

[DE] Publication of 2026 ARD/ZDF Media Study on media usage in Germany

IRIS 2026-9:1/23

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On 22 September 2026, the two German public service broadcasters, ARD and ZDF, published their 2026 Media Study. Their findings show that the transition from linear to non-linear media consumption is continuing. With regard to the platform market, YouTube remained the most important video streaming service. The study also examines people's use and awareness of AI, concluding that the use of AI tools is growing rapidly and has become part of everyday life for Germans.

The ARD/ZDF Media Study has been commissioned for many years by the ARD/ZDF Research Commission to compile annual data on the fundamentals and trends of media usage in Germany. As well as usage figures for linear and non-linear media services, it addresses a range of additional topics that reflect current media developments and innovations. In 2026, AI use and awareness was one such topic.

With regard to media usage habits, the results show that whilst the shift from linear to non-linear services continued, the change compared with the previous year was moderate. However, linear providers remained relevant and, particularly in the audiovisual sector (unlike in the audio sector, which was also analysed in the study), had similar reach to that of non-linear providers. Linear television, for instance, achieved a daily reach of 56% (weekly reach of 71%), while non-linear video services had a daily reach of 55% (weekly reach of 79%). Linear television accounted for just over half the total usage time. Interestingly, the study highlights that, for the first time in 2026, non-linear video usage time did not increase, suggesting that the transition appears to be slowing down somewhat. Overall, however, linear services were used more frequently by older age groups, whilst non-linear streaming services achieved a high daily reach and a higher total usage time among younger age groups in particular.

As regards the video streaming sector, the study reports that five platforms (YouTube, Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, the ARD Mediathek and the ZDF streaming portal) achieved weekly usage of at least 20%, with YouTube remaining the clear market leader with a larger share compared with the previous year. Among social media platforms, whilst Instagram continued to lead in terms of weekly reach (40%), none of the providers examined (Instagram, Facebook,

TikTok, Snapchat, Pinterest, LinkedIn, X, Reddit, Twitch, Threads, Xing, BeReal, Bluesky, Mastodon) increased their reach in 2026. The study therefore notes sluggish growth in the platform sector and, consequently, a phase of consolidation. On average, people in Germany used five video, audio and social media platforms per week, with 14- to 29-year-olds using over eight platforms on average.

As regards this year's spotlight topic of AI, the study concludes that AI tools were no longer a niche phenomenon, but were used very widely, particularly by younger people. Their use rose sharply in 2026, when 59% of the population used them at least occasionally, while weekly usage almost doubled year-on-year to 37%. However, they were used differently to traditional media offerings, with AI tools tending to be used on an ad hoc basis and for shorter periods of time. Many users also remain sceptical about the results produced by AI tools. Nevertheless, according to the study's findings, new challenges for journalistic services are emerging, particularly amongst younger people, due to changing information habits.

Pressemitteilungen und Infografiken bei ARD und ZDF

<https://www.ard-zdf-medienstudie.de/>

ARD and ZDF press releases and infographics

<https://www.ard-zdf-medienstudie.de/>

Ausführliche Ergebnisse der Studie und Datenauswertungen bei Media Perspektiven

<https://www.media-perspektiven.de/studien/ard/zdf-medienstudie>

Detailed results of the study and data analysis by Media Perspektiven

<https://www.media-perspektiven.de/studien/ard/zdf-medienstudie>

