

Minnesota News Council

Statewide Survey

May 2000

How the Poll Was Conducted

The survey was commissioned by the Minnesota News Council. A total of 403 Minnesota adults were interviewed May 3-5, 2000 by Mason-Dixon Polling & Research, Inc. of Washington, D.C. Margin for error is +/-5%.

A representative sample of Minnesota adult residents were surveyed statewide by telephone. Those interviewed were selected from a randomly generated list of telephone numbers.

The margin for error, according to standards customarily used by statisticians, is no more than plus or minus 5%. This means that there is a 95% probability that the "true" figure would fall within margin of error if all residents were surveyed.

Key Findings:

Where Minnesotans Get Their News

- **A substantial majority (87%) of Minnesotans read a daily or weekly newspaper "on a regular basis."** Forty-five percent read "daily newspapers, 16% read weekly newspapers, and 26% read both on a "regular basis."
- **A similar percentage (82%) watch local television news on a regular basis.**

"No Time" to Read or Watch

- **Of the 13% who do not read newspapers on a regular basis:**
 - 35% Don't have time to read it
 - 29% Have no interest in it
 - 17% Prefer to get information from other sources
 - 4% Don't trust or like what the newspaper reports
 - 14% Other
 - 2% Not Sure

- **Of the 18% who do not watch local television news on a regular basis:**

- 42% Don't have time/not on at time that is convenient
- 22% Prefer to get information from other sources
- 10% Don't trust or like what television reports
- 8% Have no interest in it
- 17% Other
- 1% Not Sure

How Minnesotans Rate Local Newspaper & Television Coverage

- A majority (73%) of Minnesotans give newspapers good ratings for local news coverage.

Rating of Newspaper News Coverage

Excellent	10%	
Good	63%	73%
Fair	19%	
Poor	7%	26%
DK	2%	

- A slightly smaller majority (66%) give a positive rating for local television news coverage.

Rating of Television News Coverage

Excellent	9%	
Good	57%	66%
Fair	26%	
Poor	7%	33%
DK	1%	

Caveat Lector! – Majority of Minnesotans are Skeptical about What They Read and Watch

- Minnesotans view what they read in the newspaper with a degree of skepticism. Fifty-seven percent (57%) said they are “sometimes” or “usually” skeptical about what they read in the newspaper.

I believe everything I read in the newspaper	1%	
I believe most of what I read in the newspaper	40%	41%
I am sometimes skeptical about what I read	47%	
I am usually skeptical about what I read	10%	57%
No Opinion/Not Sure (NOT READ)	1%	

- Local television news coverage is viewed with a similar degree of skepticism. Sixty percent (60%) are “sometimes” or “usually” skeptical about see in their local television news broadcasts.

I believe everything I see on local TV news	1%	
I believe most of what I see on local TV news	38%	39%
I am sometimes skeptical about what I see	51%	
I am usually skeptical about what I see	9%	60%
No Opinion/Not Sure (NOT READ)	1%	

Awareness and Attitudes about the Minnesota News Council & Its Mission

- While only a 23% of Minnesotans have heard of the **Minnesota News Council**, and less than ten percent can identify its function, a majority (67%) of **Minnesotans consider its stated mission useful and worthwhile.**

QUESTION: The Minnesota News Council is a non-profit, independent organization that was founded in 1970. Its mission is to sustain accountability and fairness in the media by providing people who feel they have been treated unfairly with a forum to bring their complaints and seek resolution. This is done ultimately through a formal grievance process and hearing before its 24-member council, half of whom are from the media and half of whom are not.

Do you consider such a service useful, or not?

Yes	67%
No	14%
Not Sure	19%

- Few Minnesotans (4%) have ever been the subject of an unfair or harmful news report, and of those less than half (48%) took any action.
- However, 67% of all Minnesotans would consider engaging the Minnesota News Council to “seek a resolution” to the problem.