

## Country fact sheet

# Germany



### Key findings

Over recent years there has been a growing debate on local media in German, without the concept ‘news deserts’ playing a prominent role though. To highlight the problems of plurality in local news, the term ‘**Einzeitungskreis**’ is commonly used. This refers to districts with only one editorial outlet producing local news.

Regarding the definition of local and community media, German media legislation lacks a specific legal definition. Since media legislation is the responsibility of individual federal states, **there are 13 distinct media laws**. Notably, not all laws provide specific regulatory frameworks for local media. The **primary focus is on regulating local radio**.



Germany still has a robust media landscape, also in terms of the availability of local media, but challenges persist, particularly in **regions with poor broadband internet provision**, hindering the shift to digital formats.

The **Eastern parts of Germany, with lower population density, face the highest risk for the press and TV**.

The **number of journalists employed by local newspapers** has seen a decline of 17% from 2010 to 2020.

This trend is accompanied by changes in work patterns, with publishers centralising editorial functions in larger cities and regions, which impacts local newsrooms.

### A steady decline in revenues

Local newspapers have experienced a steady fall in revenues from both sold copies and advertisements. The local media landscape has seen no outlet closures, but has witnessed mergers and ‘efficiency improvements’ through team consolidations. Most recently, a print edition was discontinued for the first time and is now only available as an ePaper.

The **audience reach for local media** has also declined in the past three years. Only FM radio continues to have a solid audience. The figures below illustrate the decrease in audience reach during this period.



## A look into the working conditions of German local journalists

The **effectiveness of journalists' unions, associations, and organisations at the local level plays a crucial role** in protecting the profession. These unions maintain specialised departments for media with regional representatives in all federal states: they advocate for minimum wage regulations, collective bargaining, and other labour rights, and try to ensure the well-being of journalists in both permanent and temporary positions.

The number of attacks on media professionals in Germany had fallen in 2022, recording 56 assaults throughout the year; 27 less than in 2021.

Still, **local journalists are particularly vulnerable as they lack the anonymity enjoyed by colleagues in larger cities and in regional outlets.** There is a continued need for vigilance.



## A reduction in the diversity of local reporting

While there is not a significant threat to editorial independence, there is a **growing concentration in the German press.** The centralisation of reporting from large publishing groups contributes to a reduction in the diversity of local reporting, impacting the uniqueness of circulation areas.

However, **local TV and radio are legally obligated to provide diverse content,** mitigating concerns related to news content homogenisation.

