

Decline of Local News

When newspapers die, there's a cost

Smaller voter turnout, less community spirit, higher cost of government, more partisan politics just a part of the loss

During the past 14 months, our committee has studied the decline of local news in Washington and its impact on our communities.

We interviewed more than 45 experts and examined more than 400 documents. Our study concluded that the loss of more than two dozen newspapers and 1 million subscribers over the past 20 years has affected civic engagement, voter participation, public health, public financing and political partisanship.



Lee Shaker

"Newspapers are vital institutions in our democracy, and their decline warrants our concern."

Studying 18 metro areas, Portland State University's Lee Shaker discovered that when cities lost a newspaper, residents were less engaged with their communities.

Also, people often turn to social media, where algorithms direct information that re-enforces readers' pre-conceived ideas.



A democracy problem

"It's not a journalism problem, it's a democracy problem."

– Benjamin Shors, WSU



Yakima Herald-Republic

Newsroom: 24 journalists

Newspaper circulation: 25,000.

Population: 97,000



Tacoma News-Tribune

Newsroom: 25 journalists

Newspaper circulation: 54,000.

Population: 219,000

1

THINK LOCAL

"When people read news about their neighborhoods, schools and municipal services, they think like locals. When they read about national political conflict, they think like partisans."

– Researcher Joshua Darr

2

VOTERS SCARCE

In all but one of Washington's 39 counties, voter participation in February Special elections in February Special elections decreased from 2012 to 2020. The decrease was 13 percent in Asotin County and 11 percent in Benton County.

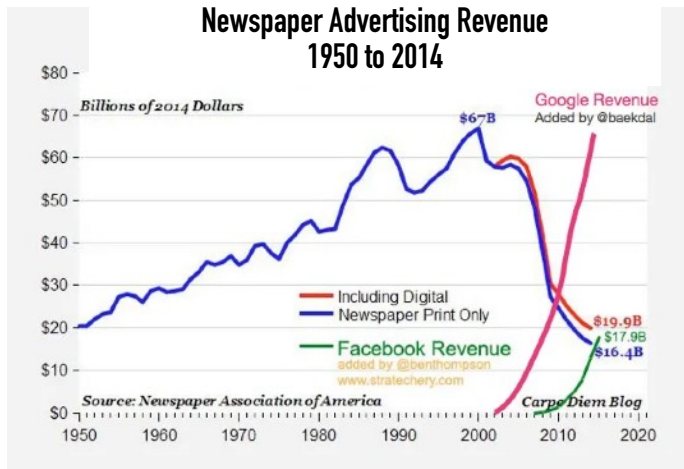
3

FACEBOOK IS KING

In Ellensburg, more people turn to Facebook for news than the Daily Record. April 2022

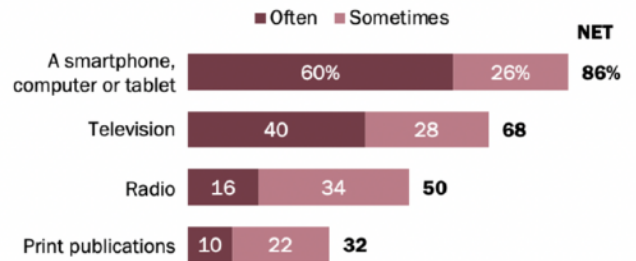
Daily Record circulation: 5,523.

Facebook/Community Connect members: 12,900



Most Americans get news on digital devices

% of U.S. adults who get news ___ from ...



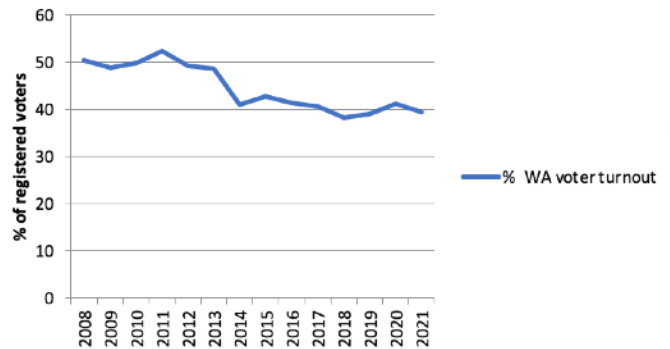
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Aug. 31-Sept. 7, 2020.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Page Count Decreases at Four Newspapers



WA voter participation in February special elections 2008-2021



False information posted on Twitter spreads faster and farther than truth.
 – *Scientific American.*

NEWSPAPERS AND PUBLIC HEALTH

“I would learn about a business that was flaunting masks or occupancy. I learned about a bar in Spokane Valley that, in spite of limited occupancy, was wide open. There were other examples. And I learned about it by reading the newspaper.”

– Bob Lutz, Former Spokane County public health officer

For more information about this study, please contact:

Dee Anne Finken at dfinken@comcast.net or

Delores Irwin at deloreslww@gmail.com