

PRESS RELEASE

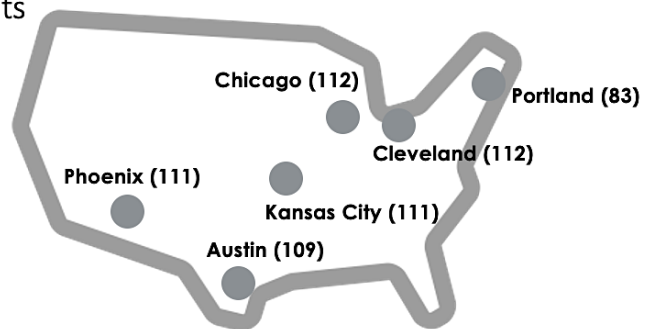
HOPE, IMPACT, APPEAL: HOW SOLUTIONS JOURNALISM TRANSFORMS ENGAGEMENT

Leading media research firm finds solutions reporting ‘unlocks a secret weapon’ for newsrooms seeking to restore trust and loyalty

At a time when journalism faces crises of relevance and sustainability, a new study from media research leader SmithGeiger demonstrates solutions journalism increases the appeal and effectiveness of news coverage.

The Solutions Journalism Network commissioned the study, the first of its kind, to evaluate audience response to solutions journalism. Conducted with the media research company SmithGeiger, it examined the reactions of local news consumers across the country to traditional problem-focused stories as well as to solutions stories that covered the responses to the problems being examined.

638 total
respondents
across 6
markets



The study, launched in September 2020, took place online in six geographically diverse and demographically different communities and focused on stories from Solutions Journalism Network partners in each of those communities.

After detailed analysis of the audience’s responses to the variety of problem-focused and solutions stories, there was a significant lift in key news consumer responses to the stories that demonstrated core principles of solutions journalism. Solutions journalism, those stories that went beyond the problem to examine the responses to the issue at hand, solidly outperformed stories that took a more traditional approach to reporting on a local community’s problems.

Audiences strongly preferred stories that helped them understand how people in communities are working to confront society’s challenges.

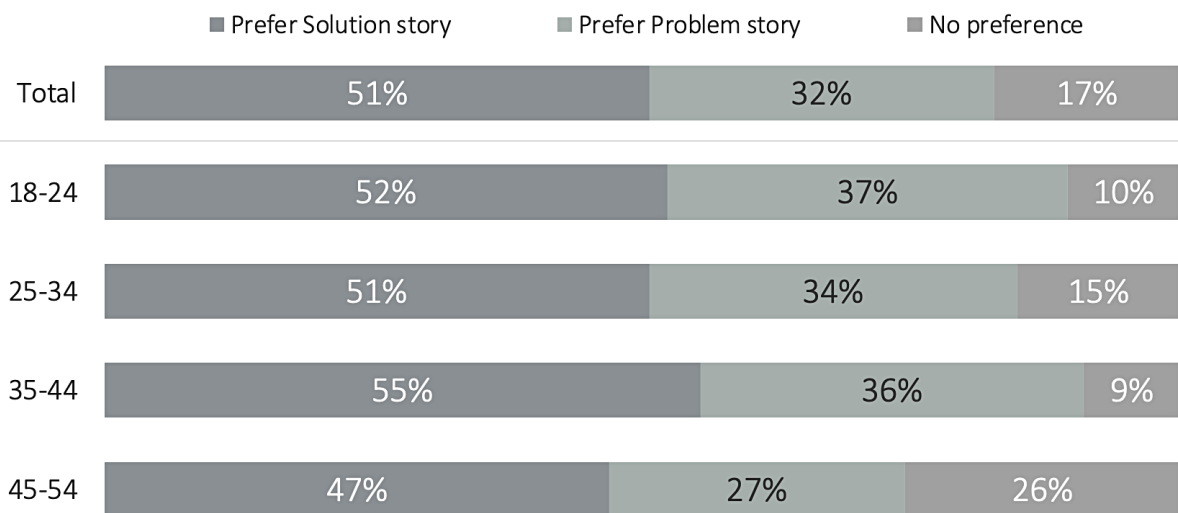
“Once you’re exposed to solutions journalism, you’ve actually unleashed a new set of expectations of how much better local news can be,” said Seth Geiger, SmithGeiger’s co-founder and president. “You could use this data to persuade every newsroom that they need to do at least one story every day that has a significant solutions component. We do a lot of these [studies]. This is about as good as it gets, in terms of defining the efficacy of a particular approach.”

Key findings indicate:

More audience appeal and deeper engagement: Audiences found solutions stories more interesting, more trustworthy, deeper and more uplifting, and less upsetting. Solutions stories changed people’s understanding of issues and inspired them to get involved. And they talked to friends and family about these stories.

Broad interest, especially among the young: Across partisan lines, the results were virtually the same. “These stories transcend politics,” said Geiger. Across age differences, three-quarters of respondents said solutions were important, but the number was even higher among young people. “This is an opportunity to engage a younger audience in local news more effectively than in a pure problem approach.”

Overall Story Preference



Reassurance and hope: Solutions stories feed an audience’s need to feel things can get better. When asked what was missing from the news, a common answer was “positive stories connecting me to my community.”

A distinctive difference: Newsrooms can set themselves apart from the competition by embracing solutions journalism principles and practices.

As news media seek to earn audience trust and loyalty, the study suggests solutions journalism can unleash “a new set of expectations of how much better local news can be,” said Andrew Finlayson, SmithGeiger’s executive vice president. “This research transcends TV. It speaks to a broader opportunity for journalism to shift itself.”

To see a video highlighting the research, click [here](#).

To download a full report, click [here](#).

To see the Top 10 takeaways, click [here](#).

To learn more about solutions journalism, email info@solutionsjournalism.org.