

Online local news does not replace traditional newsroom sources, study shows

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For those who hoped that online local news sources could take over for shrinking newspaper organizations, the prognosis is grim. According to a new study authored by George Washington University Professor Matthew Hindman and released today by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), online local news is not only failing to fill the gaps once filled by traditional newsrooms, but the report's data negate the popular assumption that the Internet has expanded the amount of news covered by local online news sources. The study "Less of the Same: The Lack of Local News on the Internet" used data from comScore, an Internet marketing research company, on Web traffic within the 100 largest U.S. broadcast markets.

Key findings from the study include:

- Overwhelmingly, local news sites are online outposts of newspapers and television stations.
- Traffic to local news outlets is relatively small. Only one out of every 200 page views on the Web goes to a local news site. All local sites combined receive just nine monthly minutes per person in the median market.
- Metrics such as monthly audience reach are often falsely inflated (especially when measured by Website cookies), and can be deceptive even when measured accurately. Many citizens view thousands of pages a month each, and page views last less than 30 seconds on average.

- There are few successful online-only local news sites. Three of the four most popular, by the percentage of the local market reached, are print newspapers that have folded (Seattle PI, Kentucky Post, Tucson Citizen).
- Most local news markets on the Web are highly concentrated, with a majority of traffic going to just two or three news organizations.
- National news outlets attract significantly larger audiences than local outlets, though news traffic overall is still only a small fraction of online activity. Users in the average market spend about an hour per person on national news sites each month. This is more than five times what they spend on local [news sites](#).

“The breadth and the market-level granularity of the comScore data makes this study one of the first comprehensive looks at of Internet-based local news,” said Matt Hindman, assistant professor of media and public affairs. “Understanding the [local news](#) landscape online has profound implications for policymakers, journalists, and local self-governance in the 21st century.”

Provided by George Washington University

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