

## » Youth Sexuality 9th Iteration

# Media of Sexuality Education

The Federal Centre for Health Education's (BZgA) representative study Youth Sexuality 9th Iteration is a representative repeat survey. A large-scale survey of young people, their parents and young adults was launched for the ninth time in the summer of 2019. It follows on from predecessor studies conducted between 1980 and 2014. The goal of the study is to acquire reliable data about the attitudes and behaviours of young people in the Federal Republic of Germany with regards to sexuality and contraception.

The majority of boys and girls obtain their knowledge of the topic of sexuality from personal conversations as well as from school. Media - printed and digital - are another important source of information about sexuality for young women and men. The internet and digital communication formats in particular have become significant in recent decades. The internet has become an important socialisation and information space for young people (BZgA, 2013). The study Youth Sexuality 9th Iteration has examined the significance of media generally and of the internet in particular with regard to questions about sexuality for adolescents and young adults. This fact sheet presents the core results on the media of sexuality education for those aged between 14 and 25.

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## The internet as a source of sexuality education continues to increase in significance.

Result 1

### Young people's media use

The use of mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets, as well as constant access to the internet have become part of everyday life for many people (Beisch & Schäfer, 2020). Young people are no exception in this regard. The current results of the study series 'JIM' show that in 2019 almost all adolescents between the ages of 12 and 19 own a smartphone (93 %). And they use their devices and the internet almost daily. Communication plays the most important role here (33 %). But young people also use the internet for entertainment - such as listening to music or watching videos (30 %) as well as for gaming (26 %). 10 percent of the respondents said they used the internet to search for information (Feierabend, Rathgeb & Reutter, 2020).

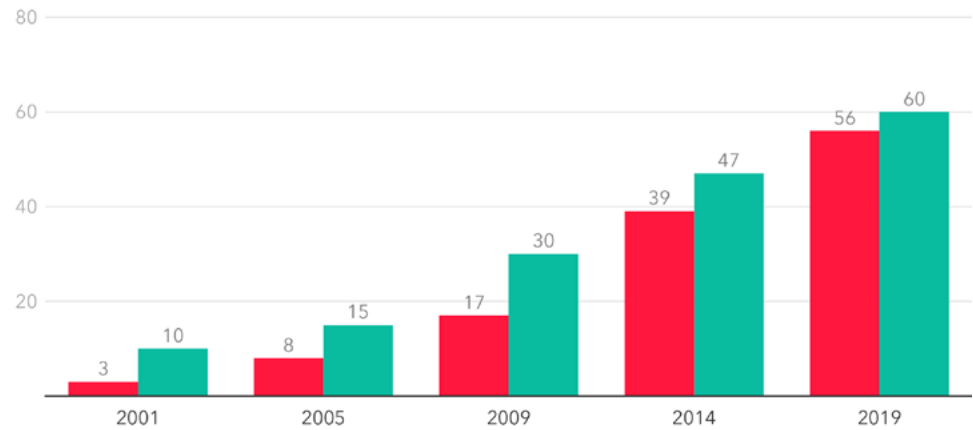
The fact that the internet has become an important socialisation and information space is also confirmed by the data from the Youth Sexuality Study. The internet's significance as a source of sexuality education has successively grown since 2001: in 2001 just 3 percent of girls and 10 percent of boys said that they had received important information about sexuality and contraception from the internet. Within just under 20 years this percentage has gone up to 56 percent for the girls and 60 percent for the boys. Even within the past five years the figures have climbed by 13 percentage points among the boys and even 17 percentage points among the girls (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

### The internet as an important source of sexuality education (long-term trend)

Question: Where did you primarily obtain your knowledge of sexuality, reproduction, contraception, etc.?  
Here: Internet

■ Girls ■ Boys



Basis: 14- to 17-year-olds with German citizenship / from 2014: origin | figures in percent

Source: Source: BZgA, data set Youth Sexuality, 2019 survey

[See Youth Sexuality 9th Iteration - Fact Sheet 'Sexuality Education and Contraceptive Advice at Home'](#)



In the current trend examination in this Youth Sexuality Study the internet is therefore the third-most important source of information for questions around sexuality and contraception for young people in Germany - right behind school and personal conversations.

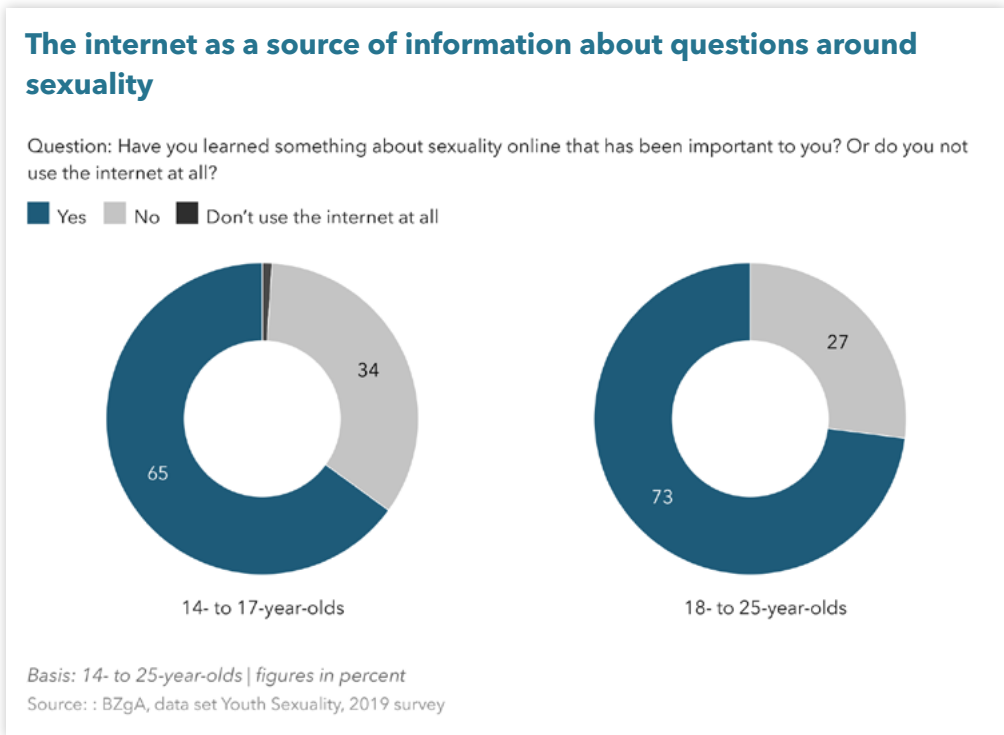
## The information that young people find about sexuality online is important to them.

Result 2

The internet is also the place where young people want to look for further and more in-depth information: 66 percent of the 14- to 17-year-olds and 70 percent of the young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 state this fact (see also Figure 5).

However, it is not just the case that young people want to obtain information online; the information they find there is also important to them: two in three of the 14- to 17-year-olds (65 %) and almost three in four of the 18- to 25-year-olds (73 %) said that they had learned something about sexuality online that was important to them (see Figure 2).

Figure 2



## Result 3

## Young people google information about sexuality.

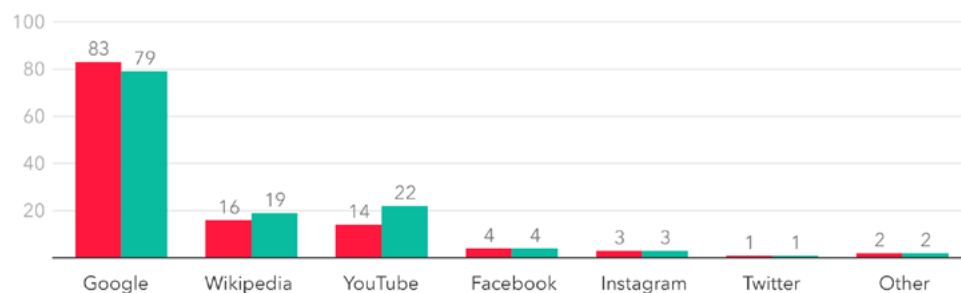
Those who wish to obtain information about sexual topics goes about this in the same way as for other topics: they google it - i.e. they use a search engine. 79 percent of the male and even 83 percent of the female respondents between the ages of 14 and 25 said they primarily used a search engine when they wanted to learn something about sexual matters online (see Figure 3).

- 16 percent of the girls and young women and 19 percent of the boys and young men start their search for information on Wikipedia. Among the boys and young men, in contrast to the girls and young women, there is an educational effect here too: only 13 percent of male respondents with a basic level of education use the site compared to 21 percent of their more highly educated counterparts.
- YouTube is the first port of call for one in seven girls respectively young women, but for more than a fifth of the boys and young men; among the men aged 18 and over (24 %) this is even more the case than among those aged 14 to 17 (19 %). YouTube is therefore used more by boys and young men than by girls (15 %) and young women (14 %).
- Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are not sites that young people use as their first option to seek out information on sexual topics (all under 5 %).

**Sources of online information used by adolescents and young adults**

Question: If you were to look for information about sexual topics of interest to you online, where would you look first?

Female Male



Basis: 14- to 25-year-olds | multiple responses possible | figures in percent

Source: BZgA, data set Youth Sexuality, 2019 survey

Figure 3

Result 4

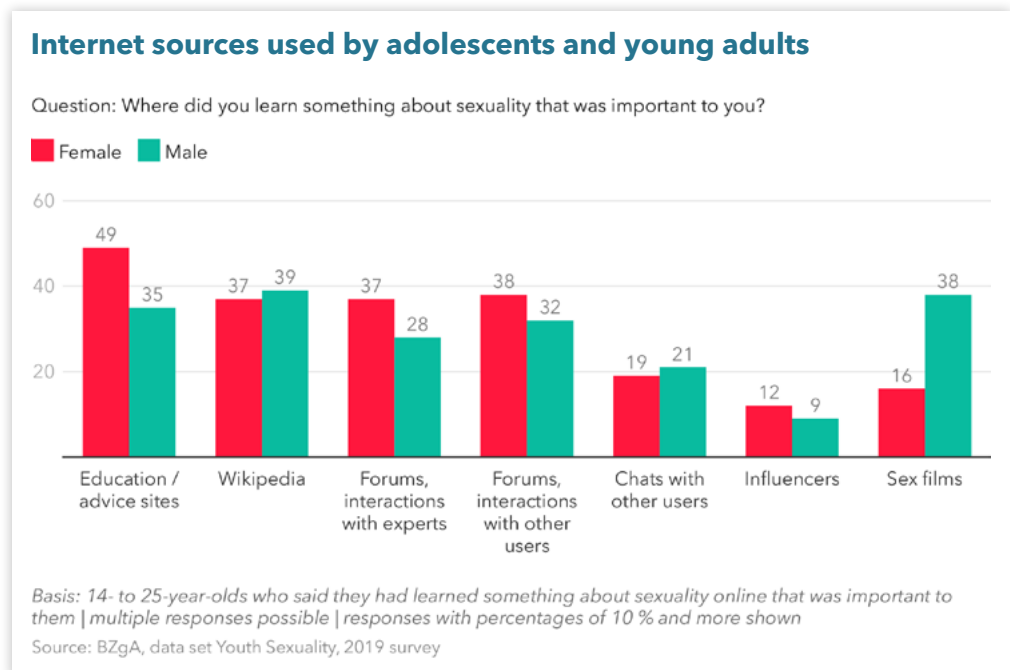
## Young women use advice and education sites, while young men also use Wikipedia and sex films.

Every second respondent among the girls and young women has visited education or advice sites about the topic of sexuality and found something there that has been important to them (49 %). 37 percent said they obtained knowledge on Wikipedia or they visited internet forums with experts (37 %) or with other users (38 %) (see Figure 4).

Among the boys and young men the picture is different: they do not have one single source of information that stands out. Sex films and Wikipedia are the avenue to obtaining important information for 38 percent and 39 percent of them respectively. The percentages for those who sought out education or advice sites (35 %) or who exchanged information in forums with other users (32 %) or experts (28 %) are similarly high (see Figure 4).

Chats and influencers play a comparatively minor role for the young people between the ages of 14 and 25 (see Figure 4).

Figure 4





## Young people under the age of 18 have a different focus than those aged 18 or over: influencers are important sources of information for them, but not the only ones.

If we look exclusively at the information behaviour of the 14- to 17-year-olds, we see a somewhat different picture: Wikipedia as a reference site for information is just as important to them as specific education and advice sites (both 41 %).

- Young people under the age of 18 are substantially more open to influencers than young adults (17 % versus 8 %) and girls more so than boys (20 % versus 15 %). Among the 14- to 17-year-old girls it is those with a more basic level of education who have received important information from influencers (27 %). It is not the case, however, that it is particularly those young people who have no one they can talk to at home or who do not have any other confidant(e) who seek out influencers: there is no such correlation to be seen in the data.
- Chats seem to be an important source of information for adolescents under the age of 18 who have a same-sex or not (clearly) heterosexual orientation - and more so for boys than for girls: 42 percent of these boys cite chats as an important source of online information (heterosexual boys: 24 %). The corresponding girls' figures are 36 percent versus 19 percent.
- Sex films are - according to the respondents' statements - especially important sources of sexuality information for the male respondents. Even among the 14-year-olds almost one in three of the male respondents said they had learned something important about sexuality from watching sex films (31 %; to compare: 14-year-old girls: 12 %). Between 14 and 17 it is especially the boys with a basic level of education who cite sex films as an important source of information: almost half the respondents in this group (48 % compared to 38 % of those with a moderate level of education and 32 % with a high level of education) cite this.

## Result 6

## Alongside the internet, young people with a higher (desired) level of education and the younger respondents were more likely to want information about sexuality and contraception via print media.

As part of the Youth Sexuality Study, the young people between the ages of 14 and 25 were also asked where they would like to get information, should they want to know more about sexuality and contraception. Here too the most common response was the internet (69%) (see Figure 5).

Despite digitalisation, young people still cite print products as one of their preferred options for obtaining knowledge: books got 28 percent, free sexuality education brochures got 23 percent, magazines got 20 percent and teen magazines got 15 percent. Girls and young women exhibited a stronger preference for print media than their male peers (Figure 5).

In the responses relating to print media, there are significant differences, depending on what level of education the respondent has or is trying to acquire: free sexuality education brochures are particularly popular with young people with a high level of education (27% compared to 20% and 16% for those with a moderate and low level respectively). It is a similar story for books: 32 percent of adolescents and young adults with a high (desired) level of education want to acquire more information through books (compared to 26% and 19% among those with a moderate and lower level of education).

What is striking is that the media preferences change with increasing age. The biggest change is in the teen magazine category. They are of more interest to the 14- to 17-year-olds than to the 18- to 25-year-olds (29 % versus 9 %). Just as in the previous survey years it is particularly girls without migrant background aged 14 and 15 who like obtaining information from teen magazines (both 41 %). The girls remain more interested in this medium than the boys into adulthood (18 and 19 years of age). From age 20 the interest in this medium drops noticeably for both sexes.

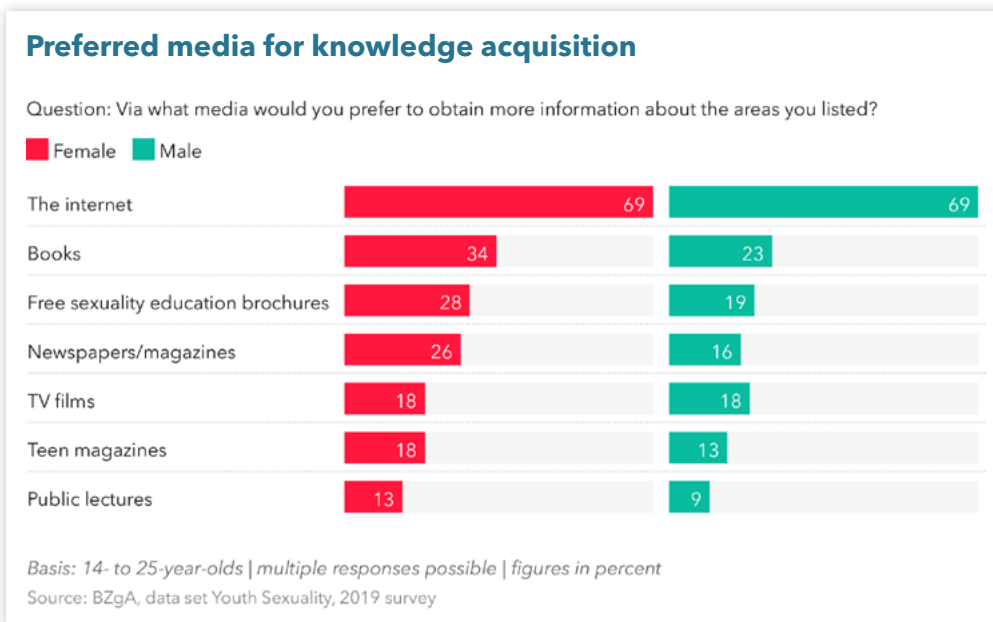


Figure 5



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## Notes on the data

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- As the percentages shown has been rounded to whole numbers, it is possible that they may not add up to 100 percent.
- For the same reason the combined categories (e.g. 'very satisfied' and 'mostly satisfied') can deviate from the sum of the individual categories depicted.
- For questions where the respondents were able to pick several answers, the total figure can exceed 100 percent.
- Where data is available from previous surveys, the survey results are shown in a trend comparison. Because of how the samples were done it is possible to see the long-term trend covering almost 40 years for boys and girls between 14 and 17 without a migrant background.
- Participants are deemed to have a migrant background if they themselves or at least one parent was born without German citizenship; this definition is also used by the Federal Statistical Office of Germany (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2021).
- The level of education is determined by the (desired) qualifications the study participants were / are seeking at school based on the education system in Germany. Low: 9 years of school, most are around 15 years old when they leave (e.g. Hauptschule) Moderate: 10 years of school, most are around 16 years old when they leave (e.g. mittlere Reife). High: 12 to 13 years of school, most are 18 to 19 years old when they leave (e.g. Abitur).
- Because of the methodological design of the Youth Sexuality Study a further non-binary differentiation of gender has had to be left out. For this same reason, the term 'sex' (biological aspects, assigned by birth) continues to be used (in contrast to 'gender' in the sense of social construction, gender identity as personal internal perception of oneself) to enable statements on long-term trends (see also Census UK, 2019). This decision is purely a methodological necessity and not based on a lack of awareness of diversity here.



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## The Research Project: Background, Research Team, Methodology

The Federal Centre for Health Education's (BZgA) representative study Youth Sexuality 9th Iteration is a repeat survey. In the summer of 2019 the ninth large-scale survey of young people, their parents and young adults began. A total of 6,032 interviews were conducted nationwide. Since 1980, the BZgA has been investigating the attitudes and behaviour of young people in the Federal Republic of Germany with regard to sexuality education, sexuality and contraception. This current study follows on from the previous years' studies with the explicit aim of illustrating trends.

### Project profile

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| <b>Client</b>                 | Federal Centre for Health Education (BZgA)   |
| <b>Project lead</b>           | Angelika Hessling, BZgA  |
| <b>Survey institute</b>       | Kantar GmbH  |
| <b>Survey population</b>      | Adolescents and young adults between the ages of 14 and 25   |
| <b>Survey method</b>          | Computer-supported combined oral-written survey; for the more intimate questions the questionnaire was to be filled out by the respondents without the interviewers being able to see. |
| <b>Selection method</b>       | A disproportionately selected quota sample with regards to sex, age and migrant background   |
| <b>Sample of young people</b> | 6,032 interviews<br>of which 3,556 were with adolescents between the ages of 14 and 17 and 2,476 with young adults between 18 and 25   |
| <b>Sample: parents</b>        | In the households of the 14- to 17-year-old adolescents without a migrant background one parent was also surveyed (2,422 interviews)   |
| <b>Weighting</b>              | All the data shown underwent a representative weighting in order to remove the sample's disproportionalities caused by the design.   |
| <b>Survey period</b>          | May to October 2019  |



### More information about the study Youth Sexuality 9th Iteration Central results and further fact sheets

<https://www.sexualaufklaerung.de/en/english/projects/detail/youth-sexuality-9th-iteration/>