



Why “trust us!” isn’t enough: **Making your integrity visible**





Trusting News

We demystify trust in news and empower journalists to actively demonstrate credibility and earn trust.

Mollie Muchna // mollie@trustingnews.org

Mollie Muchna

- Project Manager at Trusting News
- Background in legacy newsrooms, reporting, editing and audience development
- Adjunct instructor at the University of Arizona
- Based in Southern Arizona



Our basic principles:



- We can't persuade everyone to trust us. That's not a reasonable goal.
- Not all journalism is good. It's rational and wise for people to be skeptical of "the media." Our job is to differentiate our own work and show what makes it trustworthy.
- Being a news consumer is confusing and overwhelming, and many people have a casual relationship with the news.
- It's up to us to earn trust — and we don't get credit for any decisions, ethics or values that are invisible.



What we're here to talk about

- **What people get wrong about how journalism works, and what we wish they knew**
- **What signals of credibility we can offer, and what stories we can tell about how we operate**
- **Where those messages can go**
- **You'll leave with ideas and next steps!**



**Before we figure out
solutions, we have to
understand the problem.**



There's a disconnect between what we journalists think we offer — our value — and how our journalism is perceived.



From research we know:

- Trust in news is low, differences: age, political affiliation
- When people don't know how journalism operates, they don't give us the benefit of the doubt.
- There's a huge disconnect between what we think we offer — the value we provide — and how we're perceived.
- Most people have never spoken to a journalist.
- Journalists don't often reflect community: research shows we're whiter, more educated, more liberal than communities

The big picture

54% of people are neutral or disagree with the statement
most local news does not intend to mislead or persuade the public

FIGURE 7

Americans' Evaluations of Local News Organizations

How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about local news organizations in the U.S.?

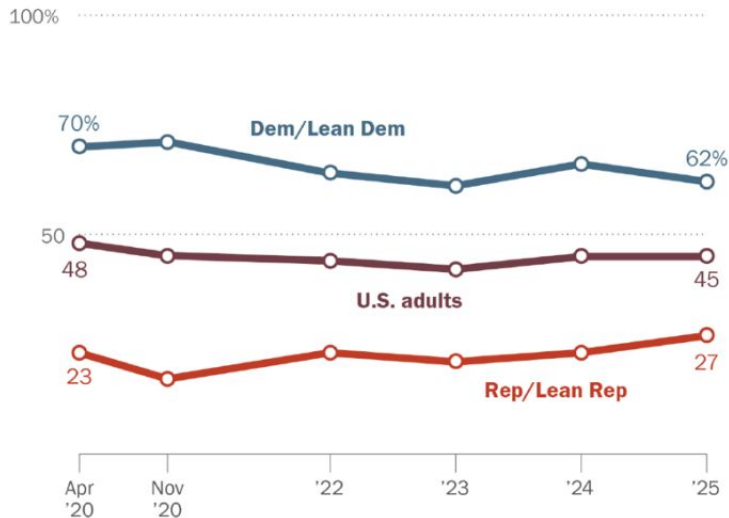


Note: "No answer" percentages not shown.

The big picture

Democrats are more confident than Republicans that journalists act in best interests of the public

% of ___ who have **a great deal** or **fair amount** of confidence in journalists to act in the best interests of the public



Note: Other response options were "Not too much confidence" and "No confidence at all."
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted April 14-20, 2025.
"How Americans View Journalists in the Digital Age"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

People don't see us as a public service

Fewer than half of U.S. adults say they have a great deal or fair amount of confidence in journalists to act in the best interests of the public. It's only 27% for Republicans.

Here's how this plays out Oklahoma Media Center

Source: Oklahoma
Media Center 2023

SEPTEMBER 13, 2023 | NEWS

Groundbreaking study of local news habits of Oklahomans will launch Trusting News training to fund projects

Oklahoma Media Center released a comprehensive academic **study** today designed to fuel data-driven training this month from the nationally known Trusting News nonprofit to help collaborating newsrooms execute experiments aimed to increase trust and support of local news.

The groundbreaking **ecosystem engagement project** is designed for local newsrooms with local pollsters, local academics and trainers with local ties funded by a local foundation. The multiphase project's goal is to find out where underserved rural and metro communities get their local news, why they believe or trust information and what would make them financially support local journalism.

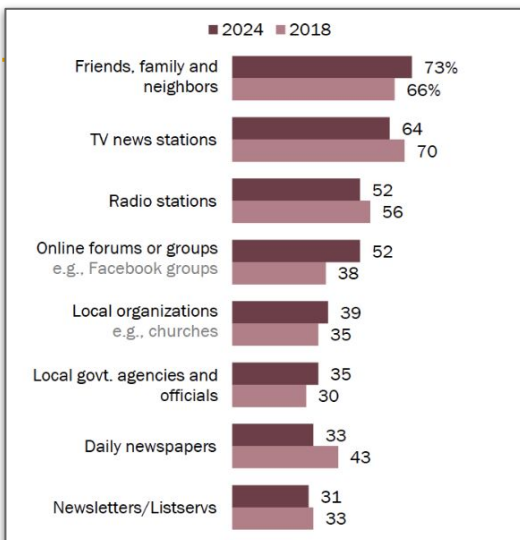


Research showed:

- Oklahomans rarely subscribe to local newspapers, and few are interested in subscribing.
- Many people said stay up to date just fine from Facebook groups and social feeds
- **Only 8.8% say they don't feel they're able to stay informed** about their local community. (32.6% somewhat, 58.6% yes).

This tracks:

- Landscape is changing: News avoidance is on the rise
- People are turning to traditional news sources less and less
- Social media is America's top news source, with 1 in 5 adults get their information from influencers



For the first time, social media overtakes TV as Americans' top news source



People don't see a problem

- If they're not getting traditional journalism AND are feeling like they're able to stay informed, that's a significant problem on the demand side of the equation.
- It's a problem for our bottom line — and our public service mission.
- That should make journalists concerned — and deeply curious about how they can be useful.



**Who gets to decide
if journalism is
credible, relevant and
useful?**



**What *should*
responsible, ethical,
mission-driven
journalists do?**



The work involves:

- **Transparency** and clarity (on types of content, on where content comes from, on our values, etc.)
- **Humility**, engagement and responsiveness
- **Articulating a counternarrative** (then making it findable)
- Taking **advantage of attention** where we have it

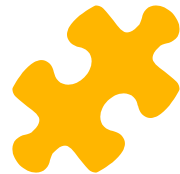


The work involves:

- **Transparency** and clarity (on types of content, on where content comes from, on our values, etc.)
- Humility, engagement and responsiveness
- Articulating a counternarrative (then making it findable)
- Taking advantage of attention where we have it



**Build elements into
your journalism that
focus on transparency
and credibility**



This is needed on **two levels**

Institutionally

- What do we communicate about our brand?
- Our ethics and policies?
- Our mission?

Day to day

- What do we communicate about our processes?
- Our choices?
- Our people?



**Why
transparency ?**

**We know
it works!**



Explain your Process Box

The goal of the “explain your process” experiments was to find out whether providing a short, explanatory text box at the bottom of a news story would help the audience understand the process of journalism better and – as a result – boost their trust in the news organization.² The box included how and why the news organization decided to pursue the story and where reporters gathered information. We tested the “explain your process” box in two separate experiments – first with a mock news site and then with real local and national news sites.

Test with *The News Beat*

In the first experiment, articles were published on a mock news site, *The News Beat*. We used two different stories – one about a hit-and-run car crash

“Explain Your Process” Box

Example of one of the boxes used in the experiments. This box references an article about a hit-and-run accident. Readers either saw this box displayed alongside the article, or they saw the story without the box. Highlighting was used to draw attention to information in the box.

Why and how we're covering this topic

Why we're doing this story

In choosing which crimes to write about, we evaluate if there is an ongoing threat to public safety and prioritize covering those that do. This crash left a driver in critical condition, and the suspect is still at large.

How we're doing this story

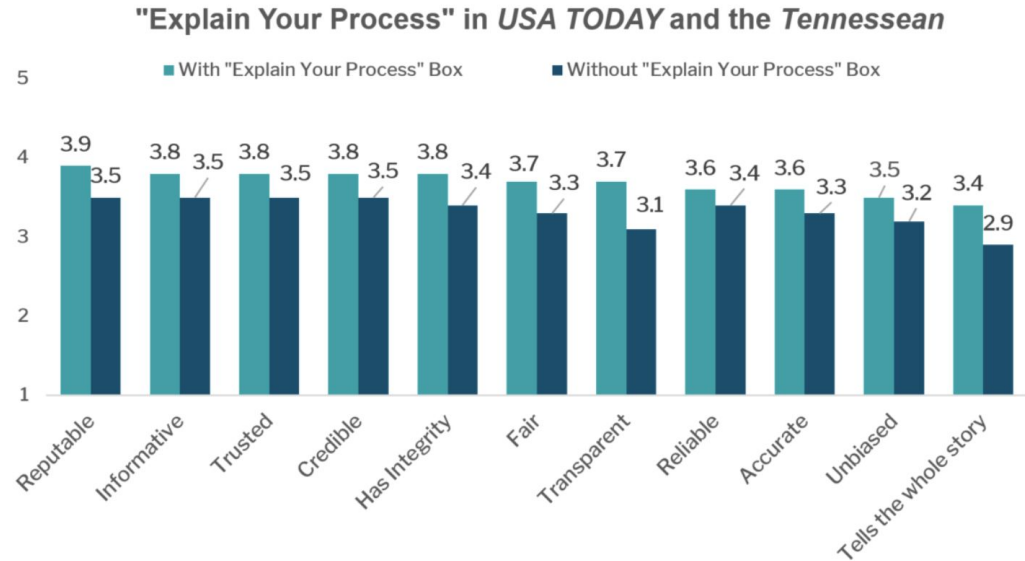
All the information in this story was gathered from interviews with Fairview police or police reports from that department. We often do not publish suspect mugshots, but we did in this case so the community can help police find him.

Our approach to covering crime

We are working on an FAQ about which crimes we report, what information we include and the goals and ethics that guide us. If you have a question you'd like to see answered, please post it in the comments.



The presence of the “explain your process” box boosted people’s perceptions of the news organization on 11 of the 12 items related to trust. These were: **transparent, informative, accurate, fair, tells the whole story, reliable, credible, unbiased, trusted, has integrity, and reputable.**



Data from the Center for Media Engagement

Notes: Average scores. Participants were asked to indicate how well 12 attributes applied to the news organization. Responses for participants exposed to the “Explain Your Process” box were significantly higher than responses for those not exposed to the box at the $p < .01$ level for all the attributes, except “does not have an agenda.”



Transparency

Polarization

Engagement

AI

- With the **Center for Media Engagement** at the University of Texas, we tested whether adding explanations for how journalists do their jobs is a useful tool to help build trust. **Our experiment found** that adding an “explain your process” box can indeed improve a user’s perceptions of a news organization.
- With the **University of Georgia**, we found it’s most effective when journalists **weave transparency elements, like these “explain your process boxes”, into a story itself** rather than pulling it out in separate elements.
- Also with the **Center for Media Engagement**, a **study using focus groups** showed TV viewers’ perceptions of news organizations improve when journalists explain why a story is being done.

trustingnews.org/impact



You may feel like your community trusts you. You may get positive feedback from readers.

But are you reaching *all* of your community? Are we challenging our own assumptions? Are we modeling what credible news looks like?



**What should we get
transparent about?**



Start by responding to what people are curious about.



**Not sure what
that is?**

**One good idea:
Ask them**



The Seattle Times

What do you want to know about how we do investigative journalism?

0/140

Your contact info

We'll be in touch if we answer your question.

Name

Email address

ZIP code

☒ Sign me up for periodic updates on the Seattle Times Investigative Journalism Fund

☐ Please don't publish my name

☐ I am over 16 years old

☐ I accept the [Terms of Service](#)

Submit



They got 60+ questions

What the Seattle Times investigative team heard:

- How do you prioritize which topics to investigate?
- How do you verify accounts from anonymous sources?
- Are you politically biased?
- How does your mostly white team authentically represent and report on communities of color?
- Who actually discusses and decides on big stories? How many investigators are involved?
- When you're trying to track down the truth or falsity of something, how many sources are enough?
- Does the editorial board influence what you investigate?

Answers to your questions about The Seattle Times' investigative journalism



By Taylor Blatchford 

Seattle Times engagement editor



- What distinguishes investigative journalism from The Seattle Times' other work?
- How do your journalists find stories?
- How do readers make suggestions for investigations?
- How does your team prioritize which topics to investigate?
- How do you work to be fair and unbiased?
- Does the editorial board influence what you investigate?
- When you're trying to track down the truth or falsity of something, how do you verify information and know your story is solid?
- When do you use anonymous sources and how do you vet their accounts?
- How does your mostly white investigative team authentically report on issues impacting communities of color?
- How can people support this journalism?



Use our community interview guide to better understand people with low trust in news

1. Do you see concerns and issues from your own life reflected in the news?
2. What do journalists often get wrong about you or about things in your life (interests, demographics, values, beliefs, etc.)?
3. What should journalists DO to more accurately portray you and the communities you're a part of?
4. Have you seen news coverage that doesn't accurately portray you and the communities you're a part of? What would you have liked to see journalists do differently?
5. Tell me about an issue in the community that you're passionate about. Who do you trust to give you information about this issue? (Be specific with people, organizations, social accounts, etc.)

The guide: bit.ly/communityinterviewguide



Also add these questions to the end of interviews or in other feedback loops.

- *What are three things you wish were covered more?*
- *What does news coverage often miss or get wrong about you, or about things in your life?*
- *What kinds of stories or information about your local community would you like to see more of?*



**Complaints can
be turned into
curiosities, too**



Turn assumptions into information gaps

What does a negative
comment indicate someone
doesn't understand about you?



Example

- **COMPLAINT:** You have a paywall because you're greedy. News should be free.
- **INFORMATION GAP:** Why do some news outlets ask their audience for money and some don't? Why does ours rely on reader revenue? What are we offering that is different from news you can get elsewhere?



Example

- **COMPLAINT:** You're only writing about the health violations at this restaurant because you're out to get them! Cut them a break!
- **INFORMATION GAP:** Why do journalists find it important to share stories about public health even if they negatively affect a local business?



When to explain coverage? (not every

- **story!)** When it's a topic that often leads to accusations or distrust (think crime, politics, elections)
- When it's something you don't normally cover or if you're covering something differently.
- If a story raises a lot of questions or prompts discussions in the newsroom.
- If it's a controversial or polarizing topic in the community or in national media.



Think about the questions you hear:

- *How do you decide what stories to cover?*
- *Who makes decisions about coverage?*
- *How do you decide who to interview?*
- *Does everyone you interview make it into the story?*
- *Why do sources have to give their names?*
- *How do you fact check and decide what is true?*
- *How do you work to be fair?*
- *Why is there so much opinion in the news?*
- *Why do you run Associated Press stories?*
- *Why do I have to pay to read the news?*

What do you wish your community knew about how and why you do your job?

- *Get in small groups and brainstorm a list*
- *Think about news consumers, potential sources, potential subscribers, people you may not be reaching.*
- *Think about what differentiates you and your journalism.*
- *Think about assumptions and accusations, and what would be easier if you were better understood.*

bit.ly/APAworksheet2026





**There are lots of ways
journalists can be
transparent and make their
integrity visible.**



Today, we'll look at specific examples around:

1. *Ethics, accuracy and fairness*
2. *Coverage priorities overall, and with specific topics*
3. *Funding*
4. *Artificial intelligence*

For more examples, go to trustingnews.org/trustkits



Ethics, accuracy and fairness



Assumptions partner newsrooms hear:

- *You don't really care about getting it right*
- *You're just out to catch people looking dumb or doing something wrong*
- *You're extractive of communities and just swoop in when things go badly*
- *"You're biased!" "You're so liberal" "You're sane washing Trump"*



Tell a different story about how you operate

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution's page tells the story of its values with a "How We Work" section following a brief history of the newspaper. Some of the statements include: "We treat people we write about fairly and openly. We work hard to avoid surprising anyone about what they may read about themselves in the AJC."



About The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Our mission is to press on. We investigate and report what's really going on in your community. Our journalists follow the facts wherever they may lead, and uncover the truth, protect the public's right to know and document our region's moments, milestones and people. Every day, we work to do something remarkable: inform and empower readers with real, rigorous, in-depth journalism. By providing this fundamental public service, we ultimately help build a better metro-Atlanta and Georgia for this generation and the next. Your support of local journalism really matters. Our journalists can keep you informed with real, fact-based news because of subscribers. Learn more at ajc.com/presson



Who We Are

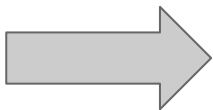


Newsroom Ethics Code



Contact Us

Explain that
you're
independent



3. We're independent

We don't give donors, advertisers or grantmakers any influence over content or ratings. Our contracts and grant agreements have clauses asserting our editorial independence.

Decisions on coverage, which facts to check, and Truth-O-Meter ratings are determined solely by PolitiFact's independent journalists.



politifact · Following



politifact · 40w

Fact-checking journalism is at the heart of what PolitiFact does. Our core principles are independence, transparency, fairness, thorough reporting and clear writing. The reason we publish is to give citizens the information they need to govern themselves in a democracy.

Whether you're a first-time reader or a longtime fan of the facts, here are five things to know about PolitiFact. Read more about our fact-checking process at the link in our bio. [#factcheck](#) [#politifact](#) [#nonprofit](#) [#independent](#) [#journalism](#)



the_chewstacabra · 40w

So what up on that Hunter Biden



528 likes

July 24, 2023



Add a comment...



Explain you're
nonpartisan –
and bring your
receipts



4. We're nonpartisan

We select statements about topics that are **in the news**. Without keeping count, we try to select facts to check from **both Democrats and Republicans**.

At the same time, we more often fact-check **the party that holds power** or people who repeatedly make **attention-getting or misleading statements**.

We go out of our way to find researchers and analysts with different points of view, so that we can **consider every angle**.



politifact • Following



politifact • 40w

Fact-checking journalism is at the heart of what PolitiFact does. Our core principles are independence, transparency, fairness, thorough reporting and clear writing. The reason we publish is to give citizens the information they need to govern themselves in a democracy.

Whether you're a first-time reader or a longtime fan of the facts, here are five things to know about PolitiFact. Read more about our fact-checking process at the link in our bio. [#factcheck](#) [#politifact](#) [#nonprofit](#) [#independent](#) [#journalism](#)



the_chewstacabra • 40w

So what up on that Hunter Biden



528 likes

July 24, 2023



Add a comment...





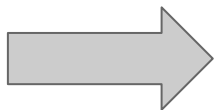
Election 2022 Coverage Mission Statement

Almost everyone says they want “independent” news. It’s hard to imagine someone saying they want explicitly biased news coverage that leans toward one partisan bent or another. But “independent” means a lot of very different things to different people.

At *The Nevada Independent*, here’s what “independent” means to us.

It means that we are dedicated to diving deep into the most important state policy issues and providing a clear, easy-to-comprehend while still substantive treatment of major issues. That’s everything from explaining how the state government operates and [why certain major decisions](#) at the state Legislature are made, giving necessary context around the [latest outrage in the school district](#), and providing [a sober look](#) at the future of water in Southern Nevada.

Get clear
about
how you
strive to
be fair



FAIRNESS CHECKLIST

Everything we do must be subject to a fairness test.

We will not hesitate to decline to publish a story that fails to meet our standards. We don't shade the truth. We let the facts lead us. We show our work.



To ensure balance and fairness we must:

- Be factually accurate
- Keep in mind our own values, cultural biases and preconceptions, and avoid imposing them on others.
- Ensure that our word choices and the overall tone of stories are fair and neutral.
- Present a diversity of views in their best light.
- Frame stories fairly and openly, in particular the critical sections that make an impression on readers – that is, in the lead and at the end.
- Ensure there are no surprises in the story for our subjects. They should have an opportunity before publication to know the full thrust of the report and respond to any meaningful details or accusations.
- Give subjects ample time to respond, generally speaking, a minimum of 24 hours.
- Include a timely response from subjects. Listen with an open mind and portray their point of view in a straightforward manner.
- Reach out to allies or sympathetic parties and scour the public record to understand the point of view of subjects who are unwilling or unable to talk.
- Make a sincere effort to reconcile conflicting information if our subjects' point of view does not square with other data points in a story.



**Make it clear
you have
ethics – you're
thoughtful and
careful to
minimize harm**

Our process

For this project, conducted over six months, PublicSource held interviews in person, on the phone and via Zoom with survivors and then worked with them to corroborate their accounts to the extent possible. We asked for any notes, legal documents, journal entries, emails and texts and/or asked to be connected with people in whom survivors confided at the time. The provided documentation was used to further detail the survivors' experiences and provide independent verification for our robust fact-checking process.

Reporting on sexual violence requires journalists to adhere to standards of accuracy and fairness while mitigating harm and the retraumatization of survivors.



Complicate the narrative of partisan storylines

SPECIAL REPORTS

Could we say something new about gun deaths and bring hope? A reporter's notebook

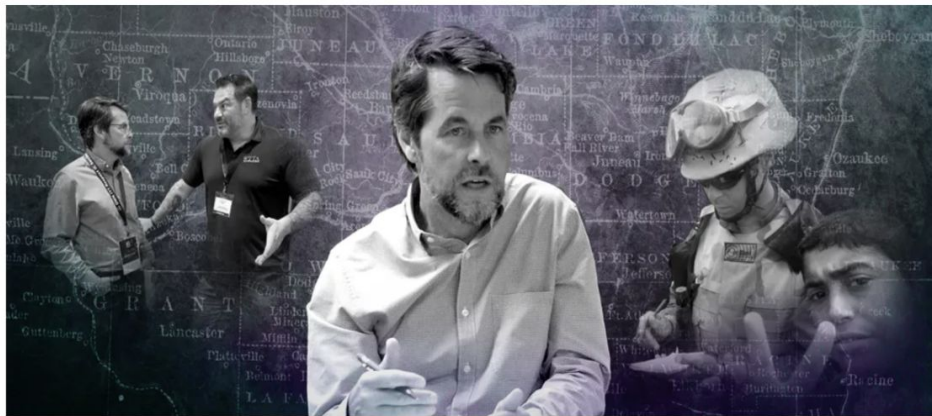


For Journal Sentinel reporter John Diedrich, a project on gun deaths in Wisconsin started with two goals; Could we get the data and would gun owners talk to us? *Illustration: Kyle Slagle. Photos: Mike De Sisti.*



SPECIAL REPORTS

Could we say something new about gun deaths and bring hope? A reporter's notebook



For Journal Sentinel reporter John Diedrich, a project on gun deaths in Wisconsin started with two goals; Could we get the data and would gun owners talk to us? Illustration: Kyle Slagle. Photos: Mike De Sisti.

One source was:

- Strong 2A defender
- Democrat
- Daughter hunts with AR-15
- Supports Red Flag law for Wisconsin

"I asked Curt, 'Are you even real? The Internet says no.' He smiled and said, 'I'm right here. And I don't see any contraction in my views.'"



Grady News Source

Corrections and Clarifications

Any factual errors will be followed by a prominent, public correction. Corrections replace the incorrect facts along with a description of the type of error made. If the error is on a platform that prevents editing, the reporter will reply to or comment on the post with corrected information, unless the error is so serious it must be deleted (see Deletions). If content was unclear or misleading but not incorrect, Newssource will craft a clarification that describes the information clearly and adds a note about how the original was unclear. Whenever possible, the nature of the correction or clarification will be equal in prominence to the original: as a caption or post on social media, using our red highlight at the top of an article on our website, read aloud on a podcast or broadcast, etc.



Thursday, February 2, 2023

The Dallas Morning News

ePaper [Subscribe](#) [Sign In](#)

[Home](#) [News](#) [Business](#) [Sports](#) [Entertainment](#) [Arts & Life](#) [Opinion](#) [Obits](#) [Marketplace](#) [DMNstore](#)

[Communities](#) [Crime](#) [Education](#) [Investigations](#) [State](#) [Nation/World](#) [Politics](#) [Videos](#)



Corrections and clarifications

Did you see something that was wrong or confusing in one of our stories? Please use this form to tell us what you think we should clarify or correct for our readers. We appreciate your help.

Your Name

First

Last

Your Email

Your Phone Number

 - -

###

###

####

I want to remain anonymous.

☐ I don't want to share my personal information.



Coverage decisions



Your audience notices what you cover and wonders about what you don't cover.

They may assume a reporter is friends with the business owner featured in a story, or the boss' kid goes to the school highlighted in a story, or a politician paid you to cover a topic or event.



Instead of letting misassumptions damage people's trust in you, let people know what criteria you DO use when deciding coverage.



Assumptions we hear from newsroom partners:

- *You actively suppress information you don't agree with and choose stories that validate your own opinions*
- *You're sensationalizing the story because you want more clicks. There's not that much crime here!*
- *Why aren't you covering this? What are you trying to cover up?*
- *You never cover xyz.*
- *Why wasn't a reporter covering this?*

How CPR News Plans To Cover The 2020 Election



By Kevin Dale and Rachel Estabrook · Aug. 28, 2020, 1:47 pm

FAQ can help explain coverage decisions around elections or other high-profile topics



How we plan to cover Election 2020:

- [What's our coverage mission for the 2020 Election?](#)
- [How are we planning to cover the entire state? How do you choose which regions to focus on?](#)
- [How do we select sources for stories? What about anonymous sources?](#)
- [How do we make editorial decisions around candidate coverage and interviews?](#)
- [How do we make editorial decisions about what stories to write, or what to cover?](#)
- [When covering different parties, how do you make sure coverage is equal? What about minor parties?](#)
- [How do you fact check stories or things politicians say?](#)
- [Take our survey.](#)

Do you have a question we haven't answered? [Let us know.](#)



What's great about this:

The post starts off strong by addressing the perception that news has an institutional bias. "At CPR News, our mission is to serve all Coloradans, not a partisan sliver. As the election approaches, we wanted to explain more thoroughly what we're doing to earn your trust every day."

It then lists the questions it will address and links to each, which accomplishes two things:

1. It lets readers on the page skip to a section they're interested in.
2. It lets the staff use the links to answer specific questions as they come up in stories and social posts.



Explain their process for deciding what to cover:

"The questions we ask include: Does this affect actual people who live in our state? How, and how many? Does this help Coloradans understand each other? Does it help them understand the issues they will have to decide on? Is this information our readers and listeners are seeking at this moment? Is this topic already thoroughly covered in other outlets or will we bring something new with our story? We also as a newsroom set long-term priorities in all of our coverage, including elections, which help keep us focused on diving deep in some areas, and saying no to others."



Shawnee Mission Post

The Shawnee Mission Post used an editor's note to add transparency around why they decided to do coverage outside of their normal scope. In just a few sentences, they were able to help set the stage for the story, explain how their coverage is separate from national talking points, and show they care about reader questions and feedback.



Explain when
you cover
something out
of the norm –
and when you
answer
readers'
questions!

Money flowing in, signs popping up as activists work to influence 'Value Them Both' outcome

Why am I seeing this story? While The Post typically focuses on local issues at the exclusion of statewide or national politics, we've received multiple inquiries from readers in recent weeks about the signs that have been popping up around town advocating for or against the proposed "Value The Both" amendment. Specifically, readers wanted to know whether it was legal for churches to display signs advocating for a political cause given their tax exempt status.

We try our best to be responsive to reader inquiries, which is why we decided to take a look at the campaigns for and against the amendment and the rules that govern churches' involvement in politics.

(If you've got a suggestion for a topic we ought to consider covering or a question that's been nagging at you, [please send it our way!](#))

Significant money is flowing to influence the outcome of the vote on the proposed amendment to the Kansas Constitution regarding abortion.

The amendment, dubbed "Value Them Both" by its supporters, will be on the Aug. 2 ballot and aims to nullify the impact of [a 2019 Kansas Supreme Court decision](#) that guaranteed a constitutional right to abortion by specifying that the state constitution "does not create or secure a right to abortion."



Why am I seeing this story? While The Post typically focuses on local issues at the exclusion of statewide or national politics, we've received multiple inquiries from readers in recent weeks about the signs that have been popping up around town advocating for or against the proposed "Value The Both" amendment. Specifically, readers wanted to know whether it was legal for churches to display signs advocating for a political cause given their tax exempt status.

We try our best to be responsive to reader inquiries, which is why we decided to take a look at the campaigns for and against the amendment and the rules that govern churches' involvement in politics.



People make a
LOT of
assumptions
around crime
(what we do and
don't cover)

Why didn't the Free Press write about that assault? Editor explains approach to crime coverage



Emilie Teresa Stigliani

Burlington Free Press

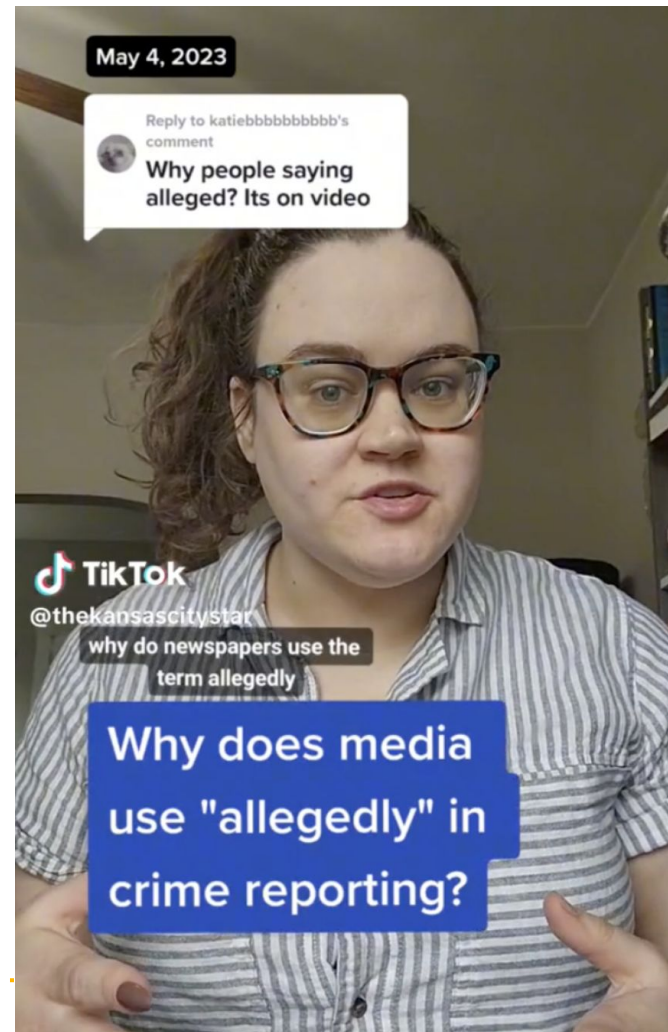
Published 5:01 a.m. ET Nov. 2, 2021



Dear Reader,

I have an ongoing email correspondence with one of you about why the Free Press has refrained from writing about individual acts of violence as they take place in our community.

Today's trust tip: Use social video to explain crime coverage





Funding & ownership



Some common questions people have (and assume the worst about):

- Who owns your news outlet and what they do or don't control
- Where your funding comes from and how that funding does — or doesn't — influence coverage
- Why some news costs money and others doesn't
- Why you ask for public support or donations



Money *does* influence

coverage

Common examples:

- You receive funding or grants allocated for specific reporting
- You cover fewer topics or stories due to layoffs and reduced staffing
- You prioritize content valued by the members of the public who contribute financially
- You prioritize content that drives subscriptions
- You're mandated to publish certain editorials or segments each week from a corporate team
- You publish sponsored content that's controlled by an advertiser, or have content that's underwritten by an advertiser but the newsroom has editorial control



So explain your revenue breakdown. Sample language:

In general, about two-thirds of our revenue comes from advertising and about one third from subscriptions. We charge advertisers for the ability to reach and engage with our audiences. Advertisers pay based on how many people their ads will reach and also how many people click on their ads. They want engaged users, not just a lot of eyeballs. Our news organization's finances typically reflect the state of the local economy. The bottom line is that surges in online traffic to our website are not likely to offset the decline in advertising revenue. That brings us to the other one third of our income: subscriptions. For us to continue to providing high-quality news to our community, we're relying more than ever on your financial support. If your budget allows for it, please subscribe.

Then use it in messaging. Cap Times:



Hopefully, you know that our work would not be possible without contributions from people like you. **Today, as we ask for your financial support**, we want to also share some information about why we rely on that support.

Our newsroom budget is covered by several main sources:

- **15%** comes from small contributors (readers like you!)
- **29%** comes from our long-standing partnership with Lee Enterprises
- **25%** comes from events like Cap Times Idea Fest
- **31%** comes from advertising in our weekly paper, on our website and in our newsletters

As you might imagine, our primary expense is our staff members, who produce our journalism. So one way to look at that breakdown is that **of our 20-member team, three of them have their salaries paid by you**, the people they aim to serve with their journalism. Your financial support is extremely important to us, because it shows that the work we're doing is valued by the people we do it for.



This Trust Kit helps you:

- Clear up public misconceptions about your ownership and funding
- Explain where your funding comes from and how that funding does — or doesn't — influence coverage
- Explain why news costs money
- Ask for public support and donations

“News is all about the money!”

Some people assume your coverage is dictated by funders or that you sensationalize the news for financial reasons. Set the record straight by talking publicly about your ownership and funding.

This Trust Kit walks you through how.
trustingnews.org/funding



trustingnews.org/funding



Artificial intelligence



From research we know much of the public thinks journalists are already using AI.

Whether you're using it or not, address that assumption.

94% of people want
journalists to **disclose**
their use of AI

What people wanted to know about journalists' use of AI:

- Knowing why journalists decided to use AI would be important - **87%**
- Understanding how journalists will be ethical/accurate with use of AI would be important - **94%**
- Knowing a human was involved & reviewed content before it was published would be very important - **92%**



You've probably seen newsrooms disclosure their use of AI ...

The Key Points at the top of this article were created with the assistance of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and reviewed by a journalist before publication. No other parts of the article were generated using AI. [Learn more.](#)

AI disclosures should give more detail about the *how* and the *why*:

- Information about **what** AI tool did
- Explanation about **why** AI was used, ideally language shows **how AI benefits community/improves news coverage**
- Description of how **humans** involved
- Explanation about how content **is still ethical, accurate, meets newsrooms editorial standards**

What that looks like

What we used

What it did

In this story we used (AI/tool/description of tool) to help us (what AI/the tool did or helped you do). When using (AI/tool) we (fact-checked, had a human check, made sure it met our ethical/accuracy standards) Using this allowed us to (do more of x, go more in depth, provide content on more platforms, etc).

Why



**Human/
accuracy**

How to invest in educating your community about AI

More than 80% of the survey respondents said it would be helpful if a newsroom provided information and tips to better understand AI in general and detect when AI was used in content creation. The demand for education around AI became more clear during the one-on-one interviews.

When asked about education and engagement opportunities around AI, people told the journalists:

- To offer workshops and produce guides/glossaries or articles explaining AI's role in reporting
- To offer opportunities for people to learn about AI's capabilities and limitations, potentially through outreach events or interactive/Q&A sessions
- To produce more in-depth articles and transparency around how AI is involved in journalism
- They appreciated being consulted and wanted newsrooms to continue engaging the public in conversations about AI

SCIENCE

How to avoid AI scams

KXAN will be producing a series of stories like this one as well as social media posts addressing some of the topics our viewers said they wanted to learn more about, including privacy and security, how to spot AI-generated content and how AI makes mistakes and contributes to misinformation.



HOW AI WORKS

How to avoid AI scams



AI Trust Kit

trustingnews.org/AI



Artificial Intelligence

As journalists incorporate Artificial Intelligence tools into their news processes, they need to be establishing clear internal guidelines and public-facing policies governing those practices.

A crucial step is to routinely communicate those standards to the public. In research conducted by Trusting News and other research organizations like [The Reuters Institute](#), [Poynter](#) and [Ipsos](#), people say they want the use of AI by journalists to be disclosed.

People do not want journalists passing work or ideas off as their own if AI is used. That can be seen as deceptive and could add to the negative assumptions many people already have about “the media.” Instead, through transparency, you can build understanding not just about how journalism operates but about what AI is and how it can be used.

Based on [new](#) and [previous](#) research, Trusting News is recommending that journalists:

- **Disclose the use of AI and explain why and precisely how AI was used**
- **Engage with their audience on the topic of AI to learn about their existing knowledge and perceptions**
- **Invest in educating their communities about AI, serving as a resource and demystifying new technology**



Journalists should disclose their use of AI and find ways to explain why AI was used and how humans fact-checked for accuracy and adhered to ethical standards.



Goals

This Trust Kit helps you:

1. Disclose your use of AI to your audience, and explain how and why you use it.
2. Learn how your audience feels about journalists using AI and what they expect from you when you do use it.
3. Understand why educating your audience about AI can help build trust and provide a public service.

Journalists talking openly about AI

The public wants to know how journalists are using AI in our journalism, ensuring it's ethical and transparent.

This Trust Kit walks you through the steps to trustingnews.org/AI



How to disclose



How to disclose

An overwhelming majority (93.8%) of news consumers surveyed by a recent Trusting News poll said they want the use of AI to be disclosed. More than half of the respondents said they want to know both how AI was used in the news process and details about the specific tool(s) used. ([Learn more about this research](#).)

When using AI in your newsroom, it seems clear the audience wants to know about the details, not just a vague, “AI was used in this story,” statement. Expand on this research, [fill out this form](#) and subscribe to our weekly [Trusting News](#) newsletter.

Fill out this form in your disclosure

Link to your disclosures



How to engage



**Where can these
messages go?**



Where can explainers go?

- In an **editor's note**
- In a **social post**
- In a **column** (linked to from stories)
- In **newsletters**
- In **on-air** segment
- In the **story text** itself
- In **emails** and one-on-one interactions
- **Anywhere your audience is consuming your content is a place they could also be learning about how you operate.**



**Don't rely on people
finding an About page or a
policy on your website**





How the tobacco industry made it cool to smoke in Colorado's communities of color



By John Daley · May. 9, 2023, 4:00 am

Editor's Note: CPR News [has spent months talking with teenagers, parents, doctors, advocates, political figures.](#)

We've looked through once-secret internal industry documents released by tobacco companies and listened to many hours of city council and legislative debate. What we found is that the conversation about tobacco products, especially flavored ones like menthol, is not only about nicotine's deadly effects or the impact on local economies. It's about ethics, optics and equity.

On a recent sunny Thursday morning, a group of high schoolers gave presentations on issues that have touched their lives. Racial bias, guns and gentrification were topics that the students, mostly juniors and seniors, talked about to an audience of teachers, parents and guests who'd gathered at Manual High School in Denver's historically Black [Five Points](#) neighborhood.



The Principles of the Truth-O-Meter: PolitiFact's methodology for independent fact-checking

How PolitiFact started

Our ownership

Our partner websites

Our partnerships with social media platforms

Our funding

Our ethics policy for PolitiFact journalists

How we choose claims to fact-check

Our on-the-record sourcing

How we determine Truth-O-Meter ratings

How we determine Flip-O-Meter ratings

How we track campaign promises

How we correct our mistakes

Our participation in the International Fact-checking Network

How to support us

How to contact us



By [Madison Czopek](#)
January 24, 2024

No, President Joe Biden didn't change 2024 the State of the Union from summer to March

IF YOUR TIME IS SHORT

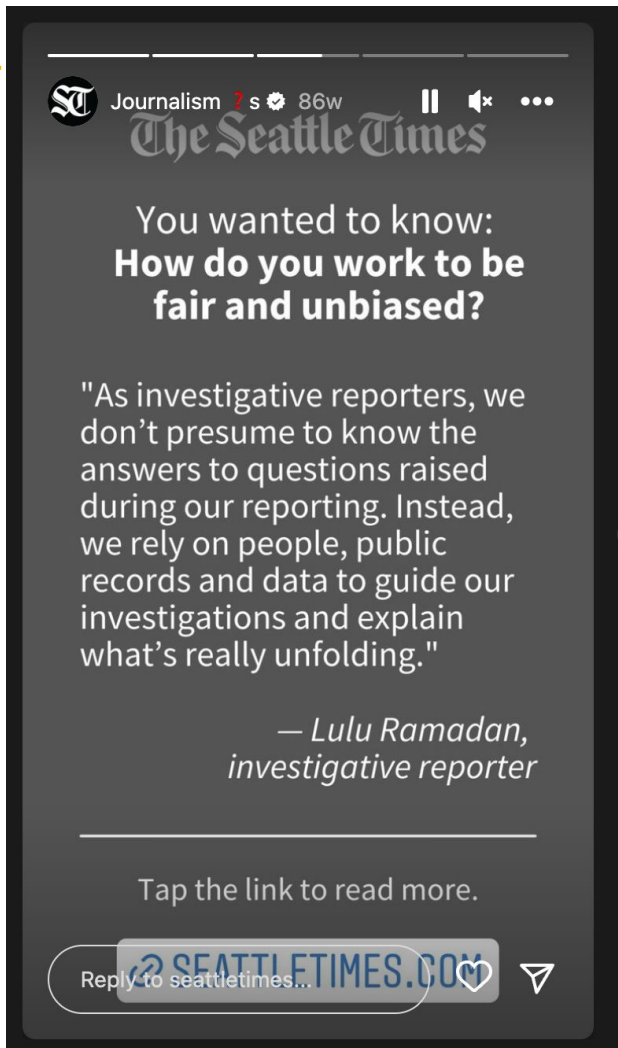
- House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., invited President Joe Biden to deliver the State of the Union address to Congress on March 7.
- A spokesperson for Biden said the president never wanted to deliver the 2024 address in the summer, nor did he ever ask Congress if he could.
- For decades, the State of the Union has been delivered in the winter, often in January or February. Biden's 2022 State of the Union address was on March 1.
- Our mission: Help you be an informed participant in democracy. [Learn more.](#)

READ ABOUT OUR PROCESS

[The Principles of the Truth-
O-Meter](#)



Take an FAQ to social



Put it in story text itself



Where should transparency language go? In the story itself.



Joy Mayer

Following ▾

7 min read · May 30, 2023

1. High contrast

Many students were leaving one of the fraternity houses at about 12:30 p.m. At least five police cars were on the scene from the Columbia Police Department, USC Police Department and SLED.

BEHIND OUR REPORTING: Why did we report on suicide?

Discussion of suicide can be difficult, especially for people who may already be thinking of harming themselves. As a general practice, The State does not report on suicides unless they involve prominent individuals or occur in public places. In the case of this story, we felt the incident warranted fact-based reporting accessible to members of our community.

The State generally does not identify individuals who die by suicide unless it is a public figure.

The State maintains rigorous standards when reporting on public health issues like suicide. If you or someone you know needs help, call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline 24 hours a day at 1-800-273-8255.

Read more here: <https://www.thestate.com/news/local/crime/article25429497.html#storylink=cpy>

People dressed in clothes with fraternity and sorority letters haggled and cried on the street near one fraternity house.

2. Floating box

EDITOR'S NOTE

On May 22, 2008, just two weeks after her last admission to the psychiatric ER, Sumner killed herself. A police officer and a chaplain visited her parents to tell them the daughter they'd known as a voracious reader and a halfhearted runner had died. Her mother, Jessica, answered the door. "I couldn't process it," she said. Three years later, she can barely talk about her daughter's death, the shared Sumner's medical records with The Chronicle, but at the family's request, The Chronicle is not using Sumner's last name, in [accordance with its policy on identifying sources](#).

San Francisco's Behavioral Health Services system helps many of the 30,000 people it works with every year, and many receive high-quality or even life-saving treatment, but Sumner's experience highlights weaknesses in the \$500 million system — a system Mayor London Breed and the Board of Supervisors say is broken.

3. Simple gray box

Many students were leaving one of the fraternity houses at about 12:30 p.m. At least five police cars were on the scene from the Columbia Police Department, USC Police Department and SLED.

BEHIND OUR REPORTING

Why did we report on suicide?

Discussion of suicide can be difficult, especially for people who may already be thinking of harming themselves. As a general practice, The State does not report on suicides unless they involve prominent individuals or occur in public places. In the case of this story, we felt the incident warranted fact-based reporting accessible to members of our community.

The State generally does not identify individuals who die by suicide unless it is a public figure.

The State maintains rigorous standards when reporting on public health issues like suicide. If you or someone you know needs help, call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline 24 hours a day at 1-800-273-8255.

People dressed in clothes with fraternity and sorority letters haggled and cried on the street near one fraternity house.

4. No box, in the story

"In the aftermath of a campus tragedy, it's normal to [feel sadness, anxiety, fear or any mix of these emotions](#)," Student Health Services tweeted, saying it is ready to help any student with a counselor.

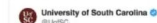
Why did The State report on suicide?

Discussion of suicide can be difficult, especially for people who may already be thinking of harming themselves. As a general practice, The State does not report on suicides unless they involve prominent individuals or occur in public places. In the case of this story, we felt the incident warranted fact-based reporting accessible to members of our community.

The State generally does not identify individuals who die by suicide unless it is a public figure.

The State maintains rigorous standards when reporting on public health issues like suicide. If you or someone you know needs help, call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline 24 hours a day at 1-800-273-8255.

Read more here: <https://www.thestate.com/news/local/crime/article25429497.html#storylink=cpy>



ABC10/ On-air transparency

Transparency went
INTO story: Anchor
explains how the
station deliberated
handling of police
body cam video





bit.ly/APAworksheet2026



Where could you share transparency messaging with your audience?

- *Get in groups and brainstorm a list*
- *Think about where people with low-trust in news are most likely to see or interact with your content*
- *Remember: Anywhere your audience is consuming your content is a place they could also be learning about how you operate.*



**Showing your process is like a
math test — you only get
partial credit if you only show
the answer not the process.**



**We know this work takes
time and investment.**

Trust Kits can help!



trustingnews.org/trustkits

[← Return to see all Trust Kits](#)



HOW NEWS WORKS

Explain your sourcing

Of all the dozens (or hundreds, or thousands) of people you could have talked to for any given story, why did you choose the ones you did? Were they uniquely qualified? If so, how do you know? Did they represent a diverse range of perspectives? If so, why did that matter to you? Did they bring specific expertise or credibility? If so, what was it? Did they show themselves to be speaking from a place of integrity, not from any outside, undisclosed interest? If so, how do you know? Or were they just the most convenient?

We know that when the public doesn't understand something about journalism, they draw their own conclusions — and those conclusions don't often give journalists the benefit of the doubt. Instead, people assume we choose sources to push a specific angle, to support our own (or the sources') agenda, to make one side of a story look bad or good, etc. They might also assume that people are quoted in our stories just because they were nearby and available (which is sometimes true, right?).

As with other misassumptions about the ethics and processes involved in our work, it's up to us to get on the record explaining ourselves.



Journalists usually have reasons for interviewing and quoting specific sources, but those reasons are invisible unless we explain them.



People would find journalism more credible if they understood things like:

1. How we choose people to be sources
2. How we choose other sources of information to cite from, such as research, documents and polls
3. How we decide what information to share about sources
4. How we try to reach sources and be fair to people featured in stories

Does your audience know why you interviewed that person?

Probably not. And that can lead to unflattering assumptions about your journalism.

This Trust Kit will help guide you explaining why it is you include in your stories.



Things to explain

The habit of explaining your sourcing. List of questions. Think about what things your audience might be the most confused about when answering those questions. Click or tap the blue boxes to expand each section.

Which experts to interview?

Which regular people to interview?

Be mindful of source diversity?

Do you interview?

Are your sources don't have conflicts of interest or hidden

Are you fair to sources, and what if you don't hear back from them?

Does anyone doesn't want their name published? Can they stay



Thank you!

Mollie Muchna // mollie@TrustingNews.org

Subscribe to Trust Tips:
TrustingNews.org/newsletter

Slides: bit.ly/APAxTrustingNews2026