

# BEING INFORMED:

## A STUDY OF THE INFORMATION NEEDS AND HABITS OF PHILADELPHIA RESIDENTS

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## ABOUT THE STUDY

A central goal of the Lenfest Institute for Journalism is to improve and sustain the local information ecosystems in cities around the country. Doing so requires a better understanding of the information needs and consumption habits of those who navigate these ecosystems in their daily lives. Using Philadelphia as a test kitchen, The Lenfest Institute, in partnership with the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School for Communication, commissioned SSRS, a local survey and market research firm, to conduct focus groups with residents of Philadelphia and its surrounding suburbs. While not a statistically representative sample, the groups were designed to include people living across the area, and to be diverse in age, ethnicity and income, with a bias towards potentially underserved groups.

Like any small focus group study, our findings are not meant to provide a generalization of all Philadelphia residents' information needs and habits. Rather, we aim to uncover suggestive evidence on how people of varying backgrounds seek information in their daily lives — and what information they seek and why.

## OUR TEAM

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## ABOUT THE INSTITUTE

**THE LENFEST INSTITUTE FOR JOURNALISM** is the first-of-its-kind non-profit organization whose sole mission is to develop and support sustainable business models for great local journalism. The Institute was founded in 2016 by cable television entrepreneur H.F. (Gerry) Lenfest. Lenfest gifted to the Institute an initial endowment of \$20 million, which has since been supplemented by other donors, for investment in innovative news initiatives, new technology and new models for sustainable journalism. Lenfest also gifted his ownership of the Philadelphia Media Network (The Philadelphia Inquirer, Philadelphia Daily News, and philly.com, the Philadelphia region's largest local news website) and these news properties now serve as a live lab for the Institute's innovation efforts. The Institute is overseen by a board of managers including news executives, media entrepreneurs, software and technology executives, philanthropists, community leaders and leading academics.

The Philadelphia news properties are now the largest newspapers in America operated as a public-benefit corporation, under the non-profit ownership of the Institute, dedicated solely to the mission of preserving local journalism nationwide.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A functioning local news ecosystem is a critical component of a thriving community. In Philadelphia, the “City of Neighborhoods,” local journalism is produced by everyone from mainstream local media to hyperlocal and niche publications. As the city population grows and diversifies, and new information products and trends emerge, the *Philadelphia Information Ecosystem* must evolve and adapt to respond to residents’ needs. This is increasingly true as the cultural battles of national politics fracture trust between local residents, and as the growing presence of misinformation weakens trust in both the media and government.

Amid the challenges and opportunities facing local news outlets, *The Lenfest Institute for Journalism* is among the first organizations focused solely on the role of local journalism in democracy. Its work aims to sustain and improve a healthy ecosystem where every citizen is heard and represented. This principle of community listening was a driving force behind *Being Informed: A Study of the Information Needs and Habits of Philadelphia residents*. The Institute also believes in a human-centered approach to building sustainable local news and information businesses, and this study also aims to inspire new products to serve citizens’ needs.

This study, co-authored by the Lenfest Institute for Journalism and the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania, examines a small sample of Philadelphia residents and identifies significant trends that cut across all ages, races and socioeconomic backgrounds. The findings may debunk some assumptions about their news needs, and will offer insights into the waning trust consumers place in regional media.

From picking up a newspaper to scrolling through a Facebook feed, there are ever more ways people consume their daily news diet. This study divides major findings into *information needs, information sources, consumption habits, participants’ recommendations, and final conclusions and recommendations*. Two of our most important findings are further broken down as follows:

## INFORMATION SOURCES:

### THE MOBILE PHONE

The mobile phone was the most popular source of information across all age groups, races and household income levels. One of the most commonly mentioned motivators for high reliance was how convenient it was to find information and news through the mobile phone.

### DEFAULT APPS

Most participants consumed news on their default apps and social media mobile apps. Local TV news stations ranked second and enjoyed greater trust. Other news sources include word of mouth and radio stations. Magazines and newspapers, mostly associated by study participants with their print versions, ranked last.

### SOCIAL MEDIA APPS

As popular as default apps were among our sample, many participants, (particularly younger ones) relied on third-party apps for a myriad of services, news and information-seeking practices like shopping, connecting with friends, following shows or podcasts, accessing hyperlocal news and finding out about restaurants.

## HYPERLOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL SOURCES

On the content side, hyperlocal sources like neighborhood newspapers or apps frequently produced specific content that no other local source covered – not even local television. Younger Philadelphians consumed somewhat less information by hyperlocal sources. A majority of the sample expressed interest in engaging with international news, even when not necessarily related to U.S. foreign policy.

## OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Participants mentioned a number of other general media and interpersonal sources for seeking information. Local television news was mentioned frequently and was regarded by most participants as a trusted source of information about the region. Other fairly common sources of news and information included simply talking to neighbors, friends and family.

# CONSUMPTION HABITS

## NEWS JUNGLES

Instead of feeling they were not finding essential information and news, participants said they had too much information and news on their screens and that they had to opt out, sort through and hunt for information that they were actually interested in.

## TRUST AND MISTRUST OF SOURCES

Trust and mistrust of sources depended on the proximity to responders. Mainstream media outlets, received skepticism whereas independent producers and influencers were valued for their accuracy.

Besides these primary findings, the study also revealed interesting facts about information sources and consumer habits signaling developing trends among news consumers. A number of people said significant portions of their daily information diet came from social media influencers and activists, some of whom acknowledged their biases and political leanings. Products such as CNN's 5 Things You Need To Know and the Skimm were another popular source for curated news and information around specific interests.

Adapting to new technologies, growing skepticism of traditional information sources and news fatigue have shaped and altered the ways that Philadelphians consume information in 2018. But in spite of disruptions to traditional consumption habits and attitudes, our study found a strong reliance on local and hyperlocal information. As final recommendations for our study, we developed seven premises that should be assumed into workflows or strategic plannings by local ecosystem actors, whether from Philadelphia, or other cities around the country. Here they are:

- **The future of news and information is online and mobile.**
- **People need information curators as much as they need information providers**
- **The future of news and other information is interactive, social and engaged**
- **Give people what they need by tying it to what they want**
- **Increase representation of all racial and cultural minorities in media**
- **Audience centric information builds support and trust among consumers**
- **Research, experiment and test**

# METHODOLOGY

Based in part on prior research, we were particularly interested in how the information needs and habits of Philadelphia residents might vary by demographics, especially income, age and race/ethnicity. We were also particularly interested in the views of underserved individuals and neighborhoods (especially black residents, who make up approximately 45% of the city’s population), and younger adults (who are abandoning legacy media at alarming rates). Because nearly 80% of registered voters in Philadelphia are Democrats, we did not consider party affiliations for this study. With this in mind the eight focus groups, conducted between Feb. 15-22, 2018, were broken down as follows:

- GROUP 1:** Aged 36-65; mixed income; white
- GROUP 2:** Aged 18-35; mixed income; white
- GROUP 3:** Aged 36-65; middle to high income; black
- GROUP 4:** Aged 18-35; middle to high income; black
- GROUP 5:** Aged 36-65; lower income; black
- GROUP 6:** Aged 18-35; lower income; black
- GROUP 7:** Aged 36-65; lower to middle income; black, Hispanic, and Asian
- GROUP 8:** Aged 18-35; lower to middle income; black, Hispanic, and Asian

Each focus group included eight participants (for 64 total individuals) and lasted two hours. Discussions were facilitated by an experienced staff member of SSRS, and were structured around a protocol designed to ask participants about their daily routines (mornings, mid-days, evenings and weekends), the information they needed or sought out as they went through their day, and where they got this information. Later, the groups were asked more pointed questions about news interests and sources, their most trusted/used information sources and what (if any) improvements they would like in access to relevant information. We intentionally defined “information” and “information sources” broadly, with the former including news, entertainment, commentary, opinions, facts, data, etc., and the latter including any personal or mediated source.

All focus groups were observed by one or more representatives of the Lenfest Institute, the Annenberg School and/or SSRS, and all were audio and video recorded and transcribed. What follows is based on these recordings, transcripts and observations. The report has been organized around four major categories: The **Information Needs** that participants reported having as they went through their day, the **Information Sources** they commonly used to obtain this information, the **Consumption Habits** they demonstrated as they sought out information, and the **Participants Recommendations** regarding how their information sources and environment might be improved. Throughout we emphasize patterns that seemed to cut across all ages, incomes, and races/ethnicities, highlighting differences when appropriate. We have also included our own recommendations in the report’s conclusion.

# INFORMATION NEEDS

Perhaps unsurprisingly, when asked about the kinds of information they typically sought out, participants emphasized information that was of practical or social value to their day-to-day lives. This was true for all participants regardless of income, race or age. Consistently across groups, what mattered most to people was information and interactions of a highly personal nature that was relevant for planning the day: food shopping, cooking and meal planning, restaurants, devotional material, entertainment, checking in with friends and family, health and exercise, etc. It also included information that was of use for work and (for those either in college or with kids) school.

To the extent “news” was relevant, it fit this same pattern: the day’s weather, traffic, public transportation and any very local issues related to crime, schools, fires and the like that needed to be taken into account in preparing themselves and their families for the day. Following sports news was also commonly mentioned. There was some, albeit little, voluntary mention of broader local issues like policy (police, taxes, social services, etc.) or local government (e.g., the mayor, city council, city agencies, etc.). Participants did mention following national or international news, but with only a few exceptions this was largely done as a way to monitor or keep an eye on what was happening, to educate themselves on issues of interest — through talk shows, podcasts or documentaries — or as a form of entertainment akin to watching sports or a reality TV show. Largely missing was a sense that this information was actionable or directly relevant to their lives, other than in the very broadest of senses.

To the extent there were differences across age, income, race or ethnicity, they were largely ones of emphasis. Young people, for example, were somewhat more likely to check in with friends or seek out information related to socializing in the evenings. Lower income respondents appeared somewhat more likely to seek out information related to work opportunities. But these differences were minor. The overarching pattern was the prioritization of useable personal or public information that directly affected them or their friends and family. This hierarchy of preferences can be seen as a form of personal “information agenda-setting.”

# INFORMATION SOURCES

Where do our participants turn to get the kind of information described above? While sources varied significantly, several clear patterns emerged. Most evident was the dominance of the smartphone as the central technology for seeking or being exposed to information, most commonly through emails and texts, the default Apps” provided on these phones, and the use of additional, downloaded social Apps of various kinds. In addition, participants reported using neighborhood and hyperlocal information sources (both print and online), online international news sources, and face-to-face interactions with friends, family, and coworkers. Local broadcast radio and television news was mentioned less frequently, and even these sources were often consumed through their phones. And local newspapers were rarely mentioned as news sources, and even more rarely read in their print (as opposed to online) version. Underlying all these patterns was a general sense that respondents were often unaware of the original source of the information they consumed, and unwilling to pay for information that they felt was already available for free. Where consumption of these sources differed along lines of race, age or socio-economic status, we describe those distinctions.

## THE MOBILE PHONE

*The mobile phone is the most common way participants in our study get information.* It was the most popular source of information across all age groups, races and household income levels, with only two out of 64 participants stating they used their television sets more when seeking information on a daily basis. One of the most commonly mentioned motivators was how convenient it was to find information and news through the smartphone:

***“What we do right now is whip out our phones and do everything on there. Even using the computer is becoming glossed over in light of how we use our phones, because the phone is as fast or faster and more convenient.”***

***“Usually, I check my email on the phone. It’s so much easier than just going to the computer and doing all that.”***

Particularly when seeking out news, the overall consensus among participants was that if they were spending significant time on their phones seeking other information, it was natural to get most of their daily news there.

***“I think everyone is on their phone all of the time anyway, so it’s just easier to get your news from that source.”***

## DEFAULT APPS

It is important to note that there was great variation in how much participants paid attention to the original source of the information they consumed, with many (especially older) participants simply saying they found or got certain information “from their phone”:

**FACILITATOR:** *When you say your map App, is that your Google map app?*

**PARTICIPANT:** *No, it is the Apple, whatever is just standard on the Phone.”*

Even when adding applications to their phone, many participants did so in a somewhat haphazard, rather than intentional, way. For example:

*“I don’t know how I found out about it (the bible app). I think I went to the Play Store and was just looking at stuff and popped on it and was like, ‘They’ve got everything.’ ”*

Participants aged 18 to 35 were in general more likely to name their favorite brands or apps, but no distinctive trend could be clearly observed across the groups when it came to source recognition and recall. Some were able to recall the names of apps, while others struggled to name them, and this was true in most groups regardless of age, race or income. Even when participants were able to name specific news apps, it was often clear that they remained uncertain regarding the source of the information provided. For example, one participant who mentioned he sometimes went to the Philly.com site for local information had only the haziest sense that it was somehow connected to The Philadelphia Inquirer and Philadelphia Daily News.

In general, the majority of participants across all age groups relied on a daily basis on the default apps on their phones to read the news, find local weather or check traffic. Also, when participants went to the iOS App store or Google Play Store with a general idea of the information that they would like to obtain from an app, e.g “Philadelphia News” or “Breaking News,” the majority downloaded the highest rated app on the list except for one participant, who said he did weekly trials before committing to using an app regularly.

According to our sample, default apps like those for weather, geolocation or traffic offer benefits like the accessing weather on your lock screen, finding coffee shops near you while using Google Maps to get there, etc. Those added functionalities offered the convenience of different types of information in one location, and could be customized to better fit users’ personal needs and preferences.

## SOCIAL MEDIA APPS

As popular as default apps were among our sample, many participants, (particularly younger ones) relied on third-party apps for a myriad of services, news and information-seeking practices like shopping, connecting with friends, following shows or podcasts, accessing hyperlocal news and finding out about restaurants.

When asked about specific apps as sources of news and information on a daily basis, social media apps like Facebook — followed by YouTube and less-so Instagram — enjoyed the highest levels of brand recognition by far. The CNN and 6ABC App were the only news apps that enjoyed anything close to the brand recognition of these other social media apps.

Facebook emerged as particularly important to many participants not only for connecting to friends and family, but for activities like participating in specific interest groups; meet-ups with friends or people with common interests; posting status updates; sharing news; searching for news and events to see what friends were “liking;” etc. Facebook was even often used for things such as finding jobs; selling products and posting help wanted ads; learning about local events; and learning about “breaking news.”

At least a third of the sample said Facebook was their main (and sometimes only) source of daily news, and more than two-thirds of the sample agreed they get information from it daily. Low-income participants relied heavily on Facebook to find rental listings, coupons, deals and even job opportunities. As in the case of other default apps mentioned before, Facebook offered the convenience of access to many forms of information and people all in one place, and the opportunity to customize your content preferences:

*“(I use it for) checking the news, the news feed. It will show you what happened during the day.”*

*“On Facebook, my family, we have a couple of Facebook groups for the older members and younger members to stay in touch”*

*“A big thing I’ve been doing is yard sale groups. So, (I’m) always on there (Facebook) and find groups.”*

*“Facebook is more news. It’s a way to share videos and what’s going on and things like that.”*

*“Yeah, on Facebook, they’re showing you stories that you might already go to see or look at based on what you already looked at. So, when you go on there and you look, you see the story you want to see, you’re not really going to check the whole rest of the paper, because you’re seeing exactly what you want.”*

The importance of Facebook and other social media apps means that were exposed to news and other information as a by-product of their social interactions, rather than explicitly seeking out news through traditional journalism sources. Furthermore, while all participants said they do not fully trust media and news as a whole (more on this later), many admitted to trusting information shared by specific individuals such as activists and influencers. This is true for all of the sample, and particularly younger participants for whom activists and influencers provided a significant portion of their daily news and information diet; i.e., they seemed to trust individual sources (specific people) more than institutional ones.

Some of the content participants in the sample consumed by way of activists and influencers was related to current affairs and pop culture commentary, at times delivered with an amusing tone. This format was particularly popular among younger participants, although one-fifth of our older sample also admitted to obtaining news and information through activists and social media influencers.

Another popular source for curated news and information was online newsletters, with six participants saying they read a morning newsletter almost every day. Most newsletter subscribers were young Philadelphia residents, who valued the product not only because they summarized the most important news every morning in their inbox, but also because “you feel like you are talking to a person.” Indeed, products with a “voice” or influencers with unique personalities were popular in our study. Among the

participants who subscribed to newsletters, CNN's *5 Things You Need to Know* and *The Skimm* were the two most mentioned products:

*"I usually – I get the CNN push notifications from the app, and then honestly, I get a lot of things from either The Skimm – I'll either check those sources from there or Facebook (...) The Skimm uses a bunch of different sources, too. And it just aggregates the news, which makes it easy to do a quick 'what do I need to know off the top of my head?' and then I can follow throughout."*

## HYPERLOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL NEWS

In the course of this study, common themes appeared among sources regularly used or sought out by our participants. Popular sources were often described as being *convenient* or *trustworthy*. Most popular sources usually exemplified both of those qualities. The hyperlocal and international news sources mentioned by our participants clearly enjoyed prestige and trust among their readers.

For city residents, neighborhood newspapers or apps often offered news about their communities that no one else could — not even local television. Consistently, low-income participants in our sample mentioned neighborhood newspapers as a fundamental source of information about community resources and services. For participants aged 36-65, it was a way of keeping up-to-date about neighborhood events, crime and the community. Hyperlocal media, even when not as sophisticated as other sources sought out by participants, offered a direct connection to their place of residence and nourished a sense of belonging:

*"There are a few local ones that are good like South Philadelphia and South Philly Review, which in a literary sense is kind of not so great, but it's fun to read. Just to see what's happening in the neighborhoods. There's one column about restaurant reviews by this woman who is just the worst and I read it because it's painful to read and funny. Everybody thinks so."*

*"The Northeast Times. They tell you free activities. They've even got places for people if you don't have your high school diploma. They've got places you can go to get your GED or high school diploma. Exercise classes..."*

Maybe not so surprisingly, hyperlocal media was not so popular among most younger Philadelphia residents in the sample group who, among other reasons, had moved away from areas where they grew up and had yet to make lasting connections to their new neighborhoods. However, when seeking international sources for news and information, older and younger Philadelphians were often driven by the same issues and sought out similar news outlets.

The most mentioned international sources were BBC and Al Jazeera. When asked about their motivation for seeking such sources, participants of all ethnicities, income levels and ages responded somewhat similarly. These outlets, they say, provided more well-rounded coverage, more frequently, about the rest of the world:

*“I feel like just, I don’t know—just the older I get, I realize... I think Americans are very—not selfish, but we’re very self-centered and we don’t really take into consideration that we’re not the only people on the planet and we kind of do need to know what’s going on around us because that affects us, too. I do definitely keep up with other countries, whether it’s their politics. Everything affects us in some type of way seeing how anything we do affects other people.”*

Some participants voiced frustration at the fact that it is difficult to find information in mainstream American media about countries that are not major players in relation to America’s current foreign policy issues and are not historical allies:

***“We don’t know what’s going on in Spain or in Greece if it’s not related to the U.S.”***

Though these previous quotes may be illustrative, they offer only a glimpse into the many reasons expressed by participants for consuming content from international media outlets. Many of our participants believed that international coverage by U.S. news organizations left something to be desired, while others simply preferred to go directly to the original source. Some read magazines from Spain and Portugal to help with their school curriculum, and others had similar practices to keep up with a religious community abroad. A significant group felt U.S.-based coverage is often too inward-facing and wanted to learn how U.S. policy shapes and affects the world. But whatever the personal reason, the majority of our sample was invested in learning more about the world past the U.S. border.

## OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

While the mobile phone and both default and social apps dominated as information sources, participants did mention a number of other general media and interpersonal sources for seeking information. Local television news was mentioned frequently and was regarded by most participants as a trusted source of information about the region (often because they watched certain channels as kids growing up), particularly 6ABC. However, not all participants tune in to the regular broadcast. The 18- to 35-year-old participants in particular were more interested in interacting with television channels through their apps, and reading or watching news “on their own time.” This was also true for participants’ consumption of national news broadcasts such as CNN, a trusted news source for more than half of our study sample that in general enjoyed of high level of brand recognition among all participants. Moreover, a new [study](#)<sup>1</sup> by The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism suggests that across the United States, local television enjoys popularity and loyalty similar to what we found.

Other fairly common sources of news and information included simply talking to neighbors, friends and family (face-to-face or via email or text);, and radio news to a lesser degree (during commutes and especially for older participants); and Magazines and newspapers were rarely mentioned voluntarily, hardly at all, unless a magazine or newspaper story appeared in social media feeds or default mobile news apps. The exception to the rule was hyperlocal newspapers — more on them later — which came up frequently, particularly among lower income and older groups.

When asked directly why most newspapers were rarely mentioned as a daily source of information, participants' answers were generally divided between the fact that a) they could access information online at no cost, and b) that reading the physical newspapers represented a significant time commitment in their already information-packed days. A majority of our participants only associated newspapers with their printed versions (i.e., while news consumed through social apps or other sources may have originated from newspapers, most participants did not make this connection or see it as important).

Not surprisingly, having to pay for news was a particular deterrent among low income participants in our study, though the idea of paying for a bundle of news (e.g., by purchasing or subscribing to a newspaper) was perceived as not time- or cost-efficient by two-thirds of our study sample, regardless of income. The most commonly read print newspaper, *Metro Philadelphia*, was praised for having a format that you could read cover-to-cover on a 10-minute train ride. It is also distributed free of cost.

Out of all 64 participants, only four acknowledged subscribing to at least one local print newspaper, and only one participant had two local newspaper print subscriptions. Several other 36- to 65-year-old participants said they occasionally bought Sunday or weekly editions of a local paper, mostly for the coupons. And a few younger participants said they occasionally bought special or collector print editions, or read the print edition "when visiting their parents." In the case of newspapers with metered digital subscriptions, five participants said they reached their maximum allowance of free articles per month every month. However, no one in our sample had a stand-alone digital subscription account. In fact, most felt the abundant and often overwhelming amount of free information online made paying for news and information unnecessary:

*"Most of the stories are already online, so there's no need to buy it (The Inquirer) anymore."*

*"I mean, I just look up, 'Philadelphia news, online, Google,' and whatever comes up and has good information."*

*"There's just less paper time now, so much internet news and stuff."*

*"It's not like our parents' generation, where you had a paper every day, or a radio that you listened to at night. When you go on Facebook, you're constantly inundated, so nobody wants to intentionally go and read what would be a whole newspaper's worth of things. It's just too overwhelming."*

Thus far we have described what information Philadelphians seek out and where they go to obtain it. We now look in more detail at **how are they making decisions about those preferences and why?**

# CONSUMPTION HABITS

## NEWS JUNGLES

As headlines have [described](#)<sup>2</sup> and our literature review confirmed, cities and their residents across the United States are experiencing so-called *news deserts*. Knowing this, we hoped to gain insight from our focus groups about what news deserts might exist in and around Philadelphia. What we found was something different: instead of news deserts, we found *news jungles*.

Instead of feeling they were not finding essential information and news, participants said they had too much information and news on their screens and that they had to opt out, sort through and hunt for information that they were actually interested in. The one important exception to this was participants of color, who repeatedly mentioned information gaps in the media about specific issues affecting Latino and black communities, like high childbirth deaths, cultural traditions and celebrations and consequences of gentrification in neighborhoods.

Additionally, across all of our focus groups, participants said there were too many things happening domestically and globally that demanded their immediate attention. Many avoided the news and ignored headlines, push notifications and articles that popped up in news feeds, claiming that if it didn't directly affect them or their families, they would not pay attention:

*“I’m at a place where it doesn’t really affect me – it affects those people way up there. That’s not affecting me all the way down here. They’re getting a bunch of money, but not me. So, sometimes you watch things and you’re like, ‘OK, that’s not worth my time.’”*

*“I just find that the news these days produces me anxiety, so I don’t want to listen to it. So, I just want to pick and choose the articles and sometimes I just want to read the headline, which may – sometimes headlines offer untruth. You really have to read the articles to see what the truth is. So, sometimes just stopping at the headline isn’t a good thing, but then there are times that you just want to go and look but then you can cut it off and go back.”*

*“Honestly, I don’t really watch the news often because it’s depressing sometimes. I don’t even watch it. (...) I don’t actively look at any news and watch it every day for anything. The only time I really watch the news is when I’m looking for something in particular, like something came across or somebody told me this happened, and I’ll look for it.”*

*“I didn’t know about it for like three days (the school shooting in Parkland). I didn’t find out until Saturday because I don’t really go—like on my phone, I kind of avoided it because I knew about it, but there were so many shootings before that happened that I kind of brushed it off. I hate to be so insensitive.”*

*“I don’t watch the news. I don’t want to know certain things. It’s really depressing sometimes. Just watching the news and finding out certain things. I’m just ignorant to a lot of stuff. When I find out things, it’s usually on social media. I will see something. Somebody will post something and that’s when I will go look to try to get further information for it. Injustices with a lot of the black men getting shot and the cops getting off and things of that nature. Just find out what the outcome will usually be, or something like that.”*

Others described a pattern of checking the news constantly only to feel overwhelmed by a news cycle leaving them with a sense of anxiety about the future:

*“I’m always wondering when we’re going to get nuked.”*

*“I want to know if they’re going to impeach Trump yet. That’s why I still read the news.”*

*“It comes on at 6:00. I watch it (PBS NewsHour), not every night, but I watch it probably three or four times [a week]. Especially ever since the new administration. There’s just so much stuff going on politically.”*

*“Not just the weather, but the world is crazy. You need to know what’s going on before you leave your door. I’ve always been taught that. I just always check. You never know what’s going on. It can be something going on down the street and around the corner. You’ll never know unless you check.”*

*“Well, to be honest, I mean with the times the way that they are, I don’t feel very secure and very safe. And so, I feel like what underlies most of me checking is do I have to worry that I’m endangered in some way. I’m just looking for whatever”*

Another term participants used to describe their experiences with the news cycle was “being flooded with news.” In our participants’ view, news and information too often carry a negative connotation or tone. That said, participants indicated that the type of news that most drives a sense of news fatigue is related to the state of the country and national politics.

A recent [study](#)<sup>3</sup> by The Pew Research Center shows Philadelphians are not alone in this; seven in 10 Americans are experiencing news fatigue. For our participants, this news fatigue is driven not only by a constant breaking news cycle and an increasingly negative perception of national politics, but also by a sense of hopelessness about political outcomes and the country’s future:

***“I think it (the new tax bill) does affect us, but I think we’re powerless to do anything about it so that’s why it’s frustrating to listen to it (the reports).”***

*“I really actually don’t pay attention unless it’s a life-threatening situation because my feelings are we have no control. And I’ve come to realize that we have so much little time in life, am I going to waste my time worrying about things I have zero control over – I may be able to help one client a day in my work or something, right? That kind of stuff I have to be aware of. But with political stuff, it’s very little that I can control.”*

As pronounced as the trends of news fatigue and hopelessness about politics were across all the focus groups, a smaller number of participants — only three — admitted to happily welcoming the amount of information they usually received. For these three participants, all the information at their disposal allowed them to compare and contrast the news they were receiving, or to further dig into the facts of the stories in real-time:

***“If there’s something going on, I like to change from channel to channel and see what camera angle they’re coming from or where they’re at in the area. Stuff like that.”***

*“I think it helps give a broader scope because it’s easy to live in your own bubble, and not see what’s going on. It just helps you get a sense of what is happening.”*

***“To get their perspective (on checking sources with different political leanings). You have to have their perspective. You have to know what the devil’s doing.”***

While most participants agreed that it was definitely a benefit to be able to engage in the sort of comparisons and personal fact-checking that many referred to as “doing your own research,” the majority saw it as a forced necessity that underscored mistrust of most news sources rather than a preferred method for keeping up with the news. In contrast to the three participants that we mentioned earlier, most participants in our sample did their “own research” but wished they didn’t need to.

## **TRUST AND MISTRUST OF SOURCES**

The acute sense of information overload expressed by our participants motivated many of them to compare, contrast and fact-check the news and other information they consumed. But while respondents often said they regularly “do their own research” about the news and information they received because of the many options available to them, it became clear there was another motivation that was also present -- a lack of trust in the mainstream media.

No less than 70 percent of our overall sample admitted that, at best, they only partially trusted news and information from mainstream media, a read, watched or listened to it with a degree of skepticism. The number was higher among white 18- to 35-year-old city residents, with almost 90 percent acknowledging this distrust. When asked about trusted sources, many often referred to the adage: “take everything with a grain of salt.” Doing their own research became, in the opinion of our participants, the preferred method for obtaining factual news and information:

*...”because they’re all liars (CNN, Fox News and MSNBC), so I put all three together in a pot, and then (...) you get a narrative from each one. And you can see through the nonsense, so then I get a gist of where each side is trying to tell you to think, and then I go to those people who do the same thing, and I just see how they interpret it as opposed to how I interpret it. And I don’t really rely on any one person or channel to – there’s no one that I just go ‘I’m going to trust everything they say.’ “*

*“What I’ve been trying to do, is I try to stay away from slants. What I mean by that is, as far as American headline news, Fox leans to the right. CNN leans to the left. So, you know what I do? I check it all. Go on YouTube. I’ll check out Al Jazeera. I’ll check out the BBC. They don’t seem to have an agenda, you know what I mean?”*

*“I don’t think any of them (news sources) are fully trustworthy because one thing I learned from one of my professors is to always look at where you’re getting the information from. It’s always someone trying to sell a product, so it’s always biased to something. Always cross-check.”*

*“You can’t fully trust nothing”*

*“I think trustworthy for me is my own research. You tell me something, let me push it up against a couple of different things and see what.”*

*“Yeah, you have to do your research. There’s no shortcut and you definitely can’t go with anyone who is sponsored by somebody else.”*

Major television networks like CNN and Fox News were sometimes mentioned as sources not to be trusted, particularly among our younger white participants. As is clear from some of the quotes above, no sources or topics were spared doubt by our participants, one of whom even questioned weather reports from local media:

*Eastern Pennsylvania Weather Authority is  
“an amateur meteorology source, which I like  
because they don’t hype things up, like the media,  
and they are very honest and say things  
the media’s not telling you about the weather.”*

Perhaps unsurprisingly, most of our sample trusted news more when it was shared by a family member or a friend, or when it was commented on or shared by social media activists or influencers. This was true in particular for almost all of our 18- to 35-year-old participants. News referred by these “people of trust” usually enjoyed more credibility among our studied sample. As we observed, becoming a person of trust or gaining credibility often relied on factors like personal empathy, commitment to causes, sources of revenue or individual background:

*“He (host of TruTV show Adam Ruins Everything) will find a topic and just give you all the facts about it, rather than what other people are telling you. Because a lot of places are influenced by money. That show focuses on just telling the truth of the situation.”*

*“I also look at again, local activists because usually if you want to know what’s actually going on, or what’s in the meat of something that’s changing, if you ask someone who’s actually being affected by it, they usually know a lot more than people.”*

*“Also it’s on social media, too. I was just going to say, you know where I get a lot of my national stuff from? Because a lot of people I follow – I get it off of Twitter. Because a lot of the people that I follow are activists and stuff like that.”*

*“Some people, they’ll just give their biased opinion on something and speak on it as truth, but he (conservative political commentator Ben Shapiro) won’t speak on something he doesn’t know a lot about. He will bring some facts into it. He’ll research it and then bring facts into it before he opens his mouth about something.”*

*MSNBC anchor Joy Reid ... “I just love her presence. She looks like me, talks like me, she’s interested in the same things, and she takes those as seriously as I do.”*

*“When I look at (CNN news anchor) Brooke Baldwin, I can resonate with her more, because she has more emotion. You can sympathize and empathize with her.”*

*“I’m addicted to watching ‘Dateline,’ ‘60 Minutes,’ ‘48 Mystery Hours,’ etc. because you can actually call them or email them. You can request – ‘Where did you get this source from?’ etc. When they do make a mistake, they actually publicly acknowledge it.”*

There was a particularly keen interest among younger participants in knowing revenue sources and sponsorship of media, with many stating that they put more trust in sources that make transparency reports and “behind-the-scenes” information available to audiences.

But in spite of news overload and decline in trust, city residents in our groups generally agreed on the types of local news stories they would like to see more of: positive, relevant and actionable stories representative of all the communities that make up the city, and that show how these diverse communities individually and collectively shape and determine what it means to be a Philadelphian. For some participants this meant telling stories of minorities and their cultures beyond stereotypical narratives:

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*“I was raised around Puerto Ricans. The neighborhood I live in is the first Puerto Rican neighborhood in Philadelphia (...) I love them (...) Positive stories, positive inputs, how do you live – their cultures. It made me get into finding my ancestry, where I came from.”*

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For others, it meant having more access to narratives highlighting individuals and organizations trying to work together to make Philadelphia a more inclusive community. Others mentioned that they would like to see stories that help further the sense of community by highlighting common ground and values among residents:

*“More community. We need to work together. No matter what color you are. If you’re in this area, we need to be working together.”*

# PARTICIPANTS' RECOMMENDATIONS

As a final exercise for our focus groups, we asked participants to brainstorm about what types of information, sources, or technology products they would advocate for if they were on the board of directors of a newspaper, a technology company or any other organization that offers information as their product. This question was intended to capture ideas and suggestions that were not covered by our previous “daily routines exercise.” What follows is a list of these recommendations that we have grouped and classified:

## INFORMATION FOR DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS

As mentioned previously, age was the trait that determined most of the differences between participants' information consumption across all focus groups. Maybe unsurprisingly, a recommendation offered by several members of our focus group was the need for more local information produced with the age of the audience in mind. While younger participants hoped to get local news products that felt more relatable to them and their generation's voice, challenges and cultural backgrounds, older participants also hoped to find information customized around their needs and preferences.

*“Make it so the younger person cares about the bottom line, tell me why that's important. Don't just talk to me about it; tell me why it's important. Make it important to me so that I care to listen.”*

*“The individual newscaster might be in your genre and they're speaking in terms that you can relate to.”*

## BUILD CONTENT AND PRODUCTS AROUND COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST

On a similar note, younger participants recommended more information products or content tailored around specific communities of interest. These communities could be differentiated by age, gender, sexual orientation, cultural preferences, ethnic background, pop-culture references and many other categories. Participants who made these suggestions related personal experiences where companies that have created products around specific communities that they feel either part of or compelled to belong to enjoyed the highest rates of engagement and trust:

*“Whether it's a product or something like that, whatever it is, – try to build a community around it, so that way you have your – you don't have to every month think how am I going to keep these people watching or buying or whatever. If you get a community around it – like I have Dollar Shave Club to get my razors. And what they started doing is genius. I feel like people already are happy with them, but they started a newsletter every month, and I realized that that did something to my brain neurons, where I feel closer to the brand. And I'm very like anti – I think of myself as I'm not loyal to any brand or anything. But I do find myself when the package comes every month, I can't wait to read (the newsletter).”*

*“That’s why Facebook has been so successful because with all of the technology, and our generation having a lack of true intimacy, that’s their way to make you think that you’re having that intimacy.”*

## TRANSPARENCY AS A CORE VALUE AND DAILY PRACTICE FOR CONNECTING WITH AUDIENCES

Participants trusted organizations and individuals that make public information about their funding and revenue, cited sources and generally acted transparently more than others. The more transparent an individual or organization was, the most positive a reaction they received from participants. That led to a recommendation that transparency should be a core value and daily practice for institutions, individuals and organizations offering information products:

*“I would definitely promote the reputability of the information that we’re providing. I feel like that’s so important like in an academic circle like you would cite your sources. You don’t always see that, but knowing where your news is coming from is so key to not waste your time or anybody else’s.”*

*“It’s important to know where the funding comes from for a lot of these things (news sources) because that’s what makes or breaks whether or not something is corrupt.”*

*“I do like hearing about outlets that won’t publish immediately because they haven’t verified it yet. That rings true to me that that’s what I would want as, OK, you’re verifying your sources and you’re going back and you’re asking the right questions.”*

## COMIC RELIEF

Another way our participants fought news fatigue and anxiety was by consuming information that offered comic relief. Participants suggested people or organizations looking to connect should make content comical, self-deprecating or speak truth to power through jokes. Comic relief knitted into the narrative of serious and grim information, our participants suggested, released some of the tension that the information provoked -- and also helped them empathize more with the person delivering the information. This personal response, in turn, created a self-fulfilling cycle in which people tired of the grim tone of most news were drawn to comical delivery tone as a form of relief. This tone also grabbed people’s attention and created empathy between the producer and the audience, who as a result, trusted him or her at increasing levels. This meant they sought out the information source not only for comic relief, but as a reputable and trusted source of information:

*“Comical. Most things that are funny are things that are usually true and happen to be something close to you.”*

*“Comical will make it serious.”*

*“Make sure it’s relatable. I feel like that’s what catches people’s attention.”*

*“It makes me remember because I want to share it with somebody else because it was so funny.”*

## **DON'T EFFECTIVELY KILL PRINTED FORMATS**

Lastly, while a majority of participants affirmed that most of their daily information was consumed on mobile phones and other digital devices -- followed closely by TV -- many affirmed that print news still played a role in their lives, particularly for older and/or lower-income participants. Several lower-income participants said some people in their neighborhoods relied on printed pamphlets or free local and hyperlocal newspapers like Metro or South Philly Reviews to get information in their daily lives:

*“ My problem with information is, as far as the Internet or social media, people who are computer illiterate – the older generation who’s not into the Internet or the phone – getting them information. It has to be more than by word of mouth. Or it has to be more than by the news. Maybe delivering a local paper.”*

# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the last year, several metro newspapers across the nation have cut their newsrooms' **staff in half**<sup>4</sup>, many other **local newspapers**<sup>5</sup> have continued to fold, and **increasing numbers**<sup>6</sup> of Americans are not **trusting the information**<sup>7</sup> that mainstream media provides. While this study is consistent with many of these findings, it also suggests that by listening to the views and feedback of the people they hope to serve, opportunities can reveal themselves. On that note, we offer some preliminary recommendations that emerged from our study:

## THE FUTURE OF NEWS AND OTHER INFORMATION IS ONLINE AND MOBILE

While this observation is not a new one, our focus groups show the extent to which the shift to online information seeking cuts across age, income, race and ethnicity. While issues of access remain important to consider, information must be presented in a form that takes maximum advantage of the strengths and limitations of digital information and communication technologies. Furthermore, we have found that here in Philadelphia, the challenges, resources, needs and skill sets of local media publishers vary greatly depending of the organization. This has meant that some ecosystem actors have been able to adapt to the changing behaviour of audiences at faster passes than some of their ecosystem counterparts. It is our hope that the findings and recommendations such as this one, cast a light on the need for all media in the ecosystem- to the extent that it is possible- make a successful transition to online and mobile platforms.

## PEOPLE NEED INFORMATION CURATORS AS MUCH AS THEY NEED INFORMATION PROVIDERS

The most successful information providers will likely be those that are able to assist in curating information in a way that helps people navigate the “information jungle” and more easily identify the most relevant and reliable information they need to go about their daily lives. Doing so requires creative thinking regarding the information, provided, its format, and the design of technology used to deliver it.

## THE FUTURE OF NEWS AND OTHER INFORMATION IS SOCIAL, INTERACTIVE, AND ENGAGED

The days of providing information to passive consumers is over. People of all backgrounds react most positively to information that is provided within social networks, and from individuals and organizations that are seen as members of that social network.

## GIVE PEOPLE WHAT THEY NEED BY TYING IT TO WHAT THEY WANT

A particular dilemma for news organizations that emerges from our study is that much of the information arguably necessary for people to meet their civic responsibilities feels distant and irrelevant to their daily lives. The irony, of course, is that their daily lives are deeply affected by the actions of the elected officials, governments, corporations, etc. that are the fodder of “hard news.” This is especially true for local news organizations. If news organizations are going to be seen as relevant to people, more effort needs to go

into explicitly showing how the actions of government and corporate institutions is relevant to the things people care about -- the quality of schools, the safety of their neighborhoods, their health, the availability of good food at affordable prices, etc. They also need to present this information in ways that are both accessible, and actionable.

## **INCREASE REPRESENTATION OF ALL RACIAL AND CULTURAL COMMUNITIES IN THE MEDIA:**

In an environment of news fatigue and decline of trust, the participants of our study consistently mentioned that they empathized and trusted people that looked and sounded like themselves. For our Latino, black and Asian participants this meant going beyond equal representation. It also suggested that anchors, influencers, business leaders or commentators understand their communities, share common experiences and cover their communities in new and refreshing forms. This, in turn, meant our participants trusted and engaged more with those information sources.

## **AUDIENCE-CENTRIC INFORMATION BUILDS SUPPORT AND TRUST AMONG CONSUMERS:**

While this recommendation is intimately related to the one above, it goes further than diversifying a newsroom or workforce. As reader revenue grows in journalism, and more media organizations rely on audiences for financial support, it only makes sense that they build direct and open channels for feedback to and from their audiences into their strategies. To the extent possible, these channels and feedback mechanisms should be with individuals (i.e., with specific journalists, commentators, and other information providers) rather than or in addition to institutions.

## **RESEARCH, EXPERIMENT AND TEST:**

There is no more effective way of incorporating and allocating audience feedback into workflows than through continued research, experimentation and testing. As our findings indicate, audiences are increasingly agnostic towards new and existing information products. Developing in-house strategies for market research and product testing before launching a product, however small, might prove incredibly beneficial for organizations. There are **abundant**<sup>8</sup> examples of organizations adding these fundamentals of product development. In addition, fostering a culture of research, experimentation and testing inside news organizations could prove invaluable in a news jungle environment.

**Lastly, we would like to thank all participants who offered us their candid feedback over the course of this study. We hope that it might prove useful for the many local media organizations, whether from Philadelphia or not, that continue to produce invaluable information amid challenging times.**

## NEEDS FOCUS GROUPS

### Discussion Guide

UPDATED AFTER DAY 1

February, 2018

#### RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- (1) Identify the kinds of information that Philadelphia residents need and want to help them go about their daily personal, professional, and civic lives
- (2) To better understand where Philadelphians go for this information (what sources are utilized)
- (3) To understand the ease of getting the information they need. Is there information they would like to get but cannot? What is preventing them from getting the information they want/need.
- (4) Use the findings from this research to better understand what might be done to improve the quality of and access to useful information for all Philadelphians.

#### WAITING ROOM EXERCISE: « Think, Pair, Share »

**OBJECTIVE:** To help respondent build rapport and bond prior to the groups.

*Moderator will pair up respondents (depending on when they arrive) in the waiting room and have them “interview” each other, switching partners if time. Each interviewer has to find 3 interesting facts about their partner. Moderator will provide index cards with questions to spark ideas. The objective is to have respondents build rapport prior to the group. Try to ensure everyone has been the interviewee and interviewer at least once.*

#### SECTION 1: Welcome, Overview, Ground Rules, Introductions (10 Minutes)

**OBJECTIVE:** Introductions, ground rules and purpose of the research. We shortened the objectives because we typically do not need to give respondents too many details up front. We also do not typically include the sponsor of the research unless there is special reason to do so as it may bias their answers.

- A. INTRO:** Hello, my name is Melissa. I am an independent market researcher – I have been hired as a moderator to guide the conversation and get your feedback/opinions.

- B. THANK YOU FOR BEING HERE!** First of all, let me start by thanking you for being here. Has anyone participated in a focus group before? We do focus groups like this so that we can understand your thoughts on whatever it is we are researching or want to learn about. Tons of products, services, and even ideas have been guided by feedback from people who participate in research. So, thank you for being part of the research process and sharing your experiences and thoughts today.
- C. NO WRONG ANSWERS:** Please know that there's no wrong answers. All we ask is that you answer honestly and thoughtfully and that you listen to and respect the views/opinions of others in the room.
- D. BACKGROUND/OBJECTIVE OF THE GROUPS:** We are going to talk all about information today! This is one of several focus groups we are doing to better understand the information needs and information seeking habits (how you find the information you need) of Philadelphia residents. The goal of our session today is to identify the kinds of information that Philadelphia residents like yourselves use, need and want to help go about your daily lives.
- E.** We are **audio and video recording this session** today to ensure we don't miss anything.
- F. AUDIO RECORDING AND REPORTING:** When this is finished we will put together a report based on everything we've heard from all the focus groups. To assure your confidentiality, your individual names are never included in the report.
- G. MIRROR:** Our conversation is being observed by some of my research colleagues who are very interested in what you have to say and are helping me take notes.
- H.** Does anyone have **any Questions?**
- I. RESPONDENT INTRO:** Before we begin, let's get to know each other. Let's go around the room and introduce each other. Tell us your first name, what you do for a living (if working), where you live/what neighborhood, and how long you have lived in Philadelphia.
- J. ICEBREAKERS:** What is your favorite thing about Philadelphia?
- K.** Have lobby share buddy tell an answer from their interview about that person before moving to the next person at table.

## **SECTION 2: Story Building: Daily Routine and Information** (25 Minutes)

**OBJECTIVE:** We used story building here instead of having them write it down to make the group more interactive and less redundant. It's a fun way to get them all to participate and brainstorm at the same time. Objective is to get a robust list by which to use in the following section to identify what information is needed at various points in the day and how it is accessed.

*We will move through this section a bit quicker to save time to talk through Section 3*

## LIST OF ACTIVITIES

*Moderator will have 3 to 4 different easels in the room and will move from easel to easel to create a robust list for morning, and mid-day and evening.*

1. Ok we are going to do an activity together. What I want you to do is think about what you tend to do every day: your daily activities or your daily routine. Sure, it might not be the same *every day* and that's ok. But, generally what does a typical day look like for you? For instance: getting ready for work, school, commuting, preparing a meal, house chores, relaxing after work. There's a lot involved in a day. If it helps, try breaking it up by morning, mid-day, and evening or breaking it up by before work, during work, after work – however you break it up just understand that we are trying to get at what you do in the AM, afternoon, and evening.
2. Let's start with morning:  
Here's how we are going to do this: We're going to do an activity we call "story building." How it works: Someone starts by telling one thing they do in the morning and then another person adds to it and another person adds to it, etc. Ok, I'm going to start it off. In the morning I wake up and I get dressed. Then I... (someone else chime in what do you do???)

What we are trying to do is get a good list going of all the different things you all do in the morning.

*Repeat for mid-day, evening until a "good" list for each is created.*

better define "Mid-Day" as the middle of the day (beyond just lunch). Mid-Day can include what you are doing while at work, what you are doing during the day whether at work or at home.

## SECTION 3: Information Needs Daily Routine

*(35 Min, ~10 min for each point of the day: morning, mid-day, evening)*

**OBJECTIVE:** To identify the type of information needed or acquired at various points in the day and how it is accessed (what sources). The post-it exercise is often used when brainstorming to generate multiple ideas. We thought it would work here because there are so many different types of information – respondents can see what others are posting which may spark ideas for them to write down themselves. It also gets them up and moving and motivated.

1. Ok. Let's start with morning. Here's what I would like you to do. You all have post-it notes in front of you. I want you to look at this list we created together, and I want you to think about what are all the ways that you get information (what kind of information do you need or look for) to help you complete these tasks or get through your morning.
2. So for each piece of information that you think of – write it down on your post it and then bring it up and stick it right next to the activity that it corresponds with. Moderator gives an example: OK, so in order to get dressed... how do I know what to wear today? Whether to wear a jacket or coat, take an umbrella? Where do I go to find that out?

It doesn't have to be something that you mentioned – you can write what information is needed and where you go for it for any of these activities.

Take a look at what you see others putting up here – it may spark a thought of your own.

**3. PROBES** *Moderator will go through individual post-its (getting through as many as time allows) writing sources on a separate list for later and Probe:*

- a. Where do you go for this information? (E.g., Internet, word of mouth/friends, TV, paper, apps, etc.) **Why do you go there?**
- b. **Anytime news is mentioned probe** deeply to understand:
  - 1. Local? Global?
  - 2. What specific news sources (TV, Internet, FB, Radio, etc.) Why?
  - 3. What specific news brands (ABC, BBC, CNN?) *WHY those sources/brands?*
  - 4. What kind of information are you looking for from these news sources (what happened the day before, breaking news, local news...what kind of local news, what stories? Local? City happenings? Headline news? Etc.)
  - 5. What is “breaking news? /Current Events” What kind of stories/events?
  - 6. If any sources do not come up (i.e. Newspapers...no one mentioned this source.) Are you using it? When/How/How often/For what information?
- c. Whenever **either local public issues or local media** sources (especially those related **Inquirer, Philly.com, Daily News**) come up **PROBE:**
  - 1. How many people use these sources? For what purpose? What type of news?
  - 2. If not using, reasons why not?

**4. Ask about list overall:**

- a. Looking at this list overall...Is some of this information easier to get than others? Which information is easy, which is more difficult? Why?
- b. Are certain sources more difficult to access? Which ones? **Why?**
- c. Is there information on here that you would like to get but you cannot? **Why not?** Probe financial/ unaware it was an option, etc.
- d. How often do you “bump” into information you were not specifically looking for? For example, let's say I'm on the Internet looking up the Eagles parade and while I'm “surfing” something else catches my eye about the grand opening of a new restaurant or a weather alert...or a new policy being considered by the city council or mayor
  - i. How often does that happen to you? (Probe, frequently, sometimes, not as frequent)?
  - ii. Are there any other examples you can think of where you have “bumped” into information?

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**REPEAT FOR MID-DAY AND EVENING**

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## SECTION 4: Weekends (10 Min)

Let's repeat that exercise for weekends. What does a "typical" weekend look like for you? How does it differ than things you do during the week? Let's just make a list. For some it may include work, recreational activities, more relaxing...shout it out and I'll write it down....what do you do on weekends?

1. Ok, now that we have list of things we do on the weekend ... I want you to take a look at that list and think about all the instances in which you need information in order to accomplish those tasks – just like we did before. Go ahead and write it on your post its and stick it up here.

*Moderator to repeat probes from Section 3 #3/4*

## SECTION 5: Unplanned and Unexpected Events (5 Min)

2. So far, I have been asking you about information you regularly seek out or get, and the places you get it from as you go about your "typical" routine. But as we all know, not every day is "typical." For our last exercise I want you to think about times that you have needed or been exposed to information that was not part of your regular pattern.
3. Think of something that happened to you over the last week or month that wasn't part of your daily routine. What was that? What are some other examples?
  - i. In these types of situations, where do you go for information? How do you find that information? Which places do you think are most helpful?
4. Examples: **personal reasons** (e.g., you needed to have your car repaired, or you or someone you know faced a health issue), **professional reasons** (for example, you were looking for a new job), or **civic reasons** (e.g., a local election or issue that caught your attention), it's someone's birthday, etc.
5. Was there anything that happened in Philadelphia over the past few weeks/months that you've sought out? (*move respondents beyond the Eagles.*)
  - i. Where did you go for that information? Why?

*Moderator to repeat probes from Section 3 #3/4 if conversation robust enough.*

## SECTION 6: Importance Scale (10 Min)

**OBJECTIVE:** To understand from a broad perspective what types of information consumers use most often and deem most important.

*There will be a scale in the room with an 11-point scale (0 to 10, with the end points identified (10=MOST IMPORTANT and 0=NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT). Respondents will be instructed to come up and put their cards on the scale accordingly.*

2. I have a scale here. I want you to think about that list of information that we have been creating together. Think about what information is more important to you; that you use more often vs. information that is less important that you use less often. When I say 'Go' I want you to write three to five pieces of information on different sticky notes and then put them on this scale, showing how important that information is to you, if at all.

**Discuss:**

Let's start with more important (moderator reads from 10 to 0).

- What makes this more important?
- How often do you use this information?
- **If not already recorded / talked about:** where do you get that information?

*Keep going as far as time will allow toward 0.*

2. Let's repeat that same thing for **sources** (where you get your information). Take a look at our list of sources here. Write down some sources on your sticky notes and then plot them on this scale just like you did with the information.

*Discuss*

## **SECTION 7: Sources of Information – Importance, Accessibility, Adequacy (15 Min)**

**OBJECTIVE:** To understand which sources people use for what type of information and under what circumstances? How are these sources used? When are they used? (Some of this may have come out earlier in the discussion – this section ensures we examine thoroughly and expand upon the sources and access)

1. We have been talking about sources of information that you use (point to list), want or need to go about your life. Let's take a look at this list
2. For each source, probe:
  - a. What type of information do you seek from this source?
  - b. How do you access this source?
  - c. How often do you access this source?
  - d. How satisfied are you with the information you get from this source?
  - e. Do you ever use multiple sources (in addition to this one) to find the information you need? Why? (Probe: Is it because you aren't satisfied with the original source?)
3. [If not mentioned] **Newspaper Specific Probes**
  - a. Do you read Newspapers? Online/Print?
  - b. Why/why not?
  - c. Which papers? Why those papers?

- d. For what purpose? What type of information? If news, what kind of news?
  - e. Probe on various papers (LOCAL): Inquirer, **Metro**, **Philly Weekly**, and (NATIONAL): NYTimes, World News, Huffington Post, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post – are you reading these? Do you consider these trusted sources? Why/Why not?
4. What sources would you consider “trustworthy” sources? What makes it trustworthy/not trustworthy?
- a. Probe to understand brands.
  - b. Probe on above newspapers to understand if trusted

### *Hand out short survey*

## **SECTION 8: Closing Questions (10 Min)**

### **1. Local Public Issues/Civic Life Probes**

#### *If not mentioned moderator will address these issues:*

What about local public issues like gov’t, local elections or who is in office, neighborhood crime, urban development, school system, taxes and how they are spent, etc. OR Local restaurants, or parks; snow and trash removal, public meetings, churches

- a. How interested are you in this information?
  - b. Do you seek out this type of information or not really? Why/why not?
  - c. Where do you go for this information? Why there?
2. Probe on Philadelphia Inquirer/Philly.com/Daily News individually:
- a. Show of hands...Who is aware of this publication?
  - b. Show of hands...who reads this?
  - c. Ask for each: What do you use it for? What information are you getting from it?
  - d. How frequently do you go here for information? Why do you read this?
  - e. What do they do well? What can improve?
  - f. Has your readership changed over the years (i.e. did you read any of these in the past?) Why?
    - i. [If yes]: What information do you use them for? How satisfied are you with the information you get from these sources? Any trouble accessing these?
  - g. Ask for each: Do you consider this a trustworthy source? A credible source? Why/Why not?
3. Knowing that companies are always innovating and changing....If you were on the board of directors of a newspaper, app or any other company that offers information as their product: what would you do next in order to communicate to more people/engage more people?
- a. If you were on the board for a local media network or Philadelphia media network specifically (Inquirer, Daily News, Philly.com)...what would you do next? What would you change? How would you engage more people? How can they improve?

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