

CHICAGO'S WEST AND SOUTH SIDES RATE NEWS MEDIA POORLY, SEE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGAGEMENT

(Jan. 18, 2018) – A comprehensive new survey of Chicago residents finds that perceptions of Chicago news media vary depending on where people live. There are substantial differences in what people think about neighborhood news coverage across three distinct regions of Chicago: the North / Downtown, the West, and the South. Those living on the West and South Sides generally see news coverage of their neighborhood as worse than those in the North / Downtown region of Chicago, but are also the most interested in getting involved in Chicago news organizations.

For this report, the Center for Media Engagement worked with City Bureau, a Chicago news organization, and Abt. Associates, a data collection firm, to survey 900 Chicago residents. The survey respondents were stratified based on the three regions. We explored attitudes towards, and preferences for, Chicago news media. The study was funded by the Robert R. McCormick Foundation.

Sixty-eight percent of West Side residents and 54 percent of South Side residents see coverage of their neighborhoods as too negative. This is compared to only 26 percent of residents in the North / Downtown. We also find that 51 percent of those living on the West Side and 42 percent of those living on the South Side believe news coverage of their neighborhood quotes the wrong people, compared to only 27 percent of residents in the North / Downtown.

Despite the differences in perceptions of neighborhood news coverage, residents of the West and the South Sides of Chicago are more interested in volunteering to report on a public meeting than North / Downtown residents are. Sixty-seven percent of residents in the West and 64 percent of residents in the South said they were likely to volunteer, compared to 43 percent of residents in the North/ Downtown.

Other findings from the report include:

- “Crime and law enforcement” is the most frequently cited important issue facing Chicago neighborhoods. Residents in the West and South regions of Chicago are more likely to cite “crime and law enforcement” as an important issue facing their neighborhoods than are residents in the North / Downtown region.
- North / Downtown residents think Chicago news media offer better coverage of crime and law enforcement than do residents of the West or South regions.
- North / Downtown residents are more likely to say coverage of their neighborhood does a good job of showing what’s going on than residents in the West and South regions.

- Regardless of region, respondents are more likely to say that they will donate \$10 to a free news site than to say that they will pay a fee of \$10 to access news.

“Our findings present challenges and opportunities for Chicago news organizations. First, it seems that news coverage is perceived poorly by those in the West and South regions of Chicago,” said Emily Van Duyn, Graduate Research Associate at the Center for Media Engagement. “But, those same regions are also home to those most interested in getting involved.”

“The results of our survey highlight how perceptions of the Chicago news media vary by where residents live in the city,” said Jay Jennings, Postdoctoral Fellow at the Center for Media Engagement. “Certain neighborhoods do not feel well-covered by local news, and we hope our findings allow for communities and news outlets to discuss solutions.”

About the Center for Media Engagement

The Center for Media Engagement envisions a vibrant American news media that more effectively empowers the public to understand, appreciate, and participate in the democratic exchange of ideas. Learn more at mediaengagement.org