



FCC Broadcast Ownership Rules

The Federal Communications Commission sets limits on the number of broadcast stations – radio and TV – an entity can own. As required by Congress, the FCC reviews most of its media ownership rules every four years to determine whether the rules are in the public interest and to repeal or modify any regulation it determines does not meet this criteria. Details of the current ownership rules are summarized below.

Dual Television Network Ownership

FCC rules effectively prohibit a merger between any two of the big four broadcast television networks -- ABC, CBS, Fox and NBC.

Local Television Multiple Ownership

An entity is permitted to own up to two television stations in the same Designated Market Area (DMA) if either:

- The service areas of the stations do not overlap; or
- At least one of the stations is not ranked among the top-four rated stations in the DMA based on audience share. However, an applicant may seek to make a showing, based on the particular facts and circumstances, that a top-four combination would nonetheless serve the public interest despite the prohibition.

Local Radio Ownership

Limitations on the number of radio stations a single entity may own in an area are based on a sliding scale that varies by the size of the market:

- In a radio market with 45 or more stations, an entity may own up to eight radio stations, no more than five of which may be in the same service (AM or FM).
- In a radio market with between 30 and 44 radio stations, an entity may own up to seven radio stations, no more than four of which may be in the same service.
- In a radio market hosting between 15 and 29 radio stations, an entity may own up to six radio stations, no more than four of which may be in the same service.
- In a radio market with 14 or fewer radio stations, an entity may own up to five radio stations, no more than three of which may be in the same service, as long as the entity does not own more than 50 percent of all radio stations in that market.

National Television Ownership

There is no limit on the number of television stations a single entity may own nationwide as long as the station group collectively reaches no more than 39 percent of all U.S. TV households. For the purpose of determining compliance with this National Television Ownership rule, television stations operating on UHF channels (14 and above) are attributed with only half (50 percent) of the number of TV households in the DMA, as opposed to 100 percent of the number of households attributed to stations operating on VHF channels (13 and below). This is known as the UHF Discount. Unlike the rules discussed above, the National Television Ownership rule is no longer subject to the FCC's quadrennial review.



Elimination of Broadcast Station Cross-Ownership Rules

In 2017, the Commission [eliminated](#) its rule that had previously prohibited common ownership of a full-power broadcast station and a daily newspaper if the station's contour (defined separately by type of station) completely encompassed the newspaper's city of publication and the station and newspaper were in the same relevant Nielsen market. At the same time, the Commission also eliminated the radio-television cross-ownership rule, which had restricted the common ownership of broadcast radio and television stations located in the same market. These two rules -- the newspaper-broadcast cross ownership and radio-television cross ownership rules -- were eliminated due in part to the growth in the number and variety of sources of entertainment, news and information in the modern media marketplace.

Consumer Help Center

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