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Americas

Press freedom threatened by political instability

Changes of government through the polls have benefitted journalists in two countries in the Americas. In the south, in [Brazil](#) (92nd), the departure of Jair Bolsonaro, who systematically attacked journalists and media throughout his four years as president, has offered the prospect of a return to normality in relations between government and media. The country rose 18 places in the Index, a record for the region. In the north, in the [United States](#) (down 3 at 45th), the Biden administration has also shown a much better disposition towards the media than its predecessor. But the US fell slightly because the media are still dogged by economic problems, two journalists were murdered (Jeff German in 2022 and Dylan Lyons in 2023), legislative efforts to bolster press freedom, such as the Press Act, stalled in 2022, and former President Donald Trump continued to attack and threaten the media.

Elsewhere, the polarisation and institutional instability that characterise several countries in the region encourage hostility and mistrust towards the media. The past six years of political turmoil in [Peru](#) (down 33 at 110th) have fuelled a general distrust towards both the country's institutions and the media. In [Haiti](#) (down 29 at 99th), the growing political instability since President Jovenel Moïse's assassination in 2021 has created an acute security crisis that has turned Haiti into one of the region's most dangerous countries for journalists. In [Ecuador](#) (down 12 at 80th), the destabilisation resulting from organised crime's growing influence has made the environment for journalists much worse. In [Mexico](#) (down 1 at 128th), the extreme violence of the cartels and their frequent collusion with local officials and politicians has continued journalism's destruction.

Disinformation and online violence

The situation has also worsened in countries where the political landscape is less volatile. The use of disinformation and propaganda, often associated with online verbal violence against journalists and media, is becoming normalised as a strategy for politicians seeking greater control over the public narrative. Although historically well placed in the World Press Freedom Index, [Costa Rica](#) (down 15 at 23rd), [Uruguay](#) (down 8 at 52nd) and [Argentina](#) (down 11 at 40th) all reflect this trend's impact on journalism. [Canada](#) (up 4 at 15th) and [Guyana](#) (down 26 at 60th) have also seen an increase in online harassment, particularly of women journalists.

Among the worst ranked countries, references to polarisation, stability and national security are still used by authoritarian governments to justify all sorts of abuses against the media. In [Nicaragua](#) (up 2 at 158th), independent journalism has been forced underground or into exile. In [Cuba](#) (up 1 at 172nd), a new penal code has updated the legal pretexts that



the government can use to keep intimidating and persecuting journalists critical of the regime.