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# Fact Sheet: News Media and Political Attitudes in Germany

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## RECOMMENDED CITATION

Pew Research Center, May, 2018, "In Western Europe, Public Attitudes Toward News Media More Divided by Populist Views Than Left-Right Ideology"

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# News Media and Political Attitudes in Germany

*CORRECTION: This fact sheet was updated on May 22, 2018, due to the possibility that the language used to identify the German news outlet Die Tageszeitung may have confused respondents. References to that outlet have been removed throughout. There were no substantive changes to the report's conclusions.*

Below are specific findings about news media attitudes and habits in Germany. The findings come from a Pew Research Center survey about news media and politics across eight Western European countries conducted from Oct. 30 to Dec. 20, 2017. The survey covered five countries in the north (Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom) and three in the south (France, Italy and Spain).

## Views of the news media in Germany

The sense of importance of and trust in the news media vary considerably by country. In general, adults in northern European countries – for example, Sweden and Germany – are more likely to say the news media are very important and that they trust the news media, while people in France and Italy are the least likely to say this.

A majority of German adults (61%) consider the news media very important to society. Similarly, around two-thirds (64%) say they trust the news media. This includes one-in-five who trust the news media *a lot*.

### About six-in-ten Germans say the news media are very important, and a majority of adults trust the media

*% of adults in Germany who say the news media are \_\_\_ important to the functioning of the country's society*



*% who trust the news media ...*



Source: Survey of eight Western European countries conducted Oct. 30-Dec. 20, 2017.

"In Western Europe, Public Attitudes Toward News Media More Divided by Populist Views Than Left-Right Ideology"

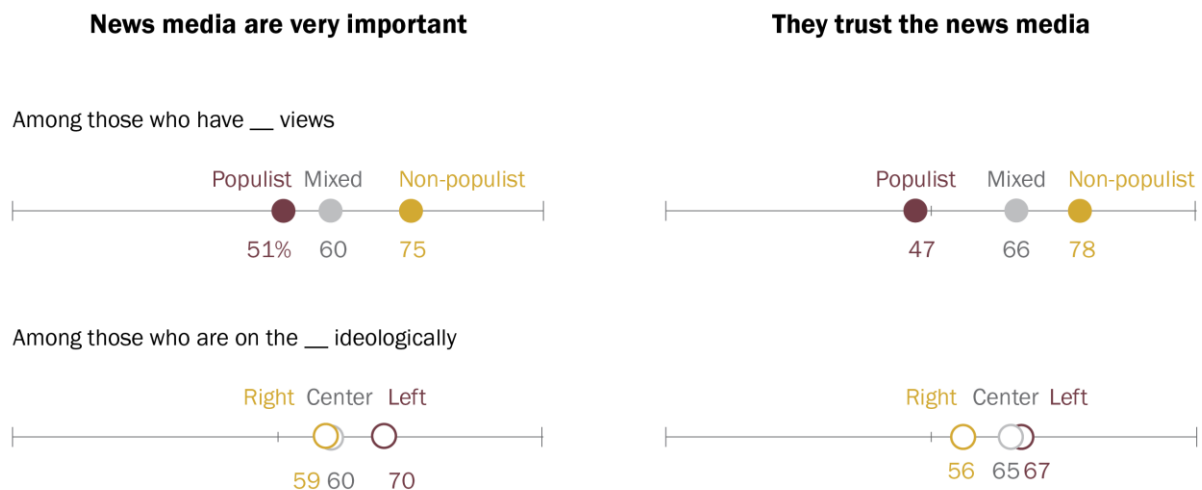
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In most of the countries surveyed, people who hold populist views are less likely to say the news media are important and to trust the news media than people who don't hold populist views. In general, the differences in these attitudes about the news media are small when comparing between people on the left and right of the ideological spectrum.

Populist divides in media attitudes are strong in Germany as well: 47% of people with populist views say they trust the news media, compared with 78% of those without populist views. On the question of importance, 51% of those with populist views say the news media are very important for society in Germany, compared with 75% of those with non-populist views.

## Divides in Germany between those with and without populist views in their attitudes toward the news media

*% of adults in Germany who say ...*



Note: Respondents are classified as holding populist views if they answered: "Most elected officials don't care what people like me think" and "Ordinary people would do a better job solving the country's problems than elected officials."

Source: Survey of eight Western European countries conducted Oct. 30-Dec. 20, 2017.

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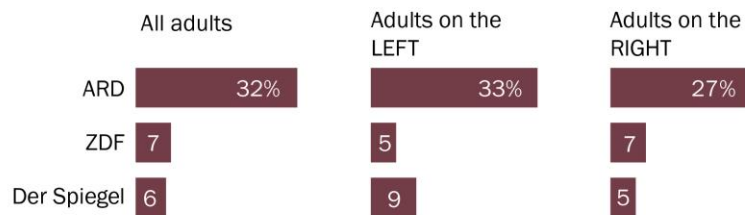
## Main sources used for news in Germany

When it comes to the news sources people say they turn to most frequently, the divides between adults with and without populist leanings are not as strong as those seen for attitudes about the news media more generally. And in the southern countries, there tend to be larger divides in main news source preference between people on the left and right of the ideological spectrum than between those with and without populist views.

In Germany, those on the left and the right do not differ in regard to the media source they turn to most for news. Both those on the ideological right and left cite ARD as their main news source.

### Germans across the ideological spectrum generally share the same main news source

*% of adults in Germany who name each outlet as their main news source*



Note: Only sources named by 5% of adults or more are shown. Respondents were asked to name the outlet they turn to the most for news. For the purposes of this analysis, major channels or brands were grouped into their larger news organization.

Source: Survey of eight Western European countries conducted Oct. 30-Dec. 20, 2017.

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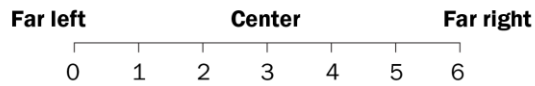
## Where users place outlets' ideologies, on the right and on the left

For many of the news outlets across the eight countries, people who use an outlet to get news tend to think the outlet is closer to their own left-right ideological position. In Germany, this is true for one outlet asked about: the public broadcaster ARD. For this outlet, news users on the right tend to place it closer to their own ideology. For three news outlets – RTL, Sat1 and Der Spiegel – right-aligned and left-aligned news users generally agree on their placement. The tabloid newspaper Bild and the newspapers Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ) and Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ) are not included in this analysis, because they did not have a large enough sample of left or right users to analyze.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The eighth outlet initially asked about, Die Tageszeitung, has been removed because the language used to identify it may have confused respondents.

## Ideological placement of news outlets in Germany

Users of each outlet were asked to place the outlet on a left-right scale



% of users on the left and right who place the outlet at position ...

0-2                      3                      4-6

### ARD

81% of adults use this outlet at least once a week

PLACEMENT BY:

Users on the left	25%	60	11
Users on the right	20%	43	30

Left users and right users ARE different in their placement of this outlet

### Sat1

41% of adults use this outlet at least once a week

Users on the left	19%	40	26
Users on the right	17%	47	28

Left users and right users are NOT different in their placement of this outlet

### RTL

42% of adults use this outlet at least once a week

Users on the left	18%	44	27
Users on the right	16%	46	31

Left users and right users are NOT different in their placement of this outlet

### Der Spiegel

30% of adults use this outlet at least once a week

Users on the left	42%	37	15
Users on the right	49%	28	18

Left users and right users are NOT different in their placement of this outlet

Note: Some outlets are not included, because their audience sample sizes are too small to analyze. Left and right users' outlet placements are considered different if the percentage of left and right users that place the outlet on the left (from 0 to 2), on the right (from 4 to 6), or both are significantly different. *This chart was modified due to the possibility that the language used to identify the German news outlet Die Tageszeitung may have confused respondents. References to that outlet have been removed.*

Source: Survey of eight Western European countries conducted Oct. 30-Dec. 20, 2017.

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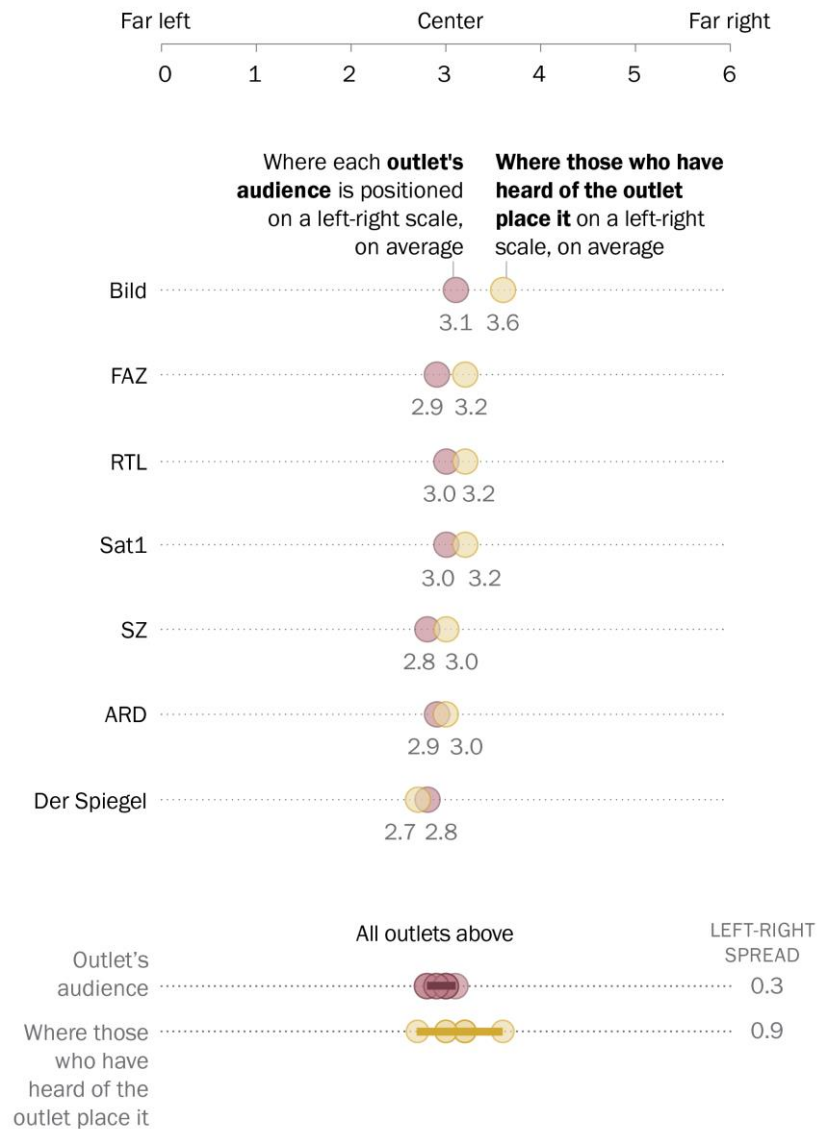
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In general, where the public places an outlet tends to differ from where the average audience actually sits ideologically. For each of the news outlets asked about in the survey, the average audience (based on self-reported usage) tends to fall near the ideological center. People who have heard of each outlet, however, tend to place the outlet either farther to the left or farther to the right than the actual ideological position of the outlet's audience.

Germany is an exception. Not only are most German outlets' news audiences near the center, but people who have heard of the outlets also tend to place them near the middle of the left-right spectrum.

## Germans generally place their news outlets in the middle of the left-right spectrum

*Mean placement of each outlet's audience on a 0-to-6 left-right scale compared with where those who have heard of the outlet place it on that same scale*



Note: An outlet's audience is defined as respondents who say they get news regularly from that outlet. Left-right spread is the difference between the outlet farthest to the left and the outlet farthest to the right. This chart was modified due to the possibility that the language used to identify the German news outlet *Die Tageszeitung* may have confused respondents. References to that outlet have been removed.

Source: Survey of eight Western European countries conducted Oct. 30-Dec. 20, 2017.

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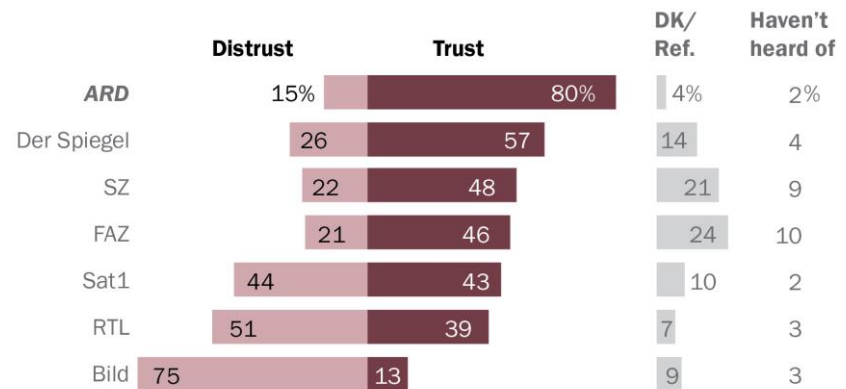
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## Trust in news media outlets

In seven of the eight countries surveyed, the most trusted news outlet asked about is the public news organization in each country. In Germany, eight-in-ten say they trust the public news organization ARD.

### In Germany, a large majority trusts the public news organization

*% of adults in Germany who generally trust or distrust each news outlet*



Note: People who said they had not heard of an outlet or refused to respond to the question about whether they get news from an outlet are grouped under "Haven't heard of" here. Public broadcaster is in **bold**. This chart was modified due to the possibility that the language used to identify the German news outlet Die Tageszeitung may have confused respondents. References to that outlet have been removed.

Source: Survey of eight Western European countries conducted Oct. 30-Dec. 20, 2017.

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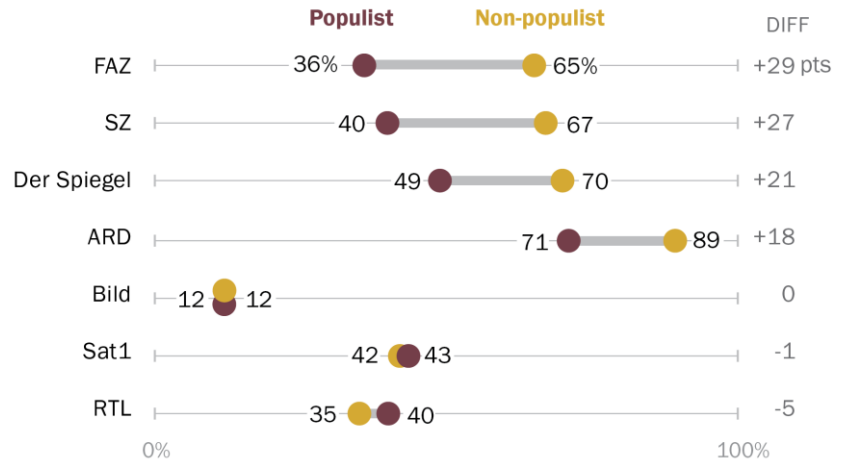


As with trust in the news media generally, trust in specific outlets varies by populist leanings, with those who hold populist views expressing lower levels of trust than those who don't.

In Germany, for example, those with populist leanings are 29 percentage points less likely than those with non-populist views to say they trust FAZ. Trust is also divided along the left-right ideological spectrum in Germany – those who place themselves on the left of the 0-to-6 ideological scale are 15 percentage points less likely than people on the right to trust RTL.

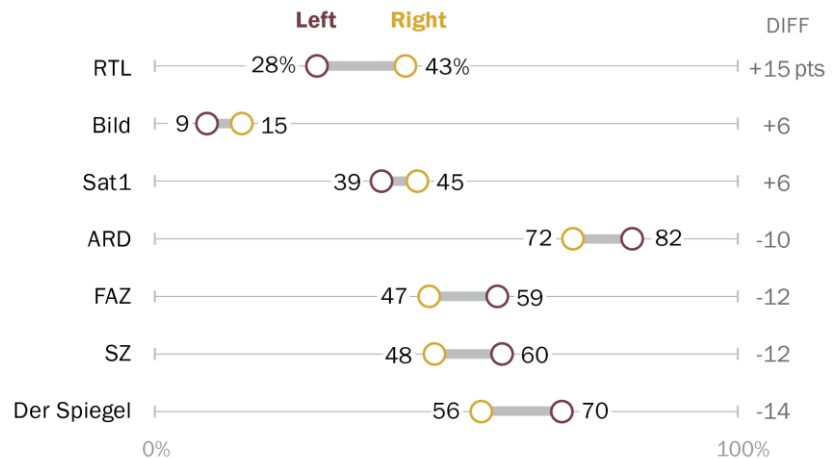
### In Germany, those with populist views tend to trust news outlets less than those without such views

% of adults in Germany who hold \_\_\_\_ views and generally trust each news outlet



### Trust is also divided along the left-right spectrum

% of adults in each ideological group who generally trust each news outlet



Note: Respondents are classified as holding populist views if they answered: "Most elected officials don't care what people like me think" and "Ordinary people would do a better job solving the country's problems than elected officials." This chart was modified due to the possibility that the language used to identify the German news outlet *Die Tageszeitung* may have confused respondents. References to that outlet have been removed.

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## Social media usage and views

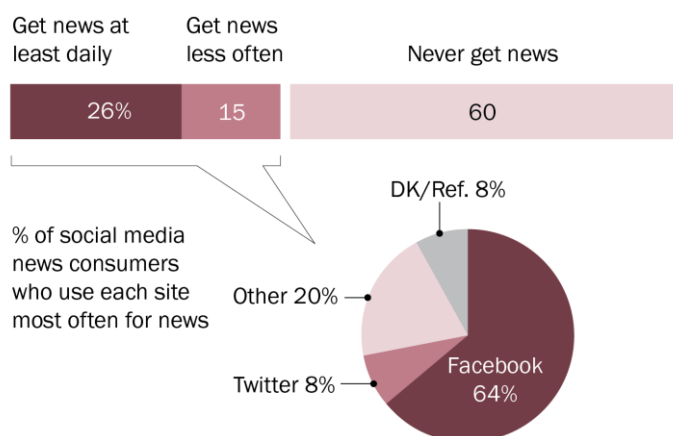
Many people in Western Europe get news through social media, with Facebook cited as the most widely used platform for news.

Among German adults, 41% get news on social media, including around a quarter (26%) who get news on social media *daily*.

Facebook is the most common social network used for news. In Germany, young people (those 18 to 29 years old) are more likely to get news on social media daily than those 50 and older (50% vs. 11%).

### A minority of Germans get news on social media, and those who do mainly do so on Facebook

*% of adults in Germany who \_\_\_\_\_ from social media*



Note: "Other" includes social media sites mentioned by 5% or less of respondents across all countries studied. Numbers may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Survey of eight Western European countries conducted Oct. 30-Dec. 20, 2017.

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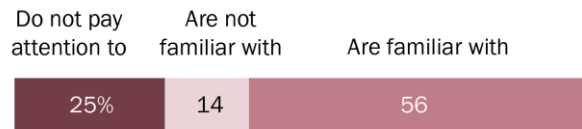
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About half or more social media news consumers in each of the eight countries surveyed say they are familiar with the sources they see on social media. Still, sizeable minorities say they typically do not pay attention to the source of the news they encounter there.

Social media news consumers in Germany are similar to other Western Europeans – 56% are familiar with the news sources they find on social media, but a quarter do not pay attention to the sources there.

### A quarter of Germans who get news on social media don't pay attention to sources there

*% of social media news consumers in Germany who say most of the news they see on social media comes from news source they ...*



Note: "Don't know" responses not shown. Question asked: "In general, does most of the news you see on social media come from news sources you are familiar with, sources you are not familiar with, or do you not pay attention to the sources?"

Source: Survey of eight Western European countries conducted Oct. 30-Dec. 20, 2017.

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## Find out more

Read the full report online for the methodology and more on Germany:

<https://pewrsr.ch/WesternEuropeNewsAttitudes>.

To view this information online, as well as data on the seven other Western European countries included in the survey, visit: <https://pewrsr.ch/GermanyNewsAttitudes>.