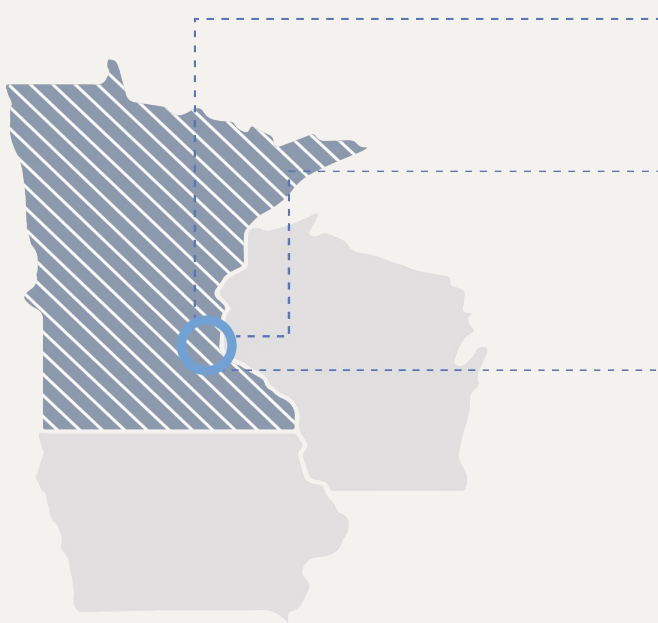

St. Paul, Minnesota

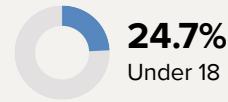
St. Paul, MN



St. Paul, MN

307,193 (2021 ACS)

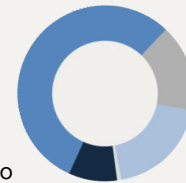
Age



Race

54.9%
White
(Non-Hispanic)

8.7%
Hispanic / Latino



16%
Black/African American
(Non-Hispanic)

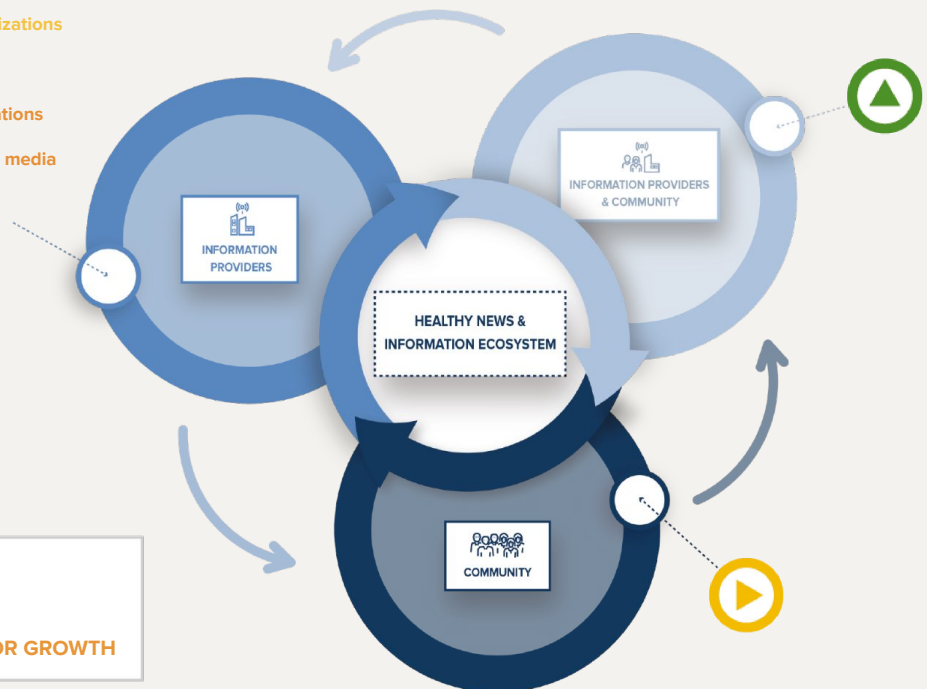
19%
Asian / Asian American
Pacific Islander

0.7%
Native American /
American Indian

News & Information Ecosystem

- Number of journalism organizations
- Types of media
- Business models of organizations
- Diversity and BIPOC-serving media
- Collaboration
- Journalism funding

- STRONG**
- AVERAGE**
- OPPORTUNITY FOR GROWTH**



Key Elements



St. Paul has a relatively high number of information providers for its population. However, it is dominated by commercial media and there is opportunity for more digital media in the ecosystem.



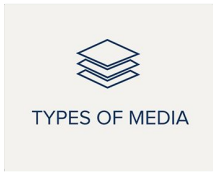
There are no ongoing journalism collaboratives in St. Paul.



MPR News records and reports on staff diversity and has reported on source diversity audits.



There are only two BIPOC-serving media outlets in St. Paul's ecosystem, for the 16% of the population that identifies as Black/African American.



St. Paul's ecosystem is dominated by newspapers.



The majority of St. Paul's news outlets are national broadcast chains or independent for profits.



Philanthropic investment is significant per capita when compared with other Knight communities, however it is concentrated in the state-serving Minnesota Public Radio and American Public Media.



According to a 2019 survey by the Pew Research Center, residents of St. Paul express a high degree of trust in local media in terms of representation, accuracy and comprehensiveness.

Summary

St. Paul is the capital of Minnesota and a city of 307,193, located just east of its larger sister city Minneapolis (population 425,336) across the Mississippi River. St. Paul is part of the Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI Metro Area with a total population of 3,690,512, the 16th-largest in the United States.¹

Stakeholders noted that St. Paul is an odd market in many ways, especially due to the geography of the Twin Cities, with most news organizations serving both St. Paul and Minneapolis. “It’s one metro and two metros at the same time,” said Mukhtar Ibrahim, founding publisher and CEO of the Sahar Journal.

St. Paul has a diverse population, including large Mexican, Somali, Hmong and Indian immigrant communities. Minneapolis-St. Paul is the metropolitan area with the largest Hmong² population in the United States by a fair amount, [according to the Pew Research Center](#), and it also has the [largest Somali population](#). The city is 16% Black/African American and 9% Hispanic/Latino, similar to communities in neighboring Minneapolis. However, at 19%, the Asian population in St. Paul is three times that of Minneapolis (6%).

Duchesne Drew, senior vice president of American Public Media Group and president of Minnesota Public Radio,

Community Indicators	Knight Communities Average, 2021	St. Paul, 2021	Comparison
Economics			
Median Household Income	\$69,021	\$63,483	Low
Per Capita Income	\$37,638	\$35,547	Low
Poverty Rate	11.6%	18.0%	High
Education			
High School Degree	88.9%	87.8%	Average
Bachelor's Degree	33.7%	42.0%	High
Literacy Rate	79.0%		
Resources & Infrastructure			
Households with Computer	93.1%	94.4%	Average
Broadband Access	87.0%	89.6%	Average
Universities	20	12	
Population per University	32,690	25,599	Low
Libraries	27	21	
Population per Library	23,693	14,628	Low
Community Satisfaction ³	60.9%	66.0%	High
Voter Turnout of most recent election	66.0%	80.0% ⁴	High
Prior Information Needs Study	Yes/No	No	
Prior Ecosystem Study	Yes/No	No	

1. “Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI Metro Area,” Census Reporter, <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/31000US33460-minneapolis-st-paul-bloomington-mn-wi-metro-area/>.
 2. The Hmong are an ethnic group with roots in China. Hmong immigration to the Twin Cities began in the 1970s as a result of displacement from Laos.
 3. Community satisfaction is measured by Share Care in partnership with Boston University, <https://wellbeingindex.sharecare.com/interactive-map/?defaultState=MN>.
 4. “Historical Voter Turnout Statistics,” Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State, <https://www.sos.state.mn.us/election-administration-campaigns/data-maps/historical-voter-turnout-statistics/>.

noted that St. Paul is a dynamic place that is continuing to evolve. He said, “[St. Paul] is way more diverse over the past decades, and that’s part of the tension around the growth—the American story. St. Paul is at a different place than a lot of other metros that were already more diverse 30 years ago.”

Information Needs

We did not find that an information needs assessment has been conducted in St. Paul. Overall, Colleen Stoxen, deputy managing editor of news operations at the *Star Tribune*, believes that the information needs of Minnesota residents are largely well met. “Minnesota’s been very lucky to have a news hungry, well-educated, attentive population. They’re good news consumers and do trust major news entities throughout the state.” As of 2017, Poynter reported that the *Star Tribune* ranked fifth in the United States for its Sunday circulation, while the Twin Cities is ranked 16th by population, supporting Stoxen’s assertion that Twin Cities residents are attentive and actively seek out news at high rates.⁵ However, St. Paul’s newspaper, *Pioneer Press*, which is owned by Alden Global, an investment firm that is notorious for prioritizing profit over investing in local news, doesn’t have the reach of the *Star Tribune*. The household penetration rate of the *Pioneer Press* throughout the Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area is 5.8%, among the lowest of Knight cities.⁶

Compared with other Knight resident communities, St. Paul respondents to the 2022 Gallup/Knight American Views survey report less reliance on TV for daily news (34%), and more than thirty percent of respondents reported relying on a newspaper (32%), a website or app (37%) and/or a radio station (32%) as a source of news.⁷ Additionally, nearly half of respondents (47%) agree that local news organizations can be relied on to deliver the information they need.

Mukhtar Ibrahim, founding publisher and CEO of the Sahan Journal, noted a gap in the ecosystem whereby the information needs of immigrant communities in Minnesota were not being met. This led Mukhtar to found Sahan Journal in order to serve diverse immigrant communities (see case study later in this chapter).

5. Rick Edmonds, “Why does the Star Tribune outperform the pack of metros? An update.” Poynter, May 2, 2018, <https://www.poynter.org/business-work/2018/why-does-the-star-tribune-outperform-the-pack-of-metros-an-update/>.

6. Daily average circulation is a composite average based on data from Alliance for Audited Media, which includes the daily average of print, print replica and print nonreplica editions of newspapers, four reporting dates for 2019 and two for 2021. Household penetration rate is the average daily circulation divided by the number of households in the Minneapolis-St. Paul MSA, according to the Census Bureau’s 2021 American Community Survey (ACS).

7. Responses to the Gallup/Knight American Views Survey are not statistically significant for St. Paul and instead can be considered information to be analyzed together with other data sources. In 2022, there were only 53 respondents from St. Paul.

Similarly, Michael Tortorello, editorial director of Sahan Journal, said, “There are a lot of newer, immigrant communities in Minnesota that have strong connections to news but just not news here,” said Tortorello. Tortorello observed that even in St. Paul’s “glory days,” the media ecosystem was white-led, and even those who were served by media weren’t served very well. But given the city’s demographic shifts, the information needs are new and large.

Information Providers

Star Tribune is the multiple Pulitzer Prize-winning daily newspaper that serves the Twin Cities, as well as the state of Minnesota. It was purchased by McClatchy in 1998 and went through a series of corporate owners before filing for bankruptcy in 2009. In 2014, the *Star Tribune* was purchased by billionaire Glen Taylor and is independently owned by his Star Tribune Media Company LLC. Given the *Star Tribune*’s independent ownership, it has not faced staff cutbacks to the same extent as many other metropolitan daily newspapers.

In St. Paul specifically, there are four neighborhood print publications owned by Press Publications, a family-owned group of weekly newspapers located in the Northeast suburbs of the metropolitan area of Minneapolis/St. Paul.

Duchesne Drew of APM and MPR observed that the Twin Cities has a fairly robust media environment with many different sources available for residents, even if industry contraction has reduced the size of many of these outlets. He also said that as a result of the large, healthy, diverse business market in St. Paul, with 15 or so Fortune 500 companies based in the region, there is robust business reporting.

Mukhtar Ibrahim, founding publisher and CEO of Sahan Journal agrees that the St. Paul media ecosystem is relatively strong: “Overall I would say with the existing media ecosystem, reporters are intentionally invested in covering communities in St. Paul . . . trying to do their best to engage communities in ways that are meaningful.”

In addition to the community being supportive financially of news organizations in St. Paul (and Minneapolis), it is a more civically engaged and involved community than a lot of other metro areas. The approach to community engagement has evolved through the years in that it’s more of a two-way street, inviting community leaders in and going out to them, with more awareness and humility in that process, according to stakeholders.

For stakeholders, a healthy news ecosystem should have a good, authentic representation of the community, with a mix of mainstream and niche organizations—and in St. Paul, that’s often where some tension comes in. Smaller organizations that are more focused on specific issues or communities might have different targets, and for larger or more mainstream organizations that serve larger audiences, the goal is “not to shift the circle to left or right, it’s to expand the circle and tell more stories, give more people the mic,” said Drew.

BIPOC-Serving Media

While there are publications serving immigrant communities in Minnesota and the region, we found only one example of a publication based in St. Paul serving local immigrant communities with locally relevant information: Sahan Journal.

Similarly, BLCK Press is the only organization serving Black residents of St. Paul, and it focuses on youth and multimedia.

Information Providers	Knight Communities Average, 2022	St. Paul, 2022	Comparison
Information Providers			
Number of Organizations (newspapers, television stations, radio stations, and digital)	34	17	
Population per Organization	27,162	19,200	Strong
Daily Average Circulation (Major Daily)	N/A	88,373 (2021)	
Household Penetration Rate	15.2%	5.8%	Low
Platform Breakdown⁸			
Newspapers	36.8%	31.3%	Low
Television Stations	31.3%	37.5%	High
Radio Stations	10.9%	12.5%	Average
Digital only	18.5%	18.8%	Average
Business Models Breakdown⁹			
Nonprofit	11.2%	18.8%	High
Public Media	11.5%	12.5%	Average
National Broadcast Chain	24.4%	37.5%	High
National Newspaper Chain	6.0%	6.3%	Average
Independent For-Profit	46.4%	25.0%	Low
BIPOC-Serving Media			
African American / Black		1	
Hispanic / Latino		0	
Asian / Asian American		0	
Diversity			
Staff Diversity Transparency		Yes	
Source Diversity Audits		Yes	
Collaboration		Ongoing and Integrated	
Journalism Funding			
Philanthropic Dollars over the 3 previous years ¹⁰	\$3,837,794	\$3,700,000	
Funders	13	25	
Recipients	8	11	
Invested Per Capita	\$5.94	\$12.04	High

8. The percentage of news outlets that publish on specific platforms in St. Paul.

9. The percentage of news outlets that have specific business models in St. Paul.

10. Philanthropic investment is based on the Media Impact Funders and Candid database, which pulls data from organizational 990s. These data include only institutional funders, not individual donors. There is also a lag in the data as a result of both the timing of organizations’ tax filings and the process of tagging grants. While this data is far from perfect, it is the only current data source with respect to philanthropic funding for media.

Case Study: Sahan Journal

Mukhtar Ibrahim founded Sahan Journal in August 2019 as a nonprofit digital newsroom dedicated to reporting for immigrants and communities of color in Minnesota. As of early 2023, it had grown to an organization with 18 full-time staff and an annual operating budget of \$2.5 million. Sahan Journal aims to understand what information immigrants and communities of color need and then provide relevant information through accessible languages and platforms. In addition to a website with content in English and Somali, Sahan Journal distributes a SMS newsletter designed for Afghan immigrants in Pashto and Dari, and engages with communities through social media, videos, newsletters and community events. And finally, Sahan Journal makes its reporting available to other publications to republish in full. In 2022, its reporters received three awards from the Minnesota chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists.

During COVID-19, Ibrahim said that the media's role was different depending on who they served, and all were oriented toward public service journalism. For instance, Sahan Journal did a series of videos on vaccinations, and felt a need to address misinformation in a language that their audiences could understand via someone from their community whom they could trust. Sahan Journal is now pursuing new initiatives, such as exploring a partnership with Somali TV MN to [produce an audio-based newsletter delivered via SMS in Somali](#). As Ibrahim and editorial director Michael Tortorello noted, part of Sahan Journal's experience is that you can't just publish content in people's native languages and expect audiences to find it, you have to reach people where they are. "Sahan Journal and Mukhtar's creation of it is a landmark in Minnesota," said Tortorello.

News Outlets Based in St. Paul

	Independent	National Chain	Nonprofit/University	Public Media
Digital only	Georgia Fort		BLCK Press Sahan Journal	
Print and digital	<i>Insight News</i> <i>Shoreview Press</i> <i>Vadnais Heights Press</i> <i>White Bear Press</i>	<i>St. Paul Pioneer Press</i>		
Radio		WCCO Radio		MPR News/KNOW
Television		KARE KMSF Fox KSTP WCCO WUCW		Twin Cities PBS

Diversity

The Star Tribune participated in the last American Society of News Editors newsroom diversity survey in 2019. At that time, the organization of 254 employees was 1% Native American, 3% Hispanic, 5% Asian and 7% Black.¹¹ *Star Tribune* is consciously focused on having the makeup of the newsroom reflect the diversity of St. Paul's communities, said Colleen Stoxen, the organization's deputy managing editor of news operations. *Star Tribune* also has a committee looking at its coverage, including conducting source diversity audits.

BLCK Press is a nonprofit multimedia training organization that works with youth in St. Paul (and beyond) and has its own newsrooms. This is one effort to train the next generation of diverse media makers to better serve the local community's information needs.

The murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis on May 25, 2020, was the catalyst for that national movement, and it was an earth-shattering event for the local community in the Twin Cities. In the wake of his murder, stakeholders said that, in general, actors across the news ecosystem in St. Paul have recognized the urgent—even life-and-death—need to address diversity in their organizations, as well as in their coverage. “The George Floyd murder shook this place,” said Duchesne Drew, president of Minnesota Public Radio.

Drew and others noted that there were many organizations working on diversity, equity and inclusion before 2020, but that Floyd's murder brought a new sense of urgency that's shaped the way organizations are moving in communities. Mukhtar Ibrahim of Sahan Journal also noted that “the news ecosystem in the Twin Cities in general has been changing post the killing of George Floyd in terms of who leads these newsrooms or type of people they bring in reporting.” He observed that news organizations are trying to bring in more diverse talent and grapple with their role in structural racism, and he believes the ecosystem is stronger than it was five years ago.

Collaborations

We did not find evidence of institutional or formal collaborations around issues in St. Paul. Projects appear to be one-off or project-based, when they happen. From 2017 through 2019, six media outlets partnered as

11.

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d2df6a6231a750001881b75/t/6042967698b7262ced3b7b67/1614976631174/2019_ASNE_Newsroom_Diversity_Survey+Managers+and+Salaried+Employees.pdf

part of the Kellogg Foundation-funded Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation initiative with the goal to replace the deeply held belief system that fuels racism with one that sees the inherent value of all people. According to this initiative, “partners included large, well-resourced, nationally known organizations and small, community-led organizations. Their collaboration offered media professionals an opportunity to meet, build trust and learn about the impact of negative narratives on people and communities of color.” This initiative also engaged young Black men and boys through a mentorship program designed to assist them to develop “new internal narratives and visions.”¹²

Local Journalism Support Organizations

The Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation, based in Saint Paul, is a statewide foundation that serves all of Minnesota and has made significant contributions to journalism organizations, including Minnesota Public Radio, American Public Media, Twin Cities Public Television, Sahan Journal, MinnPost and others. Other nonprofits in St. Paul and Twin Cities are also becoming more aware of how they can provide support and investment to news through not only grants but through shared programming and collaboration.

For some news organizations in St. Paul, pursuing foundation funding is still a relatively new idea, but one that is becoming more necessary. “We’re just starting to think about the idea of support from foundations,” said Colleen Stoxen of the *Star Tribune*, adding that the publication is noting that the shift in traditional advertising models for news means changes in the future and is looking at the potential in the local funder ecosystem.

Information Providers and Community*	Knight Communities Average	St. Paul	Comparison
Representation and Proximity			
% Who say local Journalists are in touch with the community	63%	77%	High
% Who have spoken with a journalist	21%	18%	Average
% Who say their local news source mostly covers the area where they live	51%	59%	High
Includes people like you in their stories	58%	68%	High
Financial Support			
% Who pay for local news in the past year	14%	17%	Average
% Who Say Their Local News:			
Reports news accurately	71%	80%	High
Keeps an eye on local political leaders	66%	77%	High
Provides news that they use daily	67%	74%	High
Covers news stories thoroughly	65%	73%	High
Is transparent about their reporting	62%	72%	High
Deals fairly with all sides	62%	70%	High

*Data from 2019 Pew Research Center Local News Survey

12. “Bringing TRHT TO LIFE,” W. K. Kellogg Foundation, <https://healourcommunities.org/#a-tab-13>.

Information Providers and Community

According to the 2019 Pew Research Center Local News survey, St. Paul exhibits very high levels of trust in media, with almost all indicators higher than the national average. However, that expressed level of trust has not translated into monetary support. The percentage who say they pay for news is just three percentage points higher than the national average, which is even lower than in other Knight Cities that expressed less trust.

The results of the Gallup/Knight 2022 American Views survey suggest that residents' perceptions of local media have somewhat worsened since 2019. While 62% of respondents agree that local news organizations have the resources and opportunity to report the news accurately, only 39% agree that these organizations care about how their reporting can affect their community broadly and only 36% agree that they care about the best interest of their readers, viewers and listeners. And perhaps most concerning, nearly half of respondents (49%) disagree that local news organizations do not intend to mislead, misinform or persuade the public.

Opportunities

- **Collaboration:** With more local news outlets experimenting with deep community engagement, a unique commitment to the community in the form of a locally owned daily newspaper, and robust startups like the Sahan Journal serving immigrants and communities of color, St. Paul's ecosystem is ripe for a more institutionalized collaborative effort.
- **Institutional support, especially for BIPOC-serving media:** While there is significant philanthropic investment per capita, it is concentrated in public media. There is opportunity to support BIPOC and immigrant serving information providers.
- **Membership and paid subscriptions:** There is opportunity for newsrooms to experiment with paid membership and/or subscription models given the willingness of residents to pay for news and information and their relatively high levels of trust in the ecosystem.