

CIVIC NEWS

NATIONAL SURVEY

January 26, 2026

METHODOLOGY

On behalf of Civic News, Embold research surveyed registered voters nationwide to better understand information needs and media consumption habits.



Survey of n=1,765 registered voters nationwide, from December 15-21, 2025



Respondents were recruited via dynamic online sampling to obtain a sample reflective of the population.



Post-stratification weighting was performed on age, gender, race/ethnicity, education, and 2020 presidential vote.



The modeled margin of error is 2.4%

SAMPLE OVERVIEW



52% Women
47% Men
1% Other identity



63% White
12% Black
13% Hispanic
8% AAPI
1% Native
4% Other



16% High school or less
27% Some college, no degree
15% Associate's degree
27% Bachelor's degree
16% Graduate degree



26% 18-34
24% 35-49
23% 50-64
27% 65+



22% Midwest
17% Northeast
38% South
23% West



42% Democrat
43% Republican
15% Independent

KEY FINDINGS

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On behalf of Civic News, Embold research surveyed registered voters nationwide to better understand information needs and media consumption habits.

01

Nearly half of voters find it difficult to access information about their neighborhoods, at much higher rates than when accessing national or international news.

02

There are concerning gaps between how voters assess the importance of key news topics and their satisfaction with accessing information on those topics, indicating substantial unmet local needs.

03

When seeking local news, word of mouth channels and interpersonal communications take precedence, with Facebook playing a particularly prominent role.

04

One quarter of voters self-identify as civic catalysts, and 36% express interest in working to improve local institutions and systems.

INFORMATION ACCESS AND SATISFACTION

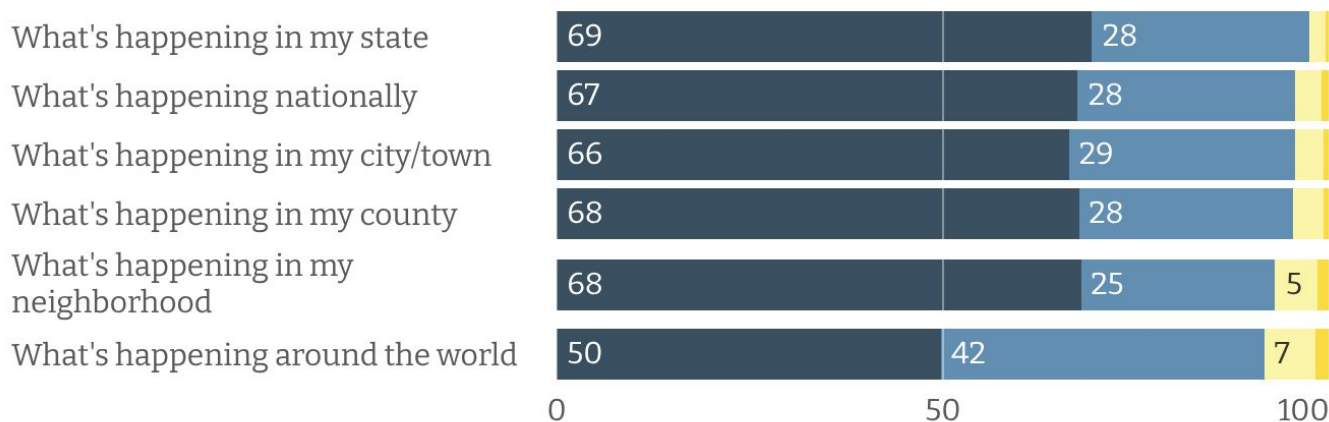


2 in 3 voters see it as very important to stay informed about what's happening locally, regionally, and nationally

Half say the same about international events

Importance of Regional Access

● Very important ● Somewhat important ● Not that important ● Not important at all



Q: How important is it to you to stay informed about each of the following in your day-to-day life?

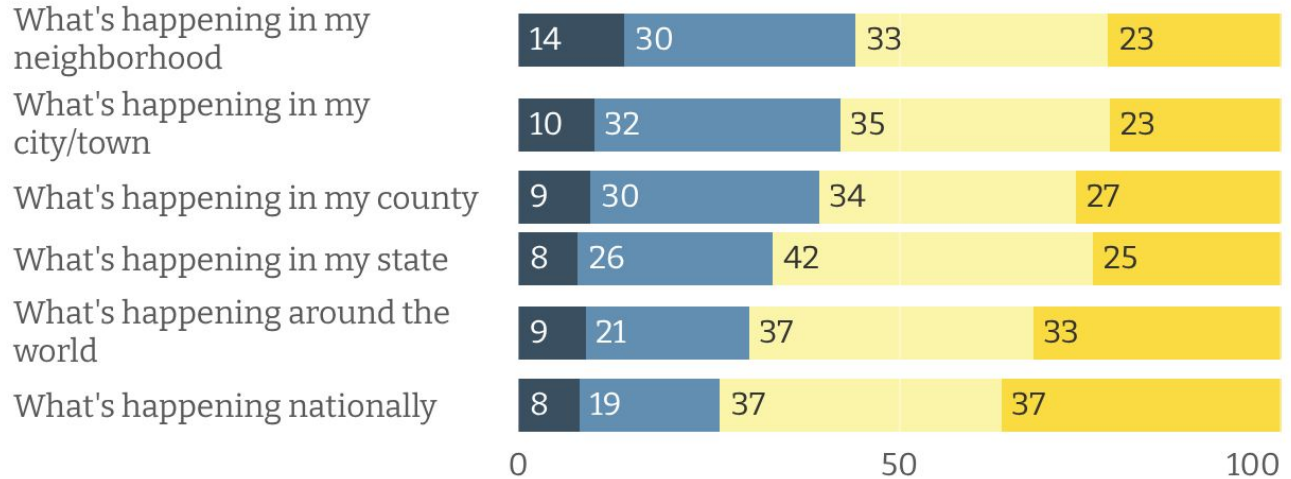


The more local the information, the harder it is to find

Young voters are particularly disconnected from their communities, with over half (52%) saying it's difficult to access information about their neighborhood.

Difficulty of Regional Access

● Very difficult ● Somewhat difficult ● Not that difficult ● Not difficult at all



Q: How difficult is it for you to get information about each of the following in your day-to-day life?



One in three respondents (32%) get information about their neighborhood, city, or town each day

Local News Frequency

	Total	Rural/Small Town	Suburb	Small/Large City	White	Hispanic	Black	AAPI	Women 50+	Women Under 50	Men 50+	Men Under 50
Multiple times a day	19	17	21	21	19	15	30	16	24	20	19	15
Once a day	13	10	11	19	13	14	11	19	17	11	15	9
A few times a week	27	29	26	25	28	26	28	23	26	28	29	27
A few times a month	19	16	19	16	19	22	16	17	15	18	19	20
Very rarely	19	25	21	17	19	17	15	23	15	21	16	24
Never	3	3	3	2	3	5	1	2	2	3	2	5

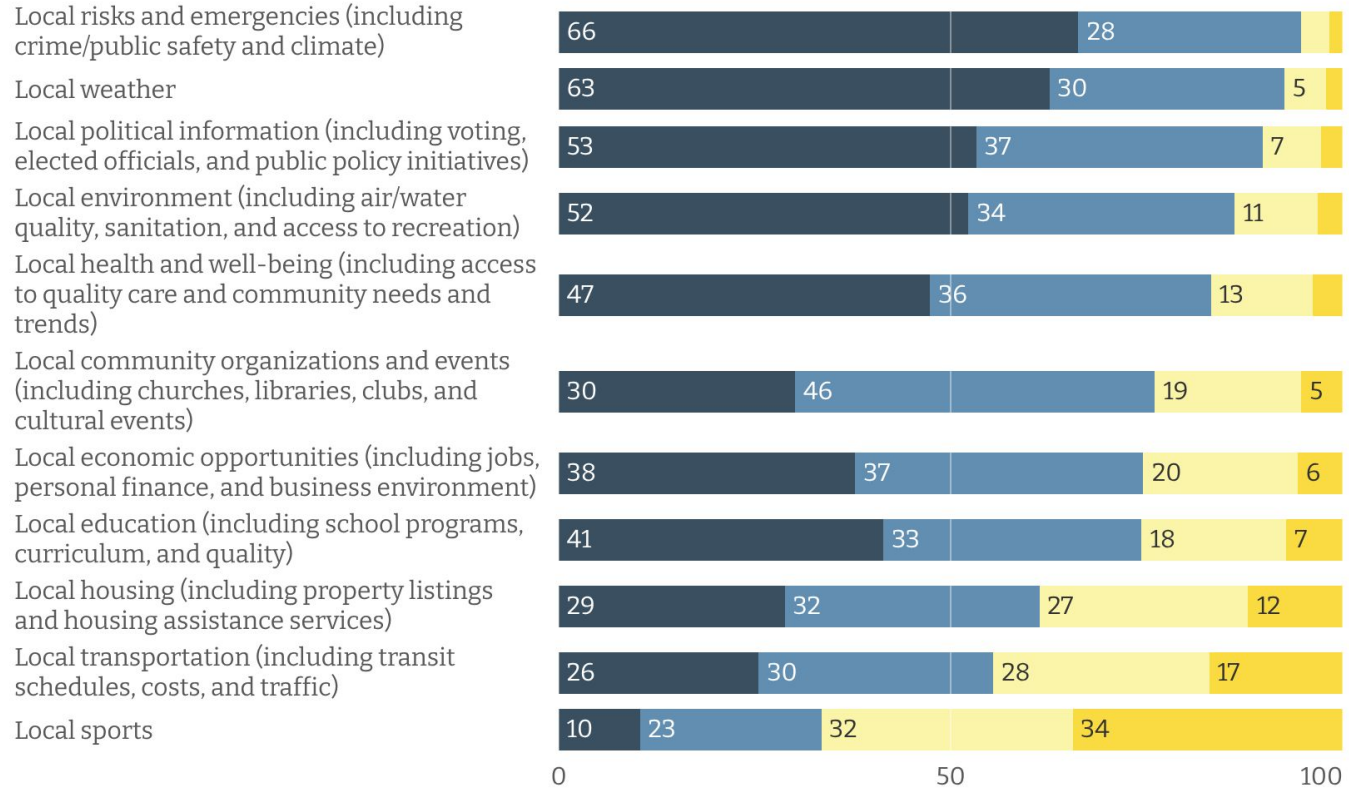
Q: How often do you hear news or information that is specifically about your neighborhood, city, or town?



Local emergencies and weather lead the list of topics voters most want information about

Importance of Information

● Very important ● Somewhat important ● Not that important ● Not important at all



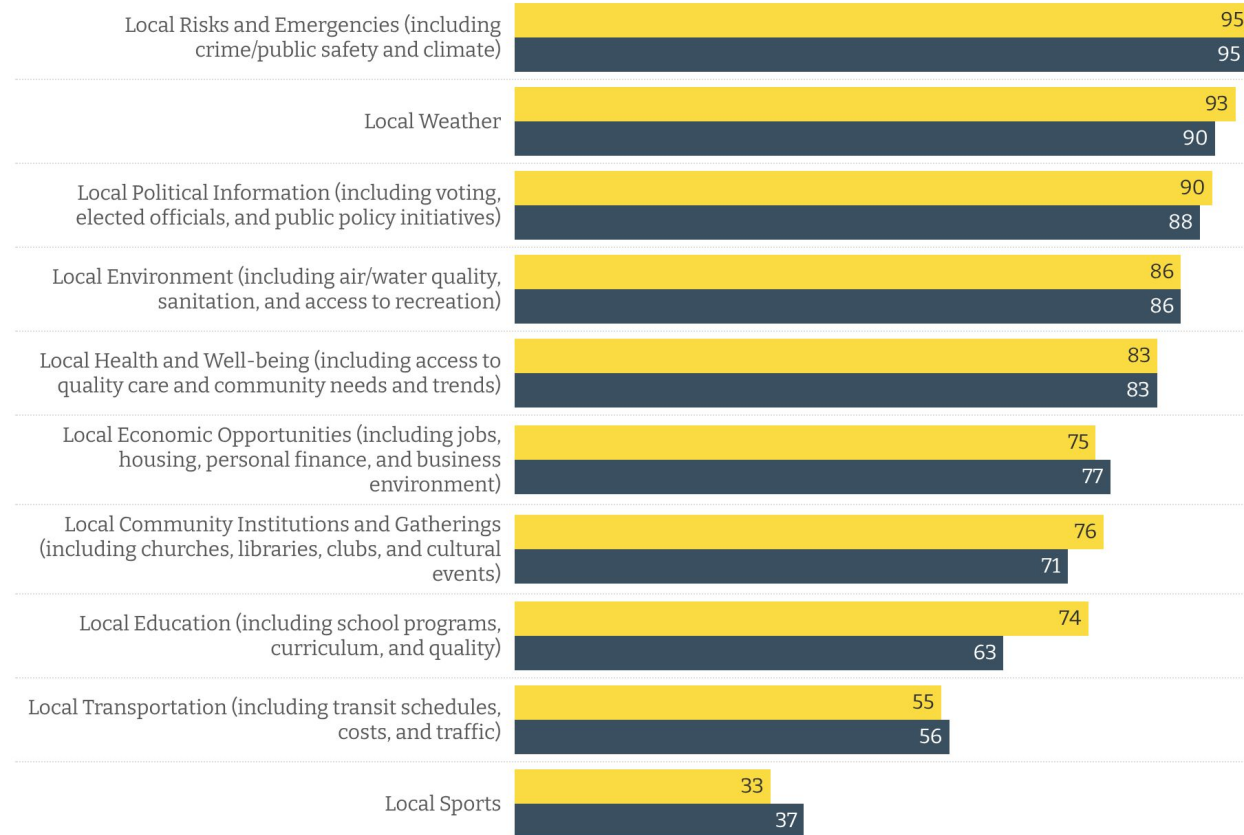
Q: How important is it for you to get information about each of the following topics in your everyday life?



The importance of most information is fairly stable since August 2024

Importance of Information Over Time

● December 2025 ● August 2024



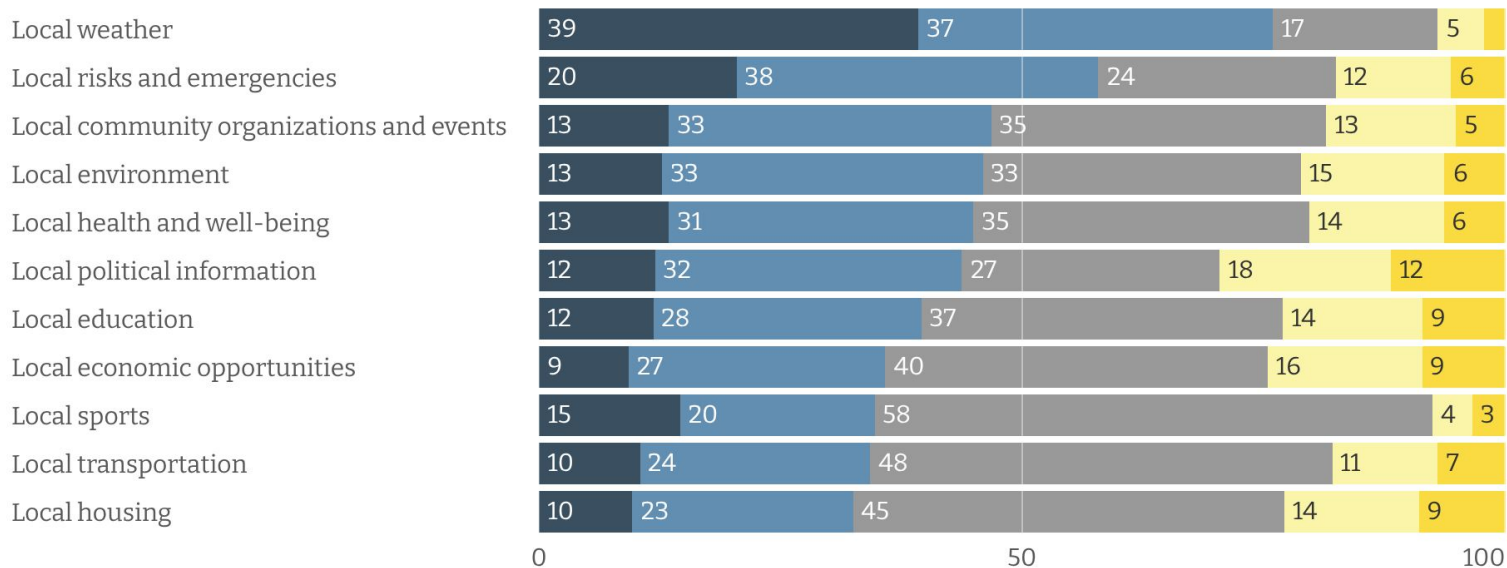
Q: How important is it for you to get information about each of the following topics in your everyday life?



While most voters are satisfied with the quality of information about local weather and emergencies, fewer than half are satisfied with other key information areas

Satisfaction with Information

● Very satisfied ● Somewhat satisfied ● Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied ● Somewhat unsatisfied ● Very unsatisfied



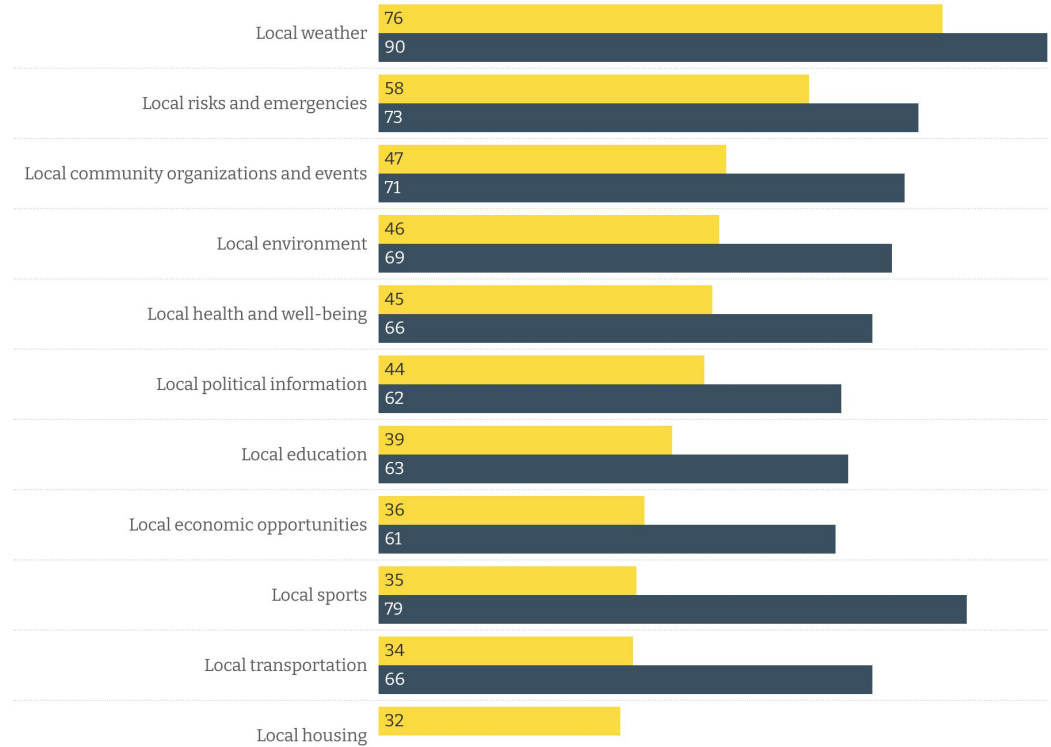
Q: When you seek out news and information about each of the following topics, how satisfied or unsatisfied are you with the information you are able to get?



Forcing a more granular picture of satisfaction shows that minorities of voters are satisfied with the local information they are able to access

Satisfaction With Information Over Time

● December 2025 ● August 2024



Q: When you seek out news and information about each of the following topics, how satisfied or unsatisfied are you with the information you are able to get?

Asked as "When you seek out news and information about each of the following topics, how satisfied or unsatisfied are you with the information you are able to get?"

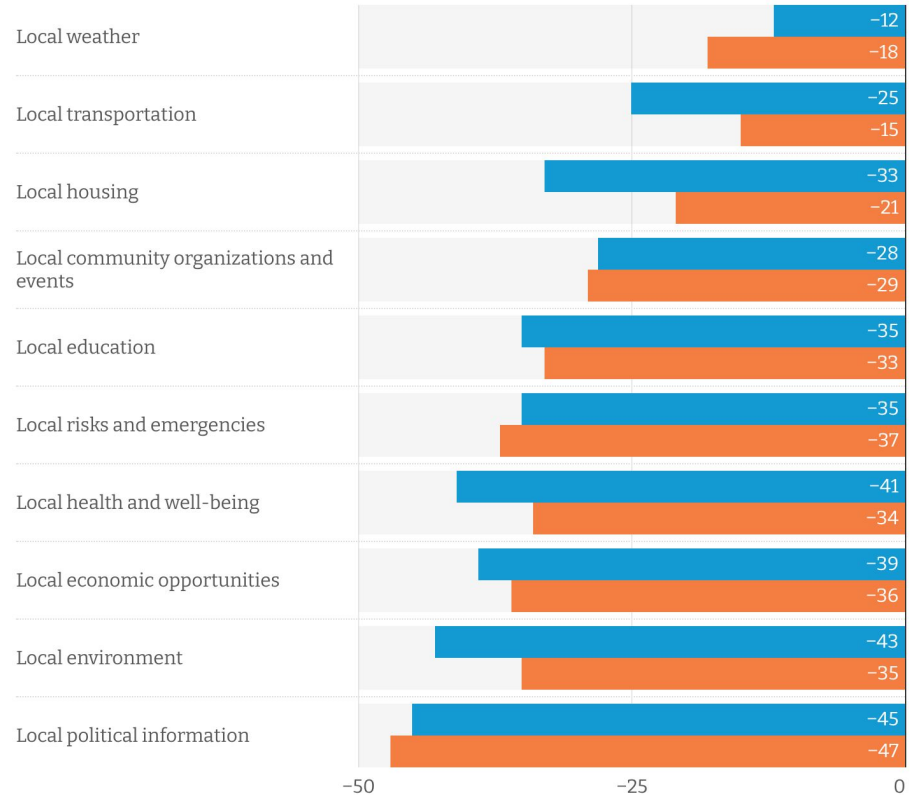
December 2025 included the option for respondents to answer "neither satisfied nor dissatisfied." In August 2024, "Local community organizations and events" was asked as "Local Community Institutions and Gatherings." The topic of housing was not asked in August, 2024.



There are large gaps between the importance of and satisfaction with local information regardless of partisan identity

Gap Between Satisfaction and Importance Across Partisanship

● Democrats ● Republicans



Gap: Satisfaction - Importance. Importance: % who say a topic is important. Satisfaction: % satisfied with ability to get information on topic.



Types of information sought: Local Community

Local Community

	Total	White	Hispanic	Black	AAPI	Women 50+	Women Under 50	Men 50+	Men Under 50
Information about fairs, festivals, or celebrations in my city or town	75	74	76	68	85	75	81	69	73
Social events or recreational activities in your city or town	71	70	65	77	91	67	78	64	74
What programs are offered by local institutions like libraries or community centers	63	59	72	73	64	66	72	52	59
Information about fairs, festivals, or celebrations in my state	63	63	52	70	62	59	70	57	61
Opportunities to volunteer	42	39	51	39	52	42	47	36	41
Something else (please specify):	3	4	0	0	6	2	5	4	2

Q: [If LOCAL COMMUNITY very/somewhat important] What types of information do you look for when it comes to local community institutions and gatherings? Select all that apply.



Types of information sought: Local Politics

Local Politics

	Total	White	Hispanic	Black	AAPI	Women 50+	Women Under 50	Men 50+	Men Under 50
Information about new laws or policies from local government	82	82	83	82	82	83	86	81	80
Information about who local elected leaders are and what they are doing	81	82	74	81	83	83	78	85	80
When elections are taking place	67	68	61	64	64	71	70	63	63
When and where town hall meetings or public forums are being held	54	53	50	54	66	54	54	54	54
Information about protests, demonstrations, or other political actions happening in your city or town	51	49	55	49	60	53	55	44	51
Where and how to vote in elections	50	51	55	49	33	49	57	44	50
Something else (please specify):	4	5	1	1	2	5	5	3	3

Q: [If LOCAL POLITICS very/somewhat important] What types of information do you look for when it comes to local political information? Select all that apply.



Types of information sought: Local Economy

Local Economy

	Total	White	Hispanic	Black	AAPI	Women 50+	Women Under 50	Men 50+	Men Under 50
Information about new local businesses	71	73	61	70	66	75	72	73	64
Job openings in my city or town	62	56	76	65	78	49	75	50	68
Information about local business closures	55	57	47	51	54	64	49	58	52
Information about adult education or training opportunities in my city or town	45	42	50	49	54	43	58	33	42
Job openings outside of my city or town, within my state	39	33	53	40	61	28	48	26	50
Something else (please specify):	5	6	1	4	5	6	5	7	3

Q: [If LOCAL ECONOMY very/somewhat important] What types of information do you look for when it comes to local economic opportunities? Select all that apply.



Types of information sought: Local Health

Local Health

	Total	White	Hispanic	Black	AAPI	Women 50+	Women Under 50	Men 50+	Men Under 50
Public health alerts affecting my city or town	80	79	81	80	82	77	83	80	78
Public health alerts affecting my state	71	72	65	70	78	73	75	69	66
Available options for medical care in your area	63	61	66	63	71	61	67	63	60
Information about mental health resources in my city or town	41	34	52	55	55	33	63	26	40
Something else (please specify):	5	6	3	0	8	6	4	6	4

Q: [If LOCAL HEALTH very/somewhat important] What types of information do you look for when it comes to local health or well-being? Select all that apply.



Types of information sought: Local Education

Local Education

	Total	White	Hispanic	Black	AAPI	Women 50+	Women Under 50	Men 50+	Men Under 50
Reports on school quality and educational outcomes in my school district	73	71	69	80	82	76	65	72	79
Changes to education policies or laws passed by my local school district	69	69	64	65	78	70	68	71	66
Changes to education policies or laws passed by my state	67	67	67	57	74	69	68	67	64
Reports on school quality and educational outcomes in my state	56	53	56	60	70	63	54	51	55
School schedules, calendars, and closures	44	40	47	49	52	42	53	34	45
Information about extracurricular activities or programs provided by local schools	33	27	46	35	53	24	45	24	36
Information about how to enroll your child(ren) into school	17	12	25	22	38	10	27	6	23
Something else (please specify):	7	8	0	3	3	8	6	7	4

Q: [If LOCAL EDUCATION very/somewhat important] What types of information do you look for when it comes to local education? Select all that apply.



Types of information sought: Local Sports

Local Sports

	Total	White	Hispanic	Black	AAPI	Women 50+	Women Under 50	Men 50+	Men Under 50
Standings and games of major sports teams in my city, county, or state (e.g., MLB, NFL, NHL, College Football, etc.)	71	70	72	79	69	67	58	82	77
Standings and games for minor sports teams in my city, county, or state (e.g., minor league baseball, minor league hockey, etc.)	48	49	56	45	44	50	42	48	52
Information about youth sports clubs and leagues	42	40	52	37	37	36	50	46	39
Opportunities to play recreational sports or athletics	30	25	48	25	54	8	39	25	46
Something else (please specify):	3	3	3	0	7	6	4	0	3

Q: [If LOCAL SPORTS very/somewhat important] What types of information do you look for when it comes to local sports? Select all that apply.



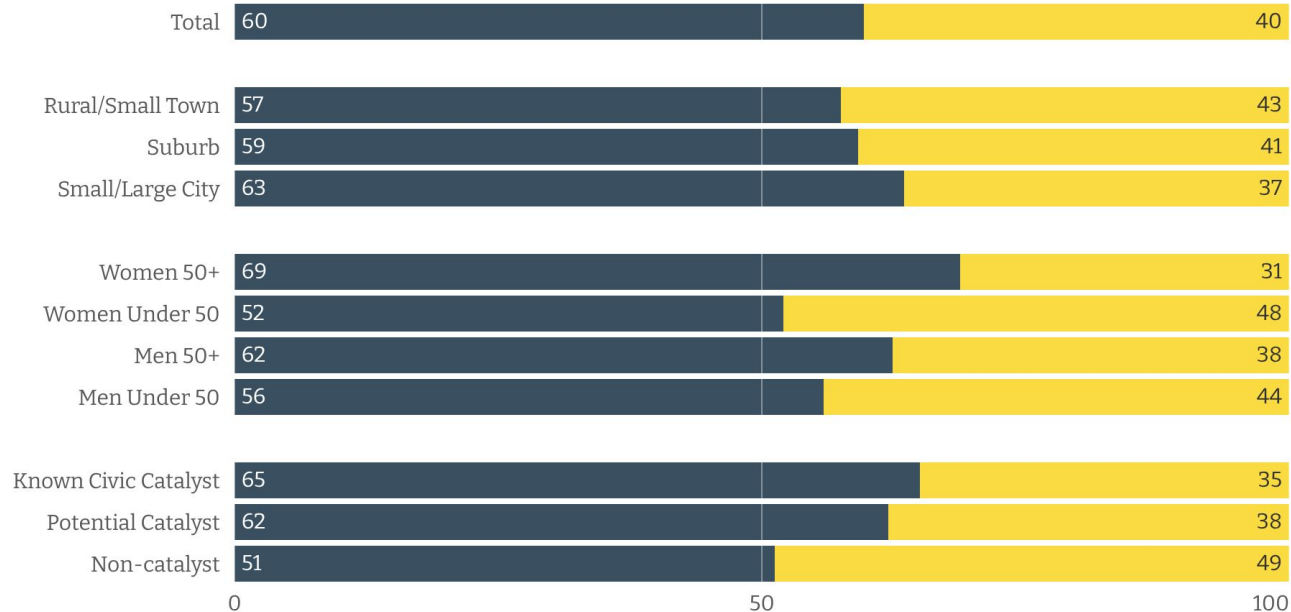
SEEKING NEWS



Voters tend to actively seek out local information rather than have it delivered to them passively

Active v. Passive News

- Actively seeking it out (e.g., reading the newspaper, scrolling for news on social media, turning on TV or radio news programs)
- Running into it spontaneously (e.g. listening to a podcast, watching sports, talking to friends and family, scrolling for fun on social media)

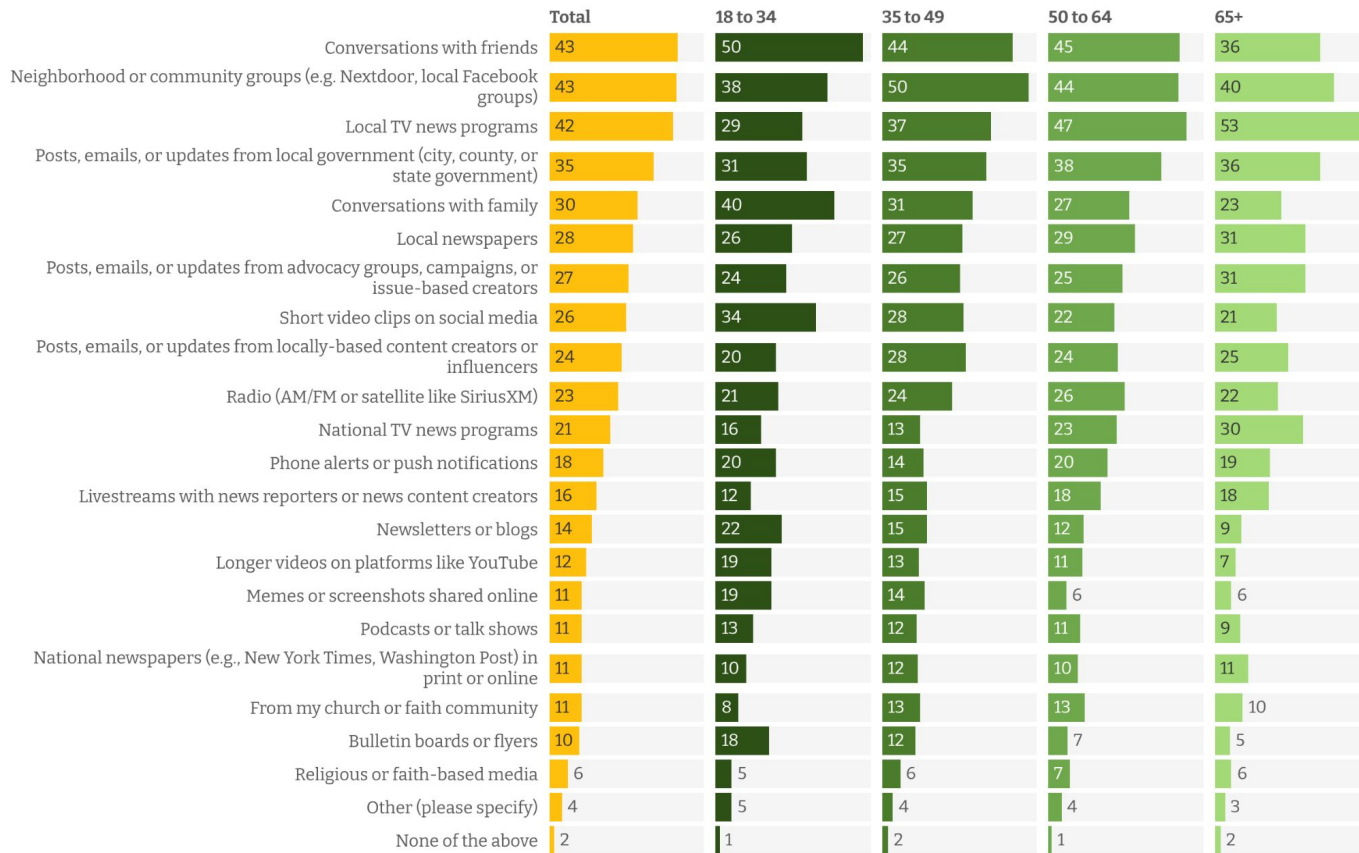


Q: When you hear about news or information about your neighborhood, city/town, or county, do you mostly find out about them by:



Hyper local news is most commonly distributed by word of mouth (either online or in person), and by local TV programs

Local News Source



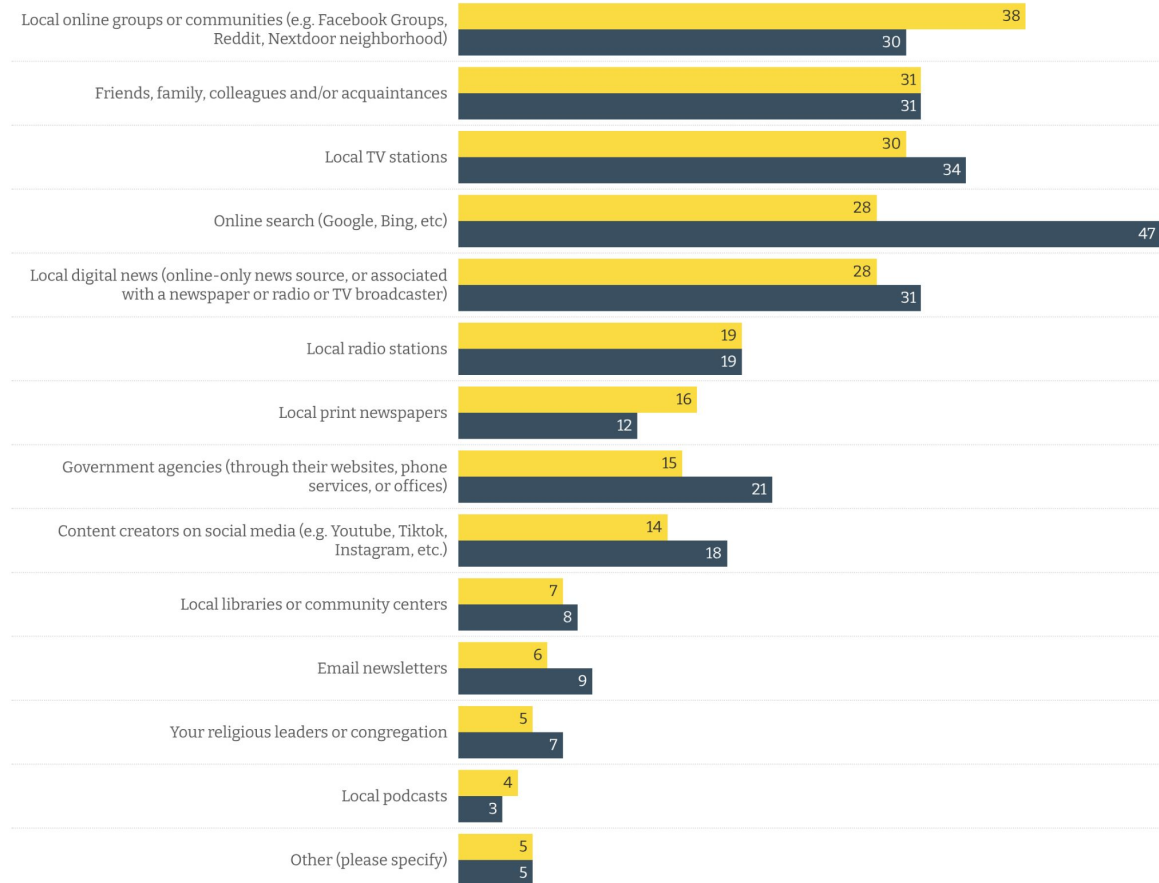
Q: How are you seeing, hearing, or reading news about your neighborhood, city/town, or county most frequently? Select all that apply.



Voters have deprioritized online search as a key news source from 2024 to 2025.

Most Useful News Sources Over Time

● December 2025 ● August 2024



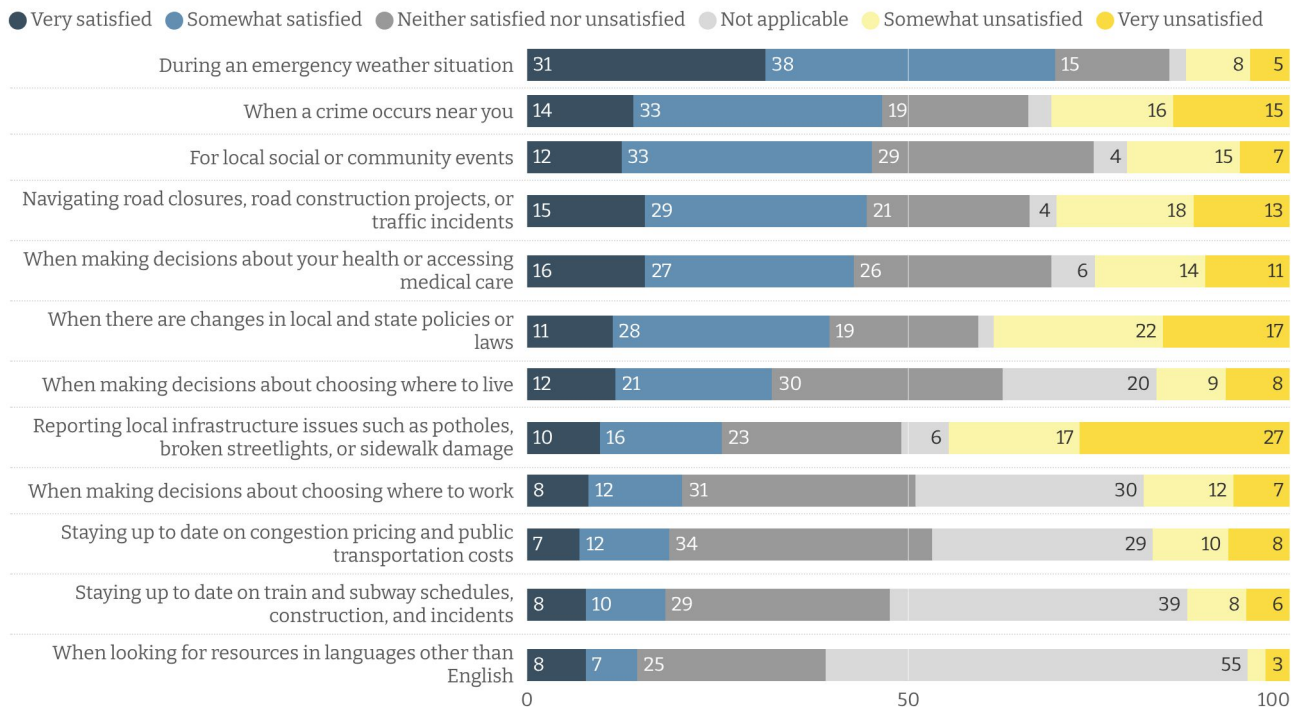
Q: Which of the following sources are the most useful when it comes to getting high quality, local information? Select up to THREE.

Asked as "When it comes to the topics where quality information is the most important to you, which of the following sources do you find most useful?" in 2024.



Except in weather emergencies, fewer than half of voters are satisfied with their access to information in various important situations

Satisfaction With Access to Information

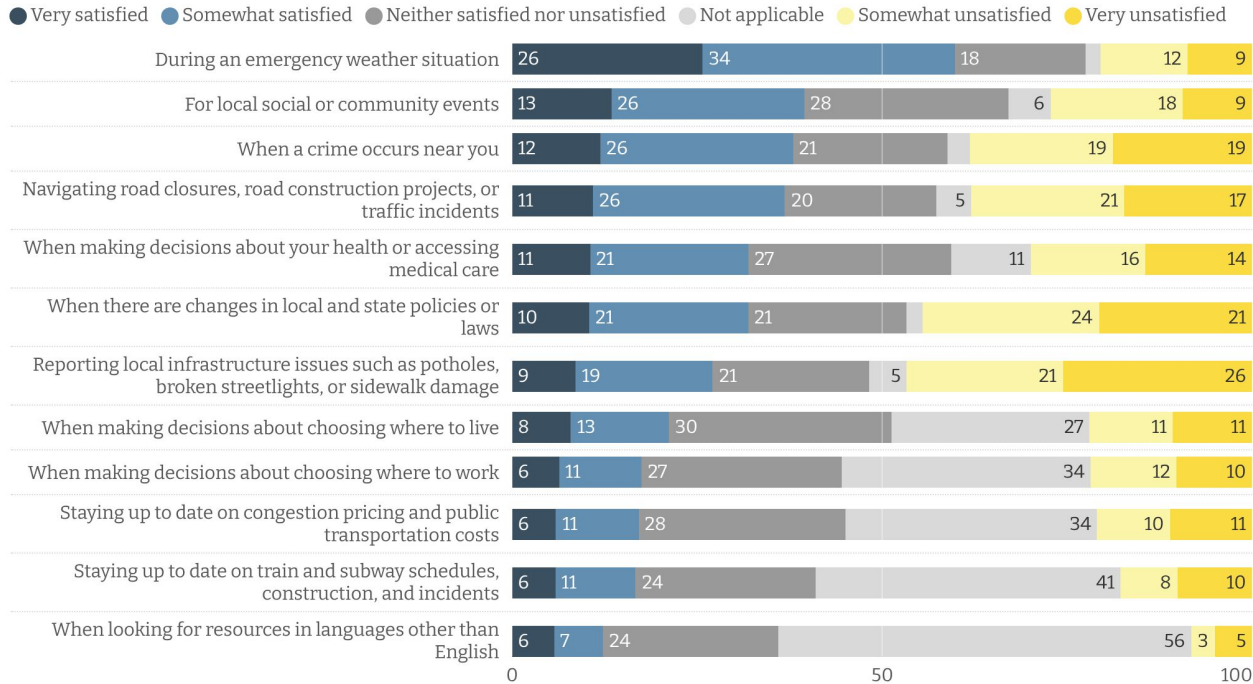


Q: How satisfied or unsatisfied are you with your ability to get the information you need in the following situations?



In these same situations, fewer than half of voters are satisfied with the information provided by their local government (again, except in weather emergencies)

Satisfaction With Local Government Provided Information



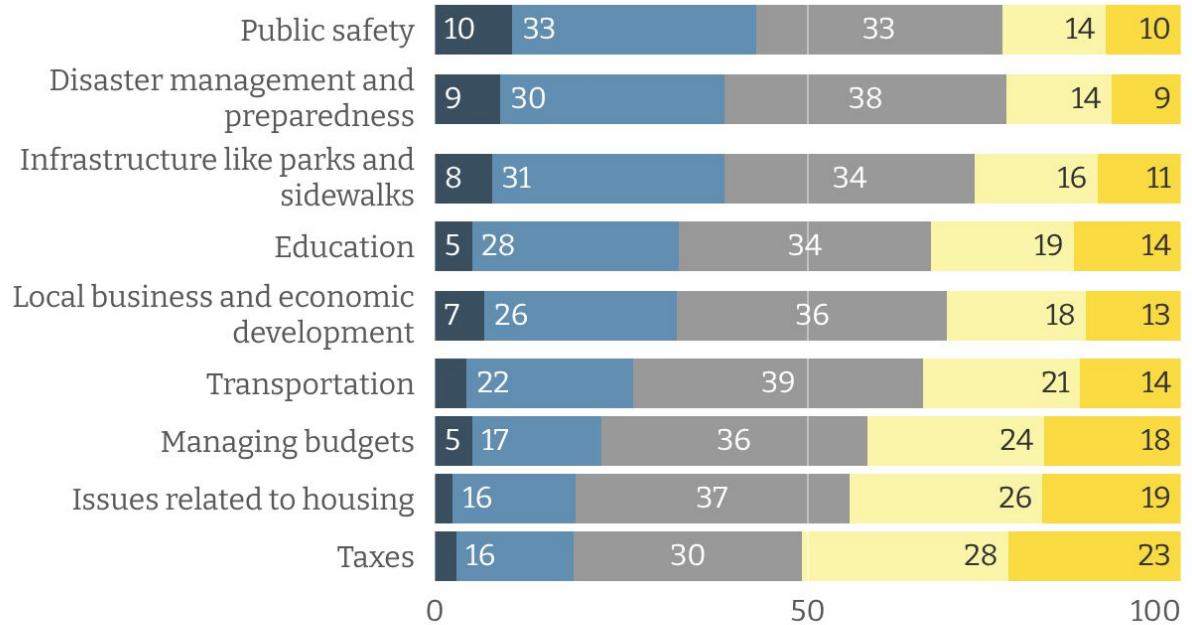
Q: Here is that same list again. How would you rate your local government on providing information in the following situations? For this question, your local government are officials in your city, town, or county.



Voters are most satisfied with their local governments on public safety, disaster management, and infrastructure

Local Government Issue Rating

● Excellent ● Good ● Fair ● Poor ● Very poor



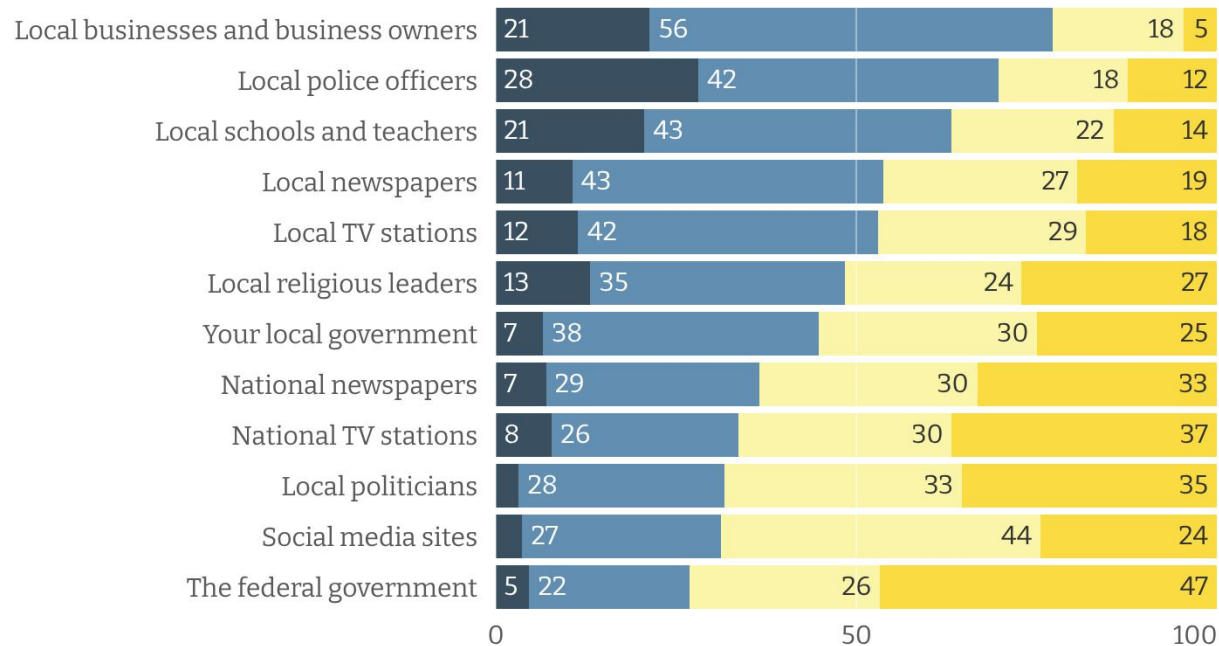
Q: How would you rate how your local government is doing on the following issues? For this question, your local government are officials in your city, town, or county.



Voters are more than twice as likely to trust local businesses and business owners (77%) as local politicians (32%)

Trust in Sources

● Trust a lot ● Trust somewhat ● Trust only a little ● Do not trust at all



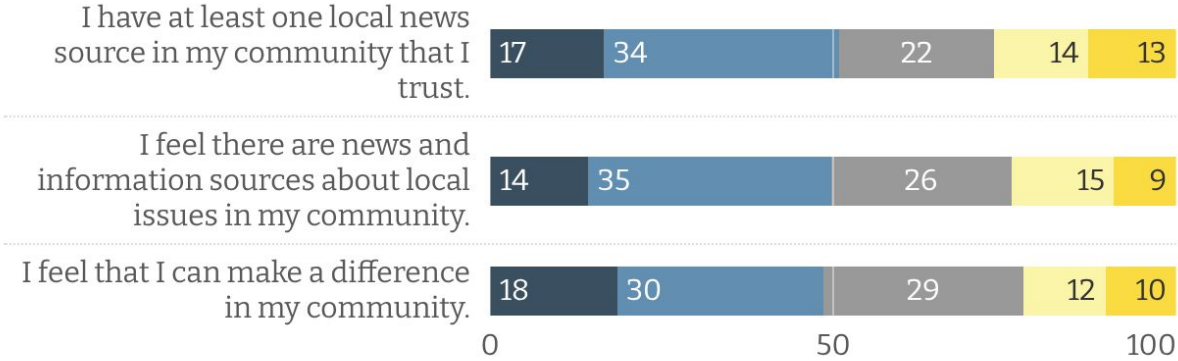
Q: How much do you trust each of the following?



About half of voters agree that they have trusted news sources in their community and that they can personally make a difference in their community

Opinions on Sources

● Strongly agree ● Somewhat agree ● Neither agree nor disagree ● Somewhat disagree ● Strongly disagree



Q: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Despite having the hardest time accessing local news, the youngest voters are most likely to have a trusted local news source

Opinions on Sources by Subgroups

	Total	18 to 34	35 to 49	50 to 64	65+	White	Hispanic	Black	AAPI
I have at least one local news source in my community that I trust.	51	56	51	54	44	50	53	63	56
I feel there are news and information sources about local issues in my community.	50	59	52	47	43	47	60	59	49
I feel that I can make a difference in my community.	49	53	55	50	37	45	54	62	61

Q: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Numbers above represent those who said either "Strongly agree" or "Somewhat agree"



SEEKING INFORMATION:
IN THEIR WORDS



When asking voters where they turn to for local news, Facebook dominates the field

With over 130 unique sources mentioned, voters still gravitate toward similar central sources. Respondents often mentioned multiple sources in their responses.

Top sources mentioned	% of coded qualitative responses
Facebook	18%
Local newspapers	13%
Local TV stations	10%
Radio	7%
The internet	6%



When asked what makes a source trustworthy, voters overwhelmingly focus on accuracy and objectivity.

Notably, responses are much more concerned with unbiased news over news that may offer multiple perspectives.

Common Themes	% of coded qualitative responses
Unbiased/No agenda	30%
Accurate and Fact-based	26%
Honest/Truthful	21%
Objective, without opinions	9%
Researchable/Verifiable	8%



IDENTIFYING
CIVIC CATALYSTS



One quarter of voters identify themselves as civic catalysts

Civic Catalyst Actions

	Total	Women 50+	Women Under 50	Men 50+	Men Under 50	Known Civic Catalyst	Potential Catalyst
Contacted an elected official (via email, phone call, letter, etc)	47	59	35	50	43	63	65
Volunteered with an association or organization (including a child's school or youth organization)	32	32	36	25	35	54	38
Attended a town hall or community forum	27	30	22	32	23	47	31
Advocated for or worked on positive changes in your city, county, or state, such as improving public services, local programs, or government policies.	25	20	33	22	29	100	0
Attended a demonstration for or against a candidate, person, or issue	21	25	15	21	23	37	24
Participated in a community organizing meeting or effort (separate from a town hall)	21	16	25	16	26	40	22
Participated in a mutual aid network or community support group	17	17	17	16	18	38	15
I have not done any of these	26	25	27	26	26	0	0

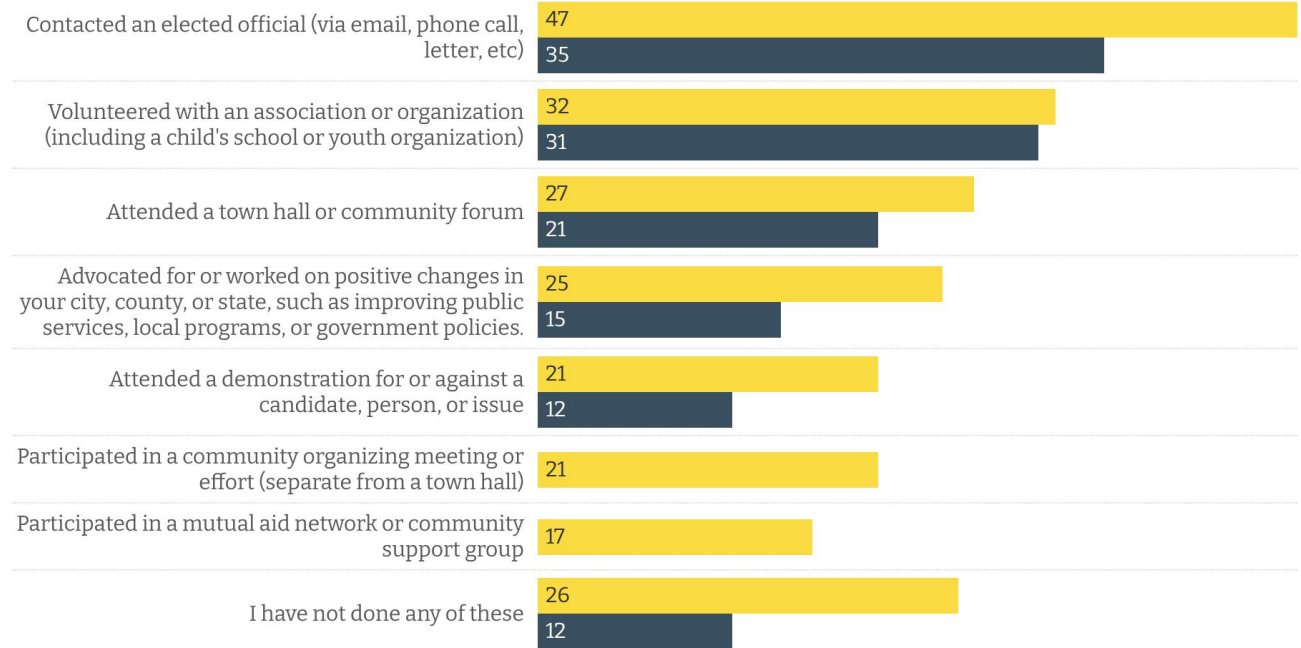
Q: Here is a list of some ways people get involved with and try to improve the community or state they live in. Which of the following, if any, have you done in the last 12 months? Select all that apply.



Voters report slight increases in civic engagement from August 2024.

Civic Catalyst Actions Over Time

● December 2025 ● August 2024



Q: Here is a list of some ways people get involved with and try to improve the community or state they live in. Which of the following, if any, have you done in the last 12 months? Select all that apply.

"Participated in a community organizing meeting..." and "Participated in a mutual aid network..." not included in 2024 question.



Even if people are not overtly civic catalysts, just over a third want to advocate or work on positive change

Interest in Civic Catalyst Actions

	Total	Women 50+	Women Under 50	Men 50+	Men Under 50	Known Civic Catalyst	Potential Catalyst
Contacting an elected official (via email, phone call, letter, etc)	40	47	32	41	41	56	47
Attending a town hall or community forum	38	32	36	40	44	56	36
Advocating for or working on positive changes in your city, county, or state, such as improving public services, local programs, or government policies.	36	25	45	29	46	63	32
Volunteering with an association or organization (including a child's school or youth organization)	33	25	46	24	41	50	33
Participating in a community organizing meeting (separate from a town hall)	28	21	30	27	37	51	24
Attending a demonstration for or against a candidate, person, or issue	25	24	26	21	30	42	24
Participating in a mutual aid network or community support group	24	18	34	20	26	45	21
I have no interest in any of these	28	31	22	30	26	9	21

Q: Do you have any interest in getting involved in one of the following ways in your community? Select all that apply. If you have no interest, please indicate it.



A plurality of civic catalysts are not satisfied with the info and tools they have to make positive change.

Satisfaction with Info/Tools to Make Change



Q: How satisfied are you with the information and tools you currently have to help you try to make positive changes in your city, county, or state?



CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

Trend data shows continued gaps in a fast-shifting information environment: When making comparisons between a similar poll conducted in August of 2024, voters maintain similar valuations of key topics, with levels of satisfaction trailing behind the importance of those same topics. At the same time, local news sources have shifted: while online search is still a common tool, other sources such as word of mouth and social media are more prominent in most recent polling.

Acute needs in hyper-local information: Data show a “proximity paradox” when it comes to information access; as information becomes more localized, it becomes harder to access. Moreover, minorities of voters are dissatisfied with the local news they are able to receive on almost all key topics tested.

Moving forward with a localized approach: While this research shows at a *national scale* the gaps in local information, it will be crucial to ask these questions of specific local audiences to parse the needs of neighborhoods, towns, and cities across the U.S. to understand the unique barriers to local information that is being experienced nationwide.

APPENDIX



Trust in Sources by Subgroups

	Total	Rural/ Small Town	Suburb	Small/ Large City	White	Hispanic	Black	AAPI	Women 50+	Women Under 50	Men 50+	Men Under 50
Local businesses and business owners	77	80	78	74	78	79	80	77	78	74	79	78
Local police officers	70	70	77	64	73	64	66	67	79	59	74	66
Local schools and teachers	63	60	66	66	61	63	77	78	63	70	57	64
Local newspapers	54	52	58	53	52	59	67	61	53	61	47	57
Local TV stations	53	47	60	55	53	54	67	59	56	53	51	53
Local religious leaders	49	52	50	43	48	45	60	47	51	39	56	48
Your local government	45	42	50	44	43	49	56	51	49	42	44	44
National newspapers	37	29	39	44	34	43	57	40	41	38	30	37
National TV stations	34	26	39	40	32	40	50	33	40	37	31	27
Local politicians	32	33	28	31	30	37	46	33	35	31	30	32
Social media sites	31	32	31	31	28	31	50	46	29	37	28	32
The federal government	27	27	30	23	27	27	29	31	31	21	31	24

Q. How much do you trust each of the following?

Numbers above represent those who said either "Trust a lot" or "Trust somewhat"



MAGNIFY AI TARGETING

Magnify AI Targeting allows you to turn the results from **this poll** into action.

Magnify AI Targeting combines the latest AI and Change's database of 250M data points to build custom targeting scores with as few as 500 survey responses. Magnify achieves better accuracy polling 500 respondents than the industry standard of 1,500 respondents.



Identify

Find the exact individuals who belong to your target audience



Contact

Target your ads, mail and field to your target audience



Maximize Resources

Avoid wasting money and time trying to target the wrong people



In Reach

Target voters in both big and small geographies

THANK YOU

QUESTIONS?