

**Before the  
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In the Matter of:  
  
Broadcast Localism

MB Docket No. 04-233

**COMMENTS OF**

**THE RADIO-TELEVISION NEWS DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION**

The Radio-Television News Directors Association (“RTNDA”) hereby submits its comments in response to the Commission’s Notice of Inquiry in the matter of *Broadcast Localism* (the “NOI” or “Notice”).<sup>1</sup> RTNDA is the world’s largest professional organization devoted exclusively to electronic journalism. RTNDA’s membership includes news executives in broadcasting, cable and electronic media in more than thirty countries.

The Commission has instituted this proceeding to examine “how broadcasters are serving the interests and needs of their communities” and “whether market forces will provide enough incentive for a broadcast station to satisfy a particular policy goal, or whether regulation is needed.”<sup>2</sup> Implicit in the inquiry is the suggestion that, in the absence of regulatory inducements, broadcasters will underprovide informative or controversial material, or both. Experience has proven otherwise. RTNDA submits that the record will amply demonstrate that local broadcasters are overwhelmingly responsible and responsive to their communities. Indeed, in the absence of government mandates, local broadcasters voluntarily provide a wealth of news,

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<sup>1</sup> *In the Matter of Broadcast Localism*, Notice of Inquiry, MB Docket No. 04-233, 19 FCC Rcd 12425 (2004) (“*Localism NOI*”).

<sup>2</sup> *Localism NOI*, 19 FCC Rcd 12425, ¶¶ 9-10.

information, public affairs and other programming reflective of the desires of their listeners and viewers. Conversely, history has shown that federal regulation of content can sharply constrain the quality and quantity of public debate.

Our First Amendment tradition requires that broadcasters be free to present whatever programming they believe will best suit the needs of their local audience. Particularly with respect to news programming and “candidate-centered discourse,” RTNDA submits that the Commission cannot constitutionally interfere with broadcasters’ editorial discretion by compelling them to offer programming not of their own choosing.

**I. HISTORY DEMONSTRATES THAT MARKETPLACE FORCES ENSURE BROADCASTERS’ COMMITMENT TO LOCALISM, AND THEY WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO**

Two decades ago, the FCC recognized that market forces provide the best, most efficient way to ensure that broadcasters identify and meet the needs of their communities. Broadcast stations have provided outstanding local news and public interest programming and services for decades and, with increasing competition in the information marketplace, stations will have additional incentive to provide such programming and services in the digital era. Such programming has included that which enhances political discourse, such as coverage of campaigns, debates, press conferences and other candidate forums.

The FCC’s deregulation of radio in 1981 represented a sea change. The Commission advocated a reliance on marketplace forces to achieve public interest goals, rejecting the viability of regulation. As the FCC stated:

We believe that, given conditions in the radio industry, it is time to . . . permit the discipline of the marketplace to play a more prominent role. Simply stated, the large number of stations in

operation and listenership demand for certain types of programming . . . provide an excellent environment in which to move away from the content/conduct type of regulation that may have been necessary for other times, but that is no longer necessary in the context of radio broadcasting to assure operation in the public interest.<sup>3</sup>

The FCC further expressed the conviction that “the enormous savings in time and money could be used for more constructive purposes in programming and news.”<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, with respect to television, the Commission said:

[E]xisting marketplace forces, not our guidelines, are the primary determinants of the levels of informational, local and overall non-entertainment programming provided on commercial television. It appears, moreover, that these forces have consistently elicited a level of such programming well above the amounts arbitrarily set by our processing criteria.<sup>5</sup>

Since the Commission abandoned its former content regulation regime, including the Fairness Doctrine, local news and public affairs programming have “proliferated.”<sup>6</sup> In 1960 and in 1980, local news programming averaged about one or two hours per station, per day. By 2003, local news programming had *doubled*—averaging two to four hours per station per day.<sup>7</sup> Many broadcasters launched 24-hour local news channels to supplement over-the-air efforts.

Radio and television broadcasters, regardless of the size of their parent company, know that localism is what makes them successful. Local news and public affairs programming are what give broadcasters brand recognition. Typically, local newscasts yield a high percentage of

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<sup>3</sup> *Deregulation of Radio: Report and Order*, 84 F.C.C. 2d 968, 1014 (1981).

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> *In the Matter of The Revision of Programming and Commercialization Policies, Ascertainment Requirements, and Program Log Requirements for Commercial Television Stations*, 98 FCC 2d 1076, ¶ 19 (1984) (“*TV Deregulation Order*”).

<sup>6</sup> *Ownership R&O*, 18 FCC Rcd at 13665.

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*, at 13664.

station's total revenues. Finally, major networks encourage their affiliates to produce local news, because it increases ratings for the network news. In this era where broadcasters face unprecedented competition from other broadcasters, cable outlets, satellite television and radio offerings, and the Internet, market forces will continue to "provide adequate incentives for licensees to remain familiar with their communities."<sup>8</sup>

## **II. BROADCASTERS ARE PROVIDING A WEALTH OF LOCAL NEWS AND INFORMATION PROGRAMMING**

The Commission has stated that it measures "localism in broadcasting markets" through two factors: 1) "local news quantity and quality" and 2) "the selection of programming responsive to local needs and interests."<sup>9</sup> An examination of the state of local news in our country evidences that "localism in broadcasting markets" is thriving.

The Spavins study commissioned in connection with the FCC's review of its media ownership rules evidences that television broadcasters need no further "encouragement" in the form of government regulation to offer local news and public affairs programming.<sup>10</sup> The survey of 130 stations in thirty-two television markets concluded that, on average, stations were devoting an average of more than twenty hours weekly to local news and public affairs programming. Moreover, according to the Economists Incorporated study cited with approval by the Commission in the *Biennial Ownership* proceeding:

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<sup>8</sup> *TV Deregulation Order*, 98 FCC 2d at ¶ 49.

<sup>9</sup> *In the Matter of 2002 Biennial Regulatory Review – Review of the Commission's Broadcast Ownership Rules and Other Rules Adopted Pursuant to Section 202 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996; Cross-Ownership of Broadcast Stations and Newspapers; Rules and Policies Concerning Multiple Ownership of Radio Broadcast Stations in Local Markets; Definition of Radio Markets; Definition of Radio Markets for Areas Not Located in an Arbitron Survey Area*, 18 FCC Rcd 13620, 13644 (2003) ("Ownership R&O").

<sup>10</sup> Media Ownership Working Group Study No. 7, *The Measurement of Local Television News and Public Affairs Programs*, by Thomas C. Spavins, Loretta Denison, Jane Frenette, and Scott Roberts (Sept. 2002).

- Each of the top four ranked stations in a market generally have a local newscast;
- There are many stations not ranked among the top four in market audience that carry local news programming. Such stations can be found in 38 percent of all DMAs. A total of 164 stations not ranked among the top four in their markets carry local news programming;
- Thirty percent of all DMAs have one or ore broadcast stations not in the top four that carries original local news;
- The average household in the United States lives in a DMA with 6.1 sources of local broadcast television news;

In the top thirty markets, an average of seven stations per market offer local news. Sixty of the 70 television markets from 31-100 have at least four stations offering local news; 32 of those markets have at least five—and in some cases as many as seven—broadcast stations offering local news.<sup>11</sup>

In January 2003, the Radio and Television News Directors Foundation's ("RTNDF")<sup>12</sup> Journalism Ethics Project and Bob Papper of Ball State University carried out a survey of news directors and the public to look at the current state of local television news. A copy of the resulting study is attached as Exhibit A. The report is drawn from the results of two surveys: one of 1003 members of the U.S. general public, and one of 262 local television news directors.

As the report indicates, most people get their news from local television, and television is the most trusted news medium. The majority of the public says that local television does a good or excellent job of providing information they need about their community and their lives. Nine in ten believe that an important function of local television news is to inform people about what is happening in their local communities. Over 70% believe that local television news should and

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<sup>11</sup> Comments of Fox, NBC/Telemundo, and Viacom, MM Docket No. 02-277, Economists Incorporated Economic Study A at 8-11 (January 2, 2003).

<sup>12</sup> RTNDF is RTNDA's educational training arm. RTNDF provides training programs, seminars, scholarship support and research in areas of critical concern to electronic news professionals and their audience

does serve as a watchdog looking over local government. Notably, more than 7 in 10 members of the public say that political news coverage on broadcast television is good or excellent.

That result is consistent with a recent nationwide poll commissioned by the National Association of Broadcasters and conducted October 22-25, 2004 by Wirthlin Worldwide.

Among the poll's key findings:

- Forty-two percent of adults believe local broadcasters are providing “too much time” covering the elections, while 47 percent say local stations are providing “about the right amount” of coverage.”
- Local broadcast coverage of elections, whether in the form of news reports or candidate debates, was viewed by 48 percent of Americans as the “most helpful” factor in selecting a candidate.
- By an overwhelming margin—69 percent to 28 percent—poll respondents oppose government-mandated free airtime for political candidates.<sup>13</sup>

Indeed, attention to this year's presidential election is vast, likely because of extensive local media coverage. Ninety percent of registered voters are following the race, and 59 percent are following it “very closely.”

Moreover, stations are continuing to pour more resources into their newsrooms. The results of a supplemental survey conducted by RTNDF/Ball State in the fourth quarter of 2003 is attached as Exhibit B. The survey demonstrates that television newsroom employment levels have substantially increased over the past year. Full-time local television news employment rose 4%, and employment rose 5.5% overall. What is more, the number of hours per day devoted to news has increased to its all time high—averaging 3.7 hours per weekday for all television stations and 3.9 hours for ABC, CBS, NBC and Fox affiliates. The number of local television stations producing their own newscasts grew from 751 in 2003 to 759 by September 2004.

Another 68 stations receive and broadcast local news from one of these 759. Annual increases

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<sup>13</sup> Results of the poll are available at <http://www.nab.org/newsroom/pressrel/Releases/102904electioncoveragepoll.asp>.

in the majority of TV news budgets from 2003 to 2004 also demonstrate broadcasters' commitment to producing and airing local news for their communities.

In the past year, more television stations reported making a profit on news than at any time since 2000. Overall, local television news brings in an average 46.1% of all station revenue. Forty-three percent of television news staffs provide news content to local radio stations. Eleven percent provide news content to cable, and over eighteen percent provide news programming to other broadcast stations. Over sixty-five percent of television stations upload local news information to a web site.

In sum, because they are accountable to their listeners and viewers, local broadcasters have ample incentives to be responsive to the unique interests and needs of individual communities. Because the system is working, and given the significant constitutional constraints associated with attempting to put more "teeth" in the public interest standard, the Commission should not act to adopt new policies, practices or rules designed to promote localism in broadcast television or radio.

### **III. FUNDAMENTAL FIRST AMENDMENT PRINCIPLES CONSTRAIN THE COMMISSION'S ABILITY TO IMPOSE CONTENT-BASED REGULATIONS**

Freedom of the press has been described as "one of the greatest bulwarks of liberty."<sup>14</sup> Because of its place in the functioning of our democracy, the First Amendment guarantees the right to communicate and receive information free from governmental interference. In those limited instances when government regulation can be justified, the burden of proof lies on the government to provide evidence to show that any speech restraints are both necessary and well tailored to its purpose. All government agencies have a responsibility to insure that their actions comply with the First Amendment.

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<sup>14</sup> *McConnell v. FCC*, 540 U.S. 93, 362 (2003) (quoting the declaration of Rhode Island upon the ratification of the Constitution. 1 J. Elliot, *Debates of the Federal Constitution* 335 (1876).

Because content regulation carries the danger of a chilling effect on speech, it has always walked a constitutional fine line. As the United States Supreme Court has stated, “balancing the various First Amendment interests involved in the broadcast media and determining what best serves the public’s right to be informed is a task of great delicacy and difficulty.” *Columbia Broadcasting Systems, Inc. v. Democratic National Committee*, 412 U.S. 94, 117 (1973). If the First Amendment is to retain its force as a bulwark against government control of the press, its underpinning—ensuring free debate—cannot be used to justify government regulation of broadcast content.

On the basis of established precedent, several principles governing the FCC’s program role can be stated categorically. The Commission does not attempt to direct licensees in the selection or presentation of specific material. *Stockholders of CBS, Inc.* 11 FCC Rcd 3733, 3746 (1995). The choice of what local news is to be covered by a station is a matter committed to the licensee’s good faith discretion. *American Broadcasting Companies, Inc.* 83 FCC 2d 302, 305 (1980). A licensee is under no obligation to cover each and every newsworthy event which occurs within a station’s service area. *KSD-TV, Inc.*, 61 FCC 2d 504, 510 (1976). The FCC will not question a licensee’s judgment merely because some party expresses the opinion that a particular event should have been covered or reported differently. To do so would contravene the First Amendment. *National Citizen’s Committee for Broadcasting*, 32 FCC 2d 824 (1971); see also *The Selling of the Pentagon*, 30 FCC 2d 150 (1971); *WSMT, Inc.* 27 FCC 2d 993 (1971); *Columbia Broadcasting System (Hunger in America)*, 20 FCC 2d 143 (1969); *Network Coverage of the Democratic National Convention*, 16 FCC 2d 650 (1969).

Inherent in each of these precepts is the notion that determination of how much news to provide or what to include in any particular newscast constitutes the very core journalistic

function of a broadcaster, and is a matter far removed from valid FCC supervision. Otherwise, the Commission “would assume a journalistic role totally inappropriate under the First Amendment, for which it lacks any expertise or authority.” *Complaint of American Legal Foundation against CBS, Inc.*, (FCC 85-556, MMB, released October 18, 1985). The Commission properly has disclaimed the role of news evaluator, censor or editor. Once a journalist has to stop and consider what a government agency will think of something he or she wants to put on the air, an invaluable element of freedom has been lost.

Because campaign coverage and “political discourse” are largely the province of broadcast newsrooms, RTNDA’s members are particularly concerned troubled by the suggestions implicit in the *NOI* that it might be appropriate for the Commission to take steps to “enhance” such coverage. No precedent supports the use of government’s coercive power to improve the conduct and discourse of politics. The First Amendment has always been hostile to such efforts. RTNDA firmly believes that any rule that would dictate to broadcast licensees how to provide local or national political coverage, whether through quotas, mandatory air time, or raised eyebrow regulation represents an affront to journalistic freedom.

Broadcast journalists face innumerable decisions for every program in choosing which events, including political events, warrant attention in news programs. For the Commission to mandate how broadcasters cover political campaigns or provide political candidates with specific amounts of air time would be for the Commission “to enter ‘an impenetrable thicket’ of reviewing editing processes and adjudging editorial judgment . . . a function inconsistent with the First Amendment and with the national commitment to the principle that debate on public issues should be ‘uninhibited, robust, [and] wide open.’” *In re Application of WGPR, Inc. and CBS, Inc.* 10 FCC Rcd 8140, 8147 (1995) (quoting *New York Times Co. v. Sullivan*, 376 U.S. 254, 270

(1964)).

RTNDA recognizes all too well that the current constitutional regime entails a different set of First Amendment constraints on the regulation of the broadcast media from those that obtain for the rest of the population, including the print media. As the Supreme Court has repeatedly observed, such scrutiny allows restrictions on broadcaster speech to be upheld “only when . . . narrowly tailored to further a substantial government interest.” *FCC v. League of Women Voters of California*, 468 U.S. 364, 380 (1984).

RTNDA submits, however, that any action by the Commission that would, for example, require broadcasters to air a minimum type or amount of “news” programming, would govern how broadcasters cover local and national political candidates, or would provide for the provision of free air time to candidates, could not withstand even this lower level of constitutional scrutiny. Indeed, in its most recent and salient pronouncement on broadcast regulation, the Court stated “the FCC’s oversight responsibilities do not grant it the power to ordain any particular type of programming that must be offered by broadcast stations.” *Turner Broadcasting System, Inc. v. FCC*, 114 S. Ct. 2445, 2463 (1994).

As the Commission itself has recognized, “policies cautioning broadcasters to engage or not to engage in certain programming practices or establishing rigid guidelines in relation to such programming raise fundamental questions concerning the constitutional rights of broadcast licenses, and therefore cannot be retained in the absence of a clear and compelling showing that the public interest demands their retention. *Elimination of Unnecessary Regulations*, 54 Rad. Reg. 2d (P&F) 1043 (1983).

As RTNDA’s and other studies indicate, and as broadcasters participating in this proceeding will undoubtedly overwhelmingly prove, broadcasters are more than amply meeting

their public interest obligation of providing programming that is responsive to their communities. Therefore, the Commission can identify no substantial government's interest that would be furthered by imposing additional content regulation on broadcasters.

Any attempt to inject the federal government and its regulatory system into the editorial process in this manner is not narrowly tailored, but a mischievous and misguided undertaking. There should not be governmental policies to govern how any form of local news is communicated through the electronic media. Such an approach is particularly offensive to the First Amendment's guarantee of a free press, because in no way does the First Amendment countenance government deciding whether broadcasters are airing sufficient quantities of "news," and whether such news is being presented "fairly." Even when there exists a government interest and the government has chosen the most narrowly tailored means to further that interest, government is forbidden from censoring content or otherwise dictating categories of programming broadcasters must or must not show. The FCC should not expand the law to suit the whim or individual regulators. Our freedom as a nation is too important for that.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

Increased media availability and communications connectivity have given Americans the ability to learn and debate more about our democracy than ever before. Civil discourse and a healthy democracy are the product of a free and open society unconstrained by government restrictions on media structures or content. At root, media quality is a subjective matter. Government should have no say over, or even attempt to influence the quality and quantity of news programming offered by broadcasters to Americans.

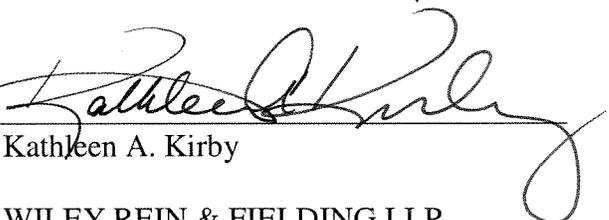
The time has come not to increase content-based obligations on broadcasters, but

to deregulate broadcasting and to create greater First Amendment freedom for broadcasters on a par with that of their print and new media colleagues. To do otherwise is to jeopardize the future of free, over-the-air broadcasting. History demonstrates that broadcasters have been and remain committed to presenting community-responsive programming and providing extensive, high-quality local news coverage. Indeed, the marketplace provides substantial incentives for broadcasters to produce local news and other informational and public service programming. Given these existing incentives, and the empirical evidence demonstrating that broadcasters are furthering the FCC's interest in preserving localism without government intervention, the Commission can advance no legitimate interest sufficient to justify any form of content regulation.

In sum, the Commission should eschew any notion of "concrete" or "quantifiable" news programming commitments enforceable through fines or the non-renewal of broadcast licenses. The concept of converting the public interest into specific programming commitments is nothing more than a springboard into intrusive government content regulation. It is dangerous to let unelected government officials dictate or make their own value judgments about what our nation's viewers and listeners will see and hear, and anathema to our First Amendment.

Respectfully submitted,

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November 1, 2004

EXHIBIT A

RADIO AND TELEVISION NEWS DIRECTORS FOUNDATION

# 2003 Local Television News Study of News Directors and the American Public



JOURNALISM ETHICS PROJECT

SUPPORTED BY FORD FOUNDATION

# **Local Television News Study Of News Directors and the General Public**

**Journalism Ethics Project**

Supported by  
Ford Foundation

Conducted and written by  
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## Foreword

This study by the Radio and Television News Directors Foundation (RTNDF) looks at the current state of local television news through the eyes of both the general public and local television news directors.

It builds on a December 1998 RTNDF study and seeks to answer some fundamental questions: What do people think about the news they get from local television? What are areas of strengths and weaknesses? What has changed or stayed the same in the past five years? In what areas do news directors and members of the general public share views and where do they differ?

This study also seeks to delve deeper into the relationship between television stations and their audience. RTNDF's Journalism Ethics Project encourages television stations to engage in discussions with their audience. Local news organizations and their communities depend on each other to survive and prosper. To support that mutual vitality, news organizations will benefit from ongoing, non-marketing dialogue with their communities and can reflect what they've heard and learned in their coverage.

The 2003 Local Television News Study represents one of the many initiatives of RTNDF's Journalism Ethics Project. The project reinforces core journalism values and ethical practices among news professionals.

Special thanks to the Ford Foundation for its generous support of the Journalism Ethics Project and to Jon Funabiki, deputy director, Media, Arts and Culture Unit, Knowledge, Creativity and Freedom Program.

Finally, we want to express our appreciation to Professor Bob Papper and his staff at Ball State University for conducting the survey and drafting this report. We also would like to acknowledge Jamshid Mousavinezhad for his editorial and managerial work on this publication as well as Jamie Mahony for his contributions. You can send us feedback-and view a Web version of this publication-at [www.rtndf.org/ethics/fepcg.shtml](http://www.rtndf.org/ethics/fepcg.shtml).

RTNDF provides training programs, seminars, scholarship support and research in areas of critical concern to electronic news professionals and their audience. As the educational arm of the Radio-Television News Directors Association, the Foundation offers professional development opportunities for working and aspiring journalists and journalism educators. Our Journalism Ethics Project is one of several RTNDF programs.

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## About the Author

Bob Papper is professor of telecommunications at Ball State University. He also serves as news director for Indiana Public Radio and oversees annual industry research for the Radio-Television News Directors Association.

Papper graduated from Columbia College and the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism in New York City. He has worked as a producer and writer at WCCO-TV in Minneapolis and WRC-TV in Washington, DC, and as managing editor and assistant news director at WSYX-TV in Columbus, Ohio. He also worked with KPIX-TV in San Francisco.

Papper previously owned and managed two radio stations and a small television production company, and he is a past president of the Maine Association of Broadcasters. He is a longtime member of the national education committee of RTNDA.

He regularly conducts writing workshops for radio and television stations around the country under the auspices of RTNDA, the Associated Press and the Voice of America. He is a past winner of the DuPont-Columbia Award for Outstanding Contributions to Television.

## About this Report

This report starts with key findings of the 2003 survey of news directors and the general public, pulling out some of specific numbers that support those findings and making comparisons (where relevant) to the 1998 survey.

The next section uses 2003 data to compare findings for the general public and news directors. The middle two sections compare 2003 data to 1998 data, taking an in-depth look first at the findings for the general public and then for news directors.

The methodology section has details on how the 2003 survey was conducted. Finally, the appendix contains the exact wording of the general public and news directors questionnaires, with tabulated results next to each answer.

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## Executive Summary

The Radio and Television News Directors Foundation's Journalism Ethics Project, and Bob Papper of Ball State University, carried out this study to look at the current state of local television news. This report is drawn from the results of two surveys conducted in January 2003: one of 1003 members of the U.S. general public, and one of 262 local television news directors. In addition, 2003 results are compared to two similar surveys conducted in 1998.

### **1) Most people get their news from television, and they watch it more than they did in 1998. Television is the most trusted news medium.**

More than 8 in 10 people (81.4 percent) say they watch local television newscasts at least several times a week. TV also scores highest as the most trusted medium. Network TV news ranks first (30.8 percent), followed by local TV (24.3 percent). Newspapers dropped from first place in 1998 to third in 2003 (21.3 percent in 2003).

The general public identifies local TV as its major source of news (49.9 percent) by a far greater margin than in 1998—by a 2:1 margin over network news (23.2 percent) and nearly 4:1 over local newspapers (13.0 percent).

### **2) Most people say the media, and local television in particular, are doing a good or excellent job overall.**

More than 6 in 10 people (60.9 percent) say the media are doing a good or excellent job covering the news. That's not as high as news directors rate the news (79.7 percent), but it's much higher than the news directors expected the general public to rate it (22.6 percent expected a rating of good or excellent).

The general public also thinks the news media are doing a better job today than in 1998 (an increase of

7.9 percentage points). News directors also think the media are doing a better job today than in 1998—also up 7.9 percentage points.

The general public rates the quality of local television news as essentially the same in 2003 as it did in 1998 (67.2 percent good or excellent in 2003 vs. 66.0 percent in 1998).

### **3) Both the news directors and the public agree that local TV does not do a good job of explaining how stations decide what to put on the news.**

Both the public (56.4 percent fair or poor) and news directors (54.8 percent fair or poor) agree that television stations don't do a very good job of explaining how they decide what to put on the news. However, while over half the public (52.1 percent) say they want to know more about the process, over a quarter (26.0 percent) of news directors think the public isn't interested.

In fact, in the minds of the general public, explaining the journalistic process was one of the few areas in which local television news made virtually no progress at all from 1998.

### **4) News directors overwhelmingly think they do a good job of responding to the public. The public isn't as enthusiastic.**

While 96.6 percent of news directors felt their station was responsive to viewer comments, ideas or problems, over three-quarters (75.8 percent) of the general public who tried to contact a station disagreed.

News directors overwhelmingly (95.4 percent) think they do a good job listening to the public. The public, however, isn't nearly so enthusiastic: Just 58.8 percent say that stations do a good job of listening to the public's concern.

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Keep in mind that fewer than 1 in 5 (19.0 percent) of the public say that they have contacted or tried to contact a station about a story or problem.

**5) The public feels local television news falls short in some key areas. However, the public's perception is less negative than in 1998 for every area, with the largest gain in reporter's sensitivity to victims' pain.**

With regards to common criticisms of television news, a majority of respondents still feel that reporters don't ask the questions people really want answered, that reporters aren't sensitive enough to victims' pain, and that the news doesn't cover enough positive stories. Yet the general public's perception of local television news was less negative for every question than in 1998.

News directors clearly felt they had made significant strides in addressing the list of common criticisms of television news. As with the general public, news directors felt the biggest improvement came in sensitivity to the pain of victims (from 69.0 percent who said it was a problem in 1998, down to 46.3 percent in 2003).

**6) The public and news directors generally agree on the function of television news, with the public now feeling more strongly that stations should act as a watchdog.**

Most answers on the role or function of local television news were similar in 1998 and 2003—with one exception. The general public felt much more strongly in 2003 that local television news should act as a watchdog over local government; the proportion of those who strongly agree with that role rose from 29.0 percent in 1998 to 42.4 percent in 2003. News directors are still far more likely than the public to say that the media should be a watchdog over local government, with 76.6 percent strongly agreeing.

Answers to several other questions about the role or function of local television news were virtually identical from 1998 to 2003; informing people about the community and reporting the news even if it's shocking and painful, were cited as important roles. Most other function questions differed primarily in degree, ranging between "strongly agree" and "mildly agree."

**7) A significant minority of the public disagrees with the idea that stations should be able to broadcast freely without government approval. News directors say government officials have made some coverage a little more difficult since the events of September 11.**

More than 6 in 10 news directors (61.7 percent) think they're communicating the importance of the First Amendment's guarantee of freedom of speech. However, a quarter (24.2 percent) of the general public disagrees that stations should be allowed to broadcast stories freely without government approval. Only a slim majority (53.4 percent) strongly agree that stations should be able to do so.

A majority of local news directors said official sources have made it harder or a little harder to cover some stories since Sept. 11, with 47.5 percent of news directors characterizing it as "a little harder," and 10.0 percent characterizing it as "a lot harder."

**8) News directors think they do a better job covering communities than the public does. The public is almost evenly split on whether the media are driven by making a profit or by serving the public interest.**

A slight majority (54.4 percent) of members of the public say local TV does a good or excellent job of providing information they need about their community and their lives. With 84.2 percent of news directors saying they do a good or excellent job, this finding is one of the top disconnects in the study.

Two-thirds of the public respondents (66.3 percent) agree that the news media have done a better job lately of reporting news in the community. Interestingly, the general public thinks reporters and anchors are more knowledgeable about the areas and subjects they report on than do news directors. Forty-five percent of the public characterize reporters as “very knowledgeable,” while 41 percent of news directors cite that answer.

Only a slim plurality of the public respondents think local television news programs are mainly interested in serving the “public interest” rather than making a profit (44.7 percent vs. 42.8 percent). More people did select public interest than in 1998.

Both the public and news directors have at least some ambivalence about whether local television news should suggest solutions to local problems (32.4 percent of the general public and 25.3 percent of news directors disagree that local TV should suggest solutions).

**9) Although the public respondents think stations really care about getting the story right and respect their intelligence, they also think local TV chases sensational stories to attract an audience. Many news directors agree.**

Most members of the public (79.2 percent) think local stations really care about the news and getting stories right; and almost two-thirds (63.7 percent) think that television news reports respect their intelligence.

However, both groups agree (77.6 percent of the public and 53.2 percent of news directors) that stations chase sensational or promotable stories even if the news value is minimal. These numbers are up from 56.0 percent of the public in 1998, when they were asked a similar question.

Furthermore, almost 6 in 10 people (58.5 percent) think stations avoid stories that stations see as complex, boring or nonvisual, such as mental health and local government. More than 4 in 10 news directors (41.4 percent) agree.

In another potentially troublesome finding, more than half (55.9 percent) of the general public say they have become more skeptical about the accuracy of anything they hear in the news.

**10) The public continues to have concerns with the use of confidential sources, hidden cameras, and other controversial journalistic practices.**

The survey found some striking differences in philosophy between the general public and news directors. The public has concerns about confidential sources (only 20.2 percent say they believe most of what they hear from a confidential source.) Members of the public are dramatically less comfortable with hidden cameras than are news directors (78.5 percent of news directors think they should be able to use hidden cameras vs. 27.1 percent of the general public).

The general public is also much more likely than news directors to think local TV goes too far in disclosing the private lives of local public officials (38.1 percent vs. 7.7 percent), but a plurality (42.6 percent) of the public now says that the amount of disclosure of details of local public figures’ private lives is just about right.

The survey found little change in the news directors’ views on journalistic practices, including issues such as using hidden cameras and waiting until people are charged before reporting their names (24.5 percent say the media should be able to use the names of uncharged suspects). In both cases, news directors in 2003 are more likely to support the use of hidden cameras and early release of names than they were in 1998.

**11) Both the public and news directors see a significant amount of improper influence from news organizations' desire to make a profit, to get the story on the air first and to increase television ratings. News directors cite the impact of budget constraints on the quality of their newscasts as well.**

The general public thinks almost everybody improperly influences local television news. But in every case, fewer people felt that way in 2003 than in 1998.

Unlike the general public, television news directors do not feel they're improperly influenced by external institutions and pressures—except the three that relate to news itself:

-Although they differ in degree, both groups think the desire of the station to make a profit exerts undue influence on news coverage (82.0 percent of the public think it's a problem "often" or "sometimes" vs. 54.4 percent of news directors).

-A strong majority of both groups also agree that the desire to report the story first is "often" or "sometimes" a problem (84.0 percent of the public and 80.0 percent of news directors).

-Even more agree that the desire to increase ratings is "often" or "sometimes" a problem (84.6 percent of the public and 83.5 percent of news directors).

Additionally, more than 4 in 10 news directors (40.2 percent) called budget constraints "severe" or "serious," with 39.5 percent saying they had a "moderate" impact on the quality of their newscasts.

**12) What the public says it wants in a newscast and what news directors think the public wants differ significantly in several ways.**

News directors and the general public have similar answers about how they decide which newscast to watch, but the two groups differ significantly in describing what the general public wants in a newscast. A plurality (43.0 percent) of the public want their news to provide the "most thorough coverage"; nearly a third (31.1 percent) say they most want "live and breaking news," and 10.8 percent say they want the news they watch to be "first on the scene" (arguably a variant of live and breaking news).

A majority (51.7 percent) of news directors described their station as providing most thorough coverage; 23.8 percent said their station was most responsive to viewers, and only 10.7 percent of news directors said live and breaking news was a priority for their station. At just 6.8 percent, "most responsive" ranks lower for the public.

When asked to characterize the news that they would prefer to watch, a majority of both groups chose stations that do a "complete and thorough job" (53.0 percent for the public and 70.9 percent for news directors). However, 29.0 percent of the public want their news stations to "investigate and not be afraid to take on powerful people and businesses"; only 15.7 percent of news directors picked that option. Keep in mind respondents could only choose one answer for this question.

**13) And when it comes to changing channels—the public doesn't click away as much as news directors might fear.**

News directors clearly envision an audience clicking away during a newscast (77.8 percent think two or more times in a newscast). Nearly half (45.5 percent) of the general public say they don't change the channel at all.

## Chapter I.

# Comparing the General Public and News Directors: 2003

*This report summarizes the results of the two surveys overseen by Bob Papper at Ball State University, in Muncie, Ind. Advantage Research conducted a total of 1003 telephone interviews with the U.S. general public. Advantage Research, and Bob Papper, completed 262 interviews with a random selection of news directors whose stations broadcast local television news programs. Interviews with the general public were completed between January 16, 2003, and February 15, 2003; interviews with news directors were done from January 16, 2003, to February 21, 2003. Similar questions were asked of both populations in order to assess the differences between those supplying the news and those viewing it. A full description of the methodology is at the end of this report.*

*For the general public, differences by age and race are noted. For news directors, we analyzed responses based on market size and years of total experience in television news. News directors in the 25 largest markets tended to respond to a number of questions differently from news directors in other markets. Years of experience made no difference in responses, except for news directors with the least experience. Given that the margin of error can grow as one looks at subsets of the overall data, readers are encouraged to pay particular attention to larger differences (generally those greater than 6%) between groups and the overall trends in the data.*

*You can compare the 2003 responses to the 1998 responses of the general public and news directors in chapters 2 and 3, respectively, and Appendices A and B.*

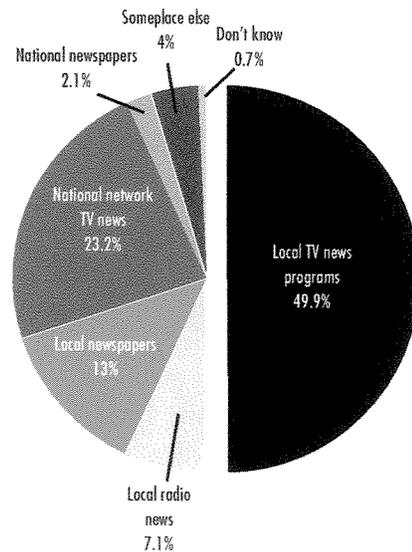
### Media Use

**Half the general public (49.9 percent) say they get most of their news from local TV.** That's better than 2 to 1 over the second most popular choice, network TV, and almost 4 times the number who say they get most of their news from local newspapers.

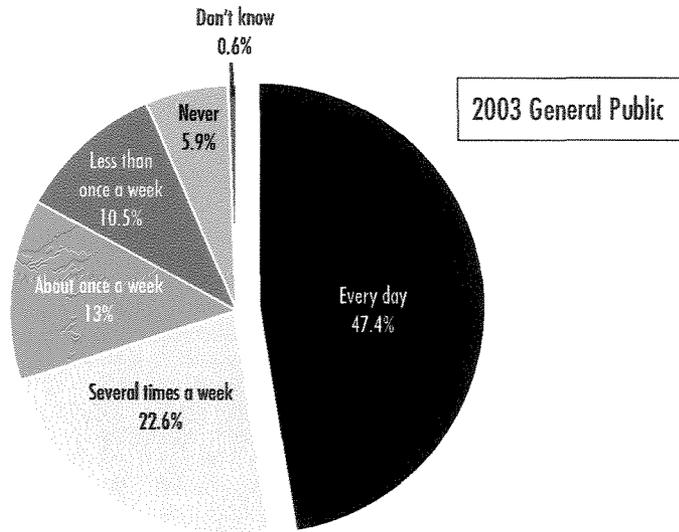
■ Where do you get most of your news from?

There's little difference here by age, but minorities are a little more likely than whites (55.3 percent vs. 49.5 percent) to get most of their news from local TV and are less likely to turn to local newspapers or radio.

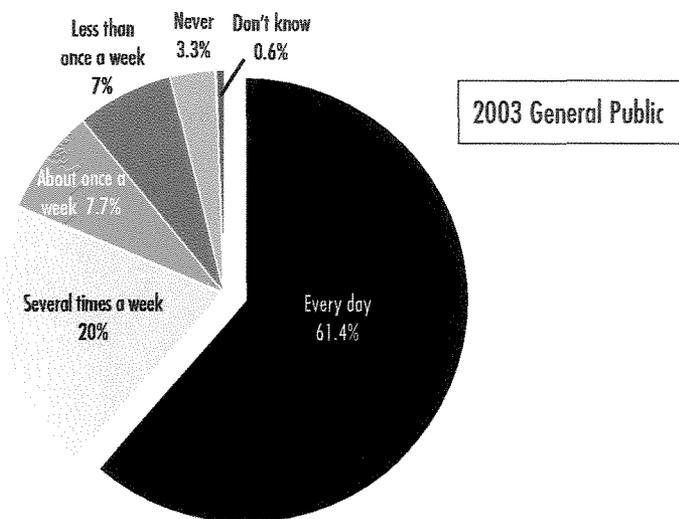
2003 General Public



■ How often do you watch national network news on television?

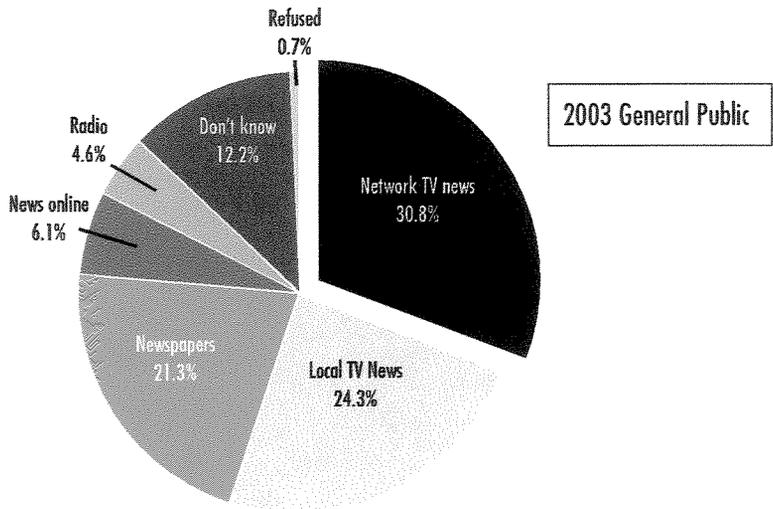


■ How often do you watch local TV newscasts?



Younger viewers (those age 18 to 34) were considerably less likely (45.8 percent vs. 69.6 percent for those 35 or older) to say they watched local TV every day, but 75.7 percent say they watch several times a week or more. Minorities reported watching more TV than did whites: 70.2 percent of minorities said they watch every day.

■ When you hear conflicting versions of the same news story, which source do you trust the most?

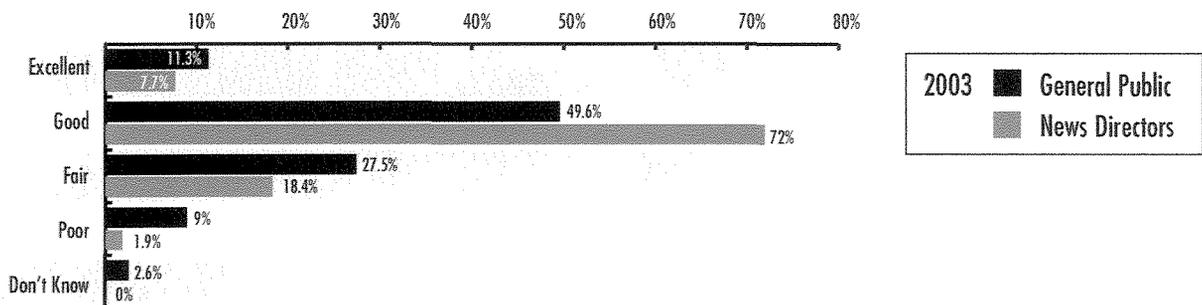


It's the younger people (18- to 34-year-olds) who put network television news in first place in the event of conflicting stories. People 35 or older have network and local TV virtually dead even. Both rank newspapers third- and at the same percentage. Interestingly, the 18- to 34-year-olds are a little less likely than viewers 35 or older to trust online news in the event of a conflict. Minorities rank local television news first (35.3 percent), network news second (30.9 percent) and newspapers a much more distant third (17.3 percent) in trustworthiness.

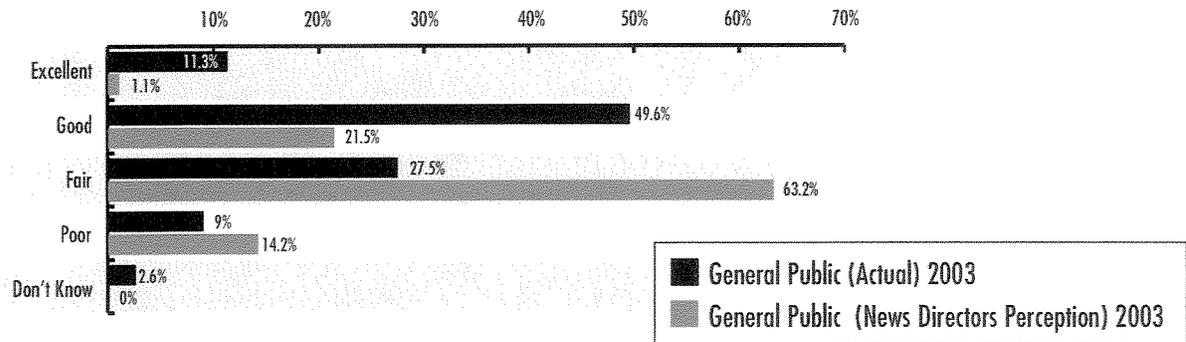
### Media Quality

Overall, people think the media do a pretty good job covering the news—a lot better than news directors expect them to say. Local television news scores even higher.

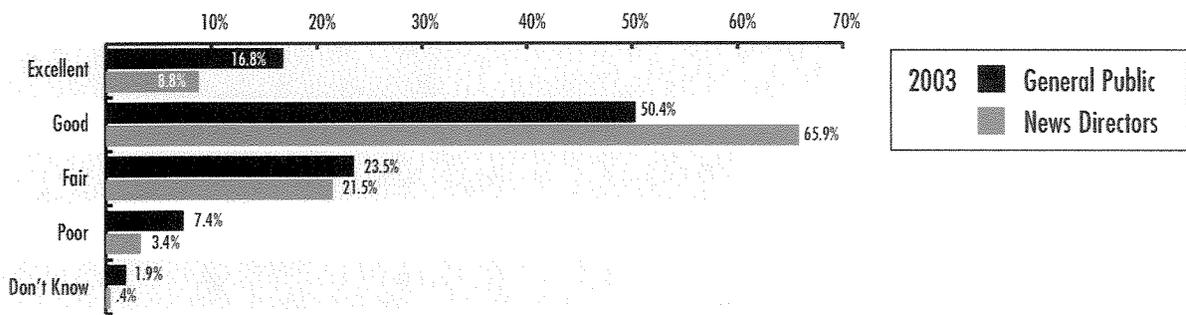
■ Overall, how would you rate the job the media are doing covering news?



■ News directors were also asked how they thought the public would rate the media

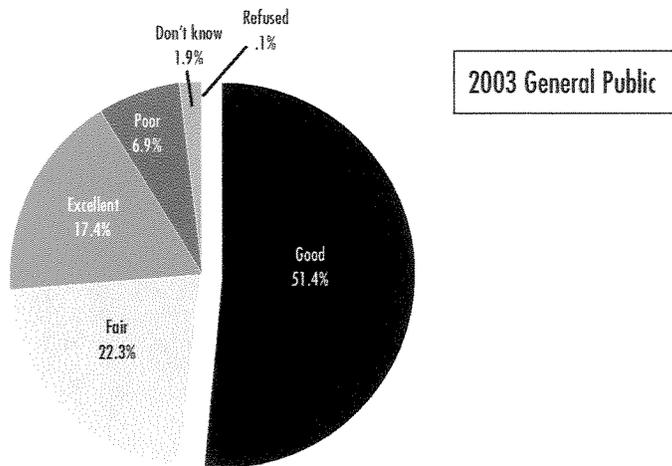


■ Aside from how you feel about the news media's overall performance, how would you rate the overall quality of the news you receive from local TV?



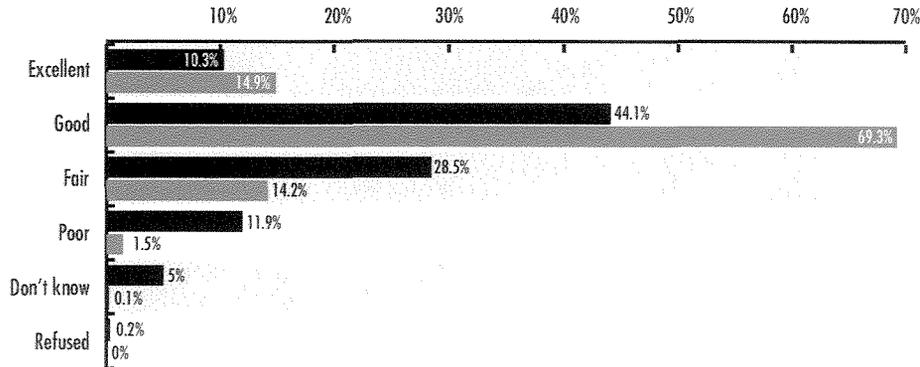
News directors in the top 25 markets were more likely to label their news as excellent. News directors with five years of experience or less were generally harsher in their evaluation than other groups.

■ How would you rate the news provided by the local television newscast you watch most often?



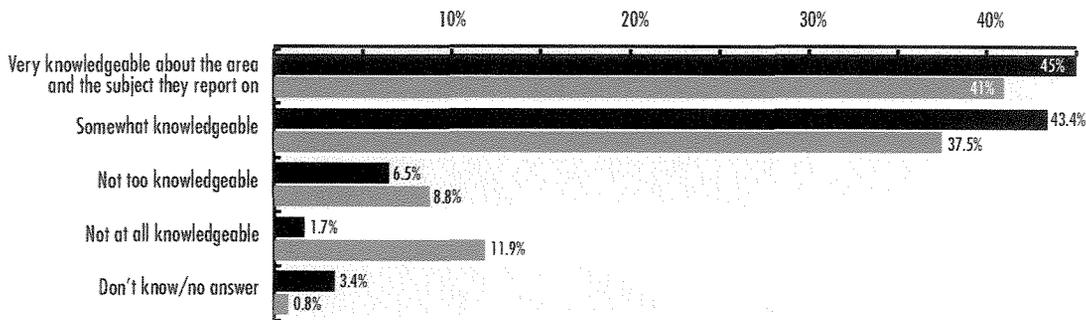
2003 ■ General Public  
■ News Directors

■ How effectively does the local television station you watch most often for news provide information you need to make decisions about your community and your life? (News directors were asked how effectively their station provided that information.)



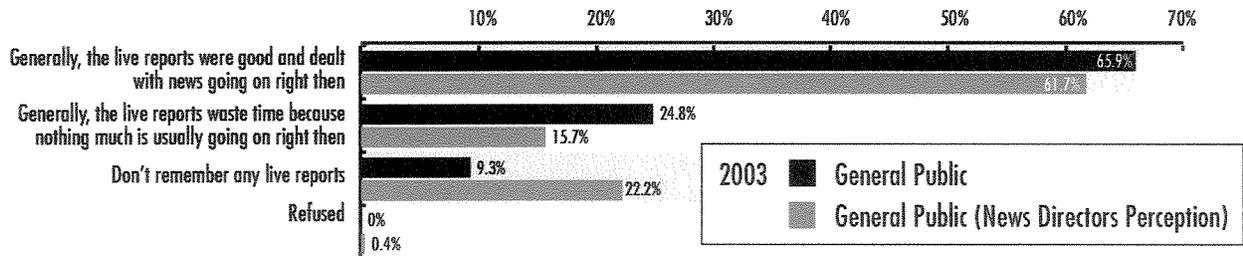
Note the huge discrepancy between the general public (54.4 percent good or excellent) and the news directors (84.2 percent good or excellent). News directors in the smallest markets (150+) were less likely to say they did a good or excellent job.

■ Overall, would you say that the anchors and reporters on the station you watch most are... (News directors were asked about the anchors and reporters on their station.)



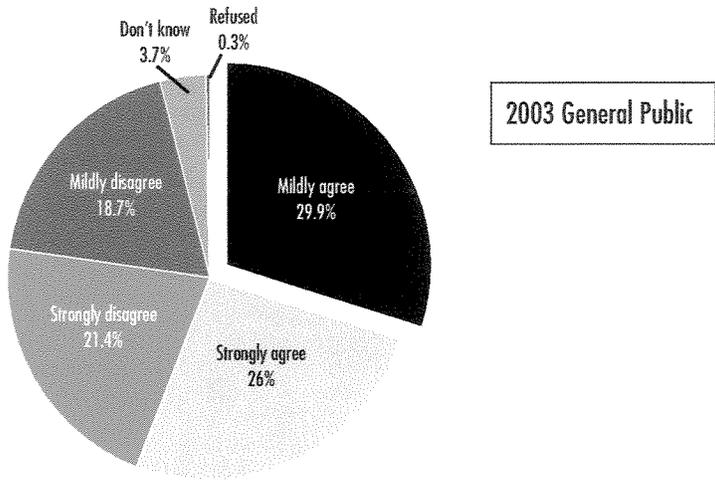
Interestingly, the general public thinks reporters and anchors are more knowledgeable about their community than do news directors. News directors in the top 25 markets were most likely among all news directors to say “very knowledgeable”-and the most likely to say “not at all knowledgeable.”

■ How would you characterize the live reports on the local TV station you watch most often for news? (News directors were asked how the audience would characterize live reports.)



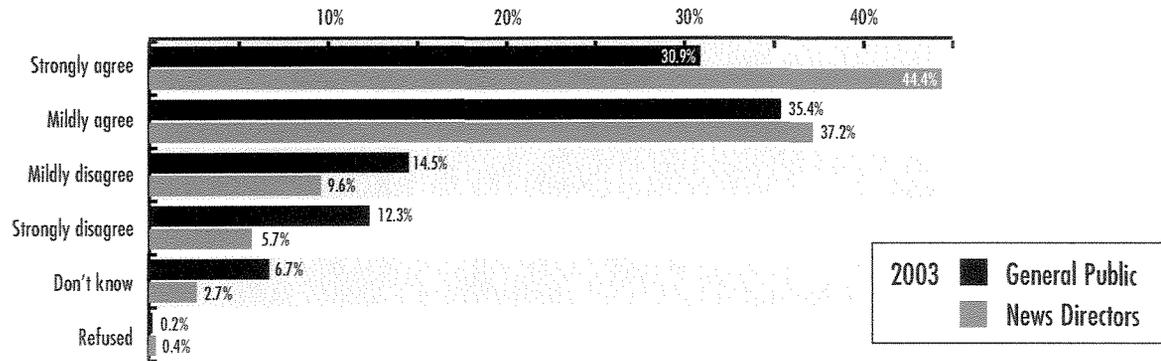
The general public likes live reports on television news. Younger people (18- to 34-year-olds) were slightly more likely (28.1 percent) than those age 35 or older to say that live reports waste time. News directors in the top 25 markets were both less likely to think people liked live reports, and more likely to think they didn't remember any, than news directors in smaller markets.

■ Lately, I've become more skeptical about the accuracy of anything I hear on the news.



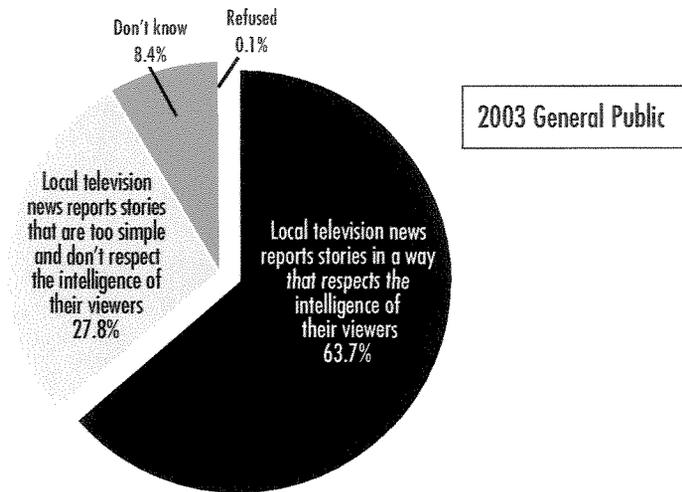
The audience tends to agree (55.9 percent) that they have become more skeptical about the accuracy of anything they hear on the news. But even more (66.3 percent) say local television news has been getting better.

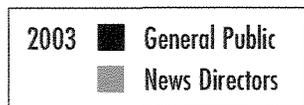
■ Lately, I think the news media have done a better job of reporting events in my community.



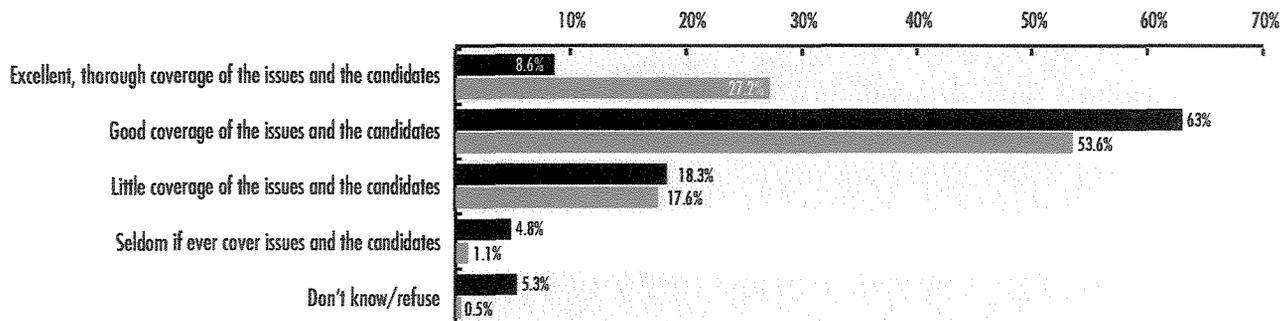
News directors with no more than five years total experience were more likely to strongly agree that the news is getting better.

■ Please tell me which statement comes closest to your opinion.



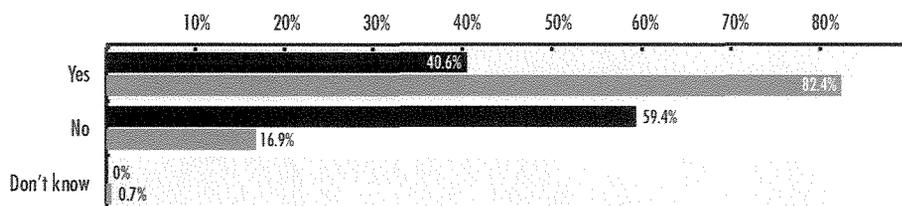


■ How would you characterize the political news reporting on the local TV station you watch most often for news? (News directors were asked to characterize their stations.)



News directors thought more highly of their political coverage than did the general public, but more than 7 in 10 members of the public say coverage is good or excellent. But there's another major disconnect between the public and news directors when it comes to whether those reports help people pick a candidate. More than 8 in 10 news directors think those reports make a difference; only 1 in 4 members of the public agree.

■ Did those reports help you make up your mind about which candidate you preferred? (News directors were asked whether they thought the reports helped the public make up their minds.)



According to the respondents, they did vote. Although off-year elections generally saw low turnout, more than three-quarters (76.3 percent) of the general public said that they voted in the last election in November. It's possible that respondents answered in the affirmative if they voted in either of the last two elections—including the last presidential one. It's also possible that they just answered in the affirmative, regardless.

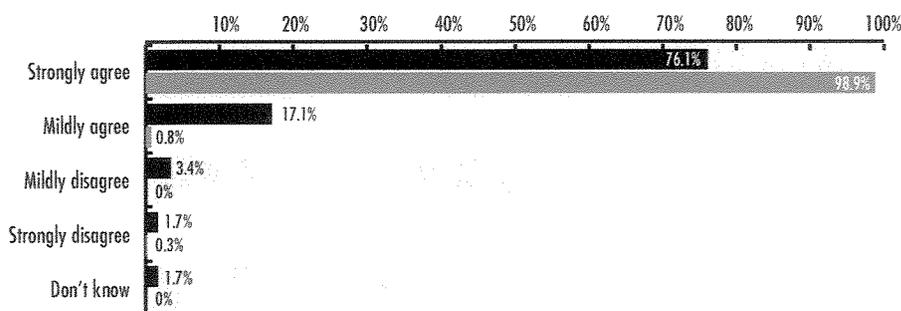
The 18- to 34-year-olds surveyed were a little more likely to say that the reports helped them decide about their preferred candidate, but they were also a lot less likely to have voted than the rest of the public.

2003 ■ General Public  
 ■ News Directors

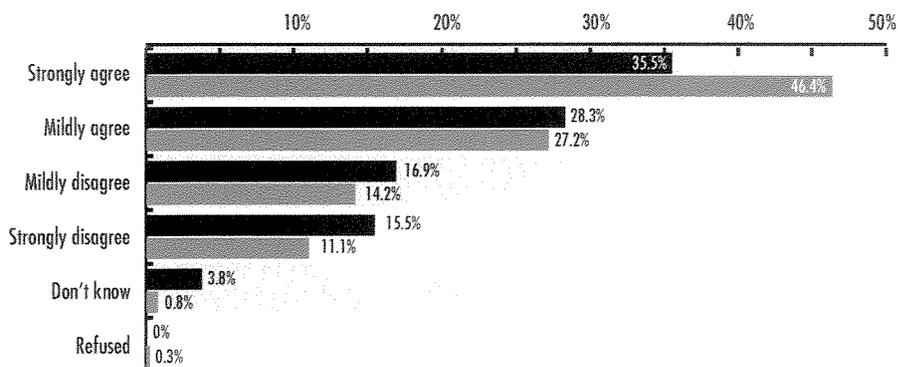
## The Function and Role of Television News

**Intensity differs, but there's general agreement between the public and news directors about the function and role of television news.** Almost all news directors strongly agree that they should inform people about what's happening in their community. Similarly, almost all members of the general public agree, but 17.1 percent only agree mildly.

■ An important function of local TV news is to inform people like you about what is happening in your community.

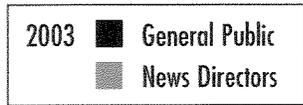


■ An important function of local TV news is to suggest potential solutions to local problems.

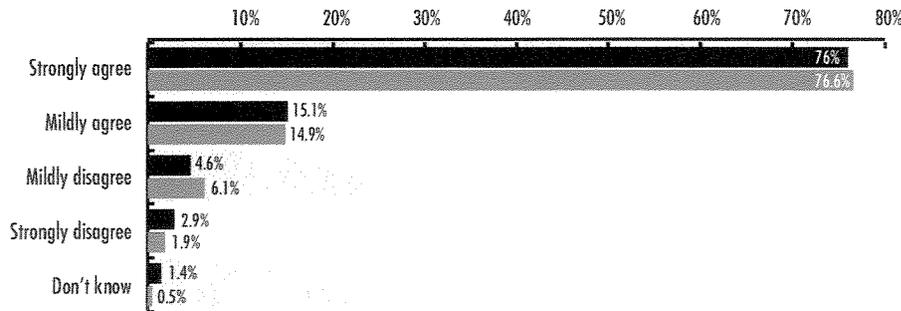


People age 18 to 34 were a little more likely than those age 35 or older to favor suggesting solutions and a little less likely to say local news should just stick to the facts. Minorities were even more in agreement that stations should suggest solutions.

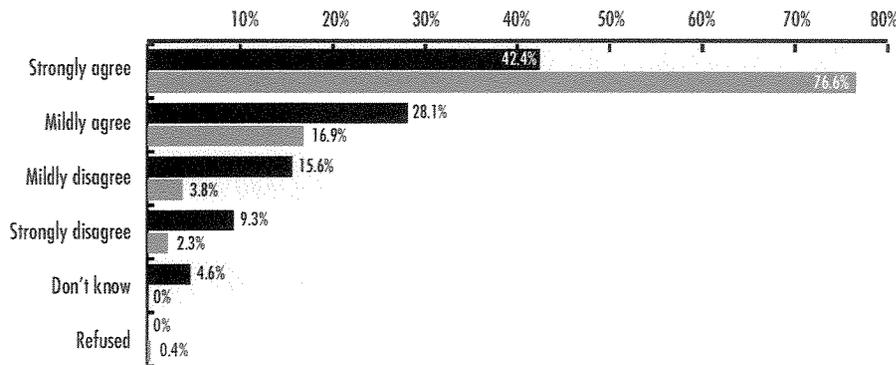
News directors with no more than five years total experience were more likely to disagree that television news should suggest solutions and more likely to agree that television news should just get the facts right.



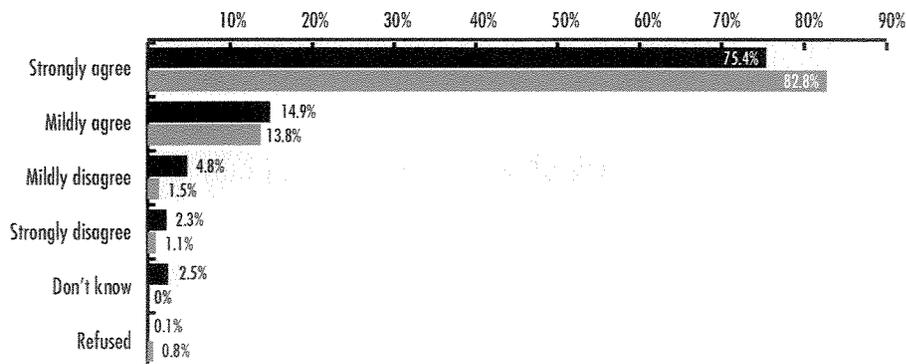
■ The major job of local TV news is to get the facts right, not to interpret the news.



■ An important function of local TV news is to act as a watchdog looking over local government.



■ The major job of local TV news is to report the truth, even if it is painful and shocking to viewers.

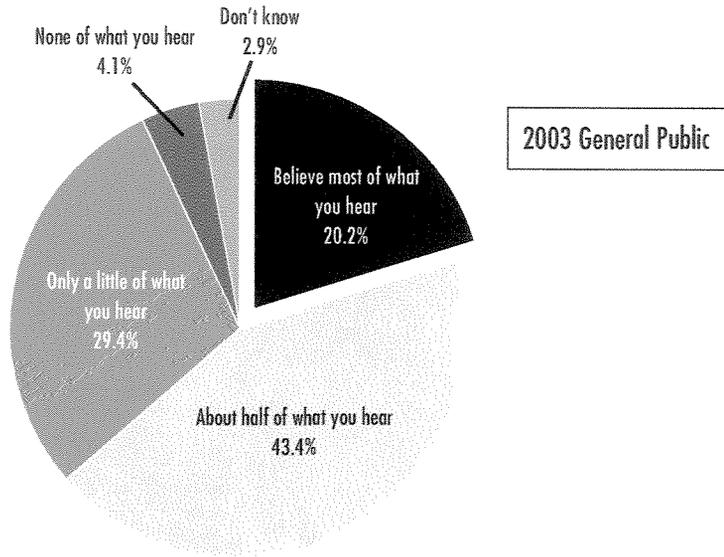


## News Judgment and Journalistic Practices

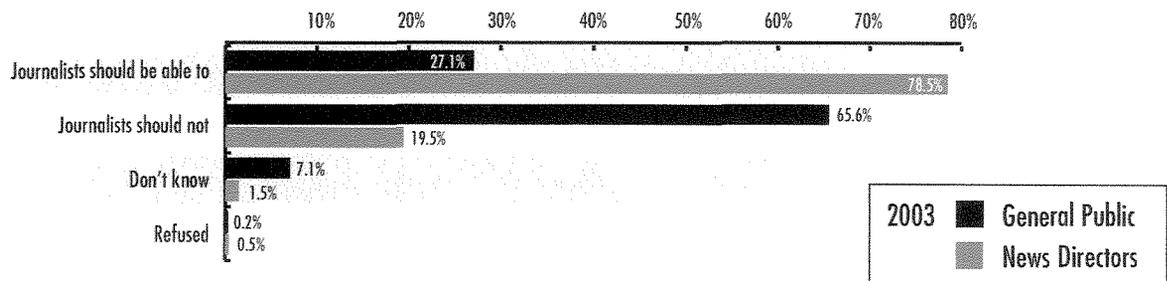
The audience is not comfortable with confidential sources.

The public also has a problem with hidden cameras, releasing the names of uncharged suspects, and issues of fairness in general.

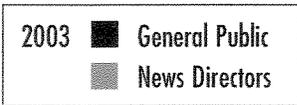
■ When you see a local TV news story based on a confidential source, how much do you believe?



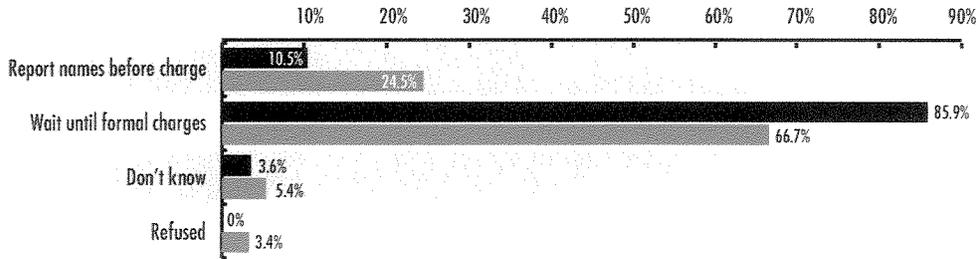
■ Should journalists be allowed to use hidden cameras or recorders?



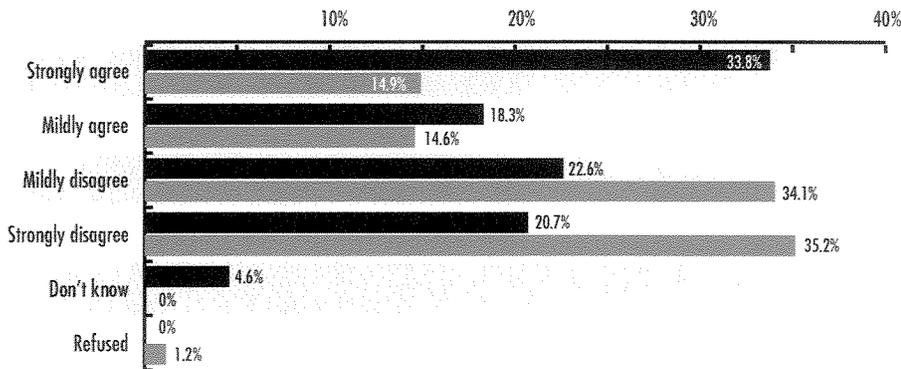
News directors in the smallest markets and those with no more than five years experience are least likely to approve of hidden cameras.



■ Should local TV news report the names of people who are suspected of committing crimes who haven't been formally charged, or should the media wait until formal charges have been brought before reporting that person's name?

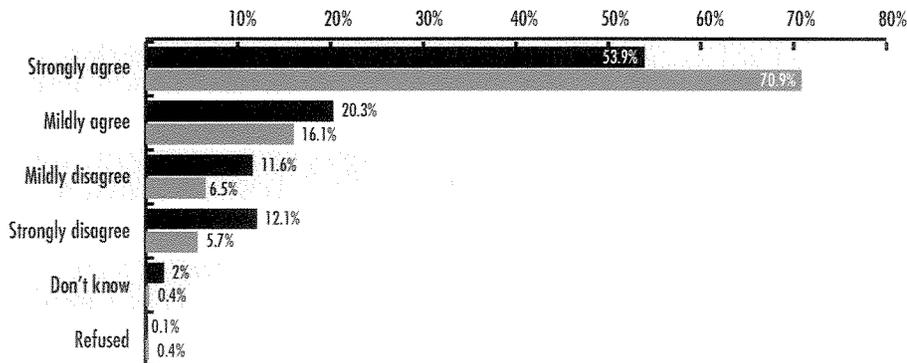


■ If a journalist cannot find a source willing to be named, the journalist should not report the story at all.



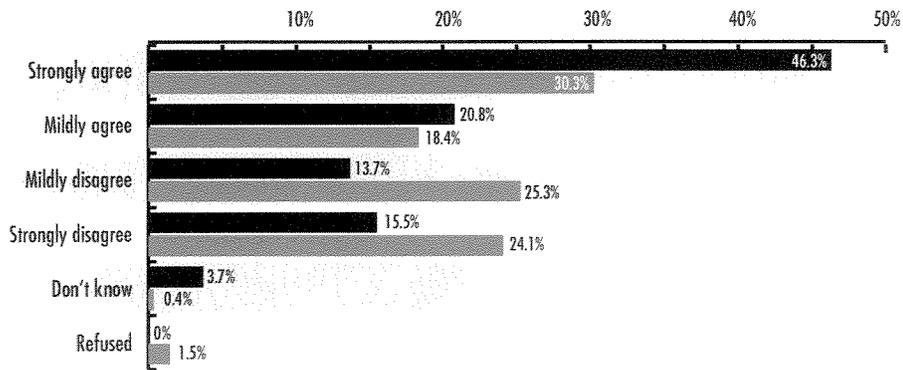
Younger people (18- to 34-year-olds) have less trouble with confidential sources than those who are 35 or older.

■ I want news only after all of the facts have been checked, even if it means I have to wait longer to hear about a story. (News directors were asked if all the facts should be checked, even if that meant their station didn't get the story first.)



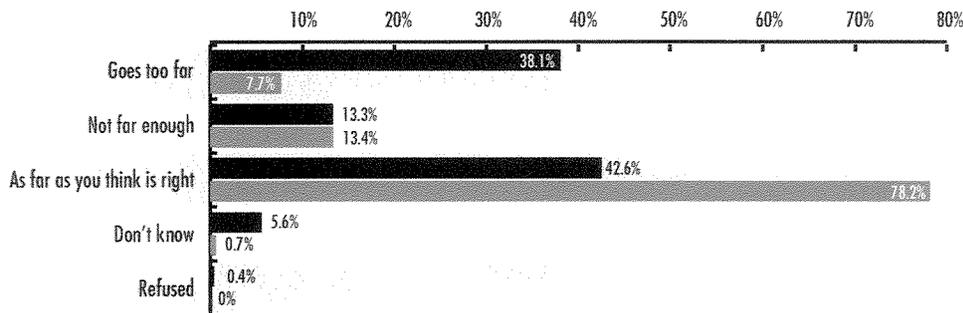
2003 ■ General Public  
■ News Directors

■ I believe that in a controversy with two clearly different sides, local TV news should not report a news story if they can only reach one side for comment.



News directors with no more than five years experience are more likely to agree with waiting to get both sides of a controversial issue.

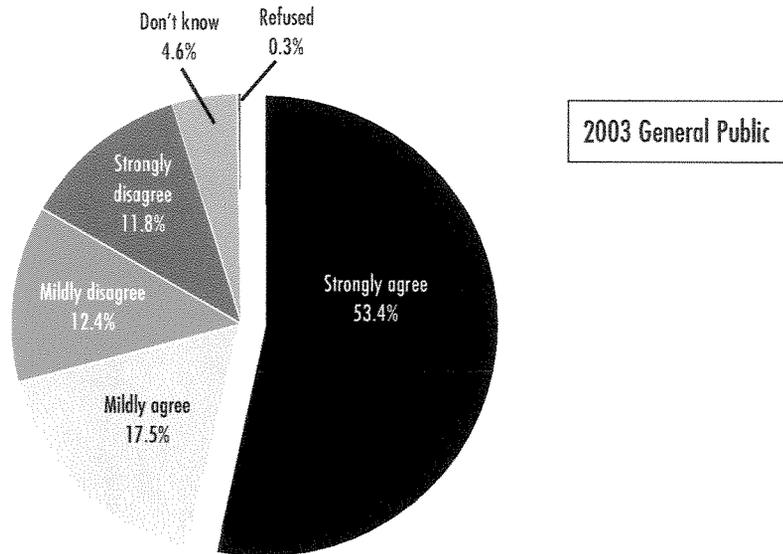
■ Do you think that local TV news goes too far in disclosing the details of local public figures' private lives, not far enough, or as far as you think is right?



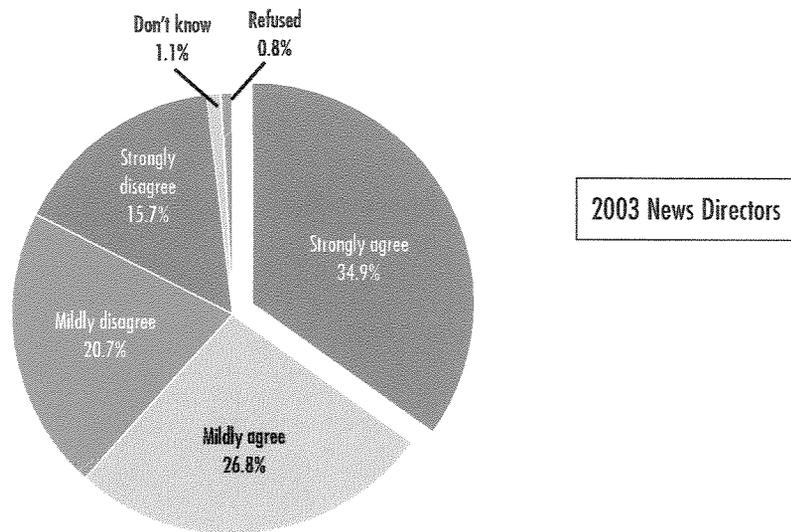
Younger people (18- to 34-year-olds) are much more likely (56.0 percent vs. 42.4 percent) than those 35 or older to think television news goes as far as is right.

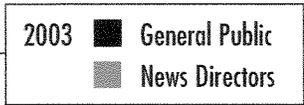
News directors generally agreed (61.7 percent) that they communicate the importance of the First Amendment's guarantee of freedom of speech. News directors in the 50 top markets were least likely to agree that they communicated the importance of free speech. But nearly a quarter (24.2 percent) of the general public do not think that television stations should be allowed to broadcast freely without government approval of a story. Only a slight majority (53.4 percent) strongly agreed that stations should be able to broadcast freely. Among minorities, 36.2 percent did not think that TV should be allowed to broadcast without government approval.

■ Do you [general public] agree or disagree that television stations should be allowed to broadcast freely without government approval of a story?



■ Do you [news directors] agree or disagree that your TV station communicates the importance of the First Amendment's guarantee of freedom of speech?



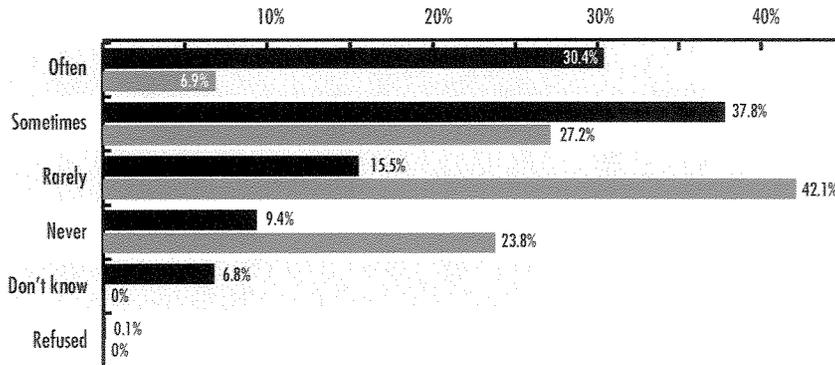


### Improper Influences on Television News

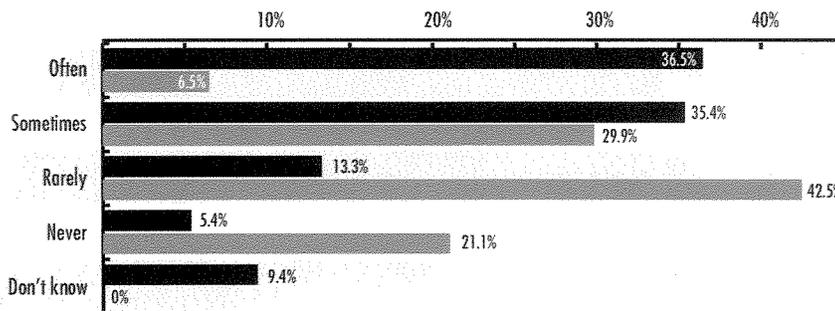
The general public thinks almost everyone improperly influences the media. News directors don't see it that way—except when it comes to things like making a profit, being first and, especially, increasing ratings.

■ How much of the time, if any, do you think news reporting on local television is improperly influenced by...

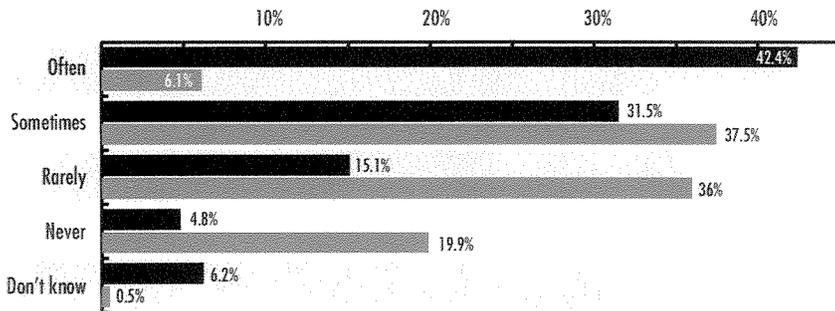
#### *Elected Officials*

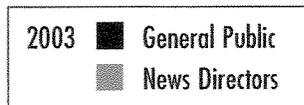


#### *Big Business*



#### *Advertisers*

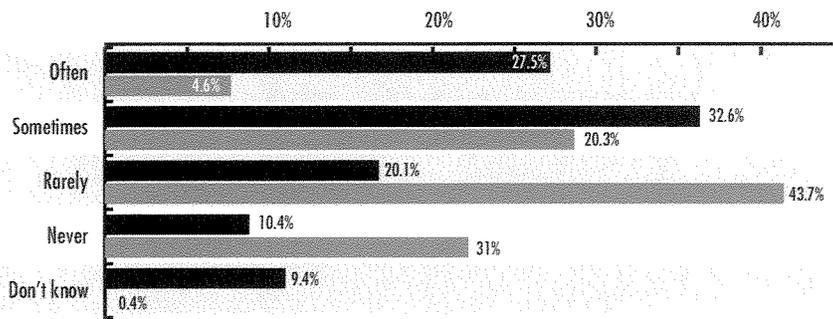




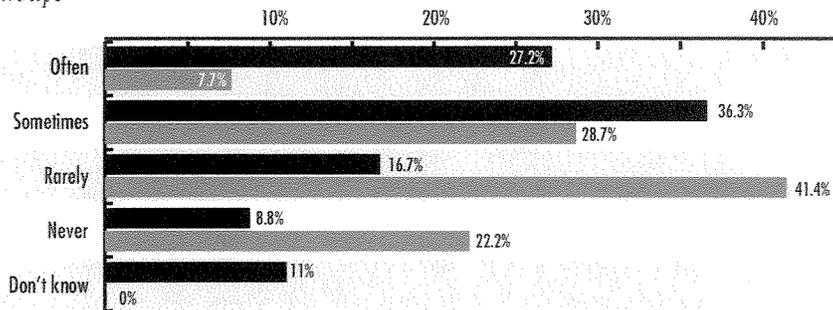
News directors in markets outside the top 50 see improper influence by advertisers as a bigger problem than do news directors in the 50 largest markets.

■ How much of the time, if any, do you think news reporting on local television is improperly influenced by...  
(continued)

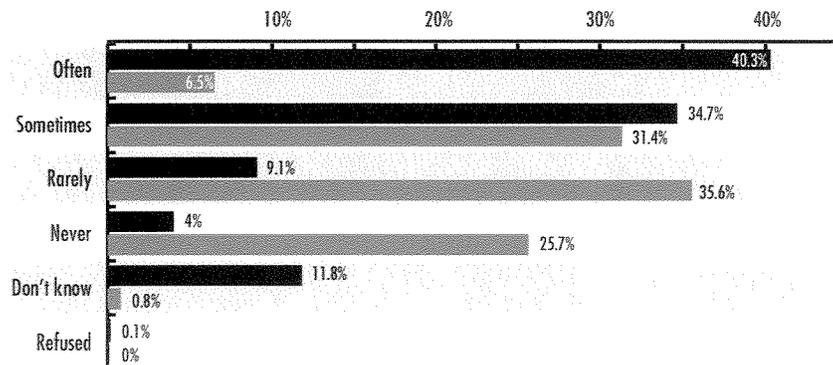
*Federal Government*

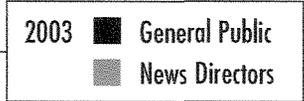


*Interest Groups*



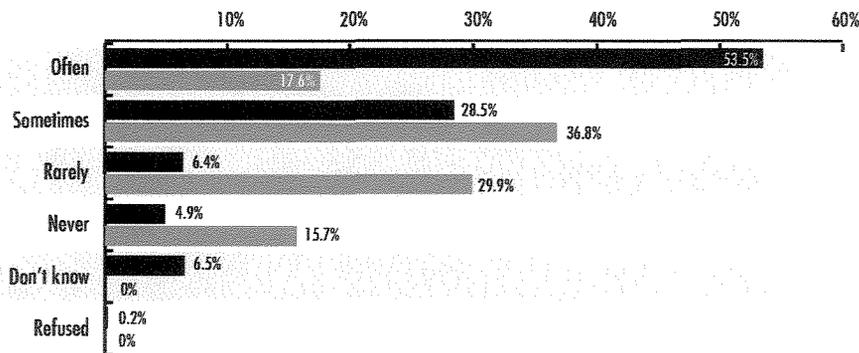
*TV Station Owners*



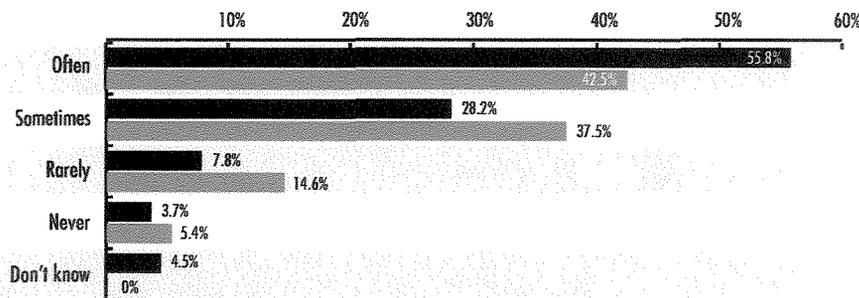


■ How much of the time, if any, do you think news reporting on local television is improperly influenced by...  
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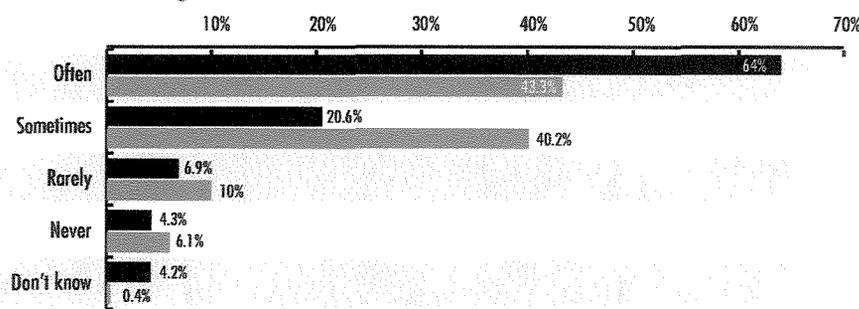
*The desire of the news organization to make a profit*



*The desire to report the story first*



*The desire to increase ratings*



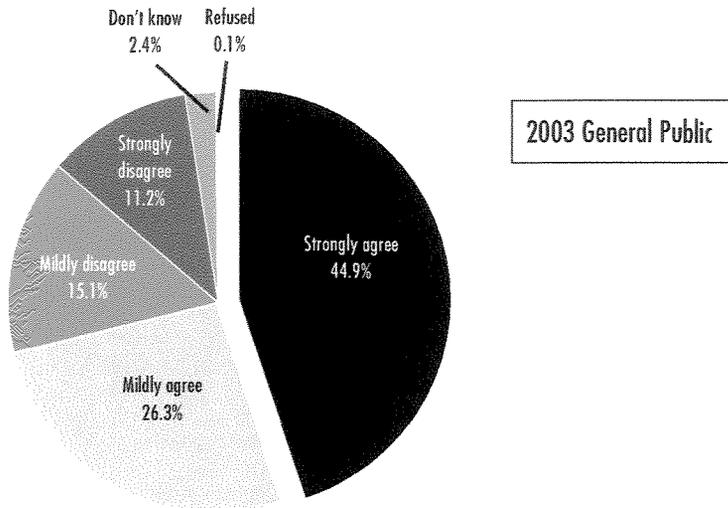
Generally, 18- to 34-year-olds are a little less likely than those age 35 or older to see improper influence on television news-except for the three internal questions on television news (profit, being first, and ratings). Minorities are a little more likely to believe that television news is improperly influenced-except for those three internal questions. For those three, all groups come in almost exactly the same.

News directors in the top 25 markets identify getting the story first and increasing ratings as bigger problems than do news directors in any of the other markets.

### Perception of Television News and Reporters

The general public overwhelmingly thinks that local television chases sensational stories to attract an audience.

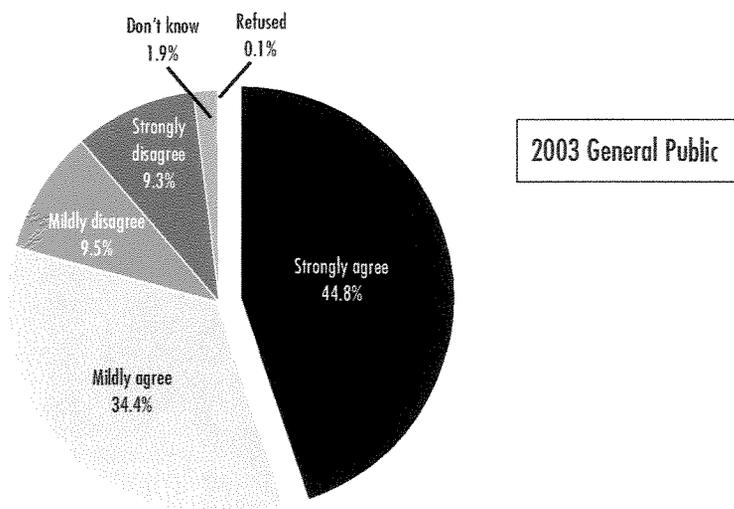
- Reporters and anchors on the TV news program you watch the most chase sensational news stories because they think it attracts large audiences not because they think it's important news.



Younger people (18- to 34-year-olds) were a little less likely to feel that television news chases sensational stories.

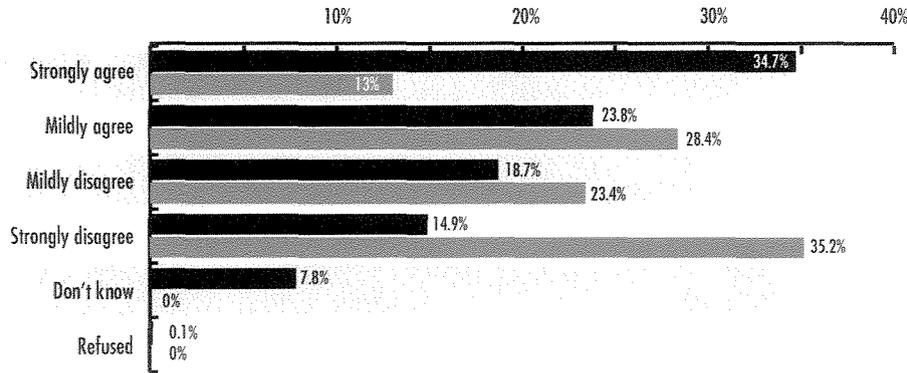
On the other hand, the general public also feels that stations really care about the news and getting stories right.

- They really seem to care about the news and getting the story right.



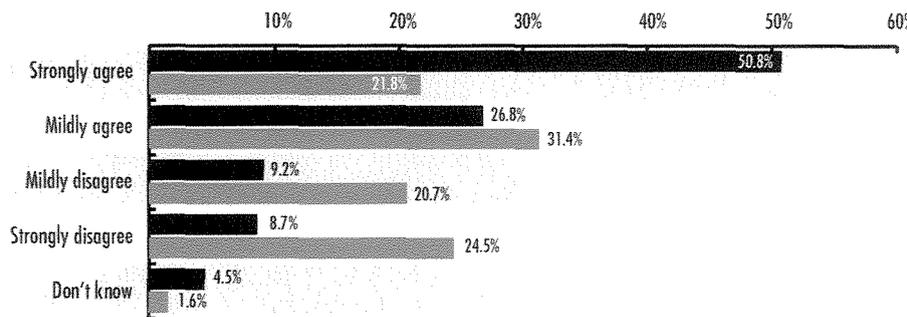
2003 ■ General Public  
■ News Directors

■ There are topics that are so complex, boring, or non-visual-like mental health and local government-that stations tend to avoid doing stories on them? (News directors were asked about their stations.)



Generally, 18- to 34-year-olds are a little more likely than older viewers to disagree that complex or boring stories are avoided and that promotable pictures are run even if the story has limited news value.

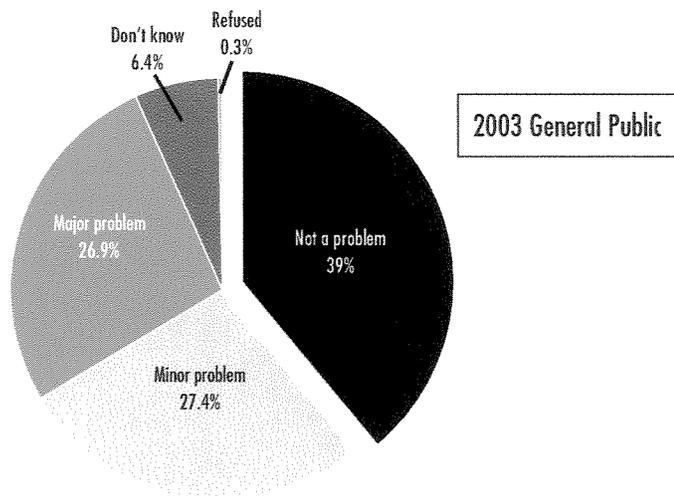
■ There are stories that are so sensational or have such promotable pictures that stations tend to cover them-even though the news value of those stories may be minimal. (News directors were asked about their stations.)



News directors in the top 25 markets and those with no more than five years of experience were much more likely to strongly disagree with airing promotable pictures without real news value.

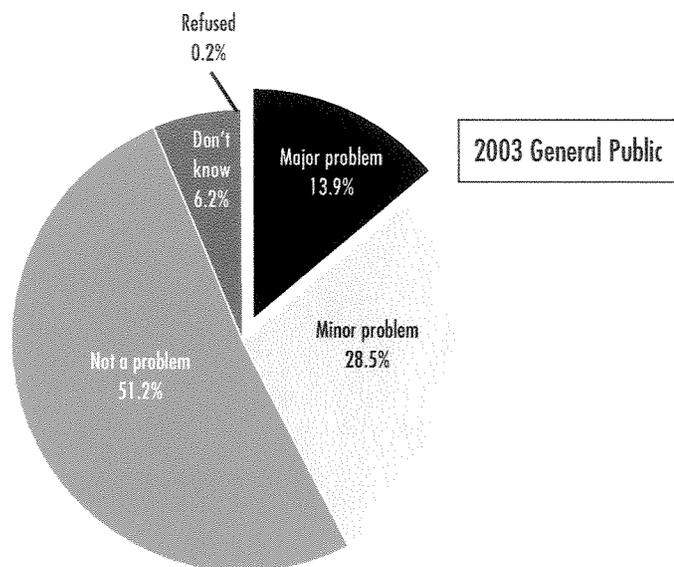
Perceived political bias is a problem-in both directions, although more people view the media as biased from a liberal point of view than a conservative one. More than a quarter (26.9 percent) of the public think liberal bias is a major problem, whereas 13.9 percent think conservative bias is a major problem. About equal numbers (27.4 percent liberal and 28.5 percent conservative) think it's a minor problem.

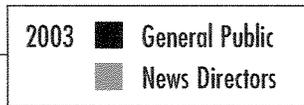
■ News seems to favor the liberal point of view.



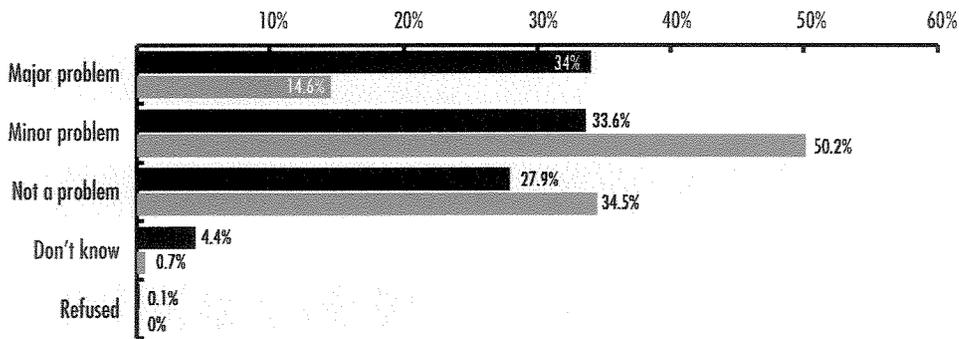
People age 18 to 34 were much less likely to see liberal bias and a little less likely to see conservative bias. In contrast, minorities were a little more likely than whites to say that local television news favors a conservative point of view.

■ News seems to favor a conservative point of view.





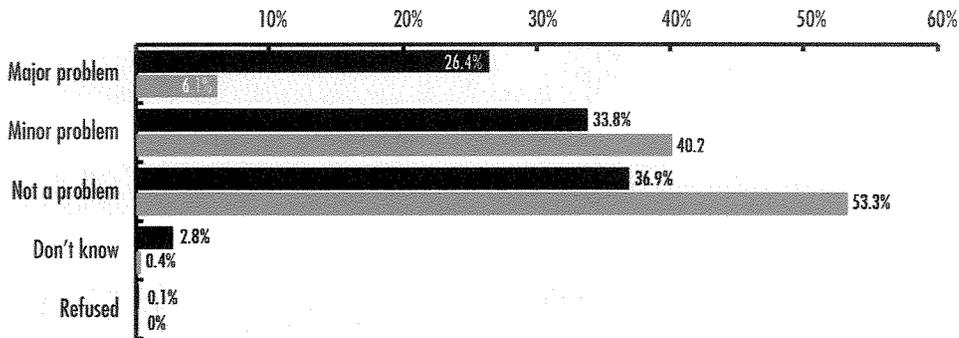
■ Reporters don't ask politicians the kinds of questions that are important to most Americans.



Minorities were much more likely to see this as a major problem (43.8 percent). People age 18 to 34 had less problem with all of these areas than did the people 35 or older. All groups had the same problems with confidential sources and hidden cameras.

The smaller the market size, the bigger the problem of reporters not asking politicians the right questions, according to news directors.

■ Reporters are insensitive to people's pain when they report on victims of accidents or crime.



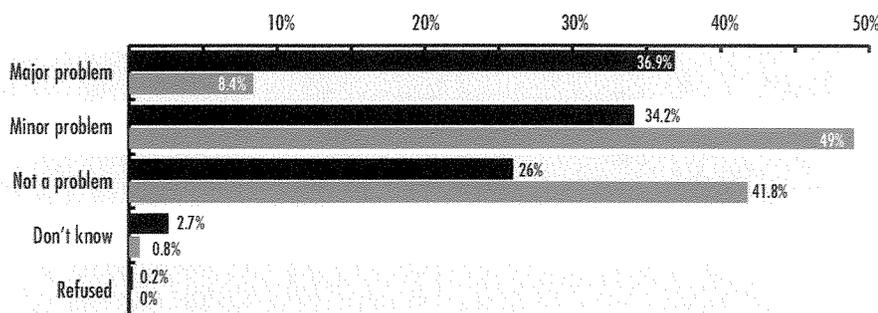
News directors in the top 25 markets perceive this insensitivity to be a bigger problem than do their counterparts in markets of other sizes.

2003 ■ General Public  
 ■ News Directors

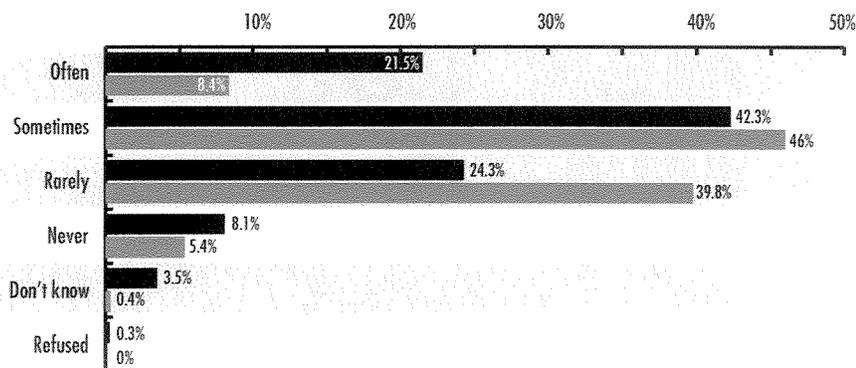
■ There is too little coverage of issues that concern people like me. (News directors were asked about too little coverage of issues that concern most people.)



■ News dwells too much on the negative stories and ignores many positive stories.



■ How often do you think television reporters allow their own, personal opinion about a person, organization, or company to influence the way they cover the news?



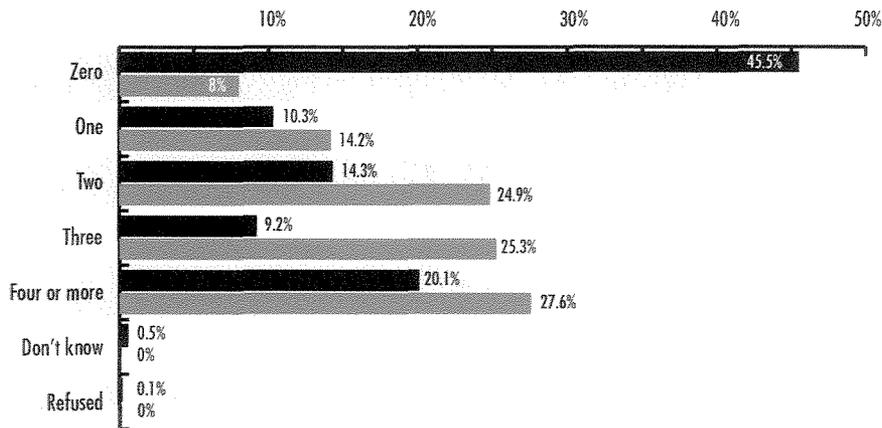
Minorities are more likely (71.6 percent) to believe that reporters allow their own opinion to influence their work either sometimes or often.

2003 ■ General Public  
 ■ General Public (News Directors Perception)

### Audience Behavior

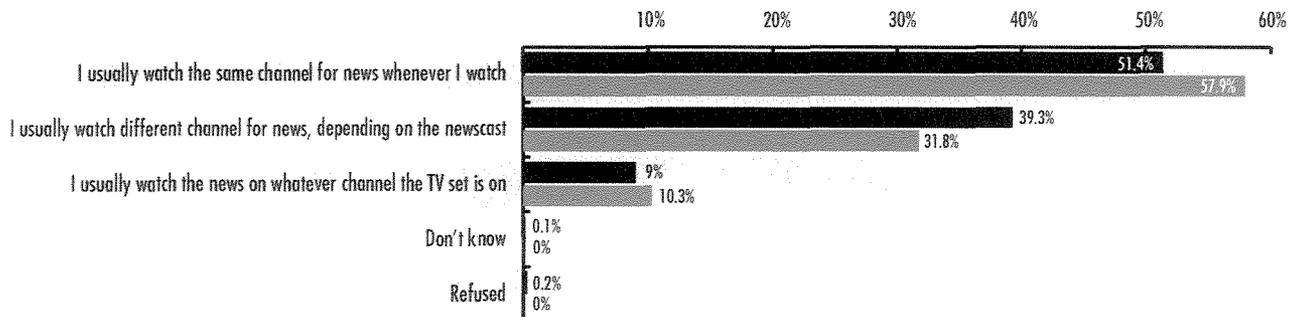
In some cases, news directors' views on audience behavior is right on the mark; in other cases, it's way off.

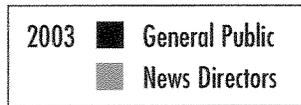
■ During the last local TV newscast that you watched, how many times did you change the channel during the newscast? (News directors were asked how many times they thought viewers changed the channel during a newscast.)



Younger viewers (those age 18 to 34) are more likely to change channels than people 35 or older. While 52.3 percent of viewers age 35 or older never change the channel, only 28.0 percent of 18- to 34 year-olds never change. But the difference is spread pretty evenly across all the other categories. Minorities also switch channels more often than whites: 32.9 percent reported no change in channels, and 26.3 percent said they switch four or more times in a newscast.

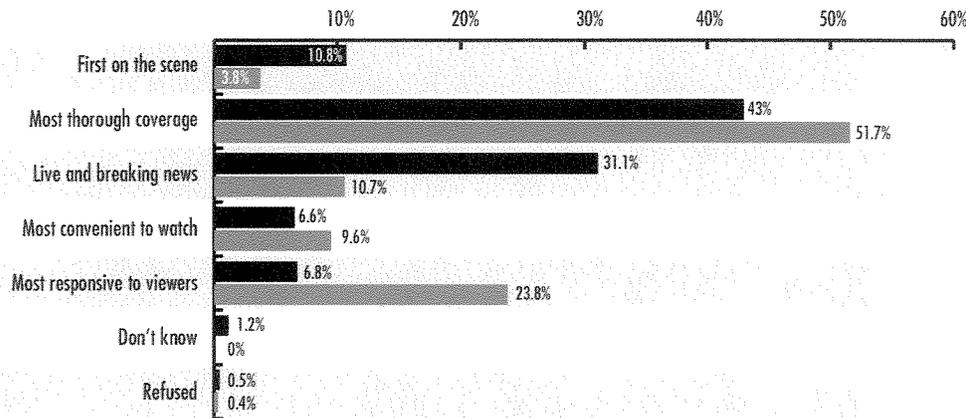
■ Which phrase best describes the pattern of your TV news viewing? (News directors were asked which best describes how people watch TV news.)





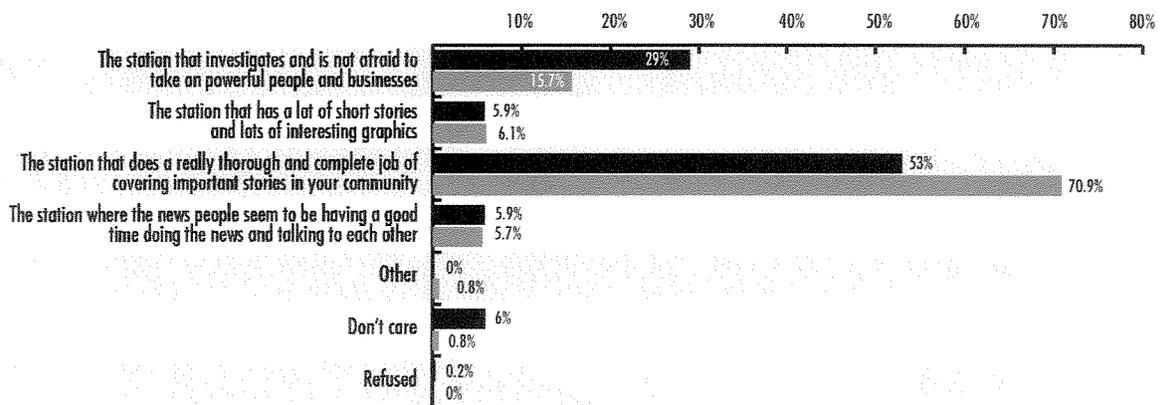
A plurality of younger viewers watch the same channel for news, but they're more likely (12.2 percent vs. 6.5 percent) than viewers 35 or older to watch the news on whatever channel the tv is set on. Minorities are more likely than whites (46.4 percent vs. 37.2 percent) to watch different channels depending on the newscast and are less likely just to watch the same one (42.5 percent vs. 55.0 percent). News directors in the top 25 markets were more likely to say that people watched whatever station the TV was on.

■ People were asked which of the following phrases most appeals to them for local TV news. (News directors were asked which comes closest to describing their station.)



Younger viewers (those age 18 to 34) were slightly more likely (49.6 percent) to pick “most thorough coverage” and least likely (2.8 percent) to pick “most responsive to viewers.” Minorities picked “live and breaking news” as their first choice (42.1 percent vs. 28.0 percent for whites). “Most thorough” was the second choice (29.6 percent vs. 49.4 percent for whites), and “first on the scene” was third (15.1 percent vs. 9.2 percent for whites). News directors in the smallest markets (outside the top 150) were most likely to pick “most responsive.” News directors with no more than five years total experience were more likely than others to favor “live and breaking news” and “most convenient.”

■ The public was asked which statement characterized their first choice for local television news. (News directors were asked which statement they would like their station to emphasize.)



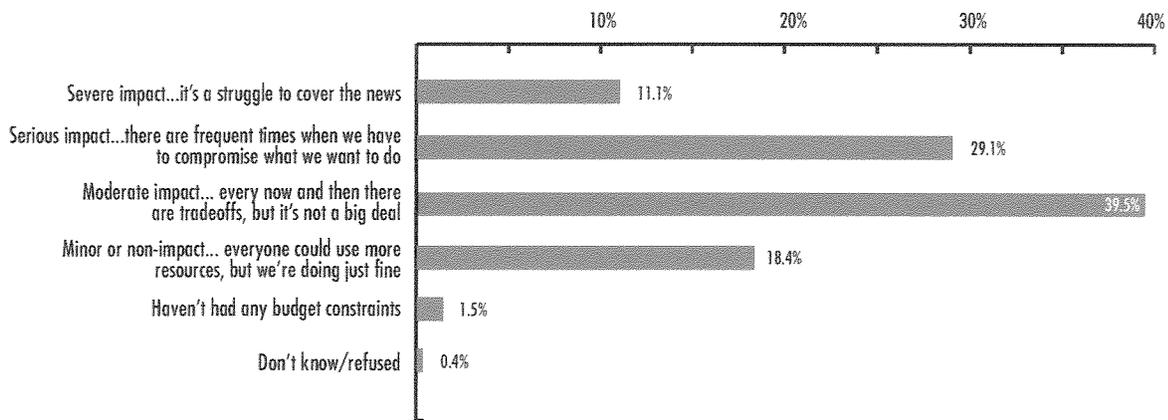
■ 2003 News Directors

Younger viewers (those age 18 to 34) exhibited no meaningful differences in preference compared with the general public. Minorities pick the same order as the general public, but with very different numbers. “Thorough job” comes in at 43.8 percent, and “investigative” at 35.9 percent. News directors in the top 25 markets were the most likely to pick “investigative” and a little less likely to pick “thorough and complete coverage.” News directors with five or fewer years of experience were more likely to pick “investigative.”

### Television News Operations

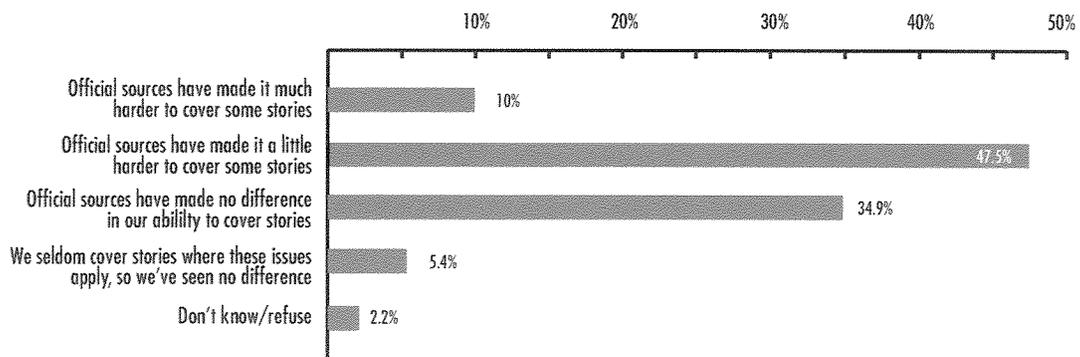
News directors clearly feel hampered in covering the news by budget constraints.

■ How much of an impact do you think budget constraints have had on the quality of your newscasts?



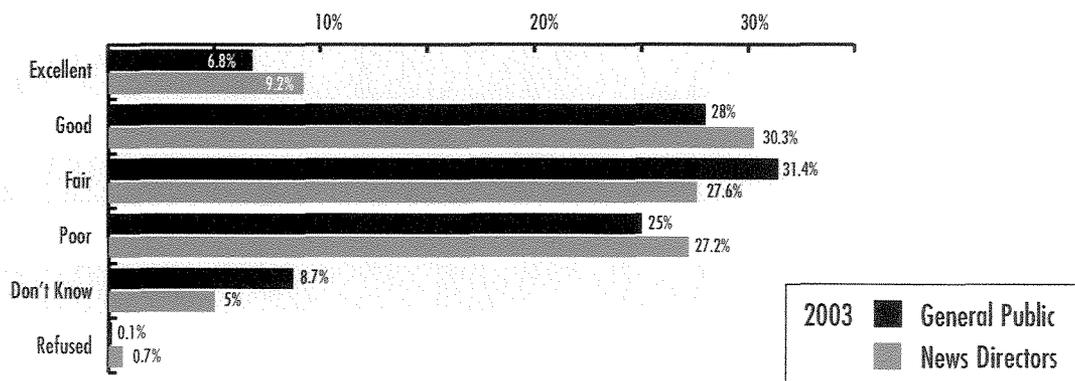
A majority of news directors say that since Sept. 11, official sources have made it harder to cover some stories.

■ Since Sept. 11, which of the following statements best characterizes your news gathering efforts-especially as it relates to government and security issues?



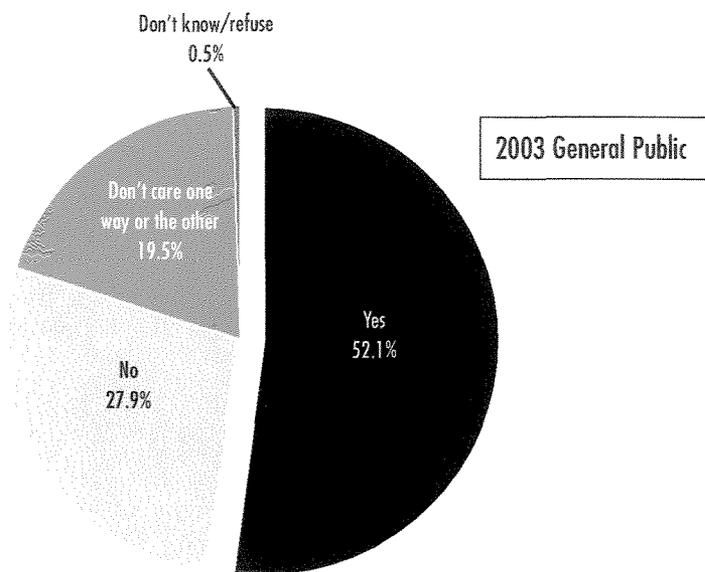
Both the general public and news directors agree that local television news does not do a very good job explaining the journalistic process-something most people say they want. Although a lot of news directors don't think the public is interested.

■ Would you say that local TV news stations do an excellent, good, fair or poor job explaining how they decide what to put on the news? (News directors were asked about their station.)

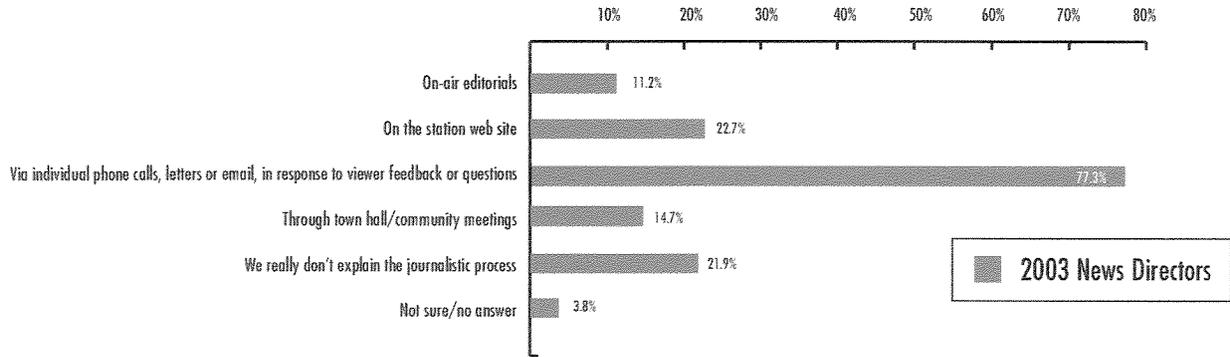


News directors in the top 50 markets were less likely to say that they did a good or excellent job explaining the journalistic process.

■ Would you be interested in having local television stations tell you more about how they decide what to put on the news?

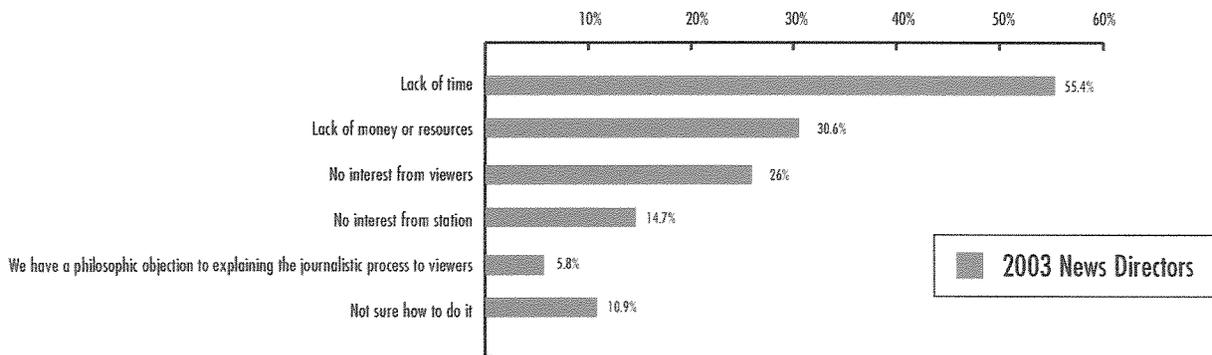


■ In which of the following ways do you (news directors) explain the journalistic process to your viewers (choose all that apply)?

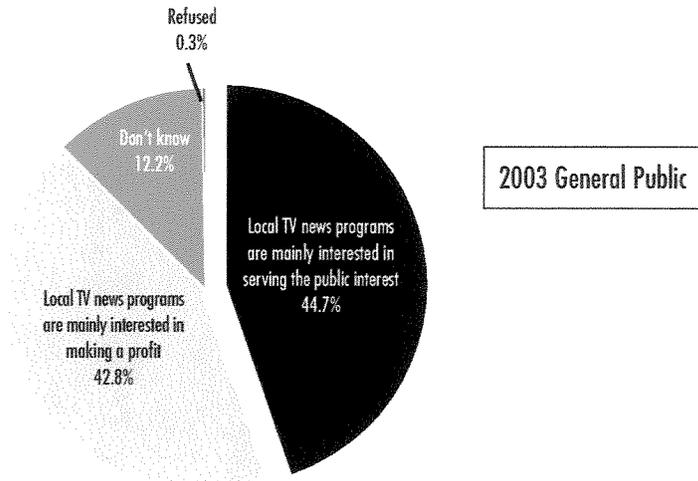


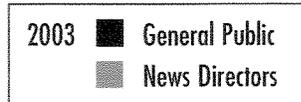
(News directors could choose all the answers that apply, so the total equals more than 100.0 percent.)

■ What are some of the barriers to your station doing a more thorough job of explaining the journalistic process to viewers (choose all that apply)?



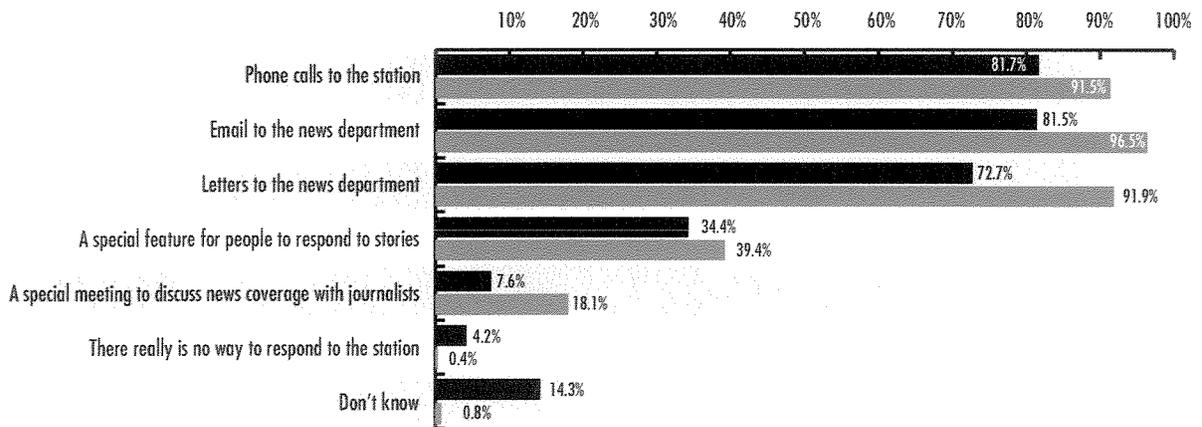
■ Please tell me which statement comes closest to your opinion





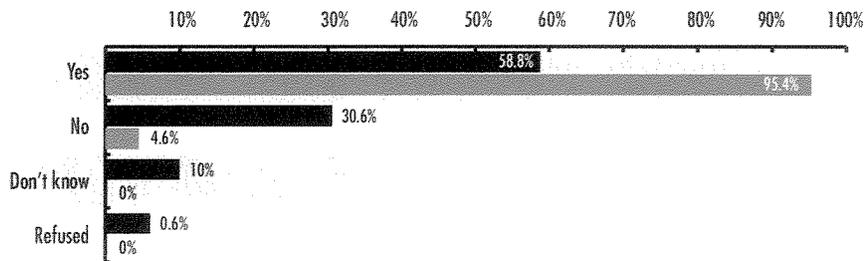
Younger people (18- to 34-year-olds) and are much more likely to view television news as mainly interested in serving the public interest (57.5 percent vs. 46.7 percent). Minorities are also more likely (58.6 percent) to view television news as mainly serving the public interest.

■ There are a variety of ways you can talk back or respond to local TV stations. Please tell me all the ones that are available at your favorite station for news. (News directors were asked about their station.)

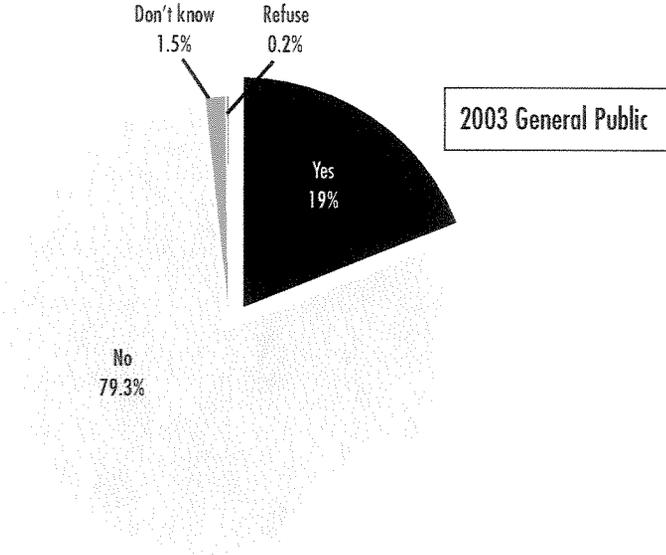


News directors feel there are more channels for feedback from the public than the public recognizes, and news directors feel their station does a lot better job of listening and responding to viewers than do viewers.

■ Do you think the station you watch most often for news does a good job listening to your concerns? (News directors were asked about their station.)

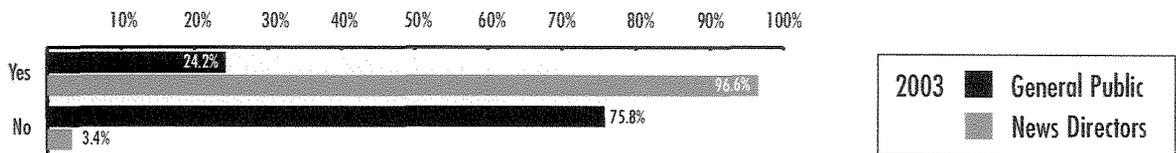


■ Have you ever contacted or tried to contact that station about a story or problem?



Younger people were a little less likely to have contacted or tried to contact a station than those age 35 or older- but they were no more likely to have had a positive experience.

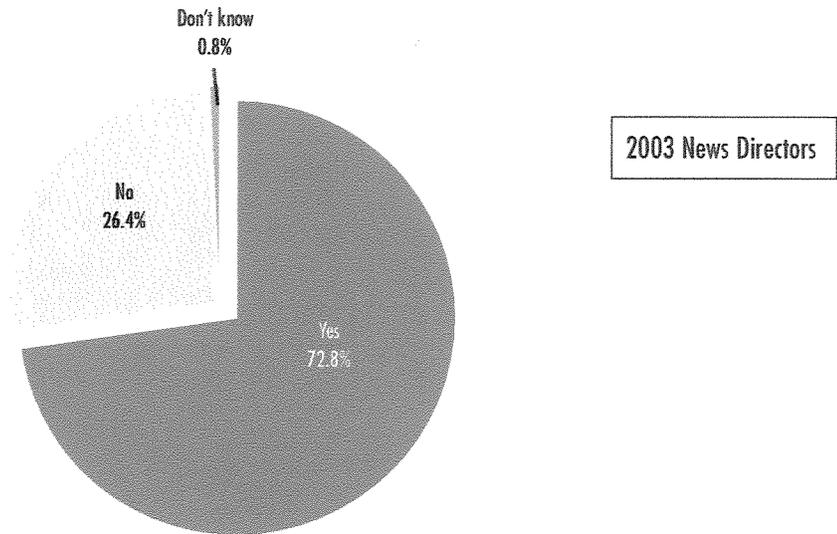
■ Was the station responsive to your comment, idea or problem? (News directors were asked if the station is generally responsive to comments, ideas or problems expressed by the public.)



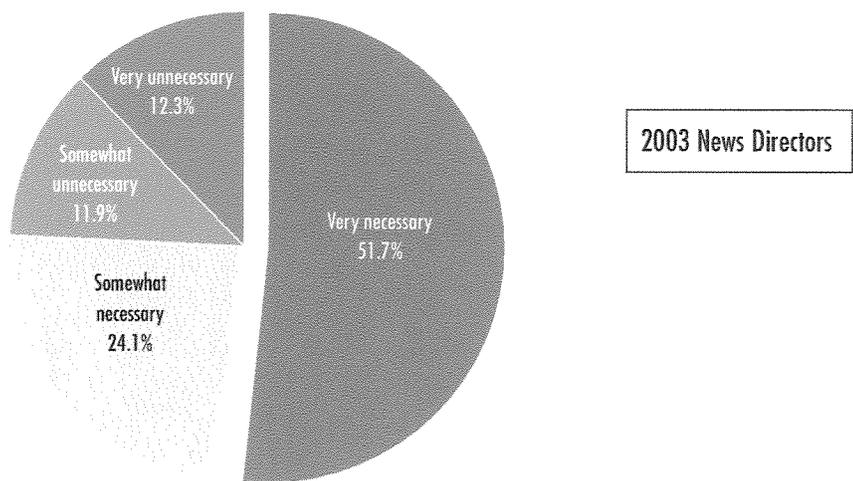
### Ethics Training in the Newsroom

More news directors in 2003 than in 1998 reported that they had a written code or guidelines (an increase of 7.8 percentage points), but news directors were less likely to feel that formal ethics training was necessary for their staff (a decrease of 16.2 percentage points), perhaps because they've had their staffs go through ethics training.

■ Does your station have in writing a code of ethics, standards or guidelines for your staff to refer to?

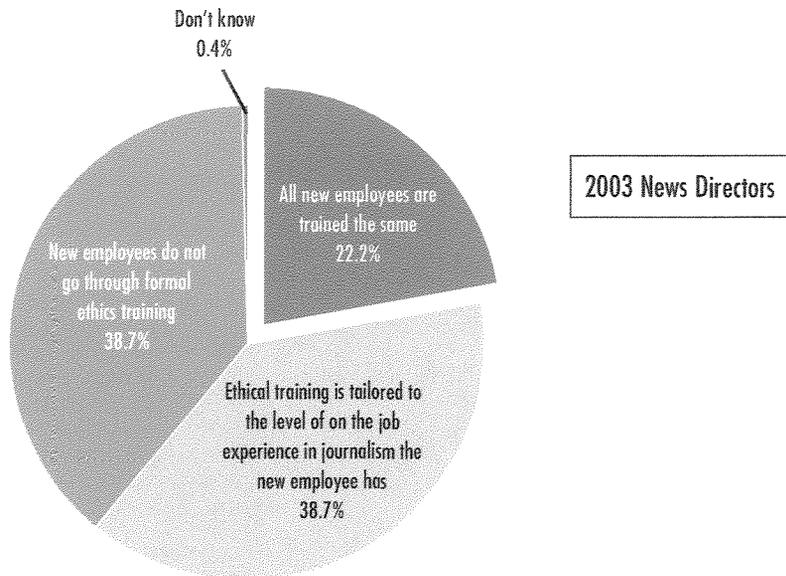


■ How necessary do you think formal ethics training is for your staff?



News directors with no more than five years total experience are less likely to think that formal ethics training is necessary.

■ Which statement best describes how you train new employees on ethical issues?



There is no discernible pattern by market size; smaller markets are no more or less likely to have ethics training than larger markets.

## Chapter II.

### The General Public: 2003 vs. 1998

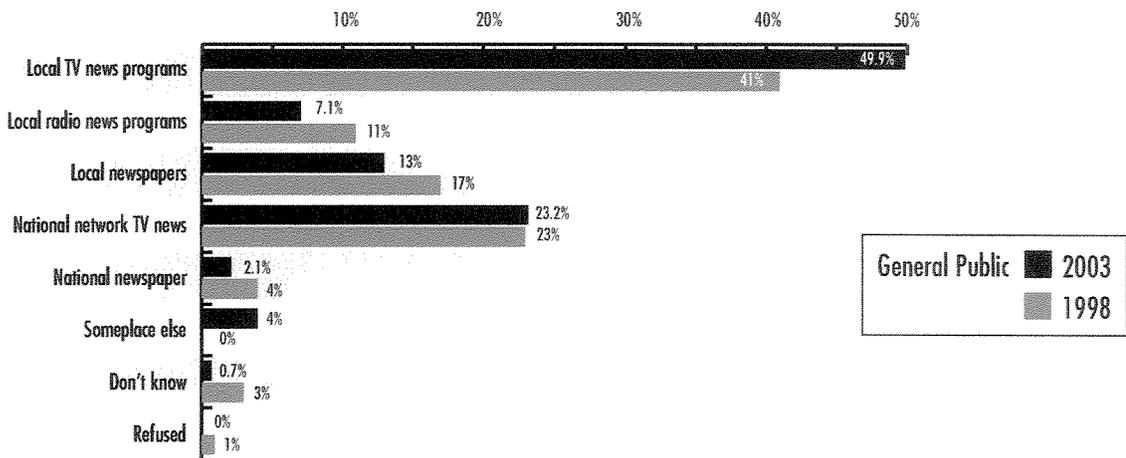
*Slightly more than one-half of the questions on this year's survey were the same as in 1998; the answers in 2003 were consistent with those obtained in the earlier survey.*

*The exact wording of each question can be found in Appendix A.*

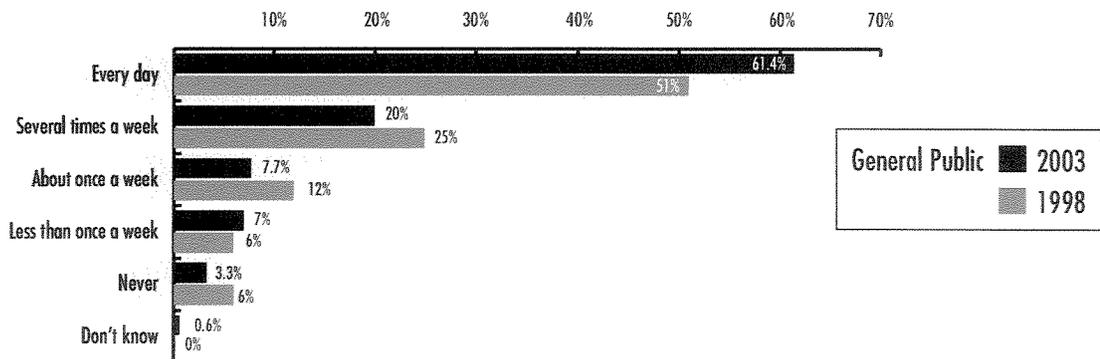
*Given that the margin of error can grow as one looks at subsets of the overall data, readers are encouraged to pay particular attention to larger differences (generally those greater than 6%) between groups and the overall trends in the data.*

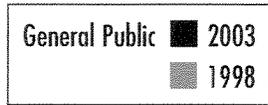
#### Media Use

■ Where do you get most of your news from?

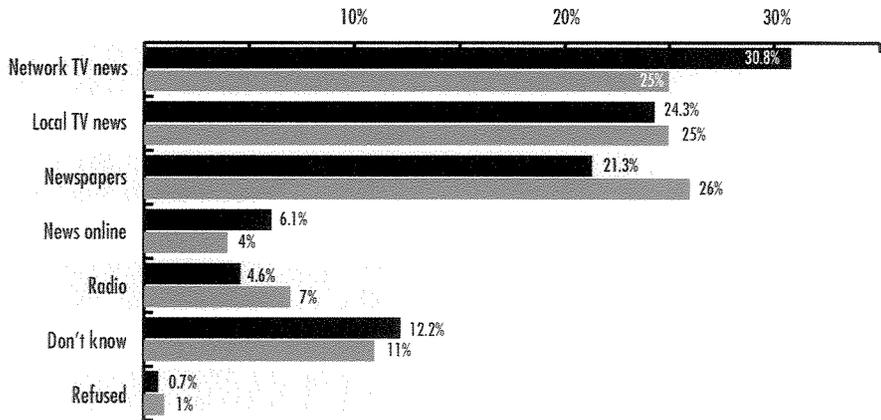


■ How often do you watch local TV newscasts?



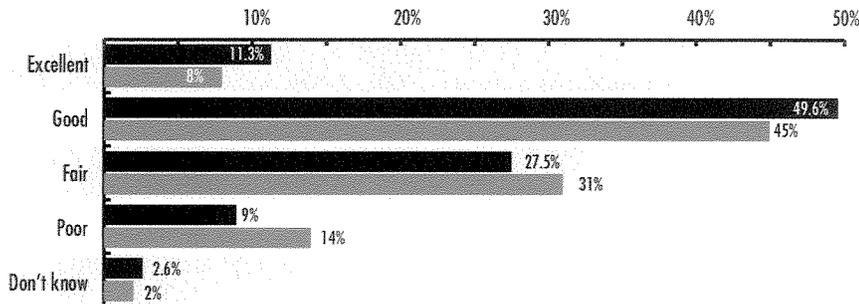


■ When you hear conflicting versions of the same news story, which source do you trust the most?

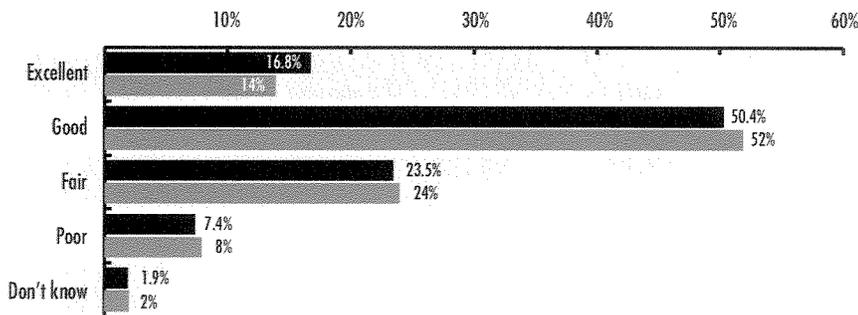


### Media Quality

■ Overall, how would you rate the job the media are doing covering news?

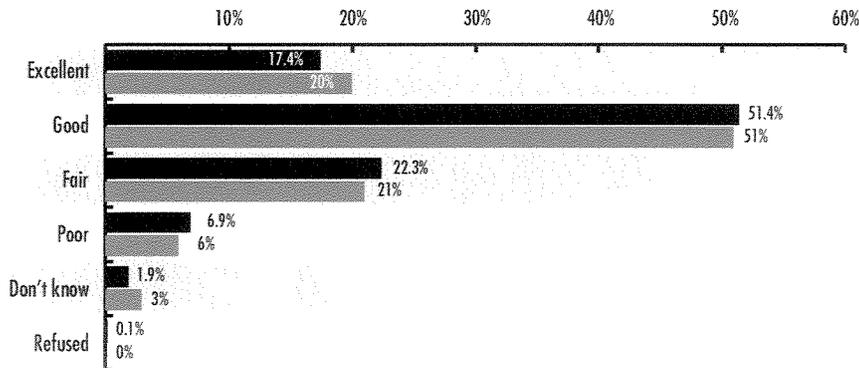


■ Aside from how you feel about the news media's overall performance, how would you rate the overall quality of the news you receive from local television?

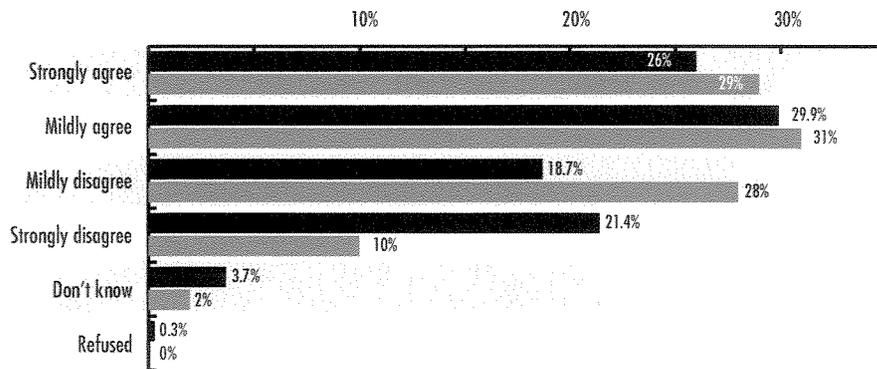


General Public ■ 2003  
■ 1998

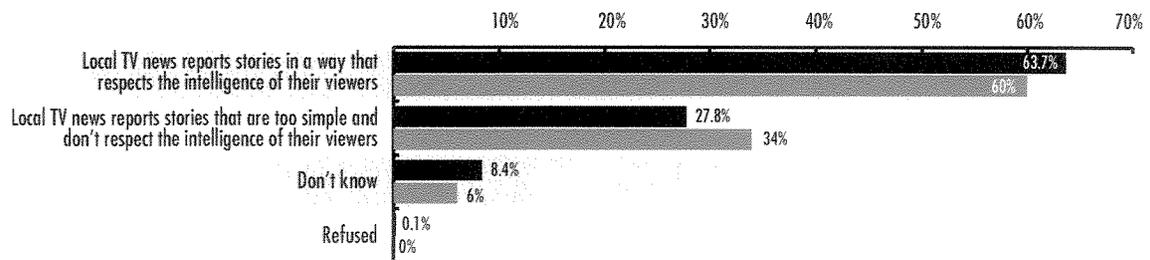
■ How would you rate the news provided by the local TV newscast you watch most often?

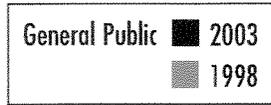


■ Lately, I've become more skeptical about the accuracy of anything I hear on the news.



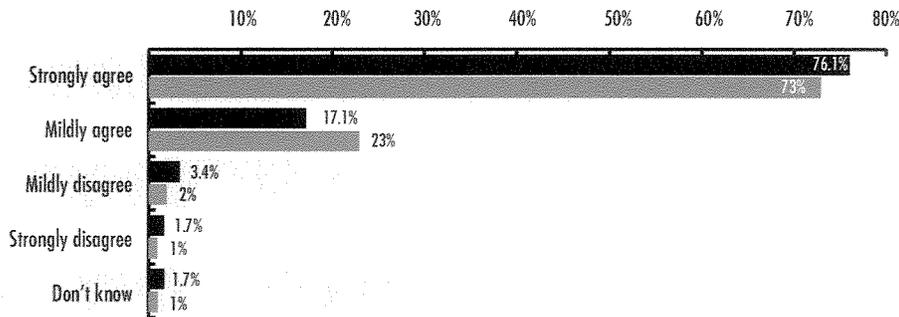
■ Please tell me which statement comes closest to your opinion.



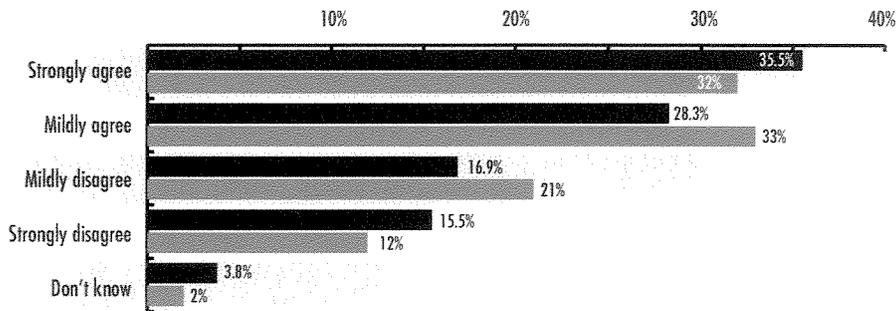


### The Function and Role of TV News

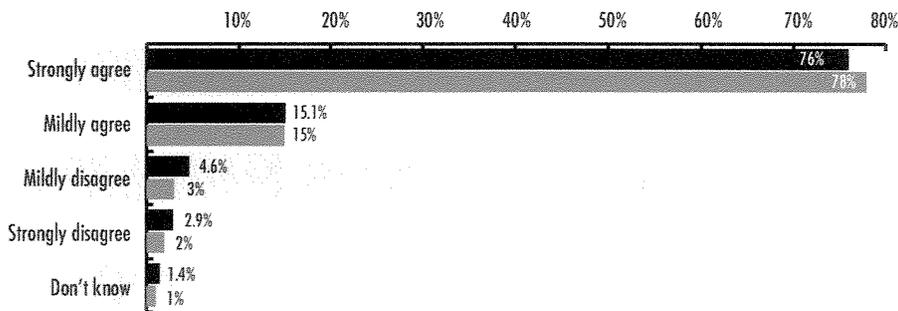
■ An important function of local TV news is to inform people like you about what is happening in your community.



■ An important function of local TV news is to suggest potential solutions to local problems.

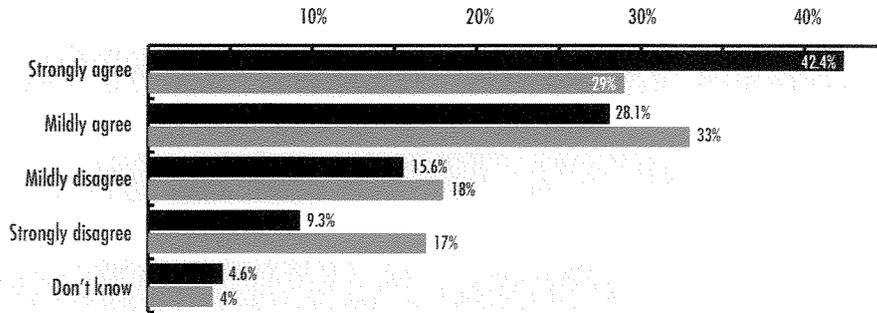


■ The major job of local TV news is to get the facts right, not to interpret the news.

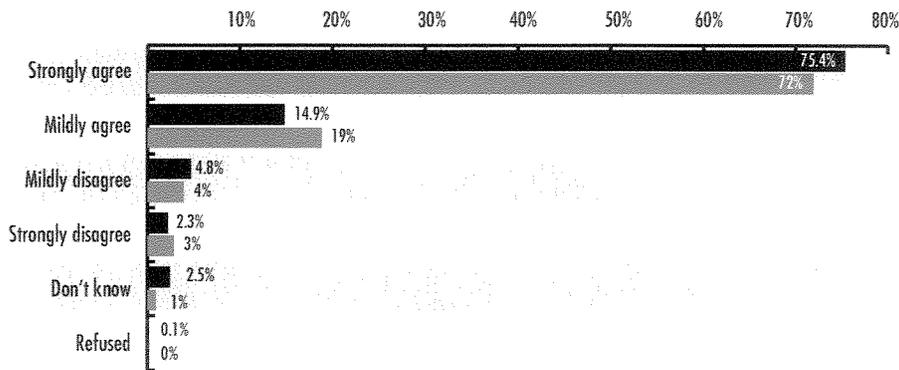


General Public ■ 2003  
■ 1998

■ An important function of local TV news is to act as a watchdog looking over local government.

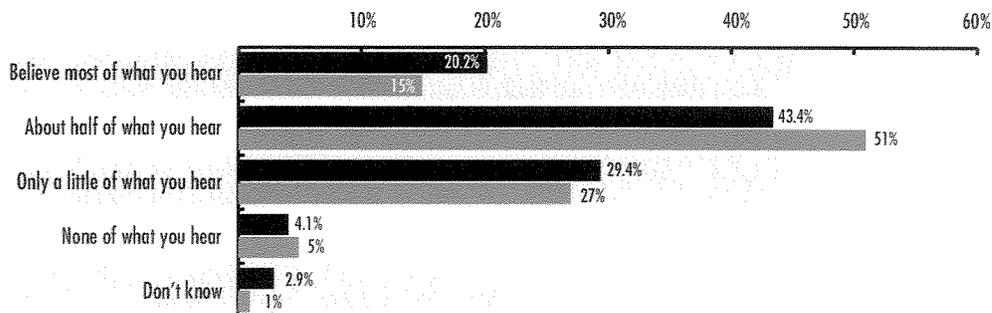


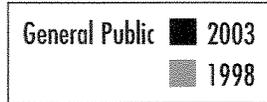
■ The major job of the local TV news is to report the truth, even if it is painful and shocking to viewers.



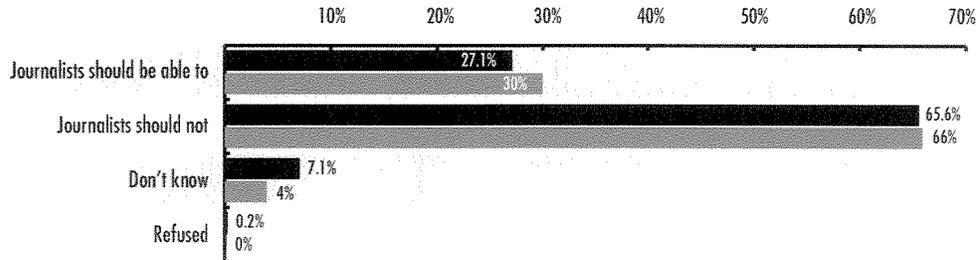
### News Judgment and Journalistic Practices

■ When you see a local TV news story based on a confidential source, how much do you believe?

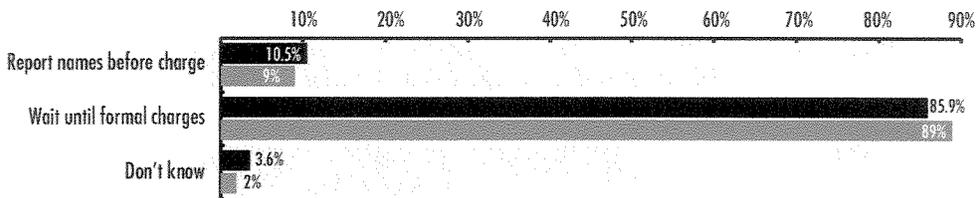




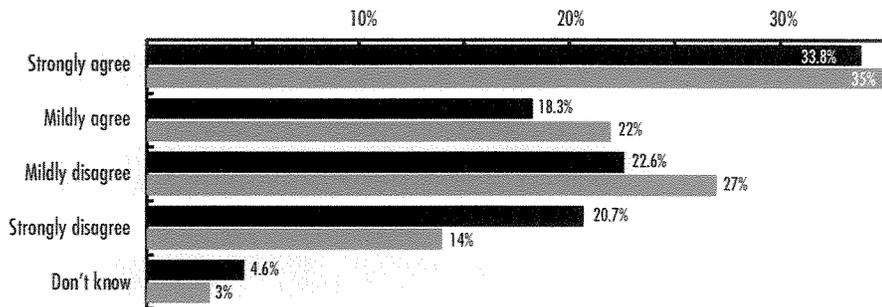
■ Some people say that journalists should be allowed to use hidden cameras or recorders because sometimes it is the only way to get the story. Others say journalists should NOT be allowed to use hidden cameras because it is unfair to the person being reported on. Which comes closest to your opinion?



■ In your opinion, should local TV news report the names of people who are suspected of committing crimes who haven't been formally charged, or should the media wait until formal charges have been brought against the subject before reporting that person's name?

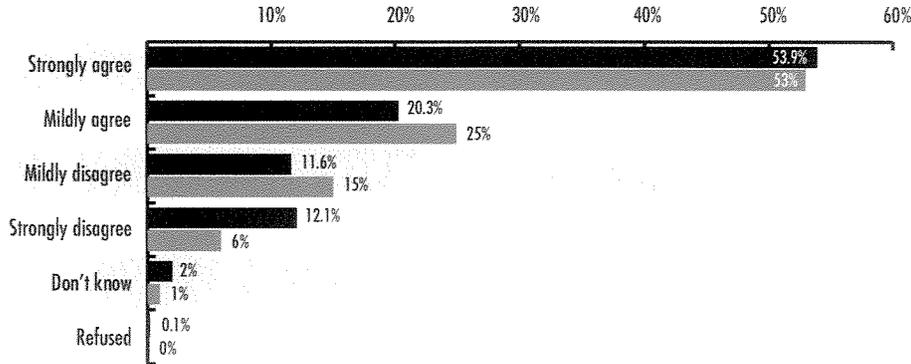


■ If a journalist cannot find a source willing to be named, the journalist should not report the story at all.

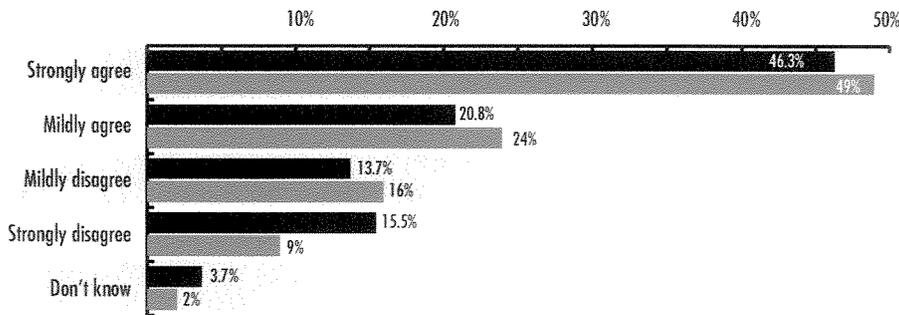


General Public ■ 2003  
 ■ 1998

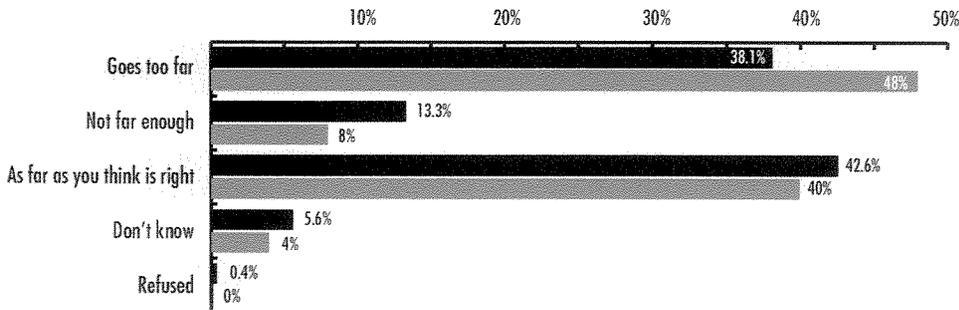
■ I want news only after all of the facts have been checked, even if it means I have to wait longer to hear about a story.



■ I believe that in a controversy with two clearly different sides, local TV news should not report a news story if they can only reach one side for comment.



■ Do you think that local TV news goes too far in disclosing the details of local public figures' private lives, not far enough, or as far as you think is right?

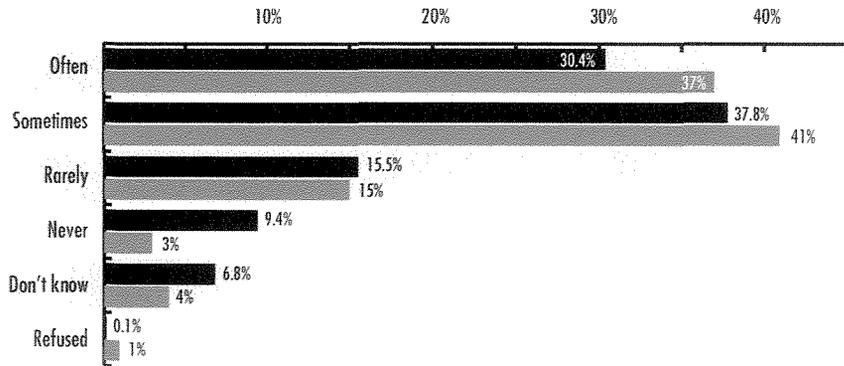


General Public ■ 2003  
 ■ 1998

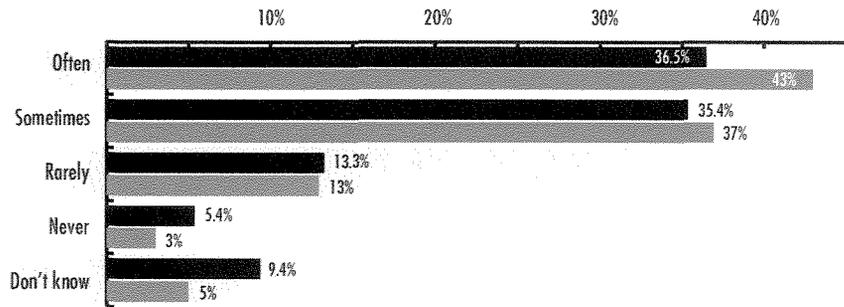
### Improper Influences on Television News

■ How much of the time-if any-do you think news reporting on local television is improperly influenced by ...

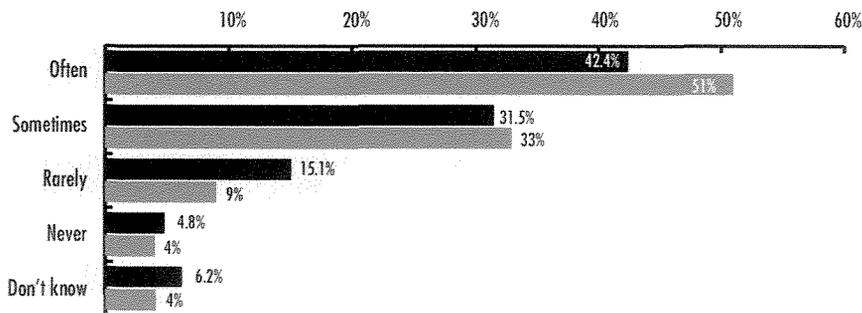
#### *Elected Officials*



#### *Big Business*



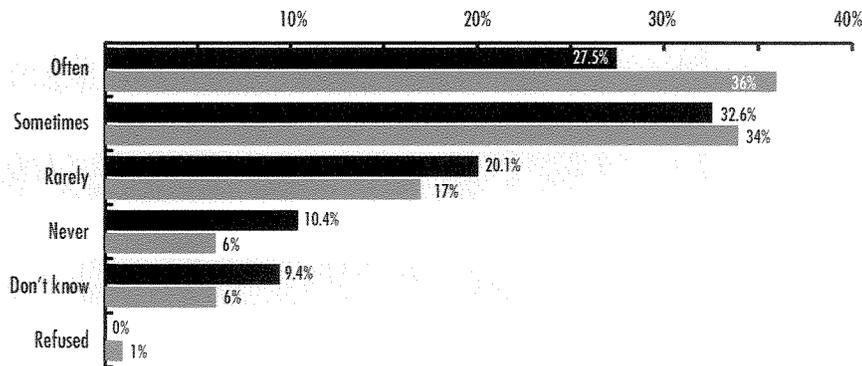
#### *Advertisers*



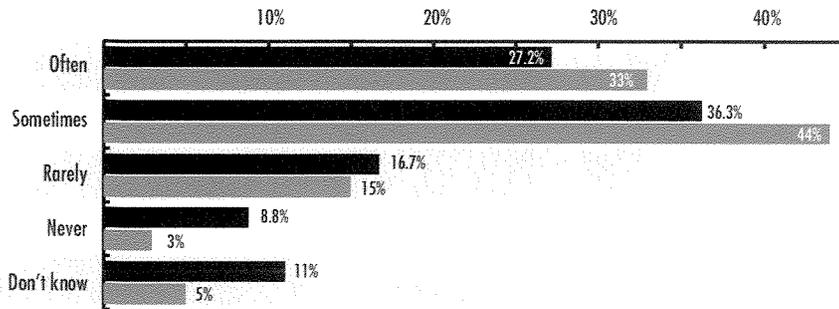
General Public ■ 2003  
 ■ 1998

■ How much of the time-if any-do you think news reporting on local television is improperly influenced by ...  
 (continued)

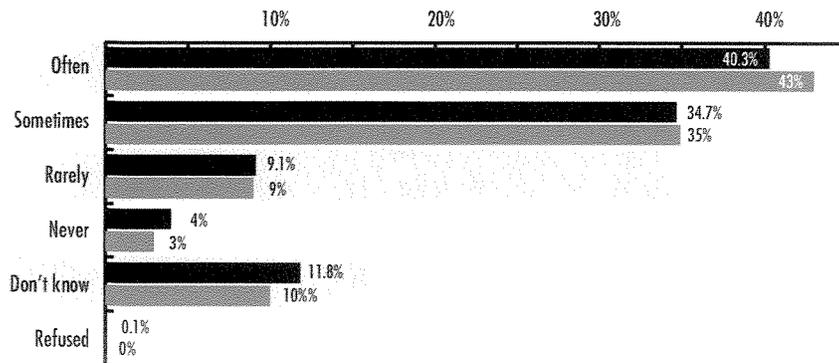
*Federal Government*

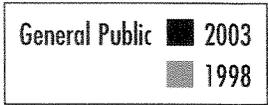


*Interest Groups*



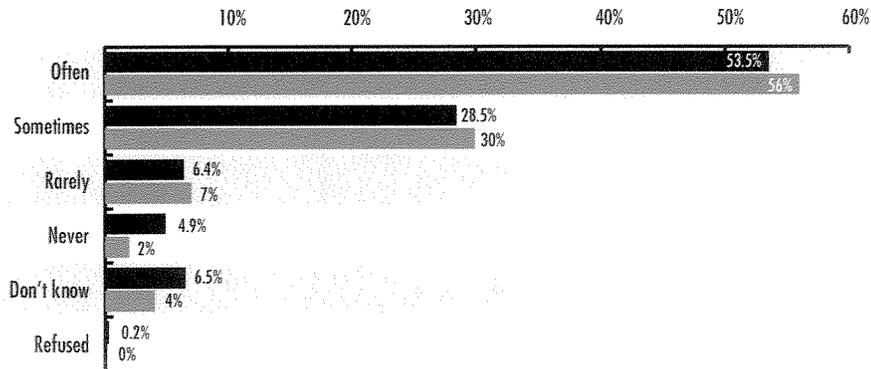
*TV Station Owners*



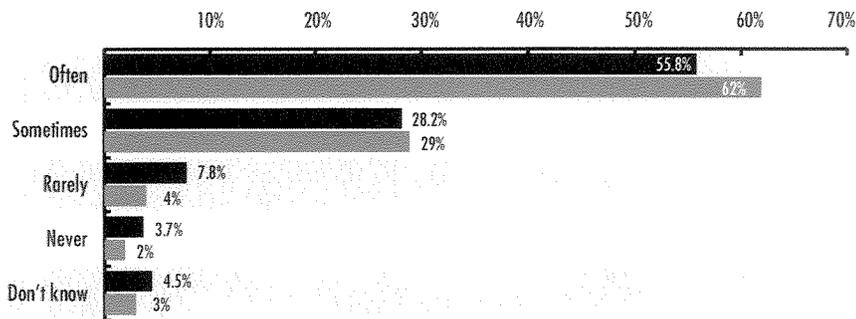


■ How much of the time-if any-do you think news reporting on local television is improperly influenced by ...  
(continued)

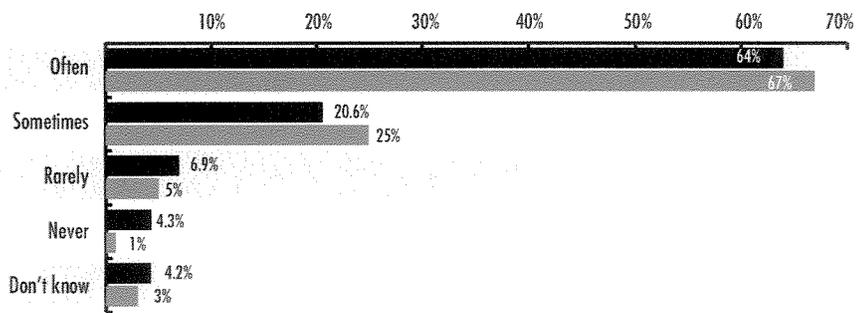
*The desire of the news organization to make a profit*



*The desire to report the story first*



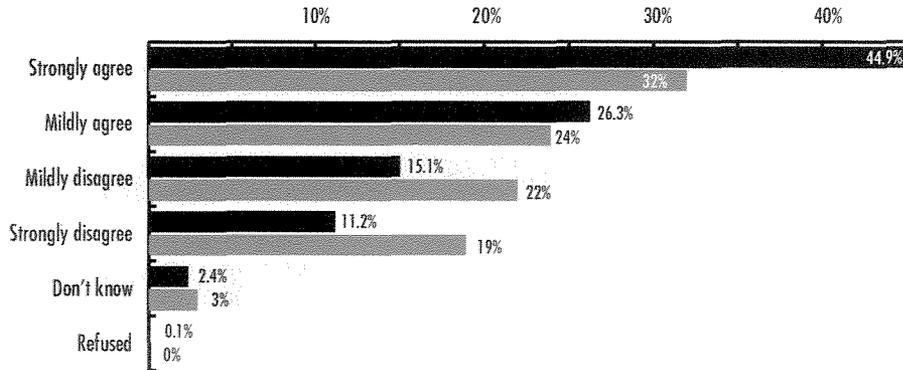
*The desire to increase TV ratings*



General Public ■ 2003 ■ 1998

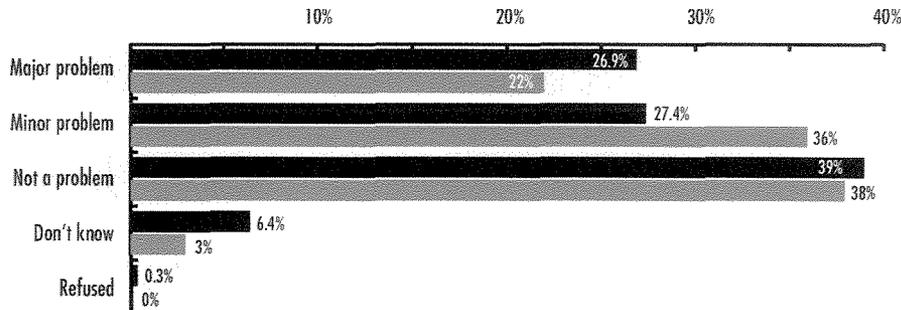
### Perception of Television News and Reporters

■ Reporters and anchors on the TV news program you watch the most chase sensational news stories because they think it attracts large audiences not because they think it's important news.

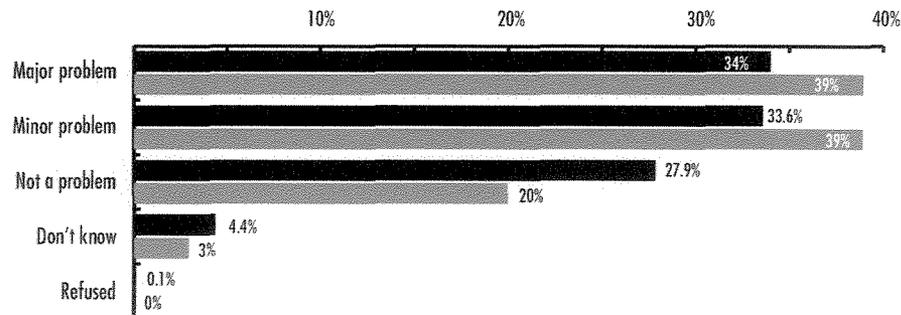


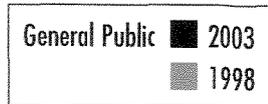
■ I'm going to read you a number of different criticisms that some people have made of local TV news. For each of these criticisms, please tell me how much of a problem it is with the news you get from your local television stations.

*News seems to favor the liberal point of view.*



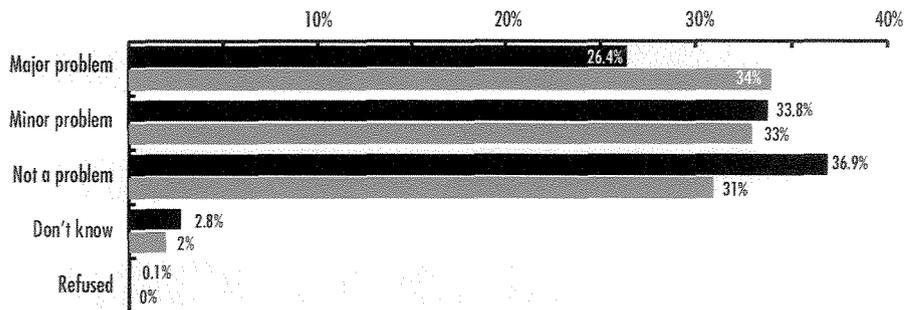
*Reporters don't ask politicians the kinds of questions that are important to most Americans.*



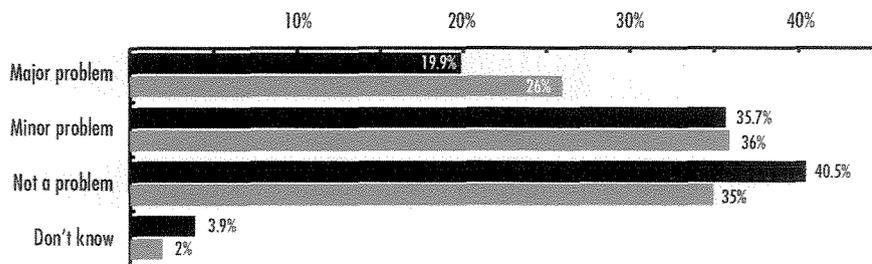


■ I'm going to read you a number of different criticisms that some people have made of local TV news. For each of these criticisms, please tell me how much of a problem it is with the news you get from your local television stations. (continued)

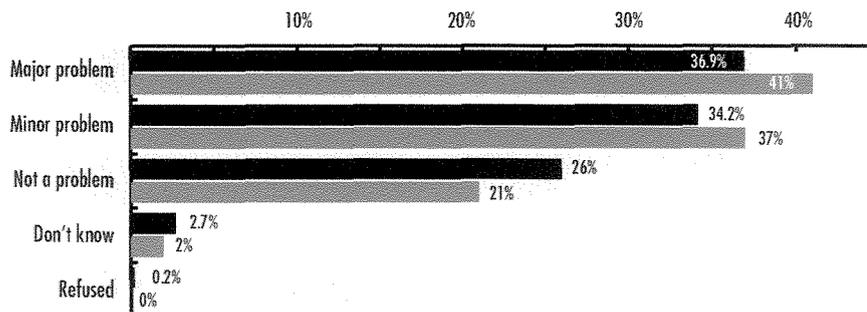
*Reporters are insensitive to people's pain when they report on victims of accidents or crime.*



*There is too little coverage of issues that concern people like me.*

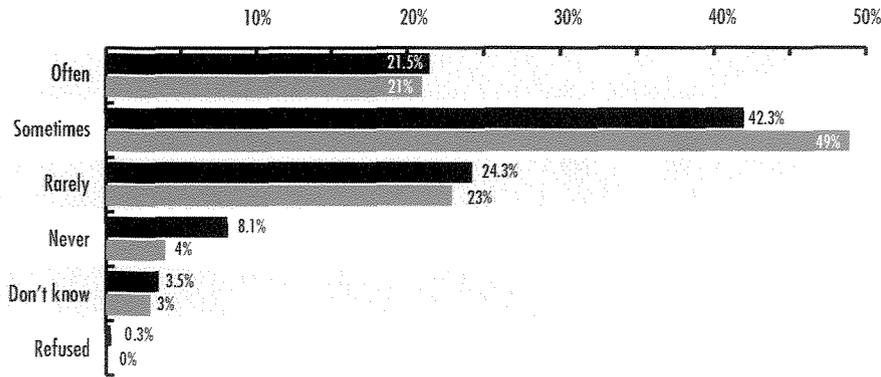


*News dwells too much on the negative stories and ignores many positive stories.*



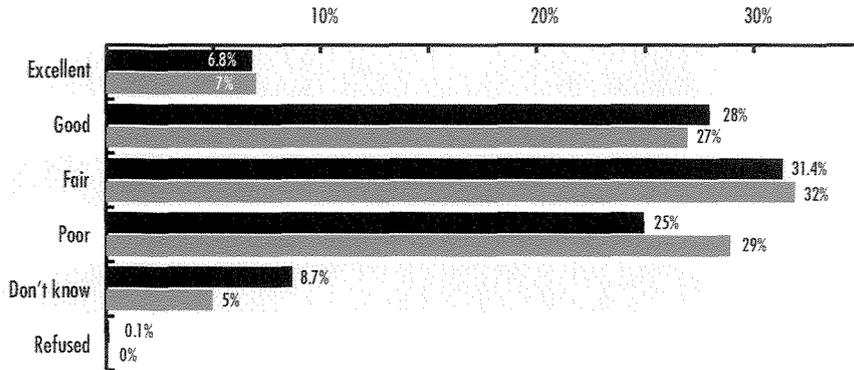
General Public ■ 2003  
 ■ 1998

■ How often do you think television reporters allow their personal opinion about a person, organization, or company to influence the way they cover the news?

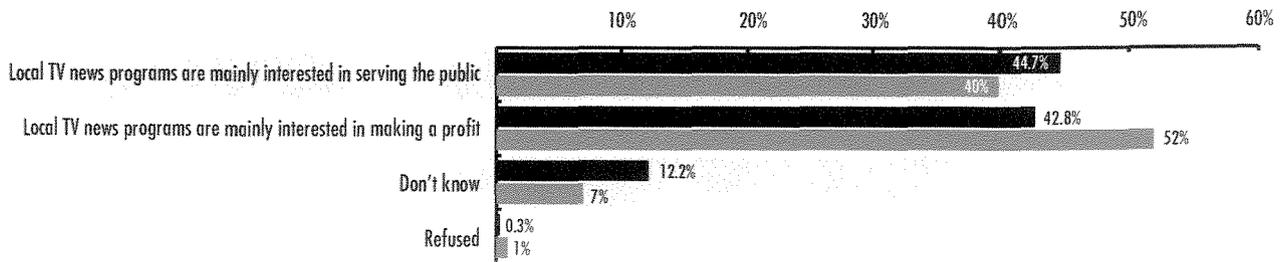


### Television News Operations

■ Would you say that local television news stations do an excellent, good, fair or poor job explaining how they decide what to put on the news?



■ Please tell me which statement comes closest to your opinion:



## Chapter III.

### The News Directors: 2003 vs. 1998

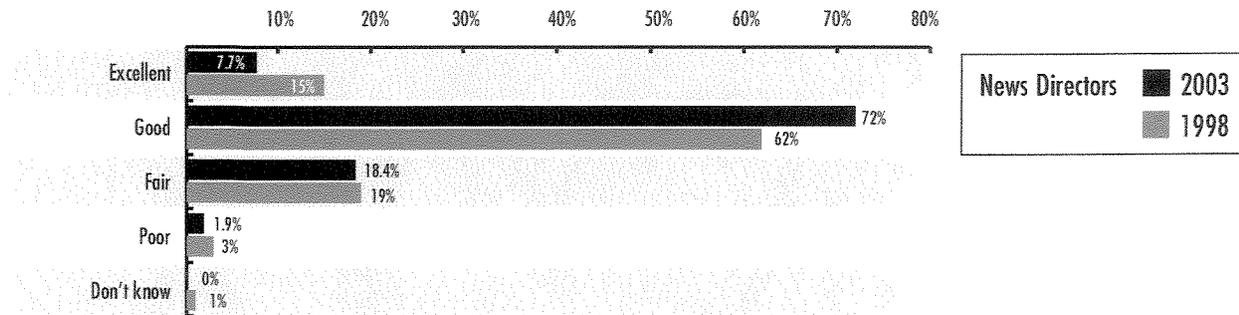
*Slightly more than one-half of the questions on this year's survey were the same as in 1998; the answers in 2003 were consistent with those obtained in the earlier survey.*

*The exact wording of each question is in Appendix B.*

*Given that the margin of error can grow as one looks at subsets of the overall data, readers are encouraged to pay particular attention to larger differences (generally those greater than 6%) between groups and the overall trends in the data.*

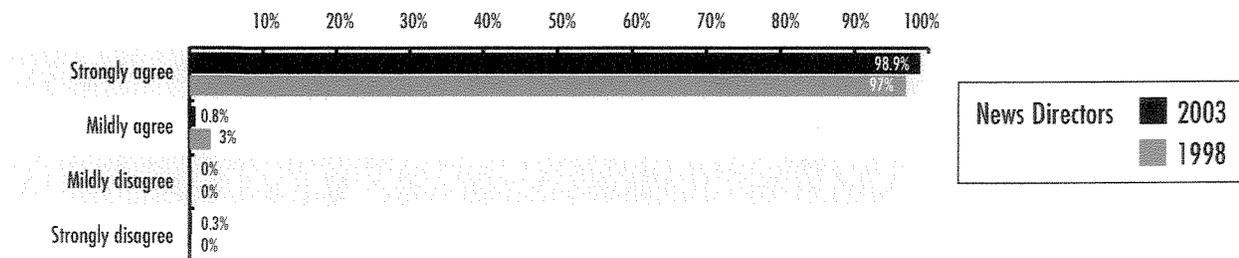
#### Media Quality

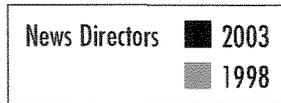
■ Overall, how would you rate the job the media are doing covering news?



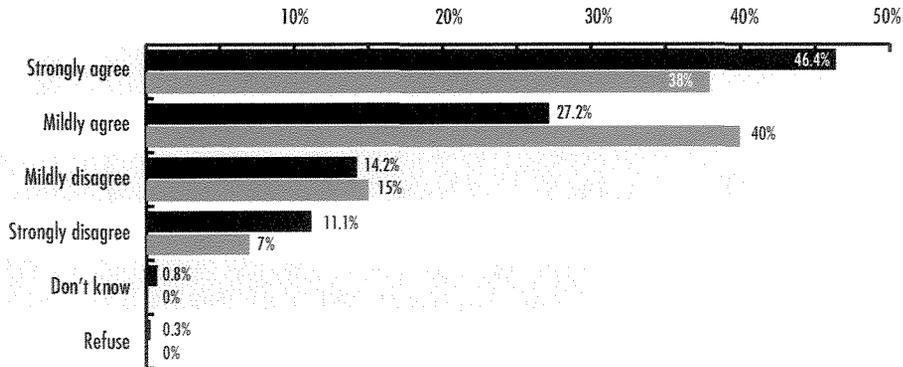
#### The Function and Role of Television News

■ An important function of local TV news is to inform people about what is happening in their community.

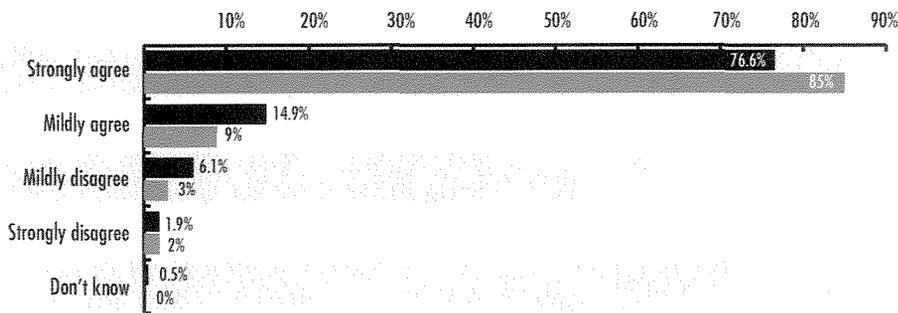




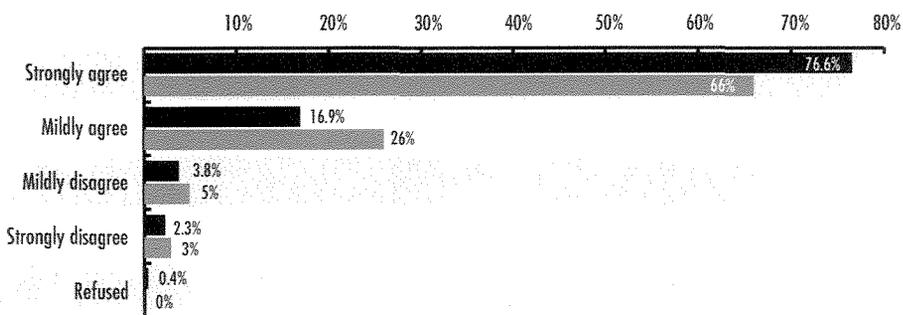
■ An important function of local TV news is to suggest potential solutions to local problems.



■ The major job of local TV news is to get the facts right, not to interpret the news.

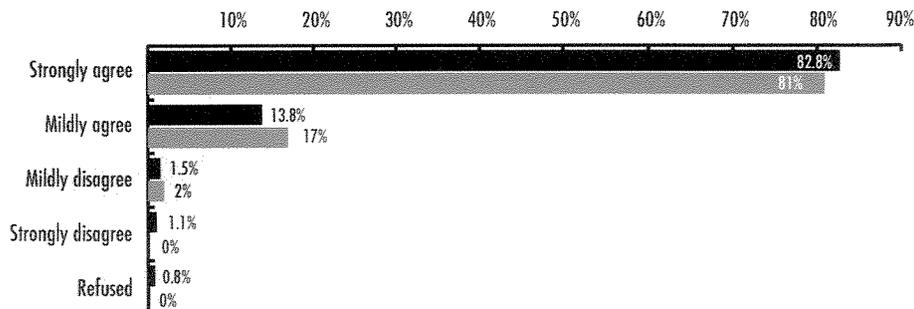


■ An important function of local TV news is to act as a watchdog looking over local government.



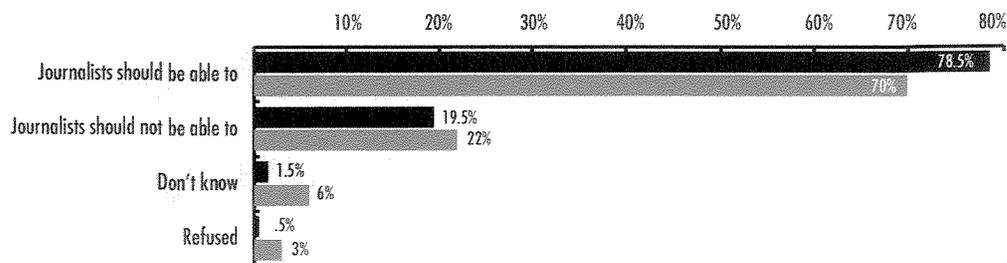
News Directors ■ 2003  
 ■ 1998

■ The major job of the local TV news is to report the truth, even if it is painful and shocking to viewers.



### News Judgment and Journalistic Practices

■ Some people say that journalists should be allowed to use hidden cameras or recorders because sometimes it is the only way to get the story. Others say journalists should NOT be allowed to use hidden cameras because it is unfair to the person being reported on. Which comes closest to your opinion?

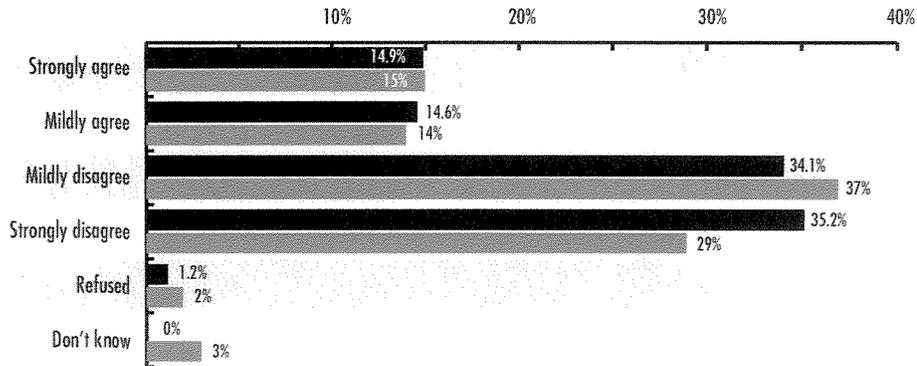


■ In your opinion, should local TV news report the names of people who are suspected of committing crimes who haven't been formally charged, or should the media wait until formal charges have been brought against the subject before reporting that person's name?

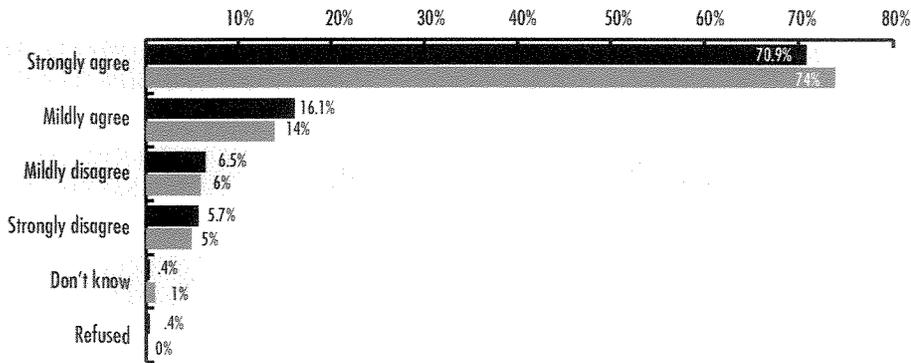


General Public ■ 2003  
 ■ 1998

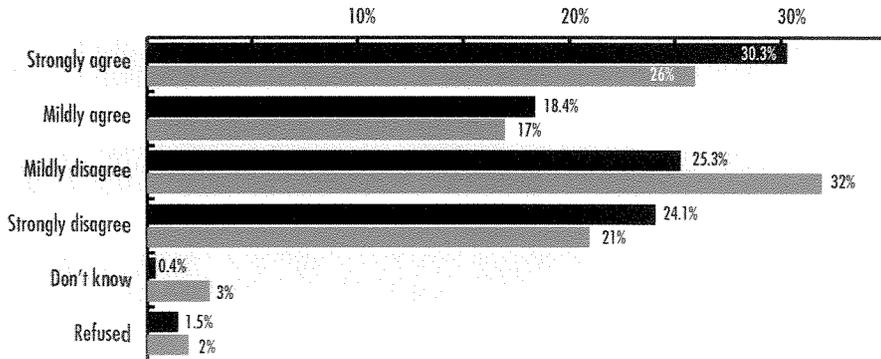
■ If a journalist cannot find a source willing to be named, the journalist should not report the story at all.



■ Our station should report news only after all of the facts have been checked, even if it means we don't report the story first.

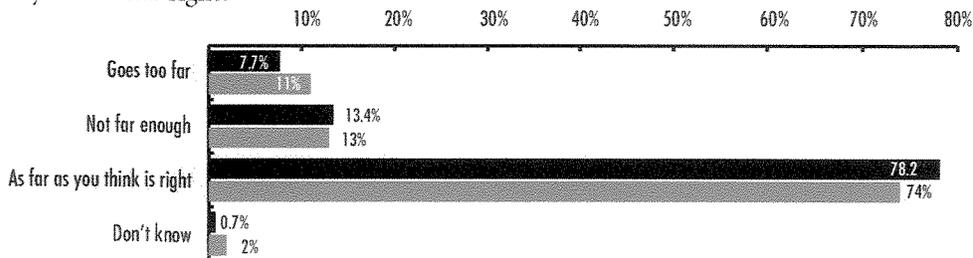


■ In a controversy with two clearly different sides, local TV news should not report a news story if they can only reach one side for comment.



General Public ■ 2003  
 ■ 1998

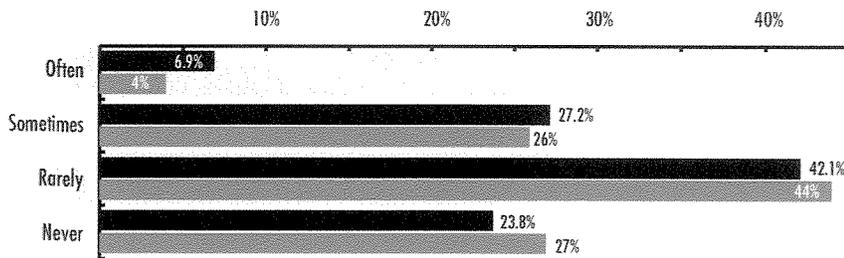
■ Local TV news goes too far in disclosing the details of local public figures' private lives, not far enough, or as far as you think is right?



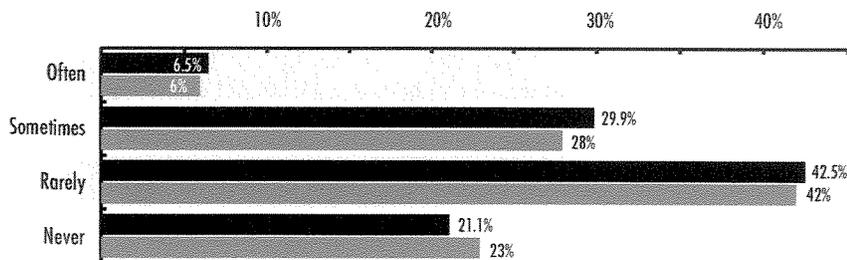
### Improper Influences on Television News

■ How much of the time-if any-do you think news reporting on local television is improperly influenced by ...

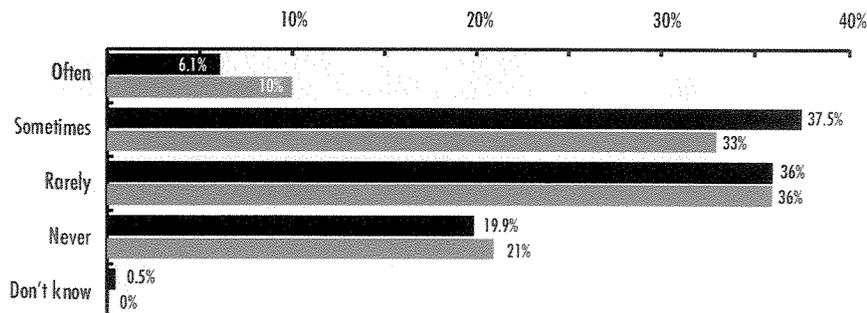
*Elected Officials*

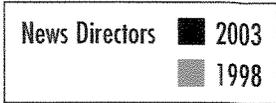


*Big Business*



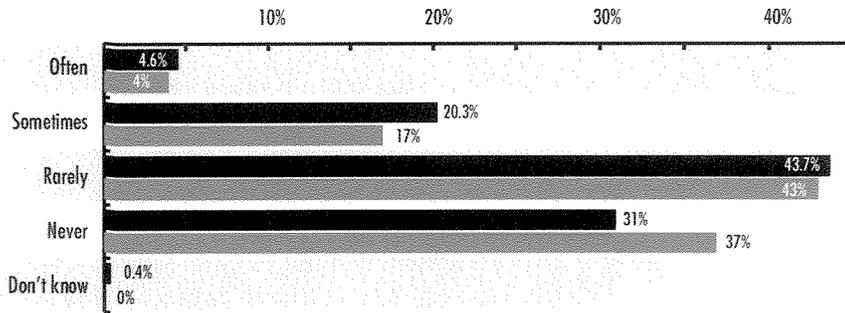
*Advertisers*



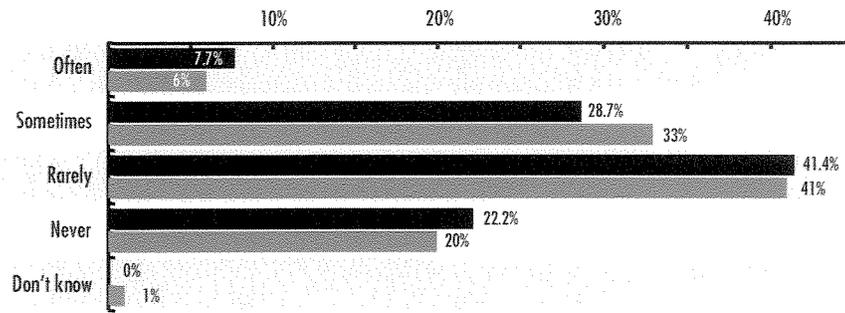


■ How much of the time-if any-do you think news reporting on local television is improperly influenced by ...  
(continued)

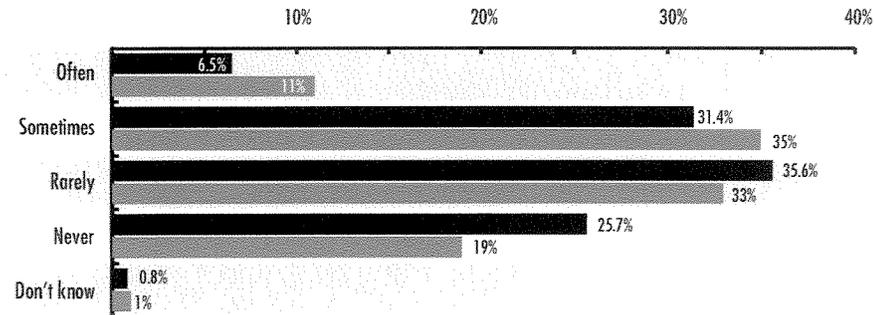
*Federal Government*



*Interest Groups*



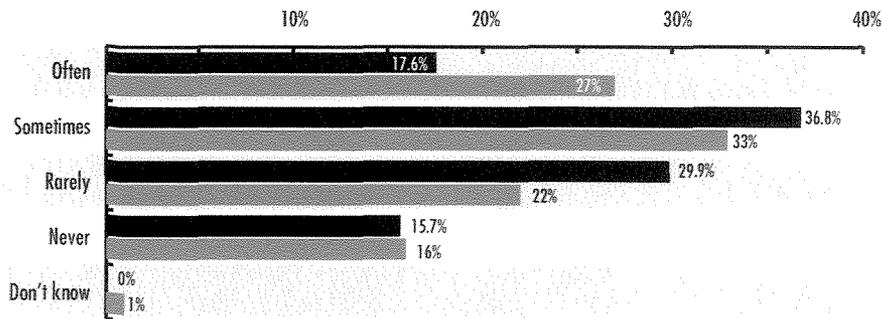
*TV Station Owners*



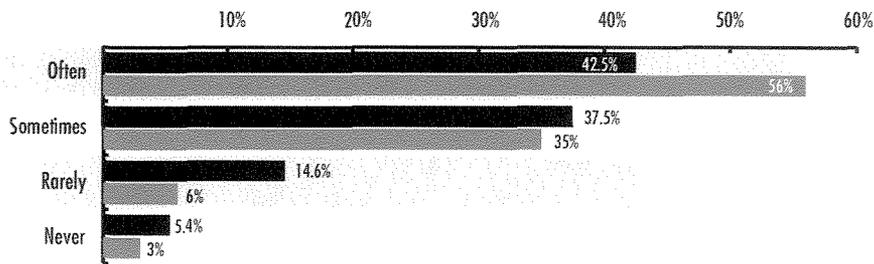
News Directors  2003  
 1998

■ How much of the time-if any-do you think news reporting on local television is improperly influenced by ...  
 (continued)

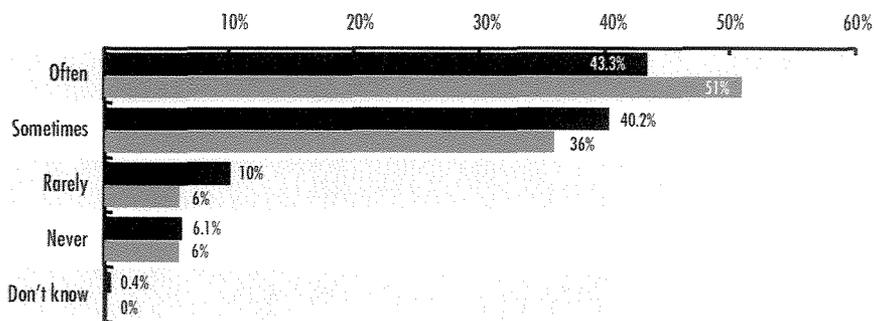
*The desire of the news organizations to make a profit*



*The desire to report the story first*



*The desire to increase TV ratings*

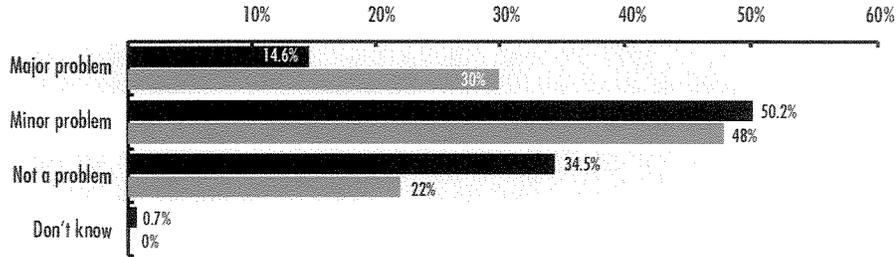


News Directors  2003  
 1998

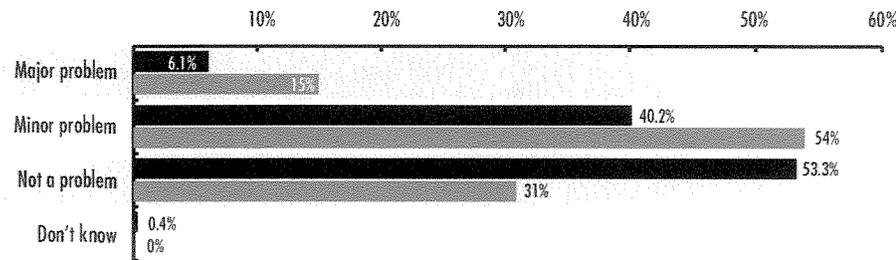
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I'm going to read you a number of different criticisms that some people have made of local TV news. For each of these criticisms, please tell me how much of a problem it is with your station.

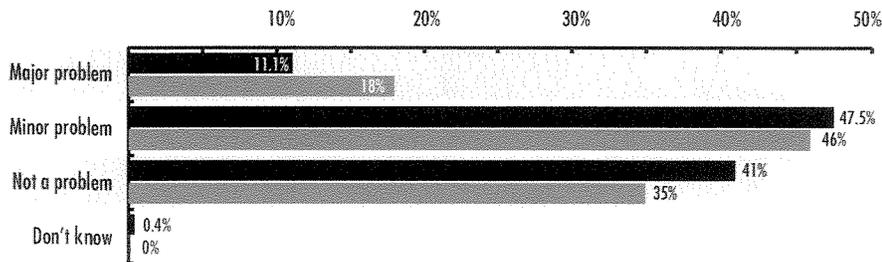
*Reporters don't ask politicians the kinds of questions that are important to most Americans.*



*Reporters are insensitive to peoples' pain when they report on victims of accidents or crime.*

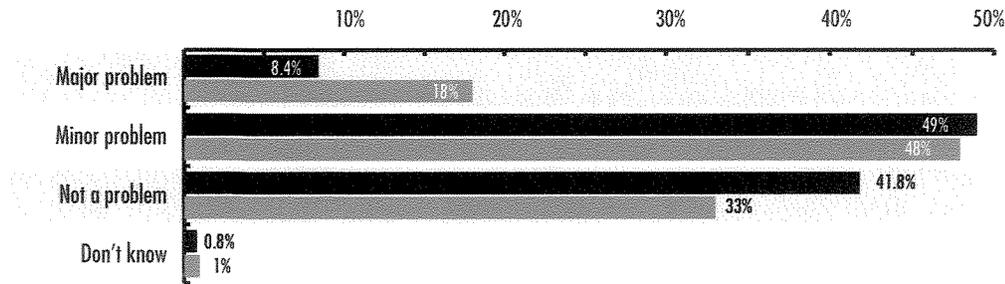


*There is too little coverage of issues that concern most people.*

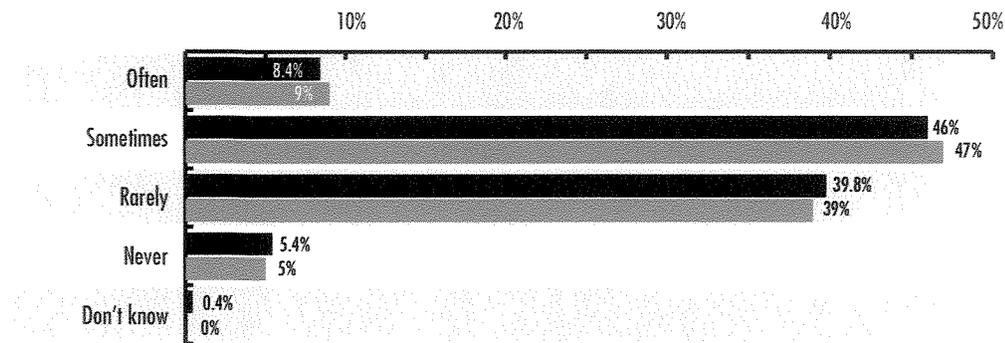


News Directors ■ 2003  
 ■ 1998

*News dwells too much on the negative stories and ignores many positive stories.*

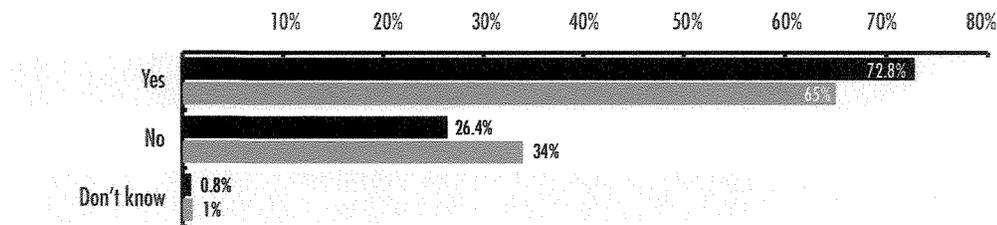


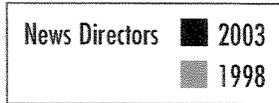
■ How often do you think television reporters allow their own, personal opinion about a person, organization, or company to influence the way they cover the news?



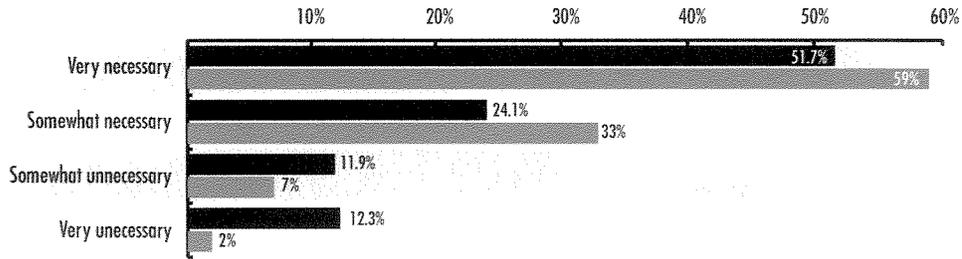
### Ethics Training in the Newsroom

■ Thinking about journalism ethics, does your station have in writing a code of ethics, standards or guidelines for your staff to refer to?

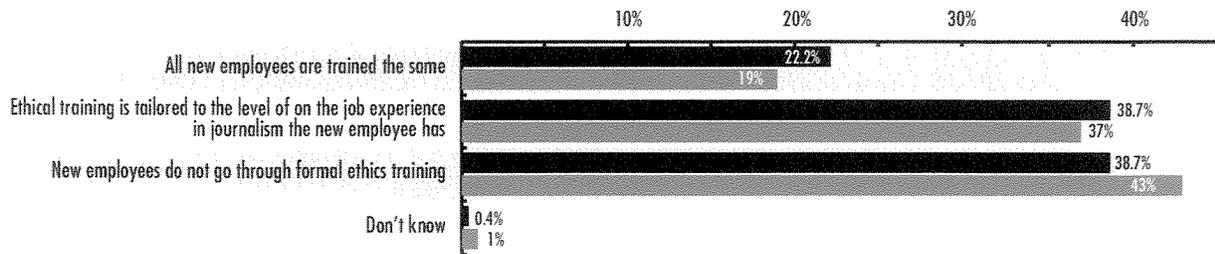




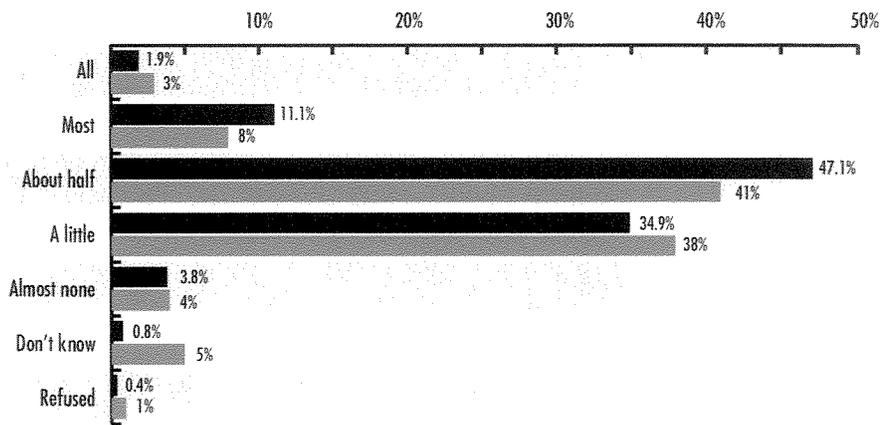
■ How necessary do you think formal ethics training is for your staff?

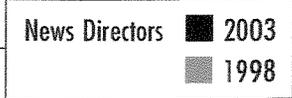


■ Which statement best describes how you train new employees on ethical issues?



■ When interviewing new employees, how much of the interview is devoted to exploring decision-making skills?

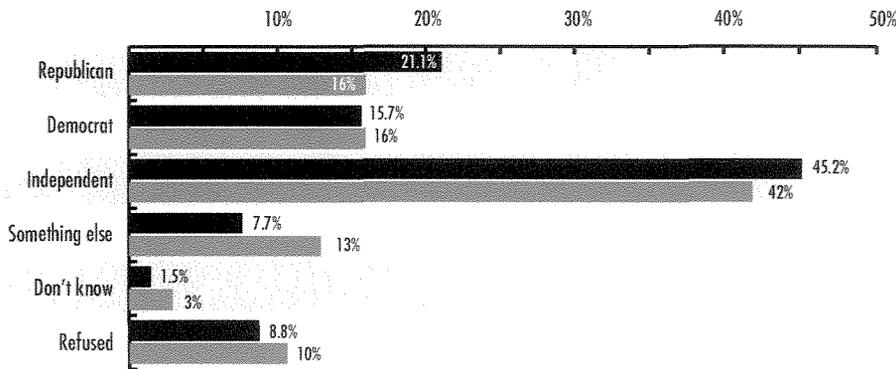




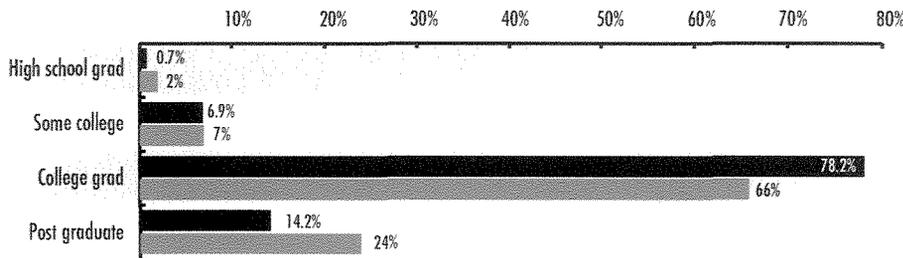
### Who are the News Directors?

As with the U.S. population in general, news directors are more likely to be Republicans in 2003 than in 1998. Compared with the 1998 survey, the survey respondents were a bit more experienced, were a little more racially diverse and included more women. The percentage of news directors with degrees in journalism or communication increased by 25.4 percentage points between 1998 and 2003.

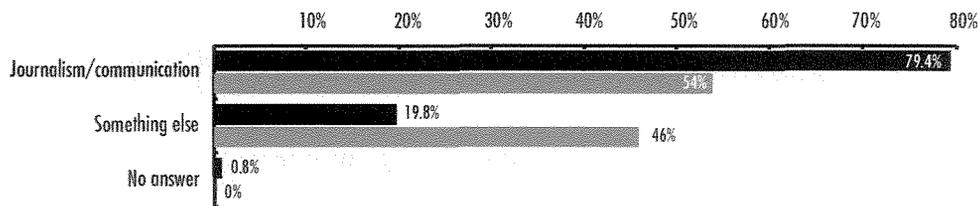
■ Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an independent or something else?



■ What was the last grade of school you completed?

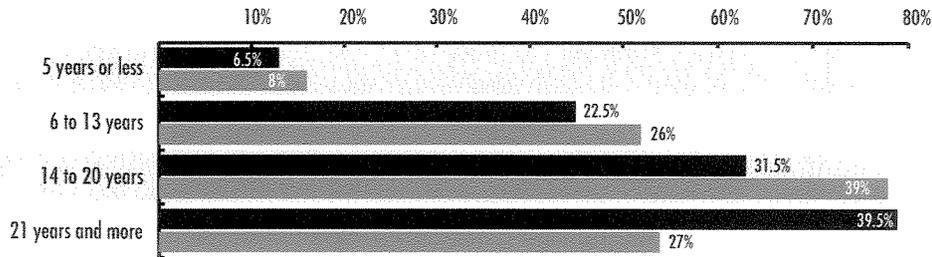


■ Is your degree in journalism/communication or something else?

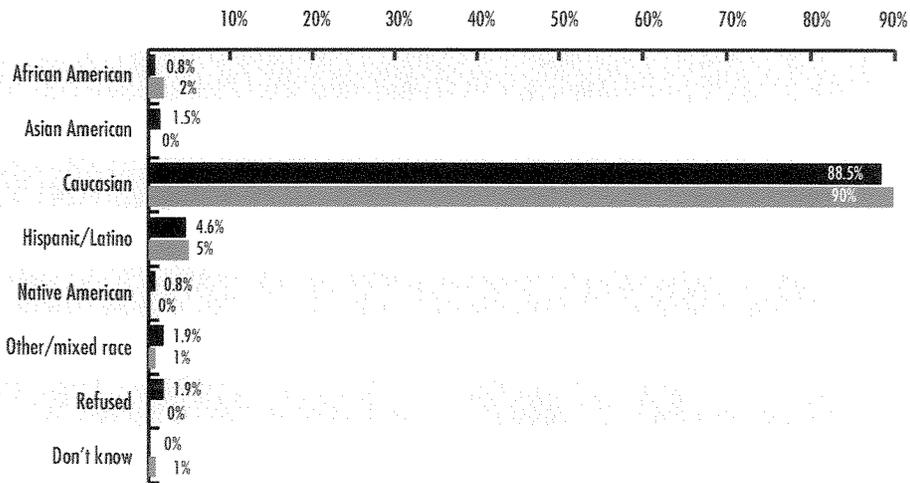


News Directors ■ 2003  
 ■ 1998

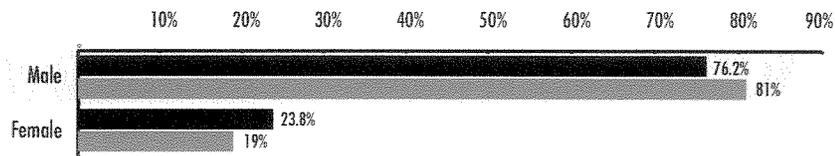
■ How long have you been working professionally in local television news?



■ What is your race?



■ Respondent gender



## Methodology

Advantage Research (Ft. Wayne, Ind., Grand Rapids, Mich., Detroit, Mich., and Cincinnati, Ohio) conducted interviews with the general public using professional survey interviewers trained in standard protocols for administering survey instruments. All interviewers assigned to this survey participated in special training conducted by senior staff. The draft survey questionnaire and field protocols were tested prior to the start of the formal interviewing period, and interviews were extensively monitored by staff to ensure professional standards for quality.

The sample for the general population survey was stratified to ensure that U.S. Bureau of the Census regions were represented in proportion to their share of the total U.S. adult (18 and older) population. Within regions, telephone numbers were generated through a random-digit-dial methodology to ensure that all possible residential telephone numbers had an equal probability of selection. Telephone banks that contain no known residential telephone numbers were removed from the sample selection process. Within each household, one adult was randomly selected to complete the interview, and all selected households were called at least three times.

The final results were weighted to ensure that the final data match U.S. Bureau of the Census estimates for age, gender, race and education for adults in the United States.

The sample error for this survey is +/- 3.0 percent: There is less than 1 chance in 20 that the results of this survey would differ by more than 3 percent in either direction from the results that would be obtained if all adults in the contiguous U.S. had been selected. The sample error is larger for subgroups.

The news directors' sample was selected from a continually updated list of all television news directors maintained by Bob Papper, director of the RTNDA/Ball State University Annual Survey. All television news directors were contacted at least eight times by Advantage Research. In addition, Bob Papper made randomly generated calls to news directors who did not respond to Advantage Research. The resulting sample is representative of the various market sizes and geographic locations of all television stations that air local news.

The sample error associated with the news directors' survey is +/- 6 percent, or less than 1 chance in 20 that the results of this survey would differ by more than 6 percent in either direction from the results that would be obtained if all television news directors in the U.S. had been surveyed. The sample error is larger for subgroups.

Data entry and tabulation were completed by the Ball State University Center for Business Research.

## Appendix A

### General Public Questionnaire

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Q1. Overall, how would you rate the job the media are doing covering news-excellent, good, fair, or poor?</b></p> <p>11.3% Excellent<br/>49.6 Good<br/>27.5 Fair<br/>9.0 Poor<br/>2.6 Don't know</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <p><b>Q4. How often do you watch local TV newscasts hosted by news anchors from your area? Do you watch local TV newscasts every day, several times a week, about once a week, less than once a week, or never?</b></p> <p>61.4% Every day<br/>20.0 Several times a week<br/>7.7 About once a week<br/>7.0 Less than once a week<br/>3.3 Never<br/>0.6 Don't know</p> |
| <p><b>Q2. Where do you get most of your news from? Is it from local television news programs, local radio news programs, local newspapers, national network TV news, a national newspaper or someplace else? (randomize list)</b></p> <p>49.9% Local TV news programs<br/>7.1 Local radio news programs<br/>13.0 Local newspapers<br/>23.2 National network TV news<br/>2.1 National newspaper<br/>4.0 Someplace else<br/>0.7 Don't know</p> | <p><b>Q5. Aside from how you feel about the news media's overall performance, how would you rate the overall quality of the news you receive from local television-is it excellent, good, fair, or poor?</b></p> <p>16.8% Excellent<br/>50.4 Good<br/>23.5 Fair<br/>7.4 Poor<br/>1.9 Don't know</p>                                                                   |
| <p><b>Q3. How often do you watch national network news on television ... like Peter Jennings, Tom Brokaw, Dan Rather, or national cable channels like CNN, FoxNews, or MSNBC? Do you watch every day, several times a week, about once a week, less than once a week, or never?</b></p> <p>47.4% Every day<br/>22.6% Several times a week<br/>13.0 About once a week<br/>10.5 Less than once a week<br/>5.9 Never<br/>0.6 Don't know</p>     | <p><b>Q6. How would you rate the news provided by the local TV newscast you watch most often-excellent, good, fair, or poor?</b></p> <p>17.4% Excellent<br/>51.4 Good<br/>22.3 Fair<br/>6.9 Poor<br/>1.9 Don't know<br/>0.1 Refused</p>                                                                                                                               |

**Q7. How effectively does the local TV station you watch most often for news provide information you need to make decisions about your community and your life?**

- 10.3% Excellent
- 44.1 Good
- 28.5 Fair
- 11.9 Poor
- 5.0 Don't know
- 0.2 Refused

I would like you to think about the reporters and anchors on the local TV news program you watch the most.

**Q8. Overall, would you say that the anchors and reporters on that station are:**

- 45.0% Very knowledgeable about the area and the subjects they report on
- 43.4 Somewhat knowledgeable about the area and the subjects they report on
- 6.5 Not too knowledgeable about the area and the subjects they report on
- 1.7 Not at all knowledgeable about the area and the subjects they report on
- 3.4 Don't know/No answer

Now tell me whether or not you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the reporters and anchors on the TV news program you watch the most. (PROBE: Do you agree/disagree strongly or mildly?)

**Q9. They chase sensational news stories because they think it attracts large audiences not because they think it's important news.**

- 44.9% Strongly agree
- 26.3 Mildly agree
- 15.1 Mildly disagree
- 11.2 Strongly disagree
- 2.4 Don't know
- 0.1 Refused

**Q10. They really seem to care about the news and getting the story right.**

- 44.8% Strongly agree
- 34.4 Mildly agree
- 9.5 Mildly disagree
- 9.3 Strongly disagree
- 1.9 Don't know
- 0.1 Refused

**Q11. How would you characterize the live reports on the local TV station you watch most often for news? (rotate first two choices)**

- 65.9% Generally, the live reports were good and dealt with news going on right then.
- 24.8 Generally, the live reports waste time because nothing much is usually going on right then.
- 9.3 Don't remember any live reports

**Q12. How would you characterize the political news reporting on the local TV station you watch most often for news?**

- 8.6% Excellent, thorough coverage of the issues and the candidates
- 63.0 Good coverage of the issues and the candidates
- 18.3 Little coverage of issues and candidates
- 4.8 Seldom ever cover issues and candidates
- 5.3 Don't know/refuse

**Q13. Did those reports help you make up your mind about which candidate you preferred?**

- 40.6% Yes
- 59.4 No

**Q14. Did you vote in the election this past November?**

- 76.3% Yes
- 23.1 No
- 0.6 Refused

Please tell me if you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

(Do you agree/disagree strongly or mildly?)

(Randomize Q15 to Q21)

**Q15. An important function of local TV news is to inform people like you about what is happening in your community.**

76.1% Strongly agree  
17.1 Mildly agree  
3.4 Mildly disagree  
1.7 Strongly disagree  
1.7 Don't know

**Q16. An important function of local TV news is to suggest potential solutions to local problems.**

35.5% Strongly agree  
28.3 Mildly agree  
16.9 Mildly disagree  
15.5 Strongly disagree  
3.8 Don't know

**Q17. The major job of local TV news is to get the facts right, not to interpret the news.**

76.0% Strongly agree  
15.1 Mildly agree  
4.6 Mildly disagree  
2.9 Strongly disagree  
1.4 Don't know

**Q18. An important function of local TV news is to act as a watchdog looking over local government.**

42.4% Strongly agree  
28.1 Mildly agree  
15.6 Mildly disagree  
9.3 Strongly disagree  
4.6 Don't know

**Q19. The major job of the local TV news is to report the truth, even if it is painful and shocking to viewers.**

75.4% Strongly agree  
14.9 Mildly agree  
4.8 Mildly disagree  
2.3 Strongly disagree  
2.5 Don't know  
0.1 Refused

**Q20. Do you think there are topics that are so complex, boring, or non-visual-like mental health and local government-that stations tend to avoid doing stories on them?**

34.7% Strongly agree  
23.8 Mildly agree  
18.7 Mildly disagree  
14.9 Strongly disagree  
7.8 Don't know  
0.1 Refused

**Q21. Do you think there are stories that are so sensational or have such promotable pictures that stations tend to cover them-even though the news value of those stories may be minimal?**

50.8% Strongly agree  
26.8 Mildly agree  
9.2 Mildly disagree  
8.7 Strongly disagree  
4.5 Don't know

I'm going to read you a number of different criticisms that some people have made of local TV news. For each of these criticisms, please tell me how much of a problem it is with the news you get from your local television stations. First, how about (READ FROM LIST)-is this a major problem, a minor problem, or not a problem with the news you get from local television stations?

(Randomize Q22 to Q27)

**Q22. News seems to favor the liberal point of view.**

26.9% Major problem  
 27.4 Minor problem  
 39.0 Not a problem  
 6.4 Don't know  
 0.3 Refused

**Q23. News seems to favor a conservative point of view.**

13.9% Major problem  
 28.5 Minor problem  
 51.2 Not a problem  
 6.2 Don't know  
 0.2 Refused

**Q24. Reporters don't ask politicians the kinds of questions that are important to most Americans.**

34.0% Major problem  
 33.6 Minor problem  
 27.9 Not a problem  
 4.4 Don't know  
 0.1 Refused

**Q25. Reporters are insensitive to people's pain when they report on victims of accidents or crime.**

26.4% Major problem  
 33.8 Minor problem  
 36.9 Not a problem  
 2.8 Don't know  
 0.1 Refused

**Q26. There is too little coverage of issues that concern people like me.**

19.9% Major problem  
 35.7 Minor problem  
 40.5 Not a problem  
 3.9 Don't know

**Q27. News dwells too much on the negative stories and ignores many positive stories.**

36.9% Major problem  
 34.2 Minor problem  
 26.0 Not a problem  
 2.7 Don't know  
 0.2 Refused

**Q28. When you see a local TV news story based on a confidential source do you believe most of what you hear, about half of what you hear, only a little of what you hear, or none of what you hear?**

20.2% Believe most of what you hear  
 43.4 About half of what you hear  
 29.4 Only a little of what you hear  
 4.1 None of what you hear  
 2.9 Don't know

**Q29. Some people say that journalists should be allowed to use hidden cameras or recorders because sometimes it is the only way to get the story. Others say journalists should NOT be allowed to use hidden cameras because it is unfair to the person being reported on. Which comes closest to your opinion?**

27.1% Journalist should be able to  
 65.6 Journalists should not  
 7.1 Don't know  
 0.2 Refused

**Q30. In your opinion, should local TV news report the names of people who are suspected of committing crimes who haven't been formally charged, or should the media wait until formal charges have been brought against the subject before reporting that person's name?**

- 10.5% Report names before charge
- 85.9 Wait until formal charges
- 3.6 Don't know

**Q31. Would you say that local TV news stations do an excellent, good, fair or poor job explaining how they decide what to put on the news?**

- 6.8% Excellent
- 28.0 Good
- 31.4 Fair
- 25.0 Poor
- 8.7 Don't know
- 0.1 Refused

**Q32. Would you be interested in having local television stations tell you more about how they decide what to put on the news?**

- 52.1% Yes
- 27.9 No
- 19.5 Don't care one way or the other
- 0.5 Don't know/refused

**Q33. Thinking about all of the news media available to you, when you hear conflicting versions of the same news story, which source do you trust the most: newspapers, local TV news, network TV news, radio, or news you get online? (randomize choices)**

- 21.3% Newspapers
- 24.3 Local TV news
- 30.8 Network TV news
- 4.6 Radio
- 6.1 News online
- 12.2 Don't know
- 0.7 Refused

Some people think local television news may be improperly influenced by others. How much of the time, if any, do you think news reporting on local television is improperly influenced by (READ FROM LIST BELOW)-often, sometimes, rarely, or never?

(Randomize Q34 to Q42)

**Q34. Elected officials**

- 30.4% Often
- 37.8 Sometimes
- 15.5 Rarely
- 9.4 Never
- 6.8 Don't know
- 0.1 Refused

**Q35. Big business**

- 36.5% Often
- 35.4 Sometimes
- 13.3 Rarely
- 5.4 Never
- 9.4 Don't know

**Q36. Advertisers**

- 42.4% Often
- 31.5 Sometimes
- 15.1 Rarely
- 4.8 Never
- 6.2 Don't know

**Q37. The desire of the news organization to make a profit**

- 53.5% Often
- 28.5 Sometimes
- 6.4 Rarely
- 4.9 Never
- 6.5 Don't know
- 0.2 Refused

**Q38. The desire to report the story first**

55.8% Often  
 28.2 Sometimes  
 7.8 Rarely  
 3.7 Never  
 4.5 Don't know

**Q39. The desire to increase TV ratings**

64.0% Often  
 20.6 Sometimes  
 6.9 Rarely  
 4.3 Never  
 4.2 Don't know

**Q40. The Federal Government**

27.5% Often  
 32.6 Sometimes  
 20.1 Rarely  
 10.4 Never  
 9.4 Don't know

**Q41. TV station owners**

40.3% Often  
 34.7 Sometimes  
 9.1 Rarely  
 4.0 Never  
 11.8 Don't know  
 0.1 Refused

**Q42. Interest groups**

27.2% Often  
 36.3 Sometimes  
 16.7 Rarely  
 8.8 Never  
 11.0 Don't know

**Q43. How often do you think television reporters allow their own, personal opinion about a person, organization, or company to influence the way they cover the news-often, sometimes, rarely, or never?**

21.5% Often  
 42.3 Sometimes  
 24.3 Rarely  
 8.1 Never  
 3.5 Don't know  
 0.3 Refused

Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statements: (Do you agree/disagree strongly or mildly?)

**Q44. Television stations should be allowed to broadcast freely without government approval of a story.**

53.4% Strongly agree  
 17.5 Mildly agree  
 12.4 Mildly disagree  
 11.8 Strongly disagree  
 4.6 Don't know  
 0.3 Refused

**Q45. Lately, I've become more skeptical about the accuracy of anything I hear on the news.**

26.0% Strongly agree  
 29.9 Mildly agree  
 18.7 Mildly disagree  
 21.4 Strongly disagree  
 3.7 Don't know  
 0.3 Refused

- Q46. If a journalist cannot find a source willing to be named, the journalist should not report the story at all.**
- 33.8% Strongly agree  
18.3 Mildly agree  
22.6 Mildly disagree  
20.7 Strongly disagree  
4.6 Don't know
- Q47. I want news only after all of the facts have been checked, even if it means I have to wait longer to hear about a story.**
- 53.9% Strongly agree  
20.3 Mildly agree  
11.6 Mildly disagree  
12.1 Strongly disagree  
2.0 Don't know  
0.1 Refused
- Q48. Lately, I think the news media have done a better job of reporting events in my community.**
- 30.9% Strongly agree  
35.4 Mildly agree  
14.5 Mildly disagree  
12.3 Strongly disagree  
6.7 Don't know  
0.2 Refused
- Q49. I believe that in a controversy with two clearly different sides, local TV news should not report a news story if they can only reach one side for comment.**
- 46.3% Strongly agree  
20.8 Mildly agree  
13.7 Mildly disagree  
15.5 Strongly disagree  
3.7 Don't know
- Q50. Do you think that local TV news goes too far in disclosing the details of local public figures' private lives, not far enough, or as far as you think is right?**
- 38.1% Goes too far  
13.3 Not far enough  
42.6 As far as you think is right  
5.6 Don't know  
0.4 Refused
- Q51. Please tell me which statement comes closest to your opinion. (Rotate A & B)**
- 44.7% A) Local TV news programs are mainly interested in serving the public interest or  
42.8 B) Local TV news programs are mainly interested in making a profit?  
12.2 Don't know  
0.3 Refused
- Q52. Please tell me which statement comes closest to your opinion. (Rotate A & B)**
- 63.7% A) Local TV news reports stories in a way that respects the intelligence of their viewers or  
27.8 B) Local TV news reports stories that are too simple and don't respect the intelligence of their viewers.  
8.4 Don't know  
0.1 Refused
- Q53. During the last local TV newscast that you watched, how many times did you change the channel during the newscast?**
- 45.5% 0  
10.3 1  
14.3 2  
9.2 3  
20.1 4 or more  
0.5 Don't know  
0.1 Refused

**Q54. Which phrase best describes the pattern of your TV news viewing:**

- 51.4% I usually watch the same channel for news whenever I watch.
- 39.3 I usually watch different channels for news, depending on the newscast.
- 9.0 I usually watch the news on whatever channel the TV set is on.
- 0.1 Don't know
- 0.2 Refused

**Q55. There are a variety of ways you can talk back or respond to local TV stations. Please tell me all the ones that are available at your favorite station for news:**

- 81.7% Phone calls to the station
- 81.5 Email to the news department
- 72.7 Letters to the news department
- 34.4 A special feature for people to respond to stories
- 7.6 A special meeting to discuss news coverage with journalists
- 4.2 There's really no way to respond to the station
- 14.3 Don't know

**Q56. Do you think the station you watch most often for news does a good job listening to your concerns?**

- 58.8% Yes
- 30.6 No
- 10.0 Don't know
- 0.6 Refused

**Q57. Have you ever contacted or tried to contact that station about a story or problem?**

- 19.0% Yes
- 79.3 No
- 1.5 Don't know
- 0.2 Refused

**Q58. Was the station responsive to your comment, idea or problem?**

- 24.2% Yes
- 75.8 No

**Q59. I'd like to read you some phrases that might apply to local news on TV stations. Please tell me which appeals to you most as something you might like to watch: (rotate choices)**

- 10.8% First on the scene
- 43.0 Most thorough coverage
- 31.1 Live and breaking news
- 6.6 Most convenient to watch
- 6.8 Most responsive to viewers
- 1.2 Don't know
- 0.5 Refused

**Q60. I'm going to read a series of statements that might characterize a local TV news operation. Please tell me which statement is the one you'd like YOUR first choice for TV news to emphasize: (rotate choices)**

- 29.0% The station that investigates and is not afraid to take on powerful people and businesses
- 5.9 The station that has a lot of short stories and lots of interesting graphics and pictures
- 53.0 The station that does a really thorough and complete job of covering important stories in your community
- 5.9 The station where the news people seem to be having a good time doing the news and talking to you and each other
- 6.0 Don't care
- 0.2 Refused

Finally, just a few questions for classifications purposes.

**D1. Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an independent or something else?**

31.8% Republican  
30.2 Democrat  
23.3 Independent  
8.8 Something else  
1.7 Don't know  
4.2 Refused

**D2. Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a liberal, conservative, a moderate or something else?**

18.7% Liberal  
35.0 Conservative  
25.4 Moderate  
11.1 Something else  
6.8 Don't know  
3.0 Refused

**D3. In what year were you born?**

26.1% 18-34 years old  
21.2 35-44 years old  
18.2 45-54 years old  
13.2 55-64 years old  
17.8 65+ years old  
3.5 Refused

**D4. What was the last grade of school you completed?**

1.2% Grade school or less  
4.8 Some high school  
28.3 High school grad  
28.6 Some college  
25.4 College grad  
9.8 Post graduate  
0.2 Don't know  
1.7 Refused

**D5. What is your race? Are you African American, Asian American, Caucasian, Hispanic/Latino, Native American, or some other race?**

7.5% African American  
1.9 Asian American  
80.3 Caucasian  
5.2 Hispanic/Latino  
0.7 Native American  
2.5 Other/Mixed race  
0.1 Don't know  
1.8 Refused

**D6. For classification purposes only, is the total yearly income of all the members of your family now living at home: \$60,000 or more, between \$30,000 and \$60,000 or is it less than \$30,000?**

34.4% \$60,000 or more  
25.8 Between \$30,000 and \$60,000  
25.4 Less than \$30,000  
2.7 Don't know  
11.7 Refused

**D7. Respondent gender**

47.8% Male  
52.2 Female

## APPENDIX B

### News Directors Questionnaire

- Q1. Overall, how would you rate the job the media are doing covering news-excellent, good, fair, or poor?**
- |      |           |
|------|-----------|
| 7.7% | Excellent |
| 72.0 | Good      |
| 18.4 | Fair      |
| 1.9  | Poor      |
- Q2. Overall, how do you think the general public rates the job the media are doing?**
- |      |           |
|------|-----------|
| 1.1% | Excellent |
| 21.5 | Good      |
| 63.2 | Fair      |
| 14.2 | Poor      |
- Q3. Aside from how you feel about the news media's overall performance, how would you rate the overall quality of the news you receive from local television-is it excellent, good, fair, or poor?**
- |      |           |
|------|-----------|
| 8.8% | Excellent |
| 65.9 | Good      |
| 21.5 | Fair      |
| 3.4  | Poor      |
| 0.4  | Refused   |
- Q4. How effectively does your station provide information viewers need to make decisions about their community and their lives?**
- |       |            |
|-------|------------|
| 14.9% | Excellent  |
| 69.3  | Good       |
| 14.2  | Fair       |
| 1.5   | Poor       |
| 0.1   | Don't know |
- Now, I would like you to think about the reporters and anchors on your TV station.
- Q5. Overall, would you say that the anchors and reporters on your station are:**
- |       |                                                                         |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 41.0% | Very knowledgeable about the area and the subjects they report on       |
| 37.5  | Somewhat knowledgeable about the area and the subjects they report on   |
| 8.8   | Not too knowledgeable about the area and the subjects they report on    |
| 11.9  | Not at all knowledgeable about the area and the subjects they report on |
| 0.8   | Don't know/No answer                                                    |
- Q6. How much of an impact do you think budget constraints have had on the quality of your newscasts?**
- |       |                                                                                            |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 11.1% | Severe impact ... it's a struggle to cover the news.                                       |
| 29.1  | Serious impact ... there are frequent times when we have to compromise what we want to do. |
| 39.5  | Moderate impact ... every now and then there are tradeoffs, but it's not a big deal.       |
| 18.4  | Minor or non-impact ... everyone could use more resources, but we're doing just fine.      |
| 1.5   | Haven't had any budget constraints.                                                        |
| 0.4   | Don't know/refused                                                                         |
- Q7. How do you think the audience characterizes the live reports on your TV station? (rotate first two choices)**
- |       |                                                                                             |
|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 61.7% | Generally, the live reports are good and deal with news going on right then.                |
| 15.7  | Generally, the live reports waste time because nothing much is usually going on right then. |
| 22.2  | They don't remember any live reports.                                                       |
| 0.4   | Refused                                                                                     |

**Q8. How would you characterize the political news reporting on your TV station:**

- 27.2% Excellent, thorough coverage of the issues and the candidates
- 53.6 Good coverage of the issues and the candidates
- 17.6 Little coverage of issues and candidates
- 1.1 Seldom ever cover issues and candidates
- 0.5 Don't know/refuse

**Q9. Do you think those reports help people make up their minds about which candidate they prefer?**

- 82.4% Yes
- 16.9 No
- 0.7 Don't know

**Q10. Since 9-11, which of the following statements best characterizes your news gathering efforts-especially as it relates to government and security issues?**

- 10.0% Official sources have made it much harder to cover some stories.
- 47.5 Official sources have made it a little harder to cover some stories.
- 34.9 Official sources have made no difference in our ability to cover stories.
- 5.4 We seldom cover stories where these issues apply, so we've seen no difference.
- 2.2 Don't know/refused

Please tell me if you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (Do you agree/disagree strongly or mildly?) (Randomize Q11 to Q17)

**Q11. An important function of local TV news is to inform people about what is happening in their community.**

- 98.9% Strongly agree
- 0.8 Mildly agree
- 0 Mildly disagree
- 0.3 Strongly disagree

**Q12. An important function of local TV news is to suggest potential solutions to local problems.**

- 46.4% Strongly agree
- 27.2 Mildly agree
- 14.2 Mildly disagree
- 11.1 Strongly disagree
- 0.8 Don't know
- 0.3 Refused

**Q13. The major job of local TV news is to get the facts right, not to interpret the news.**

- 76.6% Strongly agree
- 14.9 Mildly agree
- 6.1 Mildly disagree
- 1.9 Strongly disagree
- 0.5 Don't know

**Q14. An important function of local TV news is to act as a watchdog looking over local government.**

- 76.6% Strongly agree
- 16.9 Mildly agree
- 3.8 Mildly disagree
- 2.3 Strongly disagree
- 0.4 Refused

**Q15. The major job of the local TV news is to report the truth, even if it is painful and shocking to viewers.**

- 82.8% Strongly agree
- 13.8 Mildly agree
- 1.5 Mildly disagree
- 1.1 Strongly disagree
- 0.8 Refused

**Q16. There are topics that are so complex, boring, or non-visual-like mental health and local government-that you tend to avoid doing stories on them.**

- 13.0% Strongly agree
- 28.4 Mildly agree
- 23.4 Mildly disagree
- 35.2 Strongly disagree

**Q17. There are stories that are so sensational or have such promotable pictures that you tend to cover them-even though the news value of those stories may be minimal.**

- 21.8% Strongly agree
- 31.4 Mildly agree
- 20.7 Mildly disagree
- 24.5 Strongly disagree
- 1.6 Don't know

I'm going to read you a number of different criticisms that some people have made of local TV news. For each of these criticisms, please tell me how much of a problem it is with your station. First, how about (READ FROM LIST) -is this a major problem, a minor problem, or not a problem with the news YOUR station provides? (Randomize Q18 to Q21)

**Q18. Reporters don't ask politicians the kinds of questions that are important to most Americans.**

- 14.6% Major problem
- 50.2 Minor problem
- 34.5 Not a problem
- 0.7 Don't know

**Q19. Reporters are insensitive to peoples' pain when they report on victims of accidents or crime.**

- 6.1% Major problem
- 40.2 Minor problem
- 53.3 Not a problem
- 0.4 Don't know

**Q20. There is too little coverage of issues that concern most people.**

- 11.1% Major problem
- 47.5 Minor problem
- 41.0 Not a problem
- 0.4 Don't know

**Q21. News dwells too much on the negative stories and ignores many positive stories.**

- 8.4% Major problem
- 49.0 Minor problem
- 41.8 Not a problem
- 0.8 Don't know

**Q22. Some people say that journalists should be allowed to use hidden cameras or recorders because sometimes it is the only way to get the story. Others say journalists should NOT be allowed to use hidden cameras because it is unfair to the person being reported on. Which comes closest to your opinion?**

- 78.5% Journalists should be able to
- 19.5 Journalists should not
- 1.5 Don't know
- 0.5 Refused

**Q23. In your opinion, should local TV news report the names of people who are suspected of committing crimes who haven't been formally charged, or should the media wait until formal charges have been brought against the subject before reporting that person's name?**

- 24.5% Report names before charge
- 66.7 Wait until formal charges
- 5.4 Don't know
- 3.4 Refused

How much of the time do you think news reporting on local television is improperly influenced by (READ FROM LIST BELOW)-often, sometimes, rarely, or never? (Randomize Q24 to Q32)

**Q24. Elected officials**

6.9% Often  
27.2 Sometimes  
42.1 Rarely  
23.8 Never

**Q25. Big business**

6.5% Often  
29.9 Sometimes  
42.5 Rarely  
21.1 Never

**Q26. Advertisers**

6.1% Often  
37.5 Sometimes  
36.0 Rarely  
19.9 Never  
0.5 Don't know

**Q27. The desire of the news organization to make a profit**

17.6% Often  
36.8 Sometimes  
29.9 Rarely  
15.7 Never

**Q28. The desire to report the story first**

42.5% Often  
37.5 Sometimes  
14.6 Rarely  
5.4 Never

**Q29. The desire to increase TV ratings**

43.3% Often  
40.2 Sometimes  
10.0 Rarely  
6.1 Never  
0.4 Don't know

**Q30. The Federal Government**

4.6% Often  
20.3 Sometimes  
43.7 Rarely  
31.0 Never  
0.4 Don't know

**Q31. TV station owners**

6.5% Often  
31.4 Sometimes  
35.6 Rarely  
25.7 Never  
0.8 Don't know

**Q32. Interest groups**

7.7% Often  
28.7 Sometimes  
41.4 Rarely  
22.2 Never

**Q33. And, how often do you think television reporters allow their own, personal opinion about a person, organization, or company to influence the way they cover the news-often, sometimes, rarely, or never?**

8.4% Often  
46.0 Sometimes  
39.8 Rarely  
5.4 Never  
0.4 Don't know

Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (Do you agree/disagree strongly or mildly?)

**Q34. If a journalist cannot find a source willing to be named the journalist should not report the story at all.**

14.9% Strongly agree  
14.6 Mildly agree  
34.1 Mildly disagree  
35.2 Strongly disagree  
1.2 Refused

**Q35. Our station should report news only after all of the facts have been checked, even if it means we don't report the story first.**

- 70.9% Strongly agree
- 16.1 Mildly agree
- 6.5 Mildly disagree
- 5.7 Strongly disagree
- 0.4 Don't know
- 0.4 Refused

**Q36. Lately, I think the news media have done a better job of reporting events in my community.**

- 44.4% Strongly agree
- 37.2 Mildly agree
- 9.6 Mildly disagree
- 5.7 Strongly disagree
- 2.7 Don't know
- 0.4 Refused

**Q37. I believe that in a controversy with two clearly different sides, local TV news should not report a news story if they can only reach one side for comment.**

- 30.3% Strongly agree
- 18.4 Mildly agree
- 25.3 Mildly disagree
- 24.1 Strongly disagree
- 0.4 Don't know
- 1.5 Refused

**Q38. Do you think that local TV news goes too far in disclosing the details of local public figures' private lives, not far enough, or as far as you think is right?**

- 7.7% Goes too far
- 13.4 Not far enough
- 78.2 As far as you think is right
- 0.7 Don't know

**Q39. During a typical local TV newscast, how many times do you believe viewers change the channel during the newscast?**

- 8.0% 0
- 14.2 1
- 24.9 2
- 25.3 3
- 27.6 4 or more

**Q40. Which phrase best describes the pattern of how people watch TV news?**

- 57.9% They usually watch the same channel for news whenever they watch.
- 31.8 They usually watch different channels for news, depending on the newscast.
- 10.3 They usually watch the news on whatever channel the TV set is on.

**Q41. I'd like to read you some phrases that might apply to local news on TV stations. Please tell me which phrase comes closest to describing your station:**

- 3.8% First on the scene
- 51.7 Most thorough coverage
- 10.7 Live and breaking news
- 9.6 Most convenient to watch
- 23.8 Most responsive to viewers
- 0.4 Refused

**Q42. I'm going to read a series of statements that might characterize a local TV news operation. Please tell me which statement is the one you'd like YOUR station to emphasize: (rotate choices)**

- 15.7% The station that investigates and is not afraid to take on powerful people and businesses
- 6.1 The station that has a lot of short stories and lots of interesting graphics and pictures
- 70.9 The station that does a really thorough and complete job of covering important stories in your community
- 5.7 The station where the news people seem to be having a good time doing the news and talking to you and each other
- 0.8 Other
- 0.8 Don't care

**Q43. Would you say that your TV station does an excellent, good, fair or poor job explaining how you decide what to put on the news?**

- 9.2% Excellent
- 30.3 Good
- 27.6 Fair
- 27.2 Poor
- 5.0 Don't know
- 0.7 Refused

**Q44. In which of the following ways do you explain the journalistic process to your viewers (choose all that apply)?**

- 11.2% On-air editorials (includes on-air comments)
- 22.7 On the station web site
- 77.3 Via individual phone calls, letters or email, in response to viewer feedback or questions
- 14.7 Through town hall/community meetings
- 21.9 We really don't explain the journalistic process
- 3.8 Not sure/no answer

**Q45. What are some of the barriers to your station doing a more thorough job of explaining the journalistic process to viewers (choose all that apply)?**

- 55.4% Lack of time
- 30.6 Lack of money or resources
- 26.0 No interest from viewers
- 14.7 No interest from station
- 5.8 We have a philosophic objection to explaining the journalistic process to viewers
- 10.9 Not sure how to do it

**Q46. There are a variety of ways viewers can talk back or respond to local TV stations. Please tell me all the ones that are available at your station:**

- 91.5% Phone calls to the station
- 96.5 Email to the news department
- 91.9 Letters to the news department
- 39.4 A special feature for people to respond to stories
- 18.1 A special meeting to discuss news coverage with journalists
- 0.4 There's really no way to respond to the station
- 0.8 Don't know/No answer

**Q47. Do you think your station does a good job listening to audience concerns?**

- 95.4% Yes
- 4.6 No

**Q48. Do you feel that your station is generally responsive to the comments, ideas or problems expressed by members of the public?**

- 96.6% Yes
- 3.4 No

**Q49. Do you agree or disagree that your TV station communicates the importance of the First Amendment's guarantee of freedom of speech?**

- 34.9% Strongly agree
- 26.8 Mildly agree
- 20.7 Mildly disagree
- 15.7 Strongly disagree
- 1.1 Don't know
- 0.8 Refused

**Q50. Thinking about journalism ethics, does your station have in writing a code of ethics, standards or guidelines for your staff to refer to?**

- 72.8% Yes
- 26.4 No
- 0.8 Don't know

**Q51. How necessary do you think formal ethics training is for your staff? Is that very necessary, somewhat necessary, somewhat unnecessary, or very unnecessary?**

- 51.7% Very necessary
- 24.1 Somewhat necessary
- 11.9 Somewhat unnecessary
- 12.3 Very unnecessary

**Q52. Which statement best describes how you train new employees on ethical issues?**

- 22.2% All new employees are trained the same
- 38.7 Ethical training is tailored to the level of on the job experience in journalism the new employee has
- 38.7 New employees do not go through formal ethics training
- 0.4 Don't know

**Q53. When interviewing new employees, how much of the interview is devoted to exploring decision making skills? All, most, about half, a little, almost none?**

- 1.9% All
- 11.1 Most
- 47.1 About half
- 34.9 A little
- 3.8 Almost none
- 0.8 Don't know
- 0.4 Refused

And finally, just a few questions for classifications purposes.

**D1. Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an independent or something else?**

- 21.1% Republican
- 15.7 Democrat
- 45.2 Independent
- 7.7 Something else
- 1.5 Don't know
- 8.8 Refused

**D2. Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a liberal, conservative, a moderate or something else?**

- 10.3 Liberal
- 20.3 Conservative
- 52.5 Moderate
- 7.3 Something else
- 1.9 Don't know
- 7.7 Refused

**D3. What was the last grade of school you completed?**

- 0.7% High school grad
- 6.9 Some college
- 78.2 College grad
- 14.2 Post graduate

**D4. (If College grad or Post grad:) Is your degree is Journalism/Communication or something else?**

79.4% Journalism/Communication  
 19.8 Something else  
 0.8 No answer

**D5. How long have you been working professionally in local television news?**

6.5% 5 years or less  
 22.5 6-13 years  
 31.5 14-20 years  
 39.5 21 years and more

**D6. What is the market size of your station?**

10.0% Top 25  
 13.0 26-50  
 29.9 51-100  
 29.9 101-150  
 17.2 150+

**D7. What is the staff size of your news department?**

21.8% 51+  
 30.3 31-50  
 20.7 21-30  
 16.1 11-20  
 9.6 1-10  
 0.8 Don't know  
 0.7 Refused

**D8. What is your race? Are you African American, Asian American, Caucasian, Hispanic/Latino, Native American, or some other race?**

0.8% African American  
 1.5 Asian American  
 88.5 Caucasian  
 4.6 Hispanic/Latino  
 0.8 Native American  
 1.9 Other/Mixed race  
 1.9 Refused

**D9. Respondent gender**

76.2% Male  
 23.8 Female

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# RTNDF

ELECTRONIC JOURNALISM

RADIO AND TELEVISION NEWS DIRECTORS FOUNDATION  
1600 K STREET, NW, SUITE 700  
WASHINGTON, DC 20006-2838  
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EXHIBIT B

RTNDA RESEARCH

# Survey Shows Solid Growth in TV News and Staffing

The latest RTNDA/Ball State University Survey shows continuing growth in television news in both news and staffing—but drops in both categories for radio news.

Full-time local TV news employment rose another 4 percent this past year, putting employment at its second highest level ever—8.6 percent below the peak recorded in the fourth quarter of 2000. While staffing in TV news is just short of its all-time high, the amount of TV news rose to its highest level ever, averaging 3.7 hours of news per weekday for all TV stations. The total number of local TV stations running

news rose again from 751 last year to 759 this year. Another 68 stations get local news from one of those 759.

Radio, on the other hand, dropped in both news and staff for all size stations and markets. While radio consolidation makes it almost impossible to compare numbers over time, almost 95 percent (94.9 percent) of radio news departments handle the news for more than one station. More than six in 10 of those news departments (61 percent) involve a news staff of just one. —Bob Papper, professor of telecommunications at Ball State University

## Staff Size Changes (2004 vs. 2003)

	Increased	Decreased	Stayed the Same
<b>Television</b>			
All Television	34.0%	16.2%	49.8%
Big 4 Affiliates	34.0	14.9	51.0
Other			
Commercial	36.8	21.1	42.1
<b>Radio</b>			
All Radio	20.0	70.8	9.2

**Television:** For the second year in a row, the percentage of stations reporting staff increases grew (by 6.7 percent) while the percentage of stations reporting staff cuts dropped (by 7.3 percent). There is no consistent pattern to the increases (or decreases) by market size. Stations in the South and Northeast were a little more likely to have grown than stations in the Midwest or West. **Radio:** No surprise here: Stations in major markets were most likely to have increased staff size.

## Newsroom Staff Size (2004)

	Average full-time	Median full-time	Maximum full-time	Average part-time	Median part-time	Maximum part-time	Average total staff	Median total	Maximum total staff
<b>Television</b>									
All Television	33.8	30.0	115	4.8	3.0	85	38.6	34.0	140
Big 4 Affiliates	35.6	31.0	115	4.5	3.0	85	40.1	35.5	140
Other									
Commercial	28.6	18.5	100	3.7	4.0	15	32.3	23.0	100
<b>Market Size:</b>									
1-25	51.1	55.0	115	5.3	3.0	40	56.4	59.0	140
26-50	52.8	56.5	102	6.3	5.0	21	59.1	62.0	117
51-100	37.1	40.0	100	5.3	3.0	70	42.4	44.0	100
101-150	23.3	22.5	47	4.5	2.0	85	27.8	28.5	99
151+	17.9	18.0	40	4.8	3.0	15	20.9	20.0	40
<b>Radio</b>									
All Radio	1.8	1.0	11	1.0	0	15	2.8	1.0	18
<b>Market Size:</b>									
Major	4.1	4.0	11	3.5	2.0	15	7.6	8.0	18
Large	1.9	1.0	8	1.2	1.0	5	3.0	1.0	13
Medium	1.5	1.0	8	0.7	0	12	2.2	1.0	13
Small	1.0	1.0	3	0.2	0	2	1.2	1.0	4

**Television:** Full-time news staffs rose 4 percent for the second year in a row, largely recovering from a substantial drop in 2001. The jump in part-timers was 17.1 percent, raising the total staff by 5.5 percent. But the nature of the staff growth varied by market size. The top 100 markets added full-time staff, while smaller markets tended to add more part-time staff. Fox newsrooms tend to be smaller than other network affiliates, but not by much; other commercial stations tend to be noticeably smaller. **Radio:** Staff sizes in radio have fallen sharply in the past year. On the other hand, consolidation required a change in methodology for collecting the radio data, and we may need another year of data in the new system in order to get a clearer picture of what's happening.

## News and Staffing (continued from page 6)

### Amount of News (2004 vs. 2003)

	Increased	Decreased	Stayed the Same
<b>Television</b>			
All Television	39.0%	4.5%	56.4%
Big 4 Affiliates	37.6	3.8	58.5
Other Commercial	57.9	5.3	36.8
<b>Market Size:</b>			
1-25	47.4	10.5	42.1
26-50	37.1	5.7	57.1
51-100	36.1	4.2	59.7
101-150	39.2	3.8	57.0
151+	37.5	0	62.5
<b>Radio</b>			
All Radio	44.2	53.3	2.5

**Television:** The amount of news was most likely to stay the same, but almost 40 percent of TV stations added news. Independents led the way, with over half of those stations adding news. The biggest growth came in the top 50 markets. **Radio:** Only stations in major markets increased the amount of news in 2004.

### Planned Staff Changes (2004-2005)

	Will Increase	Will Decrease	Will Stay the Same	Not Sure
<b>Television</b>				
All Television	31.1%	3.8%	56.4%	8.7%
Big 4 Affiliates	31.6	3.8	57.7	6.8
Other Commercial	21.1	5.3	52.6	21.1
<b>Radio</b>				
All Radio	15.0	76.7	0.8	7.5

**Television:** There is almost no difference in these numbers versus one year ago. The one meaningful change involved "other commercial" stations, where the percentage of staff decreases dropped, and the percentage planning to remain the same rose. **Radio:** Major market stations are the only ones planning to increase staff in 2005.

### News Profitability (1997-2004)

	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999	1998	1997
<b>Television</b>								
Showing profit	58.4%	55.3%	54.9%	56.0%	58.0%	57.0%	63.0%	62.0%
Breaking even	10.4	13.6	11.6	13.0	11.0	9.0	11.0	6.0
Showing loss	9.2	9.2	11.2	10.0	11.0	11.0	10.0	8.0
Don't know	22.0	21.9	22.3	21.0	20.0	23.0	16.0	24.0
<b>Radio</b>								
Showing profit	22.5	25.2	15.2	17.0	25.0	19.0	22.0	23.0
Breaking even	17.1	13.8	13.9	17.0	15.0	18.0	14.0	20.0
Showing loss	7.2	2.4	7.3	—	7.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
Don't know	53.2	58.6	63.6	66.0	53.0	57.0	58.0	51.0

**Television:** Reflecting a stronger economy, more stations reported making a profit on news than any time since 2000. **Radio:** The smallest markets are most likely to report a profit on news, but more than half continue to report that they don't know whether news makes a profit.

### Get More Stats Online!

The charts you see here are just a sampling of the data we have on hand regarding news staffing and profitability. RTNDA members can visit our web site at [www.rtna.org/research/research.shtml](http://www.rtna.org/research/research.shtml) to find out more...

#### Television

- Hours of Local TV News Per Day

- TV News Budgets: Up, Down or Same?
- TV News Profitability by Size and Affiliation
- Percentage of TV Revenue Produced by News
- Percentage of TV News Departments Providing Content to Other Media
- Percentage of Newsroom Staff Under Contract, by Position
- Percentage of Newsroom Staff With Non-Competes

#### Radio

- Average Minutes of Locally Produced Radio News
- Radio News Profitability by Market Size
- Daily Use of Digital Equipment and New Technology in Radio News
- Percentage of News Material Gathered, Edited and Aired Digitally
- Percentage of Newsroom Staff Under Contract or Non-Competes

### About the Survey

The RTNDA/Ball State University Survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2003 among all 1,295 operating, non satellite television stations and a random sample of 1,482 radio stations. Valid responses came from 838 television stations (64.7 percent) and 133 radio news directors and general managers representing 437 radio stations.

## RTNDA/Ball State University Survey—2004

### Additional Data: Newsroom Staffing and Amount of News

#### Television

- Hours of Local TV News Per Day
- TV News Budgets: Up, Down or Same?
- TV News Profitability by Size and Affiliation
- Percentage of TV Revenue Produced by News
- Percentage of TV News Departments Providing Content to Other Media
- Percentage of Newsroom Staff Under Contract, by Position
- Percentage of Newsroom Staff Under Contract or Non-Competes

#### Radio

- Average Minutes of Locally Produced Radio News
- Radio News Profitability by Market Size
- Daily Use of Digital Equipment and New Technology in Radio News
- Percentage of News Material Gathered, Edited and Aired Digitally
- Percentage of Newsroom Staff Under Contract or Non-Competes

### TELEVISION

#### Hours of Local TV News Per Day

	Average Weekday	Weekday Maximum	Average Saturday	Saturday Maximum	Average Sunday	Sunday Maximum
All TV News	3.7	20.0	1.4	5.0	1.3	5.0
Big Four Affiliates	3.9	20.0	1.5	5.0	1.4	5.0
Other Commercial	2.3	10.0	1.3	5.0	1.3	5.0
Market Size:						
1-25	4.1	10.0	2.0	5.0	2.0	5.0
26-50	4.4	20.0	2.0	4.5	2.1	5.0
51-100	3.9	9.0	1.5	5.0	1.3	4.0
101-150	3.4	15.0	1.2	4.5	1.0	2.5
151+	2.8	5.0	0.8	1.5	0.8	2.0
Staff Size:						
Staff 51+	5.3	20.0	2.3	5.0	2.3	5.0
Staff 31-50	3.7	6.0	1.3	5.0	1.1	3.5
Staff 21-30	3.0	5.0	0.9	1.5	0.9	1.5
Staff 11-20	2.7	15.0	0.7	1.0	0.7	1.0
Staff 1-10	1.8	7.5	0.9	4.0	0.8	2.0
Affiliation:						
ABC	3.9	15.0	1.3	4.0	1.3	4.0
CBS	4.3	20.0	1.6	5.0	1.5	5.0
Fox	3.3	8.0	1.3	4.5	1.3	4.5
NBC	3.7	5.5	1.5	5.0	1.3	5.0
PBS	0.7	1.0	0	0	0.6	2.0

After a decline two years ago, the overall amount of news increased again this past year—rising by 12.1 percent on weekdays—or 24 minutes per weekday. That puts the total average weekday news 12 minutes more than the previous all time high. The

weekends also edged up after remaining steady the year before. All market sizes and staff sizes saw increases except markets 151+, which remained the same, and staff size 1-10, which dropped slightly. There was no consistent pattern by region, although stations in the West tended to have a little less news than the others.

**TV News Budget—2004 vs. 2003**

	<b>Increase</b>	<b>Decrease</b>	<b>Same</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
<b>All TV News</b>	51.2%	13.8%	31.2%	3.8%
<b>Big Four Affiliates</b>	54.1	12.1	30.7	3.0
<b>Other Commercial</b>	33.3	16.7	38.9	11.1
<b>Market Size:</b>				
<b>1-25</b>	61.1	8.3	22.2	8.3
<b>26-50</b>	48.6	11.4	37.1	2.9
<b>51-100</b>	49.3	14.1	35.2	1.4
<b>101-150</b>	50.0	19.2	25.6	5.1
<b>151+</b>	50.0	10.0	37.5	2.5

News budgets rose again this year. All categories of stations rose, with a higher percentage saying their budget went up and a lower percentage saying the budget fell. For the first time in three years, a majority of stations said the news budget went up. Generally, the bigger the news staff, the more likely that the budget went up. In fact, the largest newsrooms were more than twice as likely to have had budget increases as the smallest ones. CBS affiliates were most likely to have had budget increases and Fox affiliates and "other commercial" stations the least. Stations in the South and West were far more likely to have budget increases than stations in the Northeast or Midwest.

### TV News Profitability by Size and Affiliation

	Showing Profit	Breaking Even	Showing Loss	Don't Know
<b>Market Size</b>				
<b>1-25</b>	47.2%	16.7%	19.4%	16.7%
<b>26-50</b>	60.6	6.1	12.1	21.2
<b>51-100</b>	63.1	12.3	6.2	18.5
<b>101-150</b>	64.1	7.7	6.4	21.8
<b>151+</b>	47.4	10.5	7.9	34.2
<b>Staff Size:</b>				
<b>51+</b>	66.1	11.9	10.2	11.9
<b>31-50</b>	72.4	9.2	5.3	13.2
<b>21-30</b>	50.0	11.9	4.8	33.3
<b>11-20</b>	41.5	14.6	17.1	26.8
<b>1-10</b>	26.3	5.3	15.8	52.6
<b>Affiliation:</b>				
<b>ABC</b>	64.9	12.3	7.0	15.8
<b>CBS</b>	64.4	9.6	5.5	20.5
<b>Fox</b>	63.3	10.0	13.3	13.3
<b>NBC</b>	58.7	7.9	9.5	23.8
<b>Big Four Affiliates</b>	62.8	9.9	8.1	19.3
<b>Other Commercial</b>	33.3	22.2	11.1	33.3

Stations in markets 26-150 were most likely (over 60 percent) to report a profit on news. Markets 1-25 and 150+ were well below that (about 47 percent). Keep in mind that markets 1-25 include quite a few small, independent stations. Generally, the larger the staff, the more likely to report a profit on news, although the very largest operations (51+) fell a bit behind the second largest group. NBC affiliates were a little less likely to report a profit than other network affiliates, and "other commercial" stations were about half as likely to report a profit on news. Fox affiliates were slightly more likely to report losing money on news—even though the same percentage of Fox stations said they make a profit as ABC and CBS stations. News departments at stations in the South were the most likely to be profitable, and the Midwest, as usual, lagged slightly behind the others.

### Percentage of TV Station Revenue Produced by News

	Average	Median	Minimum	Maximum	Not Sure
<b>All TV News</b>	46.1%	50.0%	0	90.0%	74.5%
<b>Market Size:</b>					
<b>1-25</b>	41.1	39.0	5.0	67.0	78.1
<b>26-50</b>	40.6	39.0	14.0	90.0	60.0
<b>51-100</b>	50.1	50.0	32.0	70.0	74.2
<b>101-150</b>	44.4	47.5	0	65.0	74.7
<b>151+</b>	57.1	60.0	45.0	75.0	83.3
<b>Staff Size:</b>					
<b>51+</b>	46.8	50.0	14.0	90.0	56.6
<b>31-50</b>	42.7	45.0	0	75.0	68.8
<b>21-30</b>	52.2	50.0	40.0	60.0	81.0
<b>11-20</b>	49.2	51.0	30.0	65.0	86.8
<b>1-10</b>	-	-	-	-	100.0
<b>Affiliation:</b>					
<b>ABC</b>	46.6	50.0	0	70.0	64.8
<b>CBS</b>	53.2	50.0	25.0	90.0	72.5
<b>Fox</b>	27.3	25.0	14.0	40.0	78.6
<b>NBC</b>	46.9	49.0	25.0	65.0	79.0
<b>Big Four Affiliates</b>	47.0	50.0	0	90.0	73.2
<b>Other Commercial</b>	33.4	35.0	5.0	67.0	76.5

The overall percentage of station revenue generated by news rose substantially in the last year, from 39.7 percent a year ago to 46.1 percent this time. All market sizes rose except 101-150, which slid slightly from a year ago. On the other hand, view the figures with some care. Given the high percentage of news directors who say that they don't know (including all the news directors at non network affiliates), view these numbers cautiously.

### Percentage of TV News Departments Providing Content to Other Media

	Station Website	Another TV Station	Cable TV Channel	Local Radio
<b>All TV</b>	66.0%	18.1%	10.9%	43.0%
<b>Big Four Affiliates</b>	70.2	19.1	11.9	45.1
<b>Other Commercial</b>	26.3	10.5	5.3	15.8
<b>Market Size:</b>				
<b>1-25</b>	42.1	21.1	5.3	36.8
<b>26-50</b>	80.0	17.1	8.6	37.1
<b>51-100</b>	63.0	16.4	16.4	47.9
<b>101-150</b>	68.4	19.0	11.4	44.3
<b>151+</b>	77.5	17.5	7.5	42.5

These figures are little changed from a year ago.

### Percentage of TV News Staff Under Contract by Position

	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999
News Director	33%	36%	37%	32%	32%	29%
Asst. News Director	47	46	47	31	31	27
Executive Producer	58	41	45	55	39	42
Managing Editor	47	41	52	54	33	27
News Producer	62	56	59	57	48	40
Assignment Editor	26	26	32	33	26	23
News Anchor	90	85	85	78	74	75
Weathercaster	86	83	82	76	74	66
Sports Anchor	84	82	80	71	71	64
News Reporter	77	70	65	60	54	53
News Writer	3	8	9	21	7	11
News Assistant	2	11	5	14	5	2
Sports Reporter	57	48	43	48	39	38
Photographer	11	9	14	17	10	11
Tape Editor	1	3	9	11	2	3
Graphics Specialist	9	8	6	8	12	9
Internet Specialist	10	7	17	20	12	15

Most of the job categories rose this past year, but it's not consistent. The biggest jump came among executive producers.

### Percentage of TV News Staff Under Contracts & Non-Competes

	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999
Percentage of TV News Staff Under Contract	55.1%	51.8%	52.5%	50.2%	44.3%	42.2%

After a few years of leveling off at just over half, the percentage under contract in television has gone up to its highest level since we started asking the question. More than four of five (80.4 percent) of those with contracts also have non-compete agreements.