



# Ukraine

Population 40 million · 5 million+ Starlink users

## CONCERN

MODERATE

## PROVIDERS

2 Operational / 3 Authorized

Latest update: March 2026



*SkyCommons Observatory is a project of Open Knowledge to map power, expose risks, and advance public-interest principles into governance of LEO satellite internet services.*

*Our scores rating 'level of concern' are based on key public-interest principles defined in the table [here](#). This country profile is one of several on: [skycommons.okfn.org](https://skycommons.okfn.org)*

## Summary

Within days of a military invasion by Russia in 2022, Starlink was deployed under emergency authorisation. Today, LEO satellites serve as the national connectivity backbone, with over 160,000 terminals across the country, approximately 100,000 of them military.

The same terminals used for drone operations and to support military command-and-control also provide internet access to schools, hospitals, and civilian households. This dual-use function emerged from necessity, and Starlink now counts over 5 million users.

Starlink is Ukraine's dominant LEO provider by a large margin. However, Eutelsat OneWeb has also been operational in Ukraine since 2024—with fewer than 1,000 terminals for government and institutional use only—with backing from Germany through intergovernmental defence cooperation channels. Denmark has also provided satellite services via the European Defence Agency for a small (unspecified) number of military units.

In recent years, Ukrainians have faced consequences from the dependence on a single foreign operator—especially in the context of Ukraine's military operations in and around territories

occupied by Russia, such as Crimea. Starlink refuses to provide connectivity there for the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

Elon Musk, the founder and CEO of SpaceX, which is the parent company of Starlink, has repeatedly denied Kyiv's emergency requests to connect the region citing US sanctions. In September 2022, Ukrainian naval drones lost connectivity 70 km from their target in Sevastopol. In February 2023, SpaceX restricted Starlink for drone operations entirely. Musk tweeted, "...we will not enable escalation of conflict that may lead to WW3." These were unilateral decisions overriding a sovereign government's objectives in an active war.

In Ukraine, the high cost of Starlink hardware and subscriptions have largely been absorbed through donor-funded terminals (Poland alone contributed nearly 30,000), a temporary customs and VAT exemption in 2022–2023, and a citizen funded "People's Starlink" movement. Otherwise, subscription prices present a real constraint for civilian households.

Up to now, governance has operated almost entirely outside normal regulatory channels. The first Starlink deployment began with a ministerial tweet. Due to martial law, authorisations and consultation processes remain largely unpublished. However, in February 2026 Ukraine introduced a whitelist registration requirement for all Starlink terminals through a government portal (Diia). The goal is to block Russian forces from using unauthorised terminals.

To address concerns of sovereignty, Ukraine is investing in its own satellite—UASAT LEO—expected to launch in October 2026 at an estimated cost of \$634 million (operated by Stetman). Eutelsat and OneWeb will support the satellite launches.

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## Timeline



*[See [online version](#)]*

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## Research highlights

### Competition

CONCERN

HIGH

|                                                         |                                   |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| OPERATIONAL<br>Starlink<br>OneWeb (military+government) | AUTHORISED<br>UASAT LEO (planned) |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|

Starlink is Ukraine's dominant LEO provider by a large margin with over 160,000 terminals (approximately 100,000 of them military). Eutelsat OneWeb has been operational in Ukraine for government use only (with fewer than 1,000 terminals) since 2024 with backing from Germany through intergovernmental defence cooperation channels. Denmark has also provided satellite services via the European Defence Agency for a small (unspecified) number of military units, with no operator or scope publicly specified.

Ukraine is in active war, and the scale and speed of Starlink's deployment reflects emergency priorities and donor logistics. OneWeb is not a retail competitor. It does not compete for civilian customers in a normally functioning market.

To address concerns of sovereignty, Ukraine is investing in its own satellite—UASAT LEO—expected to launch in October 2026 at an estimated cost of \$634 million (operated by Stetman). If launched as scheduled, the satellite would give Ukraine its first domestically controlled LEO capacity, but it will not resolve the immediate concentration problem.

### Affordability

CONCERN

LOW

|                                         |                                     |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| STARLINK SUBSCRIPTION<br>\$25–95 /month | STARLINK HARDWARE COST<br>\$600–700 |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|

In Ukraine, the high cost of Starlink hardware and subscriptions have largely been absorbed through donor-funded terminals (Poland alone contributed nearly 30,000), a temporary customs and VAT exemption in 2022–2023, and a citizen funded "People's Starlink" movement. Otherwise, subscription prices present a real constraint for civilian households.

Prices have fluctuated over the years. Starlink hardware cost roughly \$385 at launch in early 2022, then doubled to \$600–700 by late 2022, and remained in that range through 2025.

In 2022, monthly subscriptions cost between \$60–100. In July 2026, SpaceX introduced the Starlink Standard 4X, triggering a significant price reduction across plans.

As of 2026, four tiers are available:

- Residential Lite at \$25/month (budget, fixed address, lower traffic priority)
- Residential at \$75/month (full speed and priority, fixed address)
- Roam at \$50/month (mobile, limited data)
- Roam Unlimited at \$95/month (mobile, no data limits)

The \$25 entry point brings Starlink within reach of middle-class households for the first time. It still remains around 2.5 times the cost of a typical mobile internet connection, which makes it unaffordable for below middle-class households.

## Accessibility

CONCERN

LOW

|                          |                               |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| POPULATION<br>40 million | STARLINK USERS<br>5 million + |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|

Before Russia's invasion in 2022, Ukraine had strong connectivity, with over 90% 4G coverage across settlements and fast fixed broadband in urban areas. Since then, destruction of fibre routes, power systems, and mobile towers across the country have led to connectivity blackouts in areas that previously had reliable service.

LEO terminals serve two distinct functions. In cities, they operate as backup infrastructure during power outages and network disruptions. In frontline communities, such as schools, hospitals, rural areas where mobile networks fail outright, they are the primary connection infrastructure. Restoring physical infrastructure in active combat zones is largely impractical. This makes satellite the only viable option.

The main access limitation is geofencing. Starlink is unavailable in Russian-occupied territories, including Crimea. Communities under occupation have no access regardless of hardware availability or affordability.

## Governance

CONCERN

MODERATE

No public consultations have been held on any LEO initiative.

Ukraine's LEO satellite governance reflects its dual-use purpose for both military operations and civilian life. There is no regulatory framework built for either. Originally, authorisation proceeded under emergency conditions, and martial law has kept most authorisation documents unpublished ever since. This leaves civil society with little opportunity for oversight and military users with no formal accountability structure either.

Starlink's deployment began on February 26, 2022, with a tweet. Minister of Digital Transformation Mykhailo Fedorov publicly tagged Elon Musk requesting access, and the first terminals arrived two days later. No formal decree preceded the deployment. Under normal procedures, a company entering the Ukrainian market would first register a local representative office, obtain equipment certification, secure frequency permissions, and only then import its terminals. In this case, everything happened in reverse. Starlink Ukraine was only registered as a representative office of SpaceX in 2026, four years after thousands of terminals were already operating across the country.

The National Commission for Communications Regulation issued the first authorisation for Starlink in April 2022, permitting its use for critical infrastructure. A Cabinet of Ministers decree followed in December 2022, temporarily removing customs duties and VAT on satellite equipment imports. Only later, in April 2026, the national regulator formally permitted all citizens and businesses to use Starlink terminals, resolving earlier restrictions on civilian use that had been in place since the emergency deployment.

No public consultation has been held on any LEO initiative. Decision-making sits within the Ministry of Digital Transformation, the Ministry of Defence, and international donor coordination structures. European alternatives, like OneWeb (a subsidiary of the French group Eutelsat) and other satellite services provided via the European Defence Agency with backing via intergovernmental defence cooperation frameworks have even less public-facing transparency than Starlink.

However, since February 2026 the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Digital Transformation now requires all Starlink terminals to be registered via a government platform to prevent misuse by Russian forces. Only verified terminals have permission to operate.

## Accountability

CONCERN

HIGH

All Starlink terminals must be registered on a whitelist

The authorisation terms for Starlink and Ukraine's other satellite arrangements remain largely unpublished. Civil society organizations are actively calling for mandatory publication of authorisations and technical annexes within a fixed timeframe—a reform that has not yet materialised. The one, concrete implemented compliance mechanism is the Ministry of Defence's whitelist registration for terminals via the e-government app, Diia. All Starlink terminals used by civilians and businesses must be registered, and there is a separate secure channel for military terminals. The purpose is to block Russian forces from using unauthorised terminals—not to enforce service standards or protect consumers.

Civilian users have no local regulatory channel for complaints. They rely on Starlink's own global support system, which is a private, extraterritorial mechanism with no Ukrainian accountability framework attached. There are no published quality-of-service standards, no

cybersecurity audit requirements, and no coverage mandates specific to satellite operators. Civil society has called for two reforms: mandatory publication of satellite authorisations and technical annexes within a fixed timeframe, and a structured requirement for resilience diversification across multiple providers. Neither has been adopted.

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### **About this research**

SkyCommons Observatory was created by the Open Knowledge Foundation, a non-profit organisation working at the intersection of technology, openness, and governance. Our website (prototype) and research community questions the politics and processes of LEO satellite internet connectivity using open data and research methods. Is the public-interest met? We treat what happens in space as something that concerns everyone on Earth.



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