

WHAT THE FUTURE: NEWS

How news can thrive by borrowing from
tech and CPG playbooks PAGE 8

How to monetize content in a
privacy-focused future PAGE 12

What people want from local news
and how to fund it PAGE 16

Why news literacy matters more than
ever for future generations PAGE 20

+ Experts from The New York Times, Poynter
Institute, the News Literacy Project and
the ARF's Coalition for Innovative Media
Measurement share their vision for
how to create a vibrant news future



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Why news is worth protecting and how to save it for our collective futures

Imagine it's 2034, and the news has all but vanished. And ... well, we're entering uncharted waters for brands and everything else in the world's largest, most diverse democracy. (We'll try to imagine that together later.)

My great aunt Edith was publisher of the Gotebo Record Times, in Gotebo, Oklahoma. She handset type on her massive press until she died in her 80s, during the 1980s. When she died, so did the paper, and it's not much of a stretch to say that Gotebo did, too. Today's population could fit in a New York subway car.

The Washington Post lays it bare: "Newspapers lost 77% of their jobs over the past 20 years, the single steepest dive among any of the 532 industries tracked by the Bureau of Labor Statistics." Reporters drained out of newsrooms. But where did they go? They're still "reporting," according to the Post analysis. They're just doing it for corporations.

What does that look like? Well, um, you're reading an example of that right now. The editorial team at What the Future used to work in traditional journalism. The future of news is something we think about a lot. And you could take it as a sign that when we envisioned our personal futures in journalism, we ... left. It's certainly positive that reporters are still doing what they are skilled at.

But according to everyone interviewed for this issue, and common sense, it's not great for democracy or the practice of holding leaders in all aspects of our lives (business, entertainment) accountable.

What's the problem with news, today? Saying, "It depends on whom you ask," says a lot about the problem. For some, "the media" has become this aggregated piñata filled with grievances. People beat "the media" (aka the mainstream media) with sticks like "enemy of the people" or "biased" or "fake news." For others, the problem is that the issues that are important to them aren't covered in enough depth. For others, it's that the news is too sensational.

If it bleeds, it leads.

When I was a kid, my older sister learned of the death of a friend on the local news. I heard her horrified shriek from the other end of the house. And I wondered what possible good was being done by reporting crime day in and day out.



64%

of Americans say their household got a physical newspaper delivered when they were growing up.

(Source: Ipsos survey conducted Aug. 2-5, 2024, among 1,120 U.S. adults.)

Sure, it's low-hanging fruit because crime stories are always available. But if it happens daily, is it "news?" All that said, the problem with the future of news hasn't necessarily been the content. Sure, it's possible that the search for engagement and shares and clicks has led to a watering and dumbing down, but it's a vicious cycle.

Now it's the business that's bleeding.

Back in the '90s internet boom, ad revenue was everywhere. Dot-com dollars flooded the media space. There were those among us who followed the mantra of "information wants to be free." In fairness, that kinda worked. We could publish online content free — and employ a full newsroom — because those ad dollars in the print and online publications made that possible.

But it was also short-sighted. The platforms evolved. The publisher of AdAge at the time railed against Craigslist, not because of the competition or the disruption to the classified business. But because of what he viewed as the anti-capitalist nature of it all. "They took something that supported a lot of industries well and replaced it with something they *didn't even try to make money from*," he would rant with indignation. The business model of news fell apart as the ad money shifted from the creators of journalism to the platforms that host it and the engines that search it. That's true for broadcast, print and even non-venture-backed online publications.

Most people believe staying informed is crucial to being a productive citizen

Q. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (% Agree)



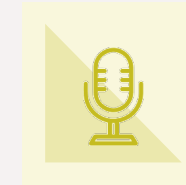
69%

It is important to stay current with news to be a productive member of society



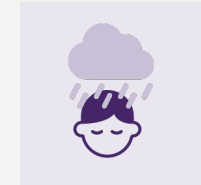
68%

The media cares more about stirring people up than reporting news neutrally



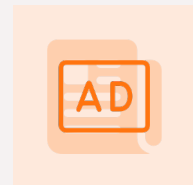
59%

News coverage today is too biased to be useful



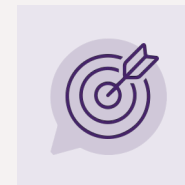
52%

I feel overwhelmed or depressed by news



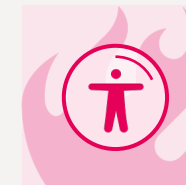
51%

The ads on online news sites make articles difficult to read



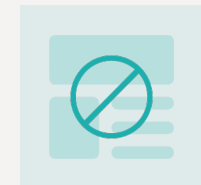
35%

Social media shows me relevant news



31%

Most news doesn't apply to me or my life



26%

I avoid news as much as possible

(Source: Ipsos survey conducted Aug. 2-5, 2024, among 1,120 U.S. adults.)

What will AI do to the future of news?

As a softball dad, I'm the guy who keeps score using an app called GameChanger (IYKYK). As soon as I tap "game over," I get a narrative summary of the game, AI-generated from the box scores. It's amazing, and not new. A company called Automated Insights was doing this (relative) ages ago — using AI to create "journalism" from structured data, like box scores or annual reports.

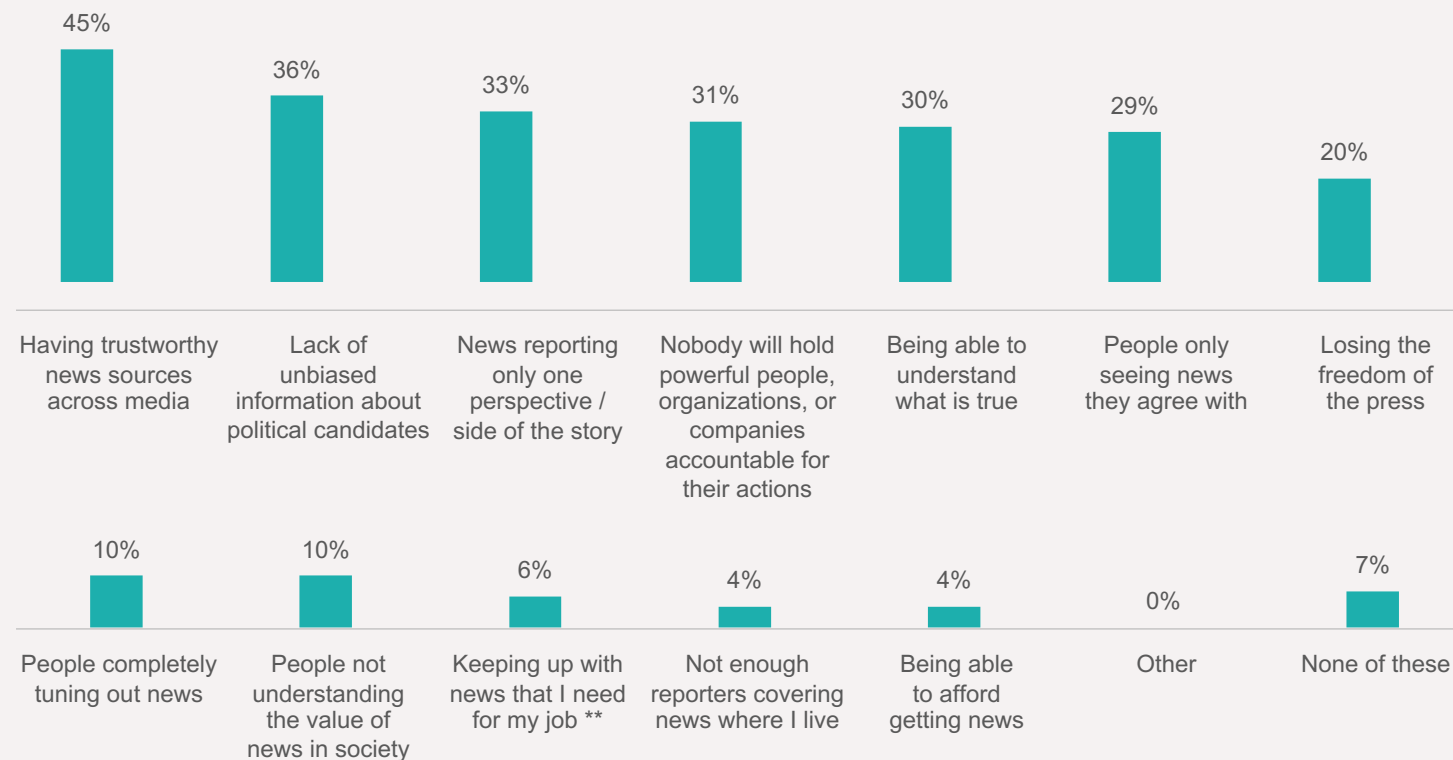
There were clear benefits. The sports section of a local paper could now "cover" every high school game, as long as the scoresheets were available. Clearly, that wouldn't happen otherwise. Analysts had access to annual report summaries within minutes.

But what of AI-generated news content? What will an AI-curated social feed look like and how will that impact our news bubbles? AI newscasters already are a thing. What will that do to trust? What does writing news for AI look like versus for SEO?

And what of disinformation? Most people think they can spot disinformation when they see it. But are they right? Many social feeds are already full of disinformation, often masquerading as breaking news or reporting.

Having trustworthy news sources tops people's concern for the future of news

Q. Which of the following, if any, do you find most worrying when thinking about the future of news consumption? (% Top 3)



(Source: Ipsos survey conducted Aug. 2-5, 2024, among 1,120 U.S. adults. ** Asked only to 648 employed adults..)

Disinformation: Bad news for brands, too.

Even Ipsos is not immune. After the contested elections in Venezuela, Ipsos was forced to publish a statement that exit results attributed to the company were false because Ipsos didn't do any polling in that election.

How do you get a real brand story out if trust in information declines? How do customers and citizens alike know what to trust?

In this issue, you'll hear from and about organizations that are making journalism work in many ways using a variety of models. Some are more scalable than others, but as David Rubin of The New York Times points out, digital journalism is a relatively new industry. We're still figuring it out. And the stakes are high.

In What the Future: Truth, we saw a perfect storm for disinformation as people tend to read free content, which tends to be low quality, and they trust the news they read. This is a bad recipe, and especially dangerous for local news, which is critically important and endangered. Local newsrooms are finding a small renaissance, but what happens without one?

"People are less likely to vote. They're less civically engaged. They're less politically knowledgeable," Victor Pickard, University of Pennsylvania professor and author of

"Democracy Without Journalism? Confronting the Misinformation Society," told me. "Meanwhile, there are higher levels of corruption, growing levels of polarization and extremism. We can now show empirically what we've all already known to be intuitively true: Democracy is seriously harmed by the collapse of local journalism."

What lessons apply to you?

Unlike me, you likely are not a journalist. So what can you learn from this issue?

- Trust issues spill over. Most of the issues facing news and journalism apply to your brand messaging, too.
- Whatever industry you're in, you need to look outside of it for innovative solutions to problems you're facing, because somewhere else, someone has likely solved it.
- Finding a safe space for your brand message will be a lot easier if there's quality news to put it against. Because people *devour* news content, still.



Matt Carmichael is editor of *What the Future*.



Shifts: Algorithms, globalization and infotainment



Trevor Sudano is a principal at Ipsos Strategy3. trevor.sudano@ipsos.com



Algorithms: Automated news feeds and social media are transforming how we consume news.

While providing personalized experiences, algorithms curate what we see, potentially trapping users in echo chambers of similar viewpoints, which also reinforces what news agencies report on. Content from news outlets with rigorous journalistic standards are mixed with content of lower quality, providing fertile ground for the spread of misinformation. This blend of personalized feeds and unverified content makes critical consumption of news more vital than ever.

Globalization: Global expansion has driven a surge in international news outlets and cross-cultural information sharing.

This interconnected media landscape exposes audiences to a wider range of perspectives, challenging traditional narratives and potentially fostering global understanding.

However, it also presents challenges in discerning credibility of unfamiliar news sources and can feed into a sense of constant crisis when readers are exposed to global issues versus those of their own community or country.

Infotainment: The lines between news and entertainment have continued to blur, impacting how news is produced and consumed.

To capture attention in a crowded media landscape, news outlets increasingly incorporate entertainment elements, sometimes prioritizing sensationalism over in-depth reporting, or seeking strong emotional reactions versus understanding, critical thinking or reflection.

This can lead to a decline in journalistic integrity and make it harder for audiences to discern news from entertainment-driven content.

How news can thrive by borrowing from tech and CPG playbooks



David Rubin

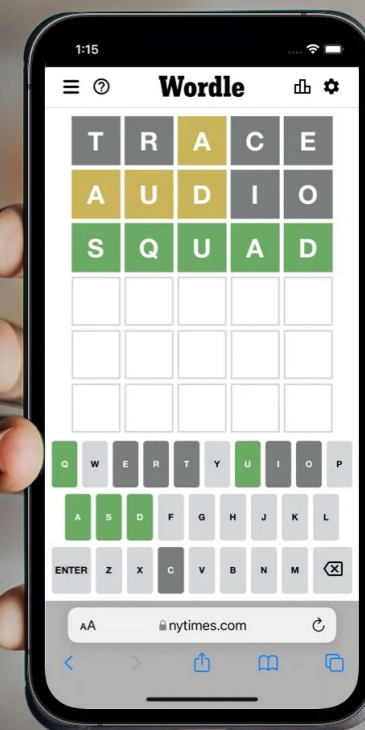
Chief brand and communications officer, The New York Times

The New York Times has unique but also shared challenges with the rest of the news media. Not everyone can buy Wordle and Wirecutter. But there's also high demand for quality news. Finding the right model and getting people to trust your publication isn't easy, however. David Rubin, the chief brand and communications officer at The Times brings a background in tech and consumer packaged goods marketing to the news world. When he thinks about the future of news, he's finding inspiration from outside as well as within.

47%

of Americans believe it is likely in the next five years that there won't be any sources of free, quality local news.

(Source: Ipsos survey conducted Aug. 2-5, 2024, among 1,120 U.S. adults.)



What The Future interview with David Rubin

Matt Carmichael: What can other news organizations learn from The New York Times?

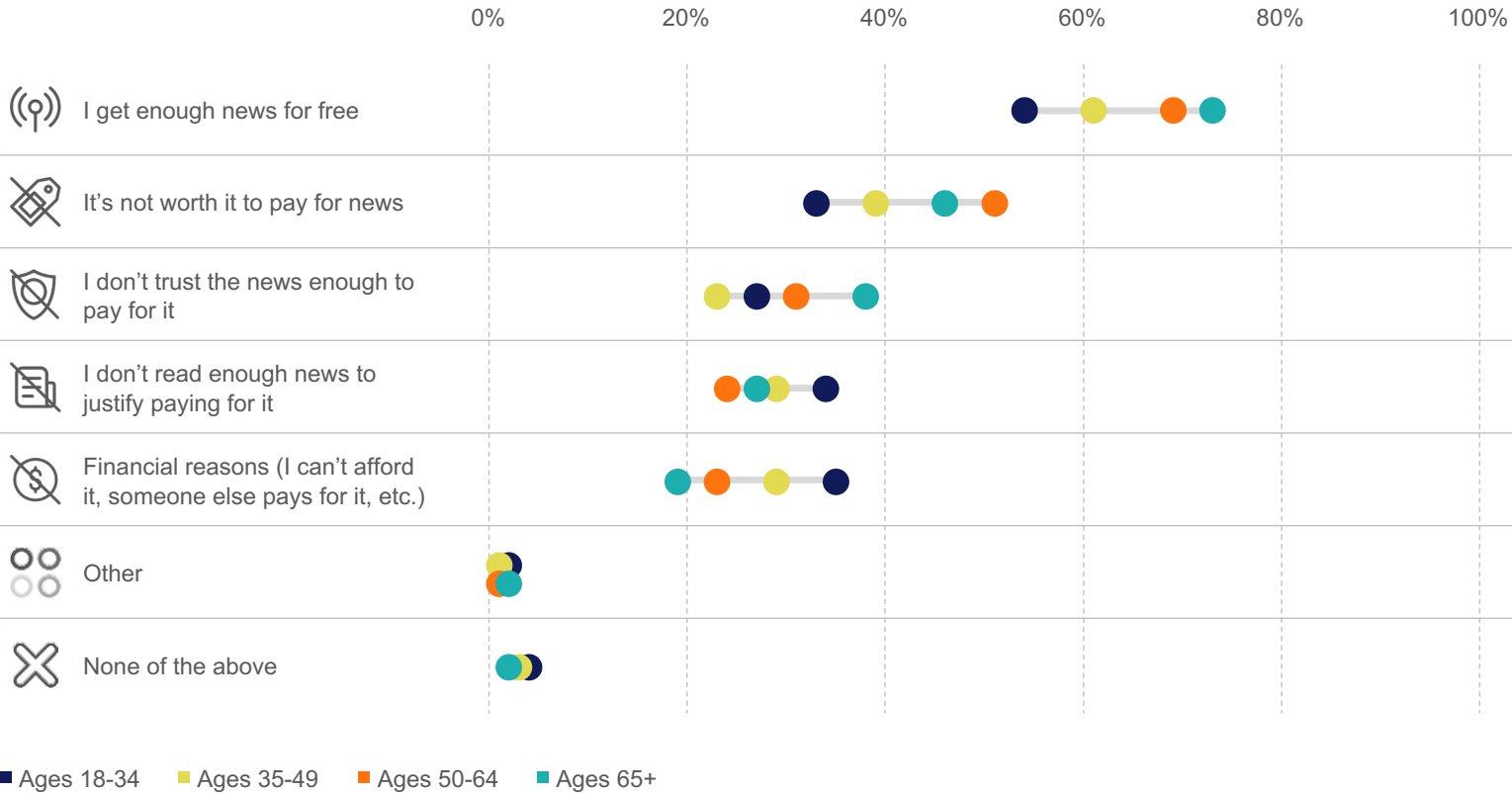
David Rubin: I don't know that there is a single playbook that anyone should be telling everyone else what to do. It's still more of a growing industry from the subscription perspective or subscription-driven models. But first, have a real sense of your most-defining business model and align that model with your mission and your product. The other part of our model is that advertising remains super important to us. An affiliate model has been helpful. Licensing revenue has been helpful. We have multiple revenue streams, but we also have a sense of what's most important, and we can organize around that.

Carmichael: The Times is successful at many of those revenue streams. How does that work?

Rubin: One of the challenges about our industry is we use words like "the media" and say that's one industry. I don't think folks making video-based cable news have a whole lot in common with Disney+ or with us. They're very different models and in some ways, different industries. Bringing them all together confuses folks and, in fact, confuses the public. Pulling those things apart takes sophistication but is really important to do.

Most Americans say free news is sufficient

Q. Which are the following reasons why you do not pay for news content? (% Selected)



(Source: Ipsos survey conducted Aug. 2-5, 2024, among 701 U.S. adults who only read news they can access for free.)

Carmichael: The Times is both a local paper and a national resource. What part of the localness translates to other news organizations?

Rubin: What matters most is that you put out quality work that people want. That may seem simple, but it's not. News is hard and expensive. It is a human-first endeavor. In the digital era, all of us, including local publications, have seen an expansion in their total audiences, but a reduction in their business strength because the platforms are taking a lot of that economic value versus, say, the print model of 20 years ago.

Carmichael: This topic can get depressing.

Rubin: Yes, but there are examples, ourselves included, that prove that there is a path. We have a lot of consumer interest. Now we just have to figure out what to do with it.

Carmichael: In our Future of News survey, a strong majority said that they only read news they can access for free. What does that show you about the future of news?

Rubin: You also see a whole lot of people in those same kinds of surveys lamenting the state of our news: There's no shared fact base; they don't know who to trust. Our job in news is to help connect those dots for people, so that if you're not actively supporting a news

organization, and then you don't like the quality of news that's out there ... you should ask yourself [why].

Carmichael: Your background is in CPG. What do you think news organizations can learn from other sectors?

Rubin: In the end, businesses are businesses. Of course there are differences. There's always value in looking outside for models and inspiration. It is hard to come up with something no one's ever thought of. It's a lot easier to apply something that no one's ever thought of in your particular context.

Carmichael: There are systemic issues with the industry and consumer trust. How does that challenge you as a marketer?

Rubin: It's helpful for us to not see ourselves as a mature industry, but as a startup industry of digital subscription journalism. The insight behind Axe body spray, which I worked on, was to stop talking about how it works because everybody knows those products all work equally well. Start talking about other elements. In news, it's helpful to have the mindset that we have to explain to people the basics of what we're offering. People sort of think they know what they're getting, but they don't really.

Matt Carmichael is editor of What the Future.



There's always value in looking outside for models and inspiration. It is hard to come up with something no one's ever thought of. It's a lot easier to apply something that no one's ever thought of in your particular context."

How market research on news topics tells us what people really care about

The economy and climate are issues that people don't know enough about but care a lot about. How do we know? We asked.

Last year, Ipsos launched the Care-o-Meter. It asks a simple two-part question: Do you know about this thing that happened in the news recently? And, now that we asked, do you care? This research query has uncovered some fascinating patterns that have broad implications for newsrooms and content marketers alike.

Economic stories, especially positive ones, often pop into the quadrant of things we don't know about but care about. So do climate stories. (Wildfire smoke stories are among the most cared about and known about of more than 200 topics tested.) Pop culture and sports? It's very hard to find a majority of people who care about them.

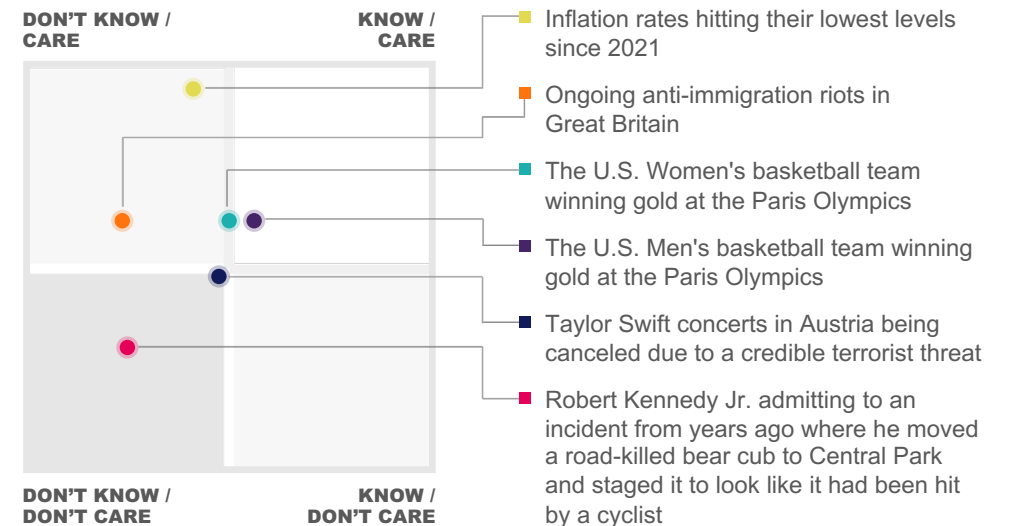
So, in the spirit of newsrooms thinking more like brands to understand their audiences, what products or services could you offer to satisfy this unmet interest?



Matt Carmichael edits *What the Future* and the *Ipsos Care-o-Meter*.
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The Ipsos Care-o-Meter shows what news matters

The following topics were in the news recently. Net familiarity is plotted vs. net caring, regardless of familiarity.



(Source: Ipsos survey conducted Aug. 20-21, 2024, among 1,083 U.S. adults.)

How to monetize content in a privacy-focused future



Tameka Kee

Deputy managing director of the Coalition for Innovative Media Measurement

As privacy laws and practices tighten, and third-party cookies crumble, online news media and brand content producers face an uncertain future for how to measure, monitor and monetize their audiences. But Tameka Kee, deputy managing director of the Advertising Research Foundation's nonprofit subsidiary CIMM, sees a promising way forward. By building meaningful connections and providing valuable, empowering experiences for audiences, media can sustainably monetize content and thrive in a changing world.

51%

of Americans say that ads on online news make articles difficult to read.

(Source: Ipsos survey conducted Aug. 2-5, 2024, among 1,120 U.S. adults.)

What The Future interview with Tameka Kee

Kate MacArthur: What are the most promising news monetization models that you're seeing emerging?

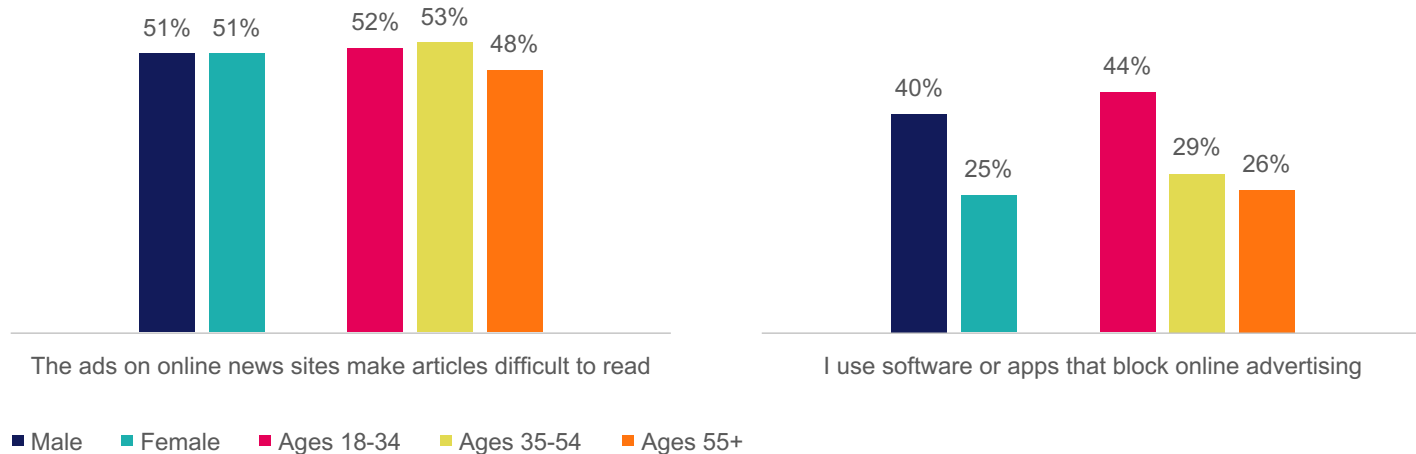
Tameka Kee: Events. There are slightly more intimate and curated experiences where people get the chance to meet journalists and to meet speakers that they may not have met before. Then there are the big events like a food and wine festival. Those are particularly unique areas of growth for local news, especially because they're a source of community and information. Think of a renewable energy meetup in a town where they're starting to consider whether they should even put EV chargers in, and a local news organization could theoretically bring in someone from Tesla.

MacArthur: How can news organizations demonstrate the value of their content in a way that resonates and encourages audiences to pay for it?

Kee: The organizations that foster a sense of community are able to get people to pay them. It's not about making money from the information you provide. It's about making money from the way that you allow information to empower people and feel more connected. There's also an opportunity in creating moments of respite or enlightenment from the deluge. As a perfect example, The New York Times has subscriptions and ad revenue. It also lets people just pay for the crossword or for the recipes. They're paying for these moments that matter to them and that they deem valuable.

Younger adults and men are more likely to block online ads on news sites

Q. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements (% Agree)



(Source: Ipsos survey conducted Aug. 2-5, 2024, among 1,120 U.S. adults.)

MacArthur: Cookies aren't ending, but there's a move to get away from them. How should brands adjust?

Kee: Some of it is contextual, and that's understanding the content on the page, but also the context of the situation that the user is in when they're consuming content. There's also research starting around the mentality that the person is in when they're listening to that content. And you don't need cookies to determine

the mindset they're in. You can use far more information than that to create a profile. You can also do that using opt-in signals, as opposed to signals that you have to opt out of. There are also unified identifiers from companies like ID5, LiveRamp, Trade Desk and TransUnion. And there is a big shift toward adopting these alternative identifiers, because they're a bit more reliable than cookies, and the rise of more privacy-focused, regulation and technology is going to warrant that.

MacArthur: AI is becoming really important. What's the advantage of AI-powered personalization as it relates to monetizing news?

Kee: The first benefit is not about AI personalization. It's literally about content creation. It allows the team to extend the life of an individual piece of content, and then you can monetize that content, and you didn't necessarily have to hire an additional person on the creative team to help you do that. Personalization is a thing. The caveat is it doesn't stand alone on its own. And it also requires engineering support on the news organization's team. You can't just take ChatGPT and make it work for your news organization. You still need someone who can figure out how to make it work.

MacArthur: How do Europe's privacy regulations shape how U.S. advertisers build relationships with their audiences and manage their data?

Kee: There are some companies that don't even offer their content in Europe now because of GDPR. There's a big push for a national privacy law in the states, especially from the advertising industry because complying with privacy regulations on a state-by-state basis can be expensive and burdensome for smaller organizations. Moving forward, it's going to come down to companies being able to explicitly articulate to the feds, to the state and to the user what you are doing with this data, who are you sharing it with and how.

MacArthur: How does social media apply in a cookie-less world?

Kee: Studios like Warner Bros. or Paramount have learned how to use social to drive traffic back to their apps. In the past, they wouldn't have wanted to put clips on at all. But now they're like, "We'll put as many short-form snippets of our episodes as possible. When you want to watch the whole thing though, you come back to our app." That's the way news organizations need to work with social media — using social as a place for discourse, dialogue, laughs, additional content. But you still have to drive traffic back to whatever owned and operated place you have.

MacArthur: People initially saw pivot-to-video as quaint, but now are focusing on video first. How should news organizations approach video, particularly with younger audiences, to maximize engagement and revenue?

Kee: Video is not optional. Your site may not be video-first, but you must always have a video component if you're going to engage or grow your audience moving forward. The easiest thing to do is use AI to create snippets of content that can drive users back to whichever owned and operated environment you have.

Kate MacArthur is managing editor of What the Future.



It's not about making money from the information you provide. It's about making money from the way that you allow information to empower people and feel more connected."

Why better campaigns focus on audiences' memories rather than views

Third-party cookies remain popular among marketers — but they tell an incomplete story. As regulations tighten and consumers demand transparency, newer metrics can offer a richer, privacy-safe understanding of audiences, their attitudes and how ads resonate with them.

Ads must get consumers' attention, spark a connection, and shape their brand expectations. But above all, they must make a lasting impression — and that's something cookies can't track.

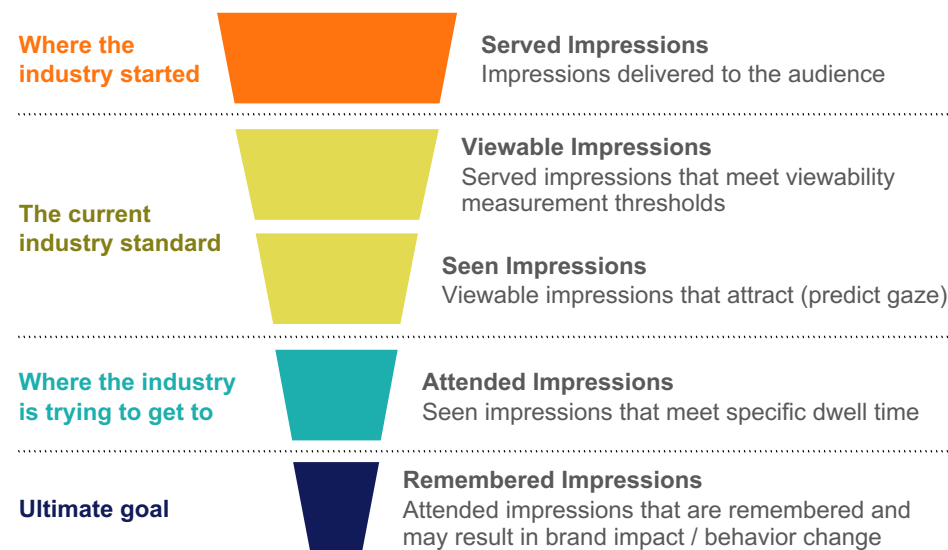
Cookies can quantify how many times a digital ad appears onscreen ("viewable impressions"). But more powerful brand tracking frameworks can evaluate campaign performance over time in recognition, emotion and retention, which Ipsos calls "memory currency."

By focusing on memory currency, marketers can go beyond whether an ad was simply viewable. They can craft more influential attention-getting ads while centering their real target: human impact.



Nicholas Watson is a research director with Ipsos' Brand Health Tracking practice.
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How recognition and memory currency trump attention



Impression funnel from technically served to meaningful remembered impressions

(Source: Ipsos Brand Health Tracking, 2024.)

What people want from local news and how to fund it



Rick Edmonds

Media business analyst for Poynter Institute

Local news in the U.S. is endangered. Just 6,000 daily and weekly newspapers have survived the digital transition from some 24,000 in the early 1900s, according to a Northwestern University/Medill study. In the last generation since 2005 alone, nearly 3,000 newspapers and 43,000 journalist jobs disappeared as print advertising collapsed and publishers struggled to replace those revenues with digital ads. Still, Rick Edmonds, media business analyst for the Poynter Institute, argues that local news still matters and shares hopeful signs of a new news landscape.

4%

of Americans list a lack of reporters covering news where they live as a top three concern when thinking about the future of news consumption.

(Source: Ipsos survey conducted Aug. 2-5, 2024, among 1,120 U.S. adults.)



What The Future interview with Rick Edmonds

Kate MacArthur: What does the public want out of local news?

Rick Edmonds: There's an emerging consensus that political news and investigative news have a part. But people are looking for practical information to help them live their lives in the community. And these items are gaining coverage: real estate, affordability, what to do, where to go, colorful local history. There's still a search for what the components of that package are and who will produce them in the newsroom, and it hasn't exactly been field-tested.

MacArthur: Is it what people want or what they need?

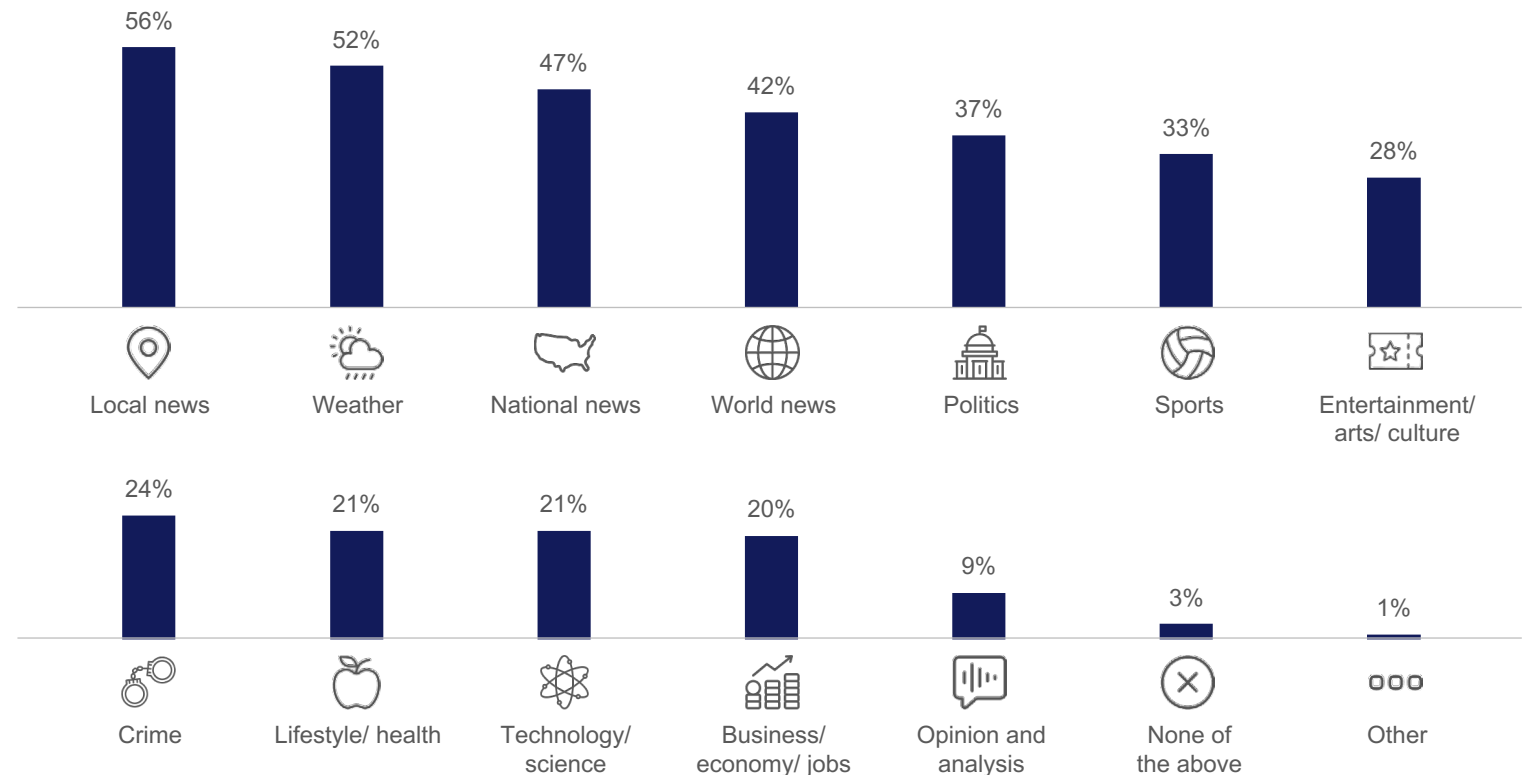
Edmonds: We know from research that the main place people get their local news is local television. And weather and traffic are for many people what they need. Now I think that's not the only thing. Once they're in the medium, the right story that catches their attention is a viable part of local news.

MacArthur: Have you found signs that people are willing to pay for news at a sustainable scale?

Edmonds: There is some evidence that young people are more willing than older people to pay for news. The rise of subscription services — which are a powerful competitor for the time of potential news readers — acclimates people that if you want the best, you're going to need to pay for it.

Local information is the top priority for news consumers

Q. What topics do you personally seek out most when reading, watching or listening to the news?
(% Top five selected)



(Source: Ipsos survey conducted Aug. 2-5, 2024, among 1,120 U.S. adults.)

MacArthur: How is the demand for local news evolving with digitally or socially native audiences?

Edmonds: Reuters Institute in Oxford documented not only that there are many people who go to social media for much of their news, in some cases, the predominance of news. Some of the platforms — TikTok is a great example — are still not big, big, like Facebook, but the trend line is going up very fast. With both social media and, to some extent, the digital or local news startups, we're entering an age where many smaller things form an ecosystem, because these outlets feed on each other. As we break down different kinds of media collectively, you need to put the creator, influencer or other social media where people are getting their news.

MacArthur: We see streaming media creating bundles where you can pick the content you want to pay for. And they're brand friendly. Do you see that kind of model having sustainability for news?

Edmonds: I do. Another thing we should mention is the rise of newsletters, and newsletters are absolutely something that tend to be quite targeted, so you pick the one or ones that fit your product best. One final thing is several of them are structured so there is one sponsor, not a bunch of different advertisers. So if you have a good newsletter, and it's got a good reputation and is growing, as an advertiser, it's your newsletter. You're the sponsor. That can be a really good message.

MacArthur: Of the various models and experiments to sustain local news, which look most promising?

Edmonds: One is for a subsidy, and that can be the cost of having a subscription. Another is tax credits and the case for that is pretty clear. The hesitation on both the government side and the publisher side is, "We've got to keep the news side and the business side totally separate to avoid a potential conflict of interest." I don't think that's an argument that makes sense in the current climate because there's a real possibility that the newspaper organization will either go out of business or will be downsized so much, especially in a smaller community, that you barely have any reporters and editors left.

MacArthur: What do futures with less local news or more local news look like?

Edmonds: We see many communities that are served not at all, the so-called news deserts. But as long as news consumers get comfortable with a bit broader shopping around to see what suits their needs, that's a sector that's growing very quickly. It has the support of local philanthropy in many instances now. Local and community foundations that used to focus on healthcare and other social issues pretty exclusively now see journalism as something they should consider supporting, and in many cases now they do.

Kate MacArthur is managing editor of What the Future.



The rise of subscription services — which are a powerful competitor for the time of potential news readers — acclimates people that if you want the best, you're going to need to pay for it."

How polling can build trust across a fragmented media landscape

When asked, Americans say just about *everyone* has a responsibility to stop fake news: platforms, politicians, regulators and media users themselves. As the world grows more complex and disinformation campaigns evolve, polling will remain an essential tool for each of these audiences.

As disinformation campaigns and fake news become more prevalent, Americans are worried about having access to trustworthy news sources in the future. By supporting credible reporting on the issues that shape American life, accurate polling provides news organizations and their audiences with a way through that impasse.

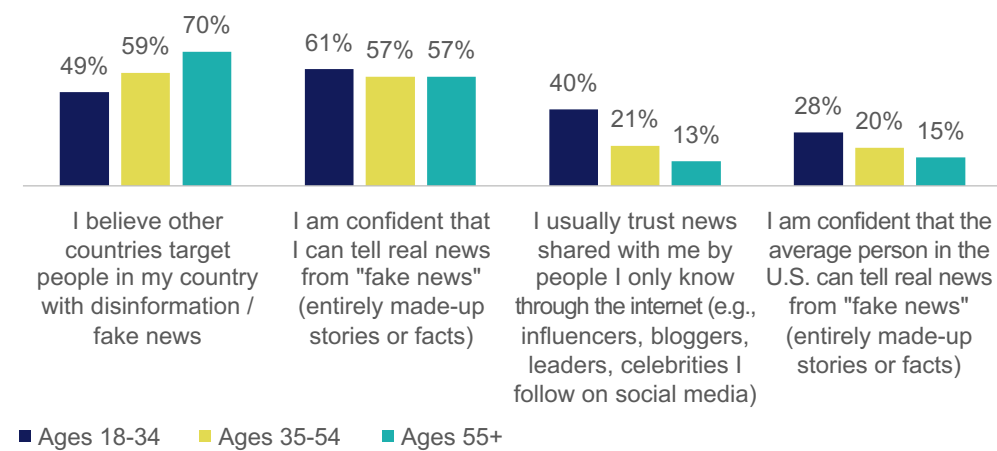
But its value isn't unique to the press. Objective and representative polling gives brands the insights needed to navigate a fast-moving economy, just as it gives the public a nonpartisan window into big-picture issues. For news outlets, consumers and advertisers alike, polling can foster trust in an era defined by its rapid decline.



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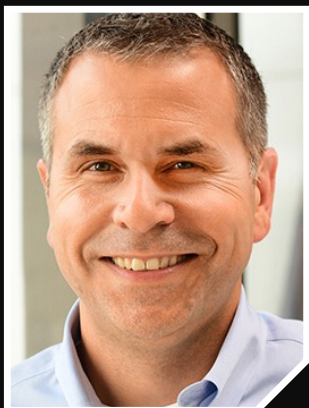
Americans of all ages think they can spot fake news, but are skeptical the average person can

Q. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (% Agree)



(Source: Ipsos survey conducted Aug. 2-5, 2024, among 1,120 U.S. adults.)

Why news literacy matters more than ever for future generations



Peter Adams

Senior vice president, research and design, News Literacy Project

News literacy, or media literacy, means a lot of things to different people, even those who teach it. That's a challenge for the News Literacy Project, a nonpartisan, nonprofit that provides training to K-12 educators, including tools like the Checkology virtual classroom. The 2016 election brought a lot of attention to issues about online (dis)information and influence. When he thinks about the future, NLP's Peter Adams is focused on helping students understand how to wield the power of skepticism in the digital age.

39%

of Americans say they were formally taught news literacy in K-12 school when they were growing up.

(Source: Ipsos survey conducted Aug. 2-5, 2024, among 1,120 U.S. adults.)

What The Future interview with Peter Adams

Matt Carmichael: My parents knew their kids would read anything they left on the breakfast table. How did you get news as a kid?

Peter Adams: My mom used to glue articles to the back of the cereal box because we'd stare at it when we ate.

Carmichael: What's being done broadly about teaching media literacy and why is it important?

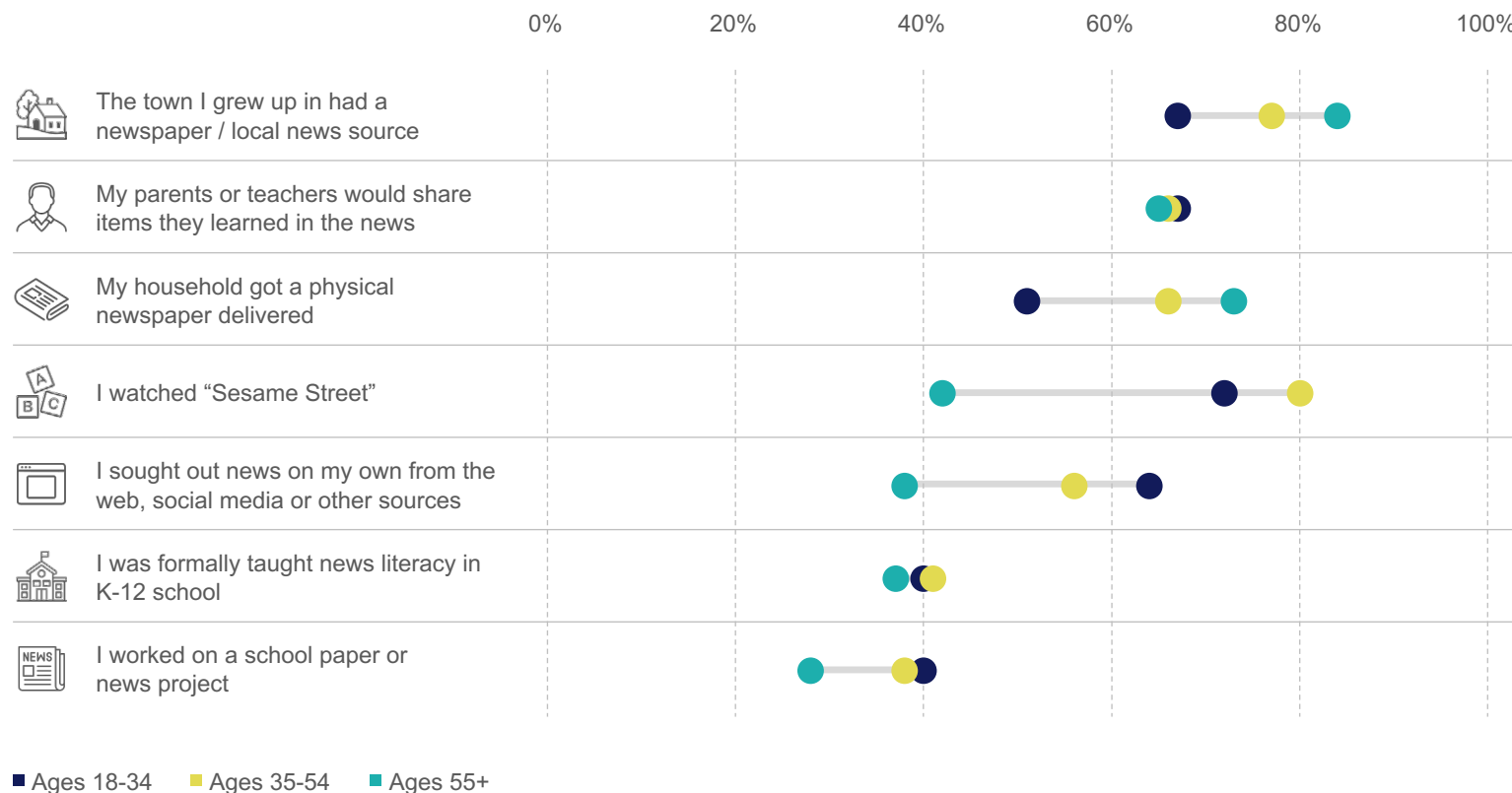
Adams: Illinois was one of the first states to introduce a media literacy graduation requirement. Other states have passed legislative endorsements of the idea. But students are inheriting the largest and most complex information environment in human history, by many magnitudes. If we don't teach them media literacy, we're actively disempowering them civically. We kind of owe it to them.

Carmichael: Is media literacy itself becoming polarized, especially in schools?

Adams: We are rigorously nonpartisan, but even with the idea of teaching students how to evaluate credibility, there are bad faith partisan actors who are trying to make that political or controversial. There are folks who would prefer you not teach the idea that there are provably false claims and how to detect them.

Digital natives are more accustomed to proactively seeking news content

Q. Thinking about growing up, did you experience any of the following related to news? (% Yes)



(Source: Ipsos survey conducted Aug. 2-5, 2024, among 1,120 U.S. adults.)

Carmichael: How do you bridge those conflicts?

Adams: No one thinks that journalism or information or news should be inaccurate. Accuracy shouldn't be controversial to affirm. No one thinks it shouldn't be fair or transparent. No one thinks news organizations shouldn't correct errors when they happen or be independent of advertisers and ownership and partisan influence. If we can agree at least on that much and then go from there, we can have all sorts of interesting and engaging conversations around what fairness and accountability should look like in practice. That's relatively safe territory for educators to get into.

Carmichael: So what do you teach in this context?

Adams: Our founder realized as a career journalist that we're all vulnerable to making assumptions that feel concrete. We're vulnerable to cognitive biases, we're vulnerable to affirming the things we think we know but *verifying* them is the discipline of journalism.

Carmichael: What could journalists and news organizations do to make your task easier?

Adams: News organizations could do a better job of explaining how they do their work. They could clarify for people the distinction between different kinds of journalism, help them understand different terminology or style decisions and things like that.

Carmichael: People are interested in news, but sometimes that takes the form of “doing your own research.” What do you teach kids about that?

Adams: We help students understand what sound reasoning is in the first place, help them understand that we have an innate tendency to engage in motivated reasoning and other logical fallacies and that cognitive biases affect everything we do and think unless we guard against them. That's No. 1.

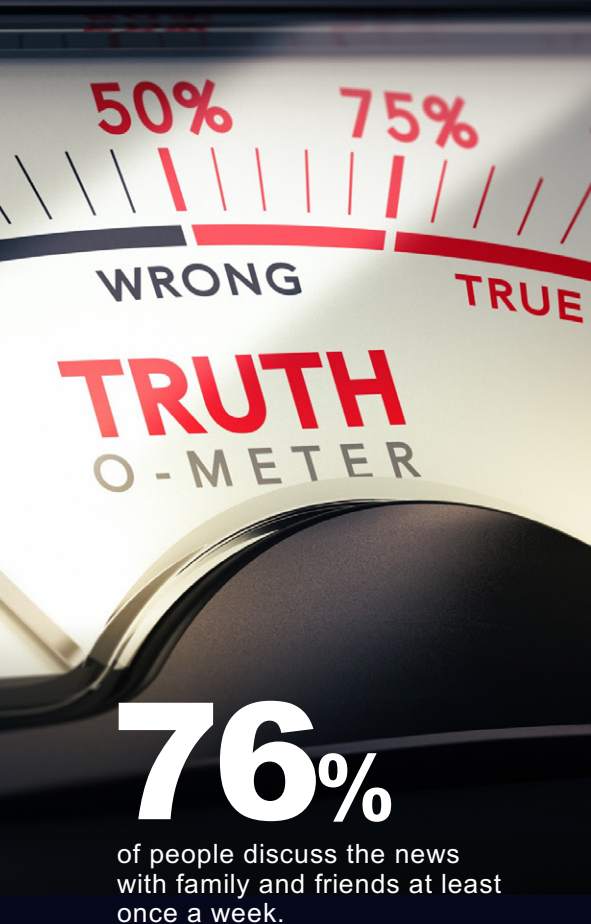
Carmichael: How do you teach the value of news, and that it needs to be paid for somehow?

Adams: Other industries like Hollywood struggled with that same question of how they protect their intellectual property in a digital world. With streaming, there's a solution now to access that stuff for a reasonable cost. The idea that because quality journalism — just like a high-budget Hollywood movie — takes capacity and people with skills to produce, that can't be free. But on the news side, people just say, “Well if I hit a firewall with this high-quality source, I'm just going to go find it somewhere else.” They don't make that same mistake with movies. It's not like they hit a paywall with a top-tier box office film, so they just go watch B movies. Somehow, we haven't broken through in that same way with news.

Matt Carmichael is editor of What the Future.



Students are inheriting the largest and most complex information environment in human history. If we don't teach them media literacy, we're actively disempowering them civically.”



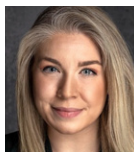
(Source: Ipsos Community discussion board conducted July 30, 2024, among 861 U.S. adults.)

What online communities reveal about who consumers trust

A new Ipsos Online Communities study reveals that half of Americans say they fact-check their news — and that many do so in conversation with their peers.

Whether they want to know what to believe or what to buy, most Americans aren't looking to chatbots for answers, but to the people they trust: their friends and family. Social media can scale that influence.

Americans rely on trusted sources to navigate the noise, making it crucial for businesses to gain consumer insights that provide a window into these influential communities and conversations. This enables authentic engagement, minimizes risk, and supports more informed decision-making.



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Americans say they're wary of misinformation

"I want to be able to trust what I'm reading and give facts to the people I talk to."

— Gen X female

"I don't want to share or talk about something that isn't true."

— Millennial woman

"My dad told me when I was young to trust but verify. Make sure you know something is true before you share it."— Baby Boomer male

(Source: Ipsos Community discussion board conducted July 30, 2024, among 861 U.S. adults.)

Tensions that will drive change:

Stay informed or have a rule-breaking leader?

The future is always in tension. We can measure those contradictions today with forced-choice questions. And we can plot them against each other in a classic 2x2 grid. That allows us to visualize where we are today, but also to imagine what the possible futures are if those tensions shift over time — and how far they would have to move to get us to a different future from our baseline.

IT'S IMPORTANT TO STAY INFORMED
AND ENGAGE IN CIVIC DISCOURSE

Say the news breaks down, or inequality continues to thrive.

Then even if we try to stay informed, we might find ourselves wishing for a stronger, rule-breaking leader. The good news for news is that people want it. The bad news is that rule-breaking leaders tend to want to control the narrative, which is less than ideal for a strong free press.

WE NEED A LEADER WILLING TO BREAK THE RULES

This world is far from our baseline, but also very plausible.

As people become less engaged, it creates an environment where disinformation can thrive. That could lead us to even stronger feelings of a “broken system,” which could lead to more feelings of wanting a stronger central authority and conversely less regulation.

In today's world, we favor a leader who is pragmatic over one who is more authoritarian, and we're on the fence about staying involved in the issues or focusing on personal things. If that persists, the future of news looks pretty bright. But the media can also help shape this future by keeping political coverage on point, and not getting distracted by attention-hungry politicians. The click-based economy doesn't incentivize that though.

WE NEED A LEADER WHO KNOWS HOW TO GET THINGS DONE

Say we get deluged by negative news or disinformation. It's easy to see a world where people unplug from issues even further. That could easily lead to more and more disinformation as people lack a shared set of facts and sources of accurate information. Which could also lead to the rise of an authoritarian leader, whether we want one or not. But it could also be a place where authentic and engaging brand messages thrive.

I PREFER TO FOCUS ON MY PERSONAL
LIFE RATHER THAN POLITICS

Tensions that will drive change:

Free news or less screen time?

The future is always in tension. We can measure those contradictions today with forced-choice questions. And we can plot them against each other in a classic 2x2 grid. That allows us to visualize where we are today, but also to imagine what the possible futures are if those tensions shift over time — and how far they would have to move to get us to a different future from our baseline.

NEWS SHOULD BE FREE, AND IT IS
UNFAIR TO PAY FOR IT

Should we nudge over to this side, the dominant problem persists: People want news to be free, but it's rather expensive. If our attitudes about screens shift to accept the roles they play in our lives, the trick for news will be to get journalistic content into the bucket of "relaxing" rather than "angering/stressing," where much news persists now. Sponsors could find this a useful future to weave their messages into.

SCREENS HELP RELAX ME AND PASS THE TIME

This world is pretty far from our current world. But a world where people pay for news is a better world for the industry. However, it could also stifle innovation on business models if organizations become too dependent on subscriber revenue or lead to churn issues, as we see in streaming media.

There's a problem with continuing in this baseline: We have spent a generation thinking that news should be free and that's what we want. In fact, news is very expensive. No one in the news business sees a future that doesn't include subscribers. So if we keep on this course, news will need an entirely new set of business models than have been tried or proposed. Without interventions, news will perhaps face a death-spiral of attrition.

I TRY TO MINIMIZE THE TIME I SPEND ON SCREENS

This world portends better outcomes for news. If our attitudes shift toward paying for news, many more outcomes become plausible for the industry, including subscriber-driven, nonprofit, and other models supporting journalism and journalists. If people move away from screens, that could impact formats or lead to more curation to minimize but not replace scroll time.

PAYING FOR NEWS IS ESSENTIAL TO
SUPPORTING QUALITY JOURNALISM

Future Jobs to Be Done

Ipsos spins the traditional “Jobs to Be Done” framework forward with *future Jobs to Be Done (fJTBD)*. This builds on the theory that people consume to fulfill certain needs or accomplish specific tasks. For example, we don’t just watch the news, we hire a network or outlet’s reporters and producers to provide us with up-to-date, accurate content to help us follow and understand current events and the human condition across the globe.

To bring these needs into the future, we envision powerful and plausible scenarios through strategic foresight. While many needs are enduring and do not change over time, the context of that job will change along with the potential solutions and alternatives. These scenarios help us define the circumstances in which people may find themselves, like watching the news to discern whether an authority figure’s words and behavior are their true beliefs or a call for attention.

We use fJTBD to tie these scenarios to actions that organizations can take to help people meet future needs. While it’s typical in foresight to create fJTBD clusters, we’re sharing one scenario here as an example.



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Help me feel informed, not baited, when keeping up with current events

In a world where sensationalized reporting often dominates the news cycle, consumers will demand that news outlets cut their reliance on click-based revenue models.

Potential fJTBD:

- Help me as a media outlet to understand ways to build and preserve trust among diverse audiences
- Help me as a consumer to understand the various leanings and biases (financial or political) of major media outlets
- Help me as a brand to understand the roles of the news cycle and media outlets to foster positive perceptions of our products, initiatives or public image

Imagine a world where ... you could install a reliable and independent, AI-powered fact-checking plug-in or app that displays real-time checks during the speeches, rallies and addresses of politicians of any party affiliation.

For full results and methodology, visit future.ipsos.com
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