



Want Local News?

The Weston Local News Initiative (WLNI)

Local News Survey

March 14, 2024

What is WLNI? Background

- Weston has been without a community newspaper since the loss of the *Town Crier* in 2021.
- An exploratory committee was formed by Weston Media at the request of many residents to investigate the possibility of a new local community news outlet.
- The first step was to conduct a town-wide survey.

What is WLNI? The Survey Team

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The WLNI Survey: Why?

To explore the possibility of a new local independent newspaper, the WLNI team surveyed residents to:

- Gauge the interest and importance of a local news source
- Determine where people get their local news today
- Understand what type of information is important to residents
- Explore interest to participate in efforts to create a new local source of news

The WLNI Survey: When and How Available?

The survey was available from **January 16 - February 9, 2024.**

The [online survey](#) could be accessed by clicking on a link or scanning a QR code.

Paper surveys were made available at:

- Brook School Apartments
- Council on Aging (COA)
- Weston Public Library

The WLNI Survey: How Distributed?

Electronically via e-newsletters, emails and social media:

Art & Innovation Center (AIC)	Churches	Council on Aging (COA)	Friends of Weston Public Library (FPLC)	Highland Meadows
Town Hall	Weston Community Facebook page	Weston Community League (WCL)	Weston Daily News Facebook page	Weston Garden Club (WGC)
Weston Historical Society (WHS)	<i>Weston Owl</i>	Weston Public Library (WPL)	Weston Media Center (WMC)	Westword (PTO)

Sandwich Board Posters placed at four locations:

- Intersections of Rt. 30 & Wellesley Street and Rt.20 & School Street
- Transfer Station
- AIC

Paper flyers posted at: Brothers Market, Kendal Green train station, and the WPL

Weston Media promoted the survey on its homepage at WestonMedia.org and Public Cable Channels.

The WLNI Survey: Who and How Many?

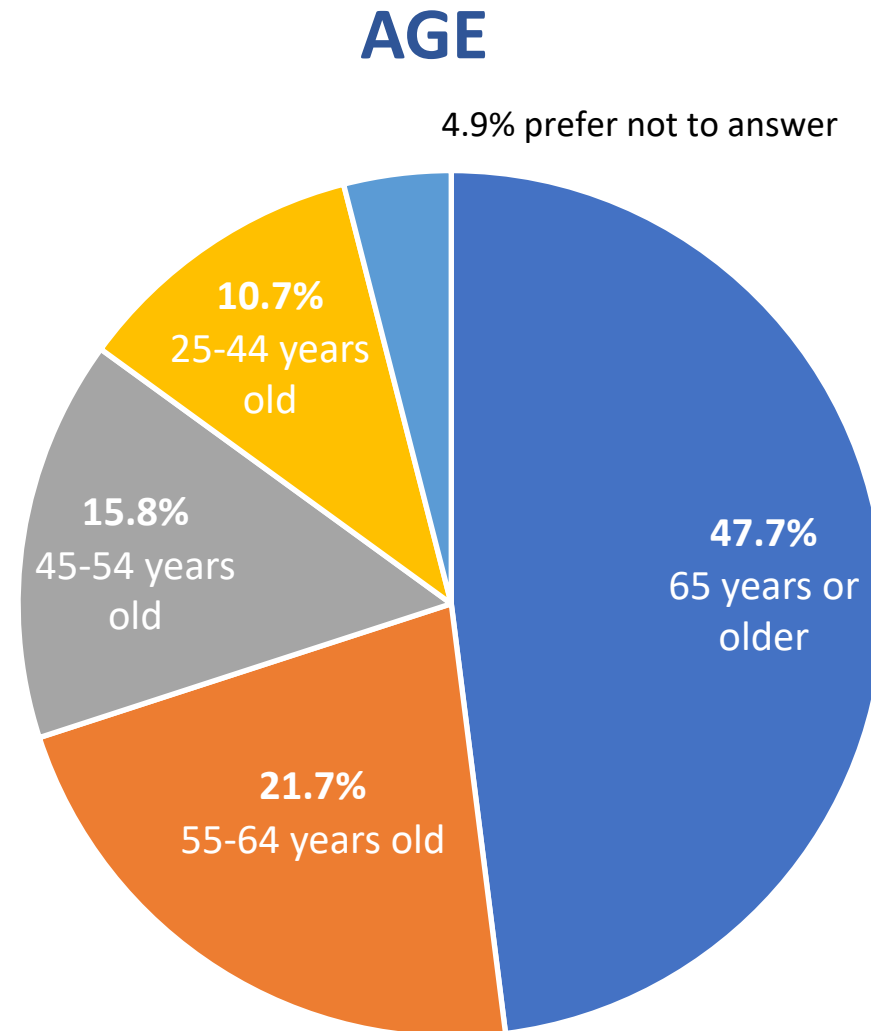
Respondents:

- 590 total
- 564 completed the survey online and 26 on paper
- Almost all respondents (96%) are Weston residents

The WLNI Survey: Who Responded?

Based on 589 responses

- Two-thirds (67%) are female; almost one-third (28%) are male; 5% did not state gender
- Survey participants primarily range from 45-65+ (see chart)
- 30% have children ages 18 or younger living at home



How important is it to have an independent Weston community news source?

There is overwhelming agreement that Weston needs an independent local community news source.

- Almost all (94%) respondents think that it is important to have an independent Weston community news source.
- Almost half (48%) believe it is “extremely important” (rating of 10).
- Almost no one (1.7%) believes this is not important (ratings 1-4).

Scale of 1-10 with 10 Being Extremely Important

Ratings: 7-10 = 94%, 10=48%



Q1: Based on 586 responses

Community members' own words: Support

Over 80 participants took the time to write in supportive comments for this news initiative.

“I wholly support this effort and hope it bears fruit.”

“We desperately need this.”

“May the force be with you!”

“Thank you for putting your energy, time, and effort into this important initiative!”

“Thanks for asking!”

Community members' own words: A void

Several mention missing the *Town Crier*.

“I miss getting The Town Crier with local news. I no longer have kids in schools, but I have neighbor kids in schools and its nice to get the highlights. I like knowing the police and fire incidents as well as information on candidates and issues prior to voting...”

“Thank you for pursuing this. The demise of the Crier was a real loss to information and discourse in town...”

“[The Town Crier’s] loss has definitely created a hole, and led to a greater sense of isolation within the town.”

Community members' own words: Community

A few mention that a local independent news outlet would promote community.

“Community information and news is as vital as national and international news. Without it, we operate in a vacuum and with only hearsay. In addition, it’s a deeply important part of building and sustaining a community—a sense of we’re all here together...”

“There’s a real opportunity to share the joys of our community through the news that would have a positive impact on bringing people together and informing the community of issues that impact our town. Thank you!”

“Written news is important for people to continue to have a connection with [the] town especially once your children have left the school system and you age.”

Community members' own words: Democracy

A handful mention the importance of independent local news as it relates to democracy.

“Democracy doesn't work with out an informed citizenry.”

“Preventing the destruction of democracy is beyond a partisan issue.”

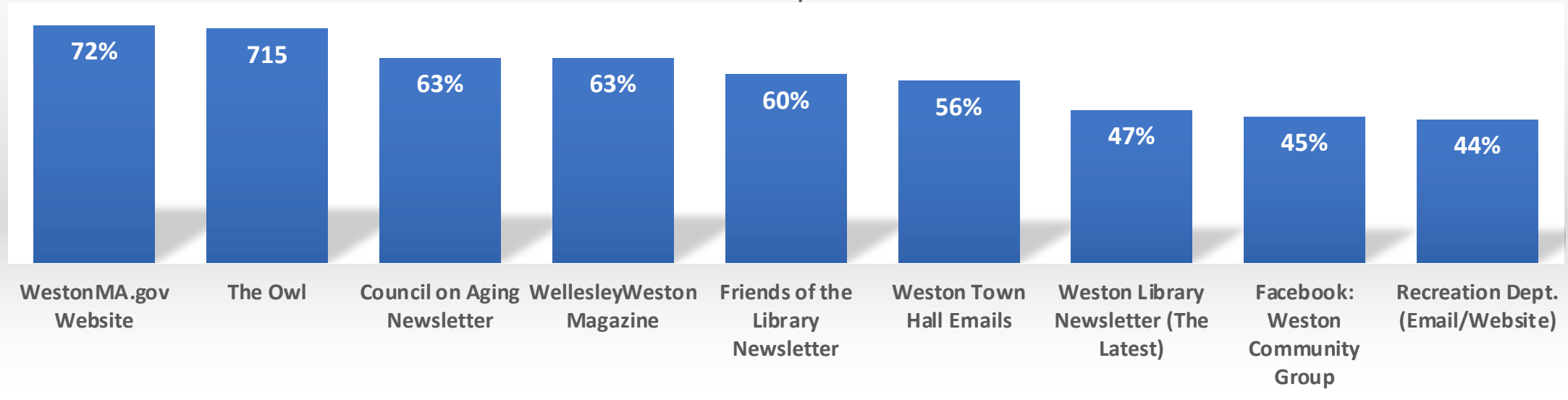
“I am thrilled that the process has started. No democracy can survive without a free and balanced press.”

What current local sources of information are read or watched?

Respondents currently get their local news from a large variety of sources, though a handful are more frequently accessed.

Top 9 Current Local Sources of Information

*Q2: Respondents that checked “often” or “sometimes” v. “rarely” or “never”
17 sources provided*



Are there other sources of local information that residents read or watch?

Other local information sources include: (*% that read or watched “often” and “sometimes”*)

Weston Media Center: email or website (36%)	Westword (PTO) 27%
Focus on Weston: Email (36%)	The Patch (25%)
Weston Neighbor: printed/mailed (36%)	Weston Media Center Cable TV Channels (18%)
Facebook: Daily News Group (28%)	Facebook: Community Political Group (8%)

There is little consistency across optional open-ended responses (“other”) to this question. However, several mention:

- Social media outlets: Facebook, Instagram, etc.
- The *Boston Globe*
- Word of mouth

What are the preferred weekly news formats?

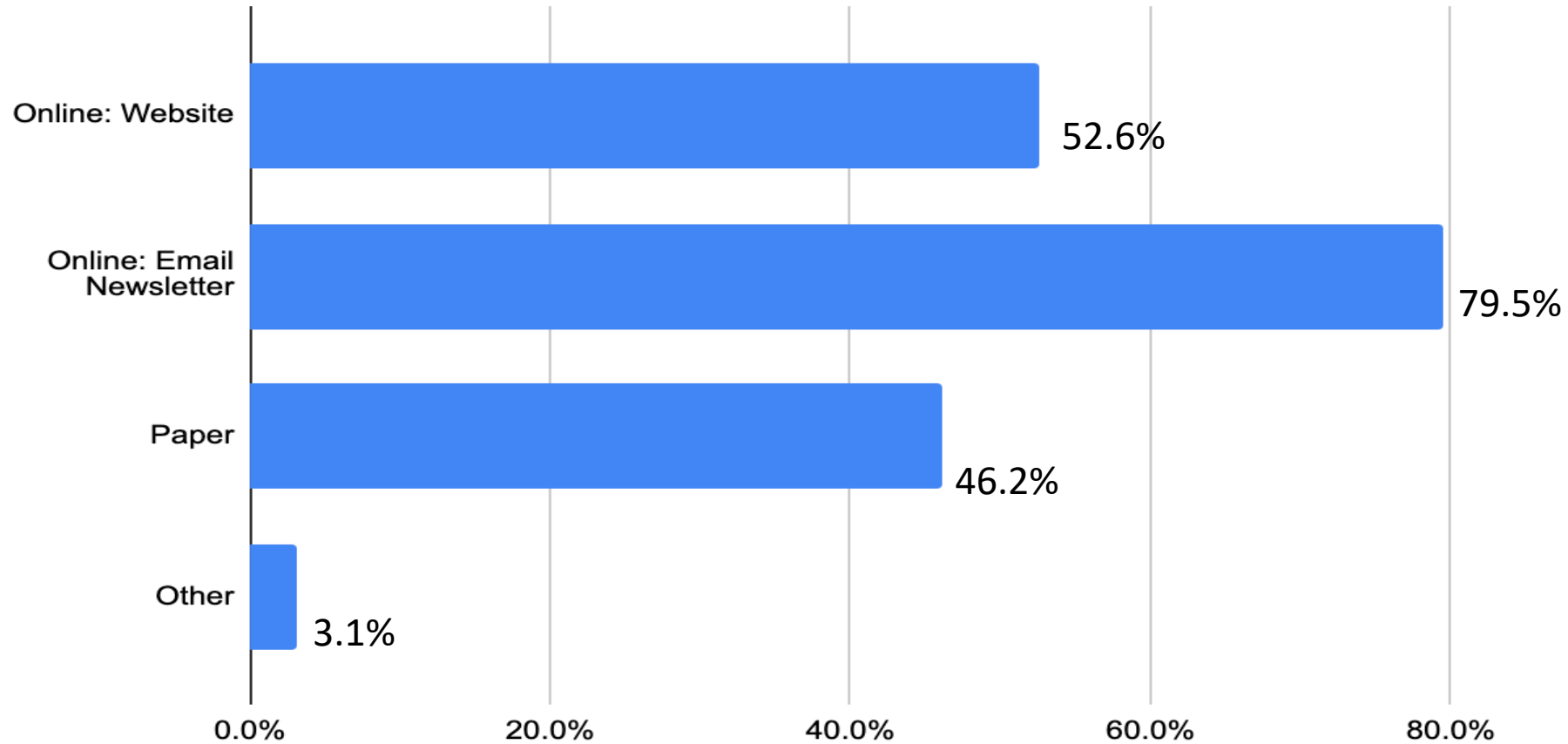
The majority of respondents would like an email version or have the ability to go to the website themselves. A significant number would also like a paper version.

- Most respondents (almost 80%) would like to receive an email newsletter.
- Over half (53%) would like to visit a local news website.
- Slightly less than half (46%) would like to have a paper version.

Several write-in comments support a full website with a weekly email listing and links to new content.

What are the preferred weekly news formats?

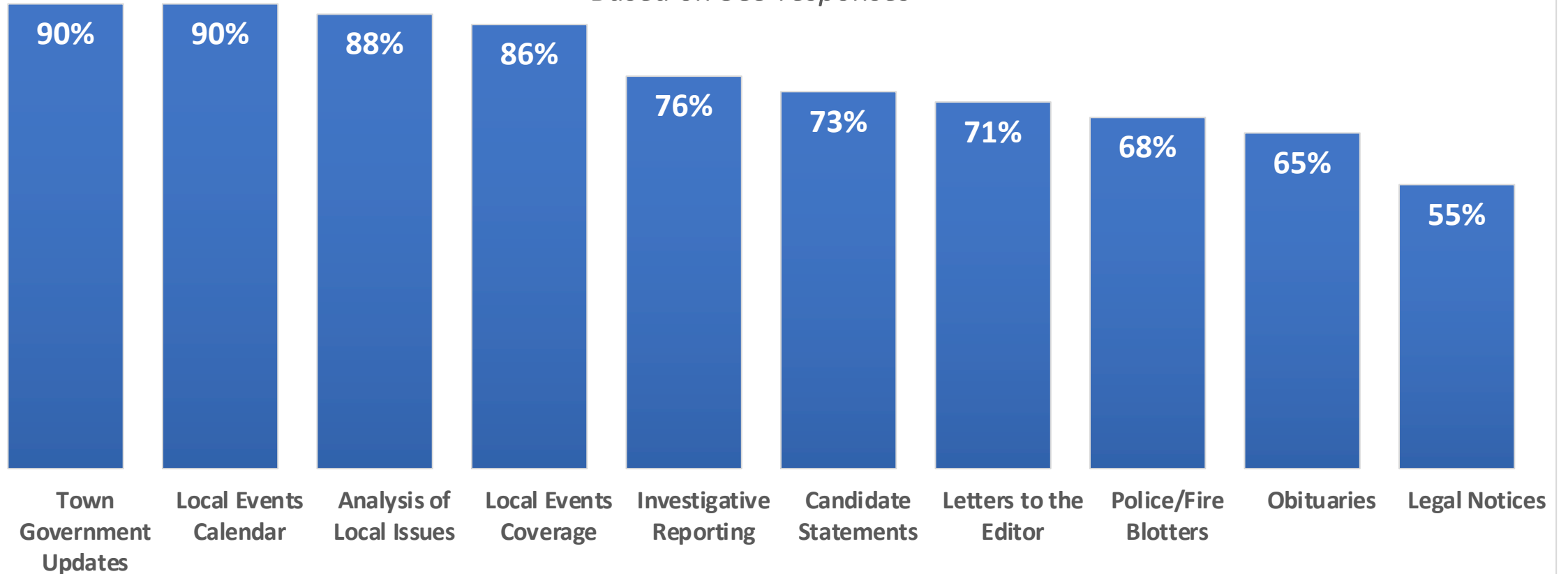
Respondents could enter multiple responses. Q3: Based on 589 responses.



What topics are most important to residents?

Top 10 Topics of Most Interest

*Q4: Respondents that answered "4" or "5" on a 5 point scale
Based on 589 responses*



What topics would community members like to see covered?

Within a wide range of topics of interest there is **very strong agreement on the importance of many features**. These include:

- Town Government Updates (90%),
- Local Events Calendar (90%),
- Analysis of Local Issues (88%)
- Local Events Coverage (86%)
- Investigative Reporting (76%)
- Candidate Statements (73%)
- Letters to the Editor (71%)
- Police and Fire Blotter (68%)
- Obituaries (65%)
- Legal Notices (55%)

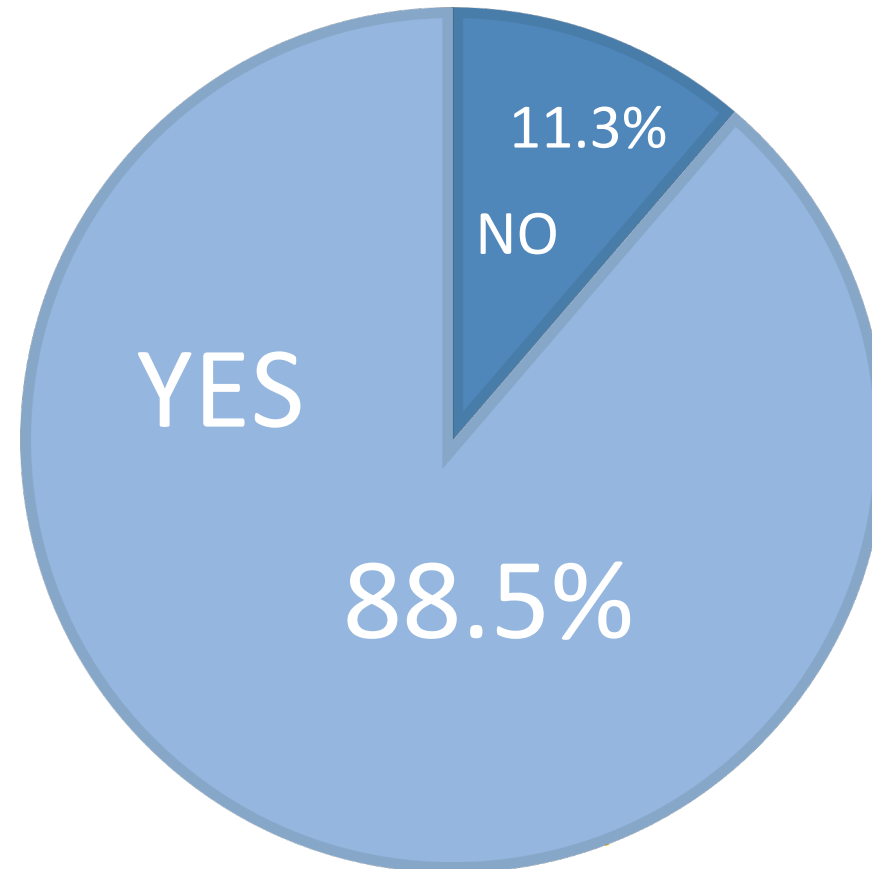
Other Topics?

Other topics in order of importance include:

Regional News (54%)	People Profiles (39%)
School News: Pre-K-12 (52%)	Local Sports: Other than K-12 (33%)
Reviews: restaurants, books, movies, etc. (50%)	Religious Institutions' News & Events (31%)
Resident Awards & Recognitions (48%)	Weddings/Engagement Announcements (31%)
Personal Essays/Editorials (48%)	Puzzles (17%)
School Sports: K-12 (44%)	Recipes (13%)
Photo Essays (40%)	Cartoons (10%)

Is there a willingness to pay for a weekly community newspaper?

Q5: Based on 585 responses



Is there a willingness to pay for a weekly community news subscription? And for how much?

Almost ALL (89%) participants demonstrate a willingness to pay for a weekly independent community news subscription (online or in print).

- Of those, over 65% state they would pay \$50 or more a year. Other price point responses include:

Q6: Based on 538 responses

\$100+	\$100	\$75	\$50	\$25	Don't Know	Other
7.1%	18.8%	8.9%	30.5%	18%	10.8%	5.9%

- A handful of residents wrote in that their willingness to pay depends on the “quality”, “content”, and “relevance” of the newspaper.

Are community members interested in participating in any future efforts to create a new local source of news?

YES!

- Almost all respondents (92.5%) would like to be kept updated on the progress of this initiative.
- Over a fourth (27.5%) would consider helping financially to kick-start this effort.
- Almost a fourth (24.3%) would consider helping with their time and expertise.

Q11: Based on 345 responses (optional question)



Weston Local News Initiative (WLNI)

Please feel free to visit our website or send us an email at:

Westonmedia.org/local-news

Westonlocalnews@gmail.com