

# Survey: Readers prefer community paper for news

COLUMBIA, MO—Readers in areas served by community newspapers continue to prefer the community newspaper as their source of local news and advertising, according to the 2011 results of an annual survey conducted by the National Newspaper Association and the research arm of the Reynolds Journalism Institute at the Missouri School of Journalism. The survey is in its sixth year.

Following consistent trends, the study shows that 74 percent of people in communities served by a newspaper with circulations under 15,000 read a local newspaper each week. They prefer the printed copy to the online version, with 48 percent saying they never read the local news online. They prefer to receive advertising through the newspaper (51 percent) instead of on the Internet (11 percent). And only about a quarter of respondents said they had found local news through a mobile device in the past 30 days. Slightly more (38 percent) said they had received local shopping information by mobile device.

They also have a strong preference for government accountability through newspaper public notice, with 80 percent saying the government should be required to publish notices in the newspaper.

NNA President Reed Anfinson, publisher of the Swift County Monitor-News in Benson, MN, said the study demonstrates that citizens believe in newspapers.

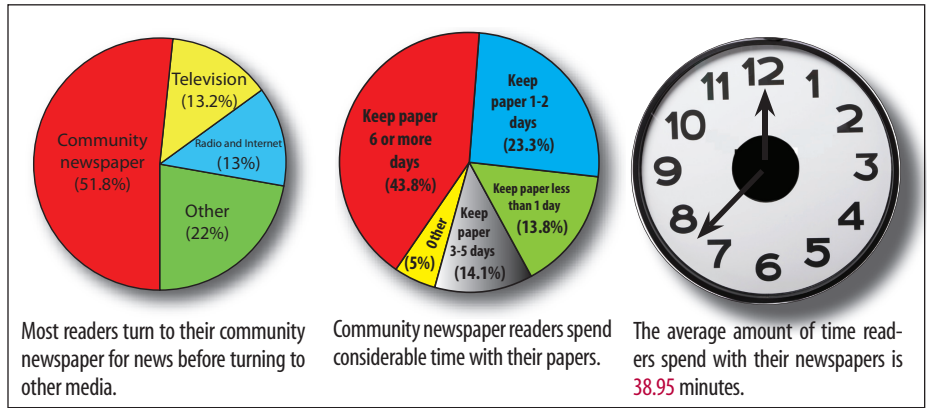
“The survey indicates a majority of respondents believe that the newspaper does a better job, provides more background and depth and is more useful to them personally than other news sources,” Anfinson said. “It reinforces not only the strong

bond between local communities and their newspapers, but it demonstrates that people do value good journalism.”

Since 2005, NNA has done research on how people read and what they think about their local newspaper. Results have been consistent over the years, even as sample and community sizes have been adjusted slightly.

The early data indicates that the positive findings in the earlier surveys are consistent for community newspapers:

- 74% of those surveyed read a local newspaper each week.
- Those readers, on average, share their paper with 2.33 persons.
- They spend about 38.95 minutes reading their local newspaper.
- 73% read most or all of their community newspaper.
- 43.8% keep their community newspaper six or more days (shelf life).
- 61% of readers read local news very often in their community newspaper; while 48 percent say they never read local news online (only 11 percent say they read local news very often online).
- Of those going online for local news (167 respondents), 52 percent found it on the local newspaper’s website, compared to 20 percent for sites such as Yahoo, MSN or Google, and 25 percent for the website of a local TV station.
- 33% of those surveyed read local education (school) news very often in their newspaper; while 68 percent never read



- local education news online.
  - 27 percent read local sports news very often in their newspaper; while 70 percent never read local sports online.
  - 40 percent read editorials or letters to the editor very often in their newspaper; while 64 percent never read editorials or letters to the editor online.
  - 80 percent think governments should be required to publish public notices in newspapers, with 23 percent reading public notices very often in their newspaper.
  - 70 percent have Internet access in the home, but 80 percent never visit the Web site of their local chamber of commerce.
  - Of those with Internet access at home, 89 percent have broadband access.
- The local community newspaper is the primary source of information about the local community for 51.8 percent of respondents compared to seeking information from friends and relatives (16 percent) and TV (13.2 percent.) Readers are

seven times more likely to get their news from their community newspaper than from the Internet (7.4 percent). Less than 6 percent say their primary local news source is radio.

Additional information, charts and presentations from the survey will appear in future issues of Publishers’ Auxiliary, and on NNA’s website, [www.nnaweb.org](http://www.nnaweb.org) under the research button.

**SAMPLING METHODOLOGY:** The 2011 survey was based on 500 telephone (landline and cellular) interviews completed with residents that lived in areas where the local newspapers had a circulation of 15,000 or less across the U.S. in July and September 2011. Please note that this sampling methodology differs from the survey conducted in 2010, which was based on 670 telephone interviews completed with residents that lived in areas where the local newspapers had a circulation of 8,000 or less in the U.S. in August and October 2010. The response rate in the study was 42.8 percent, and the margin of sampling error was plus or minus 5 percentage points. In 2005, the survey sampled people in towns and cities of 100,000 or less. In 2007, people were surveyed in communities where the local newspaper had a circulation of 50,000 or less. In 2008, the sample size dropped to 25,000 circulations and in 2009, the sample size was 15,000 circulations or less.