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**Why local newspapers hold trust while national media slips

By Dean Ridings, CEO, America’s Newspapers**

****The recent decision by The Washington Post and Los Angeles Times to skip endorsing a presidential candidate has put the issue of media trust in the spotlight — and it underscores just how differently local newspapers are perceived from their national counterparts.

America’s Newspapers, the leading trade association for local newspapers nationwide, understands that local newspapers hold a unique place of trust within their communities, especially when compared to national media, social media and cable news. Recognizing this critical distinction, America’s Newspapers commissioned a national study to quantify how local newspapers continue to earn and retain the trust of their readers, even as skepticism about media in general grows.

The 2024 America’s Newspapers Trust Study shows that while public confidence in national news sources is declining, local newspapers remain a trusted source for communities across the country. More than half of Americans see their local newspaper as their most reliable news source, citing the transparency, ethical standards and community focus that are unique to local journalism​.

Unlike national media outlets, local journalists are active members of the communities they cover. They’re present at town hall meetings, reporting on school boards and investigating local government. This closeness fosters a relationship of accountability that simply doesn’t exist with national media, which can feel distant or disconnected from the everyday lives of their readers.

Transparency is a defining characteristic of this trust. According to the study, 61% of Americans say transparency is the most critical factor in determining trust in media, and more Americans rate local newspapers as the best at upholding these standards. This level of accountability is not just a practice; it’s a necessity. Local journalists live in the same communities as their readers, which means they are answerable to the people they serve. Local newspapers prioritize showing readers exactly where their information comes from, clearly identifying sources and detailing how stories are reported. This transparency, rooted in their close connection to the community, allows local newspapers to earn trust in ways that national media can’t.

Beyond reporting on the critical issues that impact local families, local newspapers play a crucial role in supporting democratic engagement and civic accountability. According to the study, 85% of Americans believe that local newspapers are essential to sustaining democracy, and 74% worry that losing their local paper would significantly hurt their community. Local newspapers provide critical insights into local decisions that impact everyday life — issues that national media simply can’t cover in the same depth or with the same understanding.

While local newspapers continue to be recognized as the most trusted media, there are still significant challenges. The impact of the overall erosion in trust in media certainly has a negative impact on local newspapers, who too often get lumped in with the rest of “the media.” And, without question, local newspapers continue to be impacted financially by the shifting advertising models and the actions of Big Tech companies over the years. The financial impact makes it difficult to adequately staff local newsrooms in far too many areas across the country. Newspaper closures, and the resulting news deserts, have severe consequences for these communities, and there often isn’t another media source in the area to compensate for the newspaper’s loss. Legislation to support local newspapers is critical to maintaining these trusted, vital media leaders.

America’s Newspapers remains dedicated to supporting these efforts and reinforcing the vital role that local papers play in making sure every community has a voice. In a time when skepticism of media is high, it’s essential to distinguish local newspapers from the larger media landscape. Local newspapers aren’t part of “the media” that people often view with suspicion. Instead, they’re committed members of the community, present in readers’ lives, and devoted to ethical, transparent journalism.

While national media outlets navigate their own trust challenges, local newspapers stay deeply rooted in their communities, providing the kind of honest, accountable reporting that helps ensure an informed, connected and engaged community.

For more information about the America’s Newspapers Trust in Media Study, visit: <https://member.newspapers.org/trust-in-media.html>

**About America’s Newspapers:**

On behalf of its approximately 1,700 newspaper and Solutions Partner companies, America’s Newspapers is committed to explaining, defending and advancing the vital role of newspapers in democracy and civil life. We put an emphasis on educating the public on all the ways newspapers contribute to building a community identity and the success of local businesses. Learn more: [newspapers.org](https://newspapers.org)

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