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The State of Interactive Content 2026

What billions of interactions tell us about how audiences engage - and why interactive content matters in a post-search web

For publishers, brands, and media companies

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WHITE
PAPER

A data-driven look at how audiences engage with interactive content



Interactive content platform for publishers, media & brands

Executive summary

Search referrals are declining, and AI answers are absorbing clicks that once flowed to publishers. Media companies are looking for ways to earn attention directly on their own pages. Interactive content - quizzes, polls, personality tests, predictors and mini-games - is one of the most effective tools for this: it holds audiences on the page, captures first-party data, and drives organic sharing without relying on a search engine. This report is written for publishers, media companies and brands who want a clear view of how audiences behave in a post-search environment.

Throughout this report, “a Riddle” is our catch-all term for any interactive unit built on the platform - a quiz, poll, personality test, form, score predictor, mini-game or any other format. When we cite figures for a specific format, we name it.

The report draws on a representative sample of activity across the Riddle community: more than 3.8 billion content views over the trailing 12 months, of which over 1 billion turned into active engagements.

Three findings stand out:

- **Attention is the key finding.** The average person who starts a Riddle spends 112 seconds engaging with it. Across the sample that adds up to more than 31 million hours - over 3,500 years - of audience attention on interactive units alone. For context, that is 3-4x the average engaged time that Chartbeat records across the web with their real-time audience analytics platform - about 26 seconds globally in the second quarter of 2026 - measured the same active way.
- **Completion rates are high.** Nearly three in four people who start a Riddle finish it (72.7%). Once past the first question, drop-off is minimal, with question-to-question submit rates staying above 94%.
- **Format choice matters.** Mini-games hold attention for 6+ minutes on average; polls convert nearly everyone who starts (~99% completion) but in seconds; quizzes balance reach, depth and completion, which makes them the most widely used format.

1. Methodology & scope

Data source: Aggregated, anonymised interaction statistics from across the Riddle community. Every figure is an aggregate or a rate; no individual user data is included.

Time window: Trailing 12 months, June 2025 - May 2026, chosen so the “2026” framing reflects current behaviour. Longer-run trend context (from January 2024) is referenced where useful.

Exclusions: Bot traffic and sessions under 3 seconds are excluded from engagement figures.

Key definitions

- **View** - a Riddle loaded / impression served. This is the basis for the 3.8 billion+ headline figure.
- **Start** - a user actively began interacting (answered or advanced past the first screen).
- **Completion** - a user reached the final screen.
- **Time per start** - average active engagement time for users who started, in seconds.

2. The headline: attention at scale

Within the sampled period, Riddle interactive content delivered:

Metric	Trailing 12 months (Jun 2025 - May 2026)
Content views	3.8 billion+
Active starts	1 billion+
Overall completion rate	72.7%
Average time per start	112 seconds
Total engagement time	31.3 million hours (over 3,500 years)
Publisher & brand base	a global community across 20+ industries

The single most important number for a marketing audience is the 112-second average engagement time. Interactive units don't just get seen - they get used, and for far longer than a scroll past an article or a display ad.

Article comparison uses Chartbeat's Average Engaged Time, which was 26 seconds globally in the second quarter of 2026 ("Global audience insights from the second quarter of 2026," chartbeat.com). Chartbeat measures engaged time actively - scrolling, typing or mouse movement in a foreground tab - the same basis as Riddle's figure.

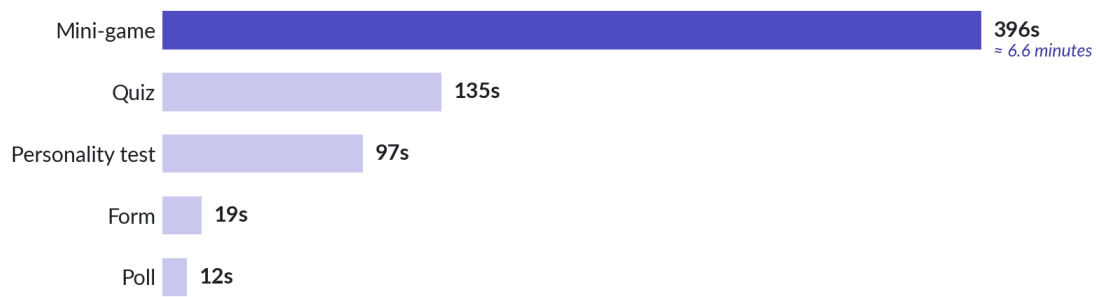
3. Findings by content type

Different formats do different jobs. Completion is shown as the median rate, which is more representative than the mean for engagement data. Volumes are shown as each format's share of total starts.

Format	View → start	Median completion	Avg time / start	Share of starts
Quiz	48.6%	72.9%	135 s	~73%
Poll	18.1%	98.6%	12 s	~19%
Personality test	52.7%	84.6%	97 s	~7%
Mini-game	33.4%	33.7%	396 s	~1%
Form	23.4%	80.0%	19 s	<1%
Average (weighted by volume)	43.0%	78.0%	112 s	100%

Mini-games hold attention 3× longer than a quiz

Average active time per engagement, by format



How to read this

- **Quizzes are the workhorse.** Nearly half of everyone who sees a quiz starts it, three-quarters finish, and they hold attention for over two minutes.
- **Personality tests are the best at pulling people in.** The highest view-to-start rate (52.7%) - the “which one are you?” hook converts curiosity into action better than any other format.
- **Polls are frictionless - and near-100% completion is by design.** Polls are almost always single-question formats, so casting a single vote is a completion. The ~99% completion rate reflects the format’s structure (one tap = done) rather than unusually sticky content, and should be read differently from a multi-step quiz. It makes polls ideal for lightweight engagement and sentiment capture at scale, in a few seconds each.
- **Mini-games are the dwell-time champions.** At ~6.6 minutes of average engagement, mini-games hold attention roughly 3x longer than a quiz and an order of magnitude longer than a poll. Their lower completion rate reflects open-ended play (there isn’t always a defined “finish”) rather than abandonment. This is the strongest data point for the “time-on-site” pitch.

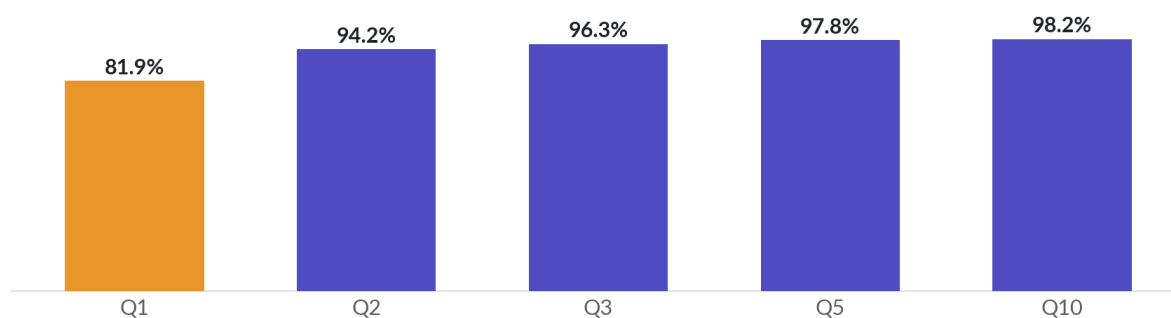
A note on that ~1% volume share: mini-games are Riddle’s newest format - Sudoku, crosswords and more - so usage is still ramping up. Their small share reflects how recently they launched, not their engagement power, which is the highest of any format here. Expect this share to grow as adoption spreads.

4. The engagement funnel

Aggregating across formats in the sample, the funnel is remarkably shallow after the first step.

Clear question 1, and almost everyone finishes

Average submit rate by question position - Q1 (amber) is the only real drop-off



Submit rate by question position

Question	Avg submit rate
Q1	81.9%
Q2	94.2%
Q3	96.3%
Q5	97.8%
Q10	98.2%

The pattern is consistent: the first question is where you win or lose the audience. About 18% of starters drop at Q1; after that, well over 94% of people carry through every subsequent question. Momentum compounds - the further in someone gets, the more likely they are to keep going.

Length matters

Length	Median completion
1-5 questions	86.4%
6-10 questions	75.2%
11-15 questions	77.5%
16+ questions	59.1%

TAKEAWAY

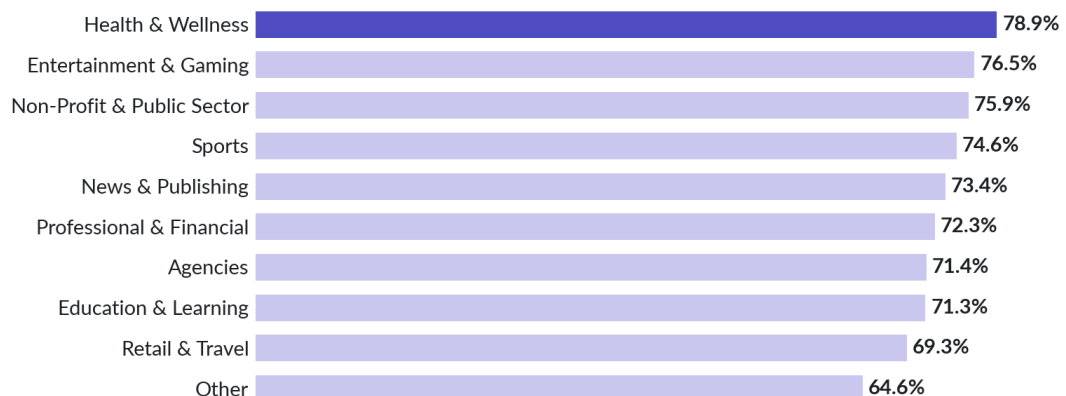
Keep it to 5 questions where completion is the goal, invest heavily in a strong first question, and reserve longer formats for high-intent audiences.

5. Findings by vertical

The 20+ industries in the sample have been consolidated into 10 verticals, shown here by average engagement time and completion rate, ordered from longest to shortest time (with the catch-all Other group last).

Interactive content completes across every vertical

Start-to-finish completion rate by publisher vertical



Vertical	Avg time per start	Completion rate
Education & Learning	212 s	71.3%
Professional & Financial Services	158 s	72.3%
News & Publishing	112 s	73.4%
Entertainment & Gaming	103 s	76.5%
Non-Profit & Public Sector	94 s	75.9%
Agencies	92 s	71.4%
Health & Wellness	81 s	78.9%
Sports	70 s	74.6%
Retail & Travel	68 s	69.3%
Other	212 s	64.6%

- **News & Publishing dominates engagement volume.** This industry posts a healthy 73.4% completion rate at scale, proving interactive content works in the highest-traffic environments.
- **Health & Wellness leads on completion (78.9%),** with Entertainment & Gaming (76.5%) and Sports (74.6%) close behind. Topics people feel personally invested in finish best.
- **Sports punches above its weight.** The sports industry shows high completion rates (74.6%) with fast engagement content, well suited to live-event polls and predictors.
- **Education and Professional Services trade reach for depth.** As expected, the education sector shows the longest engagement times in the sample (150-210+ seconds), consistent with considered, high-intent audiences.

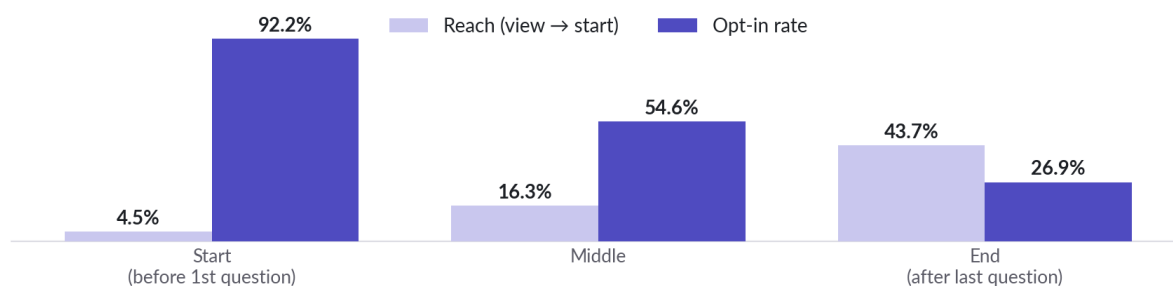
6. Lead generation: interactive content as a capture tool

For publishers and brands using Riddle to capture leads, placement of the lead/opt-in step is decisive. Across the lead-enabled riddles in the sample:

Lead-step placement	View → start	Start → completion	Opt-in rate (% of starts)
Start (before 1st question)	4.5%	78.0%	92.2%
Middle	16.3%	73.9%	54.6%
End (after last question)	43.7%	51.9%	26.9%
Overall	14.0%	61.0%	61.0%

Ask early for opt-in quality, ask late for reach

Reach (view to start) vs opt-in rate (share of starters), by lead-step placement



Opt-in rate is the share of everyone who started the interactive who went on to submit the lead form (median across riddles). A start-based denominator keeps the three placements comparable, since the lead step sits at a different point in each.

There is a clear trade-off, and it turns on whether the form gates the content. A form placed before the first question acts as a gate: only 4.5% of viewers push past it to start, but of those who do, 92.2% opt in. A form placed at the end is invisible to someone deciding whether to begin, so those riddles start at the platform's normal rate - 43.7%, in line with the ~43% volume-weighted average across formats - and far more people enter, but by then only 26.9% of starters opt in. Front-gating trades reach for opt-in quality; end-placing trades opt-in rate for reach.

The 43.7% is an aggregate across every format in the end-placement cohort, not a single format's start rate, so it will not match any single row in the format table above. It sits above a simple five-format average (35.2%) because that average under-weights quizzes, which drive most of the volume; weighted by starts, the platform view-to-start rate is about 43%.

How placement plays out: a 10,000-view

Applying each placement's rates to the same 10,000 people who load a Riddle shows how the trade-off plays out in practice:

Placement	Starts	Completions	Leads captured	Opt-in (% of starts)
Start (before 1st question)	450	351	415	92.2%
Middle	1,630	1,205	890	54.6%
End (after last question)	4,370	2,268	1,176	26.9%
Overall (any placement)	1,400	854	854	61.0%

Two things stand out:

- The end placement captures the most leads in absolute terms (1,176 versus 415), even though its opt-in rate is the lowest, because removing the gate means nearly ten times as many people start.
- The front-gated form produces more leads than completions (415 versus 351): because the email is captured before the content, some people opt in and then leave before the final screen.

Front-gated leads opt in before they start; end-gated leads have worked all the way through. The choice depends on the objectives of the publisher or media company. Gating at the front produces fewer leads but higher intent - from users interested enough to opt in before they have even seen the experience. Placing the form at the end increases the total number.

7. Social sharing

Interactive content earns organic distribution. In the sample, sharing shows clear format and channel patterns.

By format (share rate = shares per completion)

Format	Share rate
Personality test	0.66%
Quiz	0.30%
Mini-game	0.22%
Poll	0.20%
Form	0.14%

Personality tests are the most shareable format - the "here's my result" moment is inherently social, driving more than double the share rate of quizzes.

By channel

Channel	Share of all shares	Trackable?
WhatsApp	75.0%	Dark social
Facebook	12.4%	Public
X / Twitter	9.2%	Public
Email	1.1%	Dark social
Messenger	0.9%	Dark social
LinkedIn	0.7%	Public
Copy link	0.4%	Dark social

Channel	Share of all shares	Trackable?
SMS	0.2%	Dark social
Telegram	0.1%	Dark social
Other (Instagram, Viber, Pinterest, Reddit, etc.)	<0.1%	Mixed

What the “Trackable?” column means: “Public” channels (Facebook, X, LinkedIn) are open networks, so a share and the clicks it drives can be measured with standard web analytics and referrer data. “Dark social” channels (WhatsApp, Messenger, email, SMS, and copy-pasted links) are private, so the share happens where analytics cannot see it - the resulting visits usually show up as “direct” traffic with no referrer, which is why they are effectively untrackable.

~78% of sharing happens in dark social

Share of all shares by channel - WhatsApp dominates



DARK SOCIAL

Roughly 78% of all sharing happens over “dark social” - private channels like WhatsApp, Messenger, email, SMS and copy-paste links that conventional web analytics cannot see or attribute. WhatsApp alone drives three-quarters of shares. The implication: on-platform share counts materially understate true reach, because most of the sharing - and the referral traffic it generates - is invisible to standard measurement.

Conclusion

As search referrals fade, publishers and brands are building engagement directly on their own pages. The data here is consistent across every format and vertical: interactive content earns sustained attention, averaging 112 seconds per engagement, with completion rates near three in four and organic sharing that reaches well beyond what standard analytics capture. It gives publishers a practical way to hold readers and collect first-party data at the same time.

For publishers working in a post-search environment, that mix of attention, first-party data, and distribution earned on their own pages is a strong foundation to build on.

GET STARTED

Riddle powers interactive content for publishers, media companies and brands worldwide - 35+ formats, no code, EU-based and 100% GDPR-compliant. To see what it could do for your audience, visit riddle.com or book a demo.



Ready to turn readers into participants?

Riddle gives publishers, media companies and brands 35+ interactive content formats - quizzes, polls, personality tests, predictors, mini-games and more. No code. EU-based and fully GDPR-compliant. Built to grow engagement, first-party data and revenue.

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