

Tuned in? How people with a migration background in Germany use and trust the media

Summary

The role the mass media play in migrants' integration processes has been the subject of both scientific discourses and media- and integration-policy debate for some decades now. Among other things, discussions have focused on whether and to what extent copious consumption of language-of-origin mass media is detrimental to the integration process of migrants in Germany. At the same time, though, those discussions were coloured by the assumption that, besides direct contact with the local population, mass media can build bridges between potentially different lifeworlds and thus promote integration.

In view of the ongoing, highly technology-driven changes in the media landscape and the resulting increasing availability of media offers (including in languages of origin), there is also an increased demand for up-to-date information in politics and science about the media consumption of people with a migration background living in Germany. Of relevance is also these people's subjective evaluation of those media. There is a particular need for information about how much people with a migration background trust the media – that is both German and country-of-origin media. This Policy Brief by the SVR's scientific staff presents a number of new findings relating to these issues.

Results from the 2020 SVR Integration Barometer show that there are differences as regards the use of mass media between respondents with and respondents without a migration background. The survey covered (online) newspapers and magazines, (online) TV and social media. For example, more people with a migration background than people without a migration background stated that they used social media. The opposite is the case when it comes to (online) newspapers and magazines. According to respondents, these are used more frequently by people without a migration background. By contrast, there are no noteworthy differences between the two groups when it comes to (online) TV consumption, although among respondents with a migration background consumption varied depending on group of origin.

There are clear age-related effects in regard to the media use of people with and without a migration background which point to both commonalities and differences between the respondent groups. For example, younger members of both groups stated significantly more often than older members that they "frequently" use social media. At the same time, more respondents with a migration background in almost all the age cohorts reported that they "frequently" use social media than people without a migration background did. This gap is most striking in the cohort of people aged 65 and over. Only around 23 per cent of respondents



without a migration background aged 65 and over “frequently” use social media, whilst that figure is around 35 per cent for those with a migration background in the same age group.

Looking at those types of media of which account was taken, it can be said that media users with a migration background living in Germany in all groups of origin consume the majority of their media in German. However, people of Turkish origin are an exception, as they report consuming approximately equal amounts of German and language-of-origin (online) TV. A comparatively high language-of-origin media consumption among people of Turkish origin was also registered in regard to (online) TV in those subsequent generations who were born in Germany. Aside from that, the predominant use of German-language media increases in subsequent migrant generations. Overall, significantly fewer respondents with a migration background who were born in Germany state that they use language-of-origin media more than their parents do – regardless of group of origin and media. The absolute majority (depending on the type of media sometimes more than 90 per cent) of next-generation migrants who were born in Germany report that the majority of the media they consume are in German.

According to SVR’s 2020 Integration Barometer, trust in German media among people with a migration background is high compared to the population without a migration background, and is at the same time higher than trust in their respective country-of-origin media. More than three times as many respondents with a migration background reported not trusting country-of-origin media “at all” compared to German media (some 31 per cent vs. 10 per cent). A comparison of trust which people with a migration background have in German media which takes account of individual groups of origin shows that significantly fewer people of Turkish origin trust German media. Less than half (some 44 per cent) of respondents of Turkish origin reported that they (tend to) trust German media. Trust in media among this group of respondents is thus more than 20 percentage points lower than the average value for respondents with a migration background (approx. 67 per cent).

These findings validate current integration-policy approaches. Given first- and second-generation migrants’ strong use of social media, focusing on social media during various phases of the National Action Plan on Integration (NAP-I) appears promising. Nevertheless, the media landscape is in constant flux, which is why the ongoing collation of sufficiently differentiated data on the media use of first- and next-generation migrants will continue to be highly relevant.