

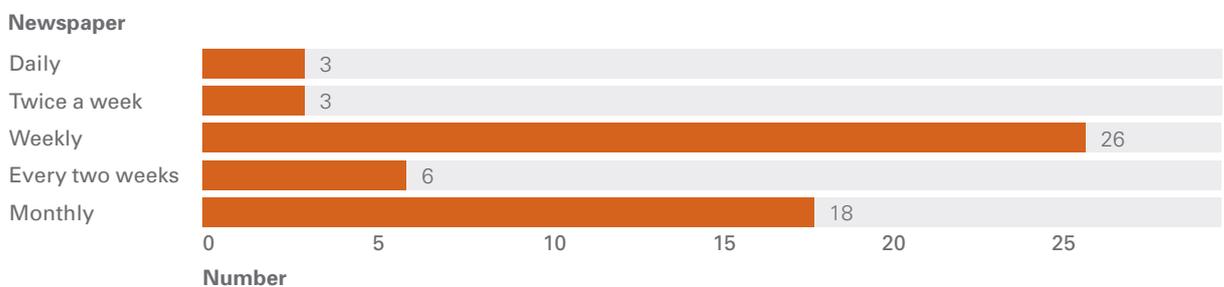


# 7. Newspapers

## 7.1 Key changes and developments in the newspaper marketplace in the past five years

According to the Ministry of Information, there were 68 newspapers and magazines published and distributed in July 2006. This is an increase from five years ago (though figures for 2000 could not be found). There are 56 newspapers and 12 magazines. Most papers are weeklies, bi-weeklies and monthlies, with only three dailies, all national, in existence. Many of the new papers in recent years have been tabloid weeklies responding to news events, such as the 2005 elections. However, some of these papers disappear when there are no strong news events to cover.

**Figure 8:** Total Number of Newspapers



Source: Ministry of Information, personal communication, August 2006

The newspaper sector is limited by the country’s low literacy rates, and most titles are said to have small print runs of only about 3,000 copies. At the time of writing this report, no data could be sourced on the percentage of the adult population that reads a newspaper.

At national level, there are three daily newspapers (see Figure 8). The three national dailies are *Addis Zemen* (Amharic), *The Ethiopian Herald* (English) and the *Monitor* (English). The *Monitor* is the only private-owned daily. There is no information available to distinguish whether the remaining 53 newspapers are national or regional papers.

There are 12 national magazines; 10 published monthly, two published every two months, and two published quarterly. Ten of these magazines are in the Amharic language, and two are published in English, a monthly and a bi-monthly (Ministry of Information, personal communication, August 2006).

## 7.2 Investment and growth in newspapers in the past five years

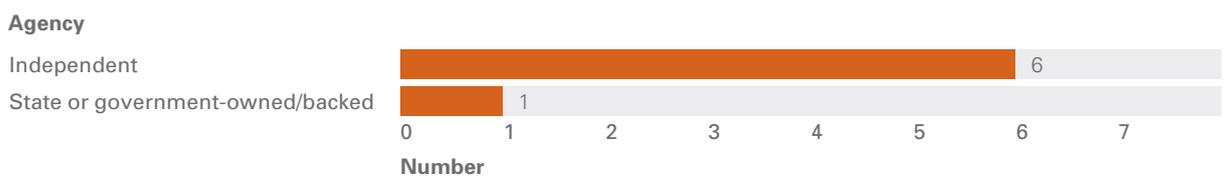
There has been a significant increase in the number of papers in the past five years, with new privately-owned papers leading this growth.

However it is difficult to comment on the exact size of the newspaper market, as there is no research available in this area. Anecdotally, however, there was evidence of high demand for private papers during the May 2005 election period, but with a contraction in the number of private papers after the election.

Only a few of the newspapers, such as *The Reporter* (with Amharic and English editions, owned by the Media Communication Centre) and *Addis Admass* (in Amharic) are backed by strong private investment. Some papers have folded after not being strong enough to withstand challenges pertaining to legal or other matters. Some complain about delays in getting permits due to delay in finalisation of the provisions of the new Press Law. Another barrier to newspaper sector growth, according to the International Press Institute (IPI, 2005), has been the banning of some newspapers and the detention of journalists following the unrest after the May 2005 elections.

There is a state-owned news agency, Ethiopian News Agency, and a private local one, Walta Information Centre, both of which mainly serve the state media. Walta Information Centre is owned by the ruling party (EPRDF), so is categorised as state-owned in Figure 9. The private media do not have arrangements with these news agencies to provide them with the content they require, and this remains a major challenge for the private media. The other five news agencies operating in the country, such as Reuters and AFP, are all international.

**Figure 9: Ownership of Newspaper Agencies**



Source: Author personal research, 2006

### 7.3 Plurality, ownership and control

The private newspaper sector in Ethiopia is still very young and, because of lack of transparency around ownership, it is not known whether ownership is diverse or concentrated in a few hands. However, Kifle Mulat, president of the EFJA, states that all newspapers are under censorship and all are pro-government and controlled by the government (directly or indirectly) (K. Mulat, private communication, 1 September 2006). There is strong opposition to this view, however, from one Ethiopian editor and publisher, Mr Amare Aregawi, who argues that there is no censorship in the country because it is unconstitutional and illegal for the government to practice it.

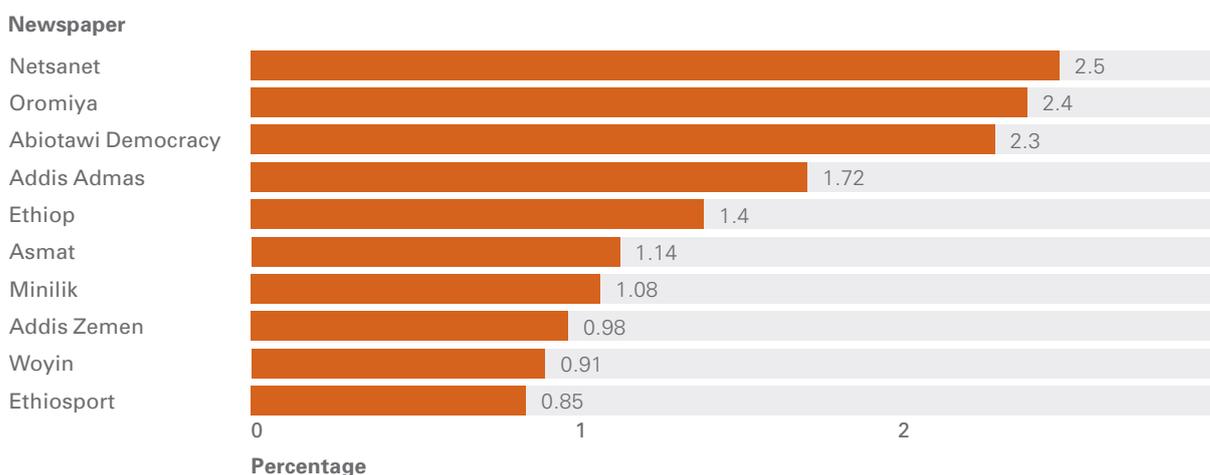
The Minister of Information states that of the 56 newspapers currently being published, six are government-owned and 32 are privately-owned. The remaining papers are owned by Religious Organisations (8), Associations (6), Political Parties (3) and NGOs (1).

Of the 12 magazines published, 11 are privately-owned, while one is owned by a religious organisation (Ministry of Information, personal communication, August 2006).

Figure 10 below lists the 10 most-read newspapers. These papers can be classified into state, private and party papers. *Addis Zemen* is a daily state paper. *Netsanet*, *Addis Admas*, *Ethiop*, *Askual*, *Minilik* and *Ethiosport* are private weeklies. Party weekly papers include *Oromiya*, *Abyotawi Dimkrasi* and *Woyin*.

The number of newspaper readers is generally thought to be quite low, and there could be several reasons for this. First, it is possible that the culture of reading has not been properly cultivated, despite the fact that literacy has been increasing over the past few years. Another possible reason is that, in the case of the private newspapers, they cannot afford to distribute beyond the capital Addis Ababa, due to both financial and infrastructural constraints.

**Figure 10: Newspaper Readership**



Source: Ministry of Information, personal communication, August 2006

## 7.4 Diversity

The past five years has seen an increase in the plurality of ideas found in newspapers. For instance, there is frequent newspaper coverage of women's and religious issues, with some papers even published by religious institutions. Private newspapers provide more entertainment coverage than the government ones do.

The majority of the newspapers are in the Amharic language (33), and the second most common language is English (14). There are also several bi-lingual newspapers, publishing in both Amharic and English (5), and there is one newspaper that publishes in Amharic, English and French. There are also newspapers written in Oromifa (2), Tigrinya (1) and Arabic (1). (Ministry of Information, personal communication, August 2006). One interviewee expressed the need for further objective research to obtain more accurate data on readership.

## 7.5 Quality of newspaper reporting

With the great increase in the number of papers, there has also been an increase in journalistic work. The quality of journalism is highly uneven. Whilst some commentators describe work as lacking in ethics, independence and professionalism, others assert that concerted efforts are being made by journalists to improve standards in the sector.

## 7.6 Specific challenges

Challenges faced by newspapers in Ethiopia include low reading levels, the high cost of distribution outside the capital Addis Ababa, and a lack of professional journalists.

### Key findings

- The past five years have seen increased private sector participation in the press sector, but many of the private papers are not financially strong.
- The largest group of publications is the national weeklies.
- Circulation of privately-owned papers is small and usually limited to Addis Ababa.
- Readership numbers are low.
- A number of newspapers are now available online.