

JANUARY 6, 2016

Around half of newspaper readers rely only on print edition

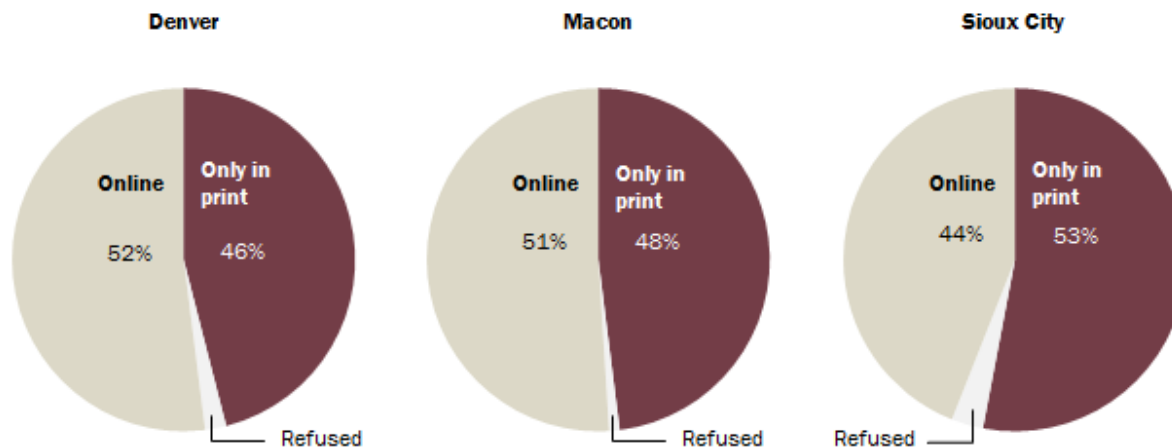
BY MICHAEL BARTHEL ([HTTP://WWW.PEWRESEARCH.ORG/AUTHOR/MBARTHEL](http://www.pewresearch.org/author/mbartHEL))

This weekend, Boston Globe editorial employees received an unusual request (<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/04/business/media/boston-globe-employees-help-deliver-paper-on-sunday.html>) : Could anyone run a paper route? Due to problems with the paper's new distributor, some home subscribers had not received their print editions. About 200 Globe workers responded to the call, and hand-delivered copies to local residents.

Although the paper announced Tuesday that it was returning to its old distributor (<https://www.bostonglobe.com/business/2016/01/05/globe-taps-former-distributor-take-over-half-boston-area-deliveries/cVgnUPfuh4WVmzm1IS1MI/story.html>) for help with home deliveries, the Globe situation is a reminder that even in the digital era, many local news consumers still rely on the print product for their news.

Around half of newspaper readers only read in print

% of newspaper readers who consume the paper...



Source: Survey conducted July 8-Aug. 18, 2014.

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(http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/01/06/around-half-of-newspaper-readers-rely-only-on-print-edition/ft_16-01-05_printnews_pie/)

(http://www.pewresearch.org/?attachment_id=276545) Data from Pew Research Center and other sources show that around half of newspaper readers consume newspapers *only* in their printed form. In our study of the local news environments in three markedly different U.S. metropolitan areas, nearly or about half (<http://www.journalism.org/2015/03/05/local-news-interest-high-across-the-board-specific-habits-vary/>) of readers of the local daily paper in Denver (46%), Macon, Ga. (48%), and Sioux City, Iowa (53%) did not access the paper

online.

These findings are similar to the 56% of newspaper readers in a national survey (<http://www.journalism.org/2015/04/29/state-of-the-news-media-2015/>) who said their *only* contact with a newspaper was in print. The print edition also remains an important part of newspapers' business model: More than three-quarters of their advertising revenue comes from print (<http://www.journalism.org/2015/04/29/state-of-the-news-media-2015/>).

(http://www.pewresearch.org/?attachment_id=276544)

Indeed, print newspaper readers tend to be news enthusiasts. They are more likely to often watch local TV news than those newspaper readers who access the paper online instead of or in addition to the print edition. And although print-only readers in the three cities studied are certainly older than their counterparts who access the paper online – in their mid-50s, compared with online newspaper readers,

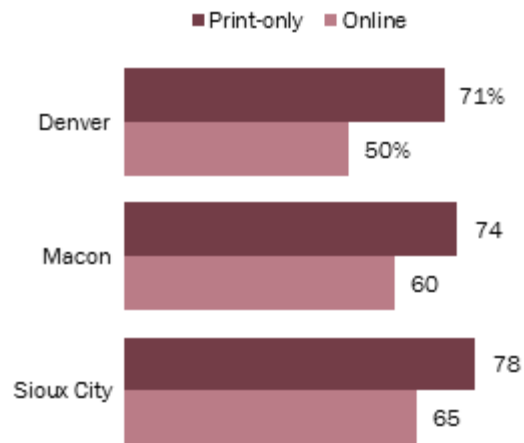
who were generally in their early to mid-40s – this difference persists even when controlling for age. If print distribution becomes economically unfeasible, it remains to be seen whether this group will finally move to the online edition, or be content with getting their local news from TV, as they already do.

Besides age, print-only readers stand out in some other ways. They are less likely to have gone to college, according to our case studies. In Denver and Macon, print-only readers have lower incomes compared with online newspaper readers. And these print-only readers are less likely to be highly engaged with local civic and political activities such as neighborhood organizations or contacting elected officials.

Even in the digital age, home distribution remains a key link between newspapers and their readers. And should the print product become a thing of the past, evidence from these three cities suggests that the impact would be felt disproportionately by about half of their audience – indeed, a particularly vulnerable contingent at that.

Print-only newspaper readers more likely to watch local TV news

% of newspaper readers who often watch local TV news



Source: Survey conducted July 8-Aug. 18, 2014.

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Demographics of print-only newspaper readers

% of newspaper readers who...

	Print-only	Online
Denver		
Have never been to college	39%	17%
Have an annual income of <\$30k	28	20
Are aged 65 or older	26	9
Are very engaged	23	33
Macon		
Have never been to college	59	48
Have an annual income of <\$30k	53	44
Are aged 65 or older	27	9
Are very engaged	26*	32*
Sioux City		
Have never been to college	52	41
Have an annual income of <\$30k	30*	36*
Are aged 65 or older	29	8
Are very engaged	19	29

Source: Survey conducted July 8-Aug. 18, 2014.

* Difference is not significant.

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