

STUDY REVEALS AMERICANS FIND IT HARDER TO GET NEWS ABOUT THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD THAN ABOUT THE WORLD

Civic Information Needs Census launches partner program to catalyze local information needs measurement in communities around the country

Feb. 9, 2026 – Americans find it harder to stay informed about their neighborhoods, towns, and cities than about national and international news, according to a new study released today by the Civic Information Needs Census (CINC).

CINC is a research program housed at Civic News Company and operated in partnership with Embold Research. It is designed to give newsrooms, libraries, government agencies, community groups, and funders data-driven insights to strengthen local information services.

The survey of 1,765 registered voters nationally found 44% report difficulty getting information about their neighborhood, compared to just 26% for national information and 30% for international – what the CINC calls the "Proximity Paradox." Across topics from local politics to transportation, there was a 21 to 46 percentage point gap between the percentage of people who say a local topic is important and the percentage satisfied with the information available.

“These information needs transcend politics, demographics, and geography,” CINC outlined in a review of the findings. “Trump and Harris 2024 voters alike report significant unmet local information needs.”

The national results align with three previous CINC surveys conducted in 2024 in Chicago, New York City, and a separate national survey, all of which found similar unmet information needs. Full data are available at infocensus.org.

Expanding research through new local partnerships

Building on these findings, CINC is launching a partner program that will bring surveys to at least 5 additional local communities in 2026. Each partner organization will conduct local surveys and use the data to address information gaps in their communities:

- American Journalism Project
- Chicago Public Media – Chicago, Illinois
- Cityside Journalism Initiative – Marin County, California
- Deep South Today – Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi

- San José Spotlight – Santa Clara County, California

Data and insights from these surveys will be shared publicly at infocensus.org.

Catalytic funding available for additional partnerships

CINC is also offering catalytic funding to support additional organizations interested in conducting CINC surveys in their communities. Priority will be given to organizations that commit to using the data to strengthen their work, sharing findings within their community, and supporting future CINC surveys. Details are available at infocensus.org/partner.

Funding for the CINC initiative and the catalytic funding program is provided by the Caswell Jin Foundation. Partial support for the five individual local CINC is provided by the American Journalism Project, Chicago Public Media, Cityside Journalism Initiative, and Chandran and Mallika Sankaran.

For more information, reach out to contact@infocensus.org.