

Nicaragua - Media Landscape

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Overview

Mass media appeared in Nicaragua between 1880 and 1900, when print outlets such as newspapers, weeklies and magazines first became available to the elite of the era. In 1920 the first radios emerged and rapidly strengthened their

position, managing to be the most consumed media among the population in the years 1948 to 1980, as stated by the research *Volver a Empezar* by Guillermo Rothschild. TV broadcasting started at the end of the 1960 and was limited to a very small audience due to its high economic cost. TV started becoming inexpensive and extremely popular in the 1980s; since then it occupies the first places of consumption among the population. After 2010, with the massive arrival of cell phones, the use of Internet and social networks has increased, becoming soon its main competitor.

The history of Nicaragua is marked by wars and internal political conflicts. Several radio stations have faced the consequences of the dictatorship, being closed or destroyed for opposing the regime. The political instability reflects in the positions that traditional media have had and in their connection with the political power of the day. With the socio-political crisis of 2018, there were further divisions and the polarisation of media increased and became more evident in 2019. There are at least three marked positions: One is the media conglomerate controlled by the Sandinista government (with seven TVs including the parliamentary channel and a private pro-government channel called *Extraplus*); then the group of private media controlled by Mexican businessman Luis Angel González, which tries to balance between information from both the government and the opposition; the third group is comprised of corporate media such as *El Nuevo Diario* and *Channel 14*, which oppose the government as do other outlets owned by independent entrepreneurs, such as *La Prensa*, *Channel 12*, digital media *Article 66*, *Confidential*, *Nicaragua Investiga*, *Ecological Bulletin* and several radios.

Journalism started in Nicaragua after independence from the Spanish crown (1821). *The Nicaraguan Gazette* was the first official newspaper, founded in 1830. Subsequently, some periodicals emerged giving professional guidelines for journalistic writing. The first formal daily, entitled *El diario de Nicaragua*, appeared in the city of Granada in 1884, founded by the intellectuals Anselmo H. Rivas and Rigoberto Cabezas. In the following years other newspapers appeared, although with limited impact. On 2 March, 1926 *La Prensa* was first published, which as of 2019 is the oldest newspaper in circulation.

With the emergence of radio in the 1920s and television in the 1960s, the need to train journalists became urgent, leading in 1960 to the opening of the first school of journalism at the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua (UNAN-Managua). The journalism profession has been historically difficult, because of the low salary and the fragility of the practice, since any person from high school or another profession can become a journalist, which brings down the quality of journalism at a national level. By law, the *Colegio de Periodistas* (College of Journalists) must ensure the profession, yet it does not fulfill its functions. In some cases, journalists don't even earn the minimum salary of 6,000 córdobas, equivalent to US\$181 per month as of April 2019. In general, journalists are poorly paid in most media, which prefer to hire students of Communication or other careers who are likely to accept low salaries. Another limitation that journalists face in Nicaragua is that most media do not pay social security, barring them from accessing social security at the reaching of retirement age. The *Colegio de Periodistas* handles a list of more than 100 people who are given a monthly financial aid to buy food and medicine. Many journalists with national relevance actually come from other careers, such as Carlos Fernando Chamorro, the economist-turned-journalist who as of 2019 is one of the most influential personalities in the country, and others mostly coming from law or economy backgrounds. Even Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, businessman and prominent journalist considered a national hero for his contribution in the fight against the Somoza dictatorship writing on newspaper *La Prensa*, was a lawyer by profession.

Since their emergence after independence, media in Nicaragua have been under the influence of governments, with the result of several closures when they have dared to criticise the ruling parties. In August 1960 the Code of Radio and Television was approved by the Congress, comprising of 73 articles that regulated broadcasting. It was signed by the President of the Republic Luis Somoza. The radio and television code was later labelled the

“Black Code” allowing the Somoza government to censor media. The code was abolished by the Sandinista government in 1980, but a new code was established with the same characteristics of controlling and censoring the media opposed to the Sandinistas. During the Sandinista government (1979-1989), newspapers and radios such as *La Prensa* and *Radio Cooperación*

were closed for being critical of its policies. In general, censorship prevailed over media that reported independently and only outlets close to the government enjoyed press freedom.

It was not until 1990 that President Violeta Barrios by Decree 1-90 abolished such a model of political-military state characterised by control and censorship. The issuing of such decree can be considered the official birth of freedom of press and expression in Nicaragua. During the so-called era of neoliberal governments (Violeta Barrios 1990-1996), freedom of the press was fully respected, contrary to the following governments of Arnaldo Alemán (1997-2001) and Enrique Bolaños (2002-2007), which practiced an economic kind of censorship, awarding prizes or punishments to media according to their degree of critical reporting.

With the return of the Sandinista government presided by Daniel Ortega (after 2007), control of the media has started again through economic censorship, the granting of frequencies and open persecution in 2018. The government closed an all-news cable TV channel for being critical of its actions. All the property of the channel was confiscated and Director Miguel Mora and Press Chief Lucia Pineda were arrested. For the same reasons, the government has also closed two feminist stations, *Radio Palabra de Woman*, located in the municipality of Paiwas (South Caribbean) and *Radio Voz de Mujer* in the northern department of Nueva Segovia, as well as *Radio MiVoz* of the León department.

According to the report of the *Mecanismo Especial de Seguimiento para Nicaragua* (Special Follow-up Mechanism for Nicaragua - MESENI) of the *Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos* (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights - CIDH), harassment, persecution and attacks on journalists have increased significantly in 2018. This is confirmed in a research by the *Fundación Violeta Barrios de Chamorro*, that, in 2018, reports the murder of journalist Angel Gahona and 420 cases of violations of press freedom, of which 77 assaults, 71 acts of intimidation, 70 attacks, 64 forms of censorship, 62 threats, 33 defamation cases, 26 verbal harassments, 10 administrative restrictions and 5 judicial harassments against journalists and independent media.

Media

Print

As of 2019, the country's written press consist of only two newspapers with national circulation, a newspaper circulating in Managua and a weekly magazine. The majority of newspaper readers are public officials, employees of private companies, civil society organisations and universities or intellectuals. Print media suffer from the small size of the advertising market and the limited culture of purchasing newspapers in Nicaragua. Since 2018 the two national newspapers, have had to reduce circulation and the number of pages, as a measure to decrease production costs, and also reduced their staff.

La Prensa is the oldest national newspaper in the country. It was founded on 2 March, 1926 by businessmen Gabry Rivas, Enrique Belli and Pedro Belli. Politically, it has always maintained a conservative line with catholic values and a strong criticism of the governments in charge. This has cost facing censorship twice, first during the Somoza dictatorship of the 1970s and then during the government of Daniel Ortega in the 1980s.

The other national newspaper, *El Nuevo Diario*, was founded on 19 May, 1980 by former workers of *La Prensa* and directed by Xavier Chamorro and the journalist Danilo Aguirre. It was initially holding a revolutionary line, then pro-business and currently criticising the government in power, yet on less conservative tones compared to *La Prensa*. These two newspapers

actually circulate only in the cities, due to the lack of reading culture in rural areas and the high price per copy, which ranges between C\$10 (US\$0.30) in Managua and C\$15 (US\$0.45) in the most remote villages on the Caribbean coast. Digital editions of the newspapers can be read on the Internet, however, since late 2018, a subscription system has been implemented, with semi-annual or annual rates varying from US\$20 to US\$50. Such measure was adopted at the end of 2018, due to the economic crisis that affects the country and the low sales.

Hoy newspaper circulates only in Managua and in some departmental capitals, at a cost of C5 (around US\$0.15). It is owned by the business group Editorial La Prensa and was founded in 2003 targeting a more popular audience, with a focus on information about events and social happenings.

Also the weekly *El Mercurio*, owned by businessman Juan Carlos Aguerri, circulates only in Managua and is aimed at a popular and low-income audience of low educational level, offering sensationalist information.

Although it does not boast a large circulation, print magazine *Confidencial* counts on subscriptions from the main decision makers from the business sector, civil society and the international community and is thus a major player in opinion making in Nicaragua.

Radio

As of 2014, according to data from the *Instituto Nicaragüense de Telecomunicaciones y Correos* (Nicaraguan Institute of Telecommunications and Postal Services - TELCOR), there are 285 radio stations at national level, half of which transmit from Managua. The majority of radios (90 percent) broadcast in FM band and very few transmit in AM. Young people tend not to consume programmes with spoken content, as most use radio to listen to music. The most popular genres are reggaeton, ballads, cumbias, gruperas bands, merengue and pop.

Only 4 radios that transmit from Managua have national coverage: *Radio Sandino*, *Radio Nicaragua*, *Radio Corporación* and *Radio Ya*. Radios *Sandino* and *Ya* are owned by the family of the Sandinista party leader Daniel Ortega (President of Nicaragua since 2007) and transmit the official bulletins of the Sandinista government and the propaganda of the Sandinista party. Their audience is mainly constituted by Sandinista sympathisers, mostly urban and rural adults. *Radio Nicaragua*, is the State's official means of communication, but like radios *Ya* and *Sandino*, it is at the service of the Sandinista government propaganda. *Radio Corporation* is owned by Ortega's opponent, Fabio Gadea Mantilla (former presidential candidate in 2011); it holds a conservative line and most of its audience is composed by adults critical of *Sandinismo*. The greatest number of listeners lives in rural areas, so the radio programming includes content aimed at rural people.

As of 2019, there are around 20 radios owned by women's collectives, organisations of the civil society or small businesses. These community radios are affiliated with the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) and offer a variety of programmes focusing on political and social issues and aimed at adult audiences with low and medium levels of education.

Other stations in Managua that broadcast informative and political content are *Radio La Primerísima* (akin to the Sandinista government), *Radio Mujer* (feminist collectives), *Radio Universidad* (Jesuit station with varied programming), *Radio Mundial* (conservative station, the oldest in the country), *Radio 800* (akin to the Sandinista government), *Radio 580* (akin to the Sandinista government), *Radio CEPAD*, *Radio Maranatha* and *Radio Restoration* (of the evangelical church).

The majority of radios that broadcast in Managua feature mainly musical programming and have limited coverage reaching the capital and surrounding departments such as Masaya, Carazo, Rivas, Granada, Leon and Chinandega. In the rest of the country's departments there are an average of 3 to 8 local radios whose coverage is limited to the department where they

broadcast. Currently about 30 radios broadcast throughout the Caribbean coast, where 15 percent of the Nicaraguan population lives. These radios are aimed at a mostly rural public made up of fishermen, illiterate farmers and peasants, and almost half of them broadcast content in indigenous languages, Miskito and English. The most influential ones are *Juvenile Radio* of the city of Bilwi in the Autonomous Region of the Northern Caribbean Coast and *Radio La Costeñísima* in the city of Bluefields in the Autonomous Region of the Southern Caribbean Coast.

Television

According to the 2015 study on the distribution of media in Nicaragua by the consulting firm Borge y Asociados, television is the most consumed media followed by radio. The study also shows that the consumption of Internet is significantly increasing. There are 11 open television channels in Nicaragua, four of which are owned by Daniel Ortega's family and four other by Mexican businessman Ángel González. The remaining three belong to other entrepreneurs.

President Daniel Ortega and his family control channels 4, 6, 8 and 13, and González is in charge of channels 2, 9, 10 and 11. Channels 12 and 23 belong to smaller media entrepreneurs and channel 14 to the Pellas business group (the largest entrepreneurs in the country). There are other national channels on paid-for cable television, such as channel 21 of the Evangelical Church, 71 of the Catholic Church, channel 98 of the journalist Manuel Espinoza and channel 99 of the Parliament. All these channels operate from Managua. In each of the 15 departments and in the two regions of the Caribbean (North and South) there is an average of two or three cable television channels, mostly offered canned programming broadcasted locally in the specific department or province. Television is the main media in terms of consumption at national level, but only channels 4, 6 and 10 reach the whole country, the rest only broadcast in the main cities of central, eastern and western Nicaragua.

According to the audience studies of the polling company MYR, González's channel 10 is the media with greatest penetration at the national level and the most preferred among Nicaraguans.

Most television channels rebroadcast programmes of Mexican and Spanish-language US TVs, because the national production is very limited and does not meet the preference of the audience. Telenovelas of the Mexican television network Televisa, those from the Hispanic chains Telemundo and from the American Spanish-language free-to-air television Univision, have the highest influence on the Nicaraguan audience.

Channel 10 is the most watched nationally, as it features content close to the preference of the audience, such as telenovelas and programmes that focus on social problems and entertainment, recreational and cultural activities. Its *Action 10* news program ranks first in audience ratings according to all surveys. The profile is popular, with news from the neighbourhoods and segments of social assistance for the people. After sensationalist information, the preferred type of content among both adults and youth is political analysis on TV. Due to the success of channel 10, the other channels, especially those of the government, are copying its style of news reporting. However, due to political preferences, these channels cannot reach 10.

In terms of international news channels, the Spanish-language channel of the CNN news network is the one with the highest penetration in Nicaragua, followed by the RT Russian chain (also in Spanish) and by the TELESUR network that transmits from Venezuela. These three channels broadcast on paid television or cable.

Television has displaced radio and newspapers, because its programming features promotions of sports and cultural events which attract more and more of the audience and live broadcasts of social issues which meet the taste of the population.

The weekly programme *Esta Semana* and the daily programme *Esta Noche*, by the group CINCO (Communication Research Center) directed by journalist Carlos Fernando Chamorro, were aired on different open television channels, the last of which

was Channel 12 as far as 2018. These programmes had gained national relevance for the quality of their reports and the chronicles that were addressed. However, because of their critical positions towards the situation in the country, the Sandinista government censored them at the end of 2018 and even confiscated the goods and threatened to arrest Chamorro, who had to go into exile in Costa Rica, where he continues to publish his programmes on the Internet and social networks.

Digital Media

Since 2016 digital media that are published on the Internet have grown in Nicaragua, accounting for at least 15 media or information portals with great following. Among the most popular there are: *Confidencial* (by above-mentioned Carlos Fernando Chamorro); *Article 66* (opposition); *Nicaragua Investiga* (Opposition, it transmits from Costa Rica and is carried out by journalists exiled following the protests of April 2018); *Ecological bulletin* (opposition); *19 digital* (official outlet of the Sandinista government); *Trench of the News* (information portal, opposition); *News Exchange* (printed and digital newsletter on subscription, with commercial and social content); *Bacanalnica* (opposition outlet providing information and entertainment); *The Voice of Sandinismo* (Sandinista Party outlet); *La Jornada* (independent and commercial journalism); *Nicaragua Today* (opposition journalism); *Nicaragua a day* (opposition journalism).

These outlets enjoy a middle class audience from intellectual, economic and political sectors, and their content is also shared on social networks like Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter, mainly by university students, journalists, politicians, professionals from different areas and social activists. Content by native digital media competes with the web pages of traditional news media such as newspapers, information radios and some television channels. Citizen journalism is exercised mainly from personal blogs and from Facebook pages dedicated to human rights, environment, education, health and entertainment.

Social Networks

According to a 2018 study by the *Cámara Nicaragüense de Internet y Telecomunicaciones* (Nicaraguan Internet Chamber and Telecommunications - CANITEL), 80 percent of the population of 7 million, uses the Internet to consult social networks, with Facebook being the most used application followed by WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, YouTube and Messenger. Social networks are used mainly by young people (who constitute 50 percent of the population, at more than 3 and a half million approximately).

The use of social networks started increasing in 2010 and is still growing. Access to the Internet is done mainly through mobile phone top-up costing approximately C\$55 (US\$1.75) for a three-day consumption plan. Media and political leaders seek to increase their following by creating social media pages, where they try to interact with the public. The political sector makes the most use of these networks to spread accusations or propaganda to discredit opponents, and the task of restoring the truth is left to users and professional media operators. According to another study of the *Grupo Interdisciplinario de Expertos Independientes* (Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts - GIEI), which investigated the riots of May 2018 in Nicaragua, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube were most used by activists to report, ask for help and announce new mobilisations.

Opinion Makers

Due to the political polarisation of Nicaragua, few people enjoy credibility, although there are a lot of opinion leaders in different subjects. At the beginning of March 2019, CCK Centroamérica: Central America Public Relations Agency published a survey on the opinion leaders of greater influence among Nicaraguans. The study found that Catholic Cardinal Leopoldo Brenes and the Archbishop of Managua, Silvio Báez, are the most trustworthy personalities in the country.

Other influencers worth of mention are: Carlos Fernando Chamorro (journalist), José Adán Aguerri (President of the Superior Council of the private company COSEP), Daniel Ortega (President of Nicaragua), Rosario Murillo (Vice President of Nicaragua), Carlos Pella (owner of the Pellas business group), Vilma Núñez (President of the *Centro Nicaragüense de los Derechos Humanos* - CENIDH), Edgard Tijerino (sports journalist), Denis Martínez (former Major League Baseball player), Ramón “*Chocolatito*” González (world boxing champion), Shantal Lacayo (fashion designer) and Xiomara Blandino (Miss Nicaragua). These opinion makers have a large following on social networks and are also sources of information and expert guests for other media outlets.

Sources

Newspapers

- [La Prensa](#)
- [El Nuevo Diario](#)
- [Hoy](#)
- [El Mercurio](#)
- [Metro](#)

Radios

- [Radio La Primerísima](#)
- [Radio Sandino](#)
- [Radio Ya](#)
- [Radio Universidad](#)
- [Radio Mujer](#)
- [Radio Mundial](#)
- [Radio Maranatha](#)
- [Radio CEPAD](#)
- [Radio 800](#)
- [Radio 580](#)
- [Radio Restauración](#)
- [Radio Nicaragua](#)

Television

- [Canal 2](#)
- [Canal 4](#)
- [Canal 6](#)
- [Canal 8](#)
- [Canal 9](#)
- [Canal 10](#)
- [Canal 11](#)
- [Canal 12](#)
- [Canal 13](#)
- [Canal 14](#)
- [Canal 23](#)

- [Canal 21](#)
- [Canal 51](#)
- [Canal 98](#)

Digital media

- [Confidencial](#)
- [Artículo 66](#)
- [Despacho 505](#)
- [La Trinchera de la Noticia](#)
- [Bolsa de Noticias](#)
- [Boletín Ecológico](#)
- [El 19 digital](#)
- [El Tayacan](#)
- [Nicaragua Investiga](#)
- [Niú](#)

Opinion makers

- [Leopoldo Brenes](#)
- [Silvio José Báez](#)
- [Carlos Fernando Chamorro](#)
- [Denis Martínez](#)
- [Román González “Chocolatito”](#)
- [Carlos Pellas](#)
- [VilmaNúñez](#)
- [Rosario Murillo](#)
- [Xiomara Blandino](#)
- [Edgard Tijerino](#)

Organisations

Trade Unions

The *Colegio de Periodistas de Nicaragua* (Journalists Association of Nicaragua - CPN) is the only union empowered by law to defend the rights of journalists. The CPN was created on 6 March, 2001, when the parliament approved Law No 372, which establishes the duties and the rights of journalists and grants protection from the State to all communicators. However, this law is not fulfilled in practice. According to the law, a new president of the CPN must be appointed every three years, with the duty to guarantee labor rights, decent wages, healthy working conditions and training for affiliated journalists. Each year, the State must deliver the funds of two national lottery drawings to the CPN to meet its needs, but this is not always the case. The CPN is controlled by the Sandinista party, which does not give confidence to communicators of other orientations about joining. In reality, the CPN is not responding to the demands of journalists, does not support in problem solving and does not urge the State to fulfill its obligations, precisely because the people who direct it are related to the Sandinista government.

The *Sindicato Nacional de Periodistas* (National Syndicate of Journalists - SPN) was created in the late 1990s and was working until the end of 2010, but as of 2019 it is no longer active. The SPN had an operative base in Managua named the *Colonia del Periodista* (House of Journalists), but it has been abandoned due to the lack of interest of journalists to join it.

There are also two other trade unions controlled by political parties, such as the *Unión de Periodistas de Nicaragua* (Union of Nicaraguan Journalists - UPN) and the *Asociación de Periodistas de Nicaragua* (Association of Nicaraguan Journalists - APN).

Journalist Associations

Just like trade unions, the journalists' associations in Nicaragua have limited impact on the working conditions of journalists. Most of these associations have very political overtones, some in favor of the Sandinista party in power (as of 2019), others against it. Due to this polarisation, many young journalists tend not to affiliate.

The *Movimiento de Comunicadores Patrióticos* (Movement of Patriotic Communicators), unites the communication professionals that work with government institutions and the media owned by the presidential family and the Sandinista Party.

The *Red de Jóvenes Comunicadores* (Network of Young Communicators) is related to the Sandinista government. Contrarily, the *Red de Comunicadores Ambientales* (Network of Environmental Communicators) criticises the Sandinista government.

The *Periodistas y Comunicadores Independientes de Nicaragua* (Independent Journalists and Communicators of Nicaragua - PCIN) was created in 2018 to defend the rights of independent journalists. It is currently active especially in representing and training its members.

News Agencies

The only news agencies present in Nicaragua are international ones such as United Press International, Europa Press, Reuters, Nomitex, Agencia France-Presse, Acan-Efe, Prensa Latina. At time of war or internal conflicts as well as during natural disasters, many foreign correspondents arrive to the country. Due to the socio-political conflict of 2018, a large number of international press agencies have returned to Nicaragua. Some have hired Nicaraguan journalists as correspondents. When instead it is in relative calm, many agencies withdraw or leave just a journalist to cover what happens in Central America.

The following international television channels and digital outlets have correspondents in the country regardless of the current situation: Univisión, the Spanish channel of CNN, Telemundo, Telesur, Diario El País de España, Plataforma de las Américas

CONECTAS, RTN.

Audience measurement organisations

The audience of Nicaraguan media is measured through costly surveys prepared by the *Organización de Agencias de Publicidad* (Organisation of Advertising Agencies - ONAP). Each year, ONAP elaborates these surveys and distributes them to its affiliate agencies to use when advertising. Generally they only measure the audiences of radio and TV. ONAP ranks the most followed media in the country, details the type of audience segmented by educational, economic and age group, and provides schedules of greater consumption and places of residence. With this segmentation, advertising agencies can offer companies the most appropriate schedules according to the level of income and the educational level of the audience. Surveys are only available to those media who can afford to pay US\$10,000 to know more about their audience.

Some polling companies also conduct studies, but most of them only as opinion polls, measuring the perceptions of people on certain political and social issues, not on consumer media. Some universities, such as the Central American University (UCA) and the University of Commercial Sciences (UCC) have also conducted studies of audiences, but very rarely.

Sources

Trade Unions

- [Colegio de Periodistas de Nicaragua](#) (CPN)

Journalist Associations

- [Unión de Periodistas de Nicaragua](#) (UPN)
- [Asociación de Periodistas de Nicaragua](#) (APN)
- [Periodistas y Comunicadores de Nicaragua](#) (PCIN)

News Agencies

- [United Press International](#)
- [Europa Press](#)
- [Reuters](#)
- [Nomitex](#)
- [Agencia France-Presse](#)
- [Acan-Efe](#)
- [Prensa Latina](#)

Audience measurement organisations

- [Organización nicaragüense de Agencias de Publicidad](#) (ONAP)
- [Empresa encuestadora MYR Consultores](#)
- [Universidad Centroamericana](#) (UCA)
- [Universidad de Ciencias Comerciales](#) (UCC)

Policies

Media legislation

The media of Nicaragua are regulated by Law No 200, known as General Law on Telecommunications and Postal Services, approved by the Parliament on 21 July, 1995. The law has three chapters, ten titles, and a single chapter on transitory and final provisions. The purpose is to regulate telecommunications and postal services and to establish the rights and duties of users and operators, in appropriate and safe environments. The law is oriented to guarantee the planned development of telecommunications, efficient postal services, the promotion of technological innovation and to guarantee availability and access to the radioelectric spectrum. Law No 200 also covers the regulation of radio and television frequencies, of phone companies, postal services and satellites. Through the law, the officials of the *Instituto Nicaragüense de Telecomunicaciones y Correos* (Nicaraguan Institute of Telecommunications and Mail - TELCOR), a government institution that regulates and controls communications, are empowered to issue, suspend or withdraw any radio or television frequency, once an administrative process was exhausted. However, this law has been criticised by different sectors because of the influence in its application by the political party in power. In 2018, it has been used to close and confiscate an all-news channel that was critical to the government of Daniel Ortega. At least four radio stations have also been closed between 2015 and 2018.

Another law that has to do with the media is Law No 621, called *Ley de Acceso a La Información Pública* (Law on Access to Public Information - LAIP), which was approved in June 2007. The LAIP establishes the criteria for media and citizens to access the information handled by state institutions and that public officials can provide reports and interviews about the work of the institutions they represent. Media outside government control have criticised that, throughout ten years of Daniel Ortega's government (2007-2017), the law has not been fulfilled because officials do not provide information to the population and media that are not controlled by the government find all doors closed. In the introduction of the LAIP it is established "that the Law of Access to Public Information promotes the responsibility of public officials to provide the information and submit and expose the scrutiny of citizens, information regarding public management and the management of public resources entrusted to it, as established in article 131 of the Political Constitution of Nicaragua." Yet, despite the demands of the population to access public information, all the above is not fulfilled, as documented by the digital platform *Right to Ask*, run by the *Fundación Violeta Barrios de Chamorro* (Violeta Barrios de Chamorro Foundation - FVBCH).

Accountability systems

Media and advertising agencies are private companies that only account to stakeholders or owners but not to the state. However, in Nicaragua there are two government institutions that monitor and regulate media operations: One is responsible for the technical matters and the other for administrative issues.

Technical standards are regulated and supervised annually by the *Instituto Nicaragüense de Telecomunicaciones y Correos* (Nicaraguan Institute of Telecommunications and Postal Services - TELCOR), which is in charge of issuing and eventually suspend licenses that allow media to operate. Those interested in having a means of communication, have to request TELCOR an operating license, which is provided as long as there is availability in the radio frequencies or in the TV band. As of 2019, there are no more frequencies available for Managua. Media have to pay a yearly operations fee to TELCOR, which has the power to withdraw a license when it considers that the media does not fulfill the functions for which it was created.

The other institution that regulates media is the *Dirección General de Ingresos* (General Income Directorate - DGI) which supervises the timely tax remittance of media or otherwise orders retaliation through TELCOR. The DGI supervises the

media every 3 months or annually to report on their income and expenses, so that they present their financial statements and determine whether or not they are complying with their taxes. Media that fail to comply with tax payments are temporarily or definitively closed depending on the severity of the case.

Regulatory authorities

All civil society organisations, including those that work in the field of communication, are regulated by the *Ministerio de Gobernación* (Ministry of Interior - MIGOB). Each organisation has to present financial reports, the list of donors and everything concerning its sources of financing. This allows the government to control NGOs, including those in the media field. The MIGOB also has the power to sanction, fine or even definitively close any organisation or media that does not meet these requirements. Journalists' organisations and unions must also have their legal status granted by the Parliament, but the MIGOB has the power to open administrative proceedings against media and organisations, including requests to the Parliament to suspend the legal status of organisations.

The national police can also intervene against media or organisations when it considers that they are violating the legal framework of the country. National police backed by a court order can confiscate a media outlet to investigate it and can even dispose of its goods, provided that a judicial authority ordered so. Although the Nicaraguan legal framework only allows confiscation of property when the accused are found guilty of crime, organised crime, drug trafficking or terrorism, the police and the MIGOB apply the law also when media are critical of the government.

Sources

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- [Creative Law of the Journalists Association of Nicaragua Law no. 372](#) Approved on March 6, 2001.
- [General Law on Telecommunications and Postal Services](#). Law No. 200. Approved on August 8, 1995.
- [Political Constitution of the Republic of Nicaragua](#). Full text with reforms incorporated to 2014. Published in La Gaceta, Official Gazette No. 32 of February 18, 2014.

Education

Universities and schools

Communication, marketing and advertising careers are taught in ten universities in the country. The most prestigious is the *Universidad Centroamericana* (UCA), which is appreciated for the quality of its education, for its international certification through the *Asociación de Universidades Confiadas a la Compañía de Jesús en América Latina* (Association of Universities Entrusted to the Society of Jesus in Latin America - AUSJAL) and for the human and critical sense of its formation. The *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua* (National Autonomous University of Nicaragua - UNAN) has branches in Managua and León, the two largest universities offering Communication Degrees. It must be noted that their courses carry a strong political bias in favour of the ruling party. Yearly, both the UCA and the UNAN-Managua offer courses of professional or certified updates to improve the training of communicators. The UCA is the only university that has offered two editions of a Master's Degree in Communication and Journalism at a cost of US\$5,500. The majority of students were granted scholarships by international financing secured by the university to support the students. As of 2019 only the UCA offers both

classes and online courses. All classes in the UCA and UNAN-Managua as well as in the other universities are taught in Spanish, the official language, despite that in the Nicaraguan Caribbean there are people who speak indigenous languages like Miskito and Creole. The American College is also among the most trusted educational institutions.

Each year an average of 150 to 200 new professionals graduate in Communication from the different universities, despite the limited working opportunities in a saturated market. The main reasons for that is the small number of traditional media in activity and the fact that institutional charges such as spokesperson are passed on to political activists coming from other careers. The educational approach of universities is still largely focused on traditional media, but lately technological equipment has been incorporated so that new professionals can undertake careers on digital platforms.

Professional development

The journalistic profession is devalued in Nicaragua and many graduate journalists have had to migrate to other sectors in order to survive. Journalists receive low salaries, equalling on average the minimum wage of US\$180 and in many cases they lack social security, which makes it difficult to retire. Only state institutions of some companies offer salaries that are a bit higher than the minimum wage.

The law does not oblige journalists to be trained, but it does recommend it. Although universities like the UCA offer training, each journalist must assume the investment costs. There are few national organisations that finance training, such as the Violeta Barrios de Chamorro Foundation, and international organisations that provide online training such as the *Fundación Iberoamericana de Nuevo Periodismo* (Latin-american Foundation on New Journalism) and the *Plataforma Internacional CONECTAS*.

Low salaries, a dangerous environment and disrespect for the profession mean that young people are increasingly uninterested in studying communication. Journalists also face aggressions and are exposed to physical violence by the authorities. According to studies of both the *Fundación Violeta Barrios de Chamorro* (FVBCH) and the *Colegio de Periodistas de Nicaragua* (CPN) the Collegiate Law that was promulgated to dignify the career is not fulfilled, making journalists defenseless.

Sources

Universities/schools of journalism

- [American College](#)
- [Universidad Americana](#) (UAM)
- [Universidad Centroamericana](#) (UCA)
- [Universidad de Ciencias Comerciales](#) (UCC)
- [Universidad de Estudios](#)
- [Humanísticos](#) (UNEH)
- [Universidad de Managua](#) (UdeM)
- [Universidad del Norte de Nicaragua](#) (UNN)
- [Universidad del Valle](#) (Univalle)
- [Universidad Hispanoamericana](#) (UHISPAM)
- [Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua](#) (UNAN)
- [Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua](#) (UNAN-León)
- [Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua](#) (UNAN-Managua)

- [Universidad Nicaragüense de Ciencias y Tecnología](#) (UCYT)

Professional development

- [Centro de Investigación de la Comunicación](#) (CINCO)
- [Fundación Violeta Barrios de Chamorro](#) (FVBCH)
- [PEN International - Nicaragua](#)

Conclusions

Conclusion

The media landscape of Nicaragua is polarised in three factions: On one side are the media controlled by the presidential family and on the other side those considered as independent. In between, the group of private media controlled by Mexican businessman Luis Angel González.

Television is the media of choice, while radio is mainly used to listen to music, to send greetings and messages and generally for entertainment. Yet, as it has been observed, Nicaragua's new audience is more critical and interactive, increasingly demanding active communication from the media. This is why social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp, are emerging at a national level, with a growth among young generations bringing their audience very close to that of television in terms of numbers.

However their popularity has increased the dissemination of fake news and the influence of political power, which has historically taken advantage of the means of communication to reach a greater number of followers. To address these issues, universities and journalist organisations seek to train new media professionals so that they can make efficient use of social networks when reporting for their outlets of provenance. It must be also noted that the issue of fake news mainly concerns social networks and digital outlets more than traditional media, which are still considered to be reliable sources.

The main loser in this landscape is the written press. The number of daily copies printed is decreasing along with sales, which have dropped by more than half as of 2019. For this reason the only two newspapers *La Prensa* and *El Nuevo Diario* started selling their content on the Internet.

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