

Trusting News Project Report 2018

A Reynolds Journalism Institute research project

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Summary: In interviews with local journalists, 81 news consumers explained the qualities of trustworthy journalism, perceptions of fact-checking organizations, and expectations of transparency. A thematic analysis found balance, depth, and honesty among the most prevalent themes relating to trustworthy journalism. The usefulness of fact-checking, ability of organizations to fact-check news subjects, and the integrity of fact-checking organizations were among the most prevalent themes relating to fact-checking organizations. Regarding transparency, the newsgathering process and journalists' professional credentials were among the most prevalent themes. Results provide implication towards building trust with news audiences.

Method

Participants

Trusting News is a project designed to study how people decide what news to trust and train journalists in how to demonstrate credibility and earn trust. In 2017, [Trusting News recruited newsrooms](#) willing to talk to their own news consumers about trust. Twenty-nine newsrooms committed to the project. The newsrooms began by publishing a questionnaire, typically using social media and newsletters. ([Here is a sample questionnaire.](#)) They issued an open invitation for people to share basic information about themselves and also indicate how likely they were to trust the news on a scale of 1-4, how many news organizations they supported financially, and how they decided which news organizations were credible. In addition, they were invited to name three news brands they typically trusted and three they did not. They were also asked if they would be willing to talk to a journalist about the issue of trust. In total across the 29 newsrooms, 8,728 questionnaire responses were recorded. [A separate analysis of that data was performed previously.](#)

Those questionnaires allowed the staffs to find a diverse set of interview subjects. They read through responses looking for thoughtful, nuanced comments. The goal for each newsroom was to sit down with four people across a spectrum of political leanings, overall trust in news, race, gender and age. Not all newsrooms were able to complete four interviews. Some subjects proved difficult to meet with, and some newsrooms were not able to spend the necessary time. In total, 81 interviews were completed, from which this analysis is made. The participating journalists were sent [an interview guide to follow](#). The interviews were conducted mostly in person, with a few being done via video conference. Journalists took notes during interviews and sent the notes to the Trusting News researchers.

Procedures

Our study used a mixed method design. We first used a thematic analysis to identify themes in participants' interview responses. We then used a content analysis to quantify the presence of those themes across all answers.

For the thematic analysis, we first read the responses to each question, then identified prevalent themes that participants mentioned. For example, when asked about fact-checking (question 7), the *usefulness* of fact-checking, the *ability* of journalists to fact check, the *benevolence* of journalists, the *impartiality* of journalists, and the influence of fact-checking on *reader agency* arose as common themes (Brandtzaeg & Folstad, 2017). We used previous research (Brandtzaeg & Folstad, 2017; Chung, Nam, & Stefanone, 2012; Karlsson & Clerwall, 2018; Yale, Jensen, Carcioppolo, Sun, & Liu, 2015;) to inform our identification of themes.

When participants described trustworthy and untrustworthy news, quality journalism, factors that influence one to follow or stop following a news source, and expectations for local, national, and international news (questions 1-6), seven themes emerged: *balance*, *depth*, *simplicity*, *reader agency*, *professionalism/professional reputation*, and *relevance* (Yale, Jensen, Carcioppolo, Sun, & Liu, 2015). When participants responded to questions about opinion labels in news (question 8), five themes emerged: *clarity of labels in general*, *clarity of opinion labels in print*, *clarity of opinion labels on TV*, *clarity of opinion labels online*, and the *influence of opinions on organization perceptions*. When participants responded to questions about individual journalists (question 9), four themes emerged: *noticing individual journalists*, *relating to individual journalists*, *the importance of relating to individual journalists*, and *the effect of individual journalists on organization perceptions*. When participants described the types of transparency they value in news (question 10), 6 themes emerged: *news selection*, *corrections*, *hyperlinks*, *journalist information*, *interactivity*, and *funding* (Chung, Nam, & Stefanone, 2012; Karlsson & Clerwall, 2018).

We followed the thematic analysis with a content analysis to quantify the themes we identified through the thematic analysis. For questions 1-5 we coded for the presence or absence of the aforementioned themes (present/absent/N/A). For question 6 we coded for the type of news (local, national, international) mentioned for each theme (local/national/international/local and national/local and international/national and international/no difference/N/A). For example, if a participant stated having a higher expectation of balance for local news, we coded "local" for the

balance category. If a participant mentioned having the same expectation of balance for local, national, and international news, we coded “no difference.” For question 7, we coded for the positive valence, negative valence, or absence of *usefulness*, *ability*, *benevolence*, and *impartiality* (positive/negative/absent/N/A). We coded for the presence or absence of *reader agency* (present/absent/N/A). For question 8, we coded for whether participants notice labels, do not notice labels, or sometimes notices labels (yes/no/sometimes/N/A). We also coded for the clarity or unclarity of labels in print, TV, and internet news (clear/unclear/N/A). Finally, we coded whether opinions expressed in an organization reflect or do not reflect on organization perceptions (yes/no/N/A). For question 9, we coded for whether participants do or do not notice individual journalists (yes/no/N/A), whether participants do or do not relate to individual journalists (yes/no/N/A), whether relating to individual journalists is important (yes/no/N/A), and whether individual journalists influence perceptions of news organizations (yes/no/N/A). For question 10, we coded for the presence or absence of the aforementioned themes (present/absent/N/A).

Coders and Intercoder Reliabilities

Two coders were used, one male doctoral student and one independent researcher. Ten percent of the sample was randomly selected for coders to code separately. Then, Krippendorff's alpha was used to calculate intercoder agreement for all variables. Coders recoded variables until an acceptable alpha coefficient was reached for each variable (.60). The average alpha level for all variables was .79. The alpha coefficient range was .62-1.0.

Results

Q1: You were asked to bring in a specific piece of journalism you find highly credible, from any news source. What specifically makes you trust it?

Results from the content analysis showed that respondents reported trusting a piece of journalism because it was perceived as balanced (38.3%), in-depth (25.9%), honest (24.7%), professional/reputable (21.0%), simple (12.3%), increased reader agency (9.9%), and relevant (4.9%).

Q2: You listed three sources of news you typically trust and three you don't. Tell me about those selections.

Results from the content analysis showed that respondents reported trusting a news source because it was perceived as balanced (72.8%), honest (53.1%), professional/reputable (32.1%), in-depth (27.1%), relevant (14.8%), increased reader agency (13.6%), and simple (12.3%).

Q3: Can you think of a time you decided to start or stop following a specific news brand? If so, do you remember what lead to that decision?

Results from the content analysis showed that when considering to start or stop following a news source, respondents considered balance (53.1%), honesty (18.5%), professionalism/reputation (13.6%), relevance (9.9%), reader agency (8.6%), simplicity (7.4%), and depth (6.2%).

Q4: What does quality journalism look like to you? What separates good journalism from bad?

Results from the content analysis showed that when describing quality journalism, respondents valued balance (77.8%), honesty (51.9%), depth (46.9%), reader agency (23.5%), professionalism/reputation (22.2%), simplicity (12.3%), and relevance (6.2%).

Q5: Is there anything the organizations you don't trust could do to earn your trust?

Results from the content analysis showed that when describing what untrustworthy news organizations can do to earn trust, respondents mentioned improvements in balance (56.8%), honesty (27.1%), reader agency (12.3%), professionalism/reputation (11.1%), depth (8.6%), relevance (8.6%), and simplicity (8.6). Results for questions 1-5 are listed in Table 1.

	Theme						
	Balance	Depth	Simplicity	Reader Agency	Honesty	Professionalism/ Reputation	Relevance
Trustworthy Piece? (Q1)	38.3%	25.9%	12.3%	9.9%	24.7%	21.0%	4.9%
Trustworthy Sources? (Q2)	72.8%	27.1%	12.3%	13.6%	53.1%	32.1%	14.8%
Why Start/Stop Following Source? (Q3)	53.1%	6.2%	7.4%	8.6%	18.5%	13.6%	9.9%
Quality Journalism? (Q4)	77.8%	46.9%	12.3%	23.5%	51.9%	22.2%	6.2%
Can Trust be Earned? (Q5)	56.8%	8.6%	8.6%	12.3%	27.1%	11.1%	8.6%

Table 1. Elements of trustworthy news.

Q6: Do your impressions of or expectations for journalism differ between local news and national or international news?

The results showed differences in expectations. Results from the content analysis showed that when describing expectations for local news, respondents most often mentioned balance (28.4%), relevance (27.2%), and depth (18.5%). When describing expectations for national news, respondents most often mentioned depth (12.3%), professionalism/reputation (11.1%), and balance (11.1%). When describing expectations for international news, respondents most often mentioned depth (6.2%), honesty (3.7%) and balance (3.7%). Results for question 6 are listed in Table 2.

	Theme						
	Balance	Depth	Simplicity	Reader Agency	Honesty	Professionalism/ Reputation	Relevance
Local	28.4%	18.5%	4.9%	7.4%	11.1%	9.9%	27.2%
National	11.1%	12.3%	2.5%	0%	6.2%	11.1%	4.9%
Local & National	2.5%	4.9%	1.2%	0	2.5%	4.9%	0%
International	3.7%	6.2%	0	0	3.7%	2.5%	1.2%
National & International	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1.2%	0
Local, National, & International	3.7%	3.7%	0	0	3.7%	1.2%	1.2%

Table 2. Expectations for local, national, and international news.

Q7: What do you think of journalists' efforts to fact-check claims made by public figures? Do you believe them? Do you think they make you better informed?

Results from the content analysis showed that nearly half of respondents viewed the usefulness of fact-checking positively (44.4%), while others viewed the usefulness of fact-checking negatively (3.7%). Nearly a tenth of respondents viewed the ability of news organizations to fact-check positively (9.9%), while even more viewed the ability of news organizations to fact-check negatively (11.1%). The same number of respondents viewed fact-checking organizations as benevolent (1.2%), as those who viewed them as malevolent (1.2%). Nearly triple the number of respondents who view fact-checking organizations as having integrity (6.2%) questioned the integrity of fact-checking organizations (19.8%). Respondents also reported fact-checking as a way to make citizens more informed (16.1%). Results for question 7 are listed in Table 3.

Fact-Checking (Q7)	
Theme	Sentiment
Usefulness	Positive: 44.4% Negative: 3.7%
Ability	Positive: 9.9% Negative: 11.1%
Benevolence	Positive: 1.2% Negative: 1.2%
Integrity	Positive: 6.2% Negative: 19.8%
Reader Agency	Present: 16.1%

Table 3. Fact-checking

Q8: Do you notice whether journalism is labeled as analysis or opinion? Does that differ by medium (TV analysis and talk show segments, opinion labels on text columns)? In your mind, do those perspectives reflect on the overall organization, or are they separate from the straight news product?

Results from the content analysis showed that more than half of the respondents (55.6%) explained opinions are easily identifiable in news media, Still, others (8.6%) explained opinions are ambiguous. Nearly a quarter of respondents stated opinions in print are clear (23.5%) as opposed to unclear (2.5%). More respondents stated opinions in TV news are more often unclearly labeled (14.8%) than clearly labeled (8.6%). Similarly, more respondents stated opinions in internet publication are more likely to be unclear (11.1%) than clear (9.9%). Nearly a quarter of respondents stated opinions expressed in the news do reflect on the organization (22.2%), while far less stated expressed opinions do not reflect on the organization (3.7%). Results for question 8 are listed in Table 4.

Opinions (Q8)	
Are Opinions Identifiable?	Yes/sometimes: 55.6% No: 8.6%
In Print?	Clear: 23.5% Unclear: 2.5%
On TV?	Clear: 8.6% Unclear: 14.8%
On Internet?	Clear: 9.9% Unclear: 11.1%
Reflect on Organization?	Yes: 22.2% No: 3.7%

Table 4. Opinion Labels

Q9: Do you notice the individual journalist behind a piece of work, in addition to the brand? Do your perceptions of an individual affect your perceptions of the news organization overall? Any examples? Do you feel like you can personally relate to individual journalists? If so, does that matter? Any examples? Do your answers differ between mediums (TV, radio, print, online)?

Results from the content analysis showed that nearly two-thirds of respondents reported noticing individual journalists (58.0%) while more than a fifth explicitly do not (21.0%). Individual journalists are more likely to affect perceptions of organizations (19.8%) than not affect perceptions of organizations (6.2%). Nearly three times as many respondents reported personally relating to individual journalists (12.3%) than reported not relating (4.9%). More respondents reported relating to journalists as important (9.9%) than not important (6.2%). Results for question 9 are listed in Table 5.

Relating to Individual Journalists (Q9)	
Notice <u>Individual</u> Journalists?	Yes: 58.0% No: 21.0%
Affect Organization Perception?	Yes: 19.8% No: 6.2%
Relate to Journalists?	Yes: 12.3% No: 4.9%
Does Relating Matter?	Yes: 9.9% No: 6.2%

Table 5. Relating to Individual Journalists

Q10: Do you want journalism to be transparent? What do you want to know about how journalism is reported and produced, and about the people doing the work? Do you think journalists have an obligation to explain or disclose any information? Are you interested in hearing about how we do our work? Would more sharing in either of those categories help build trust?

Results from the content analysis showed that more than half of respondents value transparency in news (54.3%). Valued dimensions of transparency included news selection (39.5%), journalist information (22.2%), hyperlinks (9.9%), funding (8.6%), and corrections (4.9%). Results for question 10 are listed in Table 6.

Transparency? (Q10)					
Yes	News Selection	Corrections	Hyperlinks	Journalist Information	Funding
54.3%	39.5%	4.9%	9.9%	22.2%	8.6%

Table 6. Transparency in News

Discussion

Trustworthy News

Balance

Balance emerged as a chief expectation of journalism. Some participants understand balance as getting a diversity of opinions.

“I’m looking for recognition that there is a different point of view, that that point of view has a chance to be heard. And I’m not talking about, you know, ‘the UN has a black helicopter with mind laser control’ point of view. I’m talking about when there is a

substantial minority that feels a certain way about something. I feel that that needs to be heard. And if I hear the pro and con or both of the sides then I feel like I'm getting the full picture. If all I hear is one perspective on things and I don't hear the other side, that tells me that that's biased reporting."

Other participants valued when journalists steer clear of opinion.

"That's not what I'm interested in. I don't care about what your opinion is on a matter. You're supposed to be telling me what's going on so that I can form my opinion on what's going on."

Some participants gather a diversity of opinions by getting information on one story from multiple sources.

"I personally lean conservative but I try to read articles from sources that are "balanced. I don't subscribe to hard left views but still read left leaning opinion pieces on occasion just to hear where they stand on current events. I prefer common sense conservatism (social/financial/traditional) but I realize both sides need to work together to get things accomplished in government sometimes."

Depth

Participants who mentioned depth valued journalism that provides context for a story. Depth was most often mentioned as a characteristic of quality journalism (47%) and trustworthy sources (27%).

"These publications don't include context when they talk about Trump. For example, articles about Trump's executive orders don't mention that Obama also issued a lot of executive orders, held closed-door meetings, etc. Coverage of the travel ban doesn't mention that Obama also "highlighted" several of those countries for scrutiny. ... If you're not going to say the whole story, how much else are you leaving out?"

Other participants valued detailed analysis of the facts.

"Many years ago The Economist magazine did a feature story on capital punishment...what I found credible about that was that they actually made the argument against capital punishment but they did it in a way where it was leveraging different academically vetted research sources to make the argument so they went through and talked about the fact that there's no correlation between capital punishment and murder rates... they talked about how it was actually more economical to imprison someone for life without the possibility of parole than it is to execute them. And it showed an example of the economic analysis and referenced the underlying research that had been done that showed that. They touched on the moral arguments both for and against capital punishment but not in a way that was hysterical. They kind of gave articulation to both sides of that argument. And that's really what I look for in news coverage that I find credible."

Finally, participants valued journalism that gathers information from "real people" who are closer to the story.

"I love journalism that is on the ground where journalists are interviewing people about experiences – gives me a good view of how people are living through current times. I like to hear with different people multi-culturally to see how they deal with things. I can't get to everyone... [an example is] Eleanor Beardsley in France helping refugees. She interviewed people in the village, because I got to see how they felt about refugees and the risks they took."

Simplicity

Those who valued simplicity favored journalists who stuck to *just* the facts, or who let the facts speak for themselves. Simplicity was most often mentioned as a characteristic of a trustworthy piece (12.3%), trustworthy news sources (12.3%), and quality journalism (12.3%).

“Any time I listen to NPR, I trust it. I would say that's the most credible mainstream media. In talking about the bathroom bill, it was talking about the study that came out that said \$4 billion of economic damage or so. I found it credible for a couple of reasons, mostly because it centered in the facts and not necessarily as much context because I get context all the time and I kind of just want an update on the facts. The fact that it doesn't editorialize, that's very important to me, and I do pick up on that.”

Reader Agency

Participants who valued reader agency valued journalism that empowers readers to develop their own understanding on a subject. Reader agency was most often mentioned as a characteristic of quality journalism (23.5%) and trustworthy sources (13.6%).

“I just want the facts from both sides so I can make my own decision. I do want context. I used to be in the military so I'm very knowledgeable about lots of issues; I can tell what is fact and what is not.”

Other participants valued journalism that empowers audiences to make better decisions

“Every other major news outlet, like NBC or Fox, has the same headline. There are so many facts, they're just the same facts and the same sources over and over again. It is easier to point out a problem than a solution. It would make me trust them more if they talked about solutions.”

Honesty

Honesty was most often mentioned as a characteristic of trustworthy sources (53.1%) and quality journalism (51.9%). Some participants who valued honesty valued journalism that is transparent about the news process

"Making it clear that things that are opinions are set up as a quote or it's made clear that they're opinions. Being clear about your role as a writer in story, if that person has a vested interest in why you're writing and how you're involved in the piece. Being clear up front makes me feel better. Things that are based purely on anecdotal sources and not attributed to just quotes and opinions, that's sketchy. It's bad when there's data where they don't reference a source or if the source looks like a bad data source or if the statistical analysis is blatantly wrong... If you're giving numbers, I want a reference or a link to where you got the numbers."

Other participants valued journalists who did not exaggerate headlines and details.

“What the TV industry tends to do is elaborate on a lot of things. Sure, you may have a snowstorm coming, but is it really 6 inches of snow coming? A lot of news companies turn around and exaggerate that... They go for a larger range, they go for scared people at home so they're prepared vs underprepared.... They're always looking to grab at you or get you pulled in by having death and destruction.”

Finally, participants valued journalists who were upfront about their biases.

"There would have to be a lot of admission about the bias presented in past articles and pretty significant changes in staff. I think for Fox and Breitbart, I don't feel represented in that news source. There would need to be significant staff turnover, and they have to be ready to admit all their previous reporting was pretty biased. They also have to say how they'd hold themselves accountable as a news organization and make a plan for verifying effectiveness and accountability."

Professional Expertise/Reputation

Professional expertise/reputation was most often mentioned as a characteristic of trustworthy sources (32.1%) and quality journalism (22.2%). Some participants mentioned valuing well-written stories and knowledgeable journalists.

“I’m a big language person so if someone writes something well that it gets and holds my attention, I remember that journalist and look them up. [Kurt Eichenwald] obviously has a lot of experience just based on the way he writes and the facts he sites, but if you look him up you also know he has a ton of experience in the journalism business. You can tell Eichenwald has extreme knowledge of what he's talking about.”

They also valued journalism that relied on expert sources.

“The primary source seems trustworthy, an Australian government study. The issue was the focus of a report in Nature magazine, another trustworthy source. The article explains the science behind the contentions, how the investigation was conducted. Four or so scientists are cited, including some involved in the study and at least one who wasn't, assuring a range of perspectives. The credentials of the scientists are included, lending authority. Though a concerning issue, the reporter also notes glimmers of hope in regeneration of the reef.”

Finally, participants mentioned a long-standing connection with organizations.

“For KUT [FM 90.5], it’s really about just being a local and having always grown up with you guys on in some form or another. Before I was listening to the news, I was listening to the Saturday morning programming with my dad. So, I mean there’s a little bit of trust from I guess knowledge-ability. I know you guys.”

Relevance

Relevance was most often mentioned as a characteristic of trustworthy sources (14.8%) and as a reason people decided to start or stop following a news source (9.9%). Some participants mentioned valuing journalism that represents their ideologies.

“I’ve always been very interested in politics and current events. I’m the son of an immigrant, an immigrant from Cuba who saw communism first hand. And I think a lot of people expect me to be liberal even though I’m not. But I mean I’ve always been interested in these things. I remember I started listening to Rush Limbaugh during the Clarence Thomas hearings. He was a great conservative voice during that whole thing. And you know Fox News is really the only outlet that I felt my beliefs could relate to once my beliefs were fully formed.”

Other participants mentioned valuing journalism that connects to their personal life.

“Lay off the play-by-play of Donald Trump. Find other stories that take more work and connect things on a local/regional level. People are more apt to listen to things that take place close to home.”

Fact-checking

Usefulness

Participants mentioned fact-checking being a useful for audiences (44.4%).

“I go to Snopes to figure out whether it's an urban legend or not. They may dispel a lot of myths.”

Other participants explained fact-checking could be a tool for picking at politicians rather than getting the public closer to the truth.

“I think journalists kind of forget that. When you preach facts all the time, people turn their ears off.... Journalists, they just want to poke holes in things and they just want to "gotcha," and that's what I think they get wrong.”

Ability

Participants explained they believe fact-checking if the fact-checks come from reputable sources, like Snopes. Overall, 22% of respondents mentioned the ability of fact-checking organizations to adequately check news subjects.

“It depends on the fact checkers and/or those who take taking selective quotes from fact checkers.”

Other participants explained they do not believe journalists have the ability to fact-check the claims made by individuals.

"I do believe the fact checks. The problem is when places disagree on a fact. If there's no consensus, how do I trust any of it? There's not one go-to answer."

Benevolence

One respondent believed fact-checking claims are actually attempts to stir controversy.

"I absolutely think that journalists exhaust a lot of effort trying to fact-check almost everything a politician says. I don't think it's out of a strong desire to make sure the American public is informed... They're trying to find those things that can blow up into a controversy — that can blow up into a headline."

Another respondent explained how fact-checking can actually prevent controversy.

“In general, fact checking is helpful because I think it holds politicians accountable, number one, and it forces them to, I think, speak more slowly and some of them have figured that out.... That’s a benefit publicly because one false statement gets out and, all of a sudden, I have neighbors who believe there is a genuine problem with Muslim terrorism because of false statements about the numbers.”

Integrity

26% of participants mentioned the integrity of fact-checkers. Most of these participants expressed the belief that journalists cannot be impartial in their fact-checking of others.

“Conceptually, I like that idea, but in practice, the fact-checkers usually aren’t objective. It’s very easy to swerve into editorializing. If the umpire isn’t umpiring fairly, then that’s throwing the game.”

Others (6.2%) explained the belief that journalists’ fact-checks are credible because of their independence from the sources they are fact-checking. For example, the following participant explains he is suspicious of Clinton’s fact-checking on her website during the election

“I’d rather go to a third party than get my facts from what Hillary Clinton’s going to say.”

He went on to explain he trusts third-party fact checkers more, but is still careful, as “they [might be] part of partisan think tanks.”

Reader Agency

Some participants (16.1%) explained fact-checks make them better informed.

“I value fact checking and good checking prevents [swaying] the facts. I feel more empowered when seeing fact checking.”

Transparency

News Selection

A majority of participants (54.3%) mentioned wanting news organizations to be transparent about how information was selected.

“As far as reporting, I would like to know about how many people a reporter talked to during a story or over the course of the day. I hope it would equal out to 10 Donald Trump, 10 Hillary Clinton and 10 Jill Stein reporters.... Explain what journalism is: explain what a job description is for a reporter, editor, producer, what that means in a day’s work. I would like to see transcripts of conversations if you edit part of it out. The web makes that possible, ‘go to the website for a complete transcript.’ If it is online, it should be the whole transcript of the conversation.”

Corrections

Other participants value organizations who are transparent about mistakes and corrections.

“I trust news sources that are public about retractions, writing things like ‘hey, we messed this up’ or ‘we misquoted this person in the original story.’”

Hyperlinks

9.9% of participants also mentioned valuing stories that provide links to online sources. This way they can assess the validity of the information for themselves.

"The main thing is having good sources. I look for links to original sources, like surveys. That's how I determine whether or not they're credible.”

Journalist Information

Some participants (22.2%) value knowing journalists' credentials.

"Are they really a journalist or did they just start a blog? Is it somebody who is a minor level celebrity and started to be a journalist like Leah Remy? I think if you're going to be a journalist you should know something about journalism or communication. If they don't, they should explain why they're qualified to do this."

Other participants value knowing journalists' connection to a story.

"Disclose information if it was a conflict of interest. If you aunt works at Monsanto, you should not report on that. Like, my wife is a social worker at a hospital and if I came in, she couldn't take my case."

Funding

Some participants named funding sources as an area of transparency they value. As they explain, being transparent about funding sheds light on a factor that could potentially influence the information presented.

"As far as finances go, I would like to know a bit more than what advertising support is. I'd like to know listener vs. sponsor support."

Key takeaways

1. **Incorporate multiple points of view.** Respondents indicated valuing the presence of multiple points of view in news. This includes a variety of ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, and ideologies. As the following participant explains, it is important that as many voices as possible are heard during the journalistic conversation, especially the less powerful:

- a. "I'm looking for recognition that there is a different point of view, that that point of view has a chance to be heard. And I'm not talking about, you know, 'the UN has a black helicopter with mind laser control' point of view. I'm talking about when there is a substantial minority that feels a certain way about something. I feel that that needs to be heard. And if I hear the pro and con or both of the sides then I feel like I'm getting the full picture. If all I hear is one perspective on things and I don't hear the other side, that tells me that that's biased reporting."
2. **Scrutinize all of the points of view included in a report.** Respondents indicated valuing in-depth investigations in their news. This includes diving into facts accessed from credible sources (experts, those directly involved and impacted, and primary sources). As the following participant explains, rigor in investigation, verification, and writing separates good journalism from bad.
 - a. "Many years ago The Economist magazine did a feature story on capital punishment... what I found credible about that was that they actually made the argument against capital punishment but they did it in a way where it was leveraging different academically vetted research sources to make the argument so they went through and talked about the fact that there's no correlation between capital punishment and murder rates... they talked about how it was actually more economical to imprison someone for life without the possibility of parole than it is to execute them. And it showed an example of the economic analysis and referenced the underlying research that had been done that showed that. They touched on the moral arguments both for and against capital punishment but not in a way that was hysterical. They kind of gave articulation to both sides of that argument. And that's really what I look for in news coverage that I find credible."
3. **Let people think for themselves.** Respondents indicated a sensitivity to perceived patronization. If they interpret journalists as trying to tell them what to think, audiences are turned off. Instead, they prefer relevant facts to be presented to them so they can craft their own understanding of the issues. As the following participant explains, people have their own backgrounds that help them form their unique understanding.

- a. "I just want the facts from both sides so I can make my own decision. I do want context. I used to be in the military so I'm very knowledgeable about lots of issues; I can tell what is fact and what is not."
4. **Local news organizations should focus on local news.** One participant explained she was able to schedule a grooming appointment for her dog because of the local weatherman's report. Another participant valued information such as "the best place to eat a burger" in town. As the following participant explains, people especially rely on local news organizations for stories that directly impact them.
 - a. It's a waste for local news outlets to spend time focusing on viral videos from the internet. Local news talking about what's going on in Ukraine or Afghanistan. We're in Detroit. We need to know about Detroit. There are enough things going on in Detroit for a news outlet to focus on us completely and totally.
 5. **Capture audiences while they are young.** Participants mentioned being longtime subscribers of the news organizations they subscribe to. As the following participants explain, this process sometimes started as early as childhood.
 - a. "My dad has been a lifelong subscriber of the WSJ. You know, my earliest memories are of the WSJ getting dropped off at the house, and he was always reading the WSJ. So I started off with that as a childhood bias."
 - b. "For KUT [FM 90.5], it's really about just being a local and having always grown up with you guys on in some form or another. Before I was listening to the news, I was listening to the Saturday morning programming with my dad. So, I mean there's a little bit of trust from I guess knowledge-ability. I know you guys."
 6. **Earning trust will take time.** Most respondents indicated that the news organizations they do not trust can still earn their trust (80.2%). However, as the following participant explains, this would take an admittance of fault and a commitment to restructuring the journalistic process to incorporate more voices (among staff and sources) and a commitment to the truth over all else.
 - a. "There would have to be a lot of admission about the bias presented in past articles and pretty significant changes in staff. I think for Fox and Breitbart, I don't feel represented in that news source. There would need to be significant staff turnover, and they have to be ready to admit all their previous reporting was pretty biased."

They also have to say how they'd hold themselves accountable as a news organization and make a plan for verifying effectiveness and accountability."

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