

Executive Summary

1

Most Americans think news organizations prioritize business needs and financial goals over public service.

- Three in four U.S. adults (76%) believe news organizations are first and foremost businesses, motivated by their financial interests and goals. Only 12% say news organizations are first and foremost civic institutions, motivated by serving the public interest.
- Sixty-two percent of Americans believe most news organizations prioritize staying in business over serving the public; only 6% say most news organizations lean toward providing a public service.
 - Thirty percent think news organizations balance these motivations well.
 - Younger U.S. adults (particularly Gen Z) are more likely than older Americans to say news organizations prioritize business and financial goals over public service.
- Those with more favorable views of the news media are more likely to say news organizations prioritize civic duties.
 - Fifty-eight percent of Americans with “very favorable” opinions of the news media believe news organizations balance staying in business and public service well, and an additional 29% say news organizations are first and foremost civic institutions.

2

More than seven in 10 Americans report having never paid a news organization directly for news.

- Among the 26% who have paid for news, subscriptions are the most cited form of payment, followed by donations and memberships.
- Certain segments of the American public are also more likely to have paid directly for news — including those with higher levels of income and education, Democrats, and White Americans.
 - Although younger adults generally consume less news than older adults, millennials are more likely to have directly paid for it.
- Americans who get their news primarily from printed newspapers and magazines report the highest levels of having paid for news (50%), followed by those who consume news mostly through radio (35%) and online (30%).
 - Those who primarily consume television news report the lowest levels of paying directly for news (16%), not accounting for any news already included in cable or streaming television subscriptions.
- Thirty-three percent of Americans who hold favorable opinions of the news media say they have paid directly for news, compared with 24% of those with unfavorable opinions.

3

Only 17% of Americans say they would pay to access news in the future, but if they have paid before, they are more willing to pay again.

- Forty-nine percent of U.S. adults who have paid for news in the past say they would pay for news in the future, compared with only 6% of those who have not.

- Twenty-five percent of Americans with favorable opinions of the news media would pay to access news in the future, compared with just 14% of those with unfavorable opinions of the news media.
- The same Americans who are more likely to have paid for news in the past — younger adults, Democrats and those with higher incomes — are also more willing to pay in the future.
 - Thirty-four percent of those earning a household income over \$150K say they would pay for news in the future. That number steadily declines as income declines, with only 10% of those earning less than \$50K reporting they would pay for news in the future.
- When Americans encounter a paywall online, 48% report trying to access the information somewhere else for free.
 - Twenty-eight percent move on to something else or a different news story.

4 Advertising is the most widely supported form of funding for news.

- Thirty percent of Americans say it is reasonable for news organizations to make money through advertising. Another 62% say it “depends,” with most saying it depends on what is being advertised.
 - Fifty-two percent say news organizations’ largest source of funding should be advertising.
- Twenty-four percent of U.S. adults say donations should “always” be used to ensure news is available to everyone free of charge. Fifty-four percent say it “depends,” primarily on from whom the donations are coming.
- Twenty-two percent say government funding should “always” be used to ensure news is available to everyone free of charge, with an additional 33% saying it “depends.”
 - Roughly equal numbers of respondents say government funding should be used to ensure news is free, depending on the news content and what organizations are receiving the funding.
 - Forty-four percent say government funding should “never” be used.
- Forty-seven percent of Americans say it is “never” reasonable for individuals to have to pay for the news they watch or read.
 - Forty-eight percent say it “depends” — mainly on the content (76%).

5 Expanded information services may open the door to revenue opportunities for news organizations — particularly for younger audiences.

- Thirty-five percent of Americans say it is reasonable for news organizations to charge people for in-person events. An additional 20% say it “depends.”
 - Twenty-seven percent say it is reasonable to charge for newsletters or direct-to-email content, and 23% say it is reasonable to charge for exclusive or special content.
- Gen Z and millennials, in particular, are more open to paying for special services.
 - Forty-nine percent of Gen Z Americans and 52% of millennials say it is reasonable for news organizations to charge for events.
 - Thirty-five percent of millennials say charging for newsletters or direct-to-email content is reasonable.
 - Thirty-seven percent of Gen Z adults say it is reasonable to charge for exclusive or special content.