

2013

News consumption, pluralism, democratic participation



Mertek Media Monitor
September 2013

Key conclusions

- While in 2012 almost 80% of adults claimed that the domestic media concealed certain phenomena, in 2013 this ratio had declined to 74.5%. Simultaneously, the share of those who perceive that all news are reported commensurately with their importance has risen from 13.5% to 18%. Respondents who support the governing parties are generally less likely to believe that certain facts are concealed by the media, probably because they have access to a wider variety of news sources that reflect their own views.
- A third of Hungarian society feels persistently that the intertwinement between media and politics is on the rise. Nevertheless, the ratio of those who perceive that the situation has improved in this regard has also increased since last year, though only slightly. When it comes to respondents' assessment of the intertwinement between politics and media, individual party preferences undeniably play a huge role: almost three quarters of those who feel that there has been an improvement in this area would vote for Fidesz.
- Almost all television channels have experienced declining viewership, with public television channels suffering the greatest drop. Among the two new channels, *RTL2* was surprisingly often mentioned. Not even a year has gone by since the channel was launched and already 22% of respondents designated it as a news source.
- The importance of internet portals has grown substantially. All newsportals were more widely read in 2013 than in the previous year. Though data from two years does not allow for drawing conclusions about emerging trends, it is reasonable to assert that in terms of the consumption of public affairs related content, the role of internet portals is steadily on the rise.
- Far-right *kuruc.info*'s mention by 3% of respondents appears exceedingly high, especially since the same number cited *Népszabadság*, the country's highest circulation broadsheet as a source of news.
- The past year also saw an increase in the number of listeners who tune into political and public affairs shows broadcast by radio stations. In spite of the elimination of *Neo FM*, however, the proportion of those who mentioned *Class FM* as a source of news rose by a mere 6%. Still, with the exception of *Lánchíd Rádió* all news radios have expanded their reach. Among newspapers only regional dailies achieved some growth in their numbers of readers, while other press products faced stagnant consumption levels. Only a negligible fraction of Hungarian society turns to national political dailies as their source of news, and the most influential daily newspaper continues to be the tabloid *Blikk*.

- The assessment of public television has improved, albeit only slightly. At the same time, a significant majority (55%) of those who hold that their broadcasts are improving are supporters of the governing Fidesz-KDNP parties, with a mere 8% of likely MSZP voters reporting such an impression. Among those who perceived a decline in the quality of public programming, however, some 20% would vote for MSZP, and another 16% for Együtt-PM.
- In the context of Hungarian society's media consumption habits, we distinguish four groups, just as we did in last year's analysis. As compared to the previous year, we observed significant changes, social media consumption patterns are undergoing obvious transformations. Since this survey was performed last year, the share of those who regularly turn to outlets in all types of media has nearly doubled. Another significant change is that the ratio of those who obtain their information exclusively from the two commercial television channels has declined by almost 10%, though roughly half the public still falls into this category. Another two subsets of the public are those that consume all types of media with the exception internet-based outlets, and those who exclusively rely on the world wide web for their media consumption; there are only minor changes in the sizes of these two groups as compared to the previously observed figures.
- The process wherein consumers tend to follow media that reflect and reinforce their own pre-existing views has intensified further. In the context of political weeklies, this is most eminently apparent in data on media consumption that crosses the political aisles, which reveals that the practice of reading magazines from both sides of the political divide has nigh ceased. Among the individuals that still engage in this practice, those with a primary focus on left-wing media are more likely to follow right-wing media than vice versa.
- There is a clear correlation between the willingness to vote in parliamentary elections and media consumption patterns. Among the four large groups of media consumers, 62% of those in the category consuming all types of media plan on certainly voting, while only 8% indicated that they definitely do not plan to participate in a parliamentary election. Among those who watch the two commercial channels, the ratio is dramatically different, however: a mere 39% intend to cast a ballot and 25% say they would not vote in a parliamentary election.

Methodology

The survey was conducted in July 2013 on a national representative sample (N=1200), by the Median Opinion and Market Research Ltd. Mertek Media Monitor repeated the 2012 survey, so there are comparisons with the previous year data.

Some of the more interesting conclusions of the research project in more detail

News consumption

While in 2012 almost 80% of the adult population indicated that some phenomena were concealed by the domestic media, this ratio shrunk to 14.5% in the 2013 survey. At the same time, the share of those who believe that everything is presented commensurately with its actual importance rose from 13.5% to 18%. Though our research does not suggest unequivocal answers to explain this change, respondents' party preferences - which influence their views on many issues - can help in the process of understanding it. Sixty-one percent of those who surmise that all issues receive their due attention in the media are supporters of Fidesz-KDNP, while a mere 9% and 1.5% of this group would vote for MSZP and Együtt-PM, respectively. Correspondingly, only 22.5% of those who believe there are concealed phenomena are Fidesz supporters, 15.5% and 8% in this category would vote for MSZP and Együtt-PM, respectively, and almost 20% definitely do not plan to vote. Potentially because of the wide availability of news sources that affirm their own views, those supporting the governing parties perceive fewer concealed facts in the media.

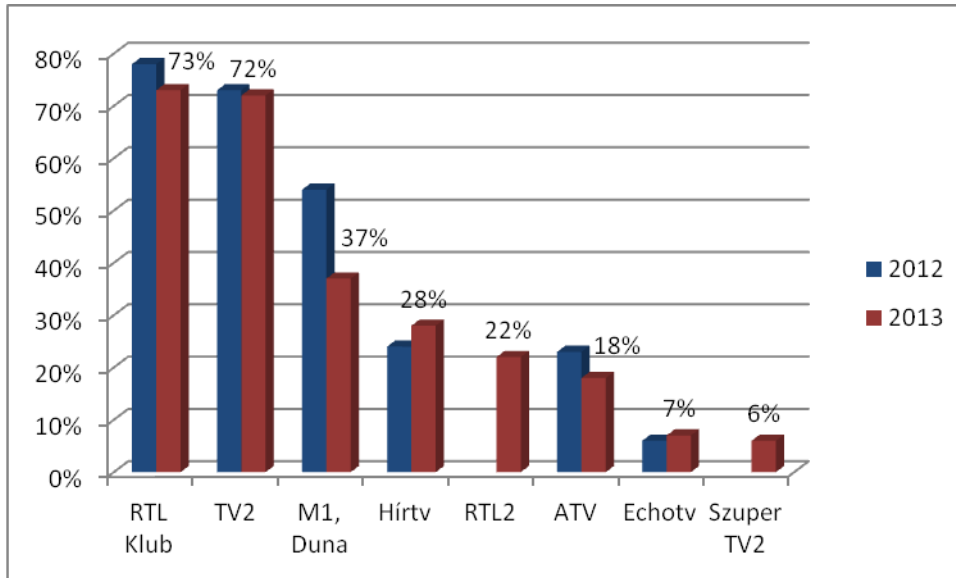
The adult population in Hungary most frequently watches the news shows of the two commercial television channels. The mentions of these two shows range between 50% and 60%. The data reveal that among the most often watched news shows, the evening news of the public television channels rank in third place behind two commercial television channels' news. It is also clearly apparent that the ratings of morning news shows are negligible. A majority of Hungarian society does not watch morning shows, be it on commercial or public television. Among the evening news shows, *M1's Este* (Evening) is watched by the fewest viewers, and it is also the show with the highest proportion of respondents that indicate never watching it, and with the lowest share of respondents who profess to watch it often. There has been no significant change in the number of viewers and listeners of the news shows as compared to the levels measured in 2012, and hence the leading role of the commercial television channels in the communication of news may be regarded as lasting.

Viewer and listener ratings of news shows (2013)

	RTL Klub news	TV2 news	M1 news	M1 evening show (Este/Evening)	TV2 morning show (Mokka)	M1 morning show (Ma reggel/This morning)	Kossuth Rádió news (Déli Krónika/Noon chronicle)	ATV evening show (Egyenes beszéd/Straight talk)
<i>Never watches/listens</i>	18.5%	21%	38.5%	78%	63.5%	67%	74%	64%
<i>Rarely watches/listens</i>	21.5%	29%	31%	17%	22%	19%	8%	11.5%
<i>Often watches/listens, several times a week</i>	59.5%	49.5%	29.5%	8%	14%	13.5%	17%	11.5%

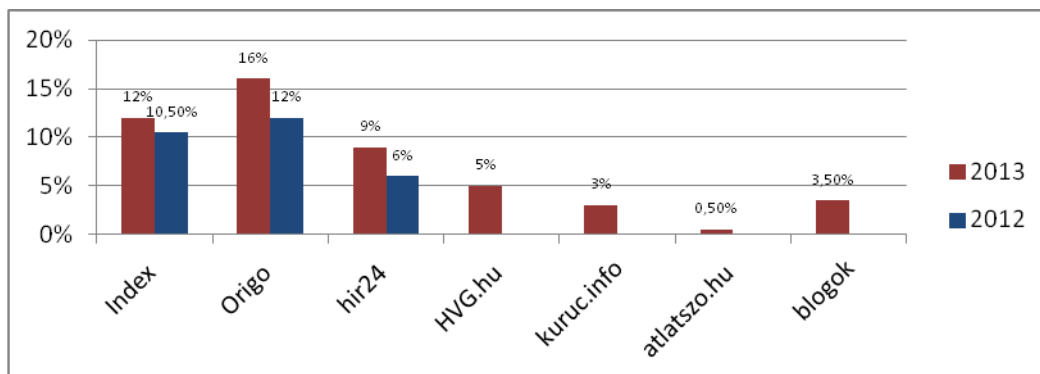
In response to the question *where they had seen, read or listened to political and public affairs news over the past week*, the majority of respondents mentioned commercial television channels, just as they had in response to the question about the news shows. In the graph below we compared data from television channels; just as last year, public television lags behind the commercial channels in terms of ratings.

On which channel did you watch political, public or current affairs news or shows during the past week?



Unlike television channels, internet portals saw their significance rise in terms of media consumption. In 2013 all news portals experienced growing readership as compared to the previous year's levels, and even though data from merely two years does not allow us to draw conclusions regarding trends, we can state with certainty that the role of internet portals is continually on the rise when it comes to the consumption of public affairs related content.

Over the past week, which news portals and blogs did you visit to read political or public and current affairs news?



The mentions of *kuruc.info*, which disseminates extremist material, appear exceedingly high, especially since the same number of respondents mentioned *Népszabadság*. This may also be connected to other data we measured, which suggest that Jobbik's voter base - an overwhelming part of *kuruc.info*'s readers presumably fall into this category - typically hail from younger generations who are simultaneously among the most active internet users.

Overall, the importance of radio as a source of public affairs news has not changed since last year. In both years 45% of the public indicated that they listen regularly, on a daily level, to radio news. At the same time, however, the past year also saw a rise in the proportion of those who do not listen to news at all, from 25% to 29%.

Only regional newspapers were able to increase their reach from 18.5% to 22%. The numbers for other press products remained stagnant, though. Among weekly political magazines, 1% of respondents reaches each, *Barikád*, *168 óra* and *Heti Válasz*. At the same time, just as last year, fewer than one percent indicated reading the weeklies *Magyar Narancs*, *Figyelő*, *Demokrata* and *ÉS*. The most important source of news among weekly newspapers was again *HVG*, with 4% of respondents saying they read it. Nor have free press products managed to expand their readership: just as in 2012, 10% mentioned reading *Metropol* and 4% referred to *Helyi Téma*.

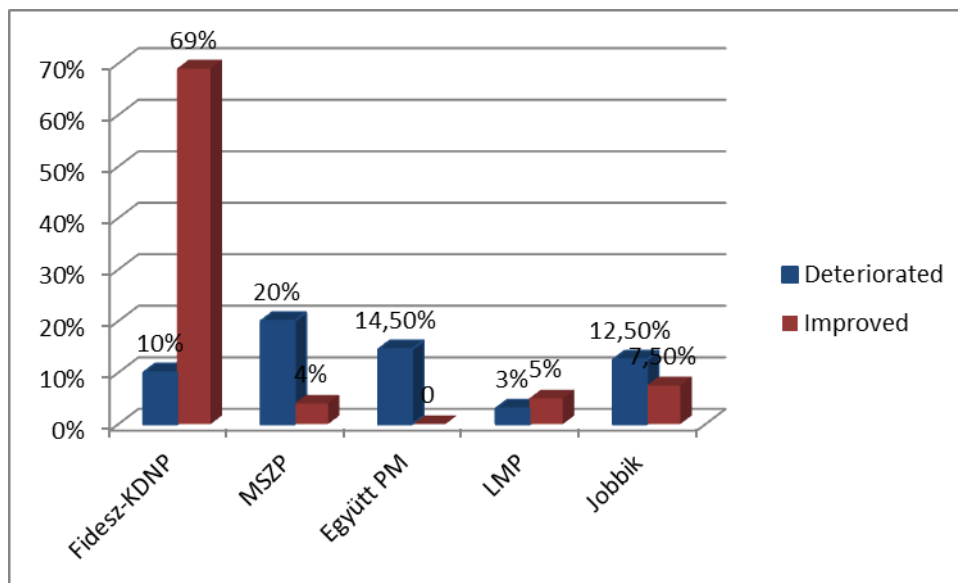
As far as the print press is concerned, the share of those who read daily newspapers has slightly risen. While in 2012 46% of the adult population were reading daily newspapers, in 2013 this ratio had increased to 48.5%. This change was probably caused by the growth in the readership of regional newspapers, since there was practically no shift in the number of those who read national newspapers. Even though low proportion of the adult population uses national dailies to inform themselves about public affairs (*Népszabadság*: 3%, *Magyar Nemzet*: 2%, *Magyar Hírlap* 1,5%), in the case of *Blikk*, which is considered a tabloid, this ratio reaches 15%, and for *Bors* it is also 5.5%. It emerges from the data that Hungarian society relies only to a minor degree on political newspapers as news sources, and that the most influential daily is *Blikk*.

We were not only curious which daily the adult population is most likely to consider a source of news on public affairs, but also sought to ascertain *how often individual daily newspapers are being read*. Correspondingly, we also asked respondents two types of questions, one of which inquired about the sources of public affairs and political information that people consume, asking specifically what media the individuals turn to attain such information. The other inquired about print press; here we wanted to know how often a given newspaper is being read. Based on data collected in the context of the second series of questions, the readership numbers of county levels newspapers stand out - in line with the numbers measured in 2012, more than half the adult population (53%) often reads them. And *Blikk* continues to be the most widely read national daily, with 30% of the adult population reading it several times a week.

Relationship between politics and media

In examining media consumption, we also investigated how individual groups relate to politics. For one, we sought to gauge how respondents assess the intertwinement of media and politics, and on the other hand we also surveyed their party preferences. The public's assessment of the intertwinement between media and politics has not changed substantially since last year. In 2012 30% of the adult population held that the situation had deteriorated, and in 2013 the proportion offering such a negative view climbed by 3 points, to 33%. The share of those who perceive that the situation has improved in this area was 6.7% in 2012 and 8% in 2013. A third of Hungarian society consistently shares the view that the intertwinement between media and politics is growing. Nevertheless, the number of those who sense an improvement in this area has also risen, if only by a small order.

How did the level of intertwinement between media and politics change, broken down by party preferences



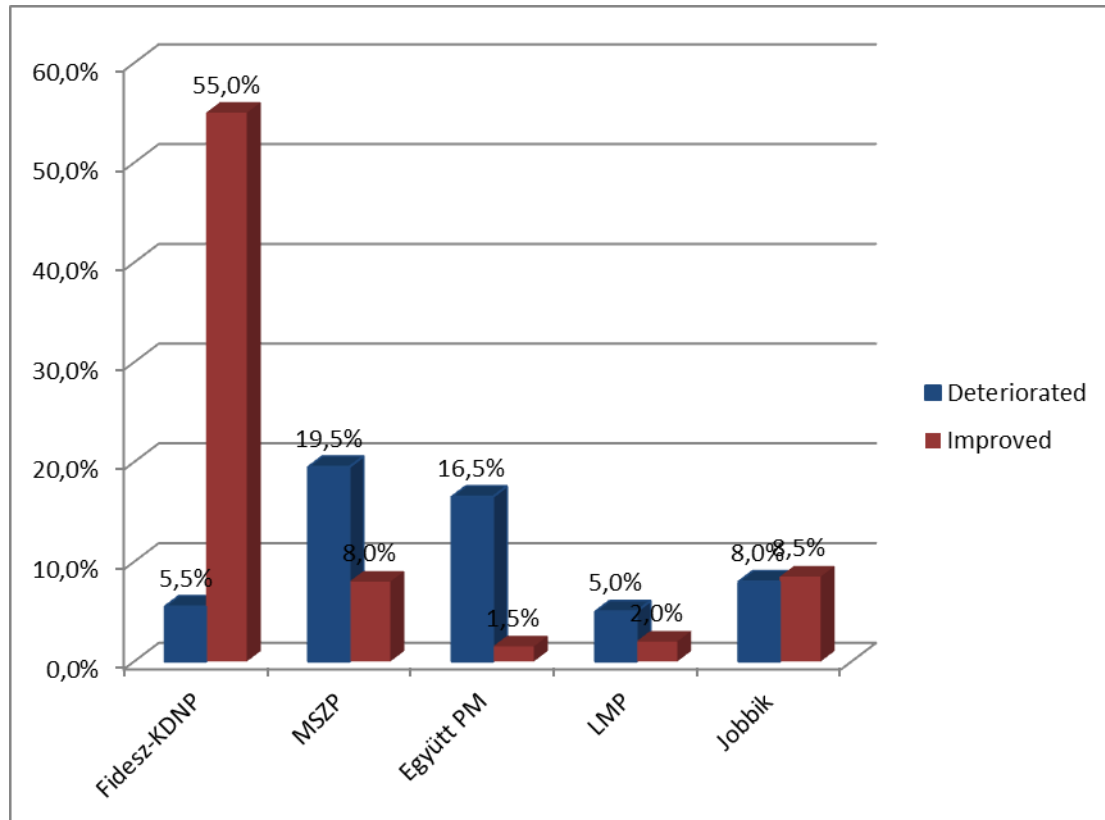
Neither age nor educational attainment or the type of municipality where the respondent resides helps predict the answer to the pertinent question, but as the graph above suggests party preferences indubitably influence opinions in this regard. Only 10% of those who perceive a deterioration in this area would vote for Fidesz, while 20% support MSZP and 14.5% support Együtt-PM. On the other hand, almost three-quarters of those who sense an improvement would cast their ballots for Fidesz.

Public service broadcasting

Our research also sought to ascertain *how the Hungarian public views the quality of public service programming*. Though the change has been modest, there has been an

improvement in citizens' assessment of the quality of public service programming: while in 2012 29.5% of citizens thought that the quality of broadcasts had deteriorated, by 2013 this ratio declined to 26%. At the same time, the ratio of those who believe that the quality of broadcasts has improved has risen from 15% to 21%.

How did the assessment of public service radio and television programming change, broken down by party preferences



The graph above shows how massively party preferences and the assessment of public service channels correlate. Fidesz-KDNP voters constitute a significant majority (55%) among those who hold that the broadcasts of public service radio and television are continually improving, while the proportion of MSZP supporters in this category stands at a mere 8%. At the same time, almost 20% of those who perceive a decline in the quality of public service broadcasting would vote for MSZP, and 16% in this category endorse Együtt-PM. In this group, Fidesz voters are substantially underrepresented, seeing as they make up only 5.5%. It appears therefore that the individual assessment of the quality of public service programming is significantly influenced by one's position on the government-opposition axis. It also seems, however, that Jobbik voters cannot be clearly attributed to either the government or the opposition segment in this regard, since they come down on both sides of the quality issue in rough proportion to their share of the national vote.

The table below offers further evidence to buttress the notion that party affiliation plays a major role in respondents' assessment of public service broadcasts. It shows namely that almost all of those who perceive a deterioration in the quality of programming also assess that there is greater intertwinement between politics and media. This leads us to conclude that those who sense that there has been a qualitative decline in public broadcasting attribute this trend to the growing intensity of linkages between politics and media.

How does the assessment of the quality of public service radio and television programming change in light of respondents' assessment of the intertwinement between politics and media

How did the degree of intertwinement between media and politics change?	How did the quality of public service radio and television programming change?	
	<i>Has deteriorated</i>	<i>Has improved</i>
<i>Has deteriorated</i>	83%	13.5%
<i>Has improved</i>	3%	8.5%

Glossary

Parties

Fidesz-KDNP	governmental parties (conservative)
MSZP	socialist party
Együtt-PM	a new party on the opposition side
Jobbik	far-right party
LMP	green party

Media brands

Print media

Népszabadság	biggest political newspaper (left-wing)
Magyar Nemzet	n2 political newspaper (right-wing)
Magyar Hírlap	smaller right-wing newspaper
Blikk	market leader tabloid newspaper
Bors	n2 tabloid newspaper
Barikád	far-right weekly
168 óra	left-wing weekly
Heti Válasz	right-wing weekly
Magyar Narancs	liberal weekly
Figyelő	business weekly
Demokrata	right-wing weekly
ÉS	left-wing biweekly
HVG	business weekly
Metropol	free daily
Helyi Téma	free weekly in Budapest

Radio

Class FM	national commercial radio station (in monopol position)
Neo FM	the other national commercial station (closed in 2012)
Lánchíd Rádió	right-wing talk radio

Television

M1	main channel of the Hungarian public service broadcaster
Duna	channel of the public service broadcaster
RTL Klub	market leader commercial channel
RTL2	commercial channel of the RTL Group
TV2	nr2 commercial channel
Super TV2	commercial channel
Hír TV	right-wing news channel
ATV	right-wing news channel
Echo TV	far-right news channel

Online

index.hu	news portal
origo.hu	news portal
hir24.hu	news portal
hvg.hu	news portal
kuruc.info	far-right online portal
atlatszo.hu	non-profit investigative portal