

# Australia and New Zealand Report

March 2026



# Project Oasis

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*Research Partners*



# About Project Oasis

Project Oasis is a global research project on independent digital native media led by [SembraMedia](#) with the support of [Google News Initiative](#) and a growing list of [partners](#).

We have mapped and analyzed digital news organizations in more than 65 countries to offer valuable insights into business models, trends, and best practices that inspire collaboration and strengthen their sustainability. We are now expanding our research into new regions, including countries in Africa and Asia.

By making this information accessible, **Project Oasis aims to foster a stronger, more resilient media ecosystem that protects press freedom and serves the public interest.**

The [Global Project Oasis Media Directory](#):

- Helps media leaders connect and learn from each other.
- Enables donors, investors, and media support organizations to identify opportunities for impact.
- Provides academics and policymakers with updated data to better understand trends, threats, and opportunities.
- Guides consumers to independent news sources in their communities.
- Enables us to build a trusted community that we share information with on an ongoing basis.

The Global Project Oasis directory includes more than 3,000 media profiles and builds on earlier research projects, including SembraMedia's study of [Spanish-language digital media](#) (launched in 2015); the [European directory](#), produced with partners and researchers in Europe, and the news directory for [the U.S. and Canada](#), produced in partnership with [LION Publishers](#).

**The media profiles from Australia and New Zealand** in our [Global Project Oasis Media Directory](#) were created by a local research team, thanks to the support from the [Local and Independent News Association](#) (LINA) and the [Digital Publishers Alliance](#) (DPA).

In both regions, our partners developed a list of proposed media outlets based on the [criteria for inclusion](#) for Project Oasis.

# Introduction

Independent digital media play an increasingly important role in the global news landscape. These outlets are helping to fill information gaps in underserved regions, cover topics overlooked by traditional media, and strengthen the communities they serve. **Project Oasis is a research initiative designed to better understand the growth, impact, challenges, and opportunities within this sector.**

Our primary goal is to generate actionable insights for media leaders while fostering stronger connections among independent news organizations around the world. This research project also seeks **to support journalists, donors, academics, policymakers, and others committed to strengthening press freedom and media sustainability** by offering a clearer picture of who these news organizations are, what they need to thrive, and where to find independent news sources in each country.

In 2024, we published the first [Global Project Oasis report](#), analyzing data from **more than 3,000 independent digital media outlets across 68 countries** in Latin America, Europe, and North America (U.S. and Canada). As part of the next phase of this research, we included **173** media profiles from Australia, and **21** from New Zealand.

In addition, we are working on expanding coverage to include digital news providers from India, Kenya, South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, and Morocco.

You can dive deeper into the data by exploring more than 3,000 profiles in the [Project Oasis Media Directory](#). The directory allows users to filter by region, revenue sources, coverage areas, and other criteria to better understand trends and discover insights.

# Methodology

**In Australia**, our research team identified **173 digital media organizations** that meet our [Project Oasis criteria](#).

Of those, 136 were provided by the **Local & Independent News Association (LINA)**, which also helped us create media profiles for the Project Oasis directory. The data includes: a description of the organization, year the organization started publishing, location, type of coverage (international, national, regional, local, hyperlocal), countries of coverage, organization tax status (nonprofit or for-profit entities), names and gender of all founders, and the languages in which the organization publishes.

**Digital Publishers Alliance (DPA)** helped us to create 23 profiles based on their members. To complete these profiles, they sent our full questionnaire to the media outlets that met the criteria. They also followed up with member organizations to encourage participation. Ultimately, they created 15 media profiles based on interviews, and 8 profiles based on desk research with public information.

In addition to members of DPA and LINA, SembraMedia's research team identified 14 other digital native media organizations in Australia that meet our criteria, and created profiles using publicly available information in order to include them in our directory. At the end of each profile in the database, we indicate if the profile was created with public information or through interviews.

In some cases, members of DPA and LINA were accepted even though they are not technically digital natives. This exception was made because they are digital-first, and they were deemed to be of significant value in the news ecosystem. Similarly, in New Zealand, two of the media sites were accepted as digital-first.


**In New Zealand**, a group of researchers did the outreach to an initial list of 21 media outlets meeting our criteria of inclusion.


Over two months, our team scheduled and conducted interviews and did online research to complete the full questionnaire with a mix of desk research and direct responses.

Explore the [full methodology behind this project here](#).


# Australia

March 2026

 Population: 27 million habitants

 Number of media profiles: 173

 Internet penetration: 97%

 RWB Press Freedom Index  
2025: 29 out of 180



# Australia

## Context in the news industry

In 2024 and 2025, the Australian government continued advancing regulations targeting digital platforms and supporting local media. Although a proposed law requiring social media platforms to remove false or misleading content [was withdrawn due to lack of Senate support](#), the government successfully [passed legislation setting a minimum age of 16 for social media use](#).

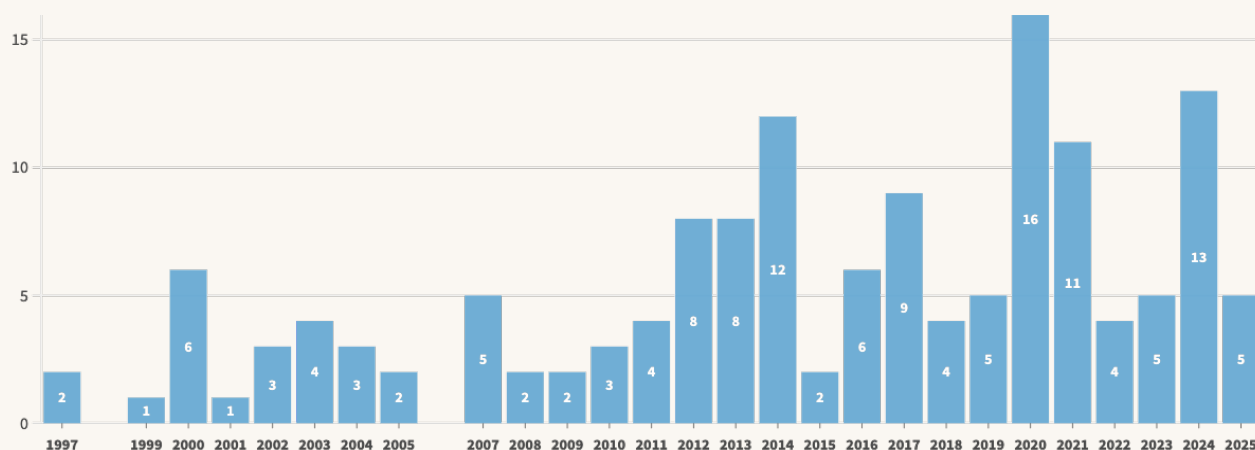
To address ongoing challenges in the media sector, the government also expanded the [News Media Assistance Program](#), providing grants to multicultural, First Nations, suburban, and regional news organizations. Despite these efforts, major media companies [continued to cut staff](#) across the industry.

According to the [Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2025](#), the long-term trend points toward increased news consumption via social media and digital devices, though traditional media brands still dominate the market. Overall trust in news remains stable at 43%.

While interest in news had been declining since 2016, the [Digital News Report of the University of Canberra](#) found a slight increase in 2025, reaching 55%. However, news avoidance remains high, with 69% of Australians reporting they avoid news at least occasionally. The main reasons cited include negative effects on mood (46%), lack of trust or perceived bias (37%), and information fatigue (32%).

### News organizations founded in Australia

Number of organizations founded per year (1997 - 2025)



## Finding independent voices in a highly concentrated media market

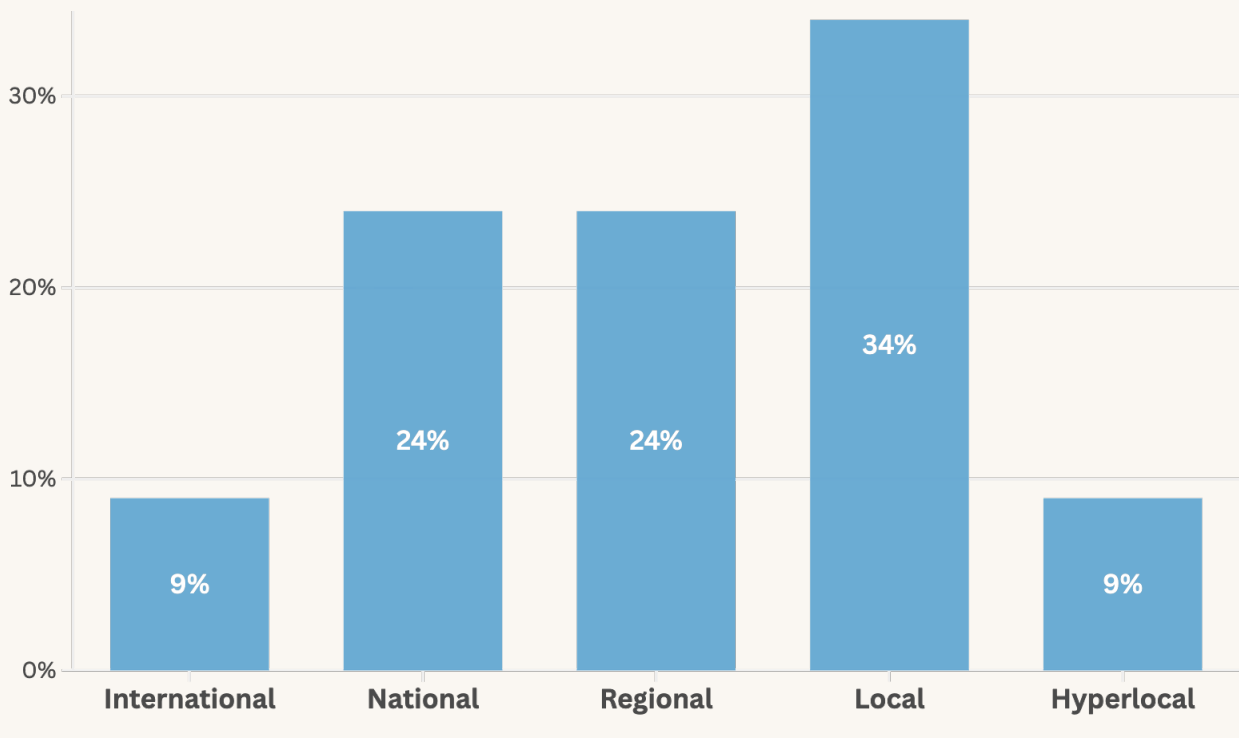
According to a [Global Media & Internet Concentration Project \(GMICP\) study](#) on Communications, Media and Internet Concentration in Australia, the country's media markets are "highly concentrated, with a few major companies dominating multiple sectors." The report highlights that News Corporation Australia, owned by the Murdoch family, is one of the largest firms, controlling a significant share of newspapers as well as stakes in streaming, online news, and pay TV.

This concentration has persisted for decades. As the [Australian Communications and Media Authority](#) notes, four major conglomerates control approximately 84% of the national newspaper market, and 18 of the 20 most populous urban areas—home to 39% of Australians—lack competition between print outlets of comparable size. Most Australians now access news primarily online. These imbalanced dynamics are largely replicated in the digital ecosystem, where the same dominant players have maintained—and even expanded—their influence through mergers, acquisitions, and cross-platform ownership.

Our media mapping and research across Australia revealed a vibrant sector of 173 independent digital media outlets. Of these, 73 focus on local and hyperlocal news coverage in towns and urban neighborhoods.

### Percentage of media outlets by coverage type

Forty-three percent of news organizations in Australia serve primarily local and hyperlocal communities



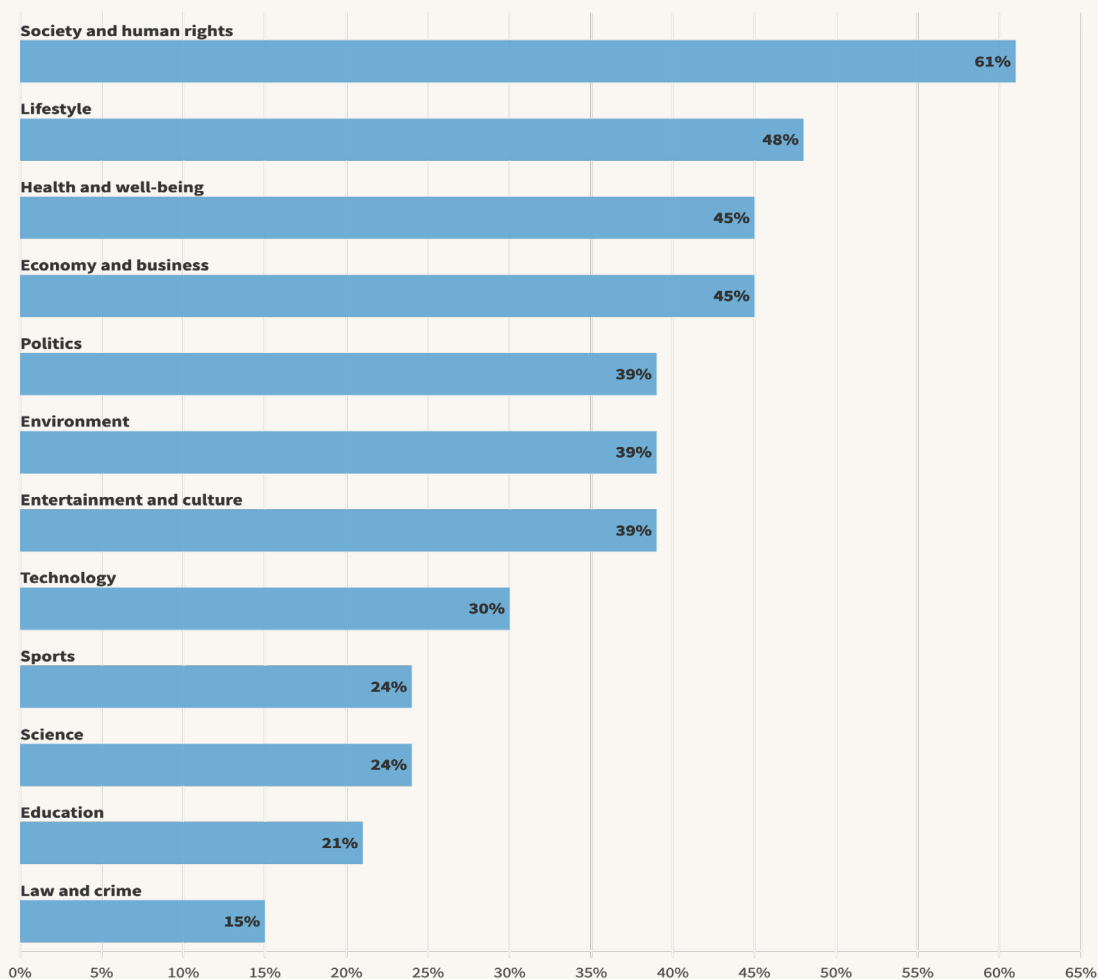
Australia is linguistically diverse, and we found news outlets that publish in many languages besides English, including Greek, Chinese, Spanish, Turkish, Hindi, Italian, and Portuguese. The high rate of digital media covering local news, and the diversity of the languages they are using to share information, is helping to fill news gaps in areas often underserved by major national outlets.

As Claire Stuchbery, Executive Director of the [Local & Independent News Association](#) (LINA), explains: **“Australia is one of the most concentrated media markets in the world. The geographic sparsity of our population presents a real challenge to newsroom viability, yet our communities need reliable and relevant news more than ever, especially vulnerable communities.”**

These independent outlets demonstrate that, even in a concentrated media ecosystem, smaller organizations play a critical role in maintaining pluralism and providing accessible, community focused information.

### Topics most covered by digital media outlets in Australia

More than 60% reported society and human rights issues as key areas of their coverage, including topics related to refugees, migration, and LGBTIQ+ community



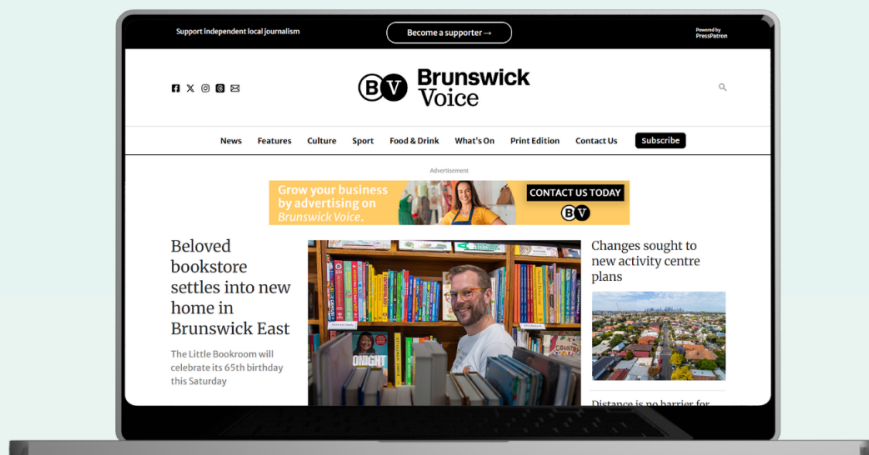
## Keeping Brunswick informed: Hyperlocal journalism in action

[Brunswick Voice](#) is a hyperlocal media outlet covering public interest news, events, and people in the suburb of Brunswick in Melbourne's inner north. It was founded in 2021 by Mark Phillips, one year after the local newspaper in his area shut down during the Covid-19 pandemic, [as did other local and community media organizations](#) across Australia.

Operating primarily as an online publication run by volunteers, Brunswick Voice also publishes occasional print editions. The team believes that free access to information is essential for democracy and, true to [their motto of "quality, not quantity,"](#) they focus on producing thoughtful, in-depth stories beyond the daily news cycle. This principle has guided two key editorial decisions: maintaining transparency by publicly listing donors, and keeping all their content free and accessible, without a paywall.

Brunswick Voice also invites contributions from local residents, strengthening its role as a community hub. This collaborative approach has helped the outlet amplify local voices and mobilize support around issues such as protecting heritage buildings and promoting arts initiatives and community events.

Through its coverage of artists, musicians, educators, and volunteers, the news team aims to reflect the spirit of Brunswick itself. **"I understand the community, and I am happy to have a dialogue with people in the community. I want to make sure that people feel a sense of ownership, not in a commercial way, but as something that exists for the public good,"** said Phillips in [conversation with LINA](#).



## How independent media generate revenue in Australia

Building a diversified revenue model is a key factor in helping media organizations become more independent and resilient. In our [previous research across Latin America, the U.S., Canada, and Europe](#), we have identified [more than 30 distinct revenue sources](#). While diversity is important, our findings also show that taking on too many projects simultaneously can be counterproductive. Two to six revenue sources appears optimal for relatively small teams.

Tim Duggan, Chair of the [Digital Publishers Alliance](#) (DPA), notes that many Australian digital media have successfully diversified their revenue, balancing advertising and partnership deals with reader revenue, events, merchandise, licensing, affiliate programs, and other revenue streams. Duggan emphasizes that reader contributions often provide the most consistent revenue while strengthening audience relationships, though achieving financial sustainability remains a challenge.

Revenue sources among Australian digital newsrooms include display advertising on websites and newsletters, which remains the primary revenue source. Subscription models are less common, particularly among local and independent publishers, but voluntary reader contributions are emerging as a complementary revenue stream, according to LINA. Other sources include advertorial content\*, grants and philanthropic support, listings revenue, copyright royalties, audio advertising via news podcasts, photography sales, pre roll video, and professional training services.

Nevertheless, limited staffing and expertise, particularly in small newsrooms, makes it challenging to scale and diversify operations effectively.

A central sustainability challenge lies in the inconsistency of revenue and audience engagement, compounded by changes in digital platforms and fluctuations in the advertising market. Despite these challenges, many Australian digital media organizations are finding ways to sustain their operations.

## Most media outlets in Australia are for-profit organizations

Our Project Oasis mapping of 173 independent digital media outlets in Australia shows that 88% operate as for-profit organizations, while only 12% are nonprofit. This stands in contrast to our [Global Project Oasis sample](#), where approximately 60% of outlets are for profit, 32% are nonprofits, 5% operate informally without registration, and 3% use hybrid models that combine both nonprofit and for-profit structures. The Australian landscape shows a stronger commercial orientation than other regions, where nonprofit and hybrid models play a more significant role in sustaining independent media.

*\*Advertorial content refers to publications or articles (news, features, interviews) paid for by advertisers. According to the [Australian Consumer Law](#), Australian media must clearly disclose when content is sponsored (for example, using labels such as #Ad or #Sponsored). In other regions, including the United States and Europe, this concept is known as sponsored or branded content.*

The federal government in Australia provides significant public funding for journalism through programs such as the [News Media Assistance Program](#), as well as other grants. Australia does [not receive large-scale international philanthropic funding](#) for journalism.

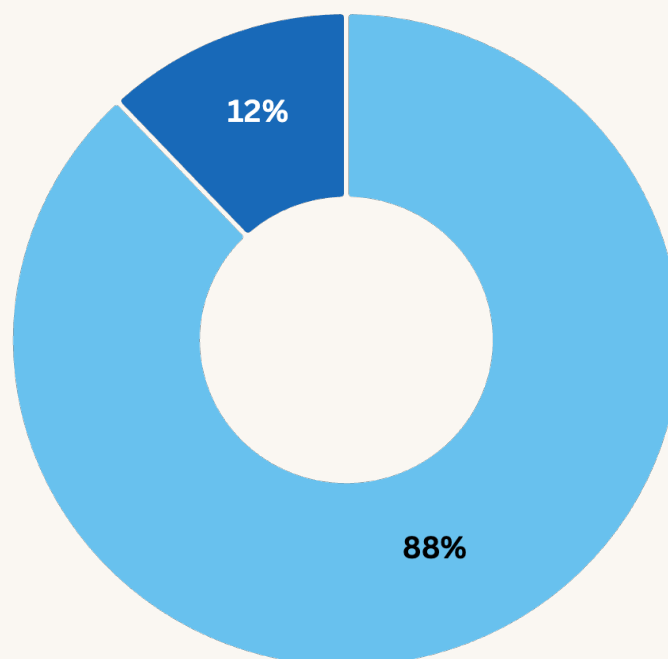
Australia's [stable economy](#), strong advertising market, and public funding explain why a larger share of independent digital outlets in Australia operate as for-profit entities. New outlets are more likely to be launched and sustained through market-based strategies and domestic support rather than extensive international philanthropic backing.

In other regions we've researched for Project Oasis, we've found that for-profit media rely primarily on advertising, while nonprofit organizations depend more on grants. For example, in Latin America, nearly 60% of for-profit outlets earn most of their revenue from advertising, and 68% of nonprofits report grants as their main revenue source, with additional revenue coming from memberships, consulting, and content services. Similarly, European digital media demonstrate a comparable pattern, with nonprofits reliant on grant funding and for profits on advertising.

### Percentage of media outlets by type of organization

Most media outlets in Australia are for-profit organizations

■ For-profit ■ Nonprofit



## Turning podcasts into sustainable operations

[The Squiz](#) was founded in 2017 by Claire Kimball, who left her corporate career to create a fast, accessible news service for busy professionals like herself. It began as a weekday newsletter and later evolved into a weekday podcast. The team expanded its reach by producing content that helped audiences navigate complex topics during major news moments (such as elections) and key life stages (including retirement and menopause).

[According to Kimball](#), The Squiz airs agenda-free news: **“We’re experts at explaining complex things simply, and we do it without an opinion and without taking ourselves too seriously. And we do it quickly because you’ve got your day to get on with.”** This approach has resonated widely with Australian listeners and readers.

Their podcast, [Squiz Today](#), is among Australia’s leading commercial news shows. According to the Triton Ranker, they have about 375,000 unique listeners each month. The organization also produces [Squiz Kids](#), a weekday podcast for children aged 7-12, and [the Newshounds media literacy course](#), reflecting a broader commitment to educating audiences of all ages.

Today, The Squiz employs more than a dozen full-time staff, nearly half of whom focus on business development and sales. Its revenue model combines [brand partnerships](#), video production for clients, and grants from technology companies, demonstrating a diversified approach that supports both editorial independence and growth.



# New Zealand

March 2026



Population: 5 million habitants



Number of media profiles: 21



Internet penetration: 95.7%



RWB Press Freedom Index  
2025: 16 out of 180



# New Zealand / Aotearoa\*

## Context in the news industry

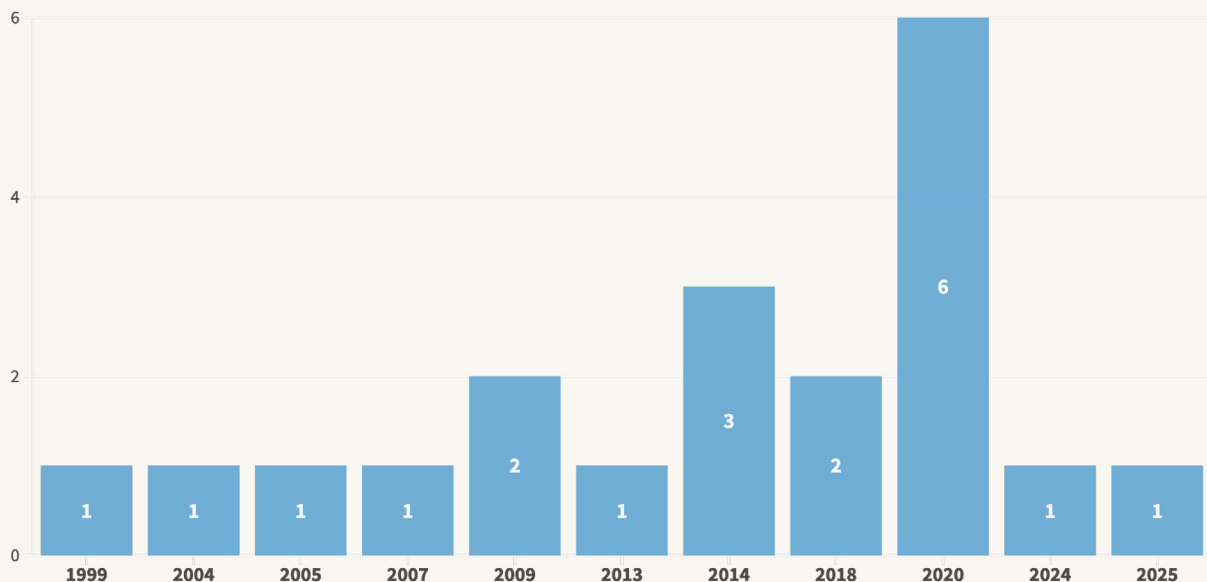
In 2024, the media industry in New Zealand\* [faced significant challenges](#), with significant cuts to staff in newsrooms and restructuring across major outlets like Warner Bros Discovery, TVNZ, Stuff, and MediaWorks. This trend continued in 2025, with [NZME announcing 40 additional job cuts](#). Meanwhile, trust in news went from 53% in 2020 to 32% in 2025, according to [a research conducted by the AUT Centre for Journalism, Media and Democracy \(JMAD\)](#).

Yet, despite this erosion of confidence in the national media landscape, trust remains comparatively strong at the local level: [a survey conducted by the New Zealand News Publishers Association](#) (NPA) indicated that more than 80% of respondents trusted news from their local media outlets.

In early 2025, [the government proposed media reforms](#) with the goal of strengthening local media against international competitors. Media and Communications Minister Paul Goldsmith noted: **“There continues to be a hunger and a thirst and an appetite for local stories and local material and local news. (...) The challenge is to find a way to make it economically sustainable to continue to produce that.”**

## Twenty-five years of digital native media launches in New Zealand

Number of organizations founded per year (1999 - 2025)



*\*New Zealand is the country's official international name, but in recent decades, Aotearoa, the Māori-language name, has been increasingly used to recognize Māori culture and the rights of Indigenous peoples. In this report and in the Project Oasis directory, we will use New Zealand for practical purposes.*

At the same time, news avoidance is a growing issue. [About 75% of New Zealanders surveyed said](#) they avoided the news at least occasionally, citing negativity, bias, and irrelevance.

The rise of AI in journalism has added new concerns. In 2024, NZME (New Zealand Media and Entertainment), an integrated media company with a portfolio of newspapers, radio stations, and digital platforms, came under fire when it was revealed that it had [published AI-generated editorials without disclosure](#). Many media unions in the country are currently [working on nationwide ethical guidelines and standards](#) for AI use.

## A snapshot of independent digital media in New Zealand

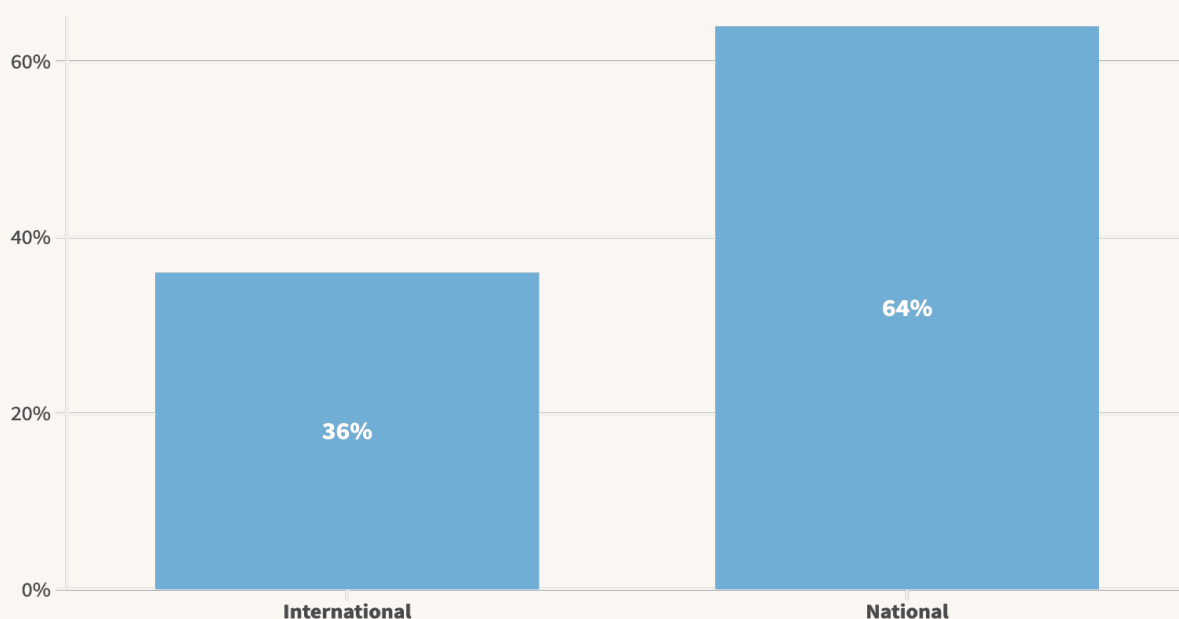
Our research in New Zealand offers a preliminary snapshot of the country’s independent digital media landscape.

Over the past decade, New Zealand’s media industry has experienced sharp [declines in funding and advertising](#), leading many [newsrooms to downsize](#). This has opened space in the market for new independent digital outlets. The year 2020 saw the highest number of new media launches—both in New Zealand and Australia—reflecting the increased demand for reliable information during the pandemic. This trend is consistent with patterns in other regions, including [in Latin America and Europe](#).

However, in more recent years, the rate of new media creation has noticeably decreased. In 2024, the industry faced a significant crisis, with [newsroom layoffs across major outlets](#).

### Percentage of media outlets by coverage type

More than half of news organizations in New Zealand focus on national coverage



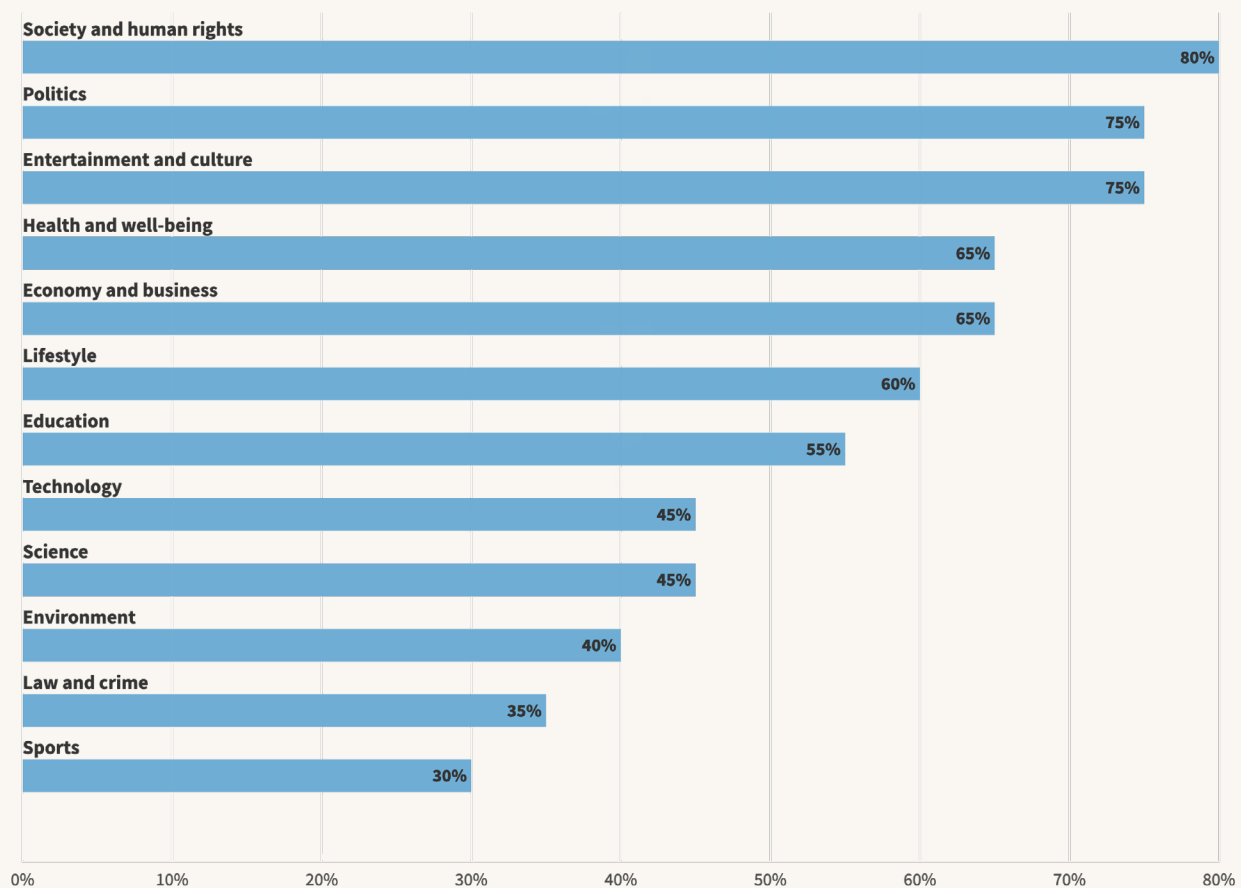
Our mapping and research in New Zealand identified 21 independent digital media outlets in a relatively small ecosystem concentrated primarily in three cities: Auckland (16), Wellington (4), and Rotorua (1). More than half (64%) of these outlets cover national topics, and 36% report internationally.

This limited geographic distribution reflects broader structural dynamics. Most of the country’s media activity is concentrated in major urban centers, while many regions remain underserved. At the same time, [media plurality faces structural challenges](#), as mainstream news outlets continue to dominate both audience reach and advertising revenue.

These conditions present both a challenge and an opportunity: while the national market is small and concentrated, there is a growing need for credible, community-focused news, especially in rural areas.

### Topics most covered by digital media outlets in New Zealand

Eighty percent of media reported society and human rights issues as key areas of their coverage, including feminism, ethnic minorities, and DEIA



## Revenue diversity and financial challenges

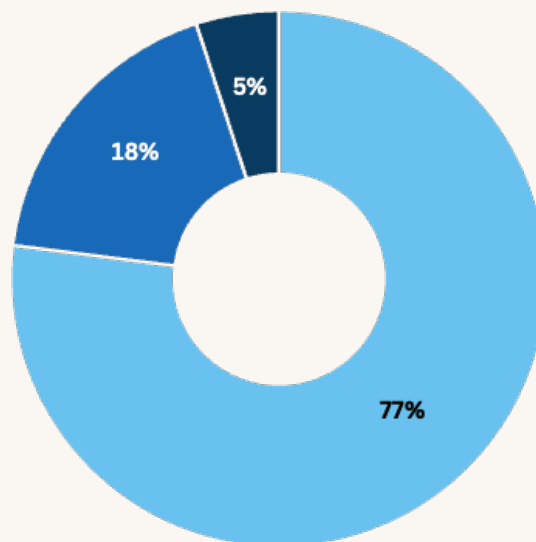
Our research found that 77% of independent digital media in New Zealand are for-profit organizations, 18% are nonprofit. Only one outlet follows a hybrid model that combines a for-profit and nonprofit. This distribution is similar to what we observed in Australia.

Digital media in New Zealand range from solo journalists publishing newsletters, to trade publications serving specific industries, to online magazines covering politics, lifestyle, and women's health.

### Percentage of media outlets by type of organization

Most media outlets in New Zealand are for-profit organizations

- For-profit
- Nonprofit
- Hybrid model (more than one nonprofit or for-profit)



Based on research conducted by our New Zealand team, these outlets generate revenue through a variety of sources:

- Subscription models that provide access to some or all content and/or additional benefits
- Memberships or donation programs, which keep content freely accessible to everyone while offering members perks such as exclusive newsletters or VIP access to events
- Digital advertising on websites or email newsletters
- Sponsorships and partnerships
- Sales of books or merchandise

Despite the growth of digital native media in New Zealand, the sector faces significant sustainability challenges. The ongoing [cost-of-living crisis and broader economic recession](#) have reduced advertising spending, which remains a critical revenue source. Many business models rely on audience support, but as household budgets tighten, subscriptions—often considered non-essential—are frequently the first expense to be cut. At the same time, social media platforms are drawing advertising dollars away from websites and print publications, providing advertisers with cheaper opportunities for both organic and paid content.

As a 2023 [Angus & Associates report on New Zealand’s media system](#) notes: **“While there is revenue growth in some areas (including niche and specialist content providers or those with a strong business focus), even profitable businesses are experiencing difficult times, with unpredictable revenue and a pessimistic marketplace.”**

In response, some digital media outlets have turned to commercial partnerships, creating bespoke content packages for businesses in ways that benefit both parties.

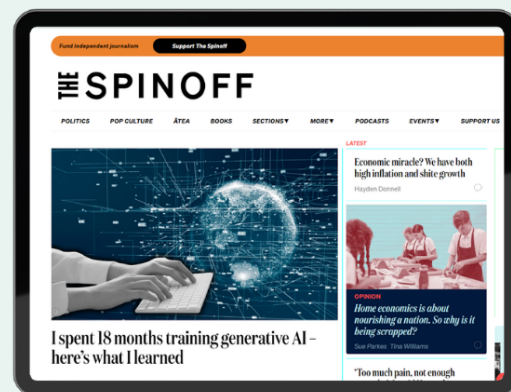
## From donations to partnerships: Supporting independent journalism

[The Spinoff](#) is a New Zealand-based digital magazine founded in 2014 by Duncan Greive.

It covers current affairs, social issues, and popular culture, with its website as the main hub for daily articles, podcasts, videos, and events.

Their mission is to **“help people to understand Aotearoa with vigour, range and humour,”** according to CEO Amber Easby.

Access to content is free, but they earn revenue through a membership model, donations, and commercial partnerships, including advertising and sponsored articles. Members can contribute monthly or annually, gaining benefits such as commenting privileges, exclusive newsletters, and VIP access to events.



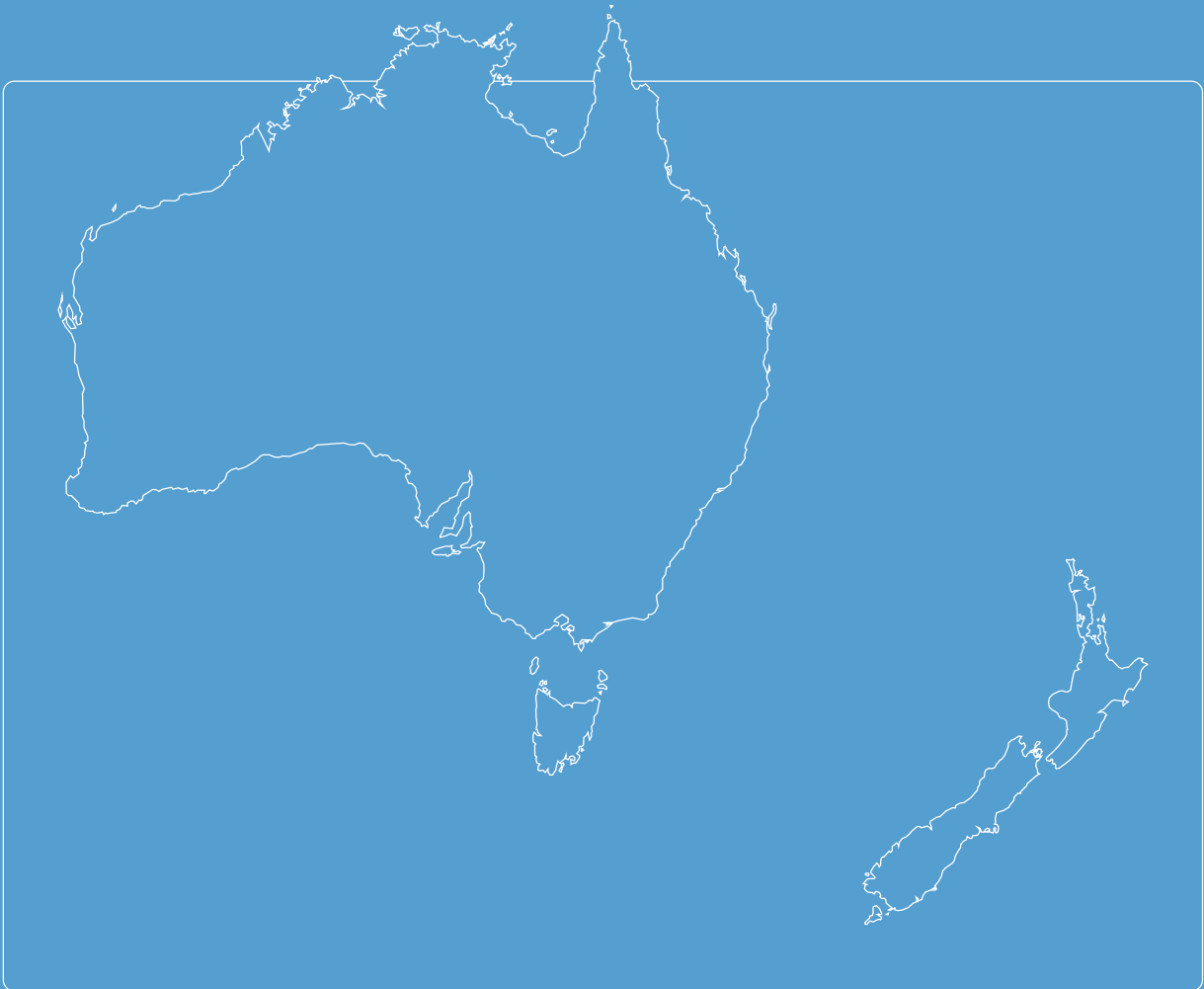
[Shit You Should Care About](#) (SYSCA), founded in 2018 by Lucy Blakiston, grew from a blog and Instagram account into a media platform with more than 3.4 million Instagram followers and 200,000 newsletter subscribers.

SYSCA's content remains free, in line with its mission to make underreported global issues accessible to young audiences. The team has created a financially sustainable model that includes voluntary subscriptions, which come with bonus newsletters, a book club, and behind-the-scenes content. This model enables supporters to contribute while maintaining open access for a wider audience. Additionally, SYSCA supports emerging journalists and writers through a free newsletter, Culture Vulture, with an optional paid upgrade.

Both cases illustrate how independent digital media in New Zealand can rely on a combination of membership, donations, and commercial partnerships to fund their operations. They show that financial resilience can be achieved without paywalls, emphasizing community engagement and diversified revenue sources as key to sustaining quality journalism.



# Final reflections





# SembraMedia team who led this research project



**Miguel Loor**

Regional Research Manager

Miguel leads the research team and coordinates partnerships for SembraMedia.



**Zahra Shahtahmasebi**

Researcher

Zahra leads media mapping in New Zealand for SembraMedia.

## Partners



*Supported by*



# SembraMedia Team members who supported this research project

Janine Warner | Cofounder and Executive Director

María Eugenia Álvarez | General Manager

Naimid Cirelli | Operations Director

Florencia Aza | Programs Director

Daniela Fernández | Innovation Director

Santiago Ramayo | Communications Director

Micaela Fernández | Finance Director

Sebastián Ortega | Programs Coordinator

Nahuel Iudica | Web Design Coordinator

Ana Minini Venega | Editorial Coordinator

Carolina Sotelo | Visual Identity Leader

Magalí Domínguez Lalli | Data Manager

Erica Destefano | Data Manager

Leandro Burioni | Full Stack Developer

Katherine Stanley Obando | English Editor

Macarena Pereyra | Administration and Finance Coordinator

Lourdes Falsetti | Administrative Assistant

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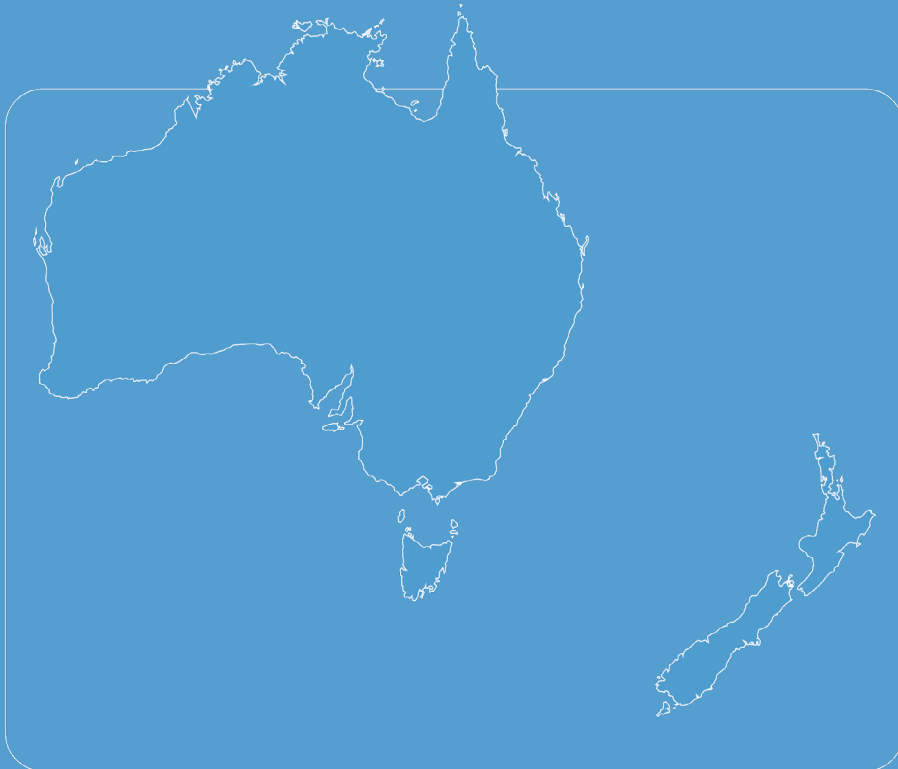
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