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PewResearchCenter

**Pew Internet & American Life Project  
Project for Excellence in Journalism**

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**Knight Foundation**

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## **72% of Americans follow local news closely**

*These local news enthusiasts follow a diverse set of topics but rely heavily on local newspapers to keep them informed*

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[www.pewinternet.org](http://www.pewinternet.org)

[www.journalism.org](http://www.journalism.org)

<http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2012/Local-news-enthusiasts.aspx>

## Summary of Findings

### Most adults follow local news closely, relying on local newspapers and other sources

Nearly three quarters (72%) of adults are quite attached to following local news and information, and local newspapers are by far the source they rely on for much of the local information they need. In fact, local news enthusiasts are substantially more wedded to their local newspapers than others. They are much more likely than others to say that if their local newspaper vanished, it would have a major impact on their ability to get the local information they want. This is especially true of local news followers age 40 and older, who differ from younger local news enthusiasts in some key ways.

One-third of local news enthusiasts (32%) say it would have a *major* impact on them if their local newspaper no longer existed, compared with just 19% of those less interested in local news. Most likely to report a major impact if their newspaper disappeared are local news followers age 40 and older (35%), though even among younger local news followers 26% say losing the local paper would have a major impact on them. In contrast, just 19% of adults who do not follow local news closely say they would feel a major impact and fully half (51%) say they would feel *no* impact at all from the loss of their local paper. Only 34% of local news enthusiasts feel this way.

These local news and information consumers stand out from other adults in several respects related to community attachment, general interest in all types of news, use of sources for local news and information, and the particular topics of interest to them on the local scene.

As a whole, local news enthusiasts do not stand out from other adults in their use of technology or in the way they use technology to participate in local affairs, such as sending around links or posting comments on websites. However, among local news enthusiasts there are considerable differences in technology use across generations.

These are among the main findings in a nationally representative phone survey of 2,251 adults by the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism and Internet & American Life Project, produced in association with the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. It focused on the ways people get information and news about 16 different topics, ranging from breaking news to weather to crime to schools information. The survey was administered from January 12-25, 2011 on landline and cell phones. It has an overall margin of error of plus or minus 2 percentage points. And here are some of the main findings, as they apply to the group who identified themselves as local news enthusiasts:

### Local news enthusiasts are more connected to their community

Adults who follow local news closely are fairly diverse in their age, though they skew older, more female, and more African-American as a group when compared with adults who do not follow local news as closely. They are also more likely to describe themselves as politically conservative and to attend religious services on a weekly basis when compared with those who are not consistent local news consumers.

Local news consumers are more connected to their communities than others, both in length of time in the community and in their connection with neighbors, and more likely to think they can improve their communities. Roughly three in 10 have lived in their community 20 years or longer (32% vs. 20% of others), and thus not surprisingly are more likely to know all of their neighbors. This is driven largely by local news enthusiasts age 40 and older. As a whole, local news enthusiasts are also slightly more likely than other adults to believe they can have a *big* impact on making their community a better place to live.

## Local news enthusiasts' news consumption habits differ from other adults

In addition to local news, this group is more actively engaged than others in following news in general, and international and national news specifically. Sixty-three percent enjoy keeping up with news “a lot” compared with 35% of other adults. This is especially true of older local news enthusiasts (age 40 and older), 72% of whom say they enjoy keeping up with news “a lot.”

Six in 10 local news followers (63%) also follow international news closely most of the time regardless of whether something is happening or not and 78% follow national news this closely. In comparison, 39% of other adults follow international news this closely and 46% follow national news this closely.

When it comes to sources of local news and information, 35% of local news enthusiasts say that local news sources give them *all* of the information that matters to them, 10 percentage points higher than those less interested in local news. They also use more sources of local news and information per week than others (mean of 3.77 vs. 2.84). The youngest local news enthusiasts, those age 18-39, use the greatest number of local news sources weekly, with a mean of 4.38.

Local news enthusiasts are interested in many local topics. This group is more likely than other adults to follow 12 out of 16 local news topics asked about – including weather, breaking news, politics, crime and schools/education. In many cases, interest in particular topics is driven by older local news enthusiasts (weather, politics, crime, traffic, taxes, and local government activity, social services and zoning), while interest in other topics lies mainly with younger local news followers (job openings, restaurants).

For 14 of these 16 topics, the local newspaper is local news enthusiasts' preferred source of information (or tied at the top with another source). Overall, local television news is the preferred source for just four topics, while the internet is preferred for just three of the 16 asked about.

While this seems to be positive news for newspapers, in many cases the reliance on newspapers is heaviest among older local news enthusiasts, while younger local news followers rely more heavily on other sources.

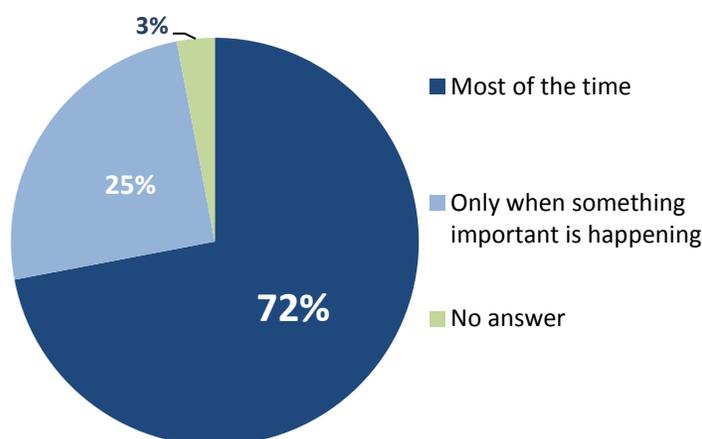
## Part I. Most adults are local news consumers

A recent study conducted by the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism and Internet & American Life Project, in partnership with the Knight Foundation, finds that nearly three quarters of Americans (72%) report following local news closely "most of the time, whether or not something important is happening." In contrast, one-quarter (25%) indicate they follow local news closely "only when something important is happening."

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### The majority of adults follow local news most of the time

*% of adults who follow local news...*



**Source:** The Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project Local News Survey, January 12-25, 2011. N=2,251 adults, age 18 and older, including 750 cell phone interviews. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. The margin of error for the total sample is plus or minus 2.4 percentage points.

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That is just one of the findings from a study detailing how citizens use a variety of sources to learn about and stay connected with their local communities. Overall, the survey found that Americans are integrating their use of both traditional and non-traditional news sources to stay informed about local news and information, and that the sources they use vary depending on the local topic they are following. As noted in the initial report based on these data,<sup>1</sup> local television news and the local newspaper are still the preferred media for many topics. At the same time, the internet has become a highly relied-upon source for many types of local information, particularly among younger adults.

This follow-up report takes a closer look at one unique group of local news consumers – those who follow local news closely "most of the time, whether or not something important is happening" to examine if, and how, they differ from other citizens who are less interested in local news. Who are these

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<sup>1</sup> See "How People Learn about Their Local Community" available at <http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2011/Local-news.aspx>.

local news enthusiasts? What do they look like demographically, and how do they differ from others in their overall attitudes and habits, their use of technology, and their news consumption habits? What local topics are important to them, and how do they gather information about these topics? Is there a reason to think this group will grow in size? The answers to these questions are important for the civic life of communities and the variety of news and information services – and advertisers – that are trying to serve customers in local markets.

## Who are local news enthusiasts?

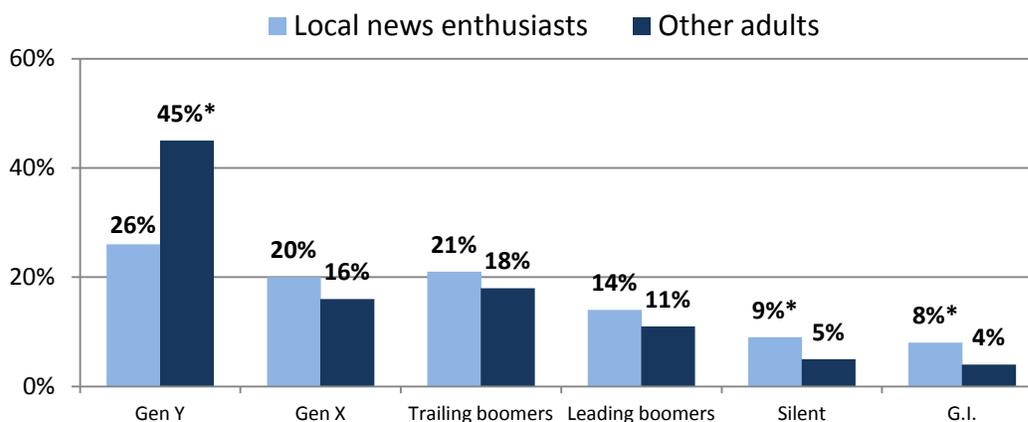
As a group, local news enthusiasts differ demographically from others in important ways, in their use of technology, the information that is of particular interest to them, and their local news habits.

Demographically, local news enthusiasts are more likely than other adults to be female, age 65 or older, retired, and African-American. Politically, they tend to be conservative in their outlook (although they do not differ from others in party identification) and they also attend religious services more frequently than others. They do not differ from other adults in terms of household income, but are less likely to be college graduates.

Despite their older age relative to other adults, local news enthusiasts are still fairly diverse generationally – one quarter are Generation Y (ages 18-34), about two in 10 are Gen Xers (ages 35-46) or Younger Boomers (ages 47-56), and roughly one in 10 are older Baby Boomers (ages 57-65), in the Silent Generation (ages 66-74), or from the G.I. Generation (age 75+). Less enthusiastic followers of local news, in contrast, are more heavily concentrated in Generation Y (45%).

## Local news enthusiasts skew older than others, but are still a diverse group

*% of each group who are in each generation...*



**Source:** The Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project Local News Survey, January 12-25, 2011. N=2,251 adults, age 18 and older, including 750 cell phone interviews. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. The margin of error for the total sample is plus or minus 2.4 percentage points. An asterisk (\*) indicates a significant difference at the 95% confidence level.

## Local News Enthusiasts Skew Female and African-American When Compared With Other Adults

	Local News Enthusiasts N=1,657	Other Adults N=524
<i>% of each group who is....</i>		
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	46%	55%*
Female	54*	45
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
White, non-Hispanic	69	67
Black, non-Hispanic	13*	8
Hispanic	13	14
Other race, non-Hispanic	4	9*
<b>Household Income</b>		
Less than \$30,000	32	28
\$30,000-\$49,999	16	14
\$50,000-\$74,999	12	13
\$75,000+	22	25
<b>Education level</b>		
Less than high school	12	12
High School graduate	34*	27
Some college	26	26
College graduate+	27	35*

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## Local News Enthusiasts Are More Likely to Be Politically Conservative and to Attend Religious Services Regularly

	Local News Enthusiasts N=1,657	Other Adults N=524
<i>% of each group who is...</i>		
<b>Party ID</b>		
Republican	26%	23%
Democrat	32	29
Independent	32	36
<b>Political Ideology</b>		
Total Conservative	38*	32
Moderate	32	33
Total Liberal	21	26*
<b>Religious Service Attendance</b>		
Weekly or more	40*	31
Monthly/Yearly	32	32
Seldom/Never	26	35*

**Source:** The Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project Local News Survey, January 12-25, 2011. N=2,251 adults, age 18 and older, including 750 cell phone interviews. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. The margin of error for the total sample is plus or minus 2.4 percentage points. An asterisk (\*) indicates a significant difference at the 95% confidence level.

## Technology use

As a group, local news enthusiasts use the internet, cell phones, social networking sites and other technology about as much as those who follow local news less closely. Yet, the connectedness of this group is driven largely by younger local news enthusiasts (age 18-39) who are much more digitally connected than both older local news enthusiasts and adults who do not follow local news closely most of the time. For instance, 91% of younger local news followers are internet users, compared with 71% of local news followers age 40 and older, and 82% of adults who do not follow local news closely.

A similar pattern exists for many online activities:

- 73% of younger local news enthusiasts use a social networking site like MySpace, Facebook, or LinkedIn, compared with 35% of older local news followers and 53% of adults who do not follow local news closely
- 16% of younger local news followers use Twitter, compared with just 4% of older local news enthusiasts and 7% of other adults.

- Similarly, while 19% of 18-39 year-old local news followers use a geolocation service or function such as Foursquare or Google Latitude, just 11% of their older counterparts and 12% of other adults do

While they are less likely than other adults to have a laptop or netbook (54% vs. 65%), there is no significant difference between local news enthusiasts and others in rates of cell phone ownership (84% vs. 87%) or tablet computer ownership (7% vs. 7%).

And, perhaps surprising given their slightly older age profile, local news enthusiasts are just as likely as other adults to consume local news and information on their mobile devices (47% v. 50%).

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### As a group, local news enthusiasts are just as connected as other adults, but this is driven by the youngest local news followers

	Total Local News Enthusiasts N=1,627	Local News Enthusiasts Age 18-39 N=405	Local News Enthusiasts Age 40+ N=1,207	Other Adults N=524
<i>% of each group who...</i>				
Have a laptop or netbook computer	54%	70*	46	65%*
Have a tablet computer	7	9	6	7
Have a cell phone	84	92*	80	87
Use the internet and/or email	78	91*	71	82
Use social networking sites	47	73*	35	53
Use Twitter	8	16*	4	7
Use a geolocation service	14	19*	11	12

**Source:** The Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project Local News Survey, January 12-25, 2011. N=2,251 adults, age 18 and older, including 750 cell phone interviews. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. The margin of error for the total sample is plus or minus 2.4 percentage points. An asterisk (\*) indicates a significant difference at the 95% confidence level.

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## Part II. How do local news enthusiasts differ in their perceptions of, and connections to, their communities?

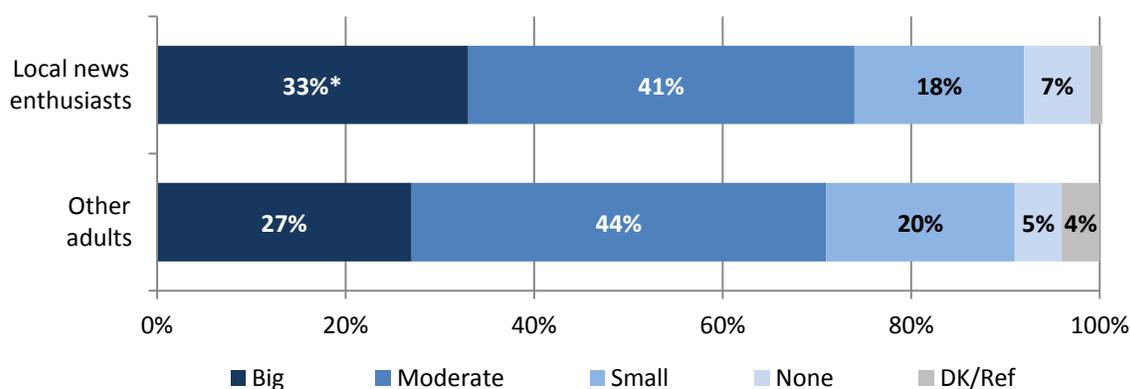
### Perceptions of community

Local news enthusiasts, like other adults, hold positive views about their communities, but they are slightly more likely than others to believe they can have a big impact on improving their communities. Eighty-two percent describe their community as an excellent (38%) or good (44%) place to live, which is comparable to the percent of other adults who say their community is an excellent (39%) or good (42%) place to live. Among local news enthusiasts, older residents are slightly more likely than younger local news followers to describe their community as excellent or good (84% v. 79%).

However, slightly more local news enthusiasts than others think they can have a *big* impact on making their community a better place to live (33% vs. 27%).

### Local news enthusiasts believe they can have a positive impact on their community

*How much impact do you think people like you can have in making your community a better place to live?*

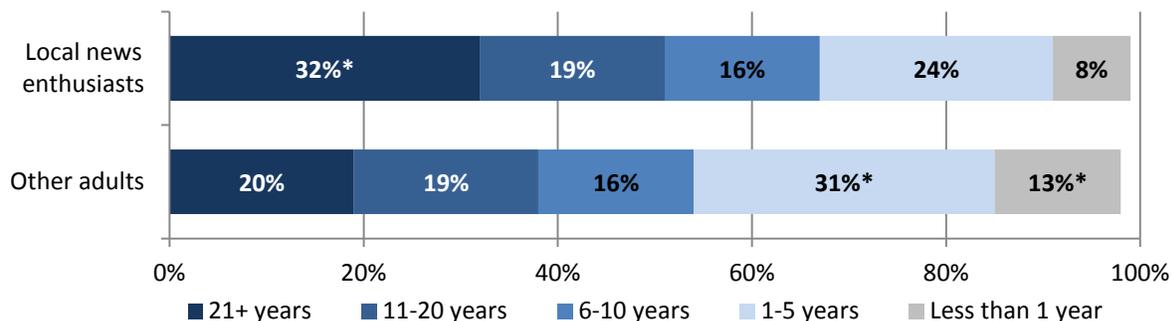


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Local news enthusiasts' feelings of empowerment may be due to their longevity in the community. Three in 10 (32%) have lived in their current neighborhood more than 20 years or all of their lives, compared with just 20% of non-local news enthusiasts. Not surprisingly, local news enthusiasts age 40 and older are most likely to be long residents of their communities; just 15% of younger local news followers have lived in their communities more than 20 years, and more than half (53%) have lived in their community five years or less.

## Local news enthusiasts have lived in their neighborhoods longer

About how long have you lived in the neighborhood where you live now?



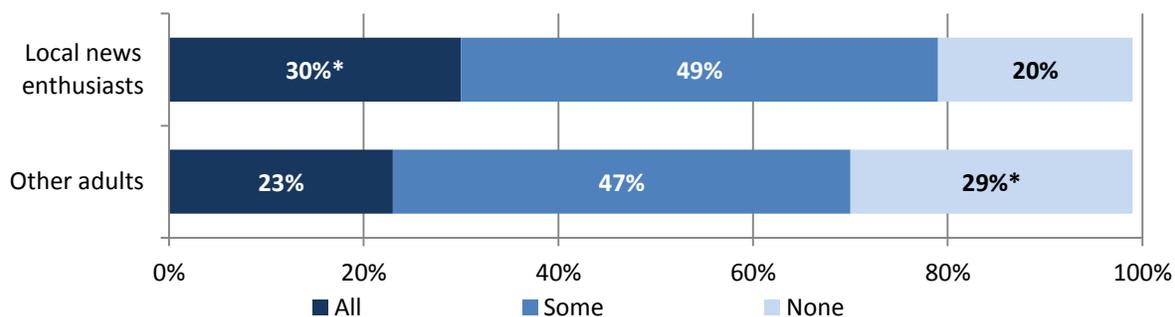
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Local news enthusiasts as a whole are more likely than other adults to know those living around them. Nearly eight in 10 (79%) local news followers say they know their neighbors, including 30% who say they know *all* of their neighbors. Those who do not follow local news closely are slightly less likely to know their neighbors; 70% know their neighbors, including 23% who know them all.

Yet again, this familiarity with neighbors is due mainly to the rootedness of older local news enthusiasts. Local news followers age 40 and older are significantly more likely than their younger counterparts to say they know *all* of their neighbors (34% v. 23%) and much less likely to say they know *none* of them (15% v. 28%).

## Local news enthusiasts are more likely to know their neighbors

Do you happen to know the names of your neighbors who live close to you, or not? Do you know all of them or only some of them?



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## Part III. How do local news enthusiasts' news consumption habits differ from others?

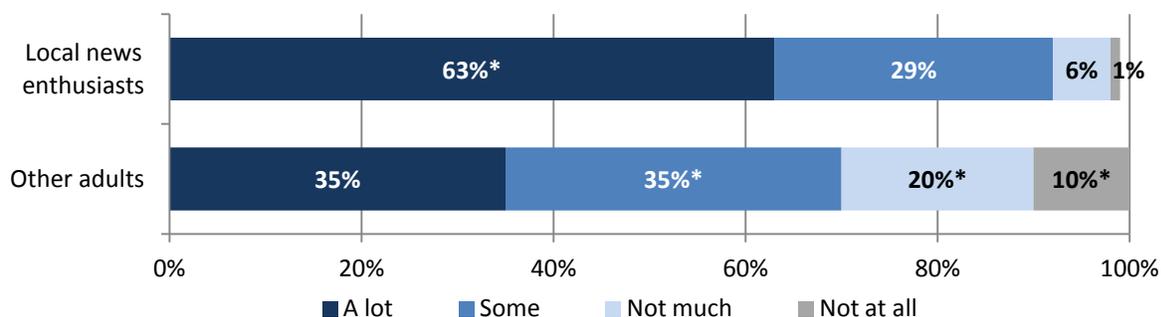
Local news enthusiasts are general news enthusiasts. Overall, nine in 10 say they enjoy keeping up with the news a lot (63%) or some (29%), and they are more likely than other adults to follow all types of news (international, national, and local). This is true of both older and younger local news enthusiasts, though those age 40 and older are the most likely to follow all types of news.

More than three-quarters of local news followers (78%) also follow national news closely whether or not something important is happening and 63% follow international news closely regardless of particular breaking events. In contrast, among their less enthusiastic counterparts, 56% report they follow international and 53% report they follow national news only when something important is happening.

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### Local news enthusiasts are general news enthusiasts

*In general, how much do you enjoy keeping up with the news – a lot, some, not much, or not at all?*

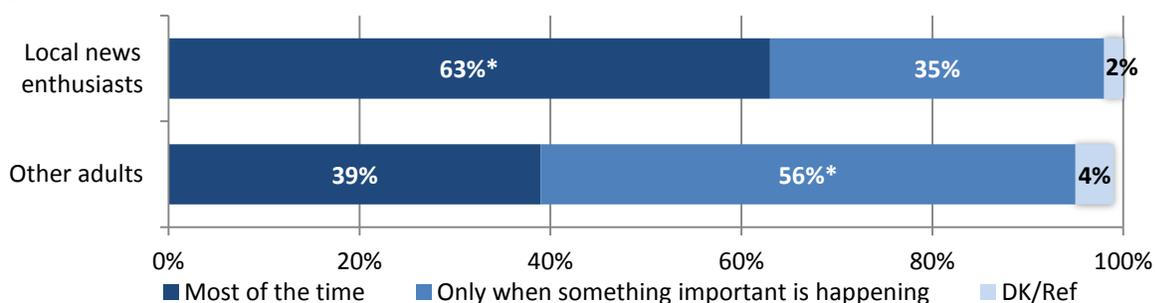


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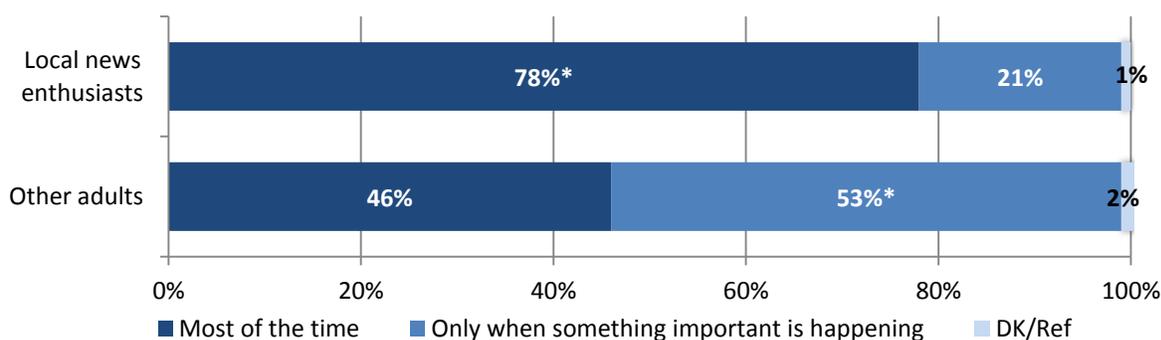
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## Local news enthusiasts are more likely than others to follow international and national news

*I follow **international** news closely...*



*I follow **national** news closely...*



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## Local news consumption habits

There is no difference between local news enthusiasts and others in their views about the comparative ease of keeping informed about the local community today compared with five years ago – just over half (56%) say that compared with five years ago it is *easier* today to keep up with local news, and an additional 29% say there is no real difference compared with five years ago. Just 13% say it is *harder* today to keep up with local news.

However, in several other respects local news enthusiasts are very different from those who follow local news less closely. Their general view of local news and the number and type of sources they use show significant differences in how these two groups approach keeping informed about their community. Overall, local news enthusiasts see more value in their local news sources, use a variety of sources and more sources regularly than others, and are more willing to pay for them.

## Do local sources provide the information that matters?

Asked whether the local news sources currently available to them give them the information they need, a third of this group (35%) say that local news sources give them *all* of the information that matters to them, and an additional 60% say these sources provide *some* of the information that matters to them. Just 4% say their local news sources give them *not much* or *none* of the information they need. Older and younger local news enthusiasts are similar on these measures of satisfaction with local news.

In comparison, among those who follow local news less closely, just one-quarter (25%) say local sources provide them *all* of the information that matters to them, while 57% say they only provide *some*. Fully 15% of this group say they do get *not much* or *none* of the information they need from their current local news sources.

## Number and variety of local news sources used

Local news enthusiasts use a wider variety of sources on a regular basis than other adults to keep up with local news. As a group they prefer traditional platforms such as newspapers and television, as well as word of mouth from family or friends, yet there are key differences between younger and older local news followers in this regard

Eight in 10 adults who follow local news closely (80%) use broadcast television as a source for local news on a weekly basis, while about half use word of mouth (57%), radio (52%) and print newspaper (48%). Older local news enthusiasts are more likely than those under age 40 to use broadcast television (83% v. 76%) and a print version of the local newspaper (53% v. 36%) weekly. In contrast, younger local news enthusiasts are more likely to use word of mouth as a local news source each week (63% v. 54%).

Fewer local news followers of any age, but still substantial percentages, go beyond these traditional sources and use online sources or the online versions of more familiar sources – such as search engines (41%), websites for the local newspaper (23%) or television station (20%), and social networking sites (12%). Local news enthusiasts are more likely than other adults to use each of these different sources for local information on a regular basis. And not surprisingly, among local news enthusiasts, younger adults lead the way in using each of these sources:

- Search engines (54% of local news followers under age 40 v. 35% of older local news followers)
- Local newspaper website (33% of those under age 40 v. 18% of those age 40+)
- Local television station website (32% of those under age 40 v. 14% of those age 40+)
- Social networking sites (21% of those younger than age 40 v. 7% of those age 40+)

## Sources Used for Local Information at Least Weekly

	Local News Enthusiasts N=1,657	Local News Enthusiasts Age 18-39 N=405	Local News Enthusiasts Age 40+ N=1,207	Other Adults N=524
<i>% in each group who get local information from each source at least weekly...</i>				
<b>Traditional sources</b>				
Local television news broadcast	80%*	76%	83%*	50%
Word of mouth from friends, family, co-workers, neighbors	57	63*	54	53
Local radio broadcast	52*	53	52	46
The PRINT version of a local newspaper	48*	36	53*	22
Print newsletter about your local community	10*	12	10	6
<b>Online sources</b>				
An internet search using a search engine such as Google or Bing	41	54*	35	44
Website of a local newspaper	23*	33*	18	13
Website of local television news station	20*	32*	14	14
Person or organization you follow on a social networking site	12*	21*	7	9
Some other website dedicated to your local community	10	19*	6	8
Website of a local radio station	9	13*	7	8
Email newsletter or listserv about your local community	7	11*	5	6
Blog about your local community	4	9*	2	3
A person or organization you follow on twitter	3	7*	1	2

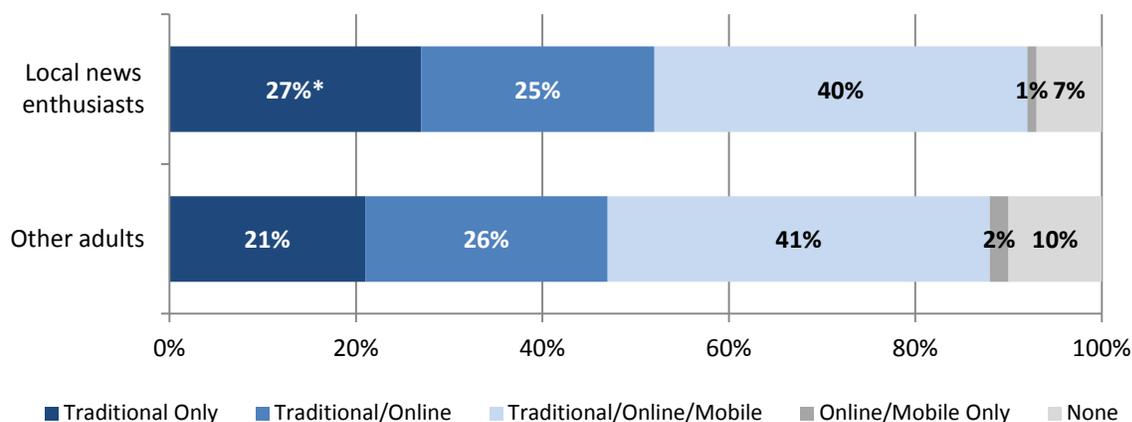
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Local news enthusiasts are also more likely than others to use *only* traditional sources of local news (27% vs. 21%), yet nearly two-thirds of this group use non-traditional sources as well. Four in 10 (40%) use a combination of traditional, online and mobile sources, and an additional 25% use a combination of traditional and online sources.

Local news followers who rely on just traditional news sources tend to be age 40 and older—36% use only traditional sources for their local news, compared with 10% of local news enthusiasts younger than 40. The latter, in contrast, are more likely than older local news followers to use a combination of traditional, online and mobile sources for their local news (64% v. 28%).

## Local news enthusiasts are slightly more likely to report using only traditional news sources

*Types of local news sources ever used...*



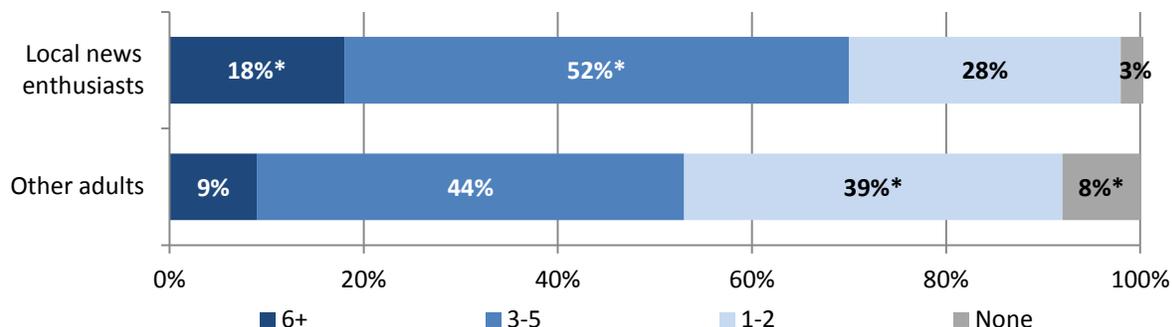
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The diversity in local news sources used by local news enthusiasts translates to using more sources weekly. These heavier local news consumers use a mean of 3.77 sources a week compared with 2.84 sources for others. Local news enthusiasts are twice as likely as other adults (18% v. 9%) to use six or more sources of local news on a weekly basis. Nearly half of those less interested in local news (47%) use two or fewer sources per week to gather information about their community.

The widest variety of sources used is among local news enthusiasts under age 40. The mean number of sources use weekly by this group is 4.38, compared with 3.47 for older local news followers. Three in ten local news enthusiasts under age 40 (29%) report using 6 or more sources for local news weekly, compared with 12% of their older counterparts.

## Local news enthusiasts report using more local news sources on a weekly basis

Number of local news sources used at least weekly...



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However, despite the number and variety of news sources used, these local news junkies are much more likely than others to have a *favorite* source for local news. Six in 10 (62%) report having a favorite source, compared with just 38% of those who follow local news only when something important is happening. Older local news enthusiasts (age 40 and older) are slightly more likely than their younger counterparts to have a favorite local source (66% v. 53%).

## Local news enthusiasts are more willing to pay for local news

Local news enthusiasts are more reliant on their local newspaper than others and that reliance is reflected in a greater willingness to pay for the local paper (both the print and online versions). One-third (32%) say it would have a *major* impact on them if their local newspaper no longer existed, compared with 19% of those less interested in local news. In contrast, just 19% of adults who do not follow local news closely say they would feel a major impact and fully half (51%) say they would feel *no* impact at all from the loss of their local paper. Only 34% of local news enthusiasts feel this way.

Most likely to report a major impact if their newspaper disappeared are local news followers age 40 and older (35%), though even among younger local news followers 26% say losing the local paper would have a major impact on them.

Local news enthusiasts are twice as likely as other adults (38% v. 19%) to have a paid subscription for delivery of a local print newspaper, led almost entirely by the 46% of older local news enthusiasts who currently pay for this service. In addition to a local newspaper print subscription, 6% of local news enthusiasts pay for some other local news source, compared with just 3% of other adults.

While nearly three quarters (72%) of local news enthusiasts say they would *not* pay for online access to their local newspaper, nearly one-quarter (23%) say they would pay a monthly subscription fee of \$5 or \$10 to get full online access to their local newspaper. This is higher than the percent of other adults who would pay to access their local newspaper online.

- 13% (vs. 8% of other adults) would pay \$5
- 10% (vs. 5% of other adults) would pay \$10

Older and younger local news enthusiasts are equally likely to say they would pay for online access to their local paper, despite the fact that younger local news enthusiasts are currently heavier users of their local paper's website.

### Local news enthusiasts are not more likely to be “local news participators”

Interestingly, as a whole, their enthusiasm for local news does not lead this group to more actively *participate* electronically in the local news environment than others. Overall, four in 10 local news enthusiasts have participated in one or more of the following activities related to local news, with their level of participation on each activity comparable to those who do not follow local news closely.

However, younger local news enthusiasts are significantly more likely than both their older counterparts and adults who do not follow local news closely to participate in the digital local news environment. More than half of local news followers under age 40 (56%) engage in one of the following activities, compared with 33% of older local news followers and 42% of adults who do not follow local news closely.

- Email a link to a local news story or local news video to someone you know (36% of younger local news enthusiasts v. 21% of older local news enthusiasts v. 26% of other adults)
- Post news or information about your local community on a social networking site like Facebook (32% of younger local news enthusiasts v. 8% of older local news enthusiasts v. 17% of other adults)
- Comment on a local news story or local blog you read online (22% of younger local news enthusiasts v. 13% of older local news enthusiasts v. 15% of other adults)
- Customize homepage to include your favorite local information or news sources or topics (20% of younger local news enthusiasts v. 13% of older local news enthusiasts v. 15% of other adults)
- Contribute to online discussions or message boards about your local community (14% of younger local news enthusiasts v. 5% of older local news enthusiasts v. 6% of other adults)
- Tag or categorize online local news content (9% of younger local news enthusiasts v. 5% of older local news enthusiasts v. 5% of other adults)
- Contribute your own article, opinion piece, picture or video about your local community to an online news site (8% of younger local news enthusiasts v. 4% of older local news enthusiasts v. 4% of other adults)
- Post news or information about your local community on Twitter (5% of younger local news enthusiasts v. less than 1% of older local news enthusiasts v. 1% of other adults)

## Part IV. Local topics of interest and the primary source for information

Among all adults, the most closely followed local topics are weather, breaking news, politics and crime, all followed by a solid majority of two thirds or more. Slightly less popular topics but still with a fairly good following of about half or more are arts and culture, local businesses, schools and education, community and neighborhood events, restaurants, taxes and traffic. Fewer survey respondents follow local news about housing, local government activity, job openings, social services, or zoning. Roughly four in 10 adults or fewer follow these local topics.

### Both local news enthusiasts and non-enthusiasts follow a wide variety of topics

Local news enthusiasts and non-enthusiasts both follow a wide variety of local topics. In fact, it is somewhat surprising that adults who say they follow local news closely most of the time are *no more likely* than those who do not to follow four of the 16 local topics asked about, including local businesses other than restaurants, community events, housing and real estate, and social services. And even among those topics which local news enthusiasts are significantly more likely to follow, in many cases the difference between the two groups is 12 percentage points or less (weather, local politics, arts and culture, local restaurants, taxes, traffic, and local job openings).

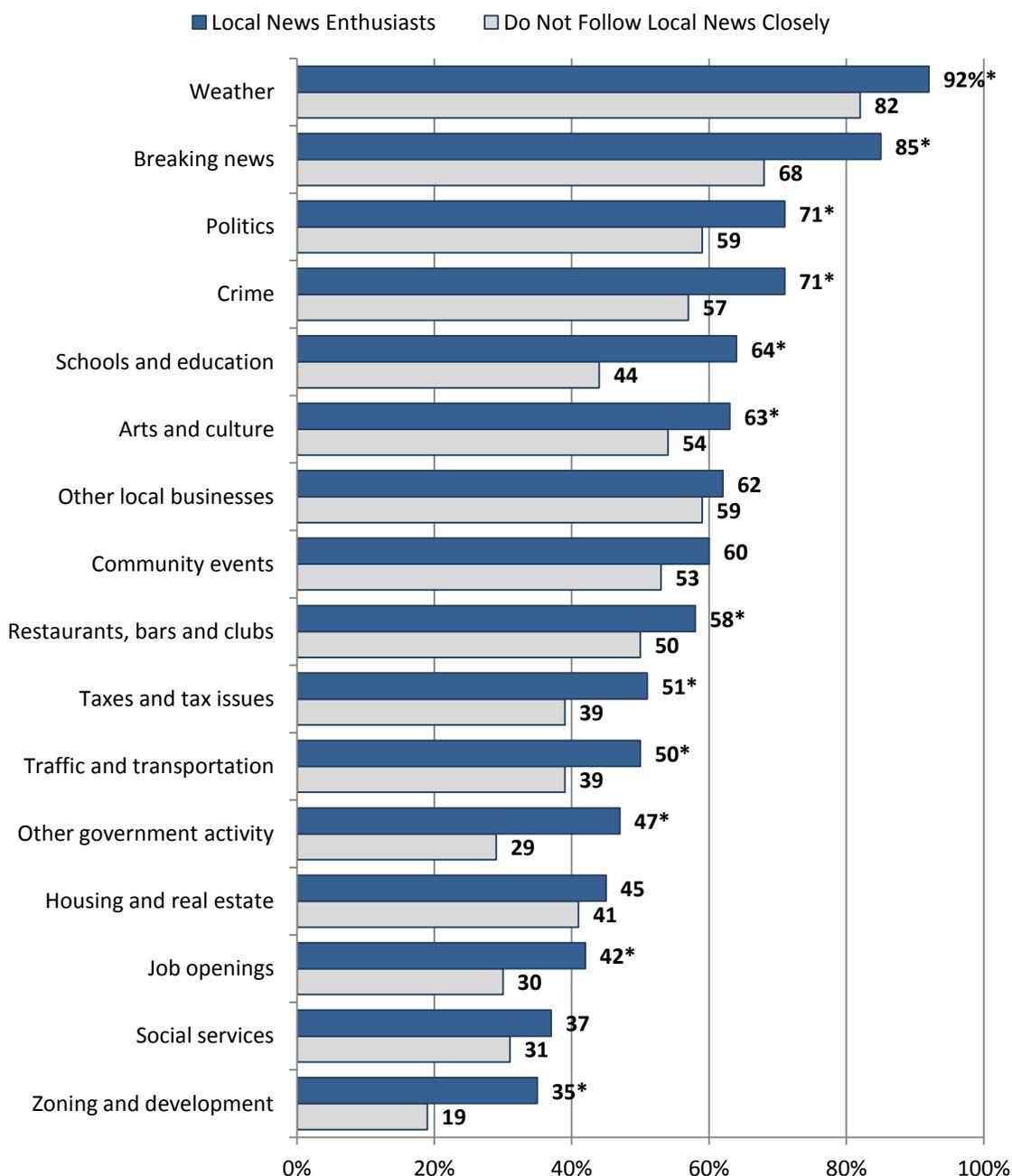
The handful of local topics which local news enthusiasts as a whole are much more likely than other adults to follow therefore stand out. They are:

- Local schools and education (20 percentage points higher than those who do not follow local news closely)
- Local government activity (18 percentage points higher)
- Breaking community news (17 percentage points higher)
- Zoning (16 percentage points higher)

Yet again, among local news followers there are significant differences by age. In most cases, greater interest in particular topics among local news enthusiasts is driven by the older adults in this group (those age 40 and older). This is true in the case of weather, politics, crime, traffic, taxes, and local government activity, social services and zoning. In contrast, local news enthusiasts' greater interest in job openings and local restaurants compared to other adults is mainly due to intense interest in these topics among local news followers under age 40.

## Local news enthusiasts are more likely to follow 12 out of 16 local news topics

% of each group who follow each topic...



**Source:** The Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project Local News Survey, January 12-25, 2011. N=2,251 adults, age 18 and older, including 750 cell phone interviews. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. The margin of error for the total sample is plus or minus 2.4 percentage points. An asterisk (\*) indicates a significant difference at the 95% confidence level.

## Local news enthusiasts prefer newspapers for most topics, while others are more reliant on the internet

Local news enthusiasts prefer to follow many local topics through traditional media such as newspapers or television news. For 12 of the 16 topics asked about, newspapers are the top source (or tied as the top source with another platform) among local news enthusiasts. For four of the 16 topics, television news is the preferred source. The internet is the top source for this group for just three topics: restaurants, bars and clubs, other local businesses, and jobs.

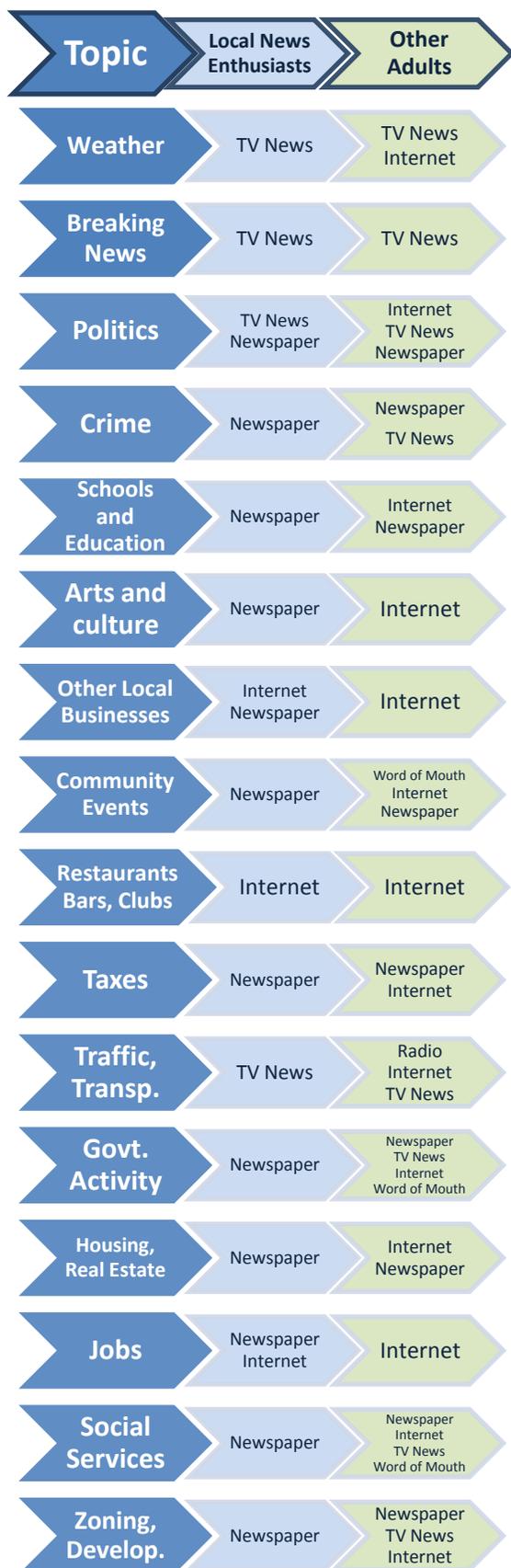
In contrast, those less likely to follow local news closely cite the internet as their preferred source (or tied with another platform as the most preferred source) for 14 out of 16 topics. Newspapers and television news top the list for eight and nine topics, respectively, while word of mouth is among the most preferred sources for three local news topics. Overall, those who do not follow local news closely rely on a broader range of sources for the 16 topics asked about, although they are much less likely than local news enthusiasts to follow local news in general.

## Local news enthusiasts are heavily reliant on traditional sources, though many are also turning to the internet

Local news enthusiasts' preference for newspapers as a source of local information is evident across all sixteen topics presented. They are more likely than others to prefer newspapers for almost every topic considered with the exception of weather and breaking news. Three in ten (or more) local news enthusiasts prefer newspapers for following crime (42%), local politics (30%), community events (29%), or arts and culture (29%). One-quarter prefer newspapers when seeking information about local schools (26%), taxes (26%), government activity (23%), other local business (23%), and housing issues (22%), and two in 10 primarily use newspapers for following restaurants (20%), job openings (20%), or local zoning issues (20%). Fewer local news enthusiasts use newspapers as their primary source for information about breaking news (15%), social services (15%), weather (11%) or traffic (10%).

These time sensitive topics (breaking news and weather) are more likely to be followed by this group via television. At least six in 10 prefer television news for following weather (66%) and breaking news (62%). About one-third follow politics (32%) and crime (32%) via TV news and one-quarter (23%) prefer to follow traffic this way. Fewer than two in 10 prefer TV news for information about local government activities (15%), arts and culture (15%), schools (12%) or taxes (12%), and fewer than one in 10 prefer television news for the other seven topics covered. Local news enthusiasts are more likely than other adults to prefer TV for each topic in the survey, with the exception of local businesses, community events, job openings, zoning and social services.

However, in addition to these traditional local news platforms, the internet is a top source for many local news enthusiasts when seeking information about local weather (31%), restaurants (28%) and other businesses (26%). Fewer go to the internet for information about schools (20%), job openings (17%), breaking news (16%), politics (16%), housing (16%), arts or culture (15%), crime (12%), or community events (11%).



## Preferred information source for 16 local news topics

### *Among local news enthusiasts...*

Newspapers are the preferred source (or tied at the top) for 12 of the 16 local topics asked about

TV news is preferred for 4 topics

The internet is preferred for 3 topics

### *Among those who do not follow local news as closely...*

The internet is the preferred source (or tied at the top) for 14 of the 16 local topics asked about

Newspapers are the preferred source (or tied at the top) for 9 of 16 topics

TV news is preferred (or tied at the top) for 8 topics

Word of mouth is preferred for 3 topics

Radio is preferred for 1 topic

**Source:** The Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project Local News Survey, January 12-25, 2011. N=2,251 adults, age 18 and older, including 750 cell phone interviews. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. The margin of error for the total sample is plus or minus 2.4 percentage points.

Local news enthusiasts are comparable to other adults in their use of radio, mobile phone, word of mouth, or local government as a source of information about local topics. While word of mouth and radio top the list of sources used for a handful of topics among adults who do not follow local news closely, they are not used more widely by that group. Rather, they are at the top of a list of sparingly used sources.

- **Radio** is used by very few local news enthusiasts as a primary source of information for any of the 16 local topics asked about. Fifteen percent look to the radio for information about traffic. About one in 10 listen to radio for information about weather (10%) or breaking news (9%), and even fewer use the radio for information on any of the other topics.
- **Word of mouth** is the preferred source for roughly one in ten local news enthusiasts on community events (13%), local restaurants (13%), local businesses (12%), and schools (10%). For the remaining topics, fewer than 10% cite word of mouth as their primary source of information about that topic.
- **Mobile phone** is cited as the primary source for information about weather by 6% of local news enthusiasts, but for all other topics it is cited by 2% or fewer.
- **Local government** is cited as the preferred source by 2% or fewer local news enthusiasts for any of these 16 topics, with the exception of taxes (4%) and social services (3%).

## Younger local news enthusiasts rely on different local news sources than their older counterparts

While local news enthusiasts' overall reliance on local newspapers for many topics of interest seems to be positive news for the industry, in most cases it is a reflection of the habits of local news enthusiasts age 40 and older. For many of the topics which older local news followers have routinely turned to newspapers for, younger local news followers prefer non-traditional sources.

Specifically, among local news enthusiasts under age 40, the internet is the preferred source for each of the following topics:

- Local restaurants, clubs and bars (45% of local news followers under age 40 rely mainly on the internet for information about this topic)
- Other local businesses (33%)
- Schools and education (29%)
- Local politics (28%)
- Jobs (27%)
- Housing (21%)
- Arts and cultural events (20%)
- Community or neighborhood events (19%)

These findings may signal significant changes to come in the local news environment, particularly in the delivery of local news to those most interested in following events in their local community.

## Methodology

This report is based on the findings of a survey on Americans' use of the Internet. The results in this report are based on data from telephone interviews conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International from January 12 to 25, 2011, among a sample of 2,251 adults, age 18 and older.

Telephone interviews were conducted in English and Spanish by landline (1,501) and cell phone (750, including 332 without a landline phone). For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling is plus or minus 2.4 percentage points. For results based Internet users (n=1,762), the margin of sampling error is plus or minus 2.7 percentage points. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting telephone surveys may introduce some error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

A combination of landline and cellular random digit dial (RDD) samples was used to represent all adults in the continental United States who have access to either a landline or cellular telephone. Both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International, LLC (SSI) according to PSRAI specifications. Numbers for the landline sample were selected with probabilities in proportion to their share of listed telephone households from active blocks (area code + exchange + two-digit block number) that contained three or more residential directory listings. The cellular sample was not list-assisted, but was drawn through a systematic sampling from dedicated wireless 100-blocks and shared service 100-blocks with no directory-listed landline numbers.

New sample was released daily and was kept in the field for at least five days. The sample was released in replicates, which are representative subsamples of the larger population. This ensures that complete call procedures were followed for the entire sample. At least 7 attempts were made to complete an interview at a sampled telephone number. The calls were staggered over times of day and days of the week to maximize the chances of making contact with a potential respondent. Each number received at least one daytime call in an attempt to find someone available. For the landline sample, interviewers asked to speak with the youngest adult male or female currently at home based on a random rotation. If no male/female was available, interviewers asked to speak with the youngest adult of the other gender. For the cellular sample, interviews were conducted with the person who answered the phone. Interviewers verified that the person was an adult and in a safe place before administering the survey. Cellular sample respondents were offered a post-paid cash incentive for their participation. All interviews completed on any given day were considered to be the final sample for that day.

Weighting is generally used in survey analysis to compensate for sample designs and patterns of non-response that might bias results. A two-stage weighting procedure was used to weight this dual-frame sample. The first-stage weight is the product of two adjustments made to the data – a Probability of Selection Adjustment (PSA) and a Phone Use Adjustment (PUA). The PSA corrects for the fact that respondents in the landline sample have different probabilities of being sampled depending on how many adults live in the household. The PUA corrects for the overlapping landline and cellular sample frames.

The second stage of weighting balances sample demographics to population parameters. The sample is balanced by form to match national population parameters for sex, age, education, race, Hispanic origin, region (U.S. Census definitions), population density, and telephone usage. The White, non-Hispanic subgroup is also balanced on age, education and region. The basic weighting parameters came from a special analysis of the Census Bureau's 2010 Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) that included all households in the continental United States. The population density parameter was derived

from Census 2000 data. The cell phone usage parameter came from an analysis of the January-June 2010 National Health Interview Survey.<sup>2</sup>

Following is the full disposition of all sampled telephone numbers:

Landline	Cell	
29,846	13,498	Total Numbers Dialed
1,365	270	Non-residential
1,425	28	Computer/Fax
2	----	Cell phone
13,829	4,988	Other not working
1,664	152	Additional projected not working
11,561	8,060	Working numbers
38.7%	59.7%	Working Rate
555	51	No Answer / Busy
2,815	1,943	Voice Mail
60	11	Other Non-Contact
8,131	6,055	Contacted numbers
70.3%	75.1%	Contact Rate
514	780	Callback
6,018	3,995	Refusal
1,599	1,280	Cooperating numbers
19.7%	21.1%	Cooperation Rate
53	36	Language Barrier
----	478	Child's cell phone
1,546	766	Eligible numbers
96.7%	59.8%	Eligibility Rate
45	16	Break-off
1,501	750	Completes
97.1%	97.9%	Completion Rate
13.4%	15.5%	Response Rate

The disposition reports all of the sampled telephone numbers ever dialed from the original telephone number samples. The response rate estimates the fraction of all eligible respondents in the sample that were ultimately interviewed. At PSRAI it is calculated by taking the product of three component rates:

- Contact rate – the proportion of working numbers where a request for interview was made
- Cooperation rate – the proportion of contacted numbers where a consent for interview was at least initially obtained, versus those refused

<sup>2</sup> Blumberg SJ, Luke JV. Wireless substitution: Early release of estimates from the National Health Interview Survey, January-June, 2010. National Center for Health Statistics. December 2010.

- Completion rate – the proportion of initially cooperating and eligible interviews that were completed

Thus the response rate for the landline sample was 13.4 percent. The response rate for the cellular sample was 15.5 percent.