



# **Paths to Subscription: Why Recent Subscribers Chose to Pay for News**

**Conducted by the Media Insight Project  
An initiative of the American Press Institute and The Associated Press-NORC  
Center for Public Affairs Research**

*Interviews: 11/9-12/13/2017  
4,113 adults who recently subscribed to a newspaper*

*NOTE: All results show percentages among all respondents, unless otherwise labeled.*

**Q1. How often do you watch, read, or hear news? Again, by news, we mean any kind of news, including sports, traffic, weather, stocks, politics, lifestyle, or any other kind of news, by any means.**

	AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017
<b>More than once a day NET</b>	<b>91</b>
Several times an hour	9
Several times a day	82
<b>Once a day</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Less than once a day NET</b>	<b>2</b>
Several times a week	2
Weekly	*
Less often	*
Never	*
SKIPPED ON WEB	*

N=

4,113

**Q2. How important is it to you personally to keep up with news and information?**

	AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017
<b>Not at all/Not very important NET</b>	<b>2</b>
Not at all important	*
Not very important	2
<b>Somewhat important</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Extremely/Very important NET</b>	<b>72</b>
Very important	49
Extremely important	23
SKIPPED ON WEB	*

N=

4,113

**Q3. Here are some different devices or technology that you might or might not use to get news and information.**

**How often, if at all, have you used each device or technology to get news and information in the last week?**

AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017	<b>At least once a day NET</b>	More than once a day	Once a day	<b>Several times in the last week</b>	<b>Once a week or less NET</b>	Once in the last week	Not at all	SKP
A television	<b>76</b>	53	23	<b>8</b>	<b>15</b>	6	9	1
A desktop or laptop computer	<b>56</b>	39	17	<b>14</b>	<b>27</b>	9	18	3
Paper versions of print publications such as newspapers or magazines	<b>54</b>	16	38	<b>18</b>	<b>26</b>	18	8	1
A cellphone	<b>52</b>	44	8	<b>11</b>	<b>32</b>	6	26	4
A radio	<b>45</b>	30	15	<b>18</b>	<b>34</b>	9	24	4
A tablet, such as an iPad, Microsoft Surface, Amazon Fire, or GalaxyTab	<b>35</b>	26	9	<b>7</b>	<b>52</b>	7	45	6
An E-reader, such as Kindle or Sony Reader	<b>5</b>	3	2	<b>2</b>	<b>88</b>	3	85	5
Virtual voice assistants such as Google Home, Alexa, or Siri	<b>4</b>	2	2	<b>5</b>	<b>87</b>	5	81	5

N=4,113

**Q4. These days many people get their news and information from social media. How often do you watch, read, hear, or see news on social media?**

By social media, we mean sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, and LinkedIn. Again, by news, we mean any kind of news, including sports, traffic, weather, stocks, politics, lifestyle, or any other type of news.

	AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017
<b>More than once a day NET</b>	<b>34</b>
Several times an hour	4
Several times a day	30
<b>Once a day</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Less than once a day NET</b>	<b>54</b>
Several times a week	9
Weekly	3
Less often	12
Never	30
SKIPPED ON WEB	*

N=

4,113

**Q5. People get news in different ways. Which of the statements below best describes you, even if it is not exactly right. In general...**

	AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017
I tend to actively seek out news and information	86
I mostly bump into news and information as I do other things or hear about it from others	13
SKIPPED ON WEB	*

N=

4,113

**Q6. Which of the following best describes how you like to get news, even if neither describes you exactly?**

	AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017
I prefer to get news once a day or a few times a day	67
I prefer to get news throughout the day via alerts, social media, or story updates	31
SKIPPED ON WEB	2

N=

4,113

**Q7. Which of the following factors is the most important when you choose to pay for a news source?**

	AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017
You are supporting a news organization you believe in	46
The information is not available for free anywhere	17
The price is a good value	36
SKIPPED ON WEB	2

N=

4,113

Now we have a few questions for you about your use of [NAME OF NEWSPAPER].

**Q8. Before you became a paying subscriber to [NAME OF NEWSPAPER], did you use it for free in any way, or not?**

	AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017
Yes	33
No	67
SKIPPED ON WEB	-

N=

4,113

## Paths to Subscription: Why Recent Subscribers Chose to Pay for News

*If yes in Q8*

**Q8A. How long were you getting news from [NAME OF NEWSPAPER] before you decided to subscribe?**

	AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017
<b>Two months or less NET</b>	<b>26</b>
Less than a month	13
A month or two	12
<b>A few months or longer NET</b>	<b>74</b>
A few months to a year	24
A year or two	12
More than two years	37
SKIPPED ON WEB	1

N=

1,371

*If yes in Q8*

**Q8B. How often were you getting news from [NAME OF NEWSPAPER] before you decided to subscribe?**

	AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017
<b>Daily or more NET</b>	<b>36</b>
Several times a day	6
Daily	30
<b>Less often NET</b>	<b>64</b>
A few days a week	35
A few times a month	21
Once a month or less	8
SKIPPED ON WEB	1

N=

1,371

*If yes in Q8*

**Q9. Prior to becoming a paying subscriber to [NAME OF NEWSPAPER], in which of the following ways did you interact with [NAME OF NEWSPAPER]?**

AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017	Yes	No	Not applicable	SKP
I regularly visited its website	59	32	7	2
I encountered it on Google and other search engines	43	45	9	3
I read print copies belonging to my friends or family	43	49	6	3
I bought individual print copies of the newspaper	40	49	7	4
I saw friends or family share its content or recommend it	30	57	8	4
I regularly shared its content with others	29	57	10	4
I used its app	28	52	19	2
I used its coupons	25	62	9	4
I followed the organization's account on social media	20	57	18	4
I subscribed to an email newsletter	16	61	19	4
I followed its journalists or columnists on social media	16	61	19	4
I registered to receive text messages or news alerts	13	64	20	4
I went to events it organized	9	76	11	5
I posted comments	7	79	10	4
I listened to its podcasts or other audio	4	81	11	4

*N=1,371*

**Q10. Describe in your own words why you decided to subscribe to [NAME OF NEWSPAPER]?**

**[OPEN ENDED RESPONSE]**

	AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017
Local news	30
Convenience of print/home delivery	15
Promotion/discount	12
Topical focus	12
Trust/quality	9
Ads/coupons	8
Support journalism	5
Habit	4
New resident	4
Useful/interesting	4
Long relationship/fond memories	4
Paywall/access	3
Convenience of digital/updates	3
Friends and family	2
Personal change in circumstances	1
Job	1
Other	1
New means	*
SKIPPED ON WEB	7

N=

4,113



**Q11. There are a lot of reasons why a person may decide to subscribe to a news source. Here is a list of factors that might have crossed your mind as you considered subscribing to [NAME OF NEWSPAPER].**

**How important was each of these factors as you considered subscribing to [NAME OF NEWSPAPER]?**

AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017	Not very/not at all impt. NET	Not at all impt.	Not very impt.	Somewhat impt.	Extremely/ Very impt. NET	Very impt.	Extremely impt.	SKP/ REF
I wanted access to news about my local community	14	10	4	24	60	37	24	2
I noticed a number of especially useful or interesting articles	23	14	9	36	40	30	9	3
I received discounts, a free trial, or promotional offers for it	41	30	11	23	35	19	16	1
I wanted to support local journalism	37	24	13	30	31	20	12	3
I was concerned about the accuracy of the reporting available from free news sources	42	29	13	24	31	18	13	3
I was looking for a news source that covers a particular topic/issue	41	30	11	29	28	21	8	2
I wanted to get the coupons	57	42	15	20	20	11	9	4
I recently moved to the area	71	67	4	8	16	9	8	5
My personal situation changed and I then had more time to use it (e.g. retired or kids moved out of house)	69	58	11	18	9	7	2	4
My personal situation changed and I had more money to spend on the subscription	74	58	16	15	8	5	2	4
My friends or family used it	78	62	16	13	7	5	2	2
I got it at work or school	85	76	9	6	5	3	2	4

N=4,113

**Q12. While people may be thinking about subscribing to a news source for a while, there can be a specific moment or reason that serves as a tipping point when someone makes the decision to subscribe. Which, if any, of the following triggered your final decision to subscribe to [NAME OF NEWSPAPER].**

*Please select up to three (3).*

	AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017
I saw a discount, free trial, or promotional offer and it led me to sign up.	45
I wanted discounts and coupons that would help me save money.	21
I kept hitting my limit on the number of articles I could read.	16
I recently moved to the area.	16
I had a change in my life such as getting a new job, retiring, or graduating from school and I decided it was time.	12
I wanted the extra benefits, memberships, discounts, and access to additional information and insider events that are only available to subscribers.	10
I was motivated by recent verbal attacks on the press.	8
Was looking for coverage of a topic or specific content (VOL)	8
I had just read an article in [NAME OF NEWSPAPER] that I really liked and decided to subscribe right then.	6
I saw messaging about supporting journalism for the good of the community or the country and decided I needed to subscribe.	6
I was with friends or family discussing the news and it persuaded me to subscribe.	4
Has subscribed for a long time/renewed subscription/subscribing is a habit (VOL)	4
I discovered I would see fewer online ads if I subscribed.	3
Wanted delivery of the paper or found the online format appealing (VOL)	3
Wanted to support local journalism or journalism generally (VOL)	1
Found the price appealing (VOL)	1
"Likes the paper" (VOL)	1
Other change led to subscribing (VOL)	*
Other, please specify	2
I cannot recall a specific reason why I finally decided to pay.	11
SKIPPED ON WEB	3

N=

4,113

**Q13. How easy or difficult was it to sign up for a subscription to [NAME OF NEWSPAPER]?**

	AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017
<b>Very/Somewhat easy NET</b>	<b>89</b>
Very easy	65
Somewhat easy	24
<b>Very/Somewhat difficult NET</b>	<b>11</b>
Somewhat difficult	8
Very difficult	3
SKIPPED ON WEB	1
N=	4,113

**Q14. To the best of your knowledge, which of the following are included in your subscription to [NAME OF NEWSPAPER]?**

*Please select all that apply.*

	AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017
Home or mail delivery of the print newspaper	79
Unlimited access to the website or mobile apps	52
Access to a digital replica of the print newspaper	50
SKIPPED ON WEB	1
N=	4,113

*If home or mail delivery of print newspaper included in Q14<sup>1</sup>*

**Q14A. How many days a week is [NAME OF NEWSPAPER] delivered to your home?**

	AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017
1	23
2	10
3	5
4	3
5	4
6	3
7	52
SKIPPED ON WEB	1
N=	3,235

<sup>1</sup> Subscribers of one newspaper that does not offer home delivery were not asked this question.

## Paths to Subscription: Why Recent Subscribers Chose to Pay for News

*If both home or mail delivery of print newspaper and unlimited access to the website or mobile apps included in Q14*

**Q14B. Which of the following is the main way you prefer to get [NAME OF NEWSPAPER]?**

*Please select all that apply.*

	AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017
The print newspaper	78
The website or mobile apps	13
No preference	8
SKIPPED ON WEB	-
N=	1,518

**Q15. Now that you are a paying subscriber, how often would you say you get news and information from [NAME OF NEWSPAPER]?**

	AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017
<b>More than once a day NET</b>	<b>23</b>
Several times an hour	1
Several times a day	22
<b>Once a day</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Less than once a day NET</b>	<b>26</b>
Several times a week	12
Weekly	11
Less often	3
SKIPPED ON WEB	1
N=	4,113

**Q16. Here are some common news and information topics. Which of these news topics do you follow most often or closely using [NAME OF NEWSPAPER]?**

*Please select up to three (3).*

**[ITEMS RANDOMIZED]**

	AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017
Local politics or government	46
National politics or government	35
Business and the economy	23
Professional sports	22
Collegiate or high school sports	21
My neighborhood or suburban town	21
Crime and public safety	18
Art and culture	14
Foreign or international news	13
Lifestyle topics such as food, beauty, exercise, pets, or parenting	13
Weather and national disasters	12
Healthcare and medical information	10
Schools and education	9
Social issues like abortion, race, and gay rights	8
Science and technology	6
The environment and climate change	6
Entertainment and celebrities	5
My hobbies	2
Traffic	1
SKIPPED ON WEB	2

N=

4,113

**Q17. Now that you subscribe to [NAME OF NEWSPAPER], in which of the following ways do you interact with [NAME OF NEWSPAPER]? Do you ...?**

AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017	Yes	No	Not applicable	SKP
Use the coupons	52	40	4	4
Regularly share its content with others	43	50	4	3
Save print copies to read later or share with others	38	53	6	4
Regularly visit its website	33	59	4	4
Use its app	24	63	10	3
Encounter it on Google and other search engines	20	71	6	3
Subscribe to an email newsletter	18	69	9	4
Receive text messages or news alerts	16	70	10	4
Go to events it organizes	13	77	7	3
Follow the organization's account on social media	10	75	10	5
Follow its journalists or columnists on social media	9	77	10	4
Post comments	6	85	6	3
Listen to podcasts or other audio	4	86	6	4

N=4,113

**Q18. People use news for many reasons. When it comes to the biggest reasons you use [NAME OF NEWSPAPER], how important to you is it that it...?**

**[ITEMS RANDOMIZED]**

AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017	Not very/not at all impt. NET	Not at all impt.	Not very impt.	Somewhat impt.	Extremely/ Very impt. NET	Very impt.	Extremely impt.	SKP
Helps me get reliable and accurate factual information	7	5	2	13	78	37	41	3
It is willing to admit its mistakes	10	6	4	17	69	38	32	3
It deals fairly with all sides	10	7	4	19	68	37	31	3
Helps me stay informed to be a better citizen	9	6	4	26	63	40	23	2
It acts as a check on political leaders and other people in power	14	8	5	22	62	32	30	3
Is very good at covering an issue or topic I care a lot about.	14	7	6	32	52	39	12	3
It cares about the people it reports on	18	9	9	32	47	32	15	3
Helps me talk to friends, family, and colleagues about what's going on in the news	21	11	10	36	41	30	10	2
Is enjoyable or entertaining	16	7	10	41	41	33	8	2
Helps me save money	39	19	20	29	29	18	11	3
Helps me care for myself or my family	38	19	19	35	24	19	5	3
It helps me do my job	68	49	19	17	12	8	4	4

N=4,113

**Q19. How reliable is the news and information you get from [NAME OF NEWSPAPER]?**

	AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017
<b>Not at all/A little reliable NET</b>	<b>9</b>
Not at all reliable	3
A little reliable	6
<b>Moderately reliable</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Very/Completely reliable NET</b>	<b>64</b>
Very reliable	57
Completely reliable	7
SKIPPED ON WEB	1
N=	4,113

**Q20. Now that you subscribe to [NAME OF NEWSPAPER], which of the following do you consider the biggest benefit of your subscription?**

*Please select up to three (3).*

	AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017
I get access to print in addition to digital news	46
I feel good about supporting the news organization	41
I like the coupons or discounts	34
I get news that is only available to paying customers	30
I like getting an unlimited number of digital stories	22
It gives me access to events sponsored by the news organization	10
I get access to giveaways or other benefits only available to subscribers	7
SKIPPED ON WEB	6
N=	4,113



**Q21. Think about your satisfaction with [NAME OF NEWSPAPER] given the price you pay for it. Which statement comes closest to your opinion?**

	AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017
<b>Very/Somewhat good value NET</b>	<b>45</b>
It is a very good value for what it gives me	29
It is a somewhat good value for what it gives me	16
<b>It is a fair value for what it gives me</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Very/Somewhat overpriced NET</b>	<b>23</b>
It is somewhat overpriced for what it gives me	16
It is very overpriced for what it gives me	7
SKIPPED ON WEB	1

N=

4,113

**Q22. Next, we are interested in whether you paid to use any other media in the last year other than your subscription to [NAME OF NEWSPAPER]. For each of the following types of media, please indicate whether you personally have a subscription or pay for it on a regular basis, or not.**

AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017	Yes, I personally have a subscription or pay for it on a regular basis	No, I do not personally pay for it	SKP
Cable or satellite TV	78	20	3
A magazine, either in print or digital format	52	44	4
Streaming TV or movies like Netflix or Hulu	46	49	4
A public radio or television station (such as PBS or NPR)	30	66	4
Another local newspaper, either print or digital	26	71	4
Streaming music services like Spotify or Pandora	22	73	6
A national newspaper, either print or digital	21	74	5
A news app or digital news website not associated with a newspaper or magazine	15	78	6
An email newsletter	11	81	8

N=4,113

**REGION4. Census region**

	AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017
Northeast	2
Midwest	46
South	29
West	23
SKIPPED ON WEB	*

N= 4,113

**PAPERSIZE. Size of newspaper**

	AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017
Small	15
Mid-sized	15
Small metro	32
Large metro	38
Unknown	*

N= 4,113

**REGION. How long have you lived in the area where the [NAME OF NEWSPAPER] is based?**

	AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017
Don't live in the area	5
Less than six months	6
Six months to a year	2
One to two years	3
Three to five years	4
More than five years	77
Seasonal resident	2
SKIPPED ON WEB	*

N= 4,113

**AGE. What is your age?**

	AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017
18-29	2
30-44	7
45-59	23
60+	65
SKIPPED ON WEB	2

N=

4,113

**EDUCATION. Which best describes your level of education?**

	AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017
Less than a high school diploma	*
High school diploma	6
Some college or an associate's degree	26
Bachelor's degree or above	27
Postgraduate study	40
SKIPPED ON WEB	*

N=

4,113

**URBAN. Which one of the following best describes where you live?**

	AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017
Urban area	28
Suburban area	55
Rural area	17
SKIPPED ON WEB	*

N=

4,113

**LATINO. Are you of Latino or Hispanic descent, or not?**

	AP-NORC 11/9- 12/13/2017
Yes	3
No	96
SKIPPED ON WEB	1

N=

4,113

**RACE. What is your racial or ethnic heritage?**

	AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017
White	90
African American, black	3
Asian	1
Latino, Hispanic	2
Other, please specify	2
SKIPPED ON WEB	3

N=

4,113

**RACE/ETHNICITY. Combines LATINO and RACE**

	AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017
White	88
African American	3
Hispanic	3
Other	6

N=

4,113

**GENDER**

	AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017
Male	51
Female	47
Transgender	*
Do not identify as male, female, or transgender	1
SKIPPED ON WEB	1

N=

4,113

**PID1. Do you consider yourself a Democrat, a Republican, an independent or none of these?**

	AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017
Democrat	36
Republican	25
Independent	28
None of these	9
SKIPPED ON WEB	1

N=

4,113

## Paths to Subscription: Why Recent Subscribers Chose to Pay for News

*If Democrat in PID1*

**PIDA. Do you consider yourself a strong Democrat or a moderate Democrat?**

	AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017
Strong Democrat	56
Moderate Democrat	44
SKIPPED ON WEB	1

N=

1,483

*If Republican in PID1*

**PIDB. Do you consider yourself a strong Republican or a moderate Republican?**

	AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017
Strong Republican	44
Moderate Republican	56
SKIPPED ON WEB	*

N=

1,017

*If Independent, none of these, don't know, skipped, or refused in PID1*

**PIDi. Do you lean more toward the Democrats or the Republicans?**

	AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017
Lean Democrat	35
Lean Republican	27
Don't lean	35
SKIPPED ON WEB	3

N=

1,613

**POLITICS. Combines PID1, PIDi, PIDA, and PIDB.**

	AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017
<b>Democrat NET</b>	<b>50</b>
Strong Democrat	20
Moderate Democrat	16
Lean Democrat	14
<b>Independent/None – Don't lean</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Republican NET</b>	<b>35</b>
Lean Republican	11
Moderate Republican	14
Strong Republican	11
Unknown	2

N=

4,113

**EMPLOY. Are you, yourself, currently employed...**

	AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017
Full-time	35
Part-time	11
Not employed	53
SKIPPED ON WEB	1

N=

4,113

**MARRIED. Are you...**

	AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017
Married	67
Widowed	9
Divorced	13
Separated	1
Never married	9
SKIPPED ON WEB	1

N=

4,113

**INCOME. And in which group does your total household income fall?**

	AP-NORC 11/9-12/13/2017
Under \$25,000	5
\$25,000 to \$49,999	17
\$50,000 to \$74,999	18
\$75,000 to \$99,999	16
\$100,000 to \$149,999	19
\$150,000 or more	15
SKIPPED ON WEB	11

N=

4,113

## Media Insight Project Poll – Paths to Subscription: Why Recent Subscribers Chose to Pay for News

### Methodology

This survey was conducted by the Media Insight Project, an initiative of the American Press Institute (API) and The Associated Press NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. The survey was conducted from November 9 through December 13, 2017. The survey was funded by API. Staff from API, NORC at the University of Chicago, and AP collaborated on all aspects of the study.

To conduct this survey, the Media Insight Project partnered with 12 different newspaper publishers with 90 newspapers across the country. The publishers who participated in the study are: A.H. Belo Corporation (Dallas Morning News), BH Media Group (Omaha World-Herald), The Buffalo News, Lee Enterprises, The McClatchy Company, Star Tribune Media Company (Minneapolis Star Tribune), The Seattle Times Company, Skagit Publishing, Cowles Publishing Company (The Spokesman-Review), Teton Media Works (Jackson Hole News&Guide), Tronc (Tribune Publishing Company), and The Virginian-Pilot.

Each publisher provided contact information for all people who began subscribing to their papers during the prior three months, from August 1 through October 31, 2017. All recent subscribers with a valid email address received an email invitation to complete the survey online, and 4,113 completed the survey. Surveys were conducted online in English. We used the email addresses only for the purpose of this study, and we made sure to protect the confidentiality of all potential respondents.

The final set of completed interviews from this convenience sample includes adults age 18 and older from 47 states and the District of Columbia. The sample frame provided by publishers included about 200,000 email addresses. About 10 percent were deemed invalid, and the overall response rate for the survey was about 2 percent. The results presented in the study are descriptive of the responding subscribers to the participating newspapers and cannot be generalized to the full population of recent subscribers in the United States.

Respondents were not offered any incentive for completing the survey, and data were not weighted.

Details about the Media Insight Project can be found at: [www.mediainsight.org](http://www.mediainsight.org). For more information, please email [info@apnorc.org](mailto:info@apnorc.org).