

SECTION 6: How do people want to get to that future?

The general public is not ready to give up on current news delivery systems. Beyond that, the new technologies in which people appear most interested are not necessarily the ones receiving most attention now.

Let's start with print.

People want to read a newspaper printed on paper.

We asked people whether they would prefer to read the newspaper printed on paper or online on a computer:

- Print on paper ... 77%
- Online on computer ... 17.6%
- Doesn't matter ... 2.9%
- Neither ... 1.6%
- Not sure ... 1%

News directors thought the public would be more interested in technological advances than they really are.

- Print on paper ... 48.2%
- Online on computer ... 47.8%
- Doesn't matter ... 2.4%
- Neither ... 1.6%

The numbers varied by group, but every demographic group overwhelmingly preferred to read the newspaper on paper.

The 18-34 year olds preferred computer at a higher rate than those 35+ (20.2 percent versus 15 percent). But the groups were almost identical in preferring to read a newspaper on paper (76.5 percent for 18-34 versus 77.5 percent for those 35+).

By individual age group, we see a general trend down in the percentage wanting to read a newspaper on a computer, from 24.3 percent of 18-24 year olds to 4 percent for those 65+. And we see a corresponding increase in the percentage of those wanting to read the newspaper in print, from 72 percent to 89.3 percent. But even the 18-24 year olds overwhelmingly preferred paper.

There are no differences between men and women on a preference for paper versus computer.

Generally, the higher the level of education, the less likely people were to say that it mattered to them whether they read a newspaper on paper or read it on a computer, but all groups preferred paper to computer.

The higher the income, the more likely people want to read the news on a computer (10.6 percent for those making less than \$30,000, rising steadily up to 26.2 percent for those making \$100,000+). And the preference for reading the news in a traditional newspaper dropped with income (82.2 percent for those making \$30,000 or less steadily down to 62.3 percent for those making \$100,000+).

There were not large differences by ethnicity, but Caucasians were a little less likely to prefer the computer (15.7 percent versus 22.3 percent average for all others), and a little more likely to prefer print (79.1 percent versus 70.6 percent average for all other).

Generally, people are not interested in paying for a newspaper – or news – online.

Given the preference for getting the newspaper on paper, it's not surprising that even newspaper subscribers – in every demographic group — were not much interested in paying the same amount for a subscription in order to receive the newspaper online:

- Yes, would pay the same ... 16.7%
- No, would not pay the same ... 78.5%
- Not sure ... 4.8%

News directors thought 70.5 percent would say no.

By age, we see a general downward trend in the percentage willing to pay for the same news online, from 24.2 percent of 18-24 year olds down to 6.2 percent for those 65+. And we see a corresponding increase in the percentage of those who just say no, from 69.7 percent to 87.6 percent.

Based on education, this breaks down into two camps. For those with some college or less, 13 percent say they'd pay the same amount for the information online, while 24.2 percent of those with a college degree or higher say they would pay. Of those with some college or less, 82.9 percent say they would not pay, while 68.8 percent of those with college degrees or more say they would not pay the same for an online paper.

But the issue may be more monetary than anything else. Only 5.7 percent of those making less than \$30,000 say they would pay, while 91.4 percent of those say they would not. Of those making \$30,000 or more, 21.9 percent say they would pay, and 73.5 percent say they would not.

The highest resistance to paying came from Caucasians and Native Americans, 81.7 percent of whom refuse, but resistance was generally high.

News and information online is free.

It's also clear that people view news online as a free service, and it's unlikely that's going to change. We asked people whether—if they had to pay for information online—they would they pay or seek out another site that didn't charge?

- Yes, would pay for information online ... 3.9%
- No, would try to find a site that didn't charge ... 79.4%
- Don't go online ... 7.9%
- Don't get information/news online ... 5.1%
- Not sure ... 3.6%

For those who said no, we asked, if everyone charged, would they pay or seek information for free not online?

- Yes, would pay ... 6.3%
- No, would try to get the information free somewhere else ... 91.2%

- Not sure ... 2.5%

On the initial question about paying for news online, news directors were pretty close to the general public, but news directors underestimated people's resistance on the follow-up. Almost a quarter of TV news directors (22.5 percent) thought that if all sites charged that people would pay for information online.

Men and those in the 18-34 age group were more likely to say they would try to find other sources that didn't charge than women or those 35+. Of the men surveyed, 82.8 percent said they'd search for free alternatives versus 76 percent of women. Of those in the 18-34 age group, 89 percent said they'd search for free offline information versus 69.8 percent for those 35+. The difference came primarily from those who said they don't get information online. There was little difference among those saying that if everyone charged, they'd search for non-web alternatives that didn't cost money.

Willingness to pay for news online

	Men	Women	18-34	35+
Would pay for news online	4.1%	3.7%	3.1%	4.7%
Try to find a site that didn't charge	82.8	76	89	69.8
Don't go online	8.3	7.5	4.1	11.7
Don't get info online	2.2	8.1	1.2	9.1
Not sure	2.6	4.7	2.5	4.7

If all sites charged:

	Men	Women	18-34	35+
Would pay	6.4%	6.2%	7.9%	4.2%
Would look for free info offline	92.1	90.2	90.1	92.6
Not sure	1.4	3.6	2	3.1

The only differences by age group for the first question was the general trend by age for "don't go online" and "don't get news online." If everyone charged for news, the youngest group, 18-24, was a little more likely than others to agree to pay, but the difference was small, 9.4 percent for 18-24 versus 5 percent for all others.

Based on education, there's little difference in whether any group would be willing to pay. The biggest difference is among those with less than a high school degree. They have a lower percentage saying they would seek free information elsewhere because fewer of them go online at all, and more of them who do go online, don't get news there. If everyone charged, generally, the higher the level of education, the more likely people were to be willing to pay, from 5 percent for those with less than a high school degree to 14.7 percent for those with post graduate degrees.

Again, the relationship is really financial. Only 1.1 percent of those making less than \$30,000 would be willing to pay for news online—which goes up steadily to 8.2 percent for those making \$100,000+. If everyone charged, only those making more than \$100,000 moved meaningfully into the category willing to pay: 19.2 percent versus 5.7 percent for all others. Even then, however, the overwhelming percentage said they'd seek free news off line (80.8 percent).

If everyone charged, resistance to paying remained strong across all groups, particularly Native Americans and Hispanics.

None of this means that people aren't interested in new technology.

It's not that people are uninterested in new technology—as we'll see shortly—but they're also not interested in giving up what they now have. And they're not necessarily interested in paying more for it. In fact, you can argue that people are reacting to new technology in the same manner that they always have. First, although media have evolved, no medium has ever disappeared. Second, just because something is technologically possible doesn't make it desirable on a widespread basis. The research suggests that—as with media development historically—people will adopt that which allows them to do what they want to do better, faster, cheaper or more conveniently. Not all new technology will pass that test.

People like the media they have right now.

We asked people whether it would matter if their local newspaper stopped printing and just went online. On a 1 to 5 scale, with 1 meaning that wouldn't matter at all and 5 meaning that it would matter a lot, the general public came out at 3.78.

The same question asked about local TV resulted in a 4.13.

It matters. Not quite as much as news directors expected (4 for newspapers and 4.6 for local TV), but it matters.

Again, there was not a great deal of difference between men and women, younger and older, by age or education. There was some relationship to income. Generally, the higher the income, the less it mattered—for both newspaper and TV.

Anchors make a difference.

Do TV news anchors matter? A vestige of TV news from its infancy, you can argue that anchors stand in the way of the audience fully controlling the information. Would people prefer the news without anchors?

- News is better with anchors ... 58.6%
- News would be better without anchors ... 28.4%
- Doesn't matter ... 9.5%
- Not sure ... 3.4%

Three-quarters of news directors (75.3 percent) expected people to vote for the anchors, while only 15.9 percent expected people to prefer no anchors.

Interestingly, people 18-34 were considerably more interested in having anchors than those 35+. Of those in the 18-34 group, 67.5 percent say news is better with anchors versus 49.6 percent of those 35+.

By individual age group, there was a general trend up in the percentage saying the news would be better without anchors, from 22.4 percent for those ages 18-24 and to 36.7 percent for those 65+, and a general downward trend of those saying the news is better with anchors from 66.4 percent for those 18-24 down to 46.7 percent for those 65+.

Asian Americans were twice as likely as all others to say that the news would be better without anchors (55.6 percent versus 27.6 percent average for all others). At 82.5

percent, Hispanics had the highest incidence of saying the news is better with anchors (all other groups averaged 52.6 percent).

People love their TVs – especially big ones.

We asked people on what device they wanted to watch TV news ... on TV, on a computer or on a handheld device? The vote wasn't close.

1. TV ... 78.2%
2. Computer ... 13.6%
3. Handheld electronic device ... 3.6%
4. Doesn't matter ... 3.1%
5. Not sure ... 1.4%

TV news directors expected people to vote for TV, too, but the news directors underestimated the lure of the big screen:

1. TV ... 56.2%
2. Computer ... 30.3%
3. Handheld electronic device ... 8.4%
4. Doesn't matter ... 1.2%
5. Not sure ... 4%

By age, the biggest difference was for handheld electronic devices, with 5.7 percent of 18-34 year olds preferring the small screen compared to 1.6 percent of 35+. Interestingly, the younger group was only slightly ahead of the older group in selecting the computer (14.1 percent for 18-34 versus 13 percent for 35+) and TV led the choices of both groups, at 78 percent for 18-34 and 78.5 percent for those 35+.

By individual age group, there were two noticeable differences. The oldest group, 65+, was much less interested in watching TV on a computer (4.7 percent versus 16.1 percent for all others) and more interested in watching on a TV (85.3 percent versus 75.6 percent). There was a fairly steady decrease in the percentage of people interested in watching news on a handheld device, from 9.3 percent of those 18-24 to 1.3 percent for those 65+ (although the percentages for people in the 45-54 and 55-64 demographic were even a little lower).

There was virtually no difference based on gender, although men were a little more interested in handheld electronic devices than women (4.7 percent versus 2.6 percent).

There was no consistent relationship to either education or income.

There were some minor variations by ethnicity, but two-thirds or more of every group chose news on TV first.

We also asked people a question we've not seen asked before: If you could have a wireless keyboard or other instrument that would allow you to do things on your big TV set the way you now do them online, would you be more likely to use a computer or more likely to use a TV? Clearly, we really love our big TVs:

1. TV ... 60.5%
2. Computer ... 29.3%
3. Doesn't matter ... 3.1%

4. Don't go online ... 4.1%
5. Not sure ... 3%

News directors thought so, too, just not by the same margins:

1. TV ... 53.4%
2. Computer ... 40.6%
3. Doesn't matter ... 0.8%
4. Don't go online ... 5.2%

Younger people, 18-34, were more likely to say the computer than those in the 35+ group (33.5 percent versus 25.1 percent), but there was virtually no difference in the percentage choosing TV (59.8 percent for those 18-34 versus 61.3 percent for those 35+).

By age, younger people were more interested than older people in watching computer material on a computer (from 37.4 percent for 18-24 year olds to 21.3 percent for 65+), but every age group picked watching the TV first.

Men were slightly higher than women in picking the computer, but the difference was small (31.4 percent for men versus 27.3 percent for women).

Every educational group picked TV first, although the margin was a bit closer for those with post graduate degrees (perhaps realizing the difficulty of extensive reading on a large screen TV). That understanding may have been more relevant based on income. Those preferring to watch what they now see on their computer on a TV set instead dropped steadily as income rose, from 72.8 percent for those making less than \$30,000 to 44.3 percent for those making \$100,000+. Even for that highest income group, the same percentage (44.3 percent) say they would prefer to use a TV screen as they would stick with a computer screen.

There's limited interest in watching news on small screens.

We asked people whether they wanted to watch news on a personal digital assistant (PDA), portable media player (such as an iPod) or mobile phone:

PDA:

- Yes ... 7.5%
- No ... 91.9%
- Not sure ... 0.6%

Portable media player:

- Yes ... 8.3%
- No ... 91.1%
- Not sure ... 0.6%

Mobile phone:

- Yes ... 10.6%
- No ... 88.9%
- Not sure ... 0.5%

This wasn't at all what news directors were expecting, where more than three-quarters of the news directors said the general public would say they were interested for each of the devices. In fact, a higher percentage of news directors said they were already making news available to PDAs, portable media player and mobile phones than people who said they were interested in watching them; 22.7 percent of news directors said they were already making news available for PDAs; 19.5 percent said they were already making news available for digital audio players; and 29.1 percent said they were making news available for mobile phones. More than 40 percent of news directors who were not already making news available for those platforms said they're considering it.

Younger people, 18-34, were noticeably more interested than 35+ in watching news on small portable devices. Here, the margin ran between two- and three-to-one. Again, the highest was mobile phone, with 15.7 percent of those ages 18-34 saying that they were interested versus 5.5 percent of those 35+.

The real break point here is the 18-24 year old group. Of that group, 15.9 percent say they're interested in news on a PDA versus 5.5 percent for all others. Of the 18-24 year olds surveyed, 16.8 percent say they are interested in news on a portable media player versus 6.4 percent for all others. Among 18-24 year olds, 27.1 percent were interested in news on their mobile phone versus 7.3 percent for all others. In other words, on this question, the 25-34 year old group reacted more in line with 35+ than the 18-24 year olds. The 65+ group lagged behind all others in interest in all three areas.

Men are more likely than women to be interested in watching news on a small screen, running about 50 percent higher than women for all three devices. Men surveyed (13.2 percent) say they are interested in watching news on a mobile phone versus 8.1 percent of women. That was by far the highest of the three areas.

Again, the differences are probably more financial than educational. It's the group at the top of the economic ladder (\$100,000+) that's noticeably different from all the rest. Of that group, 16.4 percent are interested in watching news on a PDA versus 8.5 percent of all others; 13.1 percent want to see news on a portable media player versus 9.3 percent of all other; and 16.4 percent want to watch news on a mobile phone, versus 11.7 percent for all others.

Some will argue that so few express interest in small screen news just because they're not familiar with the technology—that as it becomes more widely available and widely used, more and more will adopt it. Possibly. On the other hand, the general public expressed far more interest in other new technologies—with which they're even less familiar.

More than 40 percent of the public would like to assemble their own newscasts.

We asked people if they would like to assemble their own newscast:

- Yes ... 40.5%
- No ... 46%
- Doesn't matter ... 10.4%
- Not sure ... 3.1%

Although virtually no one in this country can assemble their own TV newscast (at least on TV), more than 40 percent of the general public was interested in doing it. News

directors were fairly close on this one, although more thought people would want to assemble their own (49.4 percent) and fewer thought it wouldn't matter (0.8 percent).

Interestingly, there was little difference based on either gender or age, other than those in the 65+ group having a little less interest in assembling their own newscasts than any other group (30.7 percent for those 65+ compared to 42.1 percent for all others). At 35.5 percent, 18-24 year olds were the second lowest group as far as assembling their own newscasts.

Generally, the higher the education, the more interested people were in assembling their own newscasts and the less interested they were in having others do it for them. The break point is with those who graduated from college; that's where the balance goes from a plurality wanting others to do it to a plurality saying they want to do it themselves.

African Americans and Hispanics expressed less interest in assembling their own newscasts, 29 percent versus 47.6 percent average for all others.

More than 60 percent would like to interact with TV news.

Nearly two-thirds (60.6 percent) of the American public would like to interact with TV news—something we defined in the question as pressing a button to get more information on something that you see in a newscast:

- Very interested ... 33.6%
- Somewhat interested ... 27%
- Not too interested ... 15.9%
- Not interested at all ... 21.8%
- Not sure ... 1.8%

More than 90 percent of TV news directors expected the public to be somewhat or very interested in interacting with TV news.

Younger people, 18-34, were much more interested than those 35+ (71.8 percent versus 49.2 percent).

By individual age group, there was a general trend down in the very interested category, with 18-24 year olds very interested at 44.9 percent down to 16.7 percent for those 65+. And there was a corresponding increase in the percentage saying that they were not at all interested, from 12.1 percent for 18-24 year old to 37.3 percent for those 65+. Men were more interested in interactive TV than women (68.7 percent versus 52.5 percent).

The bottom line for news.

The bottom line question was pretty simple: If you could get exactly the same news, whenever you wanted—in a traditional newspaper, on the television, on the radio, online or on a handheld electronic device—which would be your first choice, second choice and third choice?

The first choice was clear:

1. TV news ... 63.3%
2. Newspaper ... 17.8%

3. Computer online ... 11.1%
4. Radio news ... 5.8%
5. Handheld electronic device ... 2%

In fact, TV news won with every demographic group; the only question was the margin. More people made TV their first choice than had responded that TV is their first source for news. All the other media are fairly close. The disparity here—likely caused by TV news as a broad category—suggests that people go to local, network and cable news because no one medium or channel provides everything people are looking for all the time.

TV news directors expected TV to come out on top (66.7 percent), but they expected the computer to be second place (21.5 percent) and handheld electronic devices to be third (10.2 percent). They largely wrote off both newspaper and radio (0.8 percent each).

The 18-34 year old group chose online at twice the rate as those 35+ (14.3 percent versus 7.9 percent). The younger group preferred handheld slightly more than the older group (2.5 percent versus 1.4 percent). The difference came out of all the other choices, especially radio where the younger group was just over half the older group (4.3 percent versus 7.9 percent).

By individual age group, those 65+ made newspaper a stronger second place than other groups (22.7 percent versus 16.4 percent for all the others) and there were general downward trends for both online (14 percent for 18-24 year olds down to 1.3 percent for those 65+) and handheld (6.5 percent for 18-24 year olds down to 1.3 percent for 65+).

There were no meaningful differences based on gender.

TV was the first choice for every educational group, peaking with those with high school degrees or less (66.8 percent versus 56.2 percent for those with some college or more). Newspaper came in second with four of the five groups. Those with post graduate degrees chose online (19 percent) ahead of newspaper (16.7 percent). Radio generally went up slightly with education. Online rose steadily from 4.8 percent for those who didn't finish high school to 19 percent for those with graduate degrees. Interestingly, a preference for handheld dropped with education, from 4.8 percent down to 0.

There were consistent trends across income groups. TV easily won all groups, but it was lower, 52.5 percent, for those making \$100,000+ than for all the other groups, which averaged 64.4 percent. Online was lowest at the lowest income bracket (6.7 percent for those making under \$30,000) and highest at the highest income bracket (19.7 percent for those making \$100,000+). Newspaper, radio and handheld were all relatively consistent.

TV came in first for all ethnic groups, and came in at more than 60 percent for all except Mixed/Other at 52.4 percent. Hispanics were the highest at 79.4 percent. Newspaper came in second for three of the groups: African Americans (barely ahead of online), Asian Americans and Caucasians. Online came in second for Mixed/Other and Hispanics. For Hispanics, newspapers tied for a distant third with radio. Newspaper tied for third with online among Native Americans, who had radio in a much stronger second place than any other group. Handheld hit double digits (11.1 percent) only among Asian Americans; otherwise it was half that or less.

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