



**Paul Simon
Public Policy Institute**

Southern Illinois University Carbondale



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Contact: Charles Leonard
618-303-9099
cleonard@siu.edu

Where Southern Illinoisans Get Their News

Reports of the death of the daily newspaper may have been greatly exaggerated, at least here in Southern Illinois. According to data presented in the inaugural Southern Illinois Poll from the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois University Carbondale, six in ten (61.3 percent) registered voters here get their news from a daily newspaper “on a typical day.”

The data suggest that Southern Illinois voters are heavy media users: Nine in ten (92.5 percent) say they get information from the local TV news on a typical day, two-thirds say that on a typical day they also get news from a cable channel such as CNN or Fox, as well as from an evening broadcast network telecast (68.1 percent and 65.1 percent, respectively).

Substantial proportions, though fewer than half of the voters in the sample, get news on a typical day from the print version of a local weekly paper (44.9 percent), radio news programs (42.4 percent), and morning shows such as *Good Morning America* or *The Today Show* (41.9 percent). About a third of the voters sampled (34.2 percent) say they get news from an online version of a newspaper or other Internet source.

Significant numbers of voters in the region get news from nontraditional sources such as late-night programs like *The Tonight Show* or *The Daily Show* (25.2 percent), or daytime shows such as *Oprah* (15.5 percent). Only about one southern Illinois voter in eleven (9.0 percent) gets news on a typical day from a national newspaper such as *USA Today* or *The New York Times*.

“The heavy media usage that southern Illinois voters report about themselves is pretty striking at first,” said Charles Leonard, the Paul Simon Institute visiting professor who supervises the polling. “The thing to remember is that we poll registered voters—not the public at large—and that voters are fundamentally different from nonvoters in a number of ways.

“Registered voters tend to be older and more settled than the rest of the population, and these attributes are associated with greater news consumption. This is particularly true in southern Illinois, which is, on average, older than the rest of the state,” Leonard continued. “The fact of being a registered voter is also associated with being more attuned with the issues, which helps explain how large majorities of our respondents report being engaged with news on TV, cable, and in the local dailies.”

Leonard said the percentage of respondents engaged with news on the Internet and with late-night programs would be higher if the sample were southern Illinois citizens as a whole, rather than just registered voters. Other surveys report that most younger people get their news online, and that younger people are more likely to watch late-night TV.

The Carbondale-based *Southern Illinoisan* received the most mentions in an open-ended question about which daily paper respondents read (67.0 percent on first or second mention). Respondents mentioned hometown papers from across southern Illinois, from Benton, Carmi, Anna and DuQuoin to Harrisburg, Metropolis, and even Paducah, KY.

Voters in the Paul Simon Institute’s Southern Illinois Poll are heavy consumers of local TV news, most often mentioning Carterville-based WSIL TV as their source (42.0 percent first mention, 24.7 percent second mention). Significant numbers also report watching Cape Girardeau-based KFVS-TV and Paducah-based WPSD-TV.

The poll of 401 registered voters in the area was taken April 5 to 13 and has a margin of error of plus or minus 4.9 percent at the 95 percent confidence level. The sample of voters came from the southern Illinois counties of Alexander, Franklin, Gallatin, Hamilton, Hardin, Jackson, Jefferson, Johnson, Massac, Perry, Pope, Pulaski, Randolph, Saline, Union, Washington, White, and Williamson Counties. Phone interviews were conducted for the Institute by Customer Research International of San Marcos, Texas. It reports no Illinois political figures as clients and was paid with non-tax dollars from the Institute’s endowment fund.

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Table

On a typical day, do you get news or information from...

Source	% Yes
The local television news in your area?	92.5%
A cable news channel like CNN, Fox News, or MSNBC?	68.1%
An evening television news program like <i>NBC Nightly News</i> or <i>CBS Evening News</i> ?	65.1%
The print version of a local daily newspaper?	61.3%
The print version of a weekly local newspaper?	44.9%
A radio news program that you listen to on a car or home radio?	42.4%
Morning news shows like <i>Good Morning America</i> or <i>The Today Show</i> ?	41.9%
Online versions of any newspaper, or other places on the Internet?	34.2%
Late-night comedy programs like <i>The Tonight Show</i> or <i>The Daily Show</i> ?	25.2%
Daytime TV shows like <i>Oprah</i> ?	15.5%
A national daily newspaper such as the New York Times or USA Today?	9.0%