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How Americans Engage With Local TV News Today and What Sets Viewers Apart

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CivicScience contact@civicscience.com · Published: July 24, 2026

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In an era of a fragmented media landscape and fragile institutional trust, knowing where Americans place their confidence and how it drives their purchasing decisions has never been more vital. Using always-on, consumer-declared data, CivicScience can pinpoint cross-category spending habits, brand loyalties, and lifestyle priorities, equipping media partners and ad buyers with actionable audience intelligence that goes far beyond standard demographics.

Despite a media market full of turbulence and constant change, one key area in media to watch is local TV news.

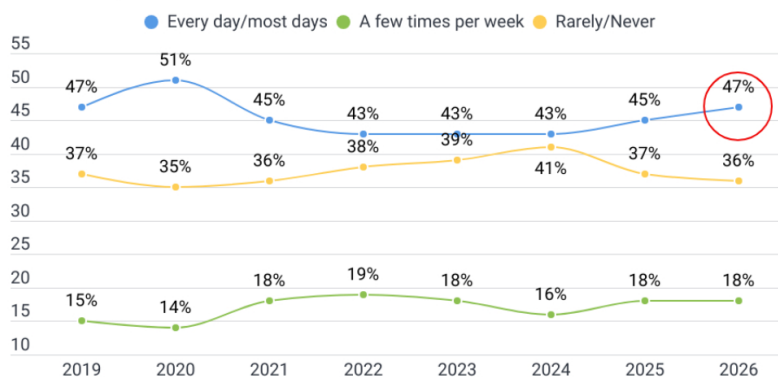
Americans Continue to Rely on Local TV News

Despite the splintered state of news media, CivicScience data show there are some encouraging signals for local TV news, in particular, as we move deeper into Q3 and as the midterms loom around the corner. The latest in real-time survey data reveals:

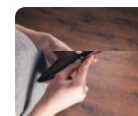
- **Americans Trust Local TV News the Most:** More than a quarter of U.S. adult respondents (27%) cite local TV news as their most trusted source for "unbiased news," leading all other sources and notably higher than the next closest choices of broadcast network news (19%) and cable network news (18%).
- **A Leading Source for Breaking News:** One-third (33%) of respondents who care about breaking news say they turn to local TV news first for breaking news coverage, the highest percentage in a decade of CivicScience tracking and 14 percentage points higher than the next source of social media (19%).

These insights culminate in growing interest in tuning in to local TV news. Currently, 47% of U.S. adults say they watch local TV news frequently ('daily' or 'most days'), marking a slight uptick over last year and the highest percentage since 2020.

How often do you watch local television news where you live? – Yearly Percentages

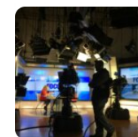


974,946 responses from 01/01/2019 to 07/22/2026
Weighted by U.S. Census 18+
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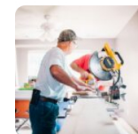
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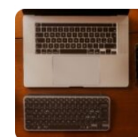
General

How Americans Engage With Local TV News Today and What Sets Viewers Apart



General

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Who Are These Dedicated Local TV News Viewers?

A deep dive into self-reported consumer data pinpoints the key demographics driving interest in local TV news in 2026. Consumers aged 65+ are the clear leaders with 59% watching their local news every or most days, followed distantly by Millennials aged 20-44 (44%). Men surpass women as frequent local news viewers (40% to 43%).

ordinarily by millennials aged 30-44 (44%). Men outpace women as frequent local news viewers (43% to 43%, respectively) while middle-income Americans—those earning \$50K-\$100K—and self-identified Republicans also set the pace over their counterparts.

But demographics are only scratching the surface of consumer insights about today's frequent local news viewers. Further analysis of this engaged audience shows what makes these Americans tick when it comes to their lifestyle, purchasing habits, and priorities:

	Attribute	% of U.S. adults	% of Frequent Local TV News Viewers
Travel	Travels for leisure 3 or more times per year	36%	40%
	Favorable to Marriott Hotels	55%	64%
	Most likely to fly Delta airlines in the next 6 months	16%	21%
Dining	Eats at fast-casual restaurants 'a few times per month' or more	43%	47%
	Favorable to Jersey Mike's Subs	50%	65%
	Favorable to Moe's Southwest Grill	37%	51%
Footwear	Buys new athletic shoes 2 times per year or more	27%	39%
	Typically buys athletic apparel & footwear from big box stores	19%	30%
	Likely to buy Adidas running shoes in the next 30 days	38%	51%
Other	'More' likely to shop at a business partnered with a charitable organization	34%	45%
	'Yes, I make it a priority to purchase environmentally friendly products/services'	42%	54%
	Likes to tell others about new brands or technology	48%	58%

Weighted by U.S. Census 18+
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Key Findings From Real-Time, Consumer-Declared Data

Frequent local news viewers represent a distinct, high-value consumer base with purchasing habits that surpass the average American across several key industries:

Leisure Travel & Premium Hospitality: The frequent local news viewer is committed to leisure travel and is more likely than Gen Pop to travel for leisure 3+ times per year. Viewers also exhibit strong brand loyalty to premium hospitality options like Marriott.

Emphasis on Fast-Casual: While they're narrowly more likely to be frequent (a few times per month or more) fast-casual restaurant diners overall, these consumers have a much higher affinity for specific fast-casual dining brands.

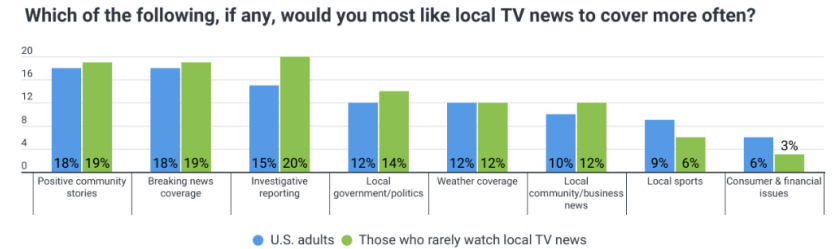
Shoe Shopping: These individuals are more likely than Gen Pop to buy new athletic shoes 2+ times per year (39% vs. 27%) and to shop for footwear at big box stores (30% vs. 19%). They are also particularly more interested than Gen Pop in buying Adidas shoes in the near-term.

What They Care About: These viewers act as brand advocates who actively share new recommendations with their networks, and their buying decisions are deeply guided by corporate social responsibility, prioritizing businesses aligned with charitable causes and environmental sustainability.

One additional nugget of note: Recent CivicScience data suggest a strong correlation between [near-term electronics buyers](#) and frequent viewership of local TV news.

What Viewers Want From Local News Coverage

CivicScience has already examined what is likely to [keep consumers engaged](#) on publisher sites, but what about local TV news media content? When asked what they'd like to see their local news cover more often, Americans point to a wide variety of topics, led by uplifting community stories and more breaking news stories. Consumer and financial issues are far less popular. A potential way to reach Americans who 'rarely' watch their local TV news is by emphasizing investigative reporting, with one in five reporting they'd like to see their local station produce more of this content, five points higher than the Gen Pop.



500+ responses from 07/09/2026 to 07/16/2026
Rebased excluding those not interested in watching Local news at all
Weighted by U.S. Census 18+
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How much trust do you have in the news media?

A great deal

A fair amount

Not much

CIVIC SCIENCE

While news media and content creators compete for a shrinking share of consumer attention and spend, local TV news continues to hold a distinct advantage: the trust of a loyal, high-value audience. But trust alone isn't enough. Decision-makers and ad buyers need real-time audience intelligence to understand who these viewers are and how to reach them as their priorities and habits evolve.

The publishers winning today are the ones adapting to the latest consumer attitudes.

CivicScience gives media and publisher partners the real-time consumer intelligence to do exactly that.

Explore Publisher + Media Partnerships

START ANSWERING QUESTIONS



How often do you watch local TV news?

- ☐ Daily
- ☐ Most days
- ☐ A few times a month
- ☐ Rarely or never
- ☐ Other / No opinion

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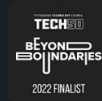
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