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**RUN University**

# Fundable Ideas and Fundraising Strategies



June 6, 2025



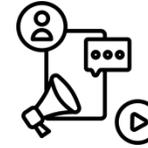
## Fundraising

Fundable Ideas and Funding Strategy

**Webinar: Monday, June 2**



Special Guest:  
**Margaret Hunt**  
Hunt Philanthropic



## Marketing

Telling Our Story, Reaching People Where They're At

**Webinar: Monday, June 9**



Special Guest:  
**Briana O'Higgins**  
Greater Public



## Music

Using Music to Build Community and Uplift Audiences

**Webinar: Monday, June 16**



Special Guests:  
**Frank Dominguez**, WDAV  
**Lindsay Kimball**, MPR  
**Tamberly Ferguson**, WDAV  
**Matt Reilly**, KUT



## News

Content and Audience Development in the News Space

**Webinar: Monday, June 23**



Special Guests:  
**Ashley Alvarado**, TPR  
**Megan Garvey**, LAist  
**Rachel Estabrook**, CPR  
**Kevin Dale**, CPR  
**David McGowan**, WJCT

# Our goals for today

Review a broad collection of fundable ideas from the research, which represent compelling reasons to begin or continue supporting public media

Provide you with data-driven messaging to use in your own fundraising efforts—especially for major gifts—in service of meeting the needs your community members have expressed

# Fundable Ideas from RUN

## **Local storytelling**

People want more ways to know what's happening in their communities

## **Community connection & resilience**

You can help bring people together in-person & in times of need

## **In-depth journalism**

A vital service in decline, and that you're well positioned to offer

## **Continuing your multi-platform evolution**

Reach more of the community by going where people already are

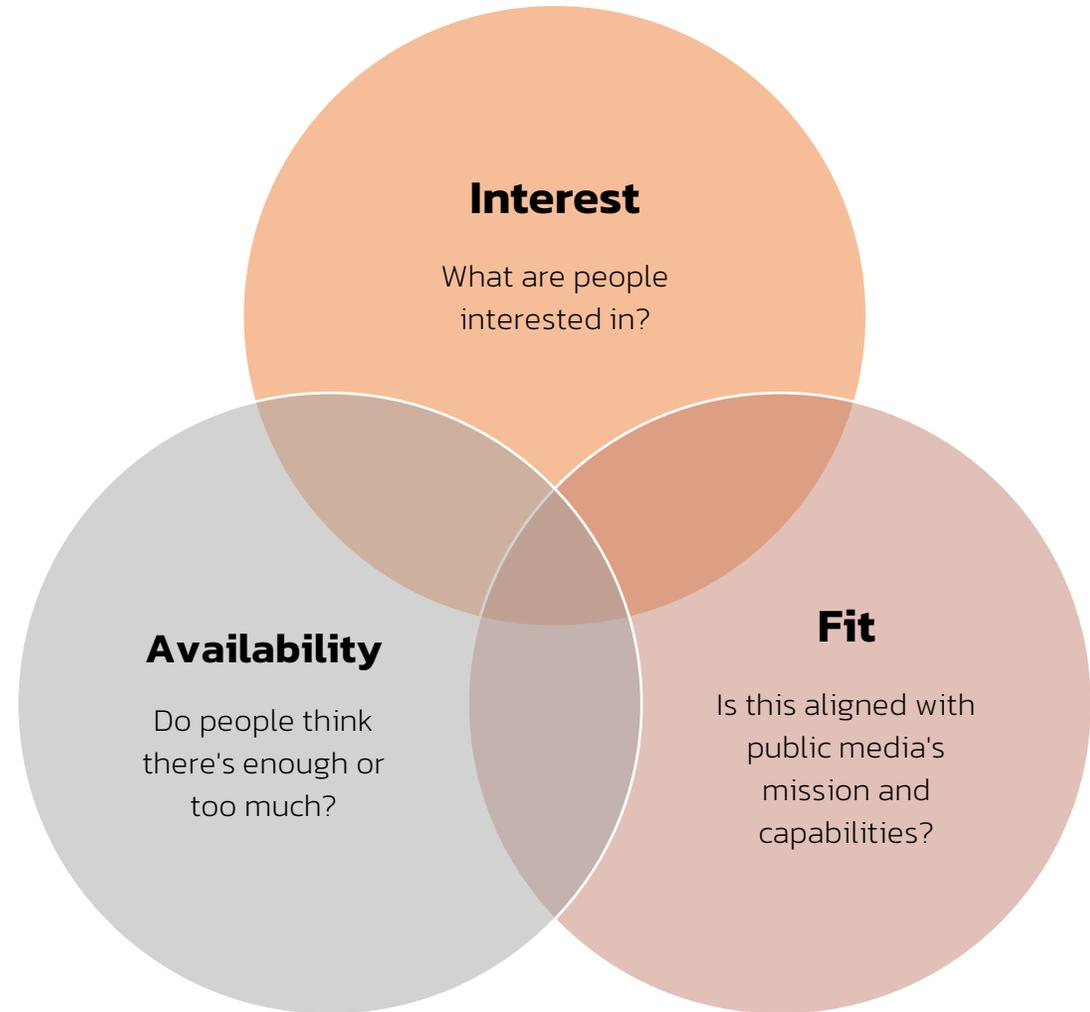
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# **The need for local storytelling**





# Approach to Measuring Unmet Needs



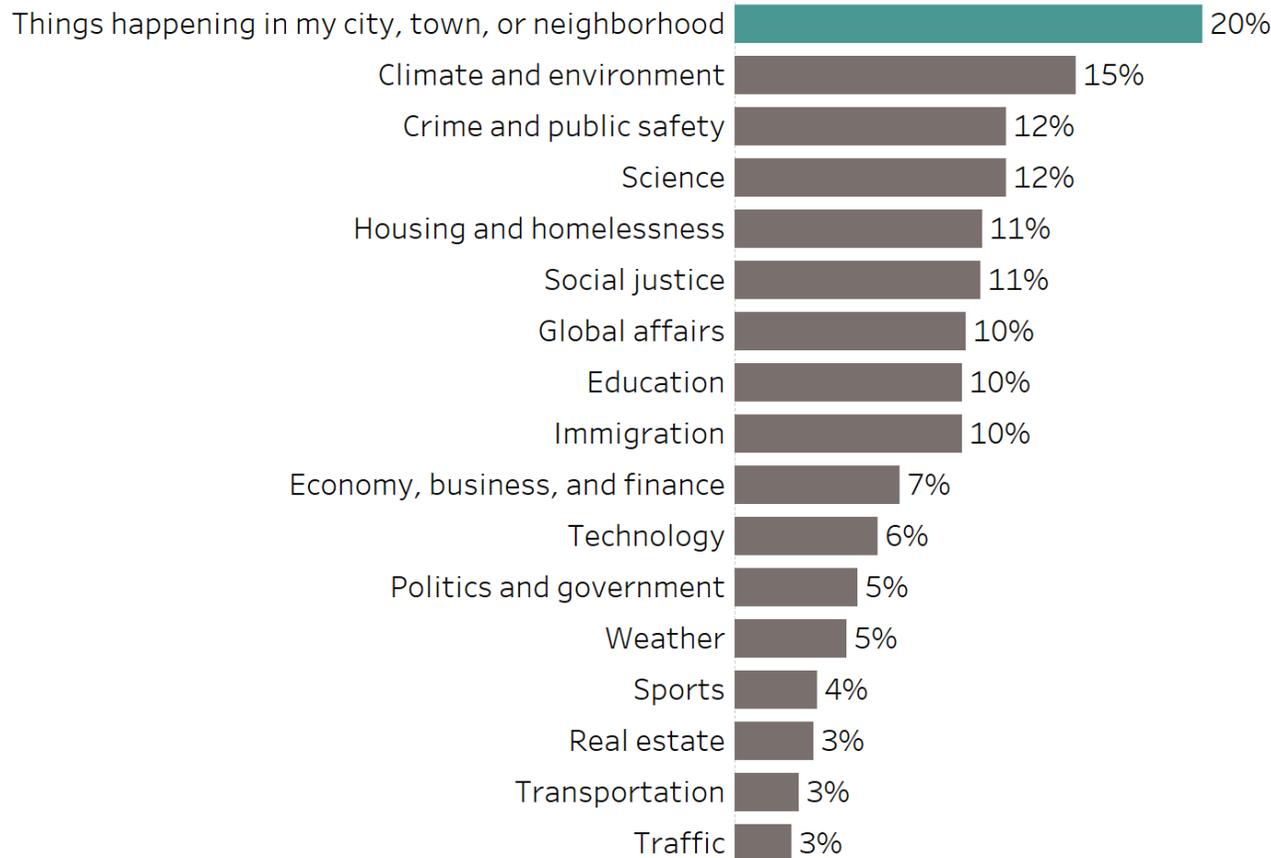


News topics

# Typically, local storytelling emerges as the most pressing unmet need

## Ranker of Unmet Needs

Interested AND say there's not enough



Interest in and appetite for more coverage of **things happening in my area** was especially high among:

- Women (23%)
- Gen-Xers (24%) and Baby Boomers (25%)
- Residents who moved from out of state (23%)
- Rural residents (24%)
- Those who are highly civically engaged\* (28%)

\*Defined as having done 4 or more civic activities in the past 12 months, from a list of 10 possible options.





News topics

# Appeal of local storytelling consistent across the country

Ranker of Unmet Needs % interested AND say there's not enough	National	Atlanta	Charlotte	Cleveland	Colorado	Jacksonville	Michigan	Milwaukee	Wisconsin	Minnesota	Nebraska	New York City	OKC and Tulsa	Philadelphia	Pittsburgh	Central Virginia	St. Louis	Tampa Bay	Utah	Washington DC
	<b>Things happening in my city/town/neighborhood</b>	20%	19%	20%	24%	23%	18%	21%	23%	25%	22%	19%	19%	22%	19%	23%	21%	20%	18%	22%
<b>Climate and environment</b>	15%	15%	13%	15%	15%	13%	15%	12%	16%	14%	14%	14%	12%	14%	14%	15%	12%	13%	11%	15%
<b>Crime and public safety</b>	12%	11%	10%	13%	17%	11%	11%	9%	12%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	11%	13%	11%	10%	10%	12%
<b>Science</b>	12%	9%	10%	12%	14%	9%	11%	10%	12%	13%	13%	10%	12%	10%	11%	10%	12%	10%	14%	11%
<b>Housing and homelessness</b>	11%	11%	10%	10%	10%	13%	10%	8%	9%	9%	10%	9%	10%	10%	8%	12%	9%	10%	10%	8%
<b>Social justice</b>	11%	11%	9%	12%	11%	11%	12%	9%	9%	11%	8%	9%	10%	10%	11%	13%	10%	9%	8%	11%
<b>Global affairs</b>	10%	11%	8%	10%	11%	9%	10%	11%	9%	8%	8%	10%	10%	9%	10%	10%	9%	10%	12%	12%
<b>Education</b>	10%	9%	10%	11%	12%	10%	8%	8%	10%	10%	12%	11%	14%	10%	9%	13%	11%	9%	12%	10%
<b>Immigration</b>	10%	10%	12%	9%	12%	13%	9%	12%	10%	9%	11%	9%	12%	9%	11%	9%	10%	11%	11%	9%
<b>Economy, business, and finance</b>	7%	9%	7%	8%	7%	10%	7%	6%	5%	7%	4%	9%	6%	5%	6%	8%	7%	9%	7%	9%
<b>Technology</b>	6%	6%	5%	5%	5%	6%	5%	5%	6%	5%	6%	6%	5%	6%	5%	8%	5%	6%	7%	6%
<b>Politics and government</b>	5%	5%	2%	4%	6%	5%	5%	5%	4%	4%	3%	6%	4%	4%	5%	5%	5%	5%	4%	6%
<b>Weather</b>	5%	4%	6%	5%	5%	5%	5%	3%	2%	2%	5%	5%	6%	5%	3%	5%	6%	4%	4%	5%
<b>Sports</b>	4%	3%	3%	4%	3%	4%	3%	3%	2%	3%	5%	2%	3%	3%	3%	3%	4%	3%	3%	3%
<b>Real estate</b>	3%	4%	2%	4%	3%	4%	3%	4%	4%	2%	3%	4%	2%	3%	3%	2%	3%	2%	5%	4%
<b>Transportation</b>	3%	2%	2%	2%	3%	4%	3%	2%	2%	2%	3%	5%	2%	3%	2%	2%	3%	2%	1%	5%
<b>Traffic</b>	3%	2%	1%	3%	4%	4%	2%	2%	2%	1%	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%	3%	2%	3%	3%	4%





News topics

# Appeal of local storytelling consistent across the political spectrum

	<b>Ranker of Unmet Needs</b> Interested AND say there's not enough	Very or somewhat conservative	Moderate	Very or somewhat liberal
Things happening in my city, town, or neighborhood	20%	20%	20%	21%
Climate and environment	15%	6%	14%	26%
Crime and public safety	12%	13%	12%	10%
Science	12%	9%	10%	17%
Housing and homelessness	11%	7%	11%	14%
Social justice	11%	4%	9%	20%
Global affairs	10%	8%	9%	13%
Education	10%	8%	10%	13%
Immigration	10%	16%	8%	6%
Economy, business, and finance	7%	8%	8%	5%
Technology	6%	6%	6%	7%
Politics and government	5%	6%	4%	6%
Weather	5%	5%	6%	4%
Sports	4%	4%	4%	3%
Real estate	3%	4%	3%	3%
Transportation	3%	3%	3%	3%
Traffic	3%	3%	2%	2%

Omits respondents who opted to politically self-identify in an open-ended "other" format (n=411)





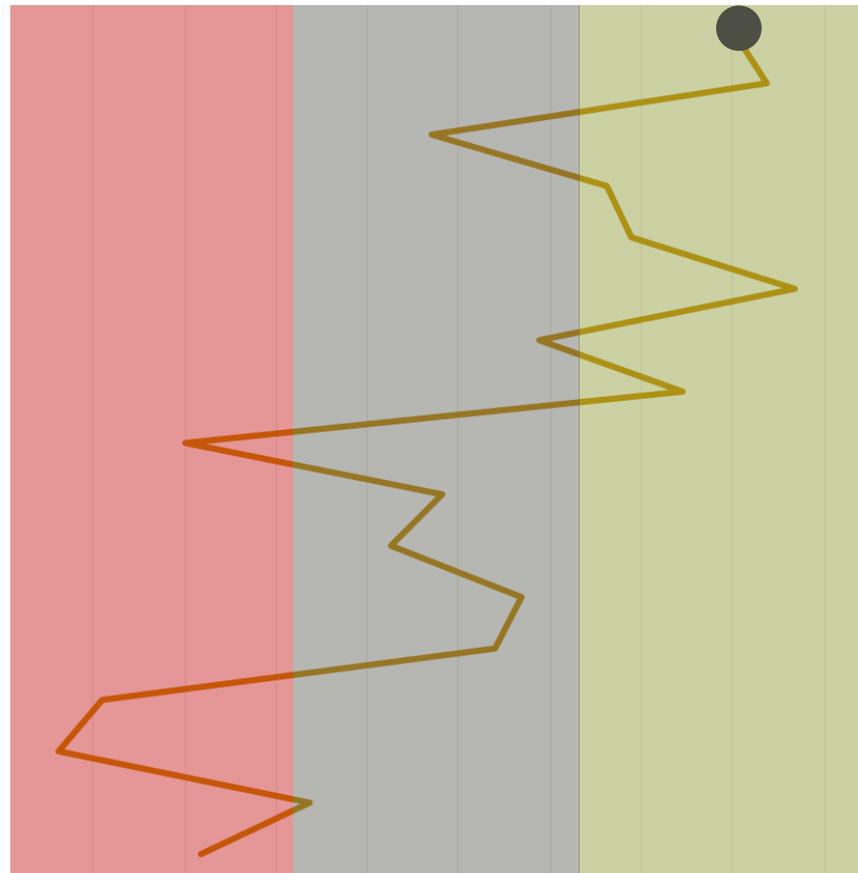
News topics

# Local storytelling already considered a public radio strength

## Public Radio as a Go-To

Interested, not enough, AND public radio would be good at providing

- Things happening in my city, town, or neighborhood
- Climate and environment
- Crime and public safety
- Science
- Housing and homelessness
- Social justice
- Global affairs
- Education
- Immigration
- Economy, business, and finance
- Technology
- Politics and government
- Weather
- Sports
- Real estate
- Transportation
- Traffic



Note: options only presented if selected as interested AND say there's not enough. Data filtered to include all respondents from the National sample and all local market general population samples identified as having "most" or "some" knowledge of public radio (n=7,456), based on open-text classification of responses to open-text question "What comes to mind when you hear 'public radio'".



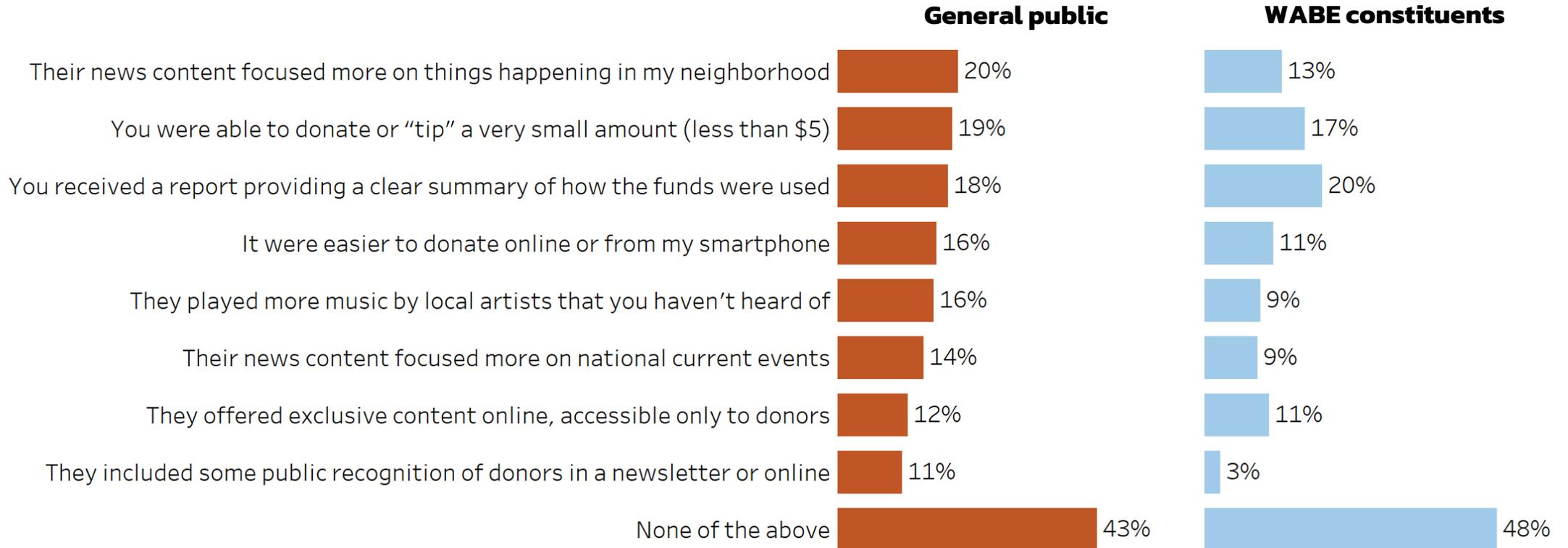
# Local content tops national news as a motivation to give

And a reminder of the differences between current membership and the general public

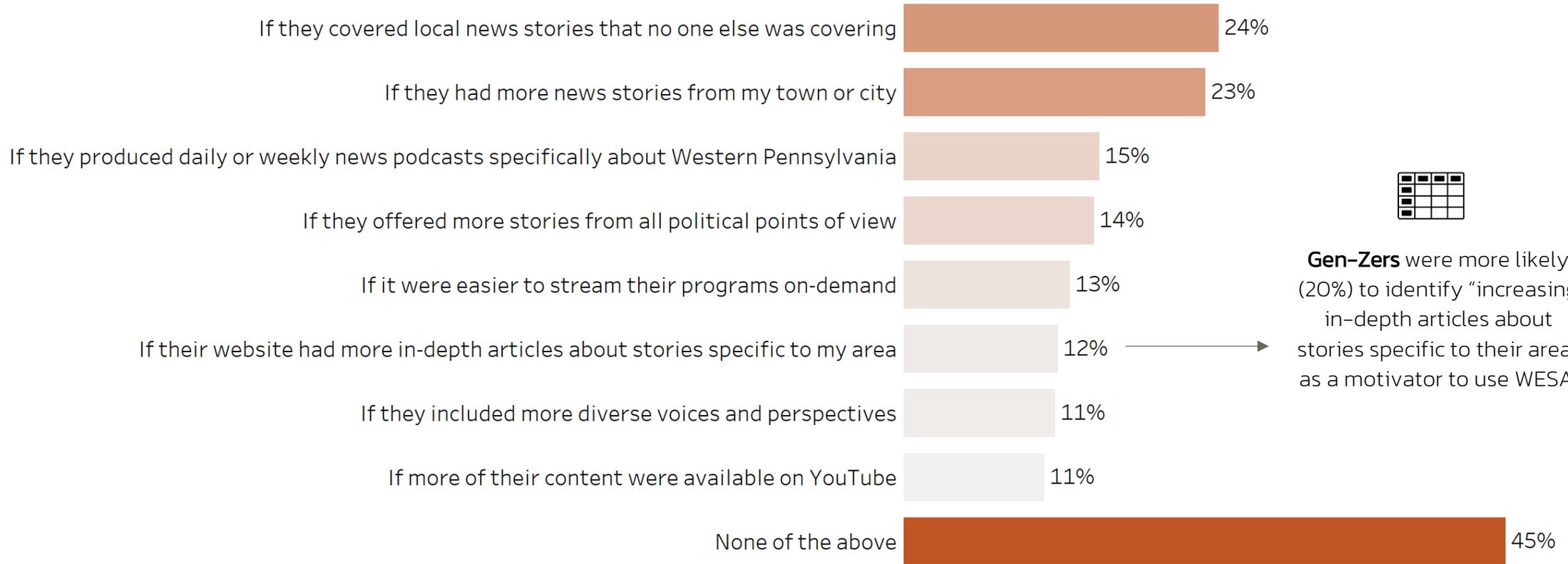
Custom Question

**WABE**

**Question text:** WABE is a non-commercial organization, meaning it relies largely on donations and contributions from listeners to bring you stories and news. Would you be any more likely to want to donate to WABE if...



# More *unique* local stories, more stories *about my own city or town* are potential drivers of increased usage



**Question text:** And which of the following would make you more likely to want to use WESA as a source for news and information? Select all that apply.

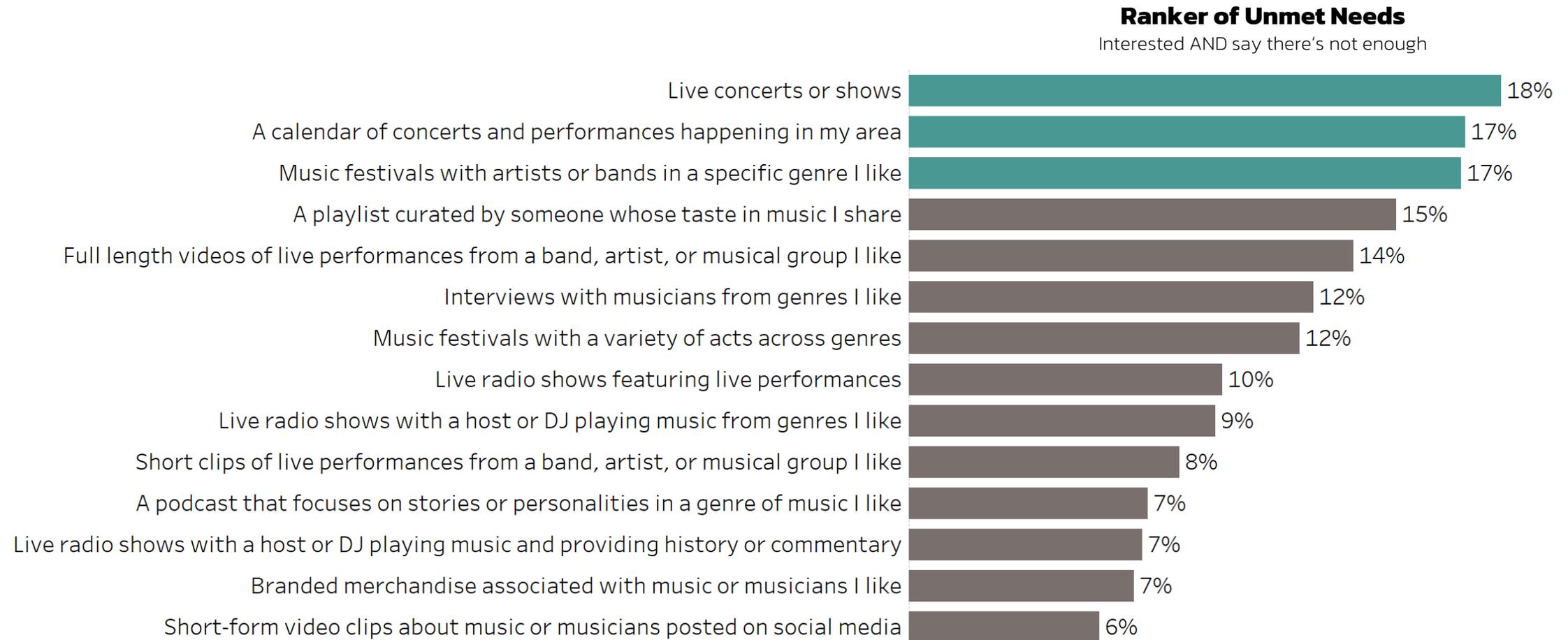


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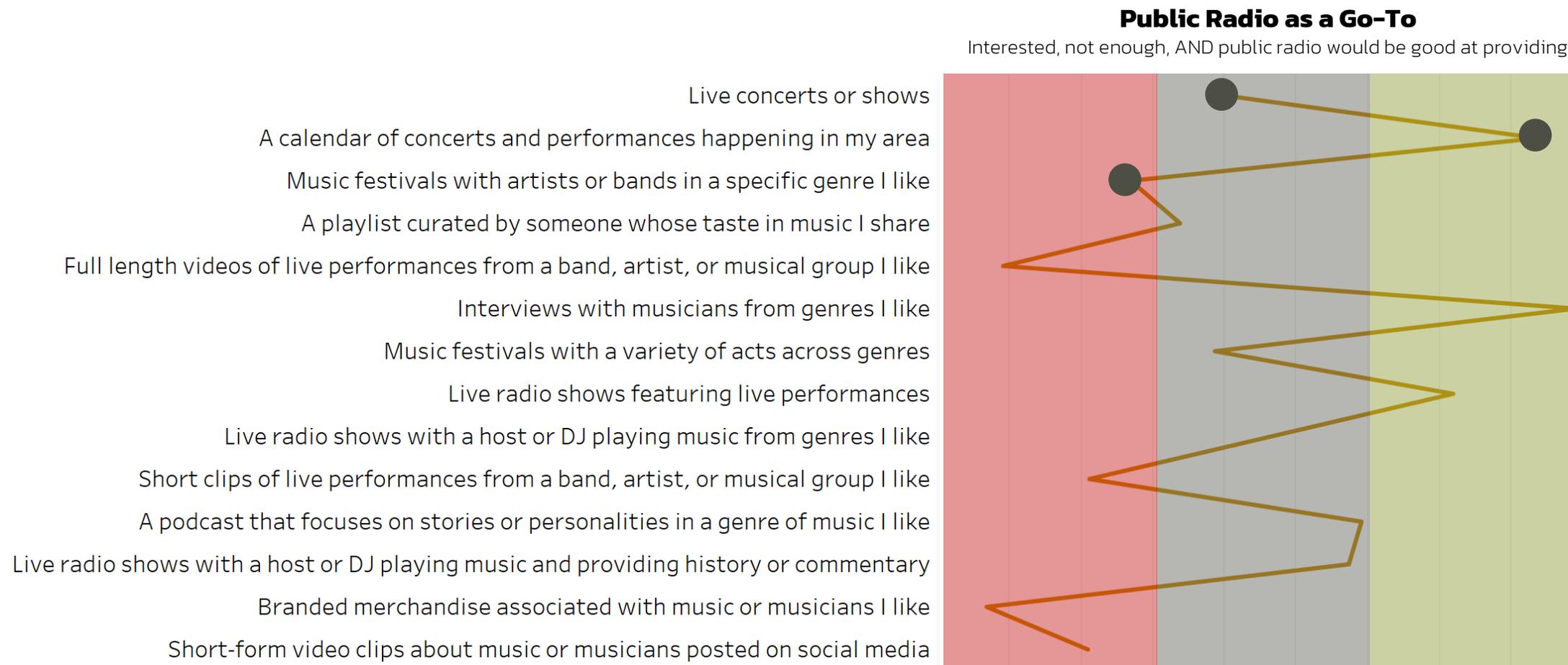
# The need for community connection and resilience



# The need for in-person connection is apparent in the music space, as live concerts & local calendars are the strongest unmet needs



# 🎵 Concert calendars already seen as a public radio strength, but work to be done in being known as a go-to for live concerts



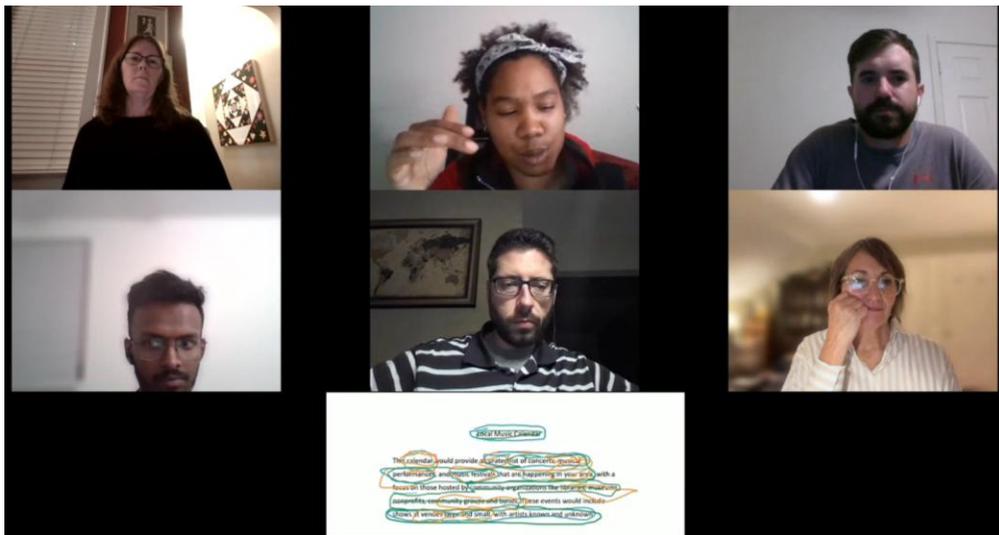
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## Local Music Calendar

This calendar would provide a curated list of concerts, musical performances, festivals, and community events that are happening in your area, with a focus on those hosted by community organizations like libraries, museums, nonprofits, community groups and bands. These events would include shows at venues large and small, with artists known and unknown.



“

I like that its curated, I would probably be **more likely to pay attention to an event that was promoted by public radio**, I'd at least give it a shot.

Kip, 64, Local Station Listener

“

I think it would be good on email because...you might be at work on a Thursday or Friday, and you see it pop up and, like, oh, let's go do this this weekend. This person's coming. **But you're not even thinking about that if it doesn't come up on your email.**

Jenny, 44, General Public

“

For me, I think it's more like, **community cultivating**. I would say that, it just depends on the venue and what type of genre or bands or, you know, artists they're pushing through there. But, ultimately, I will always wanna see people around the community.

Gavin, 33, General Public

“

I actually like that idea of creating a calendar that's like a curated list of upcoming events, because [I get] so sucked up in the pop culture sometimes, **I have a hard time figuring out what artist is coming to my city**, or coming to a city near me. I think this would be actually be a really good idea.

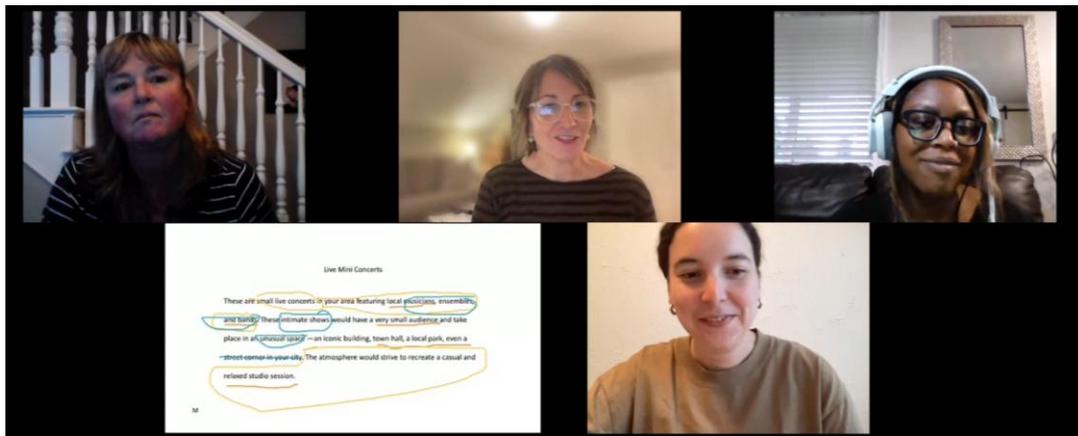
Randal, 24, General Public





## Live Mini Concerts

These are small live concerts in your area featuring local musicians, ensembles, and bands. These intimate shows would have a very small audience and take place in an unusual space —an iconic building, the town hall, a private garden, etc. —before an audience of fewer than 50 people. The atmosphere would strive to recreate a casual and relaxed studio session.



“

Let's say I was able to get a ticket to this, and its known to be a small intimate setting...I would use this as **a date night idea**, take my partner to spend an evening doing this

Cyril, 24, General Public

“

In my town, we have local bands play in a park by the water and it gets pretty popular...**it's really nice to see like, "wow our town has these great musicians"**...it'd be really cool to have more of that around the community

Kiana, 39, General Public

“

One of the reasons I like **Tiny Desks** so much is that I'm always very jealous of the people in the background.

Stu, 61, Local Station Listener

“

**I'm geeked up about the unusual space**...our city does that, three times a year when spaces that aren't normally open to the public have a kind of open doors day, and people flock. As long as the acoustics are good, it could be a real draw.

Connie, 58, Local Station Listener



Insights beyond RUN

# “Struggling Small Music Venues Battle Inflation for Affordable Prices”

BloomNews, November 23rd 2023

“Everything from basic supplies like beer and ice to essential insurance has become notably more expensive. Frank emphasized the limitations faced by these venues, lacking corporate safety nets and relying on limited resources.

The inflation-induced increase in overhead costs compounds the plight of these smaller venues. While larger establishments might absorb these hikes more quickly due to their scale and resources, **independent venues are facing a significant squeeze on their already tight margins.**”

Insights beyond RUN

# 'A death sentence for music': the battle for America's last Live Nation-free city

The Guardian, June 30<sup>th</sup> 2024

"Over the past several months, Live Nation has made significant inroads toward its first Portland conquest. It appears poised to operate a proposed 3,500-capacity venue, planned for a long-vacant site across the Willamette River from Portland's downtown.

'[It] would be a death sentence for the music scene,' says Colescott Rubin, a jazz bassist who got his start busking on streets and booking shows in Portland as a teen.

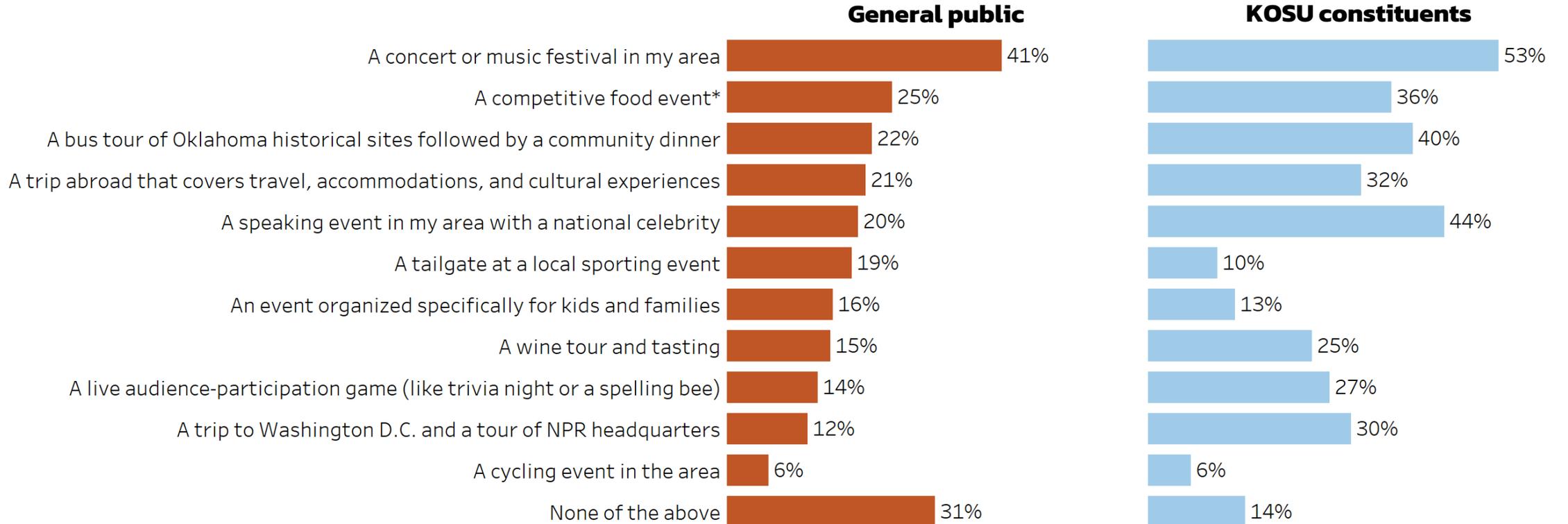
**The arrival of Live Nation, he and others in the city's music scene fear, would send Portland the way of cities such as Austin and Boston, where independent venues have shuttered and local journalists and musicians have lamented the corporatization of scenes that once felt organic and unstoppable."**

# More evidence of appetite for live concerts

Alongside other kinds of in-person community events



**Question text:** KOSU often hosts ticketed events or experiences located across Oklahoma and beyond. Which of these would you be interested in? Select all that apply.



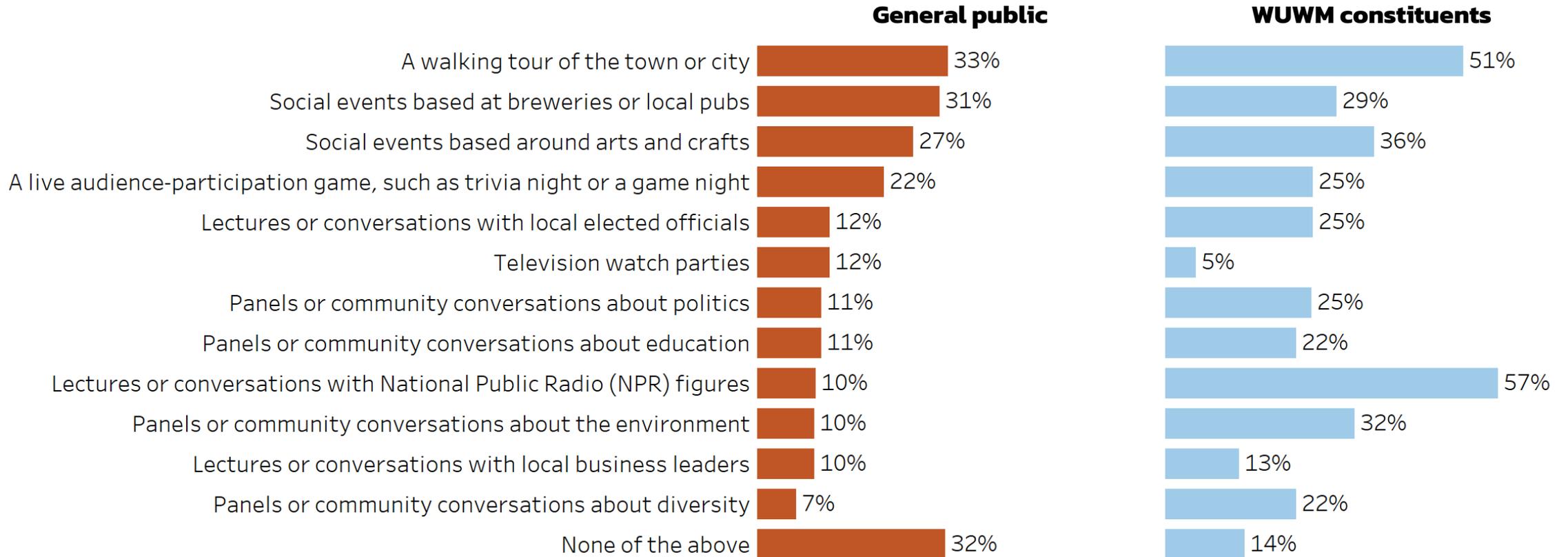
\*Described further in the survey as "A competitive food event that allows ticket holders to taste offerings from local chefs and vote on a winner (like a tournament for Oklahoma's Best Burger)"



# In a market like Milwaukee, appetite for other kinds of local connection is especially strong



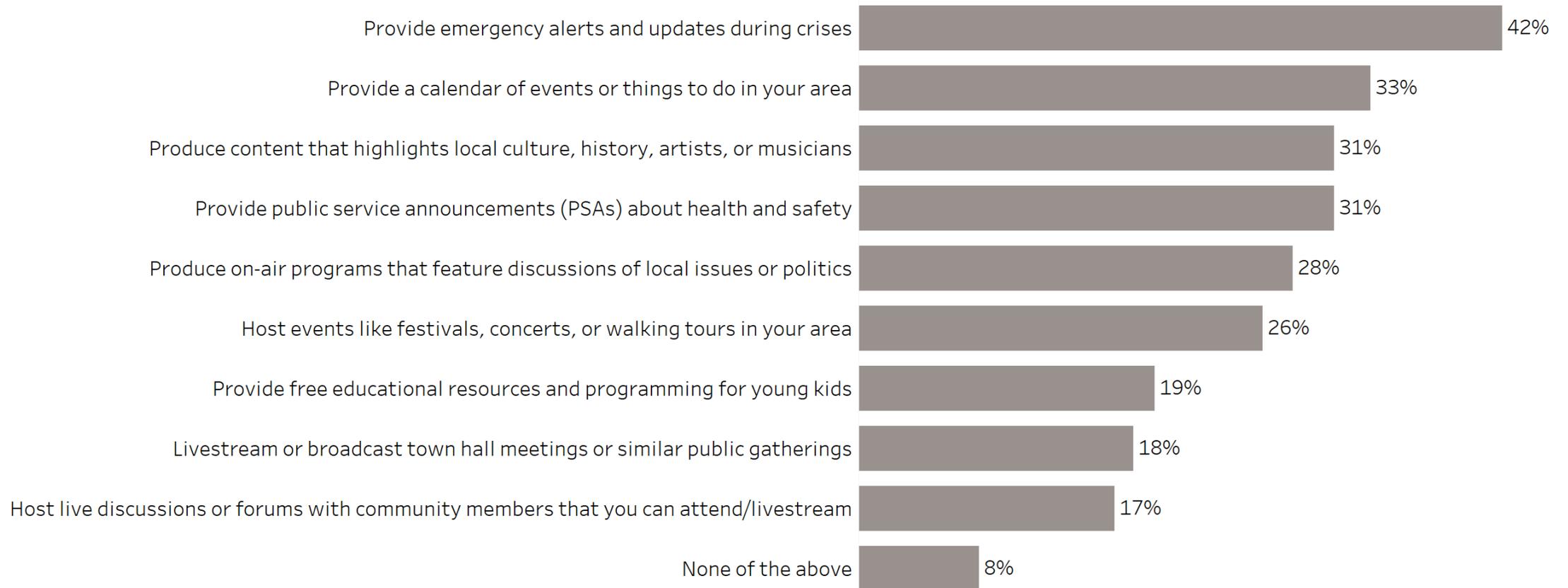
**Question text:** Below are some examples of local events that you might be able to attend in your community. Which of these—if any—would you consider paying for a ticket to attend? Select all that apply.



Valued services from public radio

# Public radio is most often valued as a source for emergency updates

**Question text:** Here's one last question about public radio. In addition to presenting news and music, sometimes public radio stations do other things in their communities. Which of these would you personally consider to be most valuable as a service from your local public radio stations? You may select UP TO THREE.



Valued services from public radio

## Updates during emergency situations is even more crucial for rural areas

	Rural	Less Urban	Urban
Provide emergency alerts and updates during crises	46%	44%	39%
Provide a calendar of events or things to do in your area	35%	35%	32%
Produce content that highlights local culture, history, artists, or musicians	28%	30%	33%
Provide public service announcements (PSAs) about health and safety	30%	33%	29%
Produce on-air programs that feature discussions of local issues or politics	25%	28%	30%
Host events like festivals, concerts, or walking tours in your area	26%	26%	27%
Provide free educational resources and programming for young kids	20%	19%	20%
Livestream or broadcast town hall meetings or similar public gatherings	17%	16%	20%
Host live discussions or forums with community members that you can attend/livestream	14%	15%	20%
None of the above	8%	8%	7%

Determined based on respondent zip codes and cross-referenced with Census data. Urban = 100% of census blocks in zip code are designated as "urban"; Less Urban = 50 – 99% of census blocks in zip code are designated as "urban"; Rural = 0 – 50% of census blocks in zip code are designated as "urban"



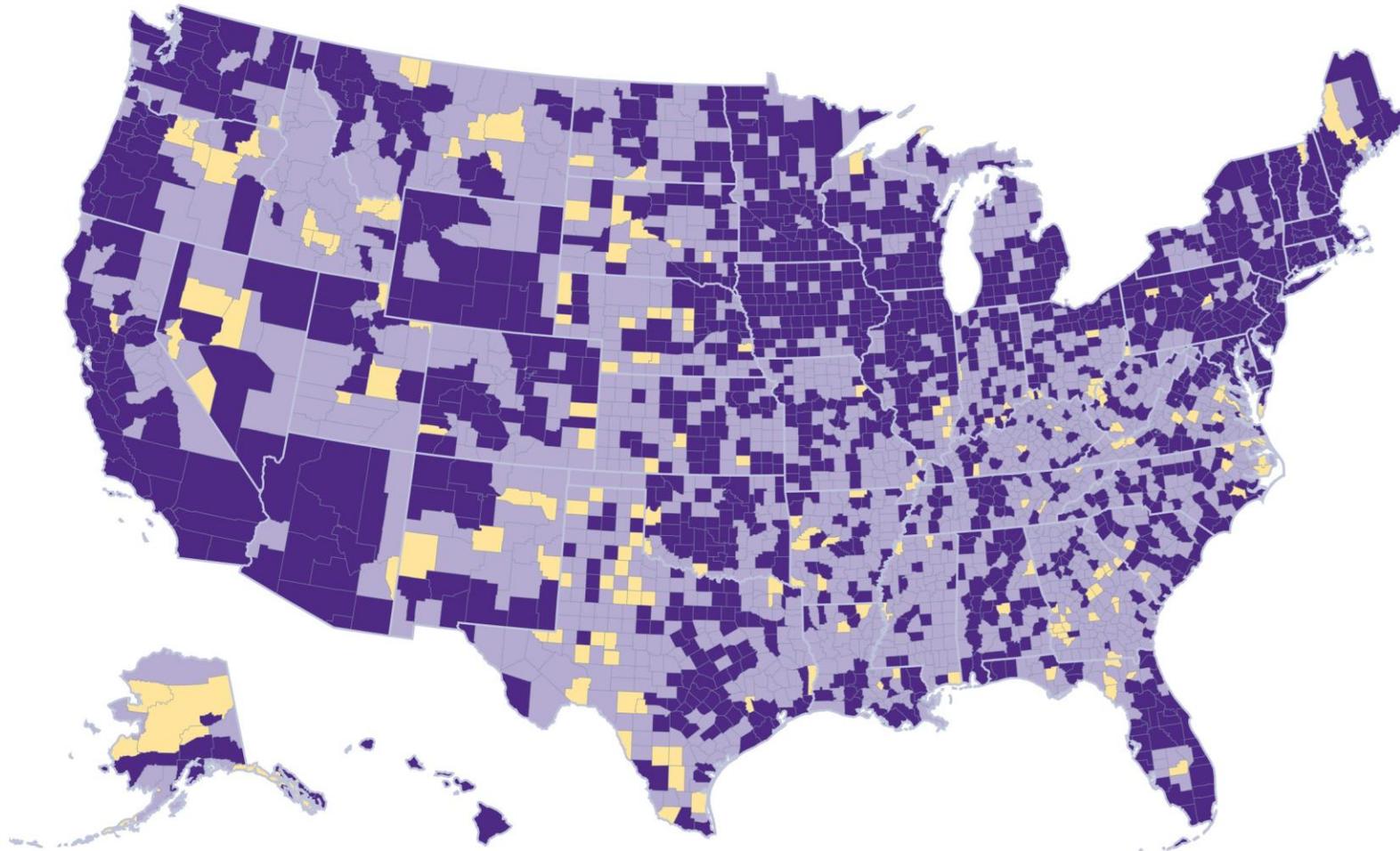
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# **A call for more in-depth journalism**



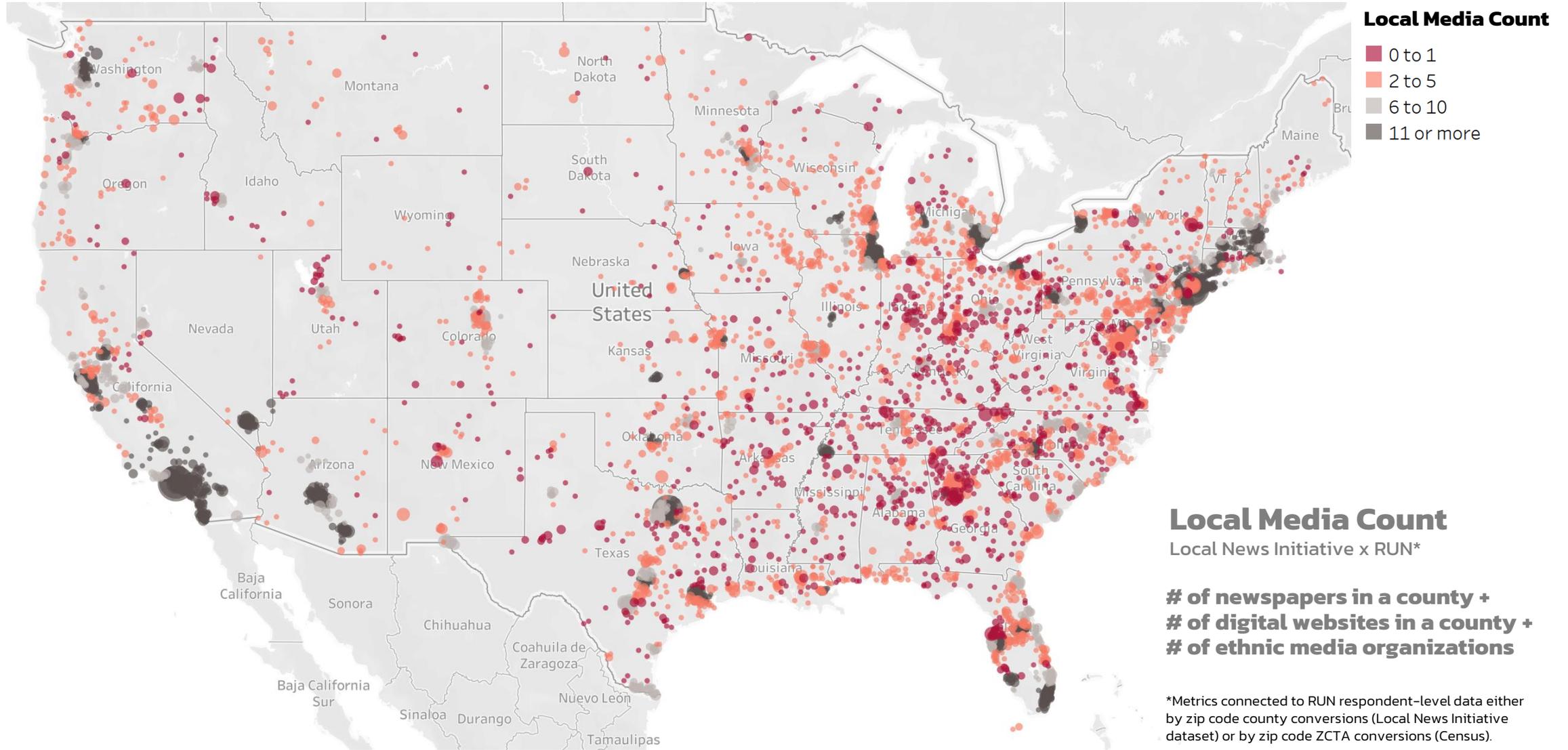
There are 201 counties in the United States with no news outlets. There are 1,563 counties with only one.

■ No news outlets   ■ 1 news outlet   ■ 2 or more news outlets



Northwestern | MEDILL  
**Local News Initiative**





Insights beyond RUN

# THE PUBLIC'S MEDIA: The Case for a Democratically Funded and Locally Rooted News Media in an Era of Newsroom Closures

"A mass extinction of local newspapers and local radio news occurred over the last twenty years. In many jurisdictions today, no investigative reporters are making document requests, combing over disclosures and filings, and reporting what their sleuthing turns up. Advertiser-financed local newsrooms have disappeared, leaving thousands of communities without any private, locally-financed news sources. **Ownership of private, for-profit media has become more and more concentrated, and the content they distribute is created far away from their listening and reading audiences, often with extreme ideological biases that reflect the views of their billionaire owners.**

These circumstances reflect failures of the private, for-profit media industry. However, it is unlikely that new regulation or a new business-model will reverse these trends any time soon. In fact, forty years of Republican-led deregulation and the dynamics of digital markets are partially responsible for this collapse."

Insights beyond RUN

# “Funding Democracy: Public Media and Democratic Health in 33 Countries”

We find five models of public media systems around the world, ranging from “state-administered” systems with low levels of independence (Botswana and Tunisia) to systems aligning with Hallin and Mancini’s “Democratic Corporatist” model, with strong and secure (multiyear) funding, large audience shares, and strong regulatory protection for their independence. In between, we identify three mixed models: a “Liberal-Pluralist” model, a “Direct Funding” model, and a “Commercial-Public” model.

Correlations and cluster analyses show that **high levels of secure funding for public media systems and strong structural protections for the political and economic independence of those systems are consistently and positively correlated with healthy democracies.**



Attitudes on news and information

## People understand and value the role of local journalism

“ Supporting local journalism is an important way to help preserve democracy.

**55%**

Agree or strongly agree

**32%**

Neutral

**12%**

Disagree or strongly disagree

Segments that were even more likely to agree or strongly agree:

- **Affluent households\*** (66%)
- **Men** (60%)
- **Millennials** (58%) and **Baby Boomers** (58%)
- **Urban residents** (58%)
- People who identify as **somewhat liberal** (68%) or **very liberal** (75%)
- People with **graduate degrees** (71%)

**Question text:** Here are some statements about news and music. Using the scale below, please rate your level of agreement with each of them.

\*Households with annual income over \$200,000

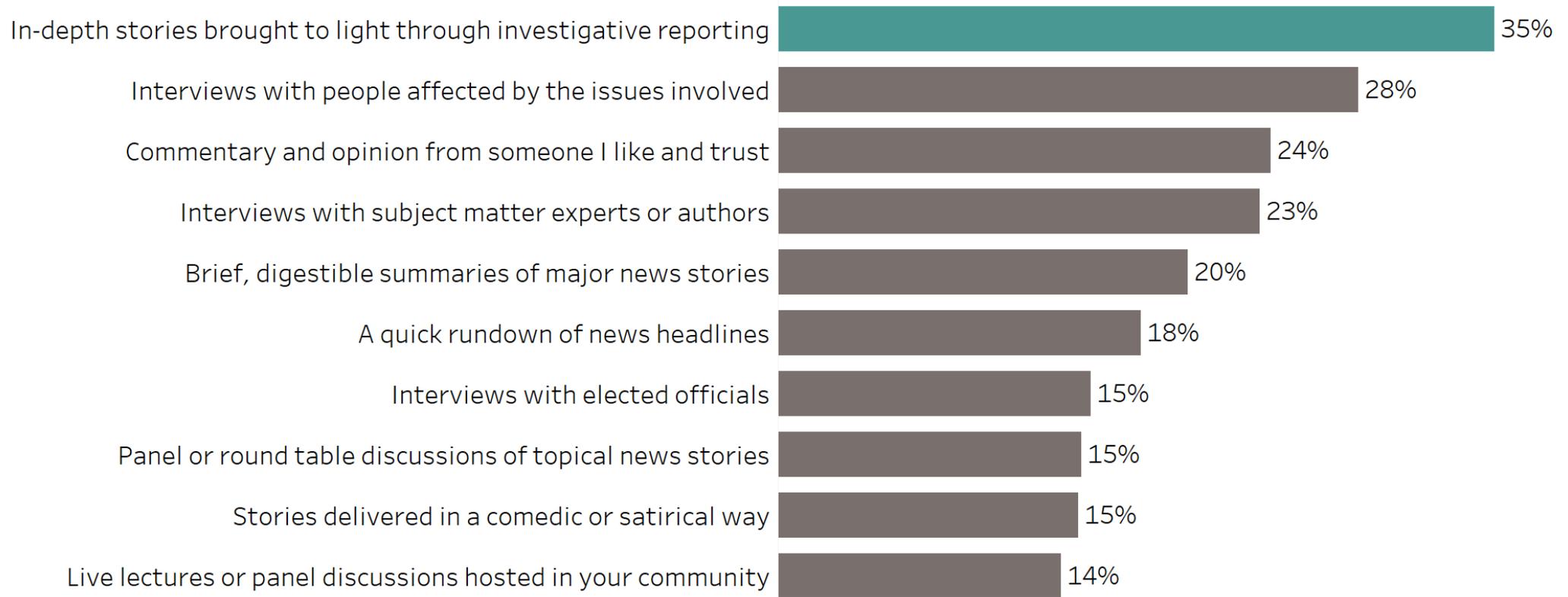


Kinds of news

 **In-depth investigative journalism far exceeds other formats as an unmet need across the country**

**Ranker of Unmet Needs**

Interested\* AND say "I wish there was more of this"



\*Defined as having provided a rating of 6 or 7 on a 7-point scale, where 1 is "not at all" drawn to this format, and 7 is "very much so."





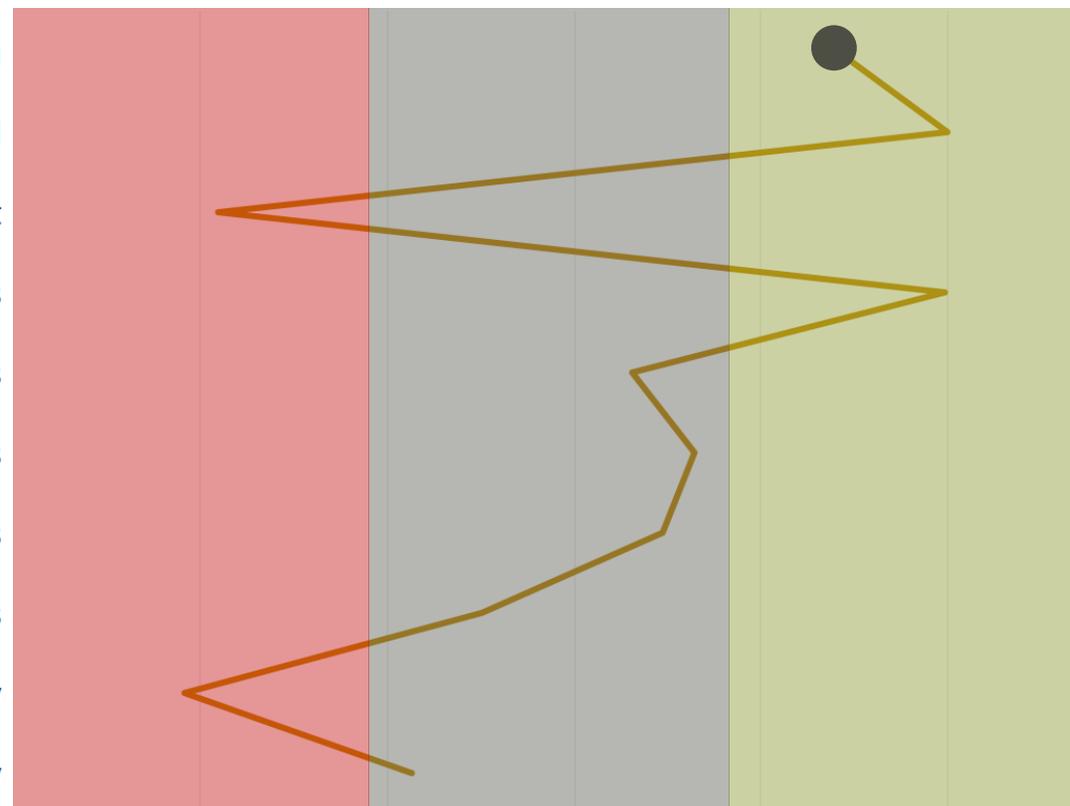
Kinds of news

# And again, public radio already positioned to deliver on this

## Public Radio as a Go-To

Interested, wish there was more, AND public radio would be good at providing

- In-depth stories brought to light through investigative reporting
- Interviews with people affected by the issues involved
- Commentary and opinion from someone I like and trust
- Interviews with subject matter experts or authors
- Brief, digestible summaries of major news stories
- A quick rundown of news headlines
- Interviews with elected officials
- Panel or round table discussions of topical news stories
- Stories delivered in a comedic or satirical way
- Live lectures or panel discussions hosted in your community



Note: options only presented if selected as interested AND say there's not enough. Data filtered to include all respondents from the National sample and all local market general population samples identified as having "most" or "some" knowledge of public radio (n=7,456), based on open-text classification of responses to open-text question "What comes to mind when you hear 'public radio'".



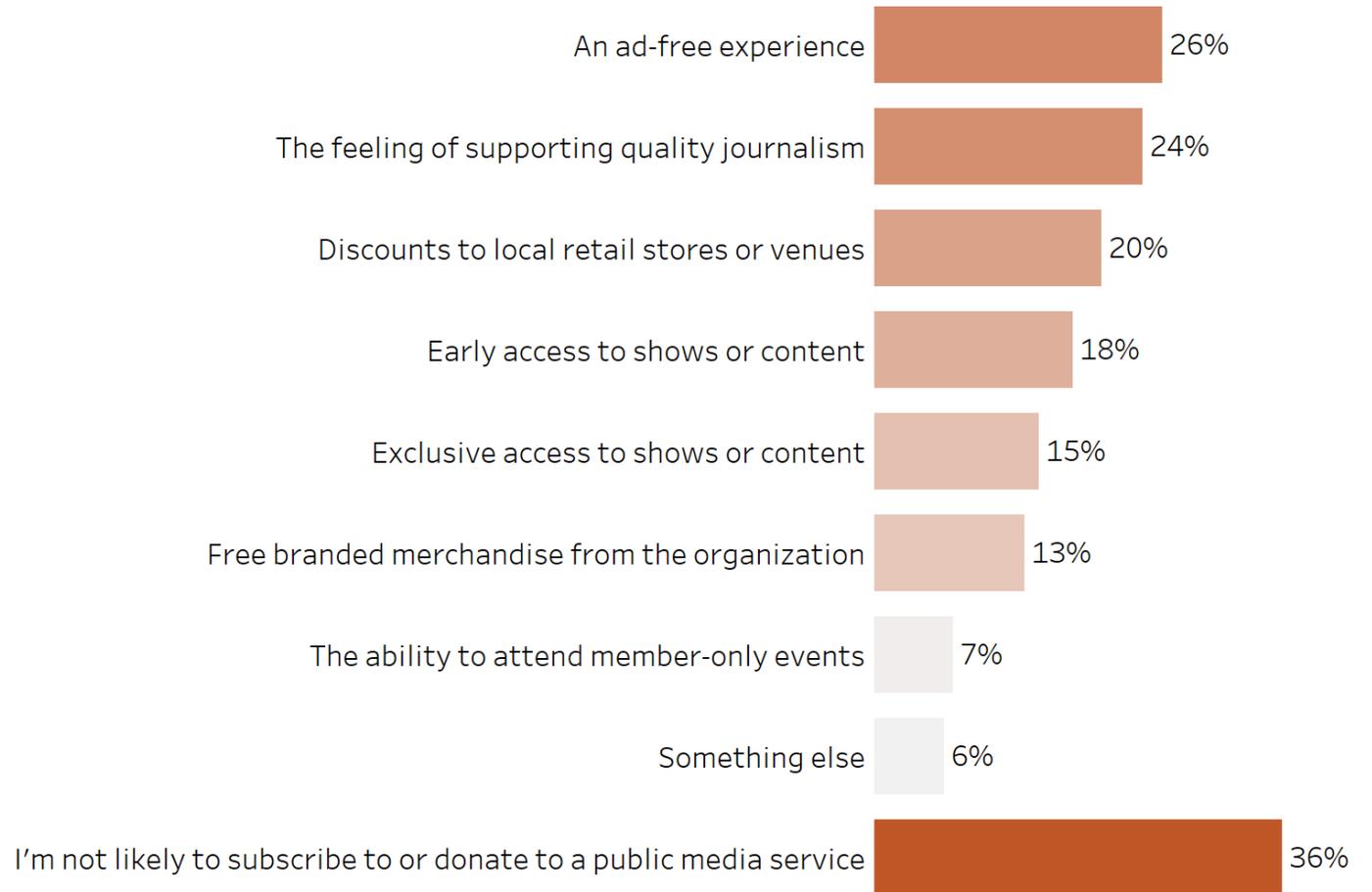


# In Nebraska, supporting quality journalism is a motivator to give

**Question text:**

As a public media organization, Nebraska Public Media is publicly funded, meaning it relies on donations from local residents, viewers, and listeners.

Which of the following benefits—if any—would most motivate you to donate to them?



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# Continuing your multi-platform evolution





Likelihood of Using News Formats

# Radio in the middle tier of platforms used for news; TV is resilient

TV news programs	5.4
Documentaries	5.1
Websites with headlines and articles	5.0
YouTube videos	4.7
Mobile apps with headlines and articles	4.6
Headlines or articles on social media	4.5
Short videos on social media	4.5
Books	4.3
Printed newspapers or magazines	4.2
Radio news programs	4.2
Podcasts	4.0
Email newsletters	3.9
Blogs	3.5
Call in radio shows	3.4

## Likelihood to use each method for news and current events information

Mean Score on 7-point scale

1 = Not at all Likely | 7 = Very Likely





Likelihood of Using News Formats

**But among younger residents, digital platforms dominate**

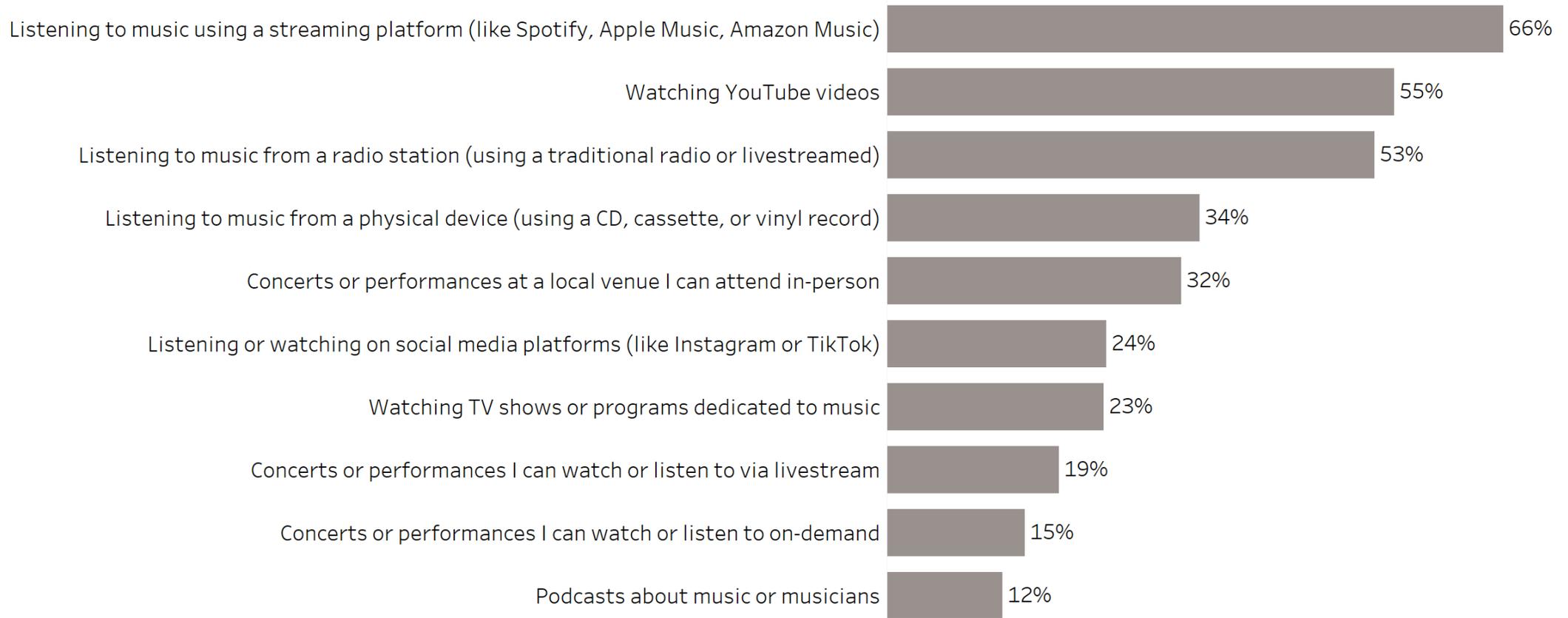
Mean Score on 7-point scale  
1 = Not at all Likely | 7 = Very Likely

	Gen Z	Millennial	Gen X	Baby Boomer
Short videos on social media	5.5	5.4	4.7	3.3
YouTube videos	5.5	5.4	4.8	3.6
Headlines or articles on social media	5.3	5.3	4.8	3.4
Documentaries	5.1	5.4	5.2	4.9
TV news programs	4.9	5.2	5.5	5.7
Mobile apps with headlines and articles	4.8	5.2	4.8	3.8
Websites with headlines and articles	4.8	5.3	5.1	4.7
Podcasts	4.8	4.9	4.1	2.9
Books	4.3	4.7	4.3	3.9
Blogs	4.0	4.3	3.5	2.5
Radio news programs	3.9	4.5	4.4	3.9
Email newsletters	3.8	4.2	4.0	3.6
Printed newspapers or magazines	3.7	4.4	4.2	4.1
Call in radio shows	3.5	4.0	3.5	2.7



Preferences for listening to music

# Streaming is the most preferred method for listening to music



Question text: How do you prefer to listen to music or music-related content? Select all that apply.



“ In the mornings, I tend to throw on **Apple Music** that has my name’s station, which is a daily playlist that refreshes every day. I’ve been using it for a couple months [after I switched from Spotify], so I feel like **the algorithm has tuned its taste** to what I find good.

Cyril, 24

General Public



“ Everyday when I drop my teen off at school, we listen to just the **Top 40 radio station**, we're big sing-along people. And then at the office, if I have a day when I'm doing a lot of typing or a lot of computer stuff, then I put on a **YouTube playlist**.

And then at home, when we are getting ready for dinner or when I'm doing laundry or anything, any kind of housework, we **ask Alexa** for a specific playlist...if my husband's cooking Italian, he puts on **cheesy Italian restaurant music**.

Isabel, 51

General Public



“ Right when I wake up, I’ll usually listen on my phone with my AirPods. I listen to **Spotify** usually. When I’m grocery shopping or running or going on a walk, I’ll do the same thing.

If I’m in the car, I’ll usually just listen to the **traditional radio in the car.**

Madeline, 33

General Public





Preferences for listening to music

## Some segment-based differences: **Generation and Income**

	Gen Z	Millennial	Gen X	Boomer	Less than \$50,000	\$50,000 to \$99,999	\$100,000 to \$149,999	\$150,000 to \$199,999	\$200,000 or more
Listening to music using a streaming platform	79%	79%	68%	47%	64%	66%	71%	73%	70%
Watching YouTube videos	56%	64%	59%	41%	62%	53%	49%	46%	39%
Listening to music from a radio station	29%	47%	58%	64%	52%	53%	55%	51%	51%
Listening to music from a physical device	26%	30%	33%	41%	34%	33%	34%	36%	33%
Concerts or performances at a local venue I can attend in-person	27%	33%	32%	32%	28%	34%	35%	35%	33%
Listening or watching on social media platforms	44%	34%	21%	7%	23%	22%	25%	30%	27%
Watching TV shows or programs dedicated to music	17%	24%	23%	25%	23%	22%	24%	28%	27%
Concerts or performances I can watch or listen to via livestream	15%	21%	20%	17%	18%	18%	20%	24%	21%
Concerts or performances I can watch or listen to on-demand	10%	14%	16%	18%	14%	15%	14%	19%	15%
Podcasts about music or musicians	13%	19%	13%	6%	11%	11%	16%	17%	18%

**Question text:** How do you prefer to listen to music or music-related content? Select all that apply.



# Parting takeaways

- You're well positioned to **fill the void in local communities** left by news deserts & closing music venues
- Fundraise around **service** as much as content
- Fundraise around **local storytelling**
- Fundraise around **the opportunity to reach new, younger audiences on the platforms they use**
- Overall, build a development strategy that focuses on **building communities**, not just audiences

**Questions?**



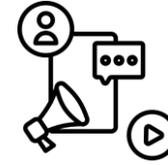
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# Coming Up Next



## Marketing

Telling Our Story, Reaching  
People Where They're At

**Webinar: Monday, June 9**



Special Guest:  
**Briana O'Higgins**  
Greater Public

# ABOUT US

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City Square Associates is a marketing research and strategic consulting practice that utilizes a variety of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies to obtain and apply consumer insight.

For twenty-five years we've partnered with a broad range of clients, including major media companies, renowned educational and cultural institutions, leaders in the medical and life sciences field, as well as non-profits and community-based organizations.

In all that we do, we endeavor to transform data into meaning and meaning into action



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