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Yearbook 2026
The Quality of the Media
Main findings

How Resilient is the Swiss Public? Disinformation, Reliable News and the Future of Public Service Media

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Main findings – How Resilient is the Swiss Public? Disinformation, Reliable News and the Future of Public Service Media

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Executive Summary

The Swiss public is under double pressure: While the public increasingly perceives disinformation as a societal problem, news media are losing reach, audience loyalty, and their economic foundation. The Yearbook Quality of the Media 2026 therefore examines how resilient the Swiss public is to disinformation and which role reliable news plays in this context. Two in-depth studies shed light on this question: The first study examines the public's awareness of the problem and its vulnerability to disinformation and analyzes the role played by the use of professional news media. The second study is devoted to the upcoming renewal of the SRG's license scheduled in 2029 and centers on the future of public service media. It illustrates which tasks, content, and distribution channels the public expects from SRG SSR, both in the area of information and beyond. Both studies underscore the importance of reliable news media: Quality journalism strengthens resilience against disinformation while broad and digitally accessible public service media can contribute to reaching diverse segments of the population. Long-term analyses of media quality, media use, attitudes toward the media, funding, and media concentration complement the findings of the two in-depth studies.

In our *first in-depth study*, we examine how the Swiss population perceives disinformation and which factors influence their resilience to disinformative conspiracy claims. Building on our 2021 study on disinformation, the current survey reveals a heightened awareness of the problem: In 2026, 56.5% classify this phenomenon as a somewhat major to very major problem – an increase of 7.5 percentage points (PP) compared to 2021. Furthermore, 51.6% encounter it often or very often. Social media (76.4%) and video platforms such as YouTube (59.8%) are considered the most important distribution channels. In contrast, news media are clearly rarely associated with this phenomenon. Overall, they are seen more as part of the solution than as part of the problem. Disinformative conspiracy claims resonate considerably with the public: For example, 36.0% consider the claim that Jewish networks control Western politics to be somewhat or very plausible. 33.8% consider the claim that 5G technology causes serious health problems to be somewhat or very plausible. The regression analysis shows that news repertoires – the typical combinations of news sources – are an important explanatory factor for resilience against disinformative conspiracy claims. «Quality-oriented users», who combine news from high-quality media with those of a high-quality public service media, and «Traditional Users», whose repertoire is largely shaped by news broadcasts, are significantly more resilient than the «News-deprived: No News». This group consumes virtually no news at all. The «News-deprived Plus» group, who rarely use journalistic media but frequently turn to Instagram or TikTok for news, also exhibit particularly high vulnerability. Compared to the «Quality-oriented» and «Traditional» groups, their vulnerability is similarly high to that of the «News-deprived: No News». Thus, one-sided news consumption via social media offers no additional protection against disinformation within an otherwise news-deprived repertoire. Higher education and the ability to recognize misleading patterns of argumentation – what is known as verification competence – therefore increase resilience. In contrast, a right-wing political orientation and an affinity for conspiracies, i.e., an overarching mindset characterized by distrust of elites, criticism of the system, and skepticism toward science, correlate with an increased susceptibility to disinformative conspiracy claims.

Our *second in-depth study* examines the public's expectations of SRG SSR: What should this major Swiss media organization with a public service mandate offer in the future, on which channels should it be present, and what should its content look like? The backdrop here is the upcoming renewal of its license in 2029, after which SRG SSR will be required to operate in the future on a budget estimated to be 17% lower. The results of our survey show broad support for public service media: 57.7% consider public service media to be (very) important, another 25.7% consider it moderately important, and 16.6% consider it unimportant. The

public continues to expect a full program that covers news, education, culture, sports, and entertainment. Information enjoys the highest priority at 76.5%. However, for around half, sports (52.3%) and education (51.8%) are also (very) important, and for another quarter, they are «moderately» important. Around a quarter consider sports and education unimportant. Similarly, for culture (25.4%) and entertainment (23.4%), about a quarter say these areas should not be important in the future. With regard to distribution channels, SRG SSR's own channels are more frequently rated as important: Particularly television (69.6%), but also websites and apps (47.0%), as well as radio via DAB+ (46.9%). SRG's own streaming platform, Play Suisse, has only been met with limited approval thus far: Only 33.5% consider it an important future channel while 38.9% consider it unimportant. Even among younger people, approval stands at only around one-third. External distribution channels such as platforms are particularly important to younger people: 69.9% of 18 to 24-year-olds consider an SRG SSR presence on social media to be important in the future, compared to 23.8% of those over 55. A majority of younger age groups attach great importance to text on SRG's own websites and apps – regardless of length. For older people, however, this is less important. Respondents generally rate SRG SSR's content positively. This also applies to objective and accurate coverage, as well as to the implementation of «balance» which is discussed in media policy.

The two in-depth studies are complemented by *long-term analyses* of media quality, media use, attitudes, funding, and media concentration. The quality analysis confirms the patterns observed in previous years. Between 2015 and 2025, there is no substantial upward or downward linear trend in aggregate media quality. In 2025, the overall quality score of 6.4 points is similarly high to that of 2015 (6.3 points). While the overall score remains stable, it masks contrasting developments. The relevance of coverage is clearly increasing over the long term and the contextualization also improving slightly. In contrast, however, the diversity of coverage is clearly decreasing. This year's analysis of media use is based on a revised measurement of news repertoires. The new measurement better accounts for digital sources in particular: It considers additional news sources such as chatbots based on artificial intelligence (AI) and various social media platforms and now distinguishes between five use types. Due to this methodological advancement, we cannot continue the previous time series that has been available since 2009. The updated analysis shows that approximately 42% of the population belongs to either one of two «News-deprived» repertoire types: The «No News» group very rarely consumes news. The «Plus» group also largely avoids news media but frequently uses the social media platforms TikTok and Instagram instead. In addition, the Swiss results of the Digital News Report survey show a declining relevance of news: Only 49.4% are strongly or very strongly interested in news, 9.5 PP less than in 2016. Trust in news media has fluctuated since 2016 without a clear long-term trend: In 2026, 42.0% somewhat or completely agree with the statement that the majority of news can usually be trusted. However, news media continue to be trusted significantly more often than social media (17.1%) or AI chatbots (16.3%). The economic foundation of journalism continues to erode. Advertising revenue for Swiss media fell to 1.94 billion Swiss francs in 2025 while tech platforms generated an estimated 2.08 – 2.55 billion Swiss francs. Only 19.3% paid for online news in the previous year. At the same time, media concentration is increasing at the structural and content levels: A small number of companies control a large portion of the information media in the three major language regions. As a result of editorial collaborations within network systems, around one in three editorial contributions in the press market is now published in multiple titles.

These findings lead to two key recommendations for action: First, it is essential to strengthen resilience against disinformation by reducing news deprivation, safeguard quality journalism, and promote media literacy. This also includes the ability to recognize the typical patterns and distribution channels of disinformation. Second, it is essential to ensure a broad and digitally accessible public service that reaches diverse population groups even under changing usage conditions (3).

The following main findings first document the two in-depth studies (1), then the long-term analyses on media quality, media usage, attitudes toward the media, funding, and media concentration (2), and finally the resulting recommendations for action (3).

1 In-depth studies

1.1 News deprivation increases vulnerability to disinformation – Quality journalism strengthens resilience

Disinformation jeopardizes the shared factual foundation of public debates and, consequently, the democratic formation of public opinion in Switzerland. Our in-depth study therefore examines how the public perceives disinformation and which factors influence vulnerability to disinformative conspiracy claims. The basis is a representative online survey of 1,222 people in German-speaking Switzerland and French-speaking Switzerland conducted from July 7 to 10, 2026.

The first part of the study examines awareness of the problem and handling of disinformation. Awareness of the problem has increased significantly: 56.5% consider disinformation as a somewhat serious to very serious problem – 7.5 PP more than in 2021. 51.6% encounter clear or suspected disinformation often or very often in their daily lives; in 2021, this was 31.1% on a comparable basis. Disinformation is primarily perceived as a threat to the formation of public opinion, trust in institutions, and core democratic processes. When asked about the distribution channels of disinformation, 76.4% stated that they most frequently encounter it on social media (see Figure 1). This is followed by video platforms (59.8%), messaging apps (44.4%), and AI chatbots (42.6%). News media are identified as distribution channels with significantly less frequency. The primary sources of disinformation are social bots (71.7%), activists (70.7%), platform operators (70.0%), and foreign governments and intelligence agencies (69.6%) – while government agencies and academia are clearly cited as rare.

When asked about their strategies for verifying unreliable information, participants most frequently reported researching the source or sender themselves (67.2%) and consulting government websites (63.8%). Fewer people (54.8%) check whether news media confirm a piece of information. Journalism thus serves less as a guide for fact-checking than government agencies do – even though 71.7% attribute a major responsibility for combating disinformation to journalism. An important resource for self-protection is skepticism toward digital platforms: 42.2% fundamentally distrust all reports on these platforms. This critical attitude toward content on platforms should limit the negative impact of disinformation. With regard to possible solutions, there is particularly strong support for a mandatory removal requirement for verifiably false platform content (84.5%), as well as for the expansion of specialized journalistic fact-check teams (77.7%).

The second part of the study examines the population's resilience, that is, its ability to recognize disinformative statements. The focus is on conspiracy narratives for which there is no reliable empirical evidence. Such narratives follow a typical pattern of disinformation by explaining social events as the result of secret intentions on the part of powerful actors. Respondents evaluated twelve claims, drawn from or based on the research literature, regarding health, climate, migration, wars, and political power dynamics: Six implausible, disinformative statements and, for comparison, six true or plausible statements. The true statements were also intended to prevent respondents from automatically evaluating all statements according to the same pattern. Based on the evaluations of the six false statements, we developed a vulnerability index and examined its influencing factors using regression analysis. First, the descriptive results show that individual disinformative conspiracy claims resonate significantly with the public: 49.4% consider the claim that the coronavirus was manufactured as a biological weapon in Wuhan to be somewhat or very plausible. 40.5% believe that political elites are deliberately promoting immigration to Europe in order to alter the composition of the population in the long term. That governments are using climate change as a pretext to control the population seems somewhat or very plausible to 36.9%. That Jewish networks are controlling Western politics in the background is endorsed by 36.0%. Nearly as many (33.8%) consider the risk of serious health damage from 5G mobile communications antennas to be somewhat or very plausible.

Given these agreement scores, the question arises as to which population groups are particularly vulnerable and which factors strengthen resilience among the population. Our regression analysis shows

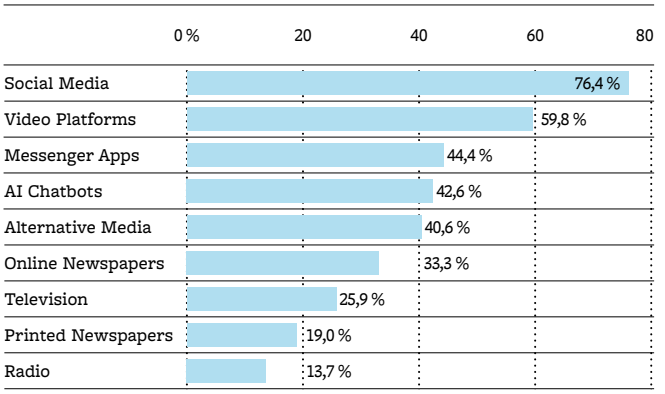

Figure 1: Perceived frequency of disinformation by channel

This figure shows how often respondents encounter disinformation on different channels. It illustrates the proportion of respondents who state that they encounter disinformation «quite often» to «very often» on the channel in question (n = 1,222). The question was: «How often do you come across disinformation on the following channels?»
Reading example: 76.4 % of respondents say they come across disinformation on social media quite often to very often.

Variables	B	p
(Constant)	3,44	**<0.001**
Age	–0,01	0.220
Gender: female[1]	0,27	0.147
Education: high[2]	–0,59	**0.002**
Political position: Left[3]	–1,00	0.084
Political position: Center-left[3]	–0,62	0.195
Political position: Center[3]	–0,04	0.913
Political position: Center-right[3]	0,70	0.116
Political position: Right[3]	1,57	**0.001**
Repertoire: Intensive Users[4]	–0,55	0.164
Repertoire: News-Deprived Plus[4]	0,19	0.540
Repertoire: Quality-oriented[4]	–0,95	**<0.001**
Repertoire: Traditional[4]	–0,92	**<0.001**
Verification competence	–0,41	**0.001**
General Affinity for conspiracy theories	1,80	**<0.001**
N	1222	
Adjusted R^2	0.421	

Figure 2: Regression model explaining vulnerability to disinformative conspiracy claims

The table shows a linear regression model for vulnerability to disinformative conspiracy claims (unstandardised coefficients (B) and p-values (p)). Reference categories: 1 «not female»; 2 «medium and low»; 3 «none»; 4 «news-deprived: No News».
Reading example: Verification competence correlates significantly negatively with vulnerability to disinformation-based conspiracy claims ($B = -0.41$; $p \leq 0.001$). In other words, people who are adept at recognizing patterns of disinformation are significantly less susceptible to disinformation-based conspiracy claims.

that news repertoires – that is, the typical combinations of news sources used by an individual – play a role (see Figure 2). Among the «News-deprived», we distinguish two types. «News-deprived: No News» consume virtually no news. The «News-deprived Plus» group also largely avoids news media but frequently uses social media platforms such as Instagram or TikTok. «Quality-oriented Users», who combine private quality media (e.g., subscription newspapers) with public service offerings, as well as «Traditional Users», whose news use is heavily influenced by news from radio and television, are significantly less vulnerable than the «No News» group. In contrast, the «News-deprived Plus» do not differ significantly from the «News-deprived: No News» group in terms of vulnerability. This leads to an important finding: News consumption via social media platforms offers no discernible additional protection against disinformative conspiracy claims compared to largely avoiding news altogether. Even «Intensive Users», who consume news very frequently across all channels but also heavily rely on social media platforms, are not significantly less vulnerable than the «News-deprived: No News». Thus, intensive news consumption alone offers no discernible protection.

In addition to engaging with quality journalism, higher education and verification competence serve as protective factors. The latter refers to the ability to recognize disinformative patterns of reasoning, such as the selective use of arguments («cherry picking») or excessive simplifications. However, a right-wing political orientation and in particular a general affinity for conspiracy theories, i.e., a mindset characterized by distrust of elites, criticism of the system, and skepticism toward science, correlates with a greater susceptibility to such narratives.

The findings give cause neither for alarm nor for complacency. A strong awareness of the problem, skepticism toward platforms, verifying sources, and trust in institutions strengthen resilience against disinformation. However, they do not provide sufficient protection for all population groups. Increasing news deprivation is proving to be a problem since the shift away from quality journalism has been shown to be associated with greater vulnerability to disinformation.

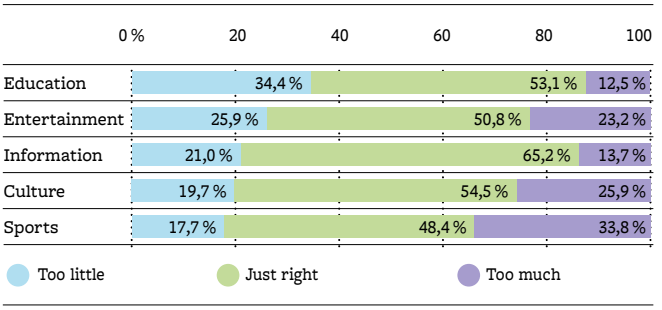

Figure 3: Evaluation of the Amount of Content by Program Category

For each of the five categories, the figure shows whether respondents consider the amount of content offered by SRG SSR to be «too little», «just right», or «too much» (n = 1,493).
Reading example: 48.4 % of respondents believe that SRG SSR offers just the right amount of sports coverage. From the perspective of 17.7 % of respondents, there is too little sports coverage, while 33.8 % believe there is too much.

1.2 The public expects a broad and digital offering from SRG SSR

According to the law, the SRG SSR media organization not only has a mandate to provide information but is also required to provide content in other areas and genres – and across a variety of channels. Details regarding this are regulated in the SRG SSR's license, among other places. Discussions regarding what the new license should look like starting in 2029 are currently underway. At the same time, following a decision by the Federal Council, SRG SSR will be required to operate on a budget that is estimated to be 17% lower in the future. This raises three fundamental questions: What should the public media organization offer in the future? Where should SRG SSR be present with its content? And how should it shape this content? Our in-depth study examines these three dimensions from the public's perspective. The basis is a representative online survey of 1,493 people in German-speaking Switzerland, French-speaking Switzerland, and Italian-speaking Switzerland conducted from June 18 to 24, 2026.

The results indicate broad public support: 57.7% consider public media to be (very) important for society, another 25.7% consider it moderately important, and 16.6% consider it (not at all) important. This level of support, which has also been observed in other surveys (Egan et al., 2026), is confirmed in our data regarding expectations for the SRG SSR's societal functions. 67.6% consider it (very) important that it contributes to social cohesion in Switzerland and 67.0% believe it is important that it reaches as many people as possible through a variety of offerings. Against the backdrop of this broad consensus, the following findings address the three key questions regarding the What, Where, and How of the current and future public service.

What should SRG SSR offer? First, an assessment of the current content shows that the public is generally satisfied with its breadth, though it sets different priorities across the individual categories of news, education, culture, sports, and entertainment (see Figure 3). With regard to the quantity of the current content, «just right» was the most common response in all five areas; in the categories of information (65.2%), culture (54.5%), education (53.1%), and entertainment (50.8%), this represents an absolute majority while sports stands at 48.4%. At the same time, 34.4% would like to see more educational content while 33.8% feel that the range of sports content is too extensive and 17.7% feel it is too limited. For the entertainment content, the evaluations «too little» (25.9%) and «too much» (23.2%) are roughly evenly split.

An evaluation of 15 representative programs shows that, in the public's view, a comprehensive public service should be wide-ranging and not limited to information alone. The main news programs are by far most frequently rated as well-suited to fulfilling the public service mandate (80.4%). However, programs on everyday culture (59.5%) and science (58.1%) also receive high approval ratings, as do widely watched sports broadcasts such as the Lauberhorn-Abfahrt (Lauberhorn downhill ski race) (55.5%) and the UEFA Champions League (53.5%). Even for quiz shows such as «1 gegen 100», the most common rating is positive (well-suited), at 44.7%. The same applies to children's programs at 41.5%, although this percentage is even higher among people with children in their households (48.4%). Assessments of foreign productions are more ambivalent. Respondents are also more critical when it comes to highly specialized culture, music, and youth content. However, such formats are rated more positively by their respective target audiences.

Expectations regarding what the programming should look like in the future are based on this gener-

ally positive assessment of the current broad program. With a view toward the future, news and information enjoys the highest priority at 76.5%. However, absolute majorities also support the continued inclusion of sports (52.3%) and education (51.8%). In the areas of culture (46.8%) and entertainment (44.5%), their supporters also represent the largest group in each area; they prevail over those who consider these areas unimportant (culture: 25.4%; entertainment: 23.4%). Coverage of national issues (73.5%), daily news (68.3%), and offerings for people with sensory disabilities (67.4%) are considered particularly important. Thus, the public neither expects a «core program» that is reduced to pure information – nor to information, education, and culture – in the future, but rather a broad program for the entire population, as well as for specific groups and minorities.

A regression analysis was examined to determine which factors explain support for a broad program. The underlying index measures how many of the five broader program categories and 19 more specific categories a person considers important for the future. The preference for a broad range of programming in the future is most strongly correlated with frequent use of SRG content and a high level of trust in SRF, RTS, and RSI. Those who use SRG SSR's content frequently and trust SRG SSR are more likely to want a broad range of programming. A left-leaning political stance, a higher level of education, and knowledge of SRG SSR («SRG literacy») is accompanied by a preference for a broader range of programming. Although this correlation with knowledge is indeed weak, it is significant: Those who are better informed about SRG SSR's mission, funding, and organization tend to favor a wider range of programming.

Where should SRG SSR have a presence? Across all age groups, there is agreement that SRG SSR should also continue to distribute its content via television (69.6%), its own digital channels such as websites and apps (47.0%), and radio via DAB+ (46.9%) and FM (41.3%) (see Figure 4). In the public's view, SRG SSR's own channels thus remain the foundation of the public service. In contrast, however, its own streaming platform Play Suisse is rated as an important future channel by only 33.5% – even among younger respondents, this percentage is only around one-third. Overall, 38.9% consider Play Suisse unimportant. Significant age differences are also evident regarding the importance of external platforms for SRG SSR: 69.9% of 18 to 24-year-olds consider a social media presence important, compared to 23.8% of those over 55. For younger people, social media, video platforms (such as YouTube), and audio platforms (such as Spotify) are thus an essential complement to, but not a substitute for, SRG's own channels.

A key point of contention regarding the license renewal is with regard to SRG SSR's online activities. Private media companies particularly view text on SRG's own websites and apps as competition for their news sites and are calling for additional restrictions. The survey results show that the public makes little distinction regarding the relevance of long or short texts – whether on SRG's own channels or on tech platforms. All formats are considered important by around one-third of the population, «moderately» important by around another third, and unimportant by the remaining third. There are, however, clear differences between the age groups. Among 18 to 24-year-olds, 53.0% consider both short and longer texts important. In contrast, this figure is only around 25% among the population aged 55 and over. The decisive dividing line thus runs less between text and non-text content and more between the age groups.

To what extent does SRG SSR meet the requirements for its content? For all criteria examined, positive evaluations do not constitute an absolute majority, but they do represent the largest respective response group. 51.3% state that SRG SSR provides objective and accurate coverage, 49.9% state that it treats people with respect in its entertainment programs, and 48.6% state that it presents women and men in an appropriate manner. Even on the politically contentious issue of balance in coverage, the group of respondents who answered positively is the largest: 44.6% believe that differing political opinions are given appropriate consideration while 20.0% disagree. A balanced topic selection is rated as positive by 42.9% and as negative by 16.4%. The findings therefore do not support the assumption that the general public perceives serious shortcomings in this or in other key content-related requirements. However, there are differing evaluations depending on political stance: Many people on the left believe that the SRG

SSR ensures balance in portraying political opinions (62.1%) and selecting topics (60.7%). With percentages of 40.1% and respectively 38.2%, people on the right consider this to be true; for 26.9% and respectively 20.6% of those on the right, this is not the case.

In sum, the public answers the three key questions clearly: In terms of the What, they continue to expect a broad range of content in news, education, sports, culture, and entertainment. Regarding the Where, they prefer the SRG SSR's own channels, although external digital platforms are particularly important for younger people. On the contentious issue in media policy surrounding online texts, short and longer text contributions on SRG's own websites and apps are rated as relevant with similar frequency. Thus, from the public's perspective, the decisive factor is not so much the length of the text, but whether content is offered on the organization's own channels or on external platforms. With a view toward the How, positive evaluations of how SRG SSR fulfills content-related requirements – including balance – constitute the largest response group in each case.

2 Long-term analyses from the Yearbook Quality of the Media

2.1 Media quality – Overall quality stable, but with losses in diversity

The quality analyses continue to paint a mixed picture in 2025: With a score of 6.4, overall quality has improved slightly compared to 2024 (6.2) and has remained stable over the past eleven years. There have nevertheless been shifts in the individual quality dimensions. In the longer term, the relevance of coverage is also increasing due to current events thanks to a stronger focus on politics. Diversity, on the other hand, is declining over the long term since media coverage is increasingly focused on domestic issues and international coverage is decreasing. Contextualization has improved in 2025, clearly halting the decline that began in 2021. Ambivalent developments are evident in terms of professionalism. Although original content is increasing in the long term, objectivity is decreasing since the media are increasingly presenting their coverage in moral and emotional terms.

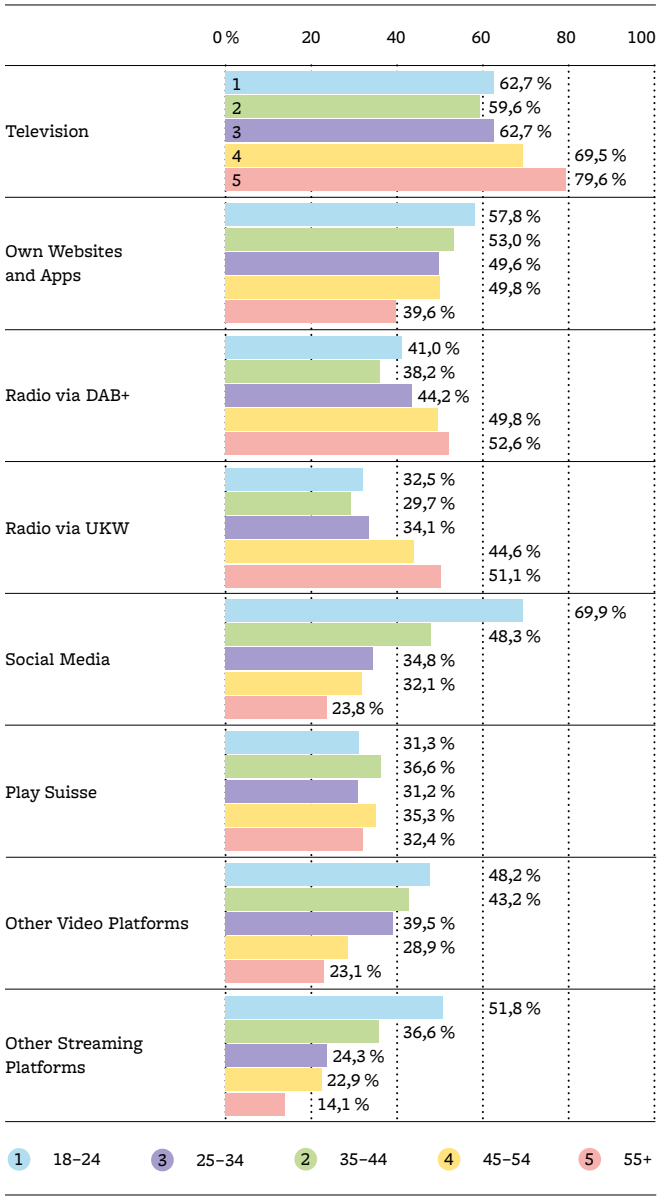

Figure 4: Importance of Future Distribution Channels, Broken Down by Age Groups

For different age groups, the figure shows the percentage of respondents who consider it important for SRG SSR content to be available on specific distribution channels in the future (n = 1,493).
Reading example: Among 18 to 24-year-olds, 69.9% consider social media to be an important channel for distribution. Among 55 to 79-year-olds, only 23.8% share this view.

The differences in quality between individual media outlets and media types remain prominent. Specific characteristics are particularly strongly correlated with overall quality while others are less so. Even in 2025, from a purely empirical perspective, contextual coverage on foreign policy remains one of the most important indicators of overall quality. Correlation analyses show: Media outlets whose overall coverage includes a high proportion of reports contextualizing politics in foreign news achieve higher overall quality than those that primarily contextualize domestic policy. Objectivity, on the other hand, correlates only very weakly with overall quality: So there are media outlets that place a relatively strong emphasis on emotions, but still maintain good overall quality since they score (very) highly in other dimensions.

Among the different media types, public radio (7.5) and public television (7.5) programs continue to perform significantly better than others while the SRG SSR's online platforms (6.6) are slightly above the average for all media types. Subscription newspapers, both online (6.4) and offline (6.5), regional private television (6.4), Sunday newspapers/magazines (6.3), and online pure players (6.3) are close to the average. In contrast, online commuter newspapers with high reach (5.5), as well as tabloid newspapers, both offline (4.6) and online (5.0), remain below the average. Even though the individual media types share certain structural similarities, there are sometimes significant differences within them, e.g., among online subscription newspapers between nzz.ch (7.5) and lenouvelliste.ch (5.0). Resources and editorial decisions within individual newsrooms are therefore key factors influencing quality.

Also in 2025, there is a clear correlation between quality and trust: Media with high quality ratings (particularly SRG SSR broadcasts and subscription newspapers such as NZZ or Le Temps) enjoy above-average levels of trust while lower-quality publications show lower trust ratings.

2.2 Media use – Two out of five people are news deprived, emerging forms of news consumption are on the rise

To account for the changing forms of news use, we have fundamentally restructured the news repertoires for this Yearbook (see Figure 5). The new measurement better reflects digital media use, takes significantly more digital news sources such as AI chatbots and journalistic newsletters into account and covers a broad spectrum of social media platforms. This results in five new repertoire types: The «Traditionalists» (32.0%) primarily use news from radio and television. The «Quality-oriented» (19.6%) combine private quality media with news from public service media. The «Intensive Users» (6.4%) frequently consume news across virtually all channels and sources. In addition, there are two repertoire types of news deprived users: The «No News group» (30.2%) rarely uses any of the news sources considered; the «Plus» group (11.8%) also largely avoids news media but uses TikTok and Instagram more frequently than average.

According to the new measurement, a total of around 42% of the population exhibits a news- deprived repertoire. Within the «News-deprived: No News» group, low news use is accompanied by the lowest level of political interest and the least trust in journalism among all five repertoire types. The «News deprived Plus» group also exhibits below-average political interest and comparatively low trust in journalism (see Chapter V.). Although this group consumes news more frequently via TikTok and Instagram, this use does not lead to higher political interest or trust in journalism.

Long-term data from the Digital News Report confirm the growing significance of social media for news use (see Figure 6). Meanwhile, 18.1% of the Swiss population names social media as their main source of news (+2.8 PP). This trend is particularly strong among 18 to 24-year-olds: In this age group, social media is the most importance news source for 41.7% (+14.0 PP). AI chatbots are establishing themselves as new information channels, although they currently play a minor role as a main source of information: In Switzerland, 1.6% of respondents cite them as their main source of news. This figure is currently at 4.0% among 18 to 24-year-olds.

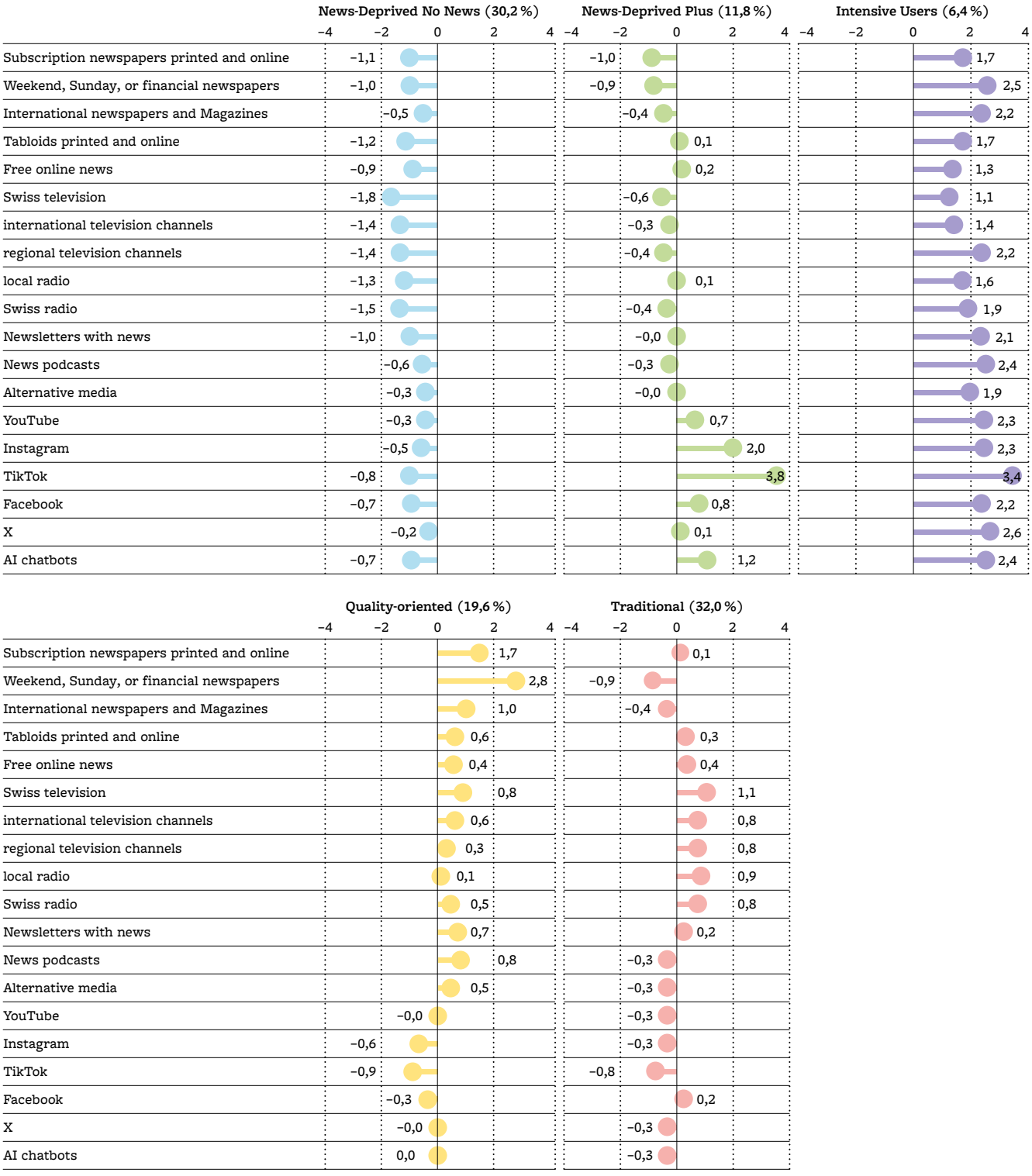

Figure 5: Deviations of the five repertoire types from average news consumption behaviour

The figure shows the standardised deviations of the five repertoire types from the average level of consumption of the 19 news sources included in the analysis. Positive values indicate above-average consumption of the respective source, whilst negative values indicate below-average consumption.
Reading example: According to their own statements, «No News» users access all 19 sources included in the study less frequently than average, whilst heavy users access all sources more frequently than average.

This development is also evident in the ways people access online news. Brand-driven consumption, where users intentionally visit a website or app or search for a specific media brand, remains dominant at 52.6%, but has declined compared to the previous year (–2.8 PP). In contrast, emergent news consumption has risen to 34.7% (+4.8 percentage points). In this case, users access content via social media, search engines, or news aggregators without specifically looking for a particular media brand. Among 18 to 24-year-olds, 38.3% already primarily receive their news through social networks (+12.4 PP) while only 23.6% prefer to use news websites or apps directly. The trend toward emergent consumption is thus weakening loyalty to news media brands, particularly among young people, and increasing their dependence on platforms and other intermediaries. Furthermore, the platforms' recommendation systems for these groups are increasingly determining whether socially relevant and reliable information even becomes visible amid a multitude of entertaining, emotionally charged, or largely irrelevant content.

2.3 Attitudes toward media – Interest in news is decreasing, active news avoidance is increasing

Our long-term data show a sustained decrease in interest in the news. In 2026, only 49.4% of the Swiss population indicates being strongly or very strongly interested in the news. That is 3.4 PP less than the previous year and 9.5 PP less than in 2016. Interest in the news is particularly low among 18 to 24-year-olds (33.7%), people with a low education level (35.3%), and those who are politically disengaged (15.8%). Cohort comparisons also illustrate that interest not only varies across age groups but has also declined over time within the same age cohorts. At the same time, active news avoidance is on the rise: 39.2% say they sometimes or often consciously avoid the news – 13.0 PP more than in 2019. This «news avoidance» is particularly widespread among 45 to 54-year-olds (47.9%) and 25 to 34-year-olds (46.2%). This should not be equated with news deprivation: While news deprivation refers to a long-term, conscious or unintentional lack of news exposure, news avoidance is situational and temporary. For example, 34.0% of those with a strong interest in news also sometimes consciously choose to avoid it. This avoidance is more common among people who distrust the media.

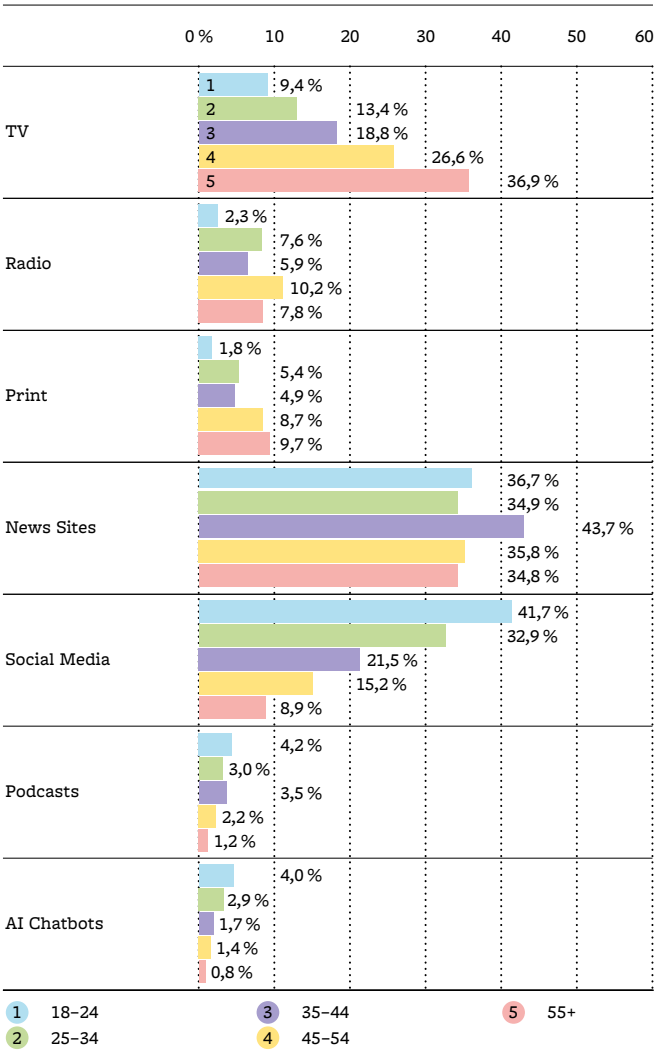

Figure 6: Media usage by age

The figure shows, for the individual age groups in Switzerland, which channels are cited as the main sources of news («Main Source of News») (n = 1,944; source: Reuters Institute, 2026).
Reading example: 41.7 % of respondents aged between 18 and 24 state that they use social media as their main source for keeping up to date with current affairs.

Trust in the media has fluctuated since 2016 without a clear long-term trend. In 2026, people with high trust in news media constitute the largest response group at 42.0%; 26.3% express little or no trust, and 31.7% are undecided. Journalistic news is trusted significantly more often than search engines (26.2%), social media (17.1%), and AI chatbots (16.3%). Media brands such as SRF and RTS, as well as NZZ and Le Temps, achieve particularly high scores (see Figure 7).

Expectations for impartial journalism remain high despite increasing platform usage: 45.3% prefer news sources that do not represent a specific opinion while another 25.3% prefer news that challenges their own position. Only 13.7% want news that confirms their opinion. Even among people for whom social media is the main source of news, unbiased news constitutes the largest preference group, at 32.4%. The findings thus show: Interest in news is decreasing while the deliberate avoidance of news is increasing. At the same time, trust in news media and the social norm of impartiality remain important resources.

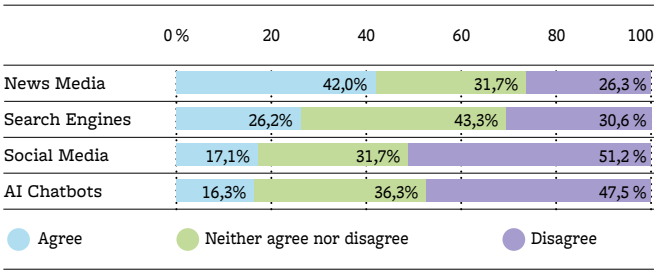

Figure 7: Comparison of trust levels

The figure shows the proportion of respondents who agree somewhat or completely that the various sources can usually be trusted (n = 2,051) (Source: Reuters Institute, 2026).
Reading example: In 2026, 26.2 % of the Swiss population agree completely or to some extent with the statement that search engines can usually be trusted. 30.6 % agree with this statement only to a limited extent or not at all.

2.4 Funding – Advertising revenue continues to flow to platforms, willingness to pay remains low

The economic foundation of Swiss journalism continues to erode. Advertising revenue from print, radio, television, and online media declined by a total of 3.9% in 2025 to 1.94 billion Swiss francs. Radio (–10.4%) and print media (–9.7%) were particularly hard hit. Nevertheless, online advertising revenue for Swiss media companies rose slightly to 666 million francs (+0.9%). However, this growth stems primarily from digital classifieds markets for jobs, real estate, and vehicles. In contrast, the display advertising on news websites, which is more crucial for journalism, fell by 2.1% to 285 million Swiss francs. At the same time, the shift in advertising spending toward international tech platforms continues. Search engines, social media platforms, and YouTube generated estimated advertising revenues in Switzerland in 2025 ranging from 2.08 to 2.55 billion Swiss francs and with this, more than all Swiss media sectors combined. This intensifies the pressure on media companies to cut costs. Large private companies are increasingly stabilizing their results through cost-cutting measures and investments outside their core journalistic business. The discontinuation of the print edition of the 20 Minuten daily newspaper at the end of 2025 is emblematic of this structural change.

Foundations have gained visibility as an alternative source of funding, but their significance for the overall market remains limited. A 2025 survey of Swiss online media providers confirms that foundation funding has thus far only been of limited relevance: Only 13% of the online media outlets surveyed cite it as a source of revenue (Udris et al., 2025b). While foundations can complement innovative projects and fill gaps in the media system, they cannot replace the dwindling advertising and audience revenues. This makes revenue from the audience market all the more important. However, the willingness to pay for online news remains limited: In 2026, 19.3% of respondents stated that they had paid for digital news in some form over the past twelve months – 3.2 PP less than the previous year. The most significant motivation for paying is access to useful information (50.8%). Another notable motive is societal in nature: 31.7% of people who pay for online news do so to support journalism as an important societal institution. This is the second most common reason for payment in Switzerland (see Figure 8). Thus, a portion of the audience not only pays for immediate

personal benefit, but also to safeguard the democratic function of journalism. Sustainable funding therefore requires attractive and viable business models – as well as an audience that recognizes the societal value of journalism and is willing to support it financially. Targeted promotion of media literacy can strengthen this awareness.

2.5 Media concentration – Ownership and coverage continue to concentrate

Our analysis shows a high level of structural media concentration. In German-speaking Switzerland, the combined market share of the three largest media companies – SRG SSR (33.3%), CH Media (20.6%), and TX Group (19.0%) – rose from 66.3% to 72.9% between 2017 and 2024. In French-speaking Switzerland, the combined reach share of SRG SSR (36.5%), TX Group (28.3%), and ESH Médias (7.2%) remained at a high level, but with a slight decline from 73.8% to 72.1%. In Italian-speaking Switzerland, SRG SSR (41.6%), Gruppo Corriere del Ticino (27.9%), and TX Group (14.6%) together account for 84.1% of the aggregate reach, compared with 81.0% in 2017. It thus remains the most concentrated media market in Switzerland. Although new digital offerings have entered the markets, they have only limited reach and have had little impact on the dominant position of the major media companies.

The high level of structural concentration fosters increasing homogenization of coverage, that is, media content concentration. In the German-speaking Swiss press market, the percentage of editorial contributions that appeared in at least two publications rose from 10.0% to 32.1% between 2017 and 2025 (see Figure 9). This means that around one in three contributions is now utilized multiple times. In national political coverage, media content concentration is particularly high: 44.7% of contributions appear in at least two different media titles. Concentration is pronounced within the network systems: At TX Group, the percentage of shared contributions increased from 16.2% to 53.5% between 2017 and 2025, and at CH Media, it rose from 12.0% to 27.2%. From 2024 to 2025 alone, the percentage of shared contributions in the overall market increased by 5.6 PP. This short-lived increase is partly attributable to the fact that the now-discontinued print edition of 20 Minuten, which did not belong to any media group, was no longer included in the analysis.

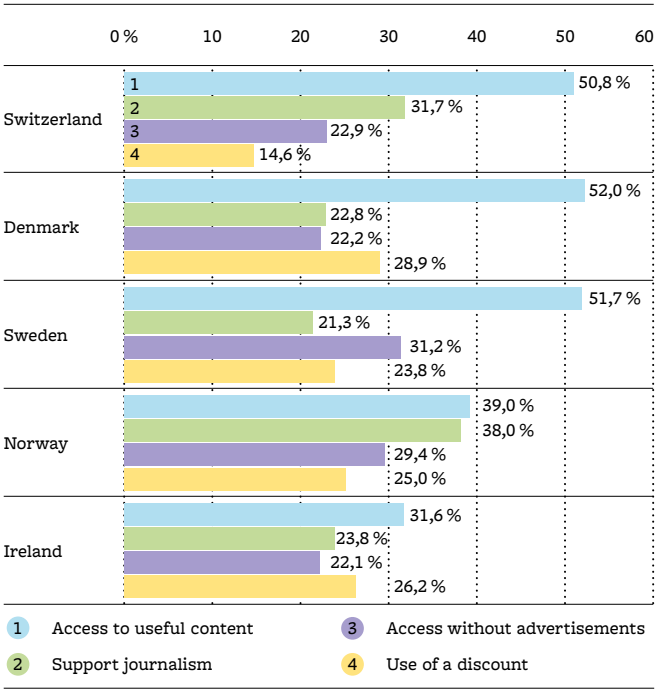

Figure 8: Reasons for paying for online news

The figure shows the reasons for purchasing digital news in Switzerland and in selected reference countries (Source: Reuters Institute, 2026). *Reading example:* Around half of respondents in Switzerland (50.8%) who pay for online news cite access to useful content as their reason. In Norway, 39.0% of respondents give this reason.

From a democratic perspective, the increasing multiple utilization of content in resource-intensive and opinion-shaping areas is particularly relevant. The percentage of shared editorials, commentaries, columns, and reviews has risen from 8.0% to 21.4% since 2017. Analytical contributions are also repurposed with above-average frequency. In contrast, regional coverage remains significantly more independent: In 2025, only 7.9% of contributions on regional topics were published in multiple media titles. Networks thus help sustain regional media outlets under economically challenging conditions. At the same time, they reduce content diversity, particularly in the areas of national and international coverage.

Another form of content concentration is expressed in the geographic orientation of foreign coverage. To address this, we analyze country diversity for the first time by assigning the location names mentioned in around 2.6 million contributions from the NZZ, the Tages-Anzeiger, and the Blick from 1998 to 2025 to their respective countries. This analysis shows that coverage is heavily concentrated on neighboring countries, as well as politically and economically significant states, particularly the U.S., Russia, and China. In political coverage, the percentage of the ten most frequently mentioned countries rose from 47.5% to 63.4% between 1998 and 2025. This points to a decline in the geographic diversity of foreign coverage: The attention is increasingly concentrated on a few major powers and current hotspots of crisis. The wars in Ukraine and in Israel and Palestine also reduce the media visibility of other countries and world regions.

3 Conclusion and recommendations for action

Two priorities emerge from the findings of this Yearbook: Strengthening resilience against disinformation and ensuring that public service media remains widely and digitally accessible.

3.1 Strengthening resilience against disinformation

First, it is essential to reduce news deprivation since it is associated with increased vulnerability to disinformative content. This is not solely a matter of frequency of news usage: Our findings show that intensive news consumption across many channels offers no discernible protection if quality journalism does not play a central role in usage repertoires. It is therefore essential to strengthen regular engagement with reliable news media. This requires economically viable private quality journalism as well as effective public service media.

An ancillary copyright law should ensure that large platforms and AI providers provide appropriate compensation for journalistic work. In addition, indirect media support should be expanded to include

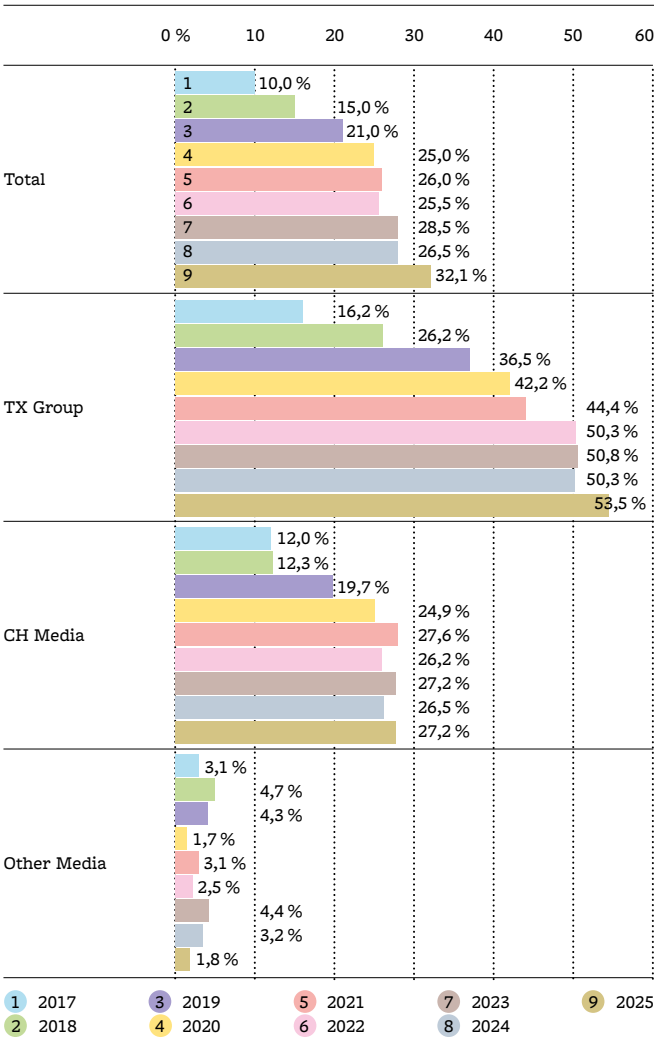

Figure 9: Media content concentration in the German-speaking Swiss press market over time, by media group

The figure shows the trend in media content concentration in the Swiss German press market for those media outlets that, in 2025, belonged to the TX Group (Basler Zeitung, Berner Zeitung, Der Bund, Tages-Anzeiger) and CH Media (Aargauer Zeitung, Luzerner Zeitung, St. Galler Tagblatt) networks. As a benchmark, media content concentration was calculated for selected press titles that did not belong to these two networks. («other media»: 20 Minuten (until 2024), Blick, Die Südostschweiz, Neue Zürcher Zeitung). The figures shown represent the percentage shares of shared editorial content.
Reading example: The proportion of shared articles in the media outlets belonging to the TX Group's network was 53.5 % in 2025. This figure has increased by around 37.3 percentage points since 2017.

demand-side instruments. Publicly co-funded media vouchers for schoolchildren, apprentices, and students that could be used to purchase digital subscriptions at significantly discounted rates are conceivable. Users should have the freedom to choose which brands to use and should be able to easily switch them. All media outlets that meet transparent journalistic quality criteria would be eligible to participate. The distribution of funding should be regularly reviewed to determine whether it disproportionately favors media brands that are already strong in the market. Similar approaches are already being tested through pilot projects in the field of regional journalism in the cantons of Fribourg and Geneva. However, reliable conclusions regarding their impact are still pending. A key sticking point is the focus on subscriptions, since many young people primarily consume news through digital platforms and social media rather than traditional media. Young people must also be reached where they – if at all – come into contact with news. However, a presence on these platforms should serve to guide them toward reliable news media's own strong, independent digital platforms.

Second, journalism must take on a stronger role as a fact-checking authority. Although 71.7% attribute a great deal of responsibility to journalism in combating disinformation, only 54.8% of respondents frequently use journalistic media to verify unreliable information. Rather than establishing a new fact-checking organization, private and public media could pool their existing expertise through a shared technical infrastructure. Fact-checks could be created, shared, and immediately published on the respective media offerings via a shared interface. Links to the original media offerings must ensure that the collaboration does not undermine their reach or funding. There is support for this: 77.7% of the Swiss favor expanding journalistic fact-checking teams. The majority of the population also believes it is important for SRG SSR to expand this capacity.

Third, users' news and media literacy must be promoted more vigorously. It should be taught as part of a broader understanding of democratic literacy. This not only includes the technical skills needed to evaluate individual pieces of content, but also an understanding of how journalism, platforms, and AI systems work, which business models they follow, and how they influence the visibility of socially relevant information. Media literacy programs should be supported by the government as part of indirect media funding and, in particular, made mandatory in schools and vocational training. This includes regular contact with quality journalism and teaching the social significance of journalism, as well as practicing the practical skill of evaluating sources for credibility or recognizing the typical patterns and distribution channels of disinformation. In Switzerland, there are already various programs designed to promote news and media literacy, including *Newstest*, *CheckNews*, *YouMedia* and *YouNews*, «Fake oder Fact», and «Wirklich?!» These initiatives should be bundled better, made accessible in all language regions, and evaluated for their effectiveness. *UseTheNews* Switzerland serves as a joint coordination platform for media, education, and academia. The federal government and the cantons should co-fund effective programs over the long term rather than primarily supporting short-term individual projects. Public funding must also be coupled with transparent goals, academic evaluation, collaboration with schools, and the training and continuing education of teachers. However, media literacy and verification competence alone cannot eliminate this vulnerability, since a predisposition toward conspiracy theories is also rooted in fundamental political worldviews, distrust of elites, and skepticism toward science. Promoting such literacy is therefore necessary, but it is not a universal remedy.

Fourth, Switzerland needs binding rules for systemically relevant platforms, search engines, and AI-powered response systems. This is not merely a matter of curbing the distribution of false or manipulative content. Increasing the visibility and discoverability of socially relevant and reliable information – particularly journalistic content – is equally important. Recommendation systems should not be exclusively designed to maximize attention and users' time, but should also take the quality and societal significance of information offerings into account. Platforms should therefore ensure transparency and allow for independent review of how journalistic content is handled in their recommendation systems. Easily accessible sections where content from verified news providers can be found in a consolidated manner is also conceivable. The draft Federal Act on

Communication Platforms and Search Engines (KomPG) is a step in the right direction with its provisions on transparency requirements for advertising and recommendation systems, complaint procedures, independent evaluations, and data access for research, but it must nevertheless be supplemented. Its scope should be expanded in a technology-neutral manner to also cover generative AI-powered response systems that are increasingly shaping access to information. A key gap in the current preliminary draft of the KomPG concerns the handling of systemic risks: Platforms are required to regularly assess whether their services facilitate risks such as the distribution of disinformation and thereby have negative consequences for the formation of public opinion, as well as for elections and referendums. However, no specific countermeasures need be drawn from this. Systemic risks also include recommendation systems' amplification of disinformative, emotionally charged, or entertaining content while simultaneously impairing the visibility of reliable, socially relevant information. Where risks are substantiated, they should therefore be required to implement appropriate and verifiable mitigation measures. These particularly include safeguards against the coordinated and automated distribution of disinformative content, as well as the transparent labeling of automated accounts, AI-generated content, and digital political advertising. Providers should also disclose how their recommendation systems handle journalistic and other socially relevant information offerings, as well as commission the independent verification of this.

Fifth, there is a need for continuous, independent, and above all, methodologically comprehensive monitoring of disinformation. Studies such as our survey show how often people believe they encounter disinformation and how serious they consider the problem to be. However, this does not reveal how much disinformation is actually circulating, whether its distribution has increased, or to what extent and under which conditions disinformation actually leads to changes in attitudes and behavior. Therefore, supplementary tracking studies are needed to measure actual contact with disinformative content. Panel and experimental studies must also examine under which conditions this contact changes attitudes or behavior. Only by combining data on perception, distribution, and impact is it possible to adequately assess the risks of disinformation in the Swiss context, avoid alarmism, and implement targeted measures.

3.2 Ensuring a broad and digitally accessible public service

The findings of our study provide five recommendations for action regarding the further development of the public service.

First, the renewal of the public service media license should not be reduced to the areas of news, education, and culture. Our findings show that the public explicitly considers sports and entertainment to be part of SRG SSR's mandate and continues to expect a full program. Through its «Enavant» transformation program, SRG SSR is already pursuing an approach that prioritizes streamlining structures, processes, and production methods, eliminating redundancies, and strengthening cooperation between the language regions, rather than a blanket reduction of content. Where additional cuts to content are unavoidable, they should primarily affect programs such as purchased foreign productions that, in the eyes of the public, fulfill specific public service functions to a lesser extent. In contrast, programs for children and young people, for people with sensory disabilities or with a migrant background, as well as specialized cultural and music formats should not be evaluated solely on the basis of their overall reach. A public service media organization such as SRG SSR must also provide content which is tailored to the needs of specific population groups.

Second, a dual digital distribution strategy is needed. SRG SSR's own TV, radio, and digital channels continue to form the foundation. At the same time, a presence on social media and video platforms such as YouTube is necessary to reach young people and groups with limited access to news. Among 18 to 24-year-olds, 69.9% support such a presence. External tech platforms can serve as a gateway to SRG SSR's own offerings. Against this backdrop, Play+ may be a step in the right direction: Starting in the fall of 2026, this platform developed by SRG SSR is set to bundle the audio and video content from SRF, RTS, RSI, and RTR, replacing both Play Suisse and the existing regional Play offerings. Our survey

shows that only 33.5% consider Play Suisse to be an important future channel and even among younger people, the figure is only around one-third. Consolidating these services into a broader offering could increase the currently limited acceptance. Furthermore, whether the public service can assume an infrastructural role for the entire information ecosystem in addition to producing its own content in the future should be examined. One could well imagine technical standards, interfaces, and public-interest-oriented recommendation systems, such as algorithms, developed in collaboration with private media outlets to make reliable journalistic content easier to find. Such solutions should not replace private news media or undermine their financial viability, but rather should direct users to the respective media brands and their own digital platforms. Furthermore, it is important that the public supports such functions in the future, as it currently considers these additional tasks to only be important to a limited extent.

Third, restrictions on online content in the area of news should not be based solely on the length of text. Such a requirement disregards actual user behavior. In our survey, 35.0% of respondents rated short texts and 33.0% rated longer text contributions on SRG's own websites and apps as significant; 32.2% and respectively 34.4% consider it irrelevant, and another third consider it «moderately» important. Thus, both text formats achieve similar ratings to audio contributions and podcasts (30.0%). Among 18 to 24-year-olds, an absolute majority of 53.0% respectively considers both short and longer texts on these digital channels to be (very) important. International studies and findings for Switzerland also show that the majority prefers to read digital news rather than watch or listen to it (Newman et al., 2023; for Switzerland: Udris et al., 2025a). Texts enable quick, selective, and self-directed access to information. The decisive factor should therefore not be the length of the text, but rather whether a contribution has a recognizable connection to the public service mandate, represents an original journalistic contribution, and fits into a distinct overall public offering.

Fourth, the regulation and further development of public service media should be based on empirical evidence. This is illustrated by the example of the claim that SRG SSR lacks «balance» in its content. However, this criticism, which has been voiced in media policy, is not supported by our survey data: According to large segments of the population, SRG SSR does indeed provide a balanced account of political opinions and topics.

Fifth, SRG SSR ultimately has to better explain its mission and how it operates. Only a minority is aware that it spends significantly more on news than on sports, is generally prohibited from running advertisements online, and that the Federal Council appoints only two of the nine members of the Board of Directors. Because this knowledge is linked to support for a broad range of programming, SRG SSR should communicate more clearly how it uses its funds, how it ensures its political and economic independence, and which oversight mechanisms are in place.

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Why the Yearbook?

With the Yearbook Quality of the Media, the Research Center for the Public Sphere and Society at the University of Zurich (fög) annually examines changes in the Swiss media landscape and their impact on society and democracy. Since its first edition in 2010, it has provided key metrics on media quality, media usage, media concentration, and funding, as well as on the development of the Swiss media system. All media types are analyzed – print, radio, television, online, and social media. In addition, the researchers place trends and current developments, such as the use of AI in journalism, the ongoing concentration of media ownership, and media use among young adults, into a broader context.

The Yearbook Quality of the Media is an informative source for media professionals, political and economic decision-makers, the academic community, and anyone interested in the development of the media and its content.

The understanding of quality

The Yearbook is based on a normative understanding of quality, which assumes that the information media fulfills an important role for society in a functioning democracy. Four quality dimensions can be derived from the functions of public communication; these are widely established in both academic research and journalistic practice: The relevance dimension is intended to provide insight into the balance between hard news and soft news, as well as the weight given to contributions regarding institutional processes in comparison to coverage of individuals. The diversity quality dimension measures whether events are reported from a wide range of content-related and geographic perspectives. The contextualization dimension is high when current events are embedded in longer-term developments and thematic contexts. Finally, the professionalism quality dimension is interested in whether the coverage is factual and produced by the editorial staff itself and to which the extent sources are made transparent. Detailed information on the data basis and methods used in the Yearbook can be found in the Methodology chapter.

Who is responsible for the Yearbook?

The Yearbook is compiled and published by fög – the Research Center for Public Sphere and Society at the University of Zurich (www.foeg.uzh.ch). External guest authors are also engaged for the in-depth studies.

Who funds the Yearbook?

The Yearbook Quality of the Media is largely funded by the nonprofit Kurt Imhof Foundation for Media Quality (www.kurt-imhof-stiftung.ch), additional funding partners, and the University of Zurich. The Board of Trustees of the Kurt Imhof Foundation consists of Christoph Degen, Mark Eisenegger, Barbara Käch, Yves Kugelmann, Christina Leutwyler, and Nenad Stojanović. Funding for the project comes from the following funding partners: Federal Office of Communications, Keystone-SDA, Somedia AG, SRG SSR, Gottfried und Schäppi Jecklin Stiftung, Fondation des Fondateurs, Verband Medien mit Zukunft, Verband Schweizer Medien , Fondation Leenaards. Donations to the Kurt Imhof Foundation for Media Quality can be transferred to the following bank account: ZKB Zurich-Oerlikon, Account number: 1100-1997.531, IBAN: CH28 0070 0110 0019 9753 1, Bank clearing number: 700, SWIFT: ZKBKCHZZ80A.

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Where are the Yearbook and the studies available?

The Yearbook is published as an online edition (https://doi.org/10.24894/978-3-7965-5664-7) by Schwabe Verlag (www.schwabe.ch). The Yearbook and the individual studies are also available for download at www.foeg.uzh.ch.

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