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# Local news and audiences' wellbeing: the roles of motivation, satisfaction, and trust

Sora Park <sup>a</sup>, Jee Young Lee <sup>a</sup>, Sonia Curl <sup>a</sup>, Caroline Fisher <sup>a</sup>,  
Kerry McCallum <sup>a</sup>, Paul Tyrrell<sup>b</sup>, Lisa Levesque<sup>b</sup> and Alex Mihalovich<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>News & Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, Canberra, Australia; <sup>b</sup>Australian Community Media, Melbourne, Australia

## ABSTRACT

Local news plays an important role in generating a sense of community attachment. However, the relationship between local news and wellbeing is less explored. Based on a national survey of 6,367 Australians, this study found that trust in and satisfaction with local news were linked with higher personal and community wellbeing. News-related factors (motivation, satisfaction, trust) were more strongly related to community wellbeing than to personal wellbeing. Accessing local news for community-related reasons was the strongest predictor of wellbeing. Guided by uses and gratifications theory, this study provides new insights into the role of local news in peoples' lives, and emphasises the need to protect local news from further decline.

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## KEYWORDS

News motivation; local news; wellbeing; community connectedness; news audiences

The number of communities without reliable sources of local news is growing (e.g. Abernathy, 2022; Barclay, Moore, & Townend, 2022; Dickson, 2022). The decline of local news provision has led to concerns about a range of issues, including misinformation filling the news gaps, lack of local knowledge leading to apathy and disengagement with the community, and negative impacts on community attachment (Bucay, Elliott, Kamin, & Park, 2017; Mathews, 2020; Mathews & Ali, 2022; Park, Lee, & Fisher, 2023; Park et al., 2020; Thompson, 2021). In this study, we explore the relationship between local news and audiences' wellbeing, to add to the breadth of knowledge about the significance of local news in society.

The benefits of news to local communities have been studied extensively, including how it can enhance civic knowledge and engagement (Shah, McLeod, & Yoon, 2001; Wadbring & Bergström, 2017) and strengthen democracy (Barthel, Holcomb, Mahone, & Mitchell, 2016; Simons & Bosland, 2019). Local news is not only an important source of information for citizens, but also a medium for people to engage with current issues that are relevant to their community (Mathews, 2020). Studies conducted in the mass media era showed that reading the newspaper was significantly related to audiences' feelings of

**CONTACT** Sora Park  [sora.park@canberra.edu.au](mailto:sora.park@canberra.edu.au)

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community attachment and involvement (Bowd, 2007; Rothenbuhler, Mullen, DeLaurell, & Ryu, 1996).

The accelerating closures of news outlets have created what are commonly referred to as ‘news deserts’ (Abernathy, 2022; Gulyas, Jenkins, & Bergström, 2023). This phenomenon has renewed interest in how gaps in the provision of local news might weaken community ties and reduce political accountability (Ferrier, Sinha, & Outrich, 2016; Magasic, Hess, & Freeman, 2023). However, few studies have explored how news deserts might also pose a threat to citizens’ personal and community wellbeing.

Wellbeing is a key indicator of health that encompasses physical and mental health, cognitive functioning, and material and social wellbeing (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2021). Wellbeing measures reflect a person’s subjective wellbeing, such as life satisfaction and mood, as well as aspects of psychological wellbeing (Dodge, Daly, Huyton, & Sanders, 2012). A key component of psychological wellbeing is a sense of connectedness to others and the community. Social connectedness is seen as a ‘key contributor to overall quality of life and important for health and wellbeing’ (Rogers & Mitzner, 2017, p. 135). Here, we examine wellbeing in the context of both personal wellbeing and community connectedness.

There is a strand of research in media studies that shows media use can be related to audiences’ wellbeing (Hofer & Eden, 2020; Ljuslinder & Lundgren, 2017; van der Goot et al., 2015). However, many of these studies apply a broad definition of ‘media’ and focus primarily on entertainment rather than on news. Guided by uses and gratifications theory, this study expands on these approaches by examining how local news factors relate to audiences’ personal and community wellbeing, linking these concepts to audiences’ motivations, news consumption, satisfaction and trust. We propose that local news can play an important role in individuals’ lives by helping them to stay informed and giving them confidence to participate in economic, social, and political activities. At a time of industry decline and shifting audiences, this study offers important insights for policy makers and news organisations to consider in their deliberations about the future of local news.

## **The role of local news for individuals and community**

At the community level, studies have found a strong link between local news and audiences’ community attachment and sense of belonging (see Friedland, 2001; Rothenbuhler, 1991; Rothenbuhler, Mullen, DeLaurell, & Ryu, 1996; Shah, 1998). Community attachment is an identification with the community combined with an affective tie and refers to the feeling of being part of a community. Sense of belonging is an important element of community attachment that is associated with positive emotions (Leonard, Stevens, & Light, 2016). People feel they belong to their local area based on their interactions with neighbours, involvement in local organisations, and the belief that they have influence over what happens in their community.

Studies in the mass media era have shown that newspaper reading is significantly related to community attachment and involvement (Rothenbuhler, Mullen, DeLaurell, & Ryu, 1996). Accordingly, local news media play a vital role in strengthening community ties. However, to date there is limited evidence of how this is playing out in the context of

the significant changes that are occurring in the news sector, where local news is rapidly on the decline.

Empirical evidence supports the usefulness of separating local from national news consumption. Consumption of local content (i.e. information about and produced for local areas) has been found to be particularly important for fostering community participation (McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999). Local news plays an important role in community integration because it is through local media that members learn about their community. Friedland (2001) found audiences conceive of the community as a representative body by consuming local stories together. Hess, Waller, and Lai (2022) study on ‘willing’ audiences of local newspapers found that a strong demand for information helps audiences socially connect with others and generate a sense of community.

Studies indicate that trust in local news is often greater than trust in national news (Park, Fisher, & Lee, 2020; Pew Research Center, 2019). This may explain why local news often acts as a pathway to strengthening relationships between the media and local communities (Stearns, 2018). Likewise, when trust in local media is absent, it can be a barrier to local discourse (Wenzel & Crittenden, 2021). Research has found connections between trust in local news and political participation (Fennema & Tillie, 1999), and between trust and community participation, such as volunteering or donating (Miranti & Evans, 2019). This potential link between local news and wellbeing is an under-researched aspect of local news studies that deserves further exploration.

## Wellbeing in the context of local news

Uses and gratifications (U&G) theory provides a useful framework for understanding the relationship between individual media use and wellbeing. U&G theory contends that audiences make a conscious decision in selecting and consuming media based on their individual needs and interests (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973, 1974; Rubin, 2009). According to this approach, audiences see media as a tool to gratify their social and psychological needs, such as information, entertainment, or social connection (e.g. Diddi & LaRose, 2006). Researchers have extensively adopted the U&G framework to interpret the main motives that drive media users and to ascertain the consequences of the interaction between motives, needs, and media use (Riskos, Hatzithomas, Dekoulou, & Tsourvakas, 2022). These motives and outcomes can also be applied specifically to news media.

For example, many studies have drawn on U&G theory to examine the motivations for news use. The motivation to be informed is a strong predictor of news consumption behaviours (Lee & Chyi, 2014). Studies also find that audiences use news for its social values or interpersonal utilities (Chan, 2015), to fulfil their needs to talk about news with others, and to appear informed (Lee, 2013), while others consume news to ease boredom and satisfy their daily routines (Flavián & Gurrea, 2009; Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985).

U&G propositions have been applied to understand a wide range of news audience behaviours and outcomes, such as news sharing (Segado-Boj, Díaz-Campo, & Navarro-Sierra, 2020), use of news aggregators (Lee & Chyi, 2015), and willingness to pay for online news content (Chyi & Yang, 2009). Gulyas, O’Hara, and Eilenberg (2019) argue that audience perceptions of news should be studied alongside

motivations for, and practices of, news engagement and consumption to gain a comprehensive understanding of audiences in the evolving news environment. In this study, we draw on U&G theory to understand how local news audiences' perceptions of trust, satisfaction, and motivations for accessing local news are related to their individual and community wellbeing.

The relationship between media use and an individual's wellbeing is most often studied in the context of entertainment media (Reinecke & Oliver, 2016). More recent research has also explored wellbeing in the context of networked media, such as social media (Hefner, Knop, & Vorderer, 2018; O'Connell, 2020; Steele, Hall, & Christofferson, 2020; Vorderer, Krömer, & Schneider, 2016). Studies investigating the effects of digital shutdowns have shown that limiting access to news and communication can generate anxiety (Ang, Tekwani, & Wang, 2012; Wagner, 2018). This may be particularly relevant in threatening situations, where people are often motivated to seek information for the purpose of alleviating their anxiety.

A few studies link news consumption to positive wellbeing outcomes. For example, Fisher, Park, Lee, Holland, and John (2021) found that older people felt isolated when they did not have access to news. This was especially true for those who spent a lot of time alone and accessed news more often. By accessing news more regularly, they were able to reduce feelings of isolation. Similarly, a study of older people by Ljuslinder and Lundgren (2017) found that social habits were crucial in the practice of obtaining information from the news media. Keeping up with news was an important part of their social practice as it was a salient topic of conversation with neighbours. They also found that older citizens were also often driven by a sense of obligation as a citizen to update themselves about the world around them.

Park, Fisher, Lee, and McGuinness (2020) found that news about COVID-19 pandemic helped reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation during social distancing restrictions and provided an important source of information to share with friends, family, and colleagues, particularly for people living on their own. Together, these findings suggest that news consumption may play a role in preventing social isolation and promoting personal and community wellbeing, especially among older people (Hofer, 2017).

On the other hand, news media consumption has also been linked to negative moods and avoidance. Studies have shown news can increase anxiety through a steady stream of exposure to negative events (Bodas, Siman-Tov, Peleg, & Solomon, 2015). While there were benefits of being informed with local health information during the COVID-19 pandemic, Park, Fisher, Lee, and McGuinness (2020) found more than half of Australian news consumers experienced increased anxiety in response to the volume of news about the negative health and economic impacts of the pandemic. Nabi and Prestin (2017) suggest that while access to information may empower users and positively influence their psychological and social wellbeing, frustration or heightened anxiety from the overwhelming amount of information may negatively impact their wellbeing. Trepte and Scharkow (2017) suggested important links between media use, social capital (the infrastructure where people can connect and engage), social support (the exchange of emotional, instrumental, or informational support), and the wellbeing of individuals. They concluded that rather than a unidirectional causal relationship, these concepts influence each other, further highlighting the potential

complexity of the links between news consumption, individual, and community wellbeing.

### **Current study**

There are few studies that directly link the wellbeing of audiences at an individual and community-level to local news consumption. To address this research gap, this study explored the relationship between an individual's personal and community wellbeing to local news. We established the following research questions:

- (1) What are the local news factors (consumption, satisfaction, motivation, and trust) that influence perceptions of personal wellbeing of news consumers?
- (2) What are the local news factors (consumption, satisfaction, motivation, and trust) that influence perceptions of community wellbeing of news consumers?

## **Method**

### **Data collection**

The study is based on a survey of  $N = 6,367$  Australian adults conducted by McNair yellowSquares using an online questionnaire in March to May 2022. We set a quota for age and gender based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics Census 2016 and applied weight on the final sample to reflect the general population based on age and gender. The final sample consisted of 49% male and 51% female. The average age was 47 years. Half of the respondents (51%) lived in regional or remote areas and half (49%) in major cities (Table 1). The study was approved by the Human Ethics Committee at the lead author's institution (No. 202211541).

**Table 1.** Respondents' Characteristics.

Characteristic		<i>n</i>	%
Gender*	Male	3,104	49
	Female	3,263	51
Age Group	18–24	750	12
	25–34	1,178	19
	35–44	1,101	17
	45–54	1,087	17
	55–64	963	15
	65–74	895	14
	75+	392	6
Location	Major cities	3142	49
	Regional or remote area	3225	51
Total		6,367	100

Gender was measured as a binary variable.

## Measures

### Personal wellbeing

To measure personal wellbeing, we used the Personal Wellbeing Index developed by the International Wellbeing Group (2013), which is a reliable and valid measure of personal wellbeing commonly used in population-based studies. An index score was calculated based on the mean score of seven items assessing satisfaction with various areas of personal life (health, personal relationships, safety, standard of living, achievement, community belonging, and financial security). In a modification from the original instrument, we used financial situation instead of future security. Index scores range from 0 to 10, with higher scores indicating higher life satisfaction ( $\alpha = 0.90$ ). We used this variable as a proxy for personal wellbeing.

### Community wellbeing

To measure community wellbeing, we drew on the Community Wellbeing Index (Schirmer, Yabsley, Mylek, & Peel, 2016). We calculated a community wellbeing index based on the average score of seven items used to assess community wellbeing, connectedness and belonging. The items used in the survey are: 'my community is a great place to live', 'my community copes pretty well when faced with challenges', 'I would recommend my community to others as a good place to live', 'my community has a bright future', 'there's good community spirit around here', 'I feel welcome here', and 'people in my community help each other when times are tough'. We also gave respondents an option, 'don't know' and excluded them from the analysis. Index scores range from 1 to 7, with higher scores indicating higher community wellbeing ( $\alpha = 0.92$ ). We used this variable as a proxy for community wellbeing.

### Local news motivation

Adapting the uses and gratifications theory, we asked respondents about their motivations to consume local news. We asked how much respondents agree with nine statements on a five-point Likert type scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. The statements were: 'I want to know what is going on in my local area', 'I want to understand things that might affect me', 'It helps me feel connected to my community', 'I like to talk with others about local news', 'To support local businesses and the local community', 'I feel I have a duty as citizen to stay informed', 'It is a part of my daily habits', 'It is a good way to pass the time', and 'I am interested in stories and information about my local community'. As local news is found to be related to community connectedness (Park, Fisher, & Lee, 2020), we included community related motivations to consume local news in the questions. A factor analysis was conducted to reduce the items into three types of local news motivation (Appendix A1.). The three factors were labelled as follows: community related motivation (community), information seeking motivation (information) and habitual motivation (habitual). The means of the scales in each component were used as variables (community motivation  $M = 3.77$ , information motivation  $M = 4.20$ , habitual motivation  $M = 3.63$ ).



### ***Satisfaction with local news***

This variable is based on the average score of three items used to assess satisfaction with local news services (quality of local news reporting, relevance to my local community and overall amount of news available). We asked the level of satisfaction on a four-point scale, ranging from 1 to 4, with higher scores indicating higher satisfaction. We adapted measures from Park, Fisher, and Lee (2020). Cronbach's alpha of .86 indicates that this scale is reliable.

### ***Trust in local news***

Trust in local news was measured on a five-point Likert type scale ranging from *don't trust at all* to *trust a lot*. Those who answered 'don't know' were removed from the analysis. We included both online news and print newspapers in the trust measure.

### ***Local news use***

Respondents were given a list of local news sources (TV, print, radio, online news, social media, podcast, magazines, talking to others) and asked to select the ones they had used in the last week as a source of local news. Respondents who chose any of these sources were categorised as 'users' (coded as 1), while those who did not select any were categorised as 'non-users' (coded as 0).

### ***Demographics***

The numeric value of age, and gender dummy (male = 1; female = 0) were included as variables. We also included a location variable (major cities = 1; regional or remote areas = 0) in the analysis. These demographic variables were included in the regression models as control variables.

### ***Data analysis***

Data analysis was performed using IBM SPSS (version 27). T-tests, correlations and multivariate regression analyses were conducted to examine the relationships between participants' wellbeing and the predictor variables described above.

## **Results**

### ***Differences between local news users and non-users***

T-tests were conducted to examine how satisfaction with local news, trust in local news, and wellbeing scores differ between local news users and non-users. There were statistically significant differences between the two groups. Those who use local news are more likely to be more satisfied with local news ( $M = 2.93$ ) and have higher trust in local news ( $M = 3.68$ ) compared to non-news users ( $M = 2.69$ ;  $M = 2.78$ ). Local news users were also more likely to have higher personal ( $M = 7.20$ ) and community wellbeing ( $M = 4.02$ ) scores than non-users ( $M = 5.25$ ;  $M = 3.43$ ; see [Table 2](#)).



**Table 2.** Differences in Local News Satisfaction, Trust in Local News and Wellbeing between Users and Non-Users.

		N	M	SD	t
Local news satisfaction	Users	6,052	2.93	0.65	3.52***
	Non-users	120	2.69	0.74	
Trust in local news	Users	6,083	3.68	0.94	10.15***
	Non-users	154	2.78	1.09	
Personal wellbeing	Users	6,182	7.20	1.62	10.71***
	Non-users	185	5.75	1.82	
Community wellbeing	Users	6,173	4.02	0.79	9.76***
	Non-users	174	3.43	0.79	

\*\*\* $p < .001$ .**Table 3.** Correlations for Key Study Variables.

	Local news motivation			Local news satisfaction	Trust in local news
	Community	Information	Habitual		
Personal wellbeing	.29***	.23***	.11***	.21***	.26***
Community wellbeing	.42***	.35***	.19***	.31***	.32***
Local news motivation	Community	.69***	.48***	.15***	.27***
	Information		.44***	.12***	.27***
	Habitual			.13***	.19***
Local news satisfaction					.46***

\*\*\* $p < .001$ .

### ***Relationships between local news motivation, satisfaction, and wellbeing***

We conducted a correlation analysis of the variables including local news motivations, satisfaction with and trust in local news and wellbeing variables. In the analysis, to investigate the associations among local news consumers more precisely, we excluded those who do not access local news. Among those who access local news, both personal and community wellbeing variables were strongly correlated to local news motivation factors, satisfaction with local news, and trust in local news. There was a stronger relationship between news-related factors – motivation, satisfaction, trust – and community wellbeing than with personal wellbeing. Among the local news motivation variables, community-related motivations had a stronger correlation with both personal and community wellbeing, compared to informational and habitual motivations (Table 3).

### ***Predictors of personal and community wellbeing***

In this study, we explored how consuming local news relates to two different types of wellbeing of news audiences – personal wellbeing and community wellbeing. Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression analyses were conducted to investigate these relationships further. In the regression analysis, we excluded non-users of local news (Table 4).

The three types of news motivations identified through a factor analysis were all significantly related to community wellbeing. In the personal wellbeing model, only community and habitual news motivations were found to be significant. Consistent with the correlation analysis, community motivation was the strongest predictor of audiences' wellbeing (personal wellbeing  $\beta = 0.192$ ,  $p < .001$ ; community wellbeing  $\beta = 0.297$ ,  $p < .001$ ). However, the habitual news motivation variable had a negative and significant relationship with both personal and community wellbeing. That is, using local

**Table 4.** OLS regression analysis results.

Dependent variables	Personal wellbeing		Community wellbeing	
	$\beta$	$t$	$\beta$	$t$
(Constant)		22.593***		19.460***
Age	0.186	14.603***	0.094	7.739***
Gender (ref. male)	0.035	2.861***	0.013	1.131
Region (ref. major cities)	-0.033	-2.672***	-0.021	-1.737
Satisfaction with local news	0.124	9.023***	0.205	15.734***
Trust in local news	0.137	9.680***	0.116	8.614***
Motivation: Community	0.191	11.015***	0.287	17.480***
Motivation: Information	0.017	1.029	0.082	5.088***
Motivation: Habitual	-0.072	-5.187***	-0.055	-4.201***
Adjusted $R^2$		.157		.245
$F$		134.377		233.046

\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

news to pass time or as part of daily habits predicted *lower* wellbeing, whereas accessing local news for information or community purposes predicted *higher* wellbeing.

Satisfaction with local news services and trust in local news were both positively associated with personal and community wellbeing. Higher levels of satisfaction with local news services and trust in local news predicted both higher personal and community wellbeing scores.

The results show the age variable was significant in both models suggesting that those who are older have higher personal and community wellbeing scores. The gender variable was significant in the model predicting personal wellbeing; men are more likely to have higher personal wellbeing scores than women. However, gender was not significant in the community wellbeing model. Location was significant in predicting personal wellbeing, showing those who live in regional areas are more likely to have higher personal wellbeing scores than those who live in major cities. However, location did not have a significant relationship with community wellbeing.

Overall, the adjusted  $R^2$  of the model predicting community wellbeing (Adj  $R^2 = .245$ ) is higher than of the model predicting personal wellbeing (Adj  $R^2 = .157$ ). This suggests the variables entered in the model have higher explanatory power in predicting community wellbeing.

## Discussion

This study explored how local news is related to audiences' personal and community wellbeing. We investigated the motivational aspects of local news use, satisfaction with local news, and trust in local news as explanatory variables that influence audiences' perceptions of wellbeing. The results show that personal and community wellbeing relate to audiences' local news motivations and their perceptions about local news.

The first research question asked whether local news-related factors are related to personal wellbeing. The data shows that those who consume local news, either through newspapers or through news websites, report higher levels of personal wellbeing, compared to those who do not access local news. Among those who do consume local news, wellbeing measures were related to their motivations to consume local news. Accessing local news to feel connected to the community predicted higher personal wellbeing scores, while accessing local news for habitual reasons predicted lower personal

wellbeing. Accessing local news for information reasons was not associated with personal wellbeing. Higher satisfaction with local news and higher trust in local news were positively related to personal wellbeing. These results indicate that local news may play a key role in determining the level of personal wellbeing of local news audiences.

The second research question was related to how local news factors can influence a person's community wellbeing, in other words, their connectedness to the community. Results showed that those who consume local news have higher community wellbeing scores compared to non-news consumers. Among local news consumers, accessing local news to get information or to feel connected to the community predicted higher levels of community wellbeing, while accessing local news habitually predicted lower community wellbeing. This element of purposeful news consumption is important (Riskos, Hatzithomas, Dekoulou, & Tsourvakas, 2022). Satisfaction with and trust in local news were both positively related to community wellbeing. Future research is needed to explain why information motivation predicted community but not personal wellbeing.

It is notable that the community-related news motivation was the strongest predictor of both personal and community wellbeing and was stronger than the motivation to seek information. Previous research in the U&G field has identified information motives as the most crucial factor influencing news consumption activities. This is because information gain is one of the fundamental reasons audiences consume news, known as 'instrumental uses' (Rubin, 1983) or 'surveillance gratifications' (Diddi & LaRose, 2006). Researchers, however, note that in the contemporary news environment, news consumption has increasingly become a socially driven activity (Purcell et al., 2010). The findings in this study show that local news audiences' wellbeing is influenced by community-related motivations, highlighting the importance of local news consumption in meeting people's needs to interact with others and connect to the local community. People may be recognising local news as a conduit that connects them to the community and enables them to participate in and support their community.

Lee (2013) pointed out the significance of the relative weight of importance of a variety of motivations which may lead to news consumption. From this perspective, our results show that while all three motivations – information, community, habitual – are likely to lead to local news use, such use is much more likely to be driven by community motivations than other needs. This finding suggests that the social utility of local news may be more significant than is currently recognised.

News deserts can undermine the health and wellbeing of communities (Bucay, Elliott, Kamin, & Park, 2017). Not only is it inconvenient to be lacking local information, the absence of locally produced news leaves residents with fear and frustration that their issues are being ignored (Mathews & Ali, 2022). This may explain why those who are actively consuming local news and are satisfied with it have higher levels of wellbeing.

This study demonstrated that local news supports personal and community wellbeing. This is an important finding, particularly in the context of a sharp decline in the provision and consumption of local news (Park, Fisher, & Lee, 2021; Simons & Dickson, 2019). More than 200 news outlets have closed in Australia since 2019. Among local news closures that occurred in the past few years, two-thirds were in regional areas and one-third in the cities (Dickson, 2022). While Australians are most interested in local news (Park et al., 2022), one quarter of regional audiences in Australia do not have access to a local TV news service or a newspaper, one third have no local commercial radio, and more than half do not have

local radio coverage provided by the national broadcaster, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC). Almost half (47%) said they have joined a Facebook or equivalent social media group to get local news (Park, Fisher, & Lee, 2020). These trends are replicated in other countries (e.g. Swart, Peters, & Broersma, 2019). Therefore, the study findings have significant implications for communities around the world, particularly in regional areas.

The study is not without limitations. First, the survey was conducted exclusively online. To encourage respondents who are print newspaper readers to participate, we placed editorial and advertising content in local newspapers. However, the participants had to respond via an online link. This may have excluded those who are not familiar or comfortable with filling online surveys, therefore underrepresenting those who are not online. Given that there is a continued desire for the printed product especially among older generations (Hess, Waller, & Lai, 2022), this may have systematically excluded a particular segment of the population.

Second, this study did not examine the different genres of local news that audience's access. Previous studies have found that individuals' selection of different news genres can vary depending on the different gratifications they are seeking (Baum, 2003; Chan, 2015). This study explored how audiences' motivation of local news consumption is related to their wellbeing. Future research should explore how the three motivations we identified in this study relate to consumption of different local news genres.

## Conclusion

A healthy news and information diet is essential to individuals' and communities' economic and social wellbeing, including their participation in civic life, access to vital information, and sense of belonging (Mathews, 2020; Rothenbuhler, Mullen, DeLaurell, & Ryu, 1996; Thompson, 2021). For centuries local news has been serving as a venue for public discussion and debate, and a mechanism for cohesion in communities (Hess & Waller, 2017). The presence of an independent press leads to better governance and less corruption (Freille, Haque, & Kneller, 2007), advances local economic development (Cox & Mair, 1988), and helps the local economy by providing positive coverage of local businesses (Gurun & Butler, 2012). This study confirms that in addition to these public benefits, local news also supports personal and community wellbeing, and thereby further underscores the need for governments and industry to support local news during this period of decline.

## Disclosure statement

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## ORCID

Sora Park  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3082-314X>

Jee Young Lee  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6985-1730>

Sonia Curll  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9653-9286>

Caroline Fisher  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7443-3787>  
 Kerry McCallum  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7567-2125>

## Compliance of ethical standard statement

The present study was approved by the Human Ethics Committee at the University of Canberra (#202211541).

## Informed consent

All participants provided informed consents before completing the questionnaire and were entered into a prize draw after completing the survey.

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## Appendix

**Table A1.** Results from a Factor Analysis of the Local News Motivation Measure.

	Community	Information	Habitual	$\alpha$
To support local businesses and the local community	<b>0.83</b>	0.22	0.06	0.83
I like to talk with others about local news	<b>0.79</b>	0.20	0.22	
It helps me feel connected to my community	<b>0.69</b>	0.47	0.13	
I feel I have a duty as citizen to stay informed	<b>0.63</b>	0.26	0.36	
I want to understand things that might affect me	0.21	<b>0.85</b>	0.11	0.83
I want to know what is going on in my local area	0.32	<b>0.84</b>	0.10	
I am interested in stories and information about my local community	0.49	<b>0.60</b>	0.30	
It is a good way to pass the time	0.13	-0.001	<b>0.89</b>	0.62
It is a part of my daily habits	0.26	0.39	<b>0.69</b>	

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 5 iterations. Factor loadings above .60 are in bold.