Community Information Needs and Habits in Wyoming

January 2025

WYOMING LOCAL NEWS FUND

IMPACT ARCHITECTS

Wyoming Local News & Information Ecosystem

This report was commissioned by the Wyoming Community Foundation, in partnership with the Wyoming Local News Fund and the Press Forward Wyoming chapter.

The Wyoming Local News Fund envisions a future where all Wyoming residents have access to the local news and information they need and want to thrive. To reach this aim, the Fund supports trustworthy, equitable and solutions-focused projects and organizations that contribute to a vibrant media ecosystem. Launched in November 2023, the Wyoming Local News Fund is a fiscally sponsored project of the Wyoming Community Foundation.

For 35 years the Wyoming Community Foundation (WYCF) has connected people who care with causes that matter to build a better Wyoming. Over the years, WYCF has not only granted over 100 million to charitable causes; we have worked on statewide initiatives that support Wyoming families and communities.

As a local chapter of Press Forward, WYCF is launching a new initiative to support news and information systems across the state and ensure that Wyomingites have the information they need from a place they trust.

Introduction

In 2024, Impact Architects partnered with the Wyoming Local News Fund (WLNF) and the Wyoming Community Foundation (WYCF) to conduct a local news and information ecosystem assessment. As part of that project, WYCF committed resources to support a statewide survey to better understand residents' news and information consumption habits and preferences, as well as their information needs and levels of trust in local news providers.

Impact Architects designed the community information needs and habits survey instrument, with feedback and contributions from the WLNF and WYCF, and the survey was administered by the Wyoming Survey & Analysis Center at the University of Wyoming (WYSAC). There were a total of 740 respondents across the state. There were sufficient responses to analyze the results and identify similarities and differences based on age, political ideology, and geography (NW, NE, SE, and SW). Some survey results were shared in our Wyoming Local News and Information Ecosystem report, published in November 2024. In this report, we aim to share a more detailed and comprehensive analysis of the survey results.

Overall, the results provide a broad and deep understanding of Wyomingites' relationship to local news, including actionable information for news organizations, funders and advertisers, and for all who are working to imagine a robust future for local news in the state.

The strength of this survey is that it was conducted across the state, invited participation both digitally and via mail, and garnered a representative sample of residents. In our ecosystem assessments, we often have to rely on national survey results with small, non-representative local samples to provide some insight into what's happening at the local level, or look to outdated data, such as Pew's 2019 Local News survey. It is our strong recommendation that any coalition of ecosystem builders, funders, and news organizations interested in baselining their ecosystem, generating actionable information, and measuring change over time implement a similar local survey.

Topline findings include:
- While Wyomingites nearly unanimously agree that there is at least one local news source serving their community, they are often dissatisfied with their coverage of some topics.
- People prefer to get news and information from digital sources, including websites and social media, and yet they report their most useful sources of local news are friends, family, colleagues, and acquaintances and that they most often get news and information via word of mouth.
  - The most frequently cited sources of trusted local journalism are digital-only sources.
  - Younger residents prefer to get their news from social media, with 42% of residents between 18-44 years

of age preferring to get their news and information this way, compared with only 12% over 45.

- More than two-thirds (68%) of residents say their most useful sources of information for schools and education are friends, family, colleagues or acquaintances.
- Residents identify online search as one of the most useful ways to obtain information on a variety of topics, often more useful than local news websites.

- Survey respondents nearly unanimously agree that it is important for local journalists to understand the history of a community and to be deeply engaged in the community.
- While 86% of residents say information about government is important, only 45% are satisfied with local coverage of government.
- Fewer than one in ten Wyomingites prefers getting local news from television, and this falls to a mere 2% for young residents (age 18 to 44) and 2% of residents who identify as liberal.
- Most respondents (75.4%) do not pay for a subscription to a local newspaper, and only 3.3% said they would if an option were available.
  - Older people are more likely to pay for news, with about a third of those aged 45-plus said they pay for a subscription, compared to less than 10% of those aged 18-44.
- When asked to name their most trusted source of local news and information, no single outlet received mentions from even ten percent of respondents, reflecting the fractured nature of the media landscape where there are many local outlets focused on covering a single municipality or county within the state.

Analysis

Consumption habits & preferences

The survey included a series of questions designed to better understand Wyomingites' current news and information consumption habits, as well as their preferences. We wanted to know what mediums residents prefer to get local news and information.

Statewide: Which of the following do you prefer for getting local news and information?

A news websote or app	40.3%
Social media	25.7%
Print newspaper	17.5%
Television	9.9%
Radio	6.6%
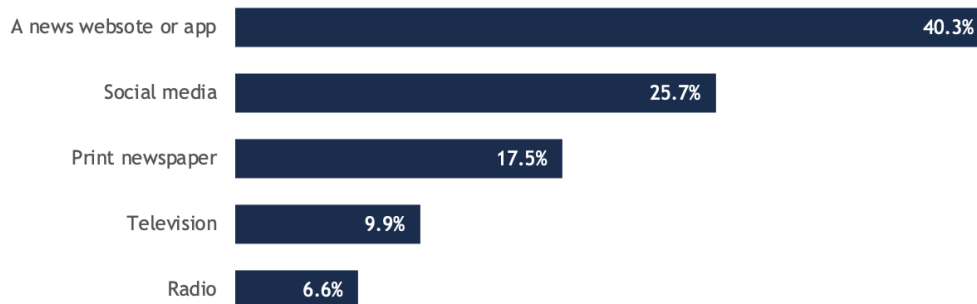
In general, Wyoming residents are getting their news and information online. Nearly half of the respondents said they prefer to get local news and information on a news website or app, and more than a quarter said they get it through social media. Digging into this overall trend, young people aged 18 to 44 are three times more likely to prefer getting local news through social media when compared with people age 45 and above (42.4% compared with 12.3%). More than half of those who identified themselves as liberal said they prefer a news app or website, compared with just over 35% of those who identified as moderate or conservative.

Wyomingites aged 18-44 far prefer getting news from social media compared to those aged 45+, who comparatively prefer television and print newspapers.

	18-44	45+
Social media site (such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, etc.)	42%	12%
Television	2%	15%
Print newspaper	12%	23%
A news website or app	37%	41%
Radio	6%	8%
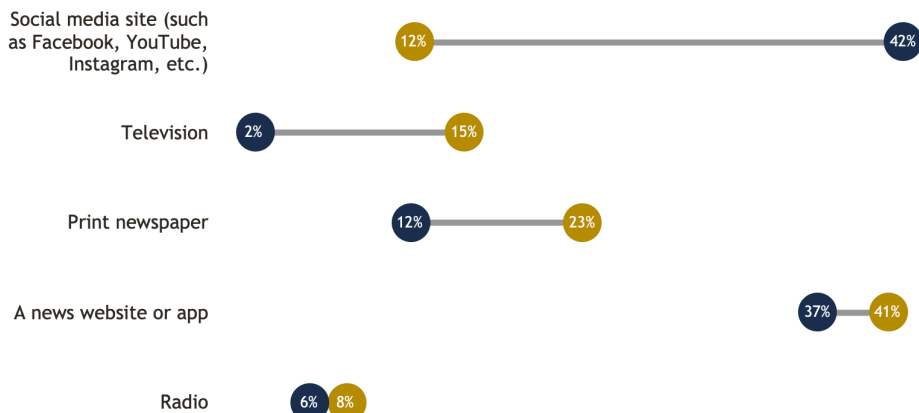
Wyomingites who identify as **liberal** prefer getting their news and information from a news website or app more than those who identify as **moderate** or **conservative**.

	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
A news website or app	56.0%	36.0%	36.8%
Social media site (such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, etc.)	19.5%	30.4%	22.9%
Print newspaper	18.0%	18.1%	18.2%
Radio	4.6%	5.2%	9.9%
Television	1.9%	10.3%	12.2%
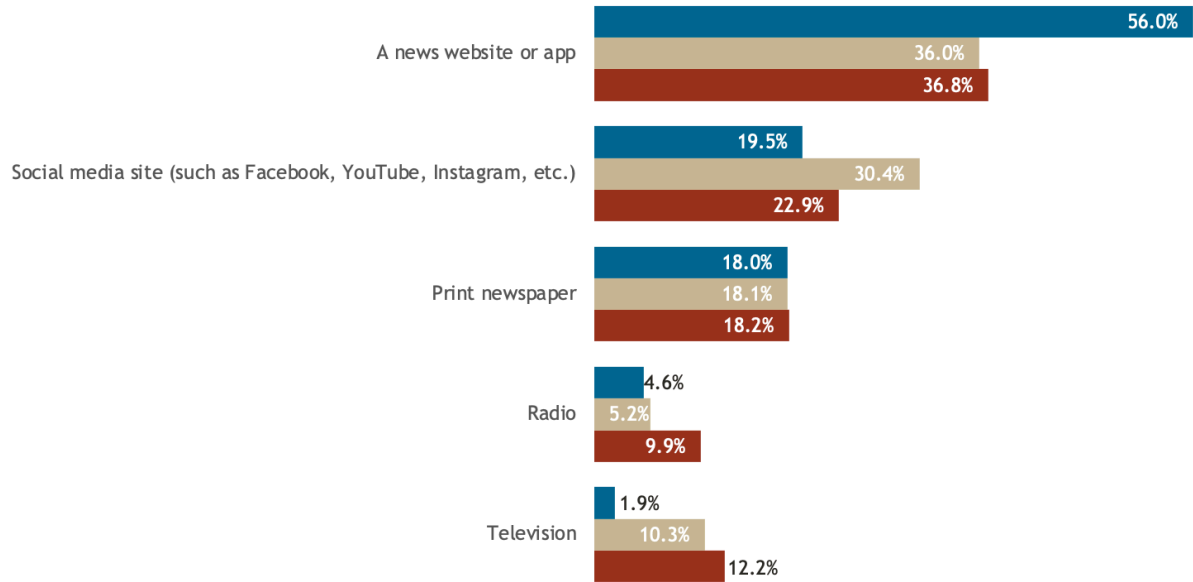
In addition to knowing how people prefer to get local news and information, we wanted to know what sources people find most useful. While the list of options included standard journalistic sources of news and information, we also included other common sources, such as friends, family, colleagues, and acquaintances, and government agencies.

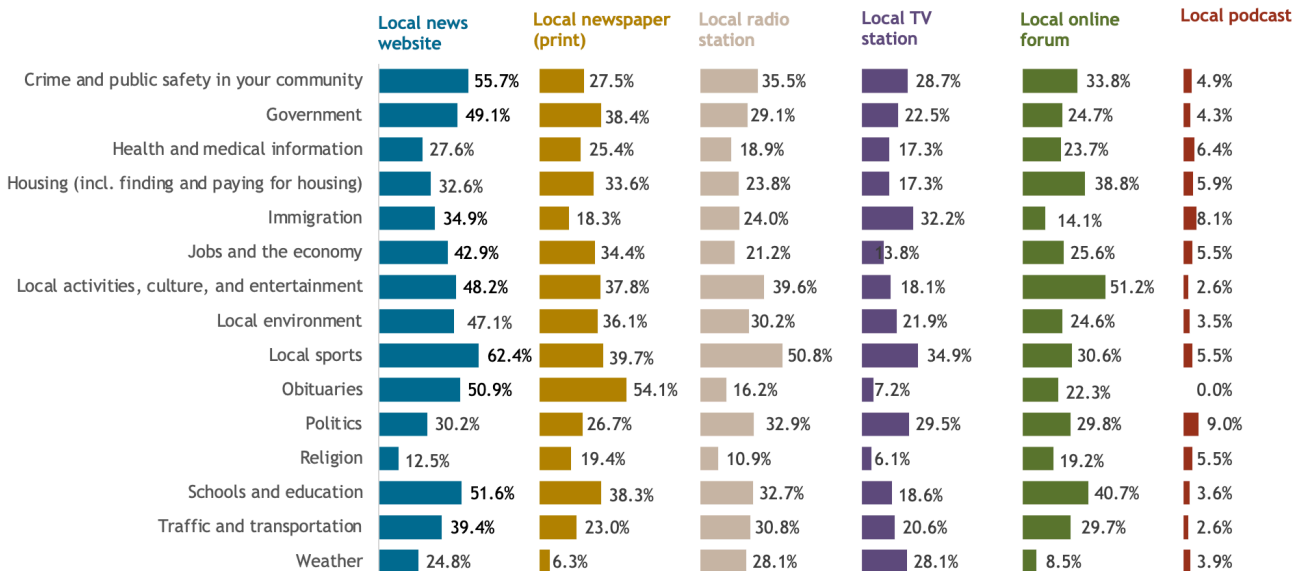Overall, online search, local news websites, and friends, family, colleagues, and acquaintances are most commonly cited as useful sources of information. There are some differences when considering which sources are most useful for information about particular topics. For example, people said that friends, family, colleagues, and acquaintances are most useful for information about religion and local activities.

The relative utility of local news sources based on topics of interest

	Local news website	Local newspaper (print)	Local radio station	Local TV station	Local online forum	Local podcast
Crime and public safety in your community	55.7%	27.5%	35.5%	28.7%	33.8%	4.9%
Government	49.1%	38.4%	29.1%	22.5%	24.7%	4.3%
Health and medical information	27.6%	25.4%	18.9%	17.3%	23.7%	6.4%
Housing (incl. finding and paying for housing)	32.6%	33.6%	23.8%	17.3%	38.8%	5.9%
Immigration	34.9%	18.3%	24.0%	32.2%	14.1%	8.1%
Jobs and the economy	42.9%	34.4%	21.2%	3.8%	25.6%	5.5%
Local activities, culture, and entertainment	48.2%	37.8%	39.6%	18.1%	51.2%	2.6%
Local environment	47.1%	36.1%	30.2%	21.9%	24.6%	3.5%
Local sports	62.4%	39.7%	50.8%	34.9%	30.6%	5.5%
Obituaries	50.9%	54.1%	16.2%	7.2%	22.3%	0.0%
Politics	30.2%	26.7%	32.9%	29.5%	29.8%	9.0%
Religion	12.5%	19.4%	10.9%	6.1%	19.2%	5.5%
Schools and education	51.6%	38.3%	32.7%	18.6%	40.7%	3.6%
Traffic and transportation	39.4%	23.0%	30.8%	20.6%	29.7%	2.6%
Weather	24.8%	6.3%	28.1%	28.1%	8.5%	3.9%

The most useful source for schools and education is friends and family (68%), with the next most useful being local news websites (52%). There is opportunity to investigate this trend more with stakeholder conversations to better understand if news coverage for schools and education is inadequate, if education and schools is simply a frequent topic of conversation among friends and family, or both.

The relative utility of other information sources based on topics of interest

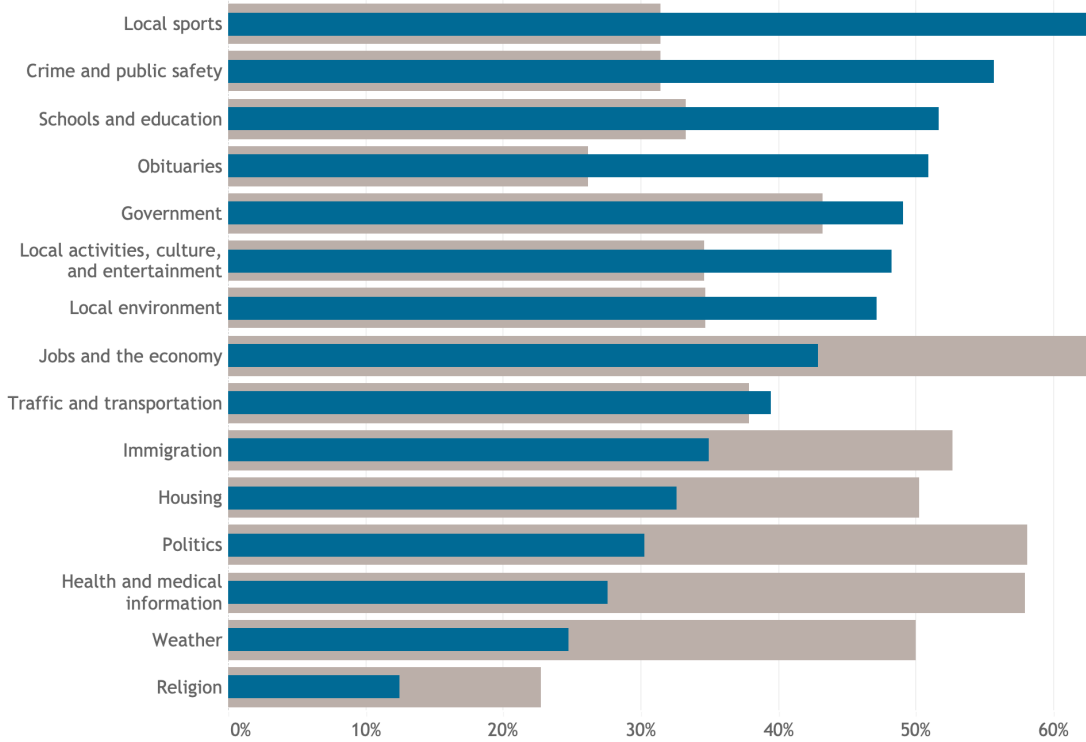|	Friends, family, colleagues	Online search	A government agency	Local community center	Religious leader	Other
Crime and public safety in your community	40.8%	31.4%	14.6%	1.4%	2.7%	2.9%
Government	33.7%	43.2%	34.3%	3.5%	3.1%	8.3%
Health and medical information	53.7%	57.9%	23.6%	8.2%	0.0%	4.5%
Housing (incl. finding and paying for housing)	46.1%	50.2%	25.2%	12.6%	0.9%	4.1%
Immigration	34.5%	52.6%	16.0%	2.1%	3.7%	15.3%
Jobs and the economy	54.1%	62.7%	24.1%	9.8%	3.1%	9.7%
Local activities, culture, and entertainment	65.8%	34.6%	7.4%	19.3%	3.7%	4.4%
Local environment	44.5%	34.7%	30.3%	6.5%	1.4%	5.2%
Local sports	61.5%	31.4%	2.8%	18.5%	0.0%	4.1%
Obituaries	41.0%	26.2%	3.9%	1.1%	10.7%	10.7%
Politics	38.8%	58.1%	19.7%	2.5%	1.9%	17.7%
Religion	73.8%	22.7%	0.0%	4.9%	55.9%	12.9%
Schools and education	67.6%	33.3%	21.1%	8.7%	4.2%	10.3%
Traffic and transportation	36.0%	37.9%	27.5%	1.3%	1.7%	9.6%
Weather	15.2%	49.9%	16.7%	1.9%	0.6%	23.6%

Comparing the relative utility of local news websites to online search shows a clear divide with regard to topic type. Residents identify local news websites as more useful for strictly local, "newsy" matters such crime and public safety, local environment, local sports, and schools and education. Online search, however, is more useful for topics that, while "newsy," also have a utilitarian element, such as housing (including finding and paying for housing), jobs and the economy (including for finding jobs, financial decisions, and support), and health and medical information (including finding and paying for care). It also includes topics with a national bend, such as immigration and politics.
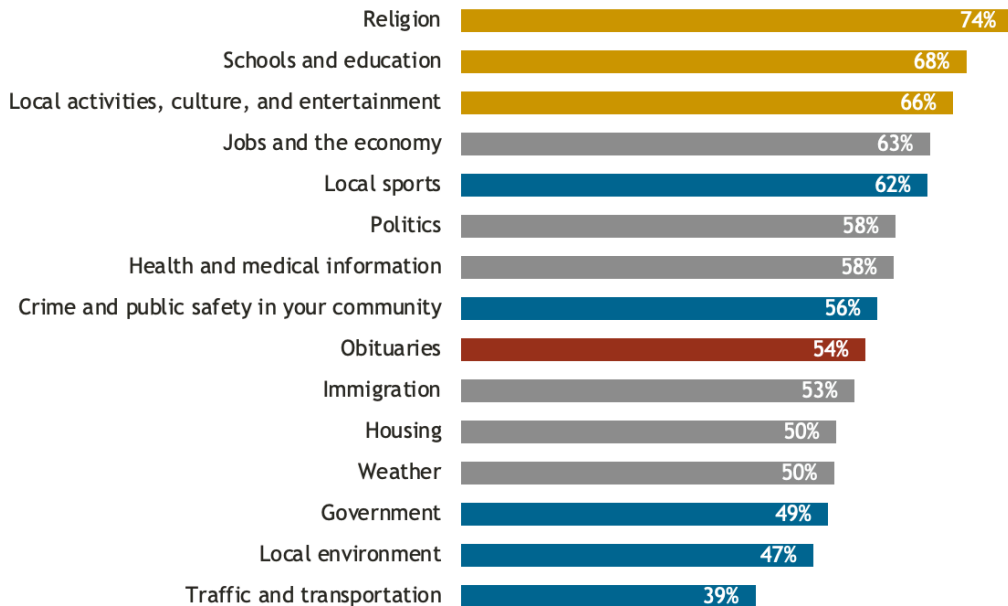
Opportunity
There could be an opportunity for local news in Wyoming to be more oriented toward supporting residents in identifying resources in areas such as housing, work, and health.

The usefullness of **local news websites** compared to **online search** for finding information depends on the topic type.

Topic	
Local sports	
Crime and public safety	
Schools and education	
Obituaries	
Government	
Local activities, culture, and entertainment	
Local environment	
Jobs and the economy	
Traffic and transportation	
Immigration	
Housing	
Politics	
Health and medical information	
Weather	
Religion	

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60%

Friends, family, colleagues, and acquaintances are cited at a higher frequency as the most useful source of news and information, while **online search** is cited as most useful for the most topics; **local news websites** and **local newspapers** are cited less frequently and for fewer topics.

Topic	Percent
Religion	74%
Schools and education	68%
Local activities, culture, and entertainment	66%
Jobs and the economy	63%
Local sports	62%
Politics	58%
Health and medical information	58%
Crime and public safety in your community	56%
Obituaries	54%
Immigration	53%
Housing	50%
Weather	50%
Government	49%
Local environment	47%
Traffic and transportation	39%

Regardless of peoples' preferences for news, there is general agreement across the state that there are local news sources in each community. Nearly all residents indicate that they know of digital media, radio, online discussion groups, and newspapers that produce local news. Only half say that they know of a local TV news station, which aligns with what we know about local broadcast TV news in the state, which tends to be located in one of the larger communities or in cities in neighboring states.
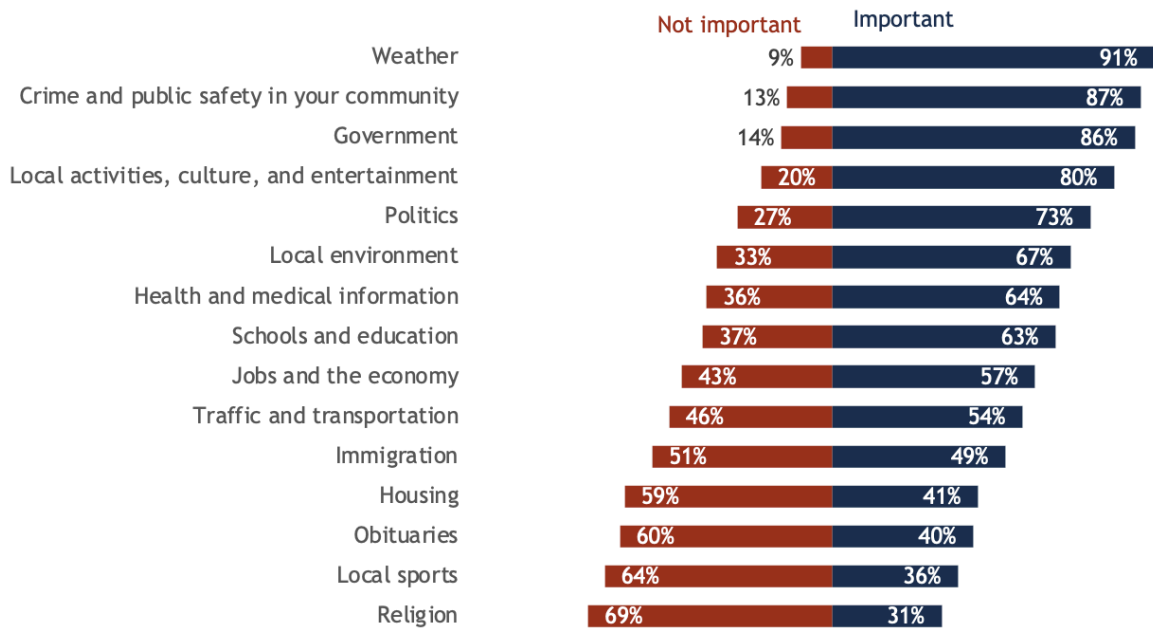
As far as you know, in your local community, is there at least one of the following news sources?
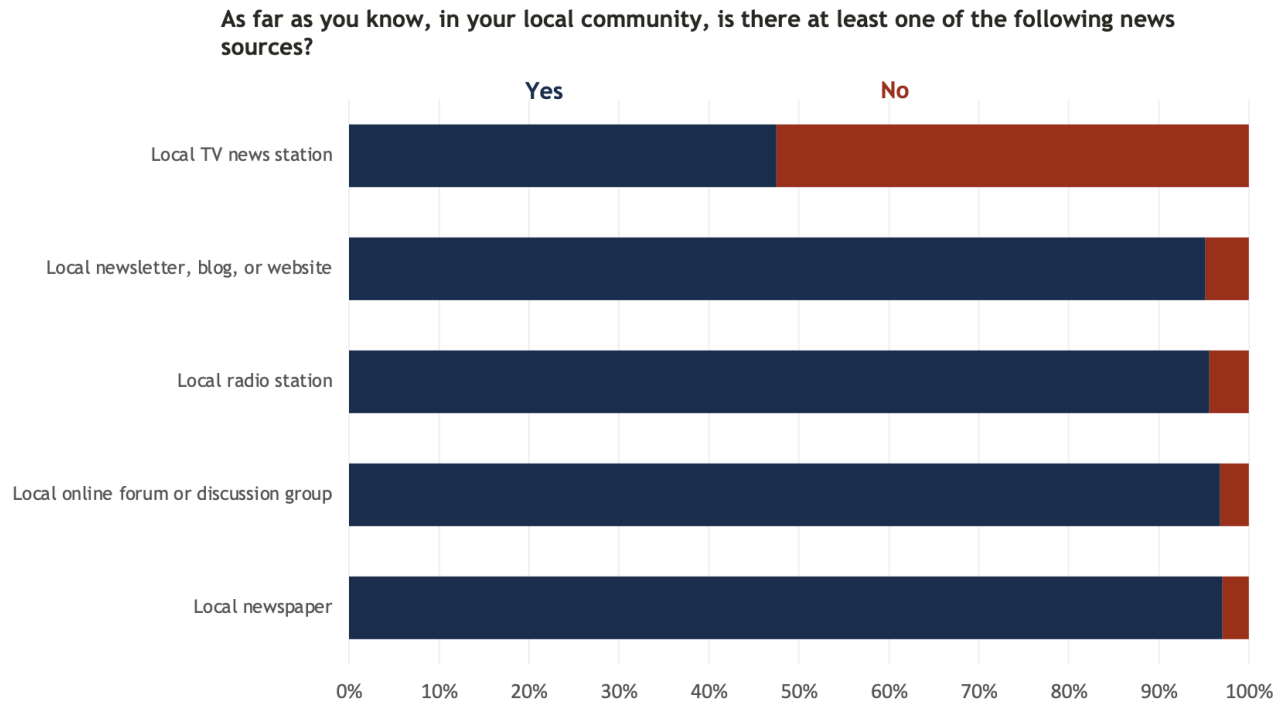
Information needs

A goal of this survey was to surface Wyomingites' critical information needs, and especially those that are not currently being met, illuminating opportunity areas for local journalists and news organizations for reporting as well as areas of need for philanthropic funding. Borrowing from Pew's 2019 local news survey, we asked respondents to rank how "important or interesting" information about a series of 15 topics are to their daily life, and then to rank how satisfied (or not) they were with information about these same topics.[1] The combination of responses from these two questions illustrates the opportunity gaps — and information needs — among WY residents.
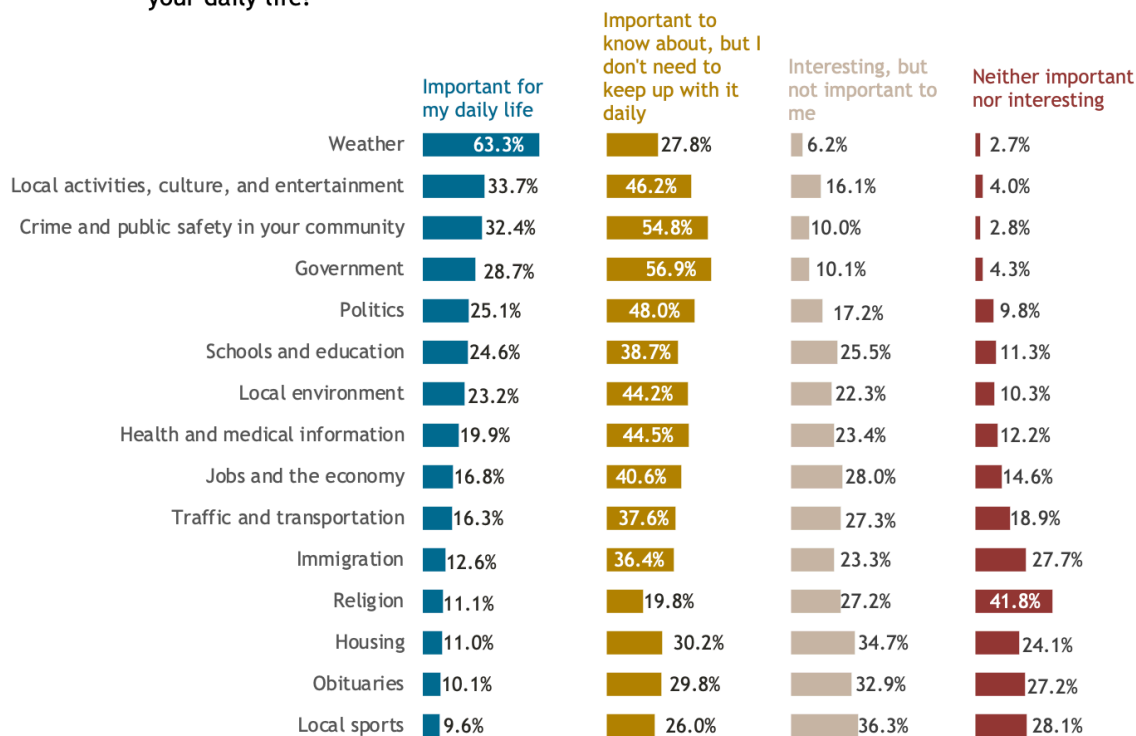
Overall, a majority of residents say that 10 out of the 15 topics presented are either important to their daily life or are important to know about, but not to keep up with daily. These include a range of topics, with the most important being weather, followed closely by topics such as crime and public safety, government, and local activities. Among the five topics of least importance (where the majority of respondents said are either interesting but not important, or neither interesting nor important), religion is least important. That is not to say religion itself is not important for Wyomingites, but news about religion from local news organizations is not. Other topics identified as not important include local sports and obituaries.

How important or interesting is information about each of the following local topics for your daily life?

Topic	Not important	Important
Weather	9%	91%
Crime and public safety in your community	13%	87%
Government	14%	86%
Local activities, culture, and entertainment	20%	80%
Politics	27%	73%
Local environment	33%	67%
Health and medical information	36%	64%
Schools and education	37%	63%
Jobs and the economy	43%	57%
Traffic and transportation	46%	54%
Immigration	51%	49%
Housing	59%	41%
Obituaries	60%	40%
Local sports	64%	36%
Religion	69%	31%

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1   Q7 How important or interesting is information about each of the following local topics for your daily life? Important for my daily life (1) Important to know about, but I don't need to keep up with it daily (2)   Interesting, but not important to me (3)   Neither important nor interesting (4)
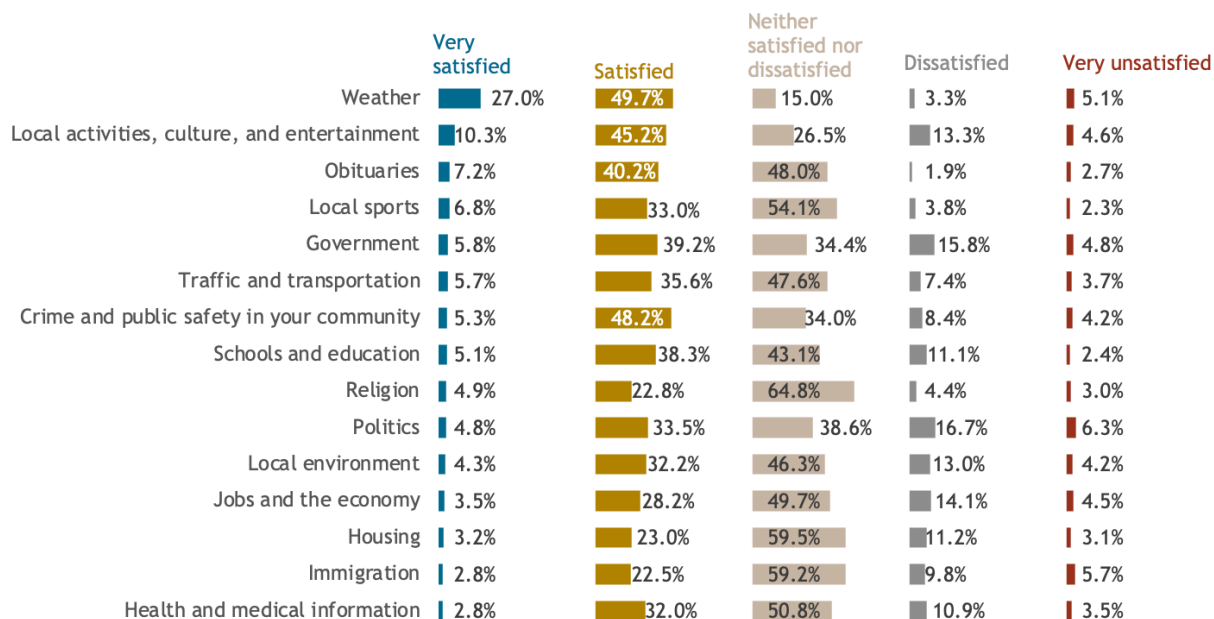
How important or interesting is information about each of the following local topics for your daily life?

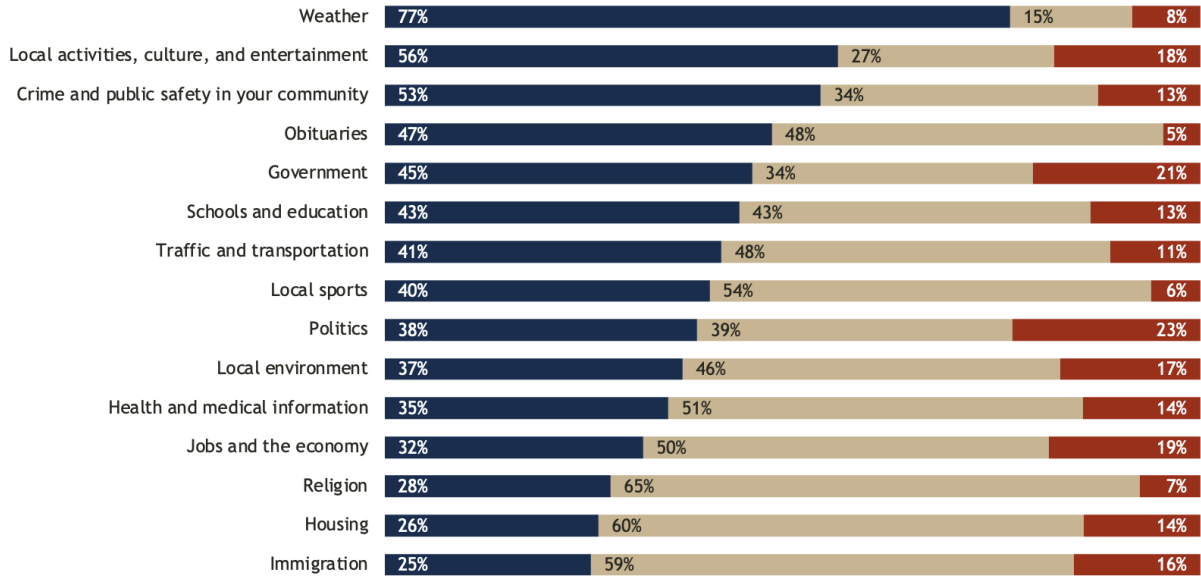|	Important for my daily life	Important to know about, but I don't need to keep up with it daily	Interesting, but not important to me	Neither important nor interesting
Weather	63.3%	27.8%	6.2%	2.7%
Local activities, culture, and entertainment	33.7%	46.2%	16.1%	4.0%
Crime and public safety in your community	32.4%	54.8%	10.0%	2.8%
Government	28.7%	56.9%	10.1%	4.3%
Politics	25.1%	48.0%	17.2%	9.8%
Schools and education	24.6%	38.7%	25.5%	11.3%
Local environment	23.2%	44.2%	22.3%	10.3%
Health and medical information	19.9%	44.5%	23.4%	12.2%
Jobs and the economy	16.8%	40.6%	28.0%	14.6%
Traffic and transportation	16.3%	37.6%	27.3%	18.9%
Immigration	12.6%	36.4%	23.3%	27.7%
Religion	11.1%	19.8%	27.2%	41.8%
Housing	11.0%	30.2%	34.7%	24.1%
Obituaries	10.1%	29.8%	32.9%	27.2%
Local sports	9.6%	26.0%	36.3%	28.1%

Respondents were most satisfied with information they are able to get about weather (77%), local activities, culture, and entertainment (56%), and crime and public safety in their community (53%), while they were not satisfied with information about politics (23%) and government (21%).
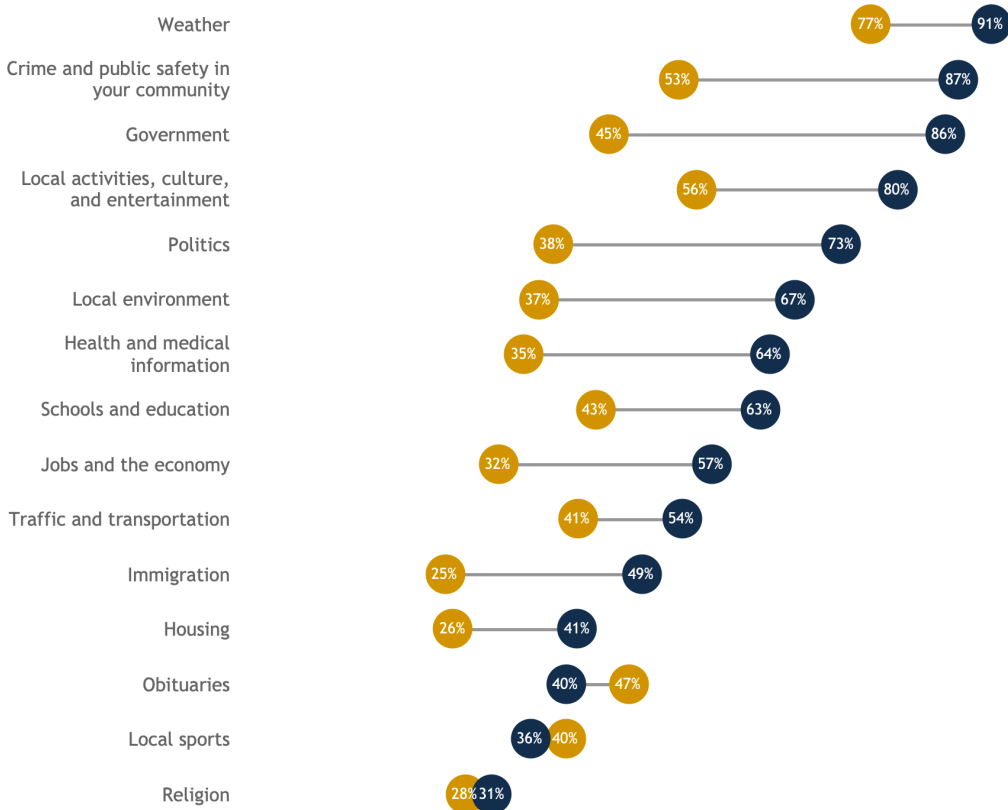
How unsatisfied or satisfied are you with the information you are able to get for each of the following topics?

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very unsatisfied
Weather	27.0%	49.7%	15.0%	3.3%	5.1%
Local activities, culture, and entertainment	10.3%	45.2%	26.5%	13.3%	4.6%
Obituaries	7.2%	40.2%	48.0%	1.9%	2.7%
Local sports	6.8%	33.0%	54.1%	3.8%	2.3%
Government	5.8%	39.2%	34.4%	15.8%	4.8%
Traffic and transportation	5.7%	35.6%	47.6%	7.4%	3.7%
Crime and public safety in your community	5.3%	48.2%	34.0%	8.4%	4.2%
Schools and education	5.1%	38.3%	43.1%	11.1%	2.4%
Religion	4.9%	22.8%	64.8%	4.4%	3.0%
Politics	4.8%	33.5%	38.6%	16.7%	6.3%
Local environment	4.3%	32.2%	46.3%	13.0%	4.2%
Jobs and the economy	3.5%	28.2%	49.7%	14.1%	4.5%
Housing	3.2%	23.0%	59.5%	11.2%	3.1%
Immigration	2.8%	22.5%	59.2%	9.8%	5.7%
Health and medical information	2.8%	32.0%	50.8%	10.9%	3.5%

Wyomingites are more **satisfied** than **dissatisfied** for every topic, but for most topics a plurality of Wyomingites say they are **neither satisfied nor disatisfied** with the information they are able to get.

Topic	Satisfied	Neither	Dissatisfied
Weather	77%	15%	8%
Local activities, culture, and entertainment	56%	27%	18%
Crime and public safety in your community	53%	34%	13%
Obituaries	47%	48%	5%
Government	45%	34%	21%
Schools and education	43%	43%	13%
Traffic and transportation	41%	48%	11%
Local sports	40%	54%	6%
Politics	38%	39%	23%
Local environment	37%	46%	17%
Health and medical information	35%	51%	14%
Jobs and the economy	32%	50%	19%
Religion	28%	65%	7%
Housing	26%	60%	14%
Immigration	25%	59%	16%

Information needs: **Importance of issues** compared with **satisfaction of coverage**

Topic	Satisfaction	Importance
Weather	77%	91%
Crime and public safety in your community	53%	87%
Government	45%	86%
Local activities, culture, and entertainment	56%	80%
Politics	38%	73%
Local environment	37%	67%
Health and medical information	35%	64%
Schools and education	43%	63%
Jobs and the economy	32%	57%
Traffic and transportation	41%	54%
Immigration	25%	49%
Housing	26%	41%
Obituaries	47%	40%
Local sports	40%	36%
Religion	31%	28%

Respondents ranked the importance of issues higher than their satisfaction of coverage for all topics except for obituaries, local sports, and religion (which were also the least important issues to respondents). The largest gaps in importance versus satisfaction are in government (41 percentage point gap), politics (35 percentage point gap), and crime and public safety (34 percentage point gap), with significant gaps also presented in local activities, culture, and entertainment, local environment, health and medical information, jobs and the economy, and immigration.

Trust in news

Trust in news is challenging to measure: it is an abstract concept, rather than an observable habit or defined preference. We asked a series of questions designed to better understand some of the dimensions of WY residents' trust in local news providers, as well as to better understand how residents suggest news and information providers could shift practices in order to increase trust.

Nearly half of all respondents (47.3%) say there is a trustworthy and accessible source for local news in their community; however, nearly a third are "unsure" (32.0%). More than half of younger respondents (18 to 44) reported having a trustworthy and accessible source of local news and information, compared with less than 44.1% of those 45 and older.

Do you feel your community in Wyoming has a trustworthy and accessible news source?

Yes	47.3%
Unsure	32.0%
No	20.8%
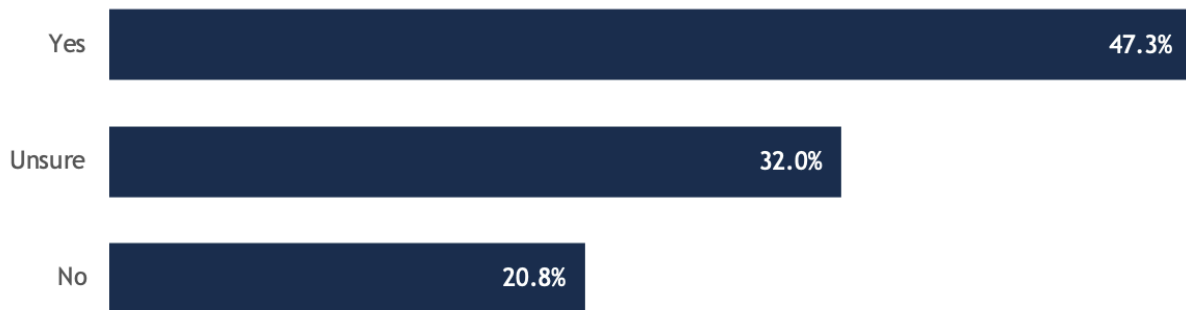
More 18-44 year olds than those aged 45+ feel their community has a trustworthy and accessible source of news and information.

	18-44	45+
Yes	52.2%	44.1%
Unsure	35.5%	28.8%
No	12.3%	27.2%
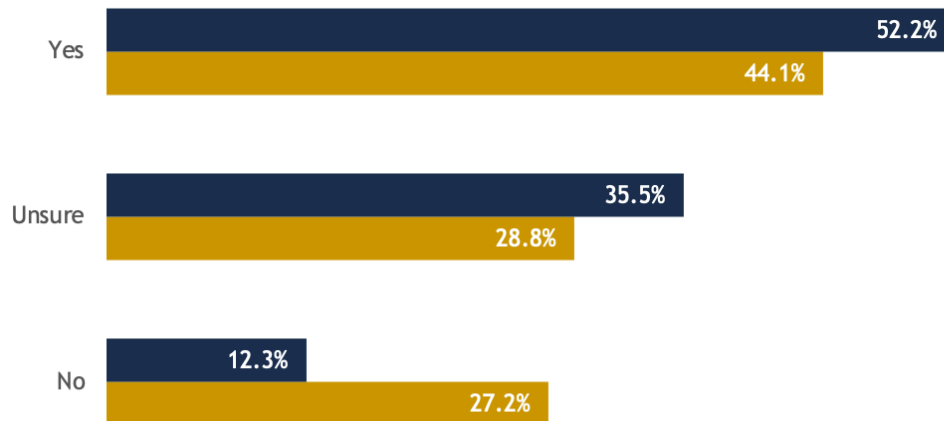
Overall, three quarters of respondents reported that local journalists in their area are in touch with the local community. This trend is strongest in the northeast quadrant with nearly 86% of respondents saying journalists are in touch, and lowest in the CE/SE, where nearly one third of respondents said that journalists are "out of touch." A very small percentage, 0.09% of all survey takers, responded that "there are no local journalists in my area. These responses are not included in the analysis.
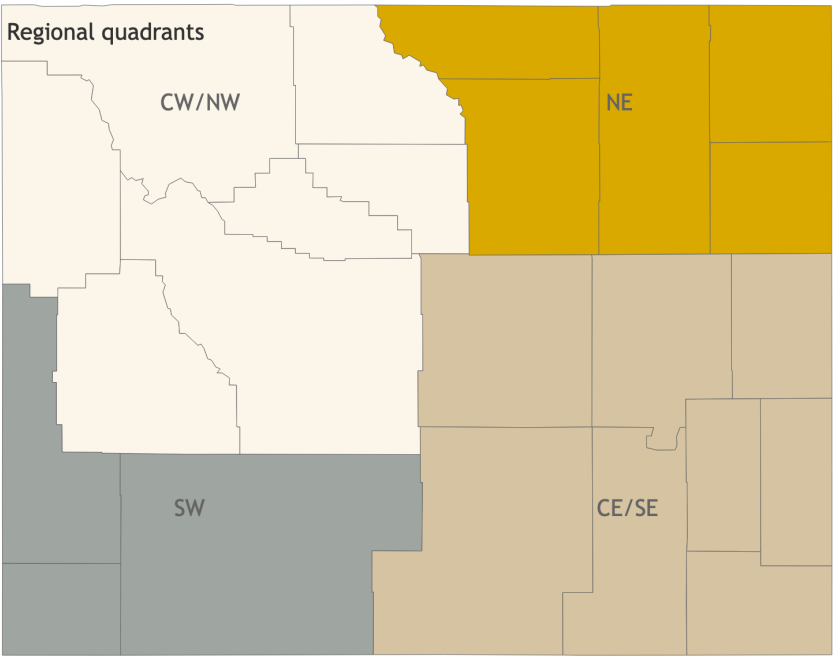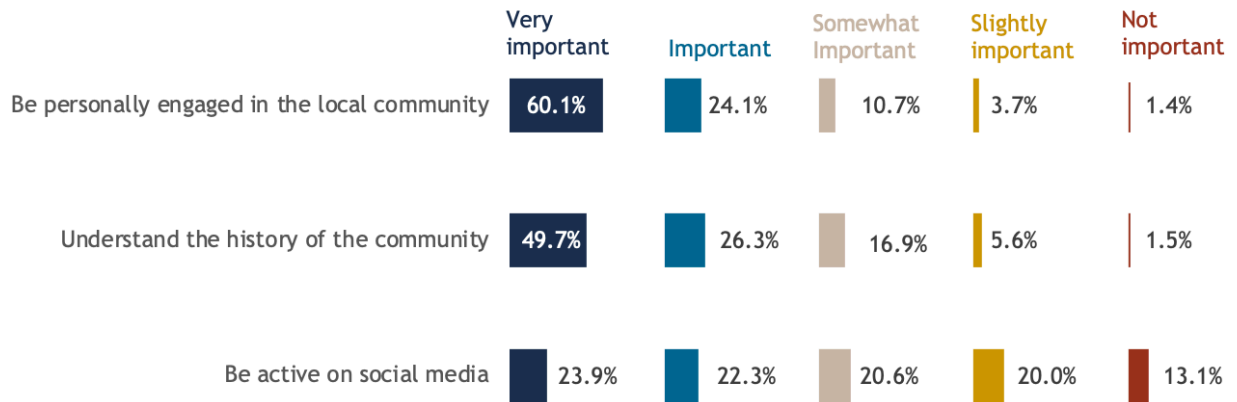

Regional quadrants

CW/NW

NE

SW

CE/SE

Overall, would you say that local journalists in your area are mostly **in touch** or **out of touch** with your local community?

| Region	In touch	Out of touch
Statewide	75.1%	24.9%
NE	85.7%	14.3%
SW	78.9%	21.1%
CW/NW	78.4%	21.6%
CE/SE	68.8%	31.2%
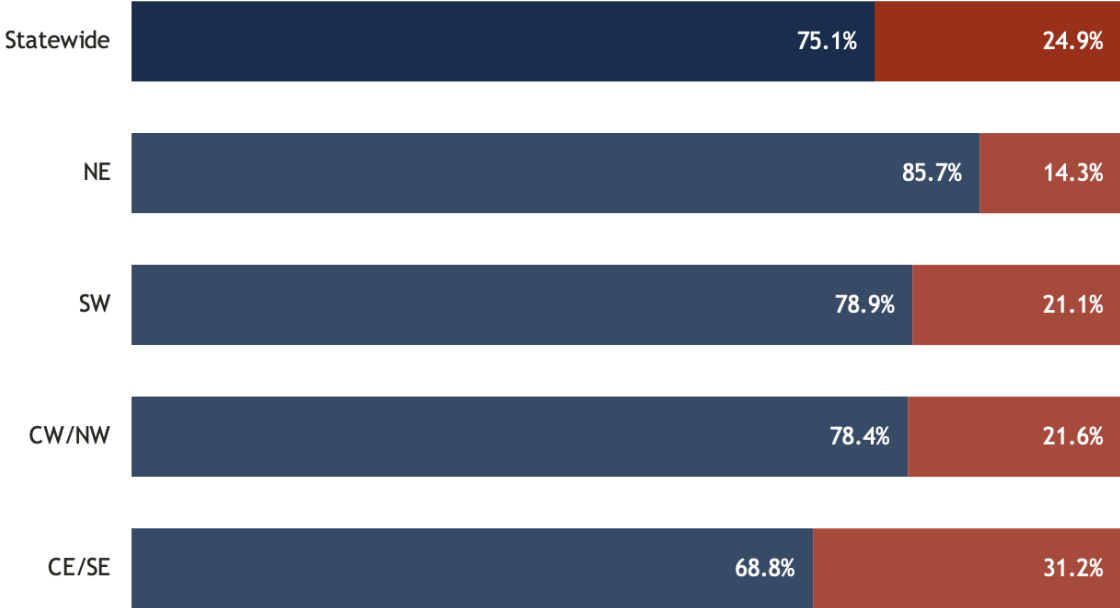
We also asked respondents to rank how important it is for local journalists to be engaged in the local community, understand the history of the community, and to be active on social media. Most respondents said it was important or very important for journalists to be engaged in the local community (84.2%) and to understand the history of the community (76.0%). Nearly all said that doing each of these things was at least somewhat important, but that was not the case for being on social media. We might conclude that Wyomingites perceive community connection as an in-person activity, even though they prefer to consume news digitally.

Thinking about the role of local journalists, how important do you think it is for local journalists to do each of the following?

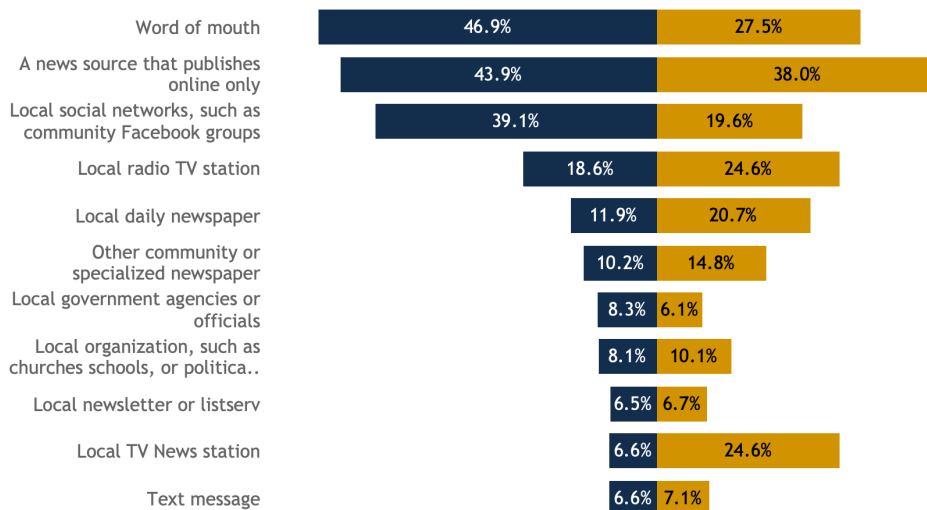|	Very important	Important	Somewhat Important	Slightly important	Not important
Be personally engaged in the local community	60.1%	24.1%	10.7%	3.7%	1.4%
Understand the history of the community	49.7%	26.3%	16.9%	5.6%	1.5%
Be active on social media	23.9%	22.3%	20.6%	20.0%	13.1%

It's more important for Wyoming residents that journalists engage in their community and understand its history than be active on social media.

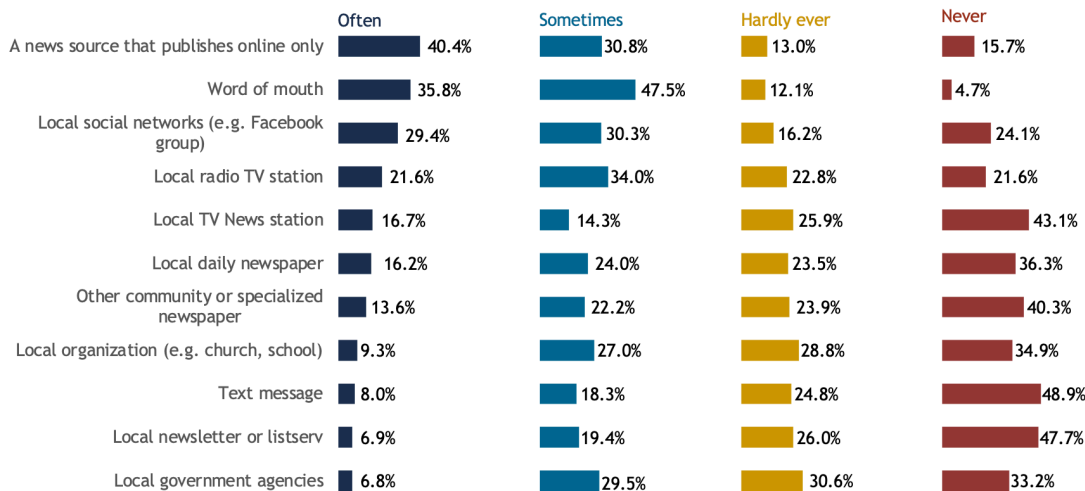|	Slightly or not important	At least somewhat important
Be personally engaged in the local community	5.1%	94.9%
Understand the history of the community	7.1%	92.9%
Be active on social media	33.1%	66.8%
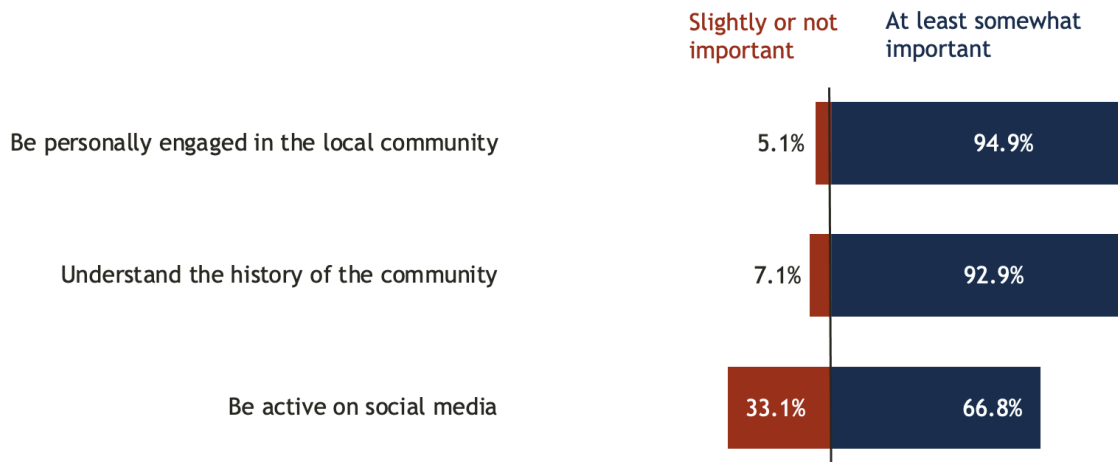
We paired a question about how often people get local news and information from a series of sources together with a question about why people get news and information from these sources. In line with responses to questions reported in section one of this report, respondents said they most often get local news and information from a news source that publishes online only, word of mouth, and local social networks. Perhaps surprisingly, given the fact that younger respondents aged 18 to 44 said they find digital sources to be the most useful, they were more likely than older respondents to say they rely on word of mouth "often" for local news and information (46.9% vs. 27.5%).

Those between 18 and 44 are more reliant on word of mouth and say that they "often" use it for local news and information, while those 45 and older are more reliant on local TV.

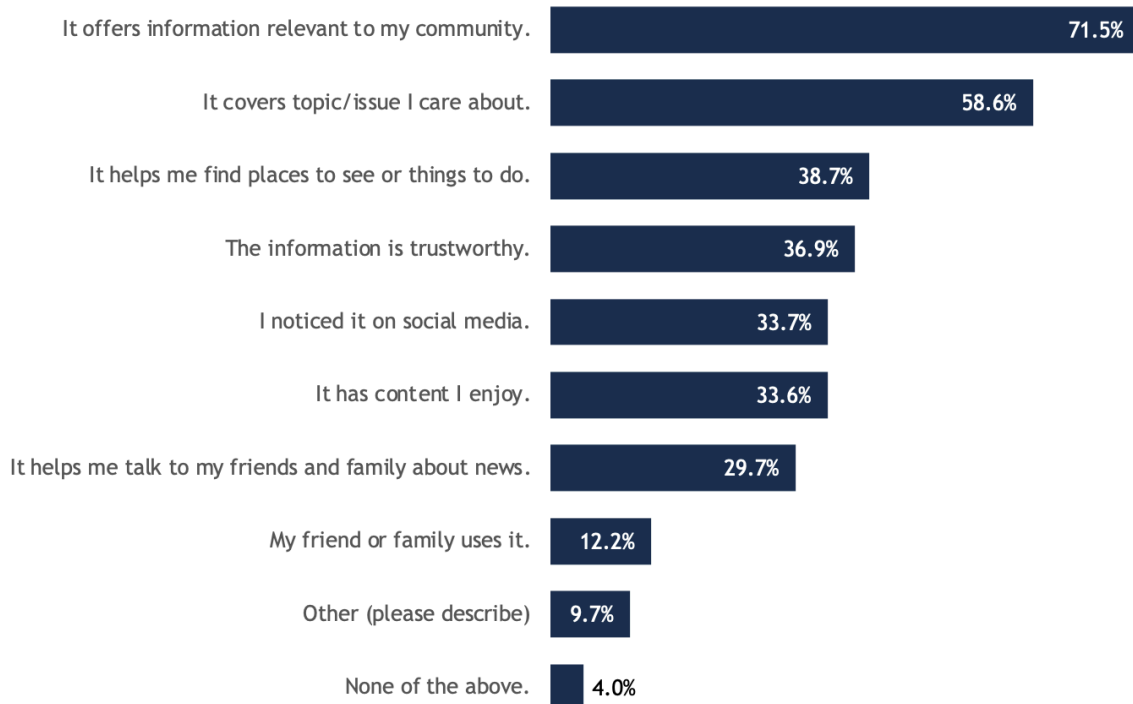| Source	18 and 44	45 and older
Word of mouth	46.9%	27.5%
A news source that publishes online only	43.9%	38.0%
Local social networks, such as community Facebook groups	39.1%	19.6%
Local radio TV station	18.6%	24.6%
Local daily newspaper	11.9%	20.7%
Other community or specialized newspaper	10.2%	14.8%
Local government agencies or officials	8.3%	6.1%
Local organization, such as churches schools, or politica..	8.1%	10.1%
Local newsletter or listserv	6.5%	6.7%
Local TV News station	6.6%	24.6%
Text message	6.6%	7.1%

How often do you get local news and information from each of the following types of sources, regardless of whether you access them digitally or not?

|	Often	Sometimes	Hardly ever	Never
A news source that publishes online only	40.4%	30.8%	13.0%	15.7%
Word of mouth	35.8%	47.5%	12.1%	4.7%
Local social networks (e.g. Facebook group)	29.4%	30.3%	16.2%	24.1%
Local radio TV station	21.6%	34.0%	22.8%	21.6%
Local TV News station	16.7%	14.3%	25.9%	43.1%
Local daily newspaper	16.2%	24.0%	23.5%	36.3%
Other community or specialized newspaper	13.6%	22.2%	23.9%	40.3%
Local organization (e.g. church, school)	9.3%	27.0%	28.8%	34.9%
Text message	8.0%	18.3%	24.8%	48.9%
Local newsletter or listserv	6.9%	19.4%	26.0%	47.7%
Local government agencies	6.8%	29.5%	30.6%	33.2%

The most common reason respondents cited for why they get news and information from these sources is that "it offers information relevant to my community" (71.5%). More than half of respondents also cited that the source covers topics or issues they care about (58.6%). Just over one third cited trustworthiness as a reason (36.9%).

**What are the main reasons you get news and information from these sources?**

Reason	Percentage
It offers information relevant to my community.	71.5%
It covers topic/issue I care about.	58.6%
It helps me find places to see or things to do.	38.7%
The information is trustworthy.	36.9%
I noticed it on social media.	33.7%
It has content I enjoy.	33.6%
It helps me talk to my friends and family about news.	29.7%
My friend or family uses it.	12.2%
Other (please describe)	9.7%
None of the above.	4.0%

Less than a quarter of respondents reported paying for access to local news through a subscription. This is even higher for those aged 18 to 44, with nearly 90% saying they do not pay for access to local news.

Do you pay for local news through a print or digital subscription?

Response	Percentage
No	75.4%
Yes	21.3%
No, but I would if an option was available	3.3%
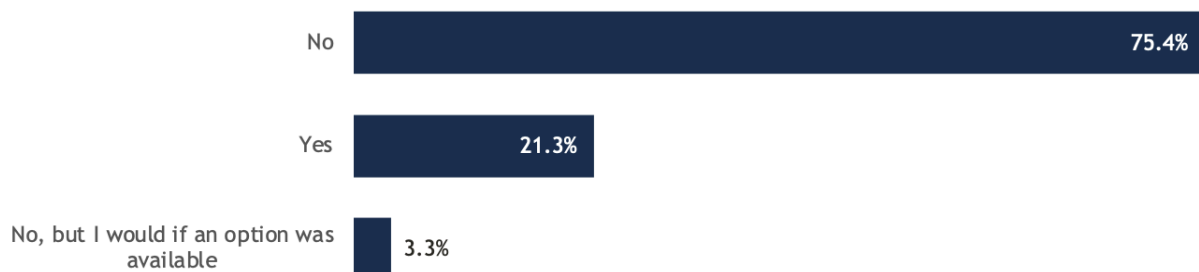
More Wyomingites aged **45+** pay to access local news through a print or digital newspaper subscription than those between **18-44,** but most from either age group don't pay for such access.

Yes 9% — 32%

No 66% — 87%

No, but I would if an option was available. 2% 4%
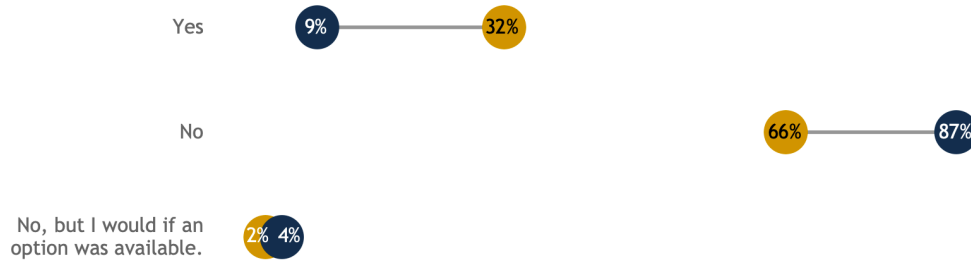
We also asked survey respondents what their most trusted source of news was, asking them to list the name of a specific news organization or other source. We coded open-ended responses in order to standardize spelling and capitalization of names. There were 649 total responses to this question, 598 of which we coded.[2] Many survey participants included more than one source in their response. Responses suggest that Wyomingites do not have broad trust in any one news source — respondents identified a total of 111 unique news sources, and Cowboy State Daily (9.0%), County 10 (7.5%), and Oil City News (6.2%) were the only news sources that were cited in more than 5% of responses. Another 10.9% of respondents said they did not trust any news source or couldn't identify a trusted source (re-coded as "none"). The fact that no single outlet received mentions from even ten percent of respondents is likely a reflection of the fractured nature of the media landscape where there are many local outlets focused on covering a single municipality or county within the state; however, the data also show that respondents did not coalesce around any single statewide news sources.

Notably, eight of the first ten sources that were cited most frequently in responses are digital-first, and make their content available for free, aligning with other survey questions that found that the vast majority of Wyoming residents do not pay for a subscription to a newspaper and most prefer digital means for accessing the news.[3]
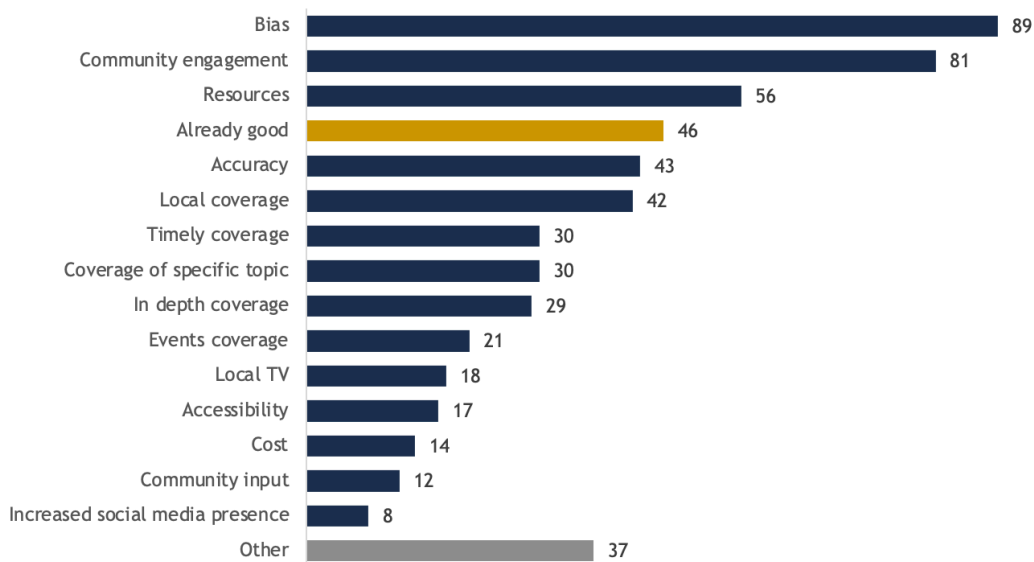
The ten most frequently mentioned sources of news in open-ended responses.

Source	%
Cowboy State Daily	9.0%
County 10	7.5%
Oil City News	6.2%
SweetwaterNow	4.7%
Facebook	4.7%
WyoFile	4.0%
Word of mouth	3.3%
Wyoming Public Radio	3.0%
Wyoming Tribune Eagle	2.8%
Sheridan Media	2.8%
Powell Tribune	2.8%

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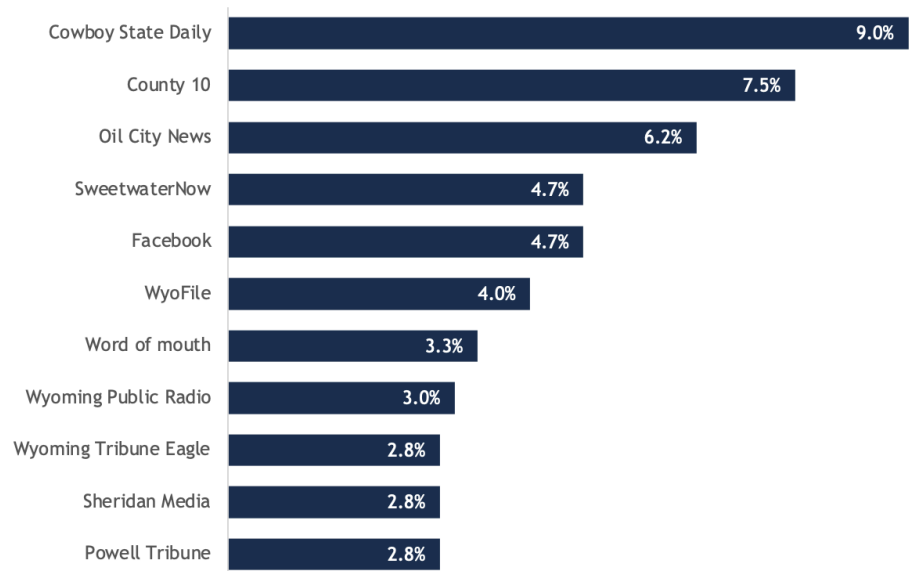
2   Some were not re-coded because we could not identify a specific news organization or source from the information provided (for example, some responses just said "my local newspaper."

3   The Powell Tribune, Sheridan Media, and the Wyoming Tribune Eagle were each mentioned the same number of times.

In addition to asking about current perceptions of journalists and respondents' trust in news, we asked people to list the most important actions state and local news organizations could take to improve their coverage. We received 581 responses to the question. For consistency, we re-coded 488 responses and sorted them into the below categories — the remaining responses could not be re-coded due to lack of specificity and were omitted from analysis. Nearly all respondents said that reducing bias should be the top priority news organizations (89), followed by conducting community engagement (81).

Respondents most frequently cited reducing bias and increasing community engagement as ways for local news organizations to improve their coverage

Category	Value
Bias	89
Community engagement	81
Resources	56
Already good	46
Accuracy	43
Local coverage	42
Timely coverage	30
Coverage of specific topic	30
In depth coverage	29
Events coverage	21
Local TV	18
Accessibility	17
Cost	14
Community input	12
Increased social media presence	8
Other	37

For coverage of specific topics — mentioned a total of 30 times in participant responses — respondents identified 16 unique topics, with politics/government cited most often (12 times). Other topics identified more than once included crime and courts (5), education (4), and sports (3).

Two thirds of respondents agree that it is very important for state and local news organizations to provide information about emergencies and hold leaders accountable. Nearly half of respondents also said that it is "very important" the news organizations present different perspectives. It is notable that this does not align with what we heard in focus groups and interviews, where local residents said that they perceive local residents as seeking out information sources that align with their political ideology and perspectives. It also could indicate that residents are seeking different perspectives because they don't feel that outlets currently align with their political ideology. In fact, in open-ended responses, many people highlighted bias, with some calling for the media to be more conservative, while others felt it should be more liberal. Two examples include:[4]
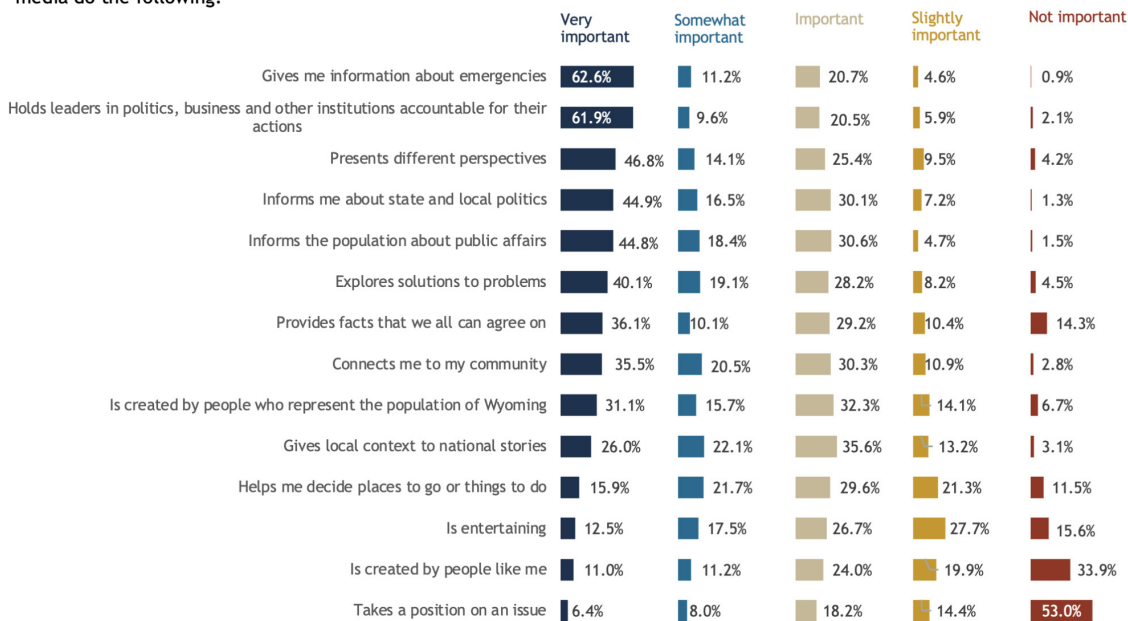
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4   Responses were lightly edited for clarity.

- "Be more conservative. The press here is quite liberal or progressive and the community is more balanced politically. The newspaper is always an advocate for more and more taxes. They should be balanced in their views."

- "Being impartial. Wyoming has a tendency to be pro-right wing, either through indoctrinated residents or through residents of other states living here at the moment, or through pro-right wing media. True and life long Wyomingites tend to be more balanced on ALL matters, regardless of the arena."

The majority of Wyoming residents believe it is **at least slightly important** that state and local media do things such as provideresources and offer different perspectives, while about two-thirds believe it is **slightly or not important** that they take a position on issues.
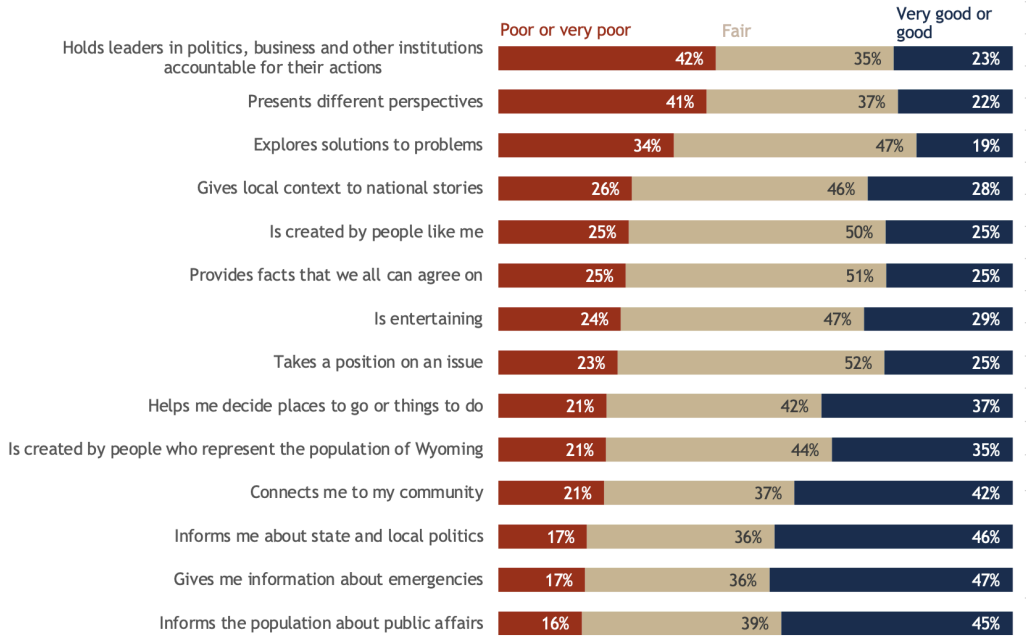
	Not at least slightly important	At least slightly important
Gives me information about emergencies	5.5%	94.5%
Informs the population about public affairs	6.2%	93.8%
Holds leaders in politics, business and other institutions accountable for their actions	8.0%	92.0%
Informs me about state and local politics	8.5%	91.5%
Explores solutions to problems	12.7%	87.3%
Connects me to my community	13.7%	86.3%
Presents different perspectives	13.8%	86.2%
Gives local context to national stories	16.3%	83.7%
Is created by people who represent the population of Wyoming	20.8%	79.2%
Provides facts that we all can agree on	24.7%	75.3%
Helps me decide places to go or things to do	32.9%	67.1%
Is entertaining	43.3%	56.7%
Is created by people like me	53.8%	46.2%
Takes a position on an issue	67.4%	32.6%

Thinking specifically about the role of news in Wyoming and your local community, how important is it that state and local media do the following?

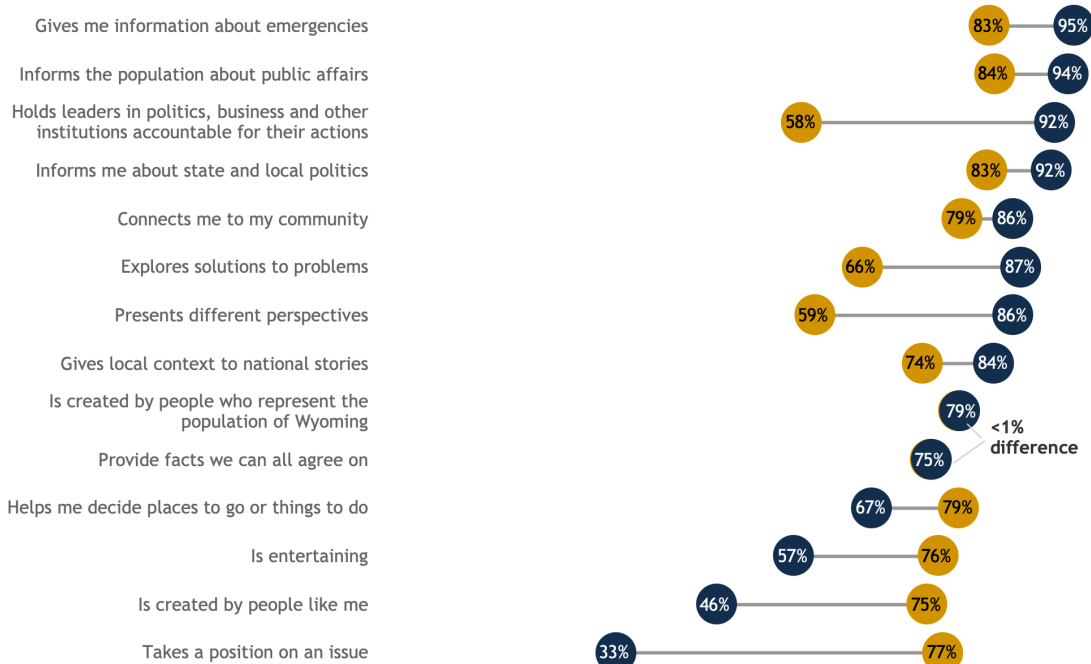|	Very important	Somewhat important	Important	Slightly important	Not important
Gives me information about emergencies	62.6%	11.2%	20.7%	4.6%	0.9%
Holds leaders in politics, business and other institutions accountable for their actions	61.9%	9.6%	20.5%	5.9%	2.1%
Presents different perspectives	46.8%	14.1%	25.4%	9.5%	4.2%
Informs me about state and local politics	44.9%	16.5%	30.1%	7.2%	1.3%
Informs the population about public affairs	44.8%	18.4%	30.6%	4.7%	1.5%
Explores solutions to problems	40.1%	19.1%	28.2%	8.2%	4.5%
Provides facts that we all can agree on	36.1%	10.1%	29.2%	10.4%	14.3%
Connects me to my community	35.5%	20.5%	30.3%	10.9%	2.8%
Is created by people who represent the population of Wyoming	31.1%	15.7%	32.3%	14.1%	6.7%
Gives local context to national stories	26.0%	22.1%	35.6%	13.2%	3.1%
Helps me decide places to go or things to do	15.9%	21.7%	29.6%	21.3%	11.5%
Is entertaining	12.5%	17.5%	26.7%	27.7%	15.6%
Is created by people like me	11.0%	11.2%	24.0%	19.9%	33.9%
Takes a position on an issue	6.4%	8.0%	18.2%	14.4%	53.0%

Overall, when asked to rank how local media in WY are performing across a number of categories, responses were middling, with the majority of respondents saying that news organizations are doing "good to fair" for all categories. The media receive the worst scores for holding leaders accountable and in presenting different perspectives, with 42.0% and 41.0% of respondents ranking news orgs "poor" or "very poor," respectively.

Wyoming residents believe local media perform worst in holding leaders accountable and presenting different perspectives

	Poor or very poor	Fair	Very good or good
Holds leaders in politics, business and other institutions accountable for their actions	42%	35%	23%
Presents different perspectives	41%	37%	22%
Explores solutions to problems	34%	47%	19%
Gives local context to national stories	26%	46%	28%
Is created by people like me	25%	50%	25%
Provides facts that we all can agree on	25%	51%	25%
Is entertaining	24%	47%	29%
Takes a position on an issue	23%	52%	25%
Helps me decide places to go or things to do	21%	42%	37%
Is created by people who represent the population of Wyoming	21%	44%	35%
Connects me to my community	21%	37%	42%
Informs me about state and local politics	17%	36%	46%
Gives me information about emergencies	17%	36%	47%
Informs the population about public affairs	16%	39%	45%

Role of state and local media in Wyoming: Importance to residents compared to perceived performance

	perceived performance	Importance to residents
Gives me information about emergencies	83%	95%
Informs the population about public affairs	84%	94%
Holds leaders in politics, business and other institutions accountable for their actions	58%	92%
Informs me about state and local politics	83%	92%
Connects me to my community	79%	86%
Explores solutions to problems	66%	87%
Presents different perspectives	59%	86%
Gives local context to national stories	74%	84%
Is created by people who represent the population of Wyoming	79%	
Provide facts we can all agree on	75%	<1% difference
Helps me decide places to go or things to do	67%	79%
Is entertaining	57%	76%
Is created by people like me	46%	75%
Takes a position on an issue	33%	77%

When taken together, the ranking of importance of local news and perceived performance of local news across many dimensions is actually quite close. However, there is a large gap with respect to holding leaders accountable, with nearly all respondents (92%) reporting this is an important role of media, and only 58% perceiving that media perform this role well.

What are the most important actions state and local news organizations could take to increase your trust?

Action	Percentage
Increase accuracy/factual reporting	62.2%
Reduce bias	56.9%
Increase transparency	43.4%
Increase community engagement	21.6%
Diversify the news	16.2%
I already trust local news	10.4%
I can't/won't trust local news	3.6%
Change content	3.0%
Other	1.5%
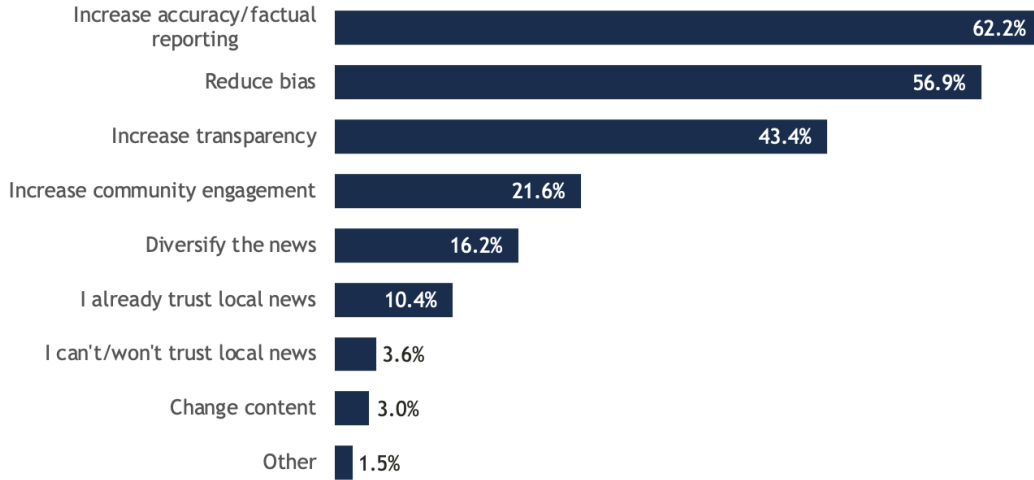
Nearly two thirds of respondents said that the most important action state and local news organizations could take to increase their trust would be to increase accuracy and factual reporting. Less than one percent of respondents suggested that increasing transparency, increasing community engagement, or reducing bias would affect their level of trust.

Do you feel you have any barriers to accessing local news?

Response	Percentage
No	40.7%
Yes, there aren't enough local news sources in my area	34.4%
Yes, the cost of a subscription to local news is too much for my budget	19.2%
Yes, other (please specify)	6.3%
Yes, technological barriers (no internet connection, don't own a device, etc.)	3.4%
Yes, there aren't enough local news sources in my preferred language	1.1%
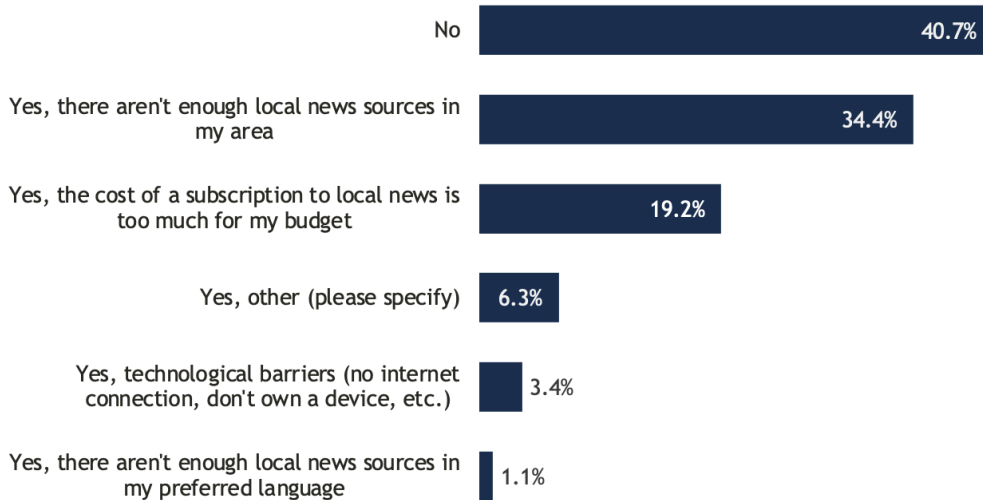
When asked to identify barriers to accessing local news, 40.7% of respondents said they do not face any barriers. And while nearly all respondents said their community has at least one source of local news (see above), more than one third of respondents (34.4%) said that there aren't enough local news sources in their area. Notably, one in five respondents (19.2%) said that the cost of a subscription to local news is "too much for my budget."

Appendix A

Methodology: Wyoming Resident Survey

Contributed by Wyoming Survey and Analysis Center, University of Wyoming

A survey of Wyoming residents

The Wyoming Survey and Analysis Center at University of Wyoming fielded a statewide survey from July 9, 2024, through August 7, 2024. The survey was designed to gauge public opinion and knowledge on several topics related to local news and journalism.

Questionnaire development

Impact Architects designed the survey, with contributions and feedback from the WY Local News Fund, Wyoming Community Foundation, and WYSAC. Once questions were decided upon, the questionnaire was programmed for web administration with Qualtrics, a leading platform for creating and distributing web-based surveys.

Sampling frame, sample design, and sample size

The sampling frame for this survey consisted of all Wyoming residents above the age of 18.
Anticipating a response rate of about 10%, to meet the target number of completed surveys, WYSAC obtained a disproportionately stratified probability sample of 12,000 mailable addresses sufficient to obtain completions from each of the six Wyoming Business Council Regions (East Central, Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, Southwest, and West Central). The sample was purchased from Marketing Systems Group (Genesys), a leading national vendor specializing in the generation of scientific samples. The sample drew from the U.S. Postal Service delivery sequence file, which included all mailable addresses in Wyoming (both physical and post office boxes).

This sampling frame provided the most complete coverage available, as every household that receives mail had an opportunity to be included in the survey sample. There was no random selection of respondents within households; any adult household member who agreed to participate could complete the survey. Valid email addresses were obtained by MSG and appended to 7,566 sample records during the sampling process.

Mode of data collection

The online (or web) mode was the only option for completing the survey. Each potential respondent was assigned a unique passcode for accessing the survey. The passcode was entered manually upon reaching the login page of the

survey, or automatically by clicking a link directly from an email invitation.

The survey administration protocols included the following steps:

- First, an invite message was emailed to all 7,566 individuals with a valid email (resulting in 672 failed/bounced messages). These email invitations explained the purpose and importance of the survey and solicited participation via a personal link. These individuals received their first email invitations on July 9th, 2024. A second reminder email was sent on July 22nd, 2024, to 6,814 individuals who had not yet responded, a third reminder email was sent on July 30th, 2024, to 6,608 individuals who had not yet responded, and a final reminder email was sent on August 5th, 2024 to 6,528 individuals who had not yet responded.
- Second, an invite letter was mailed to all households without a valid email address as well as those who did not respond to initial email invites. A total of 11,786 individuals received one invitation letter (537 individuals who had "bad addresses" did not receive this letter, resulting in 11,249 individuals receiving the letter). This letter was authored and signed by WYSAC on Wyoming Community Foundation letterhead and was sent in stamped first-class envelopes via USPS. It explained the purpose and importance of the survey and solicited participation. The URL address of the online version of the survey and a unique access code were provided, as well as a QR code for direct access through a mobile device. This invite letter went out on July 19, 2024.

A total of 671 respondents completed the survey. When accounting for failed/bounced email addresses and returned USPS mail (672 total bounced email addresses, 537 total "bad addresses"), the resulting response rate was 6.2%.

Appendix B

Respondent demographics

Age breakdown

18-44 30%	18 to 24: 11.7%	25 to 44: 33.8%	45 to 64: 31.2%
45+ 70%			65+: 23.4%

Race

White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	83.1%
Hispanic or Latino	10.8%
American Indian and Alaskan Native alone	2.8%
Two or More races	2.4%
Asian alone	1.2%
Black or African American alone	1.2%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	0.1%

Gender breakdown

Male	Female	Non-binary / third gender	Prefer not to say
48.3%	47.9%	0.6%	3.2%
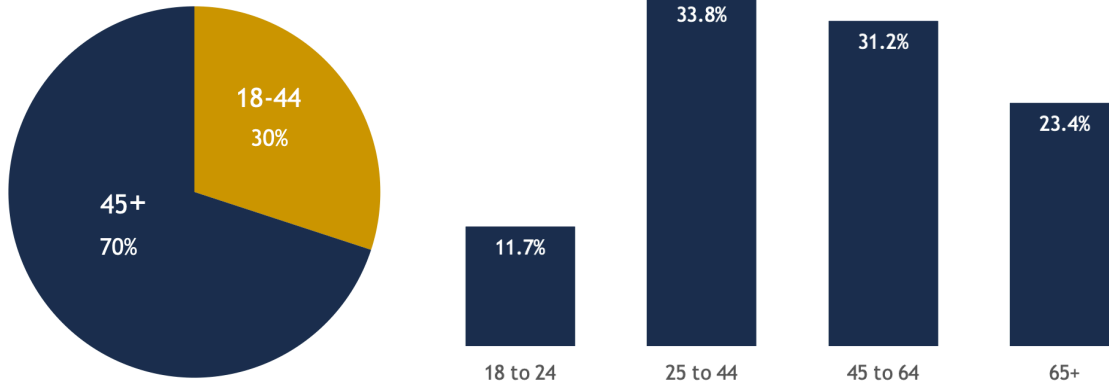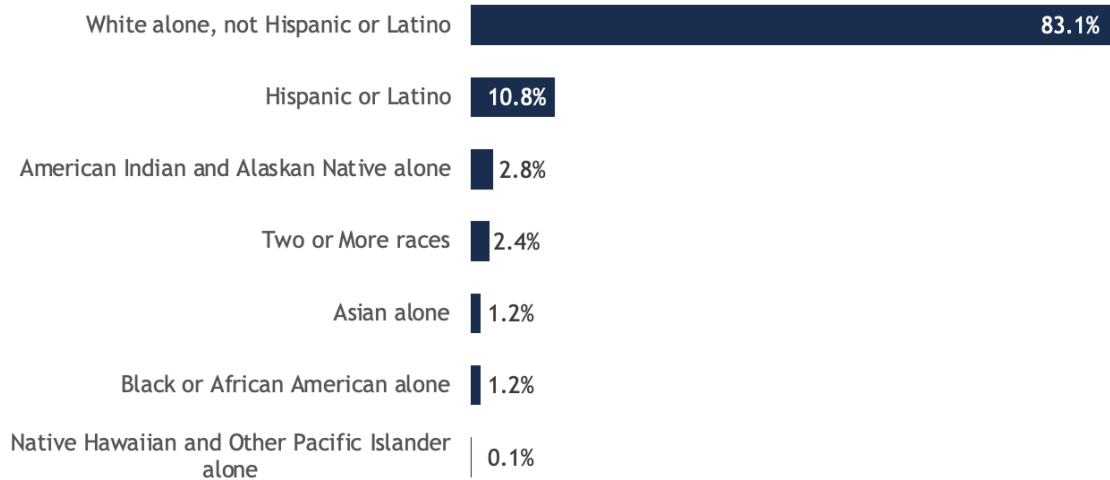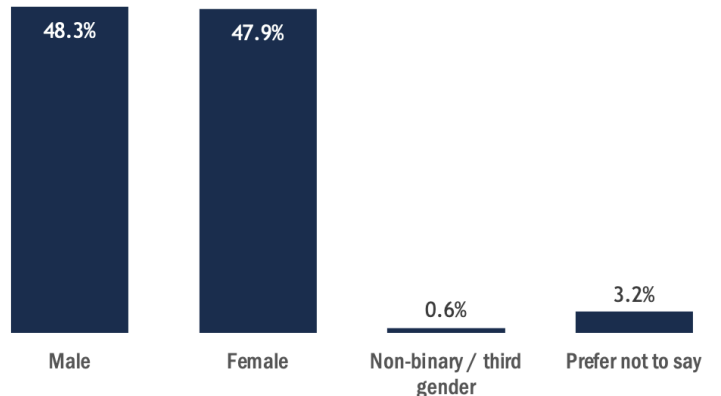
Preferred Language

	Valid Percent
English	99.2%
Spanish	0.3%
Other	0.5%
Total Valid	**100.0%**

Household income

0.1%	0.2%	33.1%	20.5%	8.4%	4.5%
Under $25,000	$25,000 to $50,000	$50,000 to $100,000	$100,000 to $150,000	$150,000 to $200,000	More than $250,000

Political ideology

2.7%	16.2%	42.7%	29.3%	9.1%
Very liberal	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative	Very conservative
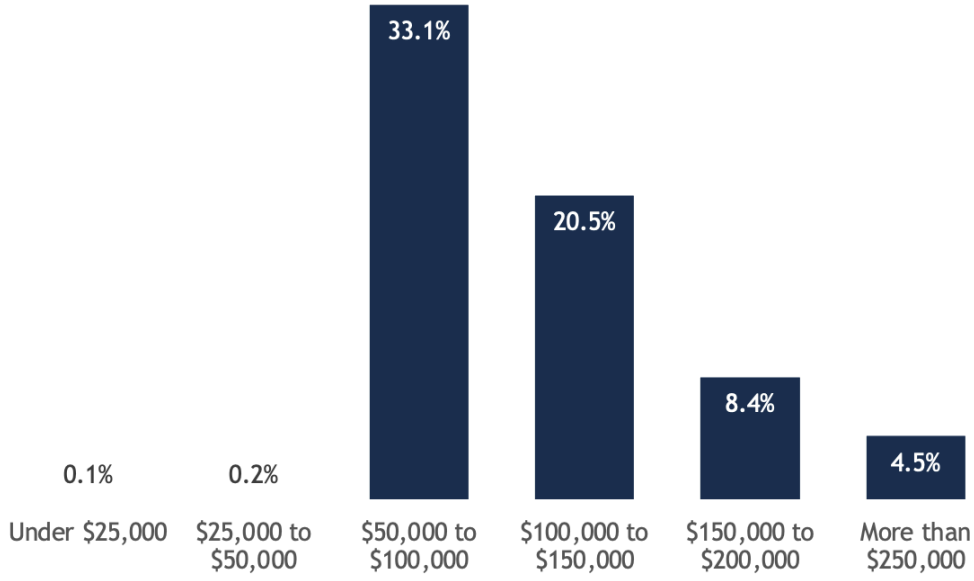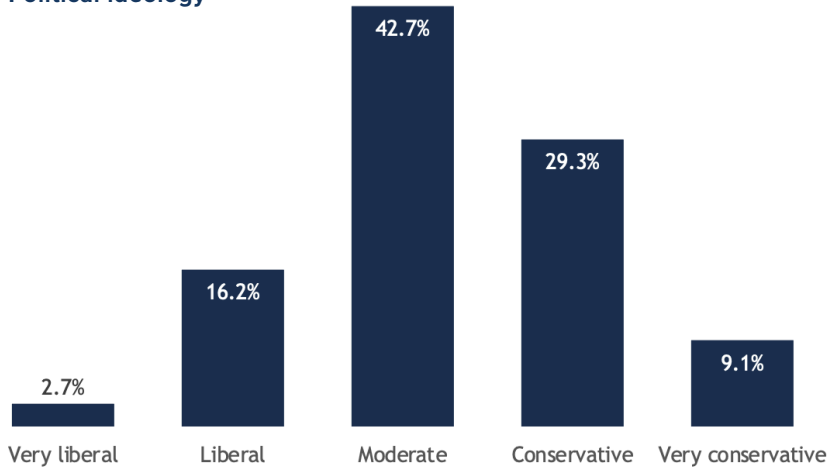
Geographic distribution

147	137	119	111	113	113
Southeast	West Central	Northeast	Northwest	Southwest	East Central
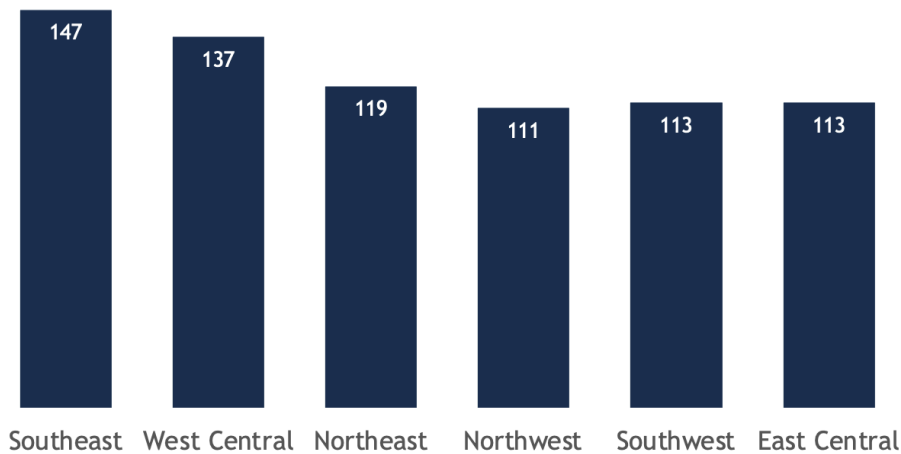
Appendix C

Full Questionnaire: Wyoming News Survey

Intro: Wyoming Local News Survey

The Wyoming Community Foundation is interested in conducting a survey of Wyoming residents regarding local news and journalism. Survey question topics will include access to news, sources of news, and trust in media.

In this survey, we are going to ask you some questions about local news and information. By this we mean information about events and issues in your local area that involve more than just your friends or family.

The survey should take approximately 10 to 15 minutes. You don't have to answer any questions you don't want to, and you can end the survey at any time by closing your web browser.

At the survey's end, you may opt to be included in the raffle drawing for one of two new iPads.

There are no foreseeable risks to this study beyond feeling uncomfortable with answering survey questions about news in Wyoming, which would only result in minimal discomfort that is no greater than everyday conversations and interactions with others. There are no direct or indirect benefits beyond critical reflection and self-assessment about own's feelings, experiences, and opinions about news and journalism in Wyoming.

We thank you in advance for your participation. Your participation and response to any survey questions is voluntary. Completing this survey indicates you have given your consent to participate. We value your help with this project. If you have questions or would like more information about the survey, please contact Mike Dorssom at 307-760-3132 or by email (mdorssom@uwyo.edu). Thank you in advance for taking part in the survey.

Q2 Overall, would you say that local journalists in your area are mostly in touch or out of touch with your local community?

    ○ In touch (1)

    ○ Out of touch (2)

    ○ There are no local journalists in my area (3)

Q3 Which of the following do you prefer for getting local news and information?

    ○ Print newspaper (1)

    ○ Radio (2)

    ○ Television (3)

    ○ Social media site (such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, etc.) (4)

    ○ A news website or app (5)

Q4 How often do you get local news and information from each of the following types of sources, regardless of whether you access them digitally or not?

    ○ Often (1)   ○ Sometimes (2)   ○ Hardly ever (3)   ○ Never (4)

- Local TV news station (1)
- Local daily newspaper (2)
- Other community or specialized newspaper (beyond the daily newspaper) (3)
- Local radio station (4)
- A news source that publishes online ONLY (5)
- Local newsletter or listserv (6)
- Local government agencies or officials, such as city council offices or libraries (7)
- Local organizations, such as churches, school groups or political groups (8)
- Local social networks, such as community Facebook groups or Nextdoor (9)
- Text message (SMS, iMessage, WhatsApp) (10)
- Word of mouth (11)

Q5 What are the main reasons you get news and information from these sources? Please select all that apply.

    ○ The information is trustworthy. (1)

    ○   It offers information relevant to my community. (2)

    ○ It covers topic/issue I care about. (3)

    ○ It helps me find places to see or things to do. (4)

    ○ My friend or family uses it. (5)

○ It has content I enjoy. (6)

○ It helps me talk to my friends and family about news. (7)

○ I noticed it on social media. (8)

○ Other (please describe) (9) _____

○ None of the above. (10)

Q6 Do you pay for access to local news through a print or digital newspaper subscription?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ No, but I would if an option was available. (3)

○ Unsure (4)

Q7 How important or interesting is information about each of the following local topics for your daily life?

○ Important for my daily life (1)

○ Important to know about, but I don't need to keep up with it daily (2)

○ Interesting, but not important to me (3)

○ Neither important nor interesting (4)

• Weather (1)

• Crime and public safety in your community (2)

• Traffic and transportation (3)

• Schools and education (4)

• Government (incl. government services, elections, voting) (5)

• Politics (15)

• Local activities, culture, and entertainment (6)

• Local sports (7)

• Health and medical information (incl. finding and paying for care) (8)

• Housing (incl. for finding and paying for housing) (9)

• Jobs and the economy (incl. for finding jobs, financial decisions and support) (10)

• Local environment (incl. sanitation services, climate) (11)

• Obituaries (12)

• Religion (13)

• Immigration (14)

Q8 What sources do you find most useful in providing the information you need on TOPIC, whether in-person, online, over the phone, or in printed materials?

- ○ Friends, family, colleagues and acquaintances (1)
- ○ A government agency (2)
- ○ Local community center (3)
- ○ Religious leader or congregation (4)
- ○ Local newspaper (print) (5)
- ○ Local news website (6)
- ○ Local TV station, including its website (7)
- ○ Local radio station, including its website (8)
- ○ Local podcast (9)
- ○ Local online forum or discussion group, such as a community Facebook group, Nextdoor group, or Listserv (10)
- ○ Online search (11)
- ○ Other (please specify / write-in) (12) _____

Q23 How unsatisfied or satisfied are you with the information you are able to get for each of the following topics?

- ○ Very unsatisfied (1)
- ○ Dissatisfied (2)
- ○ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (3)
- ○ Satisfied (4)
- ○ Very satisfied (8)

- • Weather (1)
- • Crime and public safety in your community (2)
- • Traffic and transportation (3)
- • Schools and education (4)
- • Government (incl. government services, elections, voting) (5)
- • Politics (15)
- • Local activities, culture, and entertainment (6)
- • Local sports (7)
- • Health and medical information (incl. finding and paying for care) (8)
- • Housing (incl. for finding and paying for housing) (9)
- • Jobs and the economy (incl. for finding jobs, financial decisions and support) (10)
- • Local environment (incl. sanitation services, climate) (11)

- Obituaries (12)

- Religion (13)

- Immigration (14)

Q24 As far as you know, in your local community, is there at least one...?

○ Yes (1)   ○ No, there isn't (2)   ○ Not sure (3) ○ No answer (4)

- Local TV news station (1)

- Local newspaper (2)

- Local radio station (4)

- Local newsletter, blog, or website (5)

- Local online forum or discussion group, such as a community Facebook group, Nextdoor group, or Listserv (6)

Q25 What news source do you turn to most often for local news? Please list the name of the specific news organization or source.

_____

Q26 What is your most trusted source or sources for local news and information? Please list the name of the specific news organization or source.

_____

Q27 Thinking about the role of local journalists, how important do you think it is for local journalists to do each of the following?

○ Not important (1)

○ Slightly important (2)

○ Important (3)

○ Somewhat important (4)

○ Very important (5)

○ Be personally engaged in the local community (1)

○ Understand the history of the community (2)

○ Be active on social media (3)

Q28 In your opinion, how can local news organizations improve their coverage of local issues that matter to you?

_____

Q29 Thinking specifically about the role of news in Wyoming and your local community, how important is it that state and local media...?

- ○ Not important (1)
- ○ Slightly important (2)
- ○ Important (3)
- ○ Somewhat important (4)
- ○ Very important (5)

- Provides facts that we all can agree on (1)
- Gives local context to national stories (2)
- Informs me about state and local politics (3)
- Informs the population about public affairs (4)
- Connects me to my community (5)
- Gives me information about emergencies (6)
- Helps me decide places to go or things to do (7)
- Is entertaining (8)
- Is created by people like me (9)
- Is created by people who represent the population of Wyoming (10)
- Takes a position on an issue (11)
- Presents different perspectives (12)
- Holds leaders in politics, business and other institutions accountable for their actions (13)
- Explores solutions to problems (14)

Q30 How well do you think the media in Wyoming and your community performs in the following areas?

- ○ Very poor (1)
- ○ Poor (2)
- ○ Fair (3)
- ○ Good (4)

○ Very good (5)

- Provides facts that we all can agree on (1)

- Gives local context to national stories (2)

- Informs me about state and local politics (3)

- Informs the population about public affairs (4)

- Connects me to my community (5)

- Gives me information about emergencies (6)

- Helps me to decide places to go or things to do (7)

- Is entertaining (8)

- Is created by people like me (9)

- Is created by people who represent the population of Wyoming (10)

- Takes a position on an issue (11)

- Presents different perspectives (12)

- Holds leaders in politics, business, and other institutions accountable for their actions (13)

- Explores solutions to problems (14)

Q31 Do you feel your community in Wyoming has a trustworthy and accessible source for local news and information?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ Unsure (3)

Q32 What are the most important actions state and local news organizations could take to increase your trust?

○ Increase accuracy/factual reporting (1)

○ Reduce bias (2)

○ Increase transparency (3)

○ Increase community engagement (4)

○ Change content (5)

○ Diversify the news (6)

○ I can't/won't trust local news (7)

○ I already trust local news (8)

○ Other (9)

○ Don't know (10)

Q33 Do you feel you have any barriers to accessing local news? Please select all that apply.

○ Yes, there aren't enough local news sources in my area (1)

○ Yes, there aren't enough local news sources in my preferred language (2)

○ Yes, the cost of a subscription to local news is too much for my budget (3)

○ Yes, technological barriers (no internet connection, don't own a device, etc.) (4)

○ Yes, other (please specify) (6) _____

○ No (7)

Start of Block : Demographics

Q34 What year were you born?

_____

Q35 What is your gender?

○ Male (1)

○ Female (2)

○ Non-binary / third gender (3)

○ Prefer not to say (4)

Q36 What is your zip code?

_____

Q37 What is your profession?

_____

Q38 What is your current annual household income?

○ Under $25,000 (1)

○ $25,000 to $50,000 (2)

○ $50,000 to $100,000 (3)

○ $100,000 to $150,000 (4)

○ $150,000 to $200,000 (5)

○   More than $250,000 (6)

Q39 What is your preferred language?

○   English (1)

○   Spanish (2)

○   Other (please specify) (3) _____

Q40 Which of the following best describes your race?

○   American Indian or Native Alaskan (1)

○   Asian (2)

○   Black or African American (3)

○   Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (4)

○   White (5)

○   Multi-racial (please specify) (6) _____

○   Other (please specify) (7) _____

Q41 In general, how would you describe your political views?

○   Very conservative (1)

○   Conservative (2)

○   Moderate (3)

○   Liberal (4)

○   Very liberal (5)

Q42 Would you like to be entered in a raffle for one of two iPads?

○   Yes (1)

○   No (2)