

Yearbook 2025

The Quality of the Media

Main findings

AI accelerates structural change
in the public sphere – journalism under
pressure, but indispensable

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Research Center for the Public Sphere and
Society (fög) / University of Zurich



Main findings – AI accelerates structural change in the public sphere – Journalism under pressure, but indispensable

Mark Eisenegger, Daniel Vogler, Linards Udris, Maude Rivière

Summary (Executive Summary)

The Swiss public sphere is entering a new phase of digital structural change. Following the upheaval in global communication caused by social networks and search engines, artificial intelligence (AI) is now shaping the information landscape – with far-reaching consequences for journalism, media companies, and audiences. AI-supported systems are changing production routines in journalism, the dissemination of information on platforms, and the use of news. Even large tech companies are coming under pressure: search engines and social networks are integrating AI or buying providers to secure market share. This is further shifting the logic of power and control in the public sphere – and with it the foundations of democratic opinion-formation. At the same time, growing sections of the population rarely consume news. Three studies explore both facets of this change: first, the consequences of news deprivation for knowledge and democracy; second, the role of journalistic content in AI chatbot responses; and third, media professionals' assessments of the influence of AI in their daily work. Together, they paint a picture of a public sphere that has been reorganized by AI. Journalistic media remain indispensable, but must reassert their position. These findings are supplemented by established long-term analyses of media quality, media use, attitudes toward media, media financing, and media concentration.

In our first in-depth study on news deprivation, we examined how the type and intensity of news consumption relate to democracy-relevant knowledge about current events. The results show clear differences in the population: almost half of Swiss citizens (46.4%; +0.7 percentage points, PP) will be among the «news-deprived» in 2025 – i.e., those who rarely or hardly ever consume journalistic news. This group performs worst in all areas of knowledge. «News-deprived» individuals are less likely to answer questions about politics and soft news correctly. Political interest and a clear positioning on the left or right of the political spectrum are important factors in explaining the differences in knowledge. The lower level of knowledge is also evident when the very large group of «news-deprived» people is divided into three subtypes: «Social media only,» who consume news exclusively via social media, and «Social media plus,» who occasionally consume news in combination with electronic media, perform slightly better than those who do not consume any news («No news»). However, compared to the other groups, the knowledge of these two groups also falls significantly short. Regular, active consumption of professional journalistic content across various channels proves to be crucial for knowledge. In addition, «news-deprived» individuals trust politics and the media less, participate less frequently in the democratic process, and feel less connected to the democratic community. News deprivation is therefore a fundamental problem for democracy.

Our second in-depth study examines the sources AI chatbots use to answer questions about current events. ChatGPT and Perplexity were tested with 1,176 prompts in German and French. The results are clear: journalism is the most important source type for prompts about current events and news. In ChatGPT, 73.2% of the sources cited come from journalistic media in Switzerland and abroad, while in Perplexity the figure is 66.5%, with international media accounting for the largest share. For specific questions about Swiss events, Swiss media are the main source, accounting for 36.7% (ChatGPT) and 47.1% (Perplexity) respectively. Around two-thirds of these sources come from private media, and one-third from the public service media organization SRG. Given that people trust tech platforms less than journalistic media, chatbots are also likely to benefit from a positive reputation transfer. The sources cited often include high-quality news media. At the same time, there are shortcomings in the accuracy of the answers: although 90% of the chatbot answers were correct, around one in ten contained partially or completely false information – for example, on the financing of the 13th AHV pension or on international conflicts. Since all questions related to clear facts, this result must be considered unsatisfactory. This is also a problem for the journalism cited, as it can be associ-

ated with demonstrably incorrect representations. The findings underscore two things: On the one hand, professional journalism remains the central source of knowledge for current events even in the age of AI; on the other hand, chatbots benefit from its content far more than the media companies themselves – whether through traffic or financial compensation. Remuneration for journalism by commercial tech providers is therefore a legitimate concern.

The third in-depth study focuses on journalists themselves. In an online survey of 730 media professionals from all language regions, around 87% said they use AI tools – primarily for supporting tasks such as transcription or corrections. There remains a high level of skepticism about using AI tools to create content. Although 63.4% consider AI to be useful, almost 69.2% emphasize that the results cannot be relied upon. Only a third see significant quality improvements through AI. The efficiency gains achieved through AI are also rated as low. Only one-fifth (19.5%) report a significant increase in the number of articles. 29.9% of respondents say that AI gives them more time for research. In addition, around 15.1% have already experienced errors caused by AI in their own editorial reporting. Skepticism is even more pronounced when it comes to the expected consequences for the public: three-quarters fear a growing dependence on tech companies, over 70.2% fear a loss of trust, and 61.3% fear an increase in misinformation in Swiss media. At the same time, journalists perceive an institutional vacuum: only a quarter recognize a clear AI strategy in their own organization. Respondents from small editorial offices with fewer than ten employees are particularly critical of this (64.2%). A clear majority (80.2%) are aware that AI raises many ethical questions for journalism and call for common standards, especially for transparency, labeling, and the prevention of misconduct.

The results of our long-term surveys follow on from the three in-depth analyses. The quality analyses paint an ambivalent picture: compared to the previous year, quality remains stable, but over the longer term there has been a decline in contextualization and geographical diversity. This is where dwindling resources are making themselves felt. In addition to certain quality deficits, however, journalism has above all a growing reach problem to reach audiences. The group of «news-deprived» people has reached a new all-time high of 46.4%. Social media continues to gain importance as a primary source of information. This is also an important finding in that our in-depth study on news deprivation shows that consuming social media exclusively contributes less to being well-informed. In terms of media trust, there are significant fluctuations over time. According to Swiss data from the Reuters Institute Digital News Report, in 2025 around 46.2% trust most news, 23.4% trust it little or not at all, and 30.4% are undecided. There is a clear correlation between media quality and the people's trust in news media. Higher-quality media such as SRG or subscription outlets enjoy greater trust. The financial situation of news media in Switzerland remains challenging: the majority of online advertising revenue (CHF 1.9–2.4 billion) goes to search engines and social media. Nevertheless, willingness to pay for online news rises to 22.5% in 2025 (+5 PP) compared to the previous year. However, the majority of Swiss people are still not willing to pay, even for more flexible or cheaper offers. Structural media concentration in Switzerland remains high. At the same time, content concentration in the media system continues to increase, driven by network systems with centralized offices that use the same content for different outlets. This particularly affects the democratically sensitive area of opinion-oriented formats such as editorials and commentaries. Background articles are also being reused more frequently. As a result, journalistic diversity at the system level is declining, particularly in resource-intensive formats that require a lot of journalistic resources.

These findings give rise to three key recommendations for action: prioritize the problem of news deprivation, develop solutions in media policy for the remuneration of journalism by AI providers, and establish common standards for the use of AI in the industry (3).

The main findings summarize the most important results of the 2025 Yearbook. First, we present the findings of our three in-depth studies: first, on news deprivation in connection with variables relevant to democracy; second, on the role of journalism for AI chatbots; and third, on the perception of AI by media professionals (1). This is followed by long-term analyses of media quality, media use, attitudes toward media, financing, and media concentration (2). Recommendations for action follow on this basis (3).

1 In-depth studies

1.1 News deprivation correlates with lower knowledge

News deprivation – i.e., an undersupply of news – has continued to increase in Switzerland. By 2025, 46.4% of the population will be «news-deprived.» Their share has risen by 25 percentage points since 2009 (2.2). This finding points to a key challenge for democracy: an ever-increasing proportion of the population rarely or never consumes news, or only perceives it indirectly via social media. Our in-depth study therefore examines the consequences of news deprivation for knowledge about current political and other events, as well as for other variables relevant to democracy, such as trust, participation, and «sense of community». The study is based on a representative survey conducted in German-speaking Switzerland and French-speaking Switzerland (n = 1757). In this study, we reproduce the six established news repertoires that we have been recording annually since 2009. Within the «news-deprived» group, we further distinguish between three subtypes: people who obtain their information almost exclusively from social media («social media only»), those who combine social media with occasional use of traditional media («social media plus»), and people who consume no news of note («no news»).

The results show clear differences in knowledge: «news-deprived» people are the least well-informed group across all areas. In a knowledge quiz with 24 questions on current events, they answered on average only 6.6 out of 16 political questions and 3.5 out of 8 soft news questions on topics of human interest and sports correctly (see Figures 1 and 2). They thus performed significantly worse than all other repertoire types. There is a differentiation within the «news-deprived» group: The subtypes «social media only» and «social media plus» demonstrate slightly higher knowledge than the «no news» group. However, they also lag significantly behind all other repertoire types. This shows that regular, direct use of journalistic media across various channels is necessary for a good level of knowledge. Consumption via social media alone is not sufficient.

If we compare self-assessments with actual knowledge, we also see that «news-deprived» individuals realistically assess their lower level of knowledge, while «intensive users» overestimate it. Although, according to self-reports, they use news in the most diverse and intensive way, intensive users do not have the best political knowledge of all repertoires. Self-declared high news consumption does not necessarily correlate with above-average knowledge.

We used regression analyses to examine the causes of the differences in knowledge in more detail. Political interest and a clear position on the left or right of the party spectrum are important factors alongside the type of news repertoire. Those who are interested in politics and have clear party preferences are better informed than those who are politically disinterested or who do not have a clear political affiliation. On the other hand, a «news finds me» attitude – i.e., casual information intake via social media – and active news avoidance have a negative effect. Self-assessed news literacy in turn, correlates positively with political knowledge.

No effect on knowledge is evident among individuals who report frequently consulting people in their own network as sources of information. Therefore, one's own, unfiltered consumption of news remains decisive for the quality of the knowledge acquired.

In addition to knowledge, we also examined other variables relevant to democracy. Here, too, there are clear differences between the news repertoires: «news-deprived» individuals not only have the least knowledge, they also participate less frequently in the democratic process, e.g., in referendums and elections, trust politics and news media significantly less, and show the weakest democratic civic spirit. They identify least with the political system and feel less part of democratic society. On a positive note, this does not imply a general rejection of democratic values. With a score of 3.3 on the 6-point scale, their score is the lowest, but even among them, approval of democratic values prevails. There is no evidence of greater openness to authoritarian leadership styles. What is striking in this context are the «intensive users,» who identify most strongly with the right-wing party spectrum of all news repertoires. With a score of 3.5, they show the

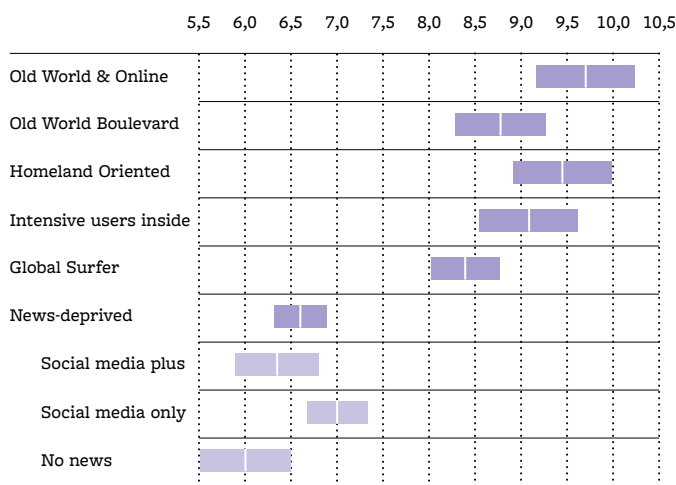


Figure 1: Political knowledge by repertoire type

The figure shows political knowledge (weighted means with confidence intervals) for the different news repertoire types, including the subtypes of the «news-deprived» (n = 1757). Political knowledge was determined on the basis of 16 questions on current political events. One point was awarded for each correct answer.

Example: On average, the «news-deprived» answered 6.6 political questions correctly, while the «homeland oriented» answered 9.4.

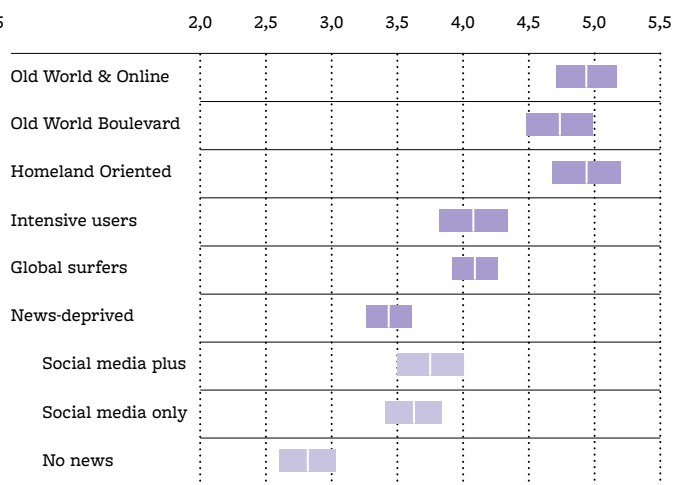


Figure 2: Soft news knowledge by repertoire type

The figure shows knowledge of soft news topics (weighted mean values with confidence intervals) for the various news repertoire types, including the subtypes of «news-deprived» (n = 1757). Soft news knowledge was determined using eight questions on current events from the soft news sector. Each correct answer earned one point.

Reading example: On average, the «news-deprived» answered 3.5 questions about soft news correctly, while the «global surfers» answered 4.1 correctly.

highest level of support for strong leaders. At the same time, however, intensive users score particularly high in terms of political trust, democratic attachment, and political participation. An anti-democratic attitude can therefore also be ruled out in this group. Rather, the result indicates a preference for strong leadership within democratic structures.

1.2 Journalism is the most important source for AI chatbots when it comes to questions about current events

The use of AI chatbots is developing rapidly in Switzerland. They are also gaining importance as a source of information: 18% of under-25s already use them to find out about current events at least once a week (Reuters Institute, 2025).

This raises not only democratic questions about the quality of the responses, but also media economic ones: To what extent do chatbots draw on the content of professional news media when re-

sponding to prompts about current events? This affects the business models of media companies and has triggered media policy initiatives to protect the copyright of journalistic content.

Using a broad set of questions (n = 1176 prompts in German and French) on current events and news from Switzerland and abroad, we examined the role of journalistic sources for ChatGPT and Perplexity. We investigated how often news media are cited as sources, which countries they come from, and to what extent the responses provided are correct. To this end, we asked general questions about current events (e.g., «Tell me the most important news stories in Switzerland today») as well as more specific questions about current events in Switzerland and abroad (e.g., «What did the National Council decide in June 2025 regarding the so called «Halbierungsinitiative»?»). To check whether the chatbots' answers were correct, we also used questions from the news deprivation study (1.1), in which correct and incorrect statements about events had to be evaluated (e.g., «Is the following statement correct: In mid-

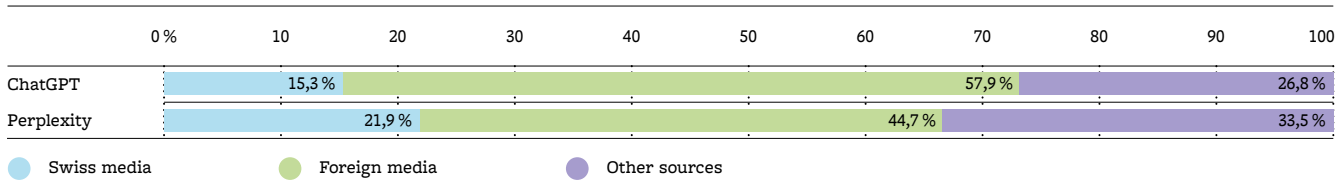


Figure 3: Swiss and foreign media as source types

The figure shows the proportions of Swiss and foreign media for ChatGPT and Perplexity compared to all other sources from Switzerland and abroad. The basis is all news queries (n = 5313 citations).

Reading example: For ChatGPT, 15.3% of all citations in news queries come from journalistic sources in Switzerland, 57.9% from journalistic sources abroad, and 26.8% from other types of sources.

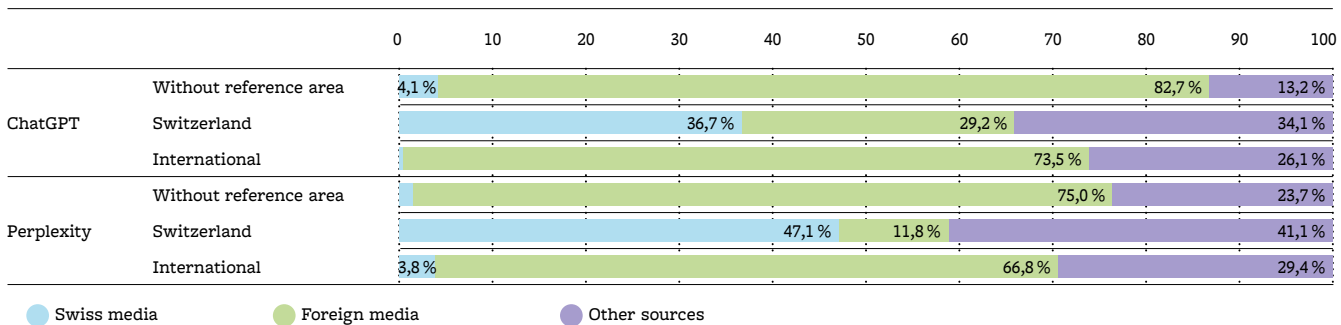


Figure 4: Swiss and foreign media by different reference areas

The figure shows the proportions of Swiss and foreign news media for ChatGPT and Perplexity compared to all other sources from Switzerland and abroad. The basis is all news queries (n = 5313 citations).

Reading example: For ChatGPT, 36.7% of sources for news queries related to Switzerland come from Swiss media and 29.2% from foreign media. For queries with an international focus, the share of Swiss media is 0.4% and that of foreign media is 73.5%.

June, the Council of States voted in favor of financing the 13th AHV pension through additional salary contributions and higher VAT»). Both AI chatbots provided sources for all questions on current events and news without being asked to do so. On average, they cited seven sources per prompt.

The results show that journalistic media are clearly the most important source type for chatbot questions about current events and news. Sources from authorities, parliaments, online encyclopedias, or companies are of secondary importance overall. In Perplexity, 66.5% of the sources cited come from news media, and in ChatGPT, the figure is as high as 73.2% (see Figure 3). International media dominate here. Of all sources cited, they account for 57.9% in ChatGPT and 44.7% in Perplexity. In contrast, Swiss news media account for only 15.3% in ChatGPT and

21.9% in Perplexity. However, they are more important when the chatbots are asked specifically about Swiss events (e.g., «Which media outlets did the police raid in June 2025 because of banking secrecy?»). Here, the share of news media from Switzerland rises to 36.7% for ChatGPT and 47.1% for Perplexity. Swiss media thus clearly dominate prompts related to Switzerland (see Figure 4).

On a positive note, the media cited often include high-quality journalistic sources, such as public news or subscription media, i.e., those with a high degree of credibility. They often come from globally renowned media brands such as Le Monde, The Guardian, ZDF, or Reuters. Of the Swiss media cited, just under a third of the sources listed are from SRG. Around two-thirds come from private media (see Figure 5).

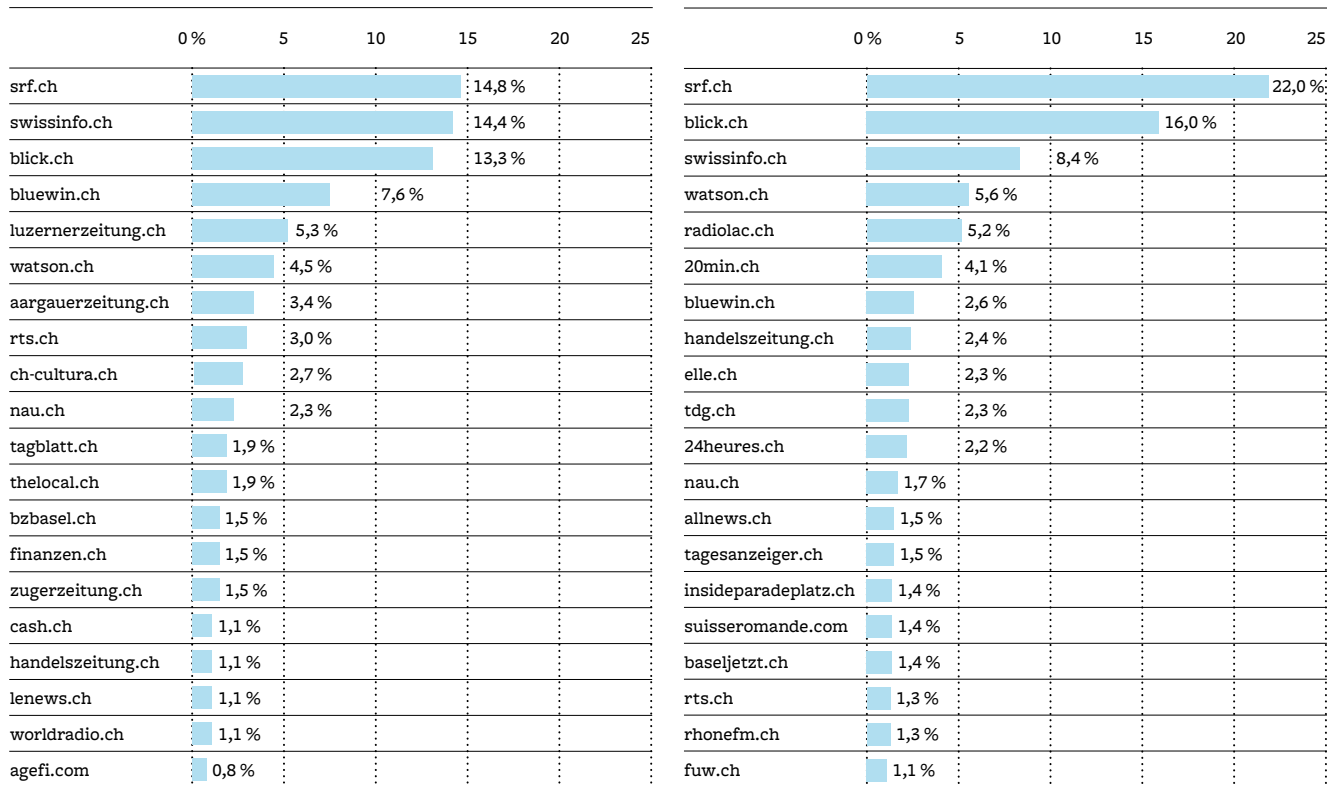


Figure 5: Top 20 Swiss media brands

The figure shows the 20 Swiss media outlets most frequently cited by ChatGPT (left) and Perplexity (right) (n = 1047 citations). *Reading example:* srf.ch is cited most frequently by ChatGPT. 14.8% of all citations from Swiss media refer to this outlet.

News media can use the robots.txt file to signal whether their content may be used by AI chatbots (known as a technical opt-out). This reveals some interesting patterns: news outlets such as blick.ch, srf.ch, swissinfo.ch, and Watson.ch, which do not use an opt-out, are among the most frequently cited Swiss sources. High-quality media outlets such as nzz.ch and letemps.ch, on the other hand, block access completely, but are still cited as sources, albeit rarely. It is striking that news outlets such as aargauerzeitung.ch are frequently cited as sources despite their restrictive opt-out. One reason for this may be that chatbots use Google or Bing to search for questions about current events, which are usually exempt from the opt-out. The technical opt-out therefore does not offer complete protection against journalistic content being picked up by chatbots.

In addition to technical factors, the geographical origin of the sources is also revealing: looking at all the sources cited, regardless of whether they are journalistic or not, there is less geographical diversity. Although all prompts were sent from Switzerland and many questions are directly related to Switzerland, only 22.2% of the sources cited by ChatGPT originate from Switzerland, compared to 33.1% for Perplexity. ChatGPT is clearly focused on the Anglo-Saxon world, while Perplexity prefers sources from neighboring countries Germany and France. There are shortcomings in the factual accuracy of the answers: Almost one in ten answers contains partially or completely false information – an indication of insufficient quality. Both chatbots provided incorrect information on several occasions, for example that the US attacked Iraq in June 2025 with a UN mandate

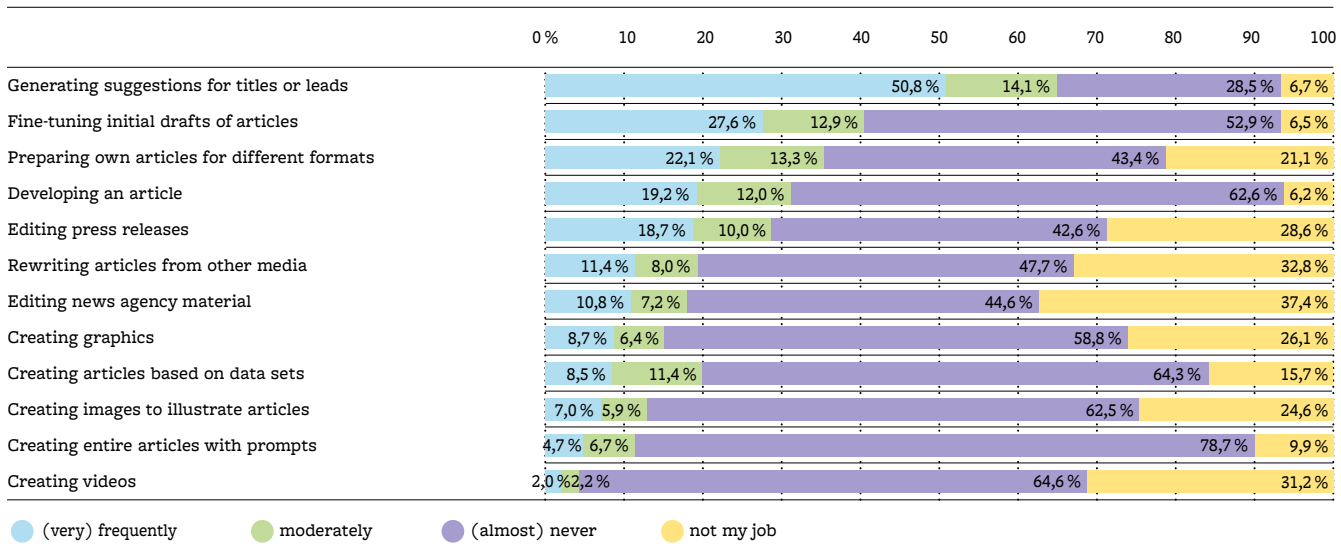


Figure 6: Use of AI for the creation of articles

The figure shows how often media professionals use AI tools for various forms of journalistic content creation in their everyday work. Question: «AI tools can be used in various ways to create content. To what extent do you use AI for this in your everyday work?» (n = 592–599, excluding media professionals who stated that they do not use AI tools).

Reading example: 50.8% of media professionals who use AI use AI tools (very) frequently to generate suggestions for titles or leads.

(ChatGPT) or that there is no evidence that Ukraine attacked Russia with drones in June 2025 (Perplexity). Such misinformation is not only a problem for chatbots, but also for journalism, which can be associated with incorrect answers as a result.

1.3 AI has become established among media professionals; reservations about quality and efficiency as well as perception of a lack of strategy

The rapid development of generative AI is bringing about profound changes in journalism. On the one hand, AI tools open up potential for innovative forms of content production and efficiency gains, which ideally can be invested in demanding journalistic activities such as extensive research that cannot be done by the «machine.» On the other hand, concerns about quality, transparency, and trust in journalism are repeatedly expressed as artificial intelligence gains in importance.

Following two studies on public perception and acceptance of AI in journalism (Vogler et al., 2023, 2024), this study is the first in Switzerland to examine how media professionals themselves assess the use of AI in their everyday work, what experiences they have had, and what consequences they see for journalism and society. Our study is based on an online survey of 730 media professionals from Switzerland's three major language regions. Participants included journalists of different age groups, editorial office sizes, and employment types.

The results show that AI is well established in journalists' everyday work. 86.7% use AI tools, 46.4% of them heavily or very heavily. Younger media professionals and those in larger editorial offices use AI more frequently than older people and employees in smaller editorial offices. Its use is particularly widespread for supporting tasks such as transcriptions (49.3%) or corrections (47.4%). In contrast, there is great reluctance to use it in the production of journalistic content. Only AI suggestions for titles or leads are relatively common (50.8%). But only a

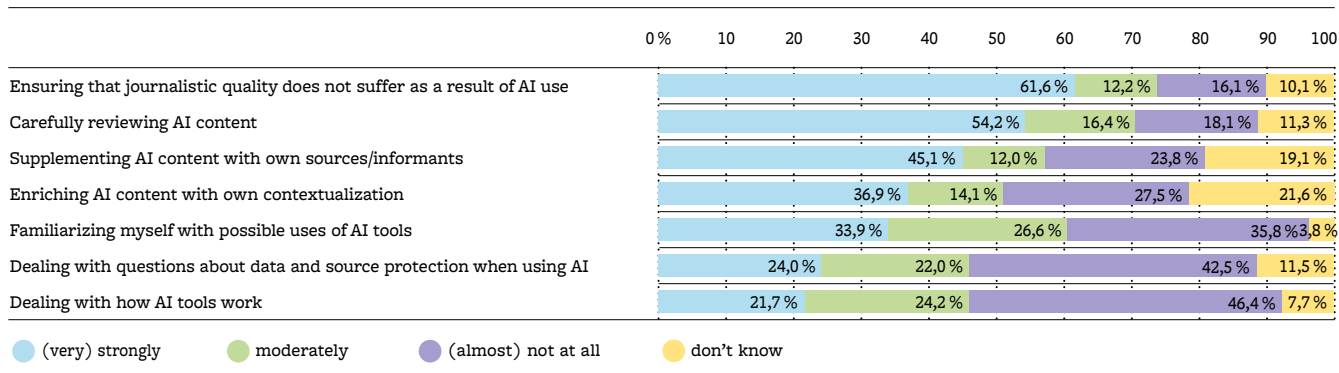


Figure 7: Time for quality assurance measures and reflective acquisition of AI tools

The figure shows the extent to which media professionals have the capacity in their everyday work to implement quality assurance measures when using AI and to acquire AI tools. Question: «To what extent do the following statements apply to you? In my daily work, I have time to ...» (n = 574–576, excluding media professionals who say they do not use AI tools).

Reading example: 54.2% of media professionals who use AI strongly agree that they have time to carefully review AI-generated content.

small minority use AI to create entire articles with prompts (4.7%) or to generate articles based on data sets (5.5%) (see Figure 6).

In terms of tolerated areas of application, this is in line with the expectations of the population: they only support the use of AI in journalism in a supporting role and express great reluctance to allow AI to generate entire texts, images, or videos (Vogler et al., 2023, 2024).

Just under two-thirds of Swiss journalists (63.4%) consider AI to be useful in their everyday work. At the same time, reservations about quality and efficiency prevail. Although 64.3% say that the output of AI tools is constantly improving, 69.2% dispute that the output of AI tools can be relied upon. Only 34.3% agree that AI often helps them improve the quality of their work. However, 15.1% have already experienced errors in reporting due to the use of AI. Against this backdrop, it is significant that 39.8% say their editorial offices do not have systematic quality assurance measures in place. The argument that AI creates space for more demanding tasks finds little support. 59.7% dispute that it frees up more time for important and neglected topics. 61.7% do not believe that AI enables them to produce more articles, and almost half (44.7%) see no potential for additional research. Although a majority say they have sufficient capacity for quality assurance (61.6%) or for reviewing AI content (54.2%) when using AI,

around a third say they have only limited or very little time to review AI-generated content or to supplement their own sources. Numerous journalists also state that they do not have sufficient capacity to adequately deal with how AI tools work (46.4%) or with data and source protection (42.5%) (see Figure 7). For many journalists, AI tools therefore remain a «black box» that is difficult to understand.

There is broad consensus among the journalists surveyed that AI raises many ethical questions (80.2%). Against this backdrop, guidelines for dealing with AI in journalism are particularly important. Many of the journalists surveyed consider the AI guidelines of their own media company (43.5%) or their own editorial office (41.7%) to be useful. However, just under a third of media professionals are not even aware of such guidelines. Industry-wide guidelines from the Press Council (22.4%), trade unions (9.9%) or the Publishers Association (8.4%) are only considered useful by a minority and are unknown to most media professionals.

When it comes to the expected impact of AI use in journalism on media quality and public opinion-formation processes, skepticism prevails: 74.5% say AI will lead to growing dependence on tech companies, 70.2% fear a loss of trust, and 61.3% fear a greater spread of misinformation.

Despite the far-reaching implications of AI, journalists perceive a strategic vacuum. Only around

a quarter of media professionals recognize a clear AI strategy in their own media company, while 47.3% see none. In small editorial offices with fewer than ten employees, 64.2% report a lack of strategy for dealing with AI. When asked about necessary measures, 82.6% of media professionals call for joint efforts to prevent misconduct in the use of AI. 81.3% would like to see uniform standards for labeling AI.

65.5% assume that their editorial office is perceived by the public as responsible in its use of AI. This shows that the perspectives of media professionals and the general public are largely at odds, as our survey last year (Vogler et al., 2024) showed that such trust on the part of the public is still largely lacking.

2 Long-term analyses

2.1 Media quality – Long-term losses in contextualization and diversity

The quality analyses for 2024 paint a mixed picture: with a score of 6.2, media quality remains stable overall. However, a longer-term comparison reveals a decline in the quality dimensions of contextualization and diversity. While the relevance of the media content examined increased, partly due to events, thanks to a stronger focus on politics, the scores for contextualization are now back at the lower level of ten years ago after a temporary increase. There are also significant losses in diversity. The reasons for this are an increasing focus on national issues and a decline in foreign reporting. In terms of media types, public radio (7.5) and television (7.4) continue to lead the way, albeit with slight losses over the long term. Subscription newspapers (print and online: 6.4 each) achieve solid scores, while tabloid and commuter media as well as online-only offerings achieve below-average quality but show slight improvements in the longer-term trend.

Finally, analyses of media companies show that although the introduction of central editorial offices at CH Media and TX Group has led to more similar content and greater concentration across the entire media system (2.5), the overall quality within the network systems has not declined.

The relationship between media quality, reach, and public trust in individual media brands paints a nuanced picture: although reach is not per se positive from a quality perspective, even the best quality is of little use if it reaches only a small number of people. In this respect, SRG and RTS play a key role, as they combine very high reach with very high quality. However, tabloid and commuter media are also relevant due to their (very) high reach. Although they are below average in terms of quality, they reach many people, including those who have little connection to journalism, are not very interested in news and politics, and/or have a lower level of education (Udris et al., 2024). At a time when journalism is reaching fewer and fewer people, these brands play a role in the Swiss media system that should not be underestimated.

On the other hand, there is a clear correlation between quality and trust: media with high quality ratings (in addition to SRG, subscription newspapers such as NZZ and Le Temps) enjoy above-average trust, while lower-quality titles have lower trust ratings (see Figure 8).

2.2 Media use – Increasing importance of social media

Since 2009, we have been documenting the development of six news user groups (repertoires) in a time series. These are characterized by typical patterns of use of different types of media. Overall, there have been only minor shifts in all repertoires compared to the previous year. The share of the most democratically problematic repertoire of the «news-deprived» – the group with the least and least diverse news usage – rose slightly again in 2025, reaching 46.4% (+0.7 PP). This has negative implications for democracy in several ways (2.1). A second time series with data from the Digital News Report (Reuters Institute, 2025) shows a clear trend in the most important news sources: social media continues to gain importance relative to other channels (15.3%; +1.9 PP) and is the main source of information for more and more people. This means that the channel that, according to our in-depth study, contributes least to people's level of information when used exclusively is growing. Traditional media, and print me-

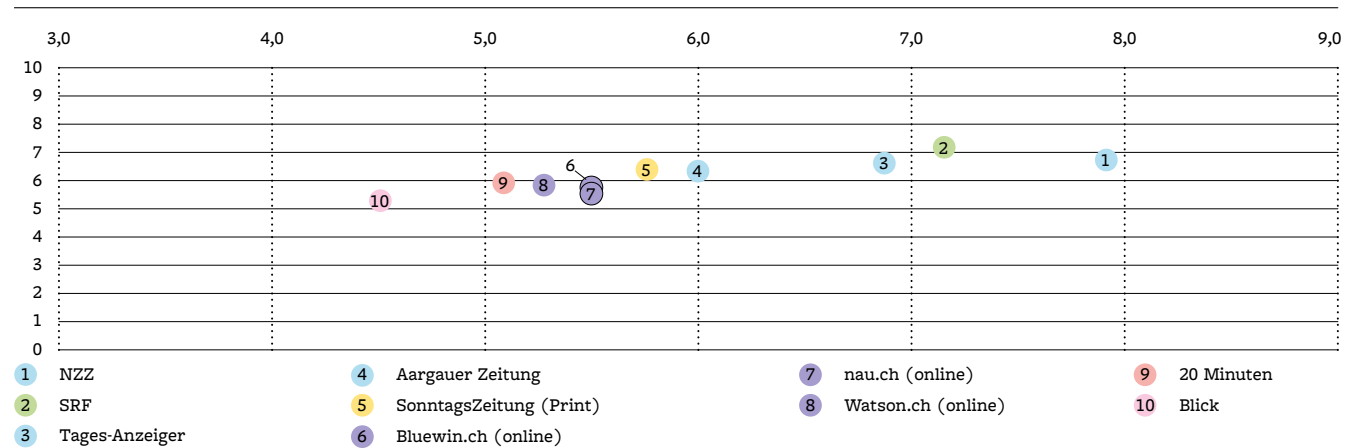


Figure 8: Reporting quality and trust in German-speaking Switzerland

The figure shows the overall quality (x-axis) and trust in selected media brands (y-axis) in German-speaking Switzerland. The data basis for media quality is provided by all news items from the random sample of the 2024 quality analysis (n = 6068). The data basis for trust is the survey data from the Digital News Report 2025 (Reuters Institute, 2025). Unless otherwise noted, the mean value of the offline and online brands was used for media quality. For SRF, the mean value of the scores of four radio and TV news programs and srf.ch was used for media quality. The colors represent different media types.

Example: According to the survey, the media brand 20 Minuten, which represents commuter media (offline and online), achieved a slightly below-average trust rating of 5.9. Its overall quality is also below average, with a score of 5.1. (Corrected version dated 10/30/2025)

dia in particular (10.3%; -1.3 PP), are losing reach. Despite this loss, print media remain important. In an international comparison, only Austria and the Netherlands achieve similarly high values. However, online news sites remain the most important source across all age groups (34.8%; -2.3 PP) (see Figure 9).

2.3 Attitudes toward media – skepticism toward AI-generated news, higher acceptance when used to support human reporting

People's attitudes toward media shape their news consumption. Trust plays an important role in determining which news brands are used and whether and to what extent users are willing to pay for them (Puppis et al., 2025). In 2025, 46.2% said that most news could usually be trusted. 23.4% disagreed, and 30.4% had no clear opinion (Udris et al., 2025). Trust levels fluctuate over time without any clear pattern emerging. In an international comparison, Switzerland ranks 14th out of 48 countries surveyed (Reuters

Institute, 2025). Higher trust levels are found in the Nordic countries, especially Finland (67.4%). In French-speaking Switzerland, the figure is 40.1% – as in previous years – lower than in German-speaking Switzerland (49.4%).

Journalists' use of AI also shapes people's attitudes toward news media. Swiss people have significantly more trust in news where journalists bear the main responsibility and AI is only used in a supporting role than in news that is primarily generated by AI. Only 19.6% feel comfortable with news that has been produced primarily by AI. The proportion is significantly higher when AI is used in a supporting role (36.5%) (see Figure 10).

Acceptance of AI in journalism is higher among people with a keen interest in news, high trust in the media, and among the small group of those who already use AI chatbots such as ChatGPT for news. Overall, this reveals a differentiated, rather cautious attitude among the population: openness to AI exists for supportive applications and as long as editorial responsibility clearly lies with journalists.

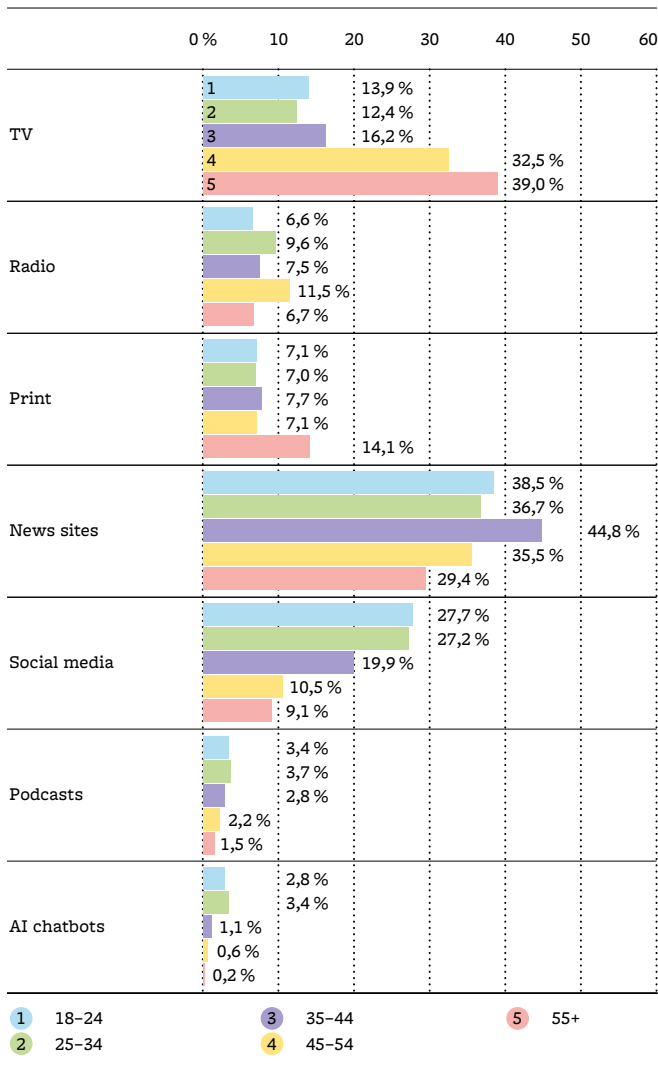


Figure 9: Media use by age

The figure shows which channels are cited as the main sources of news for the individual age groups in Switzerland (n = 1908; source: Reuters Institute, 2025).

Example: 27.7% of respondents between the ages of 18 and 24 cite social media as their most important source of news.

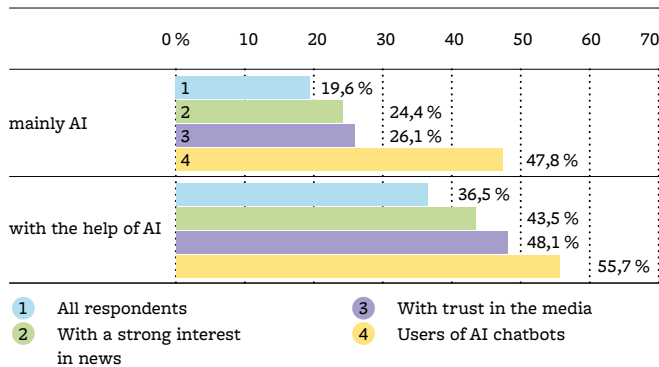


Figure 10: Acceptance of the use of AI-produced news

The figure shows how many respondents, overall and in selected groups, feel (very) comfortable with news produced mainly by artificial intelligence with some human oversight or by journalists with some help from AI (n = 2023). The selected groups include people with a strong interest in news (52.8% of all respondents), people who trust the media (46.2% of all respondents), and people who used AI chatbots for news purposes in the previous week (8.4% of all respondents) (source: Reuters Institute, 2025). Reading example: Of all respondents in Switzerland, 19.6% feel (very) comfortable using news produced primarily by AI. The proportion is significantly higher at 47.8% among those who use AI chatbots for news purposes.

2.4 Financing – majority remains unwilling to pay, potential only for flexible and inexpensive offers

For the Swiss media industry, 2024 was marked by staff cuts, editorial and printing plant closures, and cost-cutting programs. Many jobs were lost. This shows that the economic situation of the Swiss media system is continuing to deteriorate. Although the majority of large private media companies made profits, this was mainly due to cost reductions, portfolio adjustments, and income from non-journalistic areas such as online classifieds and marketplaces. Advertising revenues for Swiss media companies continue to decline. Total advertising revenues for all four media types – press, radio, TV, and online – amounted to CHF 2,024 million in 2024, a decrease of 3.8%. Print was the hardest hit (-8.4%; CHF 652 million). In the online sector, revenues amounted to CHF 660 million, including revenues from online classifieds, which are managed separately from the publishing sector and whose revenues therefore do not necessarily benefit journalism. This sector also declined again (-1.1%) after growth in the previous year.

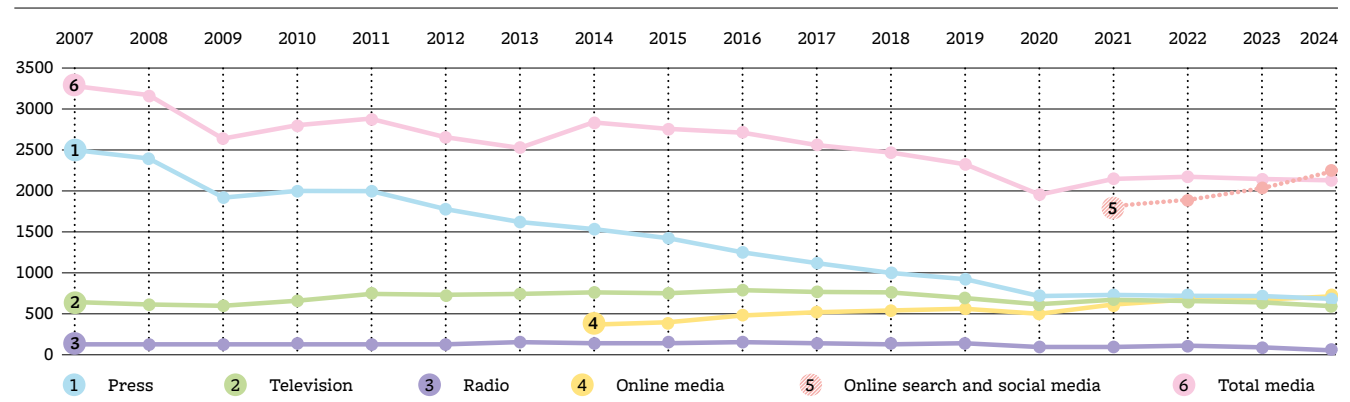


Figure 11: Development of the Swiss advertising market

The figure shows the development of advertising revenues of Swiss media in millions of Swiss francs for the press, radio, television, and online. For comparison, the advertising revenues of online search engines and social media are also shown. For these revenues, the Swiss Advertising Statistics Foundation provides a range of values based on expert estimates. The figure shows the average of the maximum and minimum values in this range (source: Swiss Advertising Statistics Foundation, 2025).

Reading example: Overall, advertising revenues for Swiss media have fallen across all genres since 2007. In 2024, they amounted to 2028 million Swiss francs. In contrast, advertising revenues from online search engines and social media platforms in Switzerland averaged 2,177 million Swiss francs in 2024.

Nevertheless, online overtook print as the advertising segment with the highest sales for the first time. Radio also recorded a decline (-2.5%; CHF 116 million). Net advertising sales for television in 2024 amounted to CHF 600 million, 1.7% below the 2023 level. A major reason for the decline in advertising revenue in the media industry is the ongoing outflow of online advertising money to large tech platforms such as Google and Meta. Their revenue in Switzerland is estimated at CHF 1.9–2.4 billion in 2024. This exceeds the total advertising revenue of the Swiss media in the four categories (2024: CHF 2,028 million) (see Figure 11).

Due to declining advertising revenues, Swiss news media are increasingly focusing on paid offerings in the user market. After remaining at a low 17% for a long time, the willingness to pay for online news rose to 22.5% in 2025 – an increase of over 5 percentage points (Udris et al., 2025). Although this is encouraging, the fact remains that the vast majority are not willing to pay for online news. Of the 73.4% who currently spend nothing on online news, 16.7% could imagine taking out a combined subscription for several news offerings at a comparatively low price (a few francs per month) in the future. 12.9% would like more flexibility in terms of

payment, such as the option to pay small amounts for limited-time access or individual articles. 9.8% would be motivated by additional offers such as games, recipes, or e-books. However, 63.8% say they would never pay for online news.

2.5 Media concentration – Multiple use of content continues to increase

The financial situation of the Swiss media continues to deteriorate and is accompanied by processes of concentration. This is illustrated by key figures on structural and content-related concentration within the Swiss media market. Ownership structures have remained stable for years, and media concentration remains high. A small number of media companies control the majority of high-reach information media in Switzerland. The three largest providers, TX Group (27.6%), SRG SSR (26.7%) and CH Media (20.3%), have a market share of 74.6% in the total user market in German-speaking Switzerland. In French-speaking Switzerland, media concentration is even higher. TX Group (45.0%), SRG SSR (32.4%) and Stiftung Aventinus (9.9%), which owns letemps.ch and heidinews.ch, together account for

87.3%. Taking all offerings into account, the online market shows a long-tail distribution: The five largest media companies, TX Group, SRG SSR, CH Media, Ringier, and NZZ, will account for around 73% of the cumulative use of all news websites in 2025 (a total of 344 offerings; Udris et al., 2025). In 2023, the figure was still around 77% (Udris et al., 2023). The online market therefore remains highly concentrated, even if concentration slightly declines. The five major providers also dominate social media and video platforms in terms of subscriber and follower numbers. They hold around 63% on Instagram, around 65% on Facebook, around 87% on X, and as much as 92% on TikTok. YouTube is an exception, where their share is only 42%. Weltwoche leads the video platform in terms of subscribers. Alternative media such as Kontrafunk and klagemauer.TV also achieve similar figures there as established media companies such as NZZ and Ringier.

A dual concentration process has been taking place in the Swiss media system for several years. In addition to concentration in user markets, there is also a clear concentration of media content. For the Yearbook, media concentration in terms of content is determined as the share of shared content in a media market: this refers to content that is published in at least two different media outlets. In the German-speaking Swiss press market, media content concentration in terms of content is increasing in a long-term comparison (see Figure 12). From 2017 to 2024, this share rose from 10.0% to 26.5%. This means that in 2024, around one in four editorial articles written by journalistic staff appeared in at least two different media titles.

This development is driven by integrated systems, which have seen a particularly sharp rise in media content concentration between 2017 and 2024. At TX Group, the share increased from 16.2% to 50.3%, and at CH Media from 12.0% to 26.5%. The concentration is evident across all topics. It is particularly high at 41.9% in national political reporting, which typically also includes reporting on national referendums. The area of opinion-based articles, which is particularly sensitive from a democratic theory perspective, is also affected. Shared editorials, commentaries, columns, and reviews increased from 8.0% to 37.0% in the Swiss German press market between 2017 and 2024. Articles that provide context are also shared more frequently

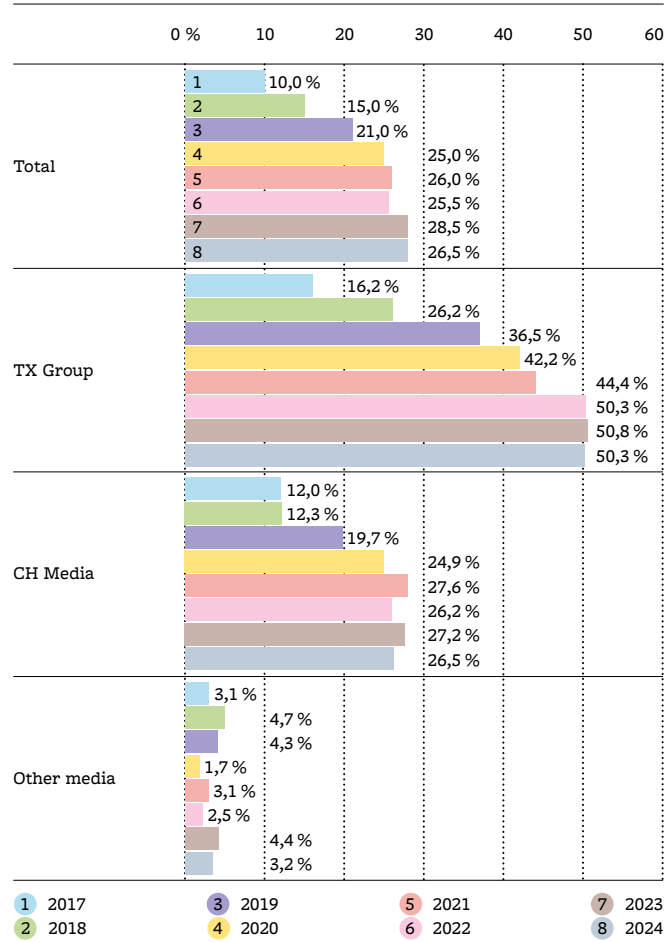


Figure 12: Media content concentration in terms of content in the Swiss German press market over time by network systems

The figure shows the development of media content concentration in terms of content in the Swiss German press market for the media that belonged to the TX Group (Basler Zeitung, Berner Zeitung, Der Bund, Tages-Anzeiger) and CH Media (Aargauer Zeitung, Luzerner Zeitung, St. Galler Tagblatt) in 2024. The reference value was the media content concentration for selected press titles that did not belong to these two network systems («Other media»: 20 Minuten, Blick, Die Südostschweiz, Neue Zürcher Zeitung). The percentages of shared editorial content are shown.

Example: The share of shared content in the TX Group network was 50.3% in 2024. This figure has increased by around 34.1 percentage points since 2017.

(49.0%) than those without context (23.5%). Overall, it is clear that articles are reused multiple times, especially where journalistic work has been invested.

3 Conclusion and recommendations for action

The findings show that artificial intelligence is giving new momentum to the digital structural change in the public sphere. At the same time, the democratic significance of regular, direct consumption of journalistic news remains high. This is confirmed by the in-depth study on news deprivation. The in-depth study on the sources of AI chatbots, in turn, illustrates that journalistic content is used substantially by AI systems without media companies benefiting to the same extent. This presents a social dilemma: on the one hand, it is necessary for the general population to be informed – from this perspective, AI chatbots can facilitate access to news. On the other hand, good information requires professional media – whose financing is further jeopardized by the rise of AI.

The survey of media professionals on the influence of AI has shown that AI is widely used in journalism. Nevertheless, there is still a great deal of uncertainty and a perceived deficit, especially in smaller media companies. The following recommendations for action address this issue. They are intended to strengthen journalism in its democratic function, limit the risks associated with AI, and ensure the conditions for an informed public, even under the conditions of the current digital transformation. We therefore recommend, first, prioritizing the problem of news deprivation (3.1), second, developing solutions in media policy for the remuneration of journalism by AI providers (3.2), and third, more firmly establishing general standards for the use of AI in the industry (3.3).

3.1 Prioritize the problem of news deprivation

News deprivation is of central importance to democracy. People who rarely consume news have less knowledge about current political events, partic-

ipate less frequently in the democratic process, trust politics and the media less, and feel less part of the democratic community. This puts nothing less than the foundation of an informed society at stake – and with it a core prerequisite for Swiss democracy. Educational institutions and politicians should therefore pay much more attention to the issue of news deprivation. In recent years, a lot has been invested in promoting media literacy. This is important, but our findings show that being well-informed comes primarily from regular, direct, and diverse use of journalistic content. Those who rely exclusively on social media are demonstrably less well informed. These empirical findings should be communicated more strongly in programs to promote media literacy – and should also shape the actions of media companies. It is often said that «you have to meet media users where they are.» When it comes to social media, this is only true to a limited extent. Exclusive use of these channels leads to less knowledge growth. Journalistic media should therefore be present on social media, but should also direct users to their own attractive digital channels. There, users can be motivated to engage more deeply with media content. This is where constructive journalism can play an important role, not only by informing, but also by offering guidance and pointing to possible solutions. This not only makes news offerings more attractive, but also reduces the risk of people turning away out of boredom or resignation (Fürst & Rieser, 2023).

Furthermore, our study shows that political interest and a clear political orientation go hand in hand with lower news deprivation. Schools and other educational institutions should therefore invest even more specifically in political education in order to stimulate interest in political issues and deepen understanding of current social developments. Finally, society as a whole is also called upon to act: political and social knowledge should once again be given greater importance. A minimum level of knowledge about current events must be a matter of course and once again be regarded as a basic requirement of an informed society.

3.2 Journalism is an important source for AI chatbots; demands for appropriate remuneration are justified

Journalistic media companies are under economic pressure. Generative AI and chatbots are further exacerbating the situation. These use content from professional news media to answer questions, particularly about current events. Daily journalism is also important for AI chatbots because the training data for AI language models always lags behind current events. However, it was previously unclear to what extent journalism is actually used to answer questions about current events. Our study on the sources of AI chatbots closes this gap. It shows that news media are the most frequently used source for questions about current events. AI chatbots benefit from this in two ways: On the one hand, journalistic content helps to fill data gaps when it comes to questions about current events. On the other hand, the use of established media brands strengthens user trust, as these enjoy significantly more trust than tech platforms (Reuters Institute, 2021). A common objection is that journalism gains visibility through frequent citations in chatbot responses and is thus already sufficiently compensated. However, studies show that this does not automatically increase traffic to journalistic news sites. Many users are satisfied with the chatbots' responses without clicking on links (Brown & Jąźwińska, 2025; Simon, 2025; Chapekis & Lieb, 2025). This is also in line with Perplexity's brand promise: «With Perplexity's search tools, users get instant, reliable answers to any question, complete with sources and citations. There's no need to click on different links, compare answers, or search endlessly for information» (Srinivas, 2024). It is therefore a one-sided relationship: AI chatbots make substantial use of content from journalistic media without providing anything in return – neither in the form of traffic to their own news websites nor in the form of remuneration for the use of their content. This is a dilemma: it is socially desirable for chatbots to provide high-quality information. At the same time, this weakens journalism as long as it is not compensated for the use of its content.

Better protection of the intellectual property of journalistic and other creative works is therefore a legitimate concern. In Switzerland, for example, this

is called for in the motion by FDP Council of States member Petra Gössi for better protection of intellectual property against AI abuse (Gössi, 2024). If AI chatbots benefit substantially from journalistic content, journalism must be adequately remunerated for this. One technical solution for protecting journalistic content from unauthorized use is opt-out, but our study shows that this does not provide consistent protection. This is also due to the fact that chatbots submit queries about current events to search engines such as Google or Bing, which are exempt from opt-out. Furthermore, opt-out is not legally binding. This increases the need for political regulation, as addressed by the «Gössi motion.»

Even if improved protection of journalistic (and other) services by rights holders and adequate remuneration are justified, the motion raises questions. For example, the text of the motion strongly suggests an opt-in, i.e., the express consent of all rights holders. This would amount to a de facto ban on generative AI, because it is hardly feasible in practice. Another critical issue is that certain «limitation provisions» in copyright law, which give research institutions privileged access to protected data for scientific analysis, would no longer apply. This could harm Switzerland's position as a center for AI research and run counter to the motion's goal of maintaining Switzerland's innovative strength. A good federal compromise is needed here that takes into account the interests of journalism (and other rights holders) as well as those of science and research. Equally important is the question of how any remuneration should be structured and distributed in concrete terms. Not only large media companies should benefit, but also smaller providers. Finally, regardless of this motion, there is the media policy question of what impact the convergence of AI chatbots and search engines will have on the regulation of ancillary copyright. Chatbots rely on search engines, and search engines such as Google or Bing already present an «AI overview» above the search results. Against this backdrop, more holistic media policy solutions that take a joint look at search engines and AI chatbots appear necessary.

3.3 Study on AI in journalism – coherent standards and industry-wide governance are needed

Artificial intelligence has established itself in journalism in record time. A large majority of Swiss media professionals already use AI tools. The way AI is used in the editorial process influences journalism's most important asset: its credibility. However, the public is critical of the use of AI in journalism – both in Switzerland (Vogler et al., 2023; Udris et al., 2025) and internationally (Reuters Institute, 2025). And a majority of Swiss media professionals doubt that the output of AI can be relied upon. A remarkable 15% of media professionals also say that the use of AI has already led to significant errors in reporting. In addition, many editorial offices do not have systematic quality assurance measures in place when dealing with AI. Around a third also say they have limited or no time to review AI-generated content. Mistakes not only damage individual companies, but can also affect the image of the entire industry and journalism as a whole. Quality assurance must therefore be given greater weight. Media management should ensure that journalists are given enough time to check AI content. Furthermore, there is often a lack of technical expertise. A majority say that they have no employees who specialize in AI. Media companies are therefore called upon to invest more in establishing specialized roles and quality assurance processes in order to keep pace with the dynamics of development.

There is also a need for action when it comes to AI guidelines. If around a third of journalists are unaware of their own media company's or editorial office's AI guidelines, or if there are none at all, this is a problem. To make matters worse, most are unaware of industry-wide rules set by press councils, unions, or publishers' associations, or only a minority con-

sider them helpful. This shows that quality assurance standards have not yet been established and that greater efforts are needed. It is not enough to develop guidelines once and then simply refer to them. In this dynamic field, these standards need to be continuously developed and communication efforts need to be ongoing. Equally important is the establishment of common industry standards and coherent AI governance, as we already discussed in last year's Yearbook edition (Eisenegger et al., 2024). At present, there is too much unregulated self-regulation. Smaller editorial offices in particular often lack the resources to implement and enforce such standards. This makes it all the more important to have binding guidelines, for example from the Press Council or industry associations, which small media companies can also use as a guide. However, these do not seem to have reached many media professionals yet. Perhaps this is because, according to our study, many media professionals mistakenly assume that the public trusts the media to use AI responsibly. For many users, however, the opposite is true (Vogler et al., 2024). This overestimation of audience trust by the industry could lead to insufficient investment in the development of robust AI governance in journalism.

Another important finding is that a large majority of journalists fear a problematic dependence on tech companies. At the same time, a majority say they lack the capacity to deal with how AI tools work. Investments are therefore needed to counteract this growing infrastructural dependence («infrastructure capture,» Simon, 2024, p. 28) – whether through the use of responsible, transparent AI systems or through the development or further development of open AI infrastructure. This requires the Swiss media industry to join forces and collaborate with colleges and universities that are working on the development of such systems.

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Why the Yearbook?

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

The Yearbook Quality of the Media is an informative source for media professionals, political and economic decision-makers, academics, 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 play an important role for society in a functioning democracy. Four dimensions of quality can be derived from the performance functions of public communication, which are widely established in both academic research and journalistic practice: The dimension of relevance is intended to provide information about the ratio of hard news to soft news and the weight of reports on institutional processes compared to personal reporting. The quality dimension of diversity measures whether events are reported from many different content-related and geographical 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 reporting is factual and originates from the editorial team itself, and to what 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 the fög – Research Center for the Public Sphere and Society/University of Zurich (www.foeg.uzh.ch). External guest authors also contribute to the in-depth studies.

Who finances the Yearbook?

The Yearbook Quality of the Media is largely financed by the non-profit Kurt Imhof Foundation for Media Quality (www.kurt-imhof-stiftung.ch), other 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, Maude Rivière, and Nenad Stojanović. Funding for the project comes from the following sponsors: Avenir Stiftung, Federal Office of Communications, Cassinelli-Vogel-Stiftung, Ernst Göhner Stiftung, Keystone-SDA, Fonds für Qualitätsjournalismus, Gottfried und Ursula Schächli-Jecklin Stiftung, Paul Schiller Stiftung, Ringier AG, Somedia AG, SRG SSR, Stiftung Temporatio, Verband Medien mit Zukunft, Verband Schweizer Medien.

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Where are the Yearbook and studies available?

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Research Center for the
Public Sphere and Society
(fög) / University of Zurich

Contact

fög / University of Zurich
Andreasstrasse 15
CH-8050 Zürich

kontakt@foeg.uzh.ch
+41 (0)44 635 21 11
www.foeg.uzh.ch
