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ABSTRACT

This booklet presents the results of a national survey sponsored by the American Newspaper Publishers Association News Research Center concerning the news and editorial content and readership of the daily newspaper. Since one of the goals of the study was a reliable estimate of the frequency of newspaper reading, interviewing was conducted in two waves approximately one week apart. A total of 1,714 respondents were interviewed in the first wave; 1,102 of these were reinterviewed. The data were collected June 15-19 and 22-26, 1971. Some of the findings of the survey were: on the average weekday, 77% of adults, 18 and older read a daily paper; the newspaper is approached almost as a matter of daily habit, with readers having their own individual patterns; nearly half of the average paper's pages are dominated by general news items, with almost twice as many sports and business pages as fashion and society pages; out of 35 specific subject categories, only one (sports) accounts for more than 10% of all items in the paper; the average newspaper item is read by about one-fourth of the issue's readers; and at one time or another almost all adults (93%) have taken some kind of action involving the daily paper. (RB)

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**News and Editorial Content  
And Readership of the Daily Newspaper**

**A National Survey**

Some of the findings of the first national survey ever made of the content and readership of news and editorial portions of daily newspapers throughout the United States are as follows:

- On the average weekday, Monday through Friday, 77% of adults, 18 and older, read a daily newspaper. Upper socio-economic groups are the heaviest readers.
- The newspaper is approached almost as a matter of daily habit, with readers having their own individual patterns of reading and going through it. Most people go through all the pages. About half of the readers start with the front page and go straight through the paper, while a majority of the others start with an inside item and then look through the rest of the paper.
- Nearly half of the average newspaper's pages are dominated by general news items. The average paper also has twice as many men's pages (sports, business and finance) as women's pages (fashion-society, food-home-garden).
- The daily newspaper is almost encyclopedic in its scope, and about two-thirds of the average paper's items are general interest articles. Out of 35 specific subject categories, only one (sports) accounts for more than 10% of all items.
- The average newspaper item is read by about one-fourth of the issue's readers, but some items attract a wider audience than others do. Among the most widely read kinds of content are reports of accidents and disasters, letters to the editor, crime news, and -- among women -- fashion and society items.
- At one time or another, almost all adults (93%) have taken some kind of action involving the daily paper: clipping articles, writing letters to the editor, placing ads, discussing news articles with other people, etc.

of items devoted to a particular topic shows that in 15 out of 36 content categories, the variation between morning and evening dailies is a meaningless one-tenth of one percentage point or less. (Table 14)

Table 14  
Distribution of News and Editorial Content  
by Time of Publication

	Morning	Evening
General local news	6.2%	8.1%
State and local govt.	5.3	5.5
Vietnam (not U.S. Govt.)		
other wars, rebellions	4.4	4.5
U.S. Government (Vietnam)		
armaments, defense	2.8	2.7
International, diplomatic		
news (U.S., foreign)	3.3	2.8
U.S. government, domestic	7.6	6.5
Crime	4.0	3.8
Education, school news	3.0	3.5
Comics	2.4	2.4
Cultural events, reviews	2.6	2.6
Public health, welfare	2.4	2.4
Puzzles, horoscopes	2.0	2.7
Accidents, disasters,		
natural phenomena	2.4	2.3
Social problems, protest	2.0	2.2
Obituaries	1.8	2.3
Labor, wages	2.1	1.7
Environment	1.5	1.6
General non-local human		
interest	1.4	1.2
Racial news, minorities		
(peaceful)	1.5	1.0
TV/radio logs	1.2	1.2
Weather	1.1	1.1
Science, invention	1.0	1.1
Travel	0.9	1.0
Taxes	1.0	0.9
Entertainers, Hollywood news	0.9	1.0
Letters to the editor	0.7	0.6
Religion	0.6	0.6
Sports	15.7	13.3
Business, finance	8.2	6.1
Fashion, society, etc.	2.8	4.6
Food, home, garden	1.0	1.8
Advice columns	2.7	3.3
Political columns	1.2	1.0
Humor columns	0.7	0.9
Gossip columns	0.5	0.2

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Since one of the goals of the study was a reliable estimate of the frequency of newspaper reading, interviewing was conducted in two waves approximately one week apart. In the second wave, up to three callbacks were made in an attempt to recontact everyone interviewed in the first wave. These measures also enabled the researchers to estimate the cumulative audience (or "reach") of newspapers over a period of five days.

A total of 1,714 respondents were interviewed in the first wave; 1,102 of these were reinterviewed. The data were collected June 15-19 and 22-26, 1971.

### Analysis of News and Editorial Content

Unlike some previous studies of news and editorial content, this research employed a coding system based on the content of entire items, not on headlines alone.

All news and editorial items of 75 agate lines (approximately 5½ column-inches) or more were coded. An analysis of a sub-sample of randomly selected newspaper pages indicated that the average page contains 3.6 news and editorial items of such length and 1.6 shorter items, so this study includes the bulk of news and editorial content.

A detailed summary of the major findings of the study follows:

### Reach and Frequency of Daily Newspaper Reading

The first measurement ever made of the total reach of the daily newspaper as a national medium was carried out by Audits and Surveys in 1961. At that time, 79% of all adults, age 21 and older, read one or more newspapers "yesterday." A number of studies of national probability samples made since that time by various researchers have produced remarkably consistent results, with the figure for "yesterday" reading rarely straying more than one or two percentage points from that obtained in 1961.

This study employed a slightly broader definition of "adult." Even so, with people age 18 to 20 included, essentially the same one-day audience figure emerged: 77.4%

Men are slightly more likely than women (79% to 76%) to have read a newspaper yesterday. (Table 1) As education goes up, so does the reading of the daily newspaper. Among college graduates, 88% read yesterday, compared to 70% of those who did not go beyond the eighth grade.

**Table 1**  
**"Yesterday" Newspaper Reading**  
**by Education and Sex**

	All Respondents	Male	Female
Total	77%	79 %	76 %
8 yrs. or less	70	74	65
9-11 years	72	73	72
Completed high school	77	77	77
Beyond high school but not completed college	84	86	82
Completed college or more	88	92	83

Members of households with substantial income are more likely to be newspaper readers than are people in low-income households. (Table 2) The highest readership (88%) is observed among adults in households with an annual income of \$10,000 to \$14,999, while the lowest figure (67%) is for those in households with less than \$5,000 income.

**Table 2**  
**"Yesterday" Newspaper Reading**  
**by Household Income and Sex**

	All Respondents	Male	Female
Under \$5,000	67%	66 %	68 %
\$5,000-\$7,499	69	72	67
\$7,500-\$9,999	81	83	79
\$10,000-14,999	88	92	83
\$15,000-or more	79	75	84

As age increases, newspaper reading increases up to a point and then levels off. (Table 3) Slightly under 70% of the adults in the 18-34 range reported reading a newspaper yesterday, compared to about 85% of those age 50 or older.

**Table 3**  
**"Yesterday" Newspaper Reading**  
**by Age and Sex**

	All Respondents	Male	Female
18-24 yrs.	66%	69%	62%
25-34 yrs.	68	72	64
35-49 yrs.	82	82	82
50-64 yrs.	85	86	84
65 or older	84	86	83

Because the study involved two interviews per respondent,

it is possible to determine the reach (number of people doing at least some reading over a given number of days) and frequency of the daily newspaper for two days and to develop reliable estimates for three, four, and five days.

These estimates were calculated for the entire sample and for each sex, broken down by several demographic variables. Since some of the sub-samples are small, the figures are presented more as approximations than as precise benchmarks.

The estimates are instructive, however. For instance, the reach of the newspaper for the entire sample goes from 77.4% for one day to 89.1% for five days. Because there is such a high duplication of readership from one day to the next, the average frequency of reading for Monday through Friday is 4.3. This consistency of readership is also shown by the fact that 64% of all adults read five days out of five, 9% read four out of five, 6% read three out of five, 10% read one or two out of five, and 11% do no reading.

For some segments of the population, the cumulative reach over five days is 90% or higher. For instance, among adults whose family income is between \$10,000 and \$14,999, the one-day reach is 88%, but the five-day reach is 98%. This is the most nearly universal cumulative audience for any of the income, age, or education categories.

At the other extreme are people whose family income is less than \$5,000. The one-day reach is 67% and the five-day reach is 77%. This is the lowest cumulative audience for any of the categories. Even so, about four out of five people in this group do at least some daily newspaper reading for Monday through Friday issues.

There are also some variations from one group to another as to frequency of daily newspaper reading. College graduates, for example, are very frequent readers, with 82% reading five issues out of five. At the other extreme are the youngest adults (age 18-24), with 47% reading all five days.

### How, Where, and When the Paper is Read

It should be emphasized that these findings on reading patterns refer to averages for the newspapers that are read in sample areas. Since each newspaper has unique material and a unique audience, this analysis of composite reading patterns cannot necessarily be applied to any specific paper.

When asked what they do with the paper as soon as they get it, most people say they do not finish reading it immediately, though a large minority (41%) do so. Only among people age 65 and older is reading completed

immediately by 50% of the audience. This may be true because these people tend to have fewer demands on their time for other activities. Small papers, 24 or fewer pages, are the most likely (49%) to be read in toto right away. In this respect, there are no major differences between morning and evening papers.

Most of the people who do not complete their reading immediately after getting the paper fall into three other categories. About one-fourth of all adult readers do some reading immediately and then pick up the paper one or more times later. About one-fifth just scan the paper when they get it and do most of their reading later. And approximately one-tenth do no reading immediately, saving it all for another time.

Regardless of whether they do their reading immediately or later, about 92% of the adults report turning through the whole paper, with most of them going through in a leisurely manner rather than scanning quickly. Only 4% limit their reading entirely to certain items that they turn to right away.

There are no marked trends or deviations from this basic pattern by sex, race, age, education, or income. However, more people under 50 than over that age report that they scan the paper quickly, even though they go through all of it. The largest papers, those with more than 70 pages, are as likely as others to be reported as having been thoroughly gone through, though there is some tendency to scan them more than smaller papers.

The majority of readers (53%) start their reading with the front page and go on through the paper. Another sizable group (37%) turn first to specific items and then go through the rest of the paper. Readers who are over 64 years of age are most likely (61%) to start with the front page and go on through the paper. Again, this may be the result of having more time available, or it may be that they are less likely than others to have the kinds of active interests that would divert them immediately to some specific item inside the paper.

Almost three-quarters of the readers (73%) say there are certain times of the day that they set aside for reading the daily paper. The most popular time is after the evening meal. The pattern is almost the same for men and women, except that women are somewhat more likely to set aside a particular reading time--especially between meals.

The average adult looks more than once at each daily paper he reads. The median number of times is 2.3. There are no extreme deviations from this pattern by various

demographic groups, although people in the 18-24 age group are the most likely to read the paper only once (51%). People who are 65 or older look at their papers slightly more often than do others. Also, white readers are somewhat more likely than blacks to look at a paper only once. Papers with fewer than 24 pages are slightly more likely than others to be picked up only once.

Newspaper reading is overwhelmingly an activity that takes place inside the home: 89% of all readership occurs there. The respective figures for morning and evening papers are 80% and 94%. About 16% of the reading of morning newspapers takes place at work. (Of course, reading at home and at work are not mutually exclusive.) No other reading place accounts for a few percentage points of the total for either morning or evening papers. Women are substantially more likely than men to read at home, while men are more likely to read at work or on the way there. Even men do most of their newspaper reading at home, however.

#### Method of Obtaining Paper

The habitual nature of newspaper reading is underscored by examination of the way in which the paper read yesterday was obtained. About three-quarters (74%) of all weekday papers in the country are home delivered. Even in metropolitan areas of more than one million population, 67% of the papers are home delivered. At the other extreme, 82% of the papers read in non-metropolitan areas are home-delivered.

By and large the papers are carrier delivered, although in non-metropolitan areas 19% arrive by mail.

#### Time Spent Reading the Daily Newspaper

On the average, readers spend 34 minutes per weekday with each paper they read. In this survey, no provision was made for analysis of the number of papers read beyond "two or more" papers read yesterday. Counting each such response as meaning that only two papers were read produces a median of 1.3 papers per reader per day. (A more precise analysis is possible using the 1970 national study done by W. R. Simmons. It showed, when provision was made for up to six papers per reader over a two-day period, that the average reader sees 1.4 daily papers per day. Applying this figure to the 34 minutes per paper results in an estimate of 48 minutes per day spent reading newspaper by the average adult.)

Earlier analyses (including one in 1961 by Audits and Surveys) have shown that time spent reading is an imperfect measure of thoroughness of reading. Less well-educated

people, readers at the lowest income level, and the elderly may spend more time reading and yet read less thoroughly than better-educated people who are able to read faster and scan more efficiently. For this reason, there are in the aggregate no clear patterns in reading time by demographic groups. It may be observed, however, that it is the oldest, least well-educated, and poorest readers who are most likely to spend more than an hour with their daily papers.

Blacks and whites spend the same average time (34 minutes) with each paper they read, but the pattern is different: many more blacks spend 30 to 39 minutes with the paper, while more whites read for 40 minutes or more. Similarly, more whites read less than 10 minutes, although only 8% do so.

There are still further considerations to be taken into account in the analysis of time spent reading the paper. For example, people in households making \$15,000 or more are more efficient readers and spend 31 minutes per day with each paper read, compared to the average of 34 minutes. The Simmons study previously cited showed that readers in this income group see 1.6 papers per day per person, so the total daily newspaper reading time is actually 50 minutes a day for the relatively well-to-do. Readers in the under \$5,000 income bracket see an average of 1.3 papers a day for 37 minutes each, for a total of 47 minutes.

People who watched TV news "yesterday" spent a little more time (35 minutes median) with the newspaper than did people who did not watch TV (32 minutes median). This suggests that these media are not necessarily competitive sources of news. Getting the news from one source may enhance the desire to get more from another source, and people who are especially interested in news will use more than one source.

### **Types of Pages in Newspapers**

In practice, many newspaper pages bring together material of highly heterogeneous content. Nevertheless, it was possible in this study to classify each newspaper page by its dominant content.

Three types of pages make up about two-thirds of the average newspaper on the average day: general news, 44%; sports, 11% and advertising-only, 11%. What are usually described as women's pages -- food, home, fashion, society, etc. -- account for another 7%. (advertising-only pages are somewhat under-represented, since classified ad pages were included only if the facing page contained another type of content.)

From Monday through Friday, the proportion of the paper devoted to particular kinds of material shows little variation. The most notable difference is that there are more advertising-only pages on Wednesday and Thursday, the traditional "food" days in many cities.

While the *number* of general news pages is greater in large metropolitan areas than in non-metropolitan areas, the *proportion* that general news pages represent of the total is smallest in metropolitan areas of one million or more population. In papers with 70 or more pages, proportionately fewer pages are dominated by society items and considerably more by advertising-only.

### Page Opening by Readers

In the daily newspaper, 84% of the pages (other than classified pages) are opened by the average reader and are in the reader's line of vision for a greater or lesser time.

Classifying men and women newspaper readers by age, income, education, and race indicates that the level of page opening is high among all types of readers, seldom dropping below 80%. The only notable trend is that page opening tends to increase with age, especially among women readers.

Most (89%) newspaper readers are subscribers or purchasers, and page opening is higher among these readers (85%) than it is (73%) among the small number of "pass-along" readers who obtain the paper at work, from friends, etc.

The figures for page opening also tend to be fairly constant by type of page. For instance, 80% of the women's pages are opened by the average male reader, while 70% of the sports pages are opened by the average female reader.

Papers having 24 or fewer pages have an average page opening score of 91%. The average page in papers having 70 or more pages stands an 8 out of 10 (77%) chance of being opened.

Following this same pattern, page opening scores stay above 70% even for the back sections of papers having four or more sections. This is true even though the sections toward the back of the paper tend to be of specialized content. The same relative constancy of page opening can be observed in the data concerning size of the city in which the interview was conducted. The highest score (91%) was for rural places of under 2,500 population, where the papers tend to be small. Yet even in metropolitan areas of one million or more population, 80% of the pages are opened by the average reader.

## News and Editorial Content

Perhaps the most striking thing about the daily newspaper is the tremendous range of subject matter found in its pages. In the average newspaper, about two-thirds of the news and editorial items measuring 5½ column-inches or longer might be called general interest items, but no specific topic within this broad category accounts for as much as 10% of the newspaper's total content.

Table 4  
Distribution of News and Editorial Content  
by Circulation  
(All percentages based on items of 5½ column-inches  
or longer.)

	All Daily Newspapers	50,000 or less	50,001 250,000	250,001 or more
<b>General Interest</b>	<b>66.8%</b>	<b>67.0%</b>	<b>66.6%</b>	<b>67.2%</b>
<b>State and Local News</b>	<b>12.7</b>	<b>15.2</b>	<b>12.0</b>	<b>9.5</b>
General local news	7.3	9.6	6.8	4.1
State and local government	5.4	5.6	5.2	5.4
<b>International News</b>	<b>10.2</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>10.2</b>	<b>11.5</b>
Vietnam (not U.S. Govt.), other wars, rebellions	4.4	4.4	4.2	4.9
U.S. Government (Vietnam), armaments, defense	2.8	2.6	2.7	3.4
International, diplomatic news (U.S. and foreign)	3.0	2.5	3.3	3.2
<b>U.S. Government, Domestic</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>7.7</b>
<b>Other General Interest</b>	<b>37.0</b>	<b>35.7</b>	<b>37.5</b>	<b>38.5</b>
Crime	3.9	3.3	4.3	4.6
Education, school news	3.3	3.5	3.6	2.6
Comics	2.6	2.7	2.5	2.6
Cultural events, reviews	2.6	2.6	2.3	3.0
Public health, welfare	2.4	2.3	2.4	2.6
Puzzles, horoscopes	2.4	2.8	2.3	1.8
Accidents, disasters, natural phenomena	2.4	2.5	2.3	2.2
Social problems, protest	2.1	2.1	1.9	2.3
Obituaries	2.1	2.2	2.1	1.8
Labor, wages	1.8	1.3	1.9	2.7
Environment	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.7
General non-local human interest	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.1
<b>Other General Interest</b>				
Racial news, minorities (peaceful)	1.2	1.0	1.5	1.2
TV/radio logs	1.2	1.0	1.1	1.5
Weather	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1

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	All Daily Newspapers	50,000 or less	50,001 250,000	250,001 or more
Science, invention	1.0	1.0	1.1	0.9
Travel	1.0	0.9	1.0	1.1
Taxes	1.0	0.8	1.1	0.9
Entertainers, Hollywood	0.9	0.6	0.8	1.7
Letters to the editor	0.6	0.5	0.7	0.8
Religion	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.4
Men's Interest	21.1	19.6	21.7	22.9
Sports	14.2	14.0	15.2	12.9
Business, finance	6.9	5.6	6.5	10.0
Women's Interest	5.4	6.9	5.0	3.2
Fashion, society, etc.	3.9	5.3	3.6	1.9
Food, home, garden	1.5	1.6	1.4	1.3
Columns	5.3	5.4	5.4	4.8
Advice columns	3.1	3.2	3.2	2.5
Political columns	1.1	1.2	1.0	1.0
Humor columns	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.7
Gossip columns	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.6
Other Items Not Classified Elsewhere	1.4	1.1	1.3	2.0

Over all, newspapers in the United States devote roughly the same proportion of items to state and local news that they do to international news. However, papers with more than 250,000 circulation tend to contain comparatively more international items and fewer state and local items, while the opposite situation is found among papers with 50,000 circulation or less. The proportion of items devoted to national news remains fairly constant regardless of circulation.

Most newspapers contain many more "men's interest" items (sports and business news) than "women's interest items (fashion, society, food, home, and garden). For newspapers of 50,000 circulation or less the ratio of men's to women's items is about three to one; among newspapers of more than 250,000 circulation the ratio is almost eight to one.

In spite of these and a few other differences which might be noted, the *percentage* of items devoted to particular types of subject matter is remarkably similar for papers of all sizes. Of course, the big circulation newspapers publish a larger *number* of items on most topics because they have more space available. For daily newspapers of 50,000 circulation or less, the median number of pages is 23.7. For papers of 50,001 to 250,000 circulation, the median number of pages

is 40.2, and for papers of more than 250,000 circulation, it is 65.4.

The average daily of 50,000 circulation or less carries an estimated total of 80 news and editorial items of 5½ column-inches or longer on the average weekday, but the average paper of more than 250,000 circulation contains about 210 such items.

As to *number* of items on a given topic, the most striking difference between small and large newspapers is in the business and finance category. On the average, papers with more than 250,000 circulation have nearly five times as many items of this type as do those with 50,000 or less. The coverage of national and international news is also more comprehensive in the big circulation papers by a ratio of about three items to one.

The *percentage* of items given to a particular topic also tends to be quite similar from one region of the country to another, but some small variations exist. For instance, a slightly smaller *percentage* of items in newspapers in the South concern state and local news than is true for newspapers in the Northeast. Correspondingly, newspapers in the South give a slightly larger percentage of items to national and international news. (Table 5)

Table 5  
Distribution of News and Editorial Content  
by Region

	Northeast	North Central	South	West
General Interest	66.6%	64.8%	68.2%	68.9%
State and Local News	14.0	13.0	11.8	12.0
General local news	8.4	7.1	7.0	6.7
State and local govt.	5.6	5.9	4.8	5.3
International News	9.2	10.0	11.0	10.7
Vietnam (not U.S. Govt.)				
other wars, rebellions	3.8	4.6	5.0	4.1
U.S. Govt. (Vietnam)				
armaments, defense	2.7	2.7	2.9	3.0
International, diplomatic				
news (U.S., foreign)	2.7	2.7	2.9	3.0
U.S. Government, Domestic	5.9	6.8	7.7	7.5
Other General Interest	37.5	35.0	37.7	38.7
Crime	4.2	3.1	4.2	4.4
Education, school news	4.3	3.1	3.0	2.9
Comics	2.2	2.9	2.6	2.6
Cultural events, reviews	3.1	2.3	2.4	2.7
Public health, welfare	2.0	2.4	2.9	2.3

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	Northeast	North Central	South	West
Puzzles, horoscopes	2.2	2.3	2.2	3.1
Accidents, disasters, natural phenomena	2.0	2.3	2.2	3.1
Social problems, protest	2.1	1.8	2.3	2.2
Obituaries	2.0	2.1	2.2	1.9
Labor, wages	2.0	2.0	1.6	1.7
Environment	1.7	1.6	1.4	1.5
General non-local human interest	0.9	1.0	1.4	1.8
Racial news, minorities (peaceful)	0.9	1.0	1.4	1.8
TV/radio logs	1.5	1.0	1.1	1.0
Weather	1.0	1.1	1.1	1.2
Science, invention	0.7	1.0	1.1	1.4
Travel	0.9	1.1	0.8	1.1
Taxes	1.4	0.8	0.8	0.9
Entertainers, Hollywood news	1.1	0.6	0.9	1.2
Letters to the editor	0.8	0.7	0.6	0.5
Religion	0.5	0.5	1.0	0.5
Men's Interest	20.9	22.6	19.5	21.4
Sports	14.5	15.0	13.4	13.8
Business, finance	6.4	7.6	6.1	7.6
Women's Interest	5.2	5.7	5.6	4.4
Fashion, society, etc.	3.9	4.0	4.2	3.0
Food, home, garden	1.3	1.7	1.4	1.4
Columns	5.7	5.4	5.5	4.1
Advice columns	3.4	3.2	3.2	2.3
Political columns	1.1	0.9	1.3	0.9
Humor columns	0.8	0.9	0.7	0.7
Gossip columns	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.2
Other Items Not Classified Elsewhere	1.5	1.6	1.2	1.2

### Readership Compared to Availability

How does the readership of items on a given subject compare with the proportion of items given to that subject by newspapers? In other words, do editors select for publication comparatively many items on topics that have generally high readership and few items on topics that have low readership?

To come up with an answer to this question, the researchers constructed two indices: A "Dominance Index" showing the proportion of all news and editorial items devoted to a given subject relative to the average proportion devoted to a subject, and a "Readership Index" comparing

the readership of items on a given subject to the average readership for all items.

For the "Dominance Index," a subject category that included the same proportion of items that the average category did would have a score of 100. A category that included a larger proportion of items would have a higher score.

For the "Readership Index," a subject category that had the same average readership as the average for all items would have a score of 100. A category that got higher than average readership would have a higher score.

If comparative readership for a given topic were directly proportional to the comparative frequency of items published on that topic, then the "Dominance Index" and "Readership Index" scores for that topic would be identical. The fact is, however, that the two indices show considerable differences between readership and availability for some topics.

If the "Dominance Index" score for a given topic is divided into the "Readership Index" score for the same topic, the resulting figure may be taken as the relative drawing power of that subject category. As used in this study, an RI/DI score of 100 would mean that the comparative readership of a subject category is equal to its comparative availability to readers. A higher score would indicate that items on that topic tend to get more readership than their frequency of publication could account for, while a score of less than 100 would mean that readership is lower than availability would suggest.

While the RI/DI ratios for a few types of items are close to the overall average of 100, some topics that contain comparatively few items receive a larger-than-average share of reader attention.

Among the topics ranking highest in drawing power are accidents and disasters, crime, obituaries, non-local human interest items, letters to the editor, and -- for women -- fashion and society. (Table 6)

Table 6  
Availability of Content Types Versus Readership

	Dominance Index*	Readership Index**	RI/DI***
General local news	261	274	105
State and local government	193	206	107
Vietnam (not U.S. Govt.) other wars, rebellions	157	178	113

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	Dominance Index*	Readership Index**	RI/DI***
U.S. government (Vietnam)			
armaments, defense	100	123	123
International, diplomatic			
news (U.S., foreign)	107	96	89
U.S. Government, domestic	246	276	112
Crime	139	189	136
Education, school news	118	105	89
Comics	93	109	117
Cultural events, reviews	93	81	87
Public health, welfare	86	110	128
Puzzles, horoscopes	86	60	70
Accidents, disasters,			
natural phenomena	86	137	159
Social problems, protest	75	94	125
Obituaries	75	99	132
Labor, wages	64	70	109
Environment	57	62	109
Non-local human interest	43	61	142
Racial news, minorities			
(peaceful)	43	51	119
TV/radio logs	43	36	84
Weather	39	40	103
Science, inventions	36	37	103
Travel, transportation	36	37	103
Taxes	36	45	125
Entertainers, Hollywood	32	28	88
Letters to the editor	21	33	157
Religion	21	26	124
Sports	507	476	94
Business, finance****	246	212	86
Fashion, society, etc.****	139	189	136
Food, home, garden****	54	62	115
Advice columns	111	143	129
Political columns	39	32	82
Humor columns	29	27	93
Gossip columns	11	12	109

\*"Dominance Index" was derived by dividing the percentage of editorial items in a given category by the average percentage for 36 categories.

\*\*"Readership Index" was derived by dividing the number of items seen or read in a category by the average number seen or read in the 36 categories.

\*\*\*RI/DI equals Readership Index score divided by Dominance Index score. For presentation purposes, decimals have been omitted.

\*\*\*\*"Readership Index" for sports and business news based on male readers only; index for fashion-society and food-home-garden based on female readers only.

Subject categories with lower than average drawing power include puzzles and horoscopes, political columns, and television and radio logs.

The extent to which a particular topic is read, of course, does not necessarily reflect the intensity of interest among those who read it. The average puzzle or horoscope is looked at by only 17% of adult readers, but this minority may find such content to be extremely interesting or useful. Indeed, one of the strengths of newspapers may be their ability to publish many kinds of content that are of interest to only a few people but which interest them intensely and are not available elsewhere. In contrast, a more widely ready type of item may produce less involvement on the part of the average reader.

### Readership by Sex

The reading patterns of men and women reveal more similarities than might be anticipated. Over all, the average male reader looks at 25% of all news and editorial items of 5½ column-inches or longer; the comparable figure for women readers is 24%. Furthermore, the best-read items among both men and women are likely to be general interest items. Two of the five categories that are most popular with men are also among the five most popular with women. These are accidents and disasters (number one for both sexes) and letters to the editor. (Table 7)

Table 7  
Readership of News and Editorial Topics  
by Sex\*

\*How to read this table: The first item listed under "Men" indicates that the average item dealing with an accident, disaster or natural phenomenon is seen or read by 37% of all male readers.

#### Most Widely Read Topics

##### Men:

Accidents, disasters, natural phenomena (37%)  
U.S. Government, Vietnam, armaments (36%)  
Taxes (34%)  
Crime (33%)  
Letters to the editor (31%)

##### Women:

Accidents, disasters, natural phenomena (41%)  
Letters to the editor (38%)  
Advice Columns (38%)  
Obituaries (37%)  
General non-local human interest (35%)

#### Least Widely Read Topics

##### Men:

Puzzles, horoscope (13%)  
Entertainers, Hollywood news (14%)

##### Women:

Sports (7%)  
Business news, commerce (15%)

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<b>Men:</b>	<b>Women:</b>
Fashion, society, etc., (15%)	Political columns (17%)
Food, home, garden (17%)	Education, school news (21%)
TV/radio logs (19%)	Cultural events, reviews (21%)

In contrast, the five least popular subject categories for men contain nothing that is on the least popular list for women. Men are least likely to look at items like puzzles and horoscopes or news of Hollywood and entertainers, while women show the least interest in sports and business.

### **Readership by Age**

The cliché that comics serve as an introduction to newspaper readership may be well founded. Comic strips are read more often by the 18-24 age group than is any other kind of content. But they do not rate among the five most popular types of content for any of the older age groups. The youngest adult age group is also more interested in news of entertainers than is any other age group. (Table 8)

Table 8

#### **Readership of News and Editorial Topics by Age**

##### **Most Widely Read Topics**

<b>18-24 years:</b>	<b>35-49 years:</b>
Comics (42%)	General non-local human interest (39%)
Accidents, disasters, natural phenomena (32%)	Accidents, disasters, etc. (37%)
Letters to the editor (29%)	Letters to the editor (37%)
General non-local human interest (28%)	Public health, welfare (36%)
Entertainers, Hollywood news (26%)	Travel (35%)
<b>25-34 years:</b>	<b>50 years or more:</b>
Taxes (39%)	Accidents, disasters, etc. (43%)
Accidents, disasters, etc. (38%)	Letters to the editor (42%)
Labor, wages (35%)	Obituaries (41%)
Weather (33%)	Crime (36%)
Crime (32%)	Public health, welfare (35%)

##### **Least Widely Read Topics**

<b>18-24 years:</b>	<b>35-49 years:</b>
Gossip columns (6%)	Puzzles, horoscope (17%)
Business, commerce (9%)	Sports (17%)
Taxes (12%)	Weather (17%)
Education, school news (14%)	Entertainers, Hollywood news (18%)
Obituaries (15%)	International, diplomatic news (19%)
<b>25-34 years:</b>	<b>50 years or more:</b>
Puzzles, horoscope (13%)	Sports (12%)

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25-34 years	50 years or more :
Political columns (15%)	Puzzles, horoscope (18%)
TV/radio logs (16%)	Entertainers, Hollywood news (18%)
Cultural events, reviews (17%)	Business, commerce (19%)
Science, invention (18%)	Comics (21%)

Between the 18-24 age group and the 25-34 age group, there is a dramatic change in readership which may reflect the end of a relatively carefree time in life and the assumption of family and financial responsibilities. The 25-34 year olds appear to be most involved with practical, everyday information such as taxes, weather, and news about labor and wages.

Obituaries are among the five most popular kinds of content for only people who are 50 or older. For the 18-24 age group, obituaries are among the least popular items. Similarly, the comic strips which may have served as an introduction to newspaper reading are among the least popular items for people who are 50 or older.

One type of item makes the most-often-read list for all four of the adult age groups. It is accidents and disasters, including natural disasters. One of the most popular types of content for three of the four age groups is letters to the editor.

#### Readership by Race

Overall, the proportion of news and editorial items read by Black readers is within two percentage points of the comparable figures for Whites. It should be kept in mind, however, that the figures reported in this study are for only Blacks and Whites who read a newspaper "yesterday", not for the entire adult population. (Table 9)

Table 9  
Readership of News and Editorial Content  
by Race

	All Readers	White	Black
General local news	25%	26%	19%
State and local government	26	26	26
Vietnam (not U.S. govt.) other wars, rebellions	27	28	14
U.S. government (Vietnam) armaments, defense	30	31	15
International diplomatic news (U.S. and foreign)	22	22	26
U.S. Government, domestic	27	27	27
Crime	33	33	31
Education, school news	22	21	31
Comics	29	29	29

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	All Readers	White	Black
Cultural events, reviews	21	21	22
Public health, welfare	31	31	43
Puzzles, horoscopes	17	17	19
Accidents, disasters, natural phenomena	39	39	25
Social problems, protest	30	32	6
Obituaries	32	33	24
Labor, wages	26	25	44
Environment	27	28	19
General non-local human interest	33	33	46
Racial news, minorities (peaceful)	29	29	30
TV/radio logs	21	20	24
Weather	24	23	40
Science, invention	25	25	6
Travel	25	26	18
Taxes	31	31	40
Entertainers, Hollywood news	21	22	8
Letters to the editor	35	37	6
Religion	28	28	29
Sports	15	14	29
Business, finance	18	18	16
Fashion, society, etc.	24	25	10
Food, home, garden	22	23	12
Advice columns	32	32	29
Political columns	20	20	...
Humor columns	23	24	14
Gossip columns	24	25	12
ALL ITEMS	24	25	23

The figures for Blacks and Whites are very similar for several types of content, including domestic activities of the federal government, crime, comics, cultural events and reviews, puzzles and horoscopes, and religion.

In spite of these similarities, the reading patterns of Blacks and Whites vary considerably for some kinds of content. The newspaper reading of Blacks seems to be much more selective, so there is a wider spread in readership between the most popular topics and the least popular topics than there is for Whites.

Among the most widely read items for Blacks are those with an immediate relevance for everyday living -- labor and wages, public health and welfare, taxes, and weather.

The category "social problems, protest" was among the

types of content least widely read by Blacks, but at the time of the study there were no prominent national stories in this category involving racial issues.

Subject categories that get more readership among Whites than Blacks include Vietnam and other wars, U.S. armaments and defense, accidents and disasters, social problems-protest, science and invention, entertainers, letters to the editor, fashion and society, food-home-garden, humor columns, and gossip columns.

Subject categories having greater readership among Blacks include education and schools, public health and welfare, labor and wages, non-local human interest, weather, and sports.

### Readership by Education

Some of the readership differences between groups with different amounts of formal education may reflect that among adults college-educated people tend to be younger than those with less than a high school education.

Apart from differences which may be age-related, there are indications that higher education may be associated with a broader world view, somewhat less interest in the sensational, and a more abstract, less personalized orientation. Crime and human interest stories are among the most widely read items for those at the lower educational levels. Among the college-educated, these topics are replaced on the most popular list by issues such as Vietnam, public health and welfare, and the federal government. (Table 10)

Table 10  
Readership of News and Editorial Topics  
by Education

#### Most Widely Read Topics

Did not Graduate  
High School  
Accidents, disaster, natural  
phenomena (43%)  
Obituaries (41%)  
Crime (36%)  
General non-local human  
interest (36%)  
Taxes (34%)

*(continued from preceding page)*

**High School  
Graduate**

Accidents, disaster, etc. (37%)  
Advice columns (34%)  
Social problems, protect (32%)  
Crime (31%)  
General human interest (30%)

**Least Widely Read Topics**

**Did Not Graduate  
High School**

Sports (11%)  
Entertainers, Hollywood  
news (13%)  
Science, invention (14%)  
Political columns (16%)  
Education, school news (17%)

**High School  
Graduate**

Business, finance (15%)  
Sports (16%)  
Puzzle, horoscope (17%)  
International, diplomatic  
news (19%)  
Education, school news (19%)

**Some College  
or More**

Accidents, disasters,  
etc. (38%)  
U.S. Government, Vietnam  
armaments (37%)  
Public health, welfare (37%)  
Vietnam, not U.S.  
Government (34%)  
U.S. Government domestic (34%)

**Some College  
or More**

Puzzle, horoscope (12%)  
Sports (18%)  
TV/radio logs (18%)  
Food, home, garden (18%)  
Fashion, society, etc. (19%)

### **Frequency of Clipping Items**

More than half (56%) of all adults report clipping one or more news or editorial items within the past three months. More women (67%) than men (45%) clip editorial items. The level of item clipping is fairly constant among adults of all ages.

Among the college-educated, more than seven out of ten clipped one or more items, as compared with only one-third of those having no more than a grade school education. The clipping of items also tends to increase with family income, rising from about the 50% level among people with incomes of less than \$7,500 to 67% of those with incomes of \$15,000 or more.

Among the employed, those in professional, technical and managerial positions, show the highest incidence of item clipping -- 67%. However, housewives are equally likely to clip editorial items.

### **Agreement with Newspapers' Views**

Respondents were asked about the extent of their general agreement with their "usual" newspaper's views and politics, with no specific reference to editorial endorsements of political candidates. Their answers do not reflect an intensive investigation into the public's attitudes toward the press, but nevertheless they provide some general guidance on the level of overall satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the viewpoints, expressed by newspapers.

On this basis, it can be said that people are largely likely to express agreement with their newspapers; three quarters of the papers (74%) that are "usually" read are seen by people who say they generally or sometimes agree with the editorial positions expressed. Generally, the further the matter is from home, the more the agreement; 55% support the newspapers' position on local politics, 62% on national issues, and this crests to 67% on world events.

While there are no great differences by demographic characteristics -- presumably if people were in strong and total opposition to a paper they would mostly cease to be regular readers -- a few weak trends emerge. The young, 18-24, express somewhat more disagreement with their papers, especially on their general editorial viewpoint and on national issues. Blacks are less likely than whites to express general support of their papers' editorial positions, but are more likely than whites to support their papers' stand on world events. The highest income group, \$15,000 and over, tends generally to be more critical, as does the college

educated group, though except for the area of local politics, a agreement with the newspaper viewpoint is substantially greater than is disagreement.

### “Yesterday’s” Television News Viewing

In this study a principal concern was to obtain some estimate of the number of people who view any TV news program (local or network) on an average day. This exclusive focus on news programs is dictated by the recognition that this particular kind of television program most nearly resembles the daily newspaper in its objectives, format and content, so that it is more equitable to compare daily newspapers with news programs than to compare newspapers with such mixed TV fare as soap operas, westerns and variety shows.

Early in both the first and second waves of the study respondents were asked: “Did you happen to watch the TV news yesterday? (IF YES) At what time was this news on?” Responses to these questions indicated that 48% of the adult population view some television news program on an average weekday. (Table 11)

**Table 11**  
**TV News Viewing “Yesterday”**  
**by Sex**

	All Respondents	Male	Female
Total watching TV news “yesterday”	48%	49%	48%
Watched before noon	5	4	6
Watched noon - 5 p.m.	7	4	9
Watched 5-9 p.m.	27	27	27
Watched after 9 p.m.	25	26	25

This figure is consonant with findings reported in Volume IV of the U.S. Surgeon General’s Report on Television and Social Behavior. A large-scale national survey by W. R. Simmons found that “on an average weekday, 25% of adult men and 22% of adult women reported watching the evening national news programs” of ABC, CBS, or NBC. The 48% figure obtained in the current study includes viewing of morning and evening network news programs plus local television newscasts.

The proportion viewing ranges from 5% in the forenoon to 27% in the early evening (5 to 9 p.m.). Overall, the percentages of men and women who view are almost identical, but men are somewhat less likely to be daytime TV

news viewers.

Television news viewing is more common among the old than among the young. "Yesterday's" viewing figure for those 65 or older is 62%, as compared with only 42% of those 18 to 24. (Table 12)

Table 12  
TV News Viewing "Yesterday"  
by Education, Age, and Household Income

	Age
Education	18-24 (42%)
Grade school (43%)	25-34 (43%)
Some high school (45%)	35-49 (46%)
High school graduate (48%)	50-64 (51%)
Some college or more (53%)	65 or older (62%)
<b>Household Income</b>	
	Less than \$5,000 (48%)
	\$5,000-\$7,499 (49%)
	\$7,500-\$9,999 (42%)
	\$10,000-\$14,999 (49%)
	\$15,000 or more (51%)

Higher education is associated with a higher incidence of television news viewing, just as it is associated with higher than average newspaper reading. Among the college-educated, 53% reported viewing at least one TV news program yesterday, but only 43% of those with grade school backgrounds identified themselves as viewers.

News viewing shows no clear-cut pattern in relation to family income. Students, retired persons and those out of work view TV news programs more than employed people do. Differences in daytime news viewing do not fully explain this finding. Even in the 5 to 9 p.m. time period, 38% of those outside the work force reported watching, as compared with only one-fourth of the employed.

Those who reported reading two or more newspapers showed a higher incidence of TV news viewing than did those who read only one of the newspapers they were asked about. Moreover, those who reported reading no newspapers showed the lowest incidence of TV news viewing. (Table 13)

Table 13  
TV News Viewing "Yesterday"  
by Number of Newspapers Read "Yesterday"

	Two or More	One	None
Total Viewing	57%	51%	40%
Before noon	7	5	3
Noon - 5 p.m.	12	7	5
5 - 9 p.m.	33	28	23
After 9 p.m.	30	27	20

On an average weekday, the number of people reached *only* by newspapers is much larger than the number reached *only* by TV news programs. "Yesterday" a third of the adult population read a newspaper but did not watch any TV news program. In contrast, only 12% were exposed to some TV news program buy not to a newspaper.

Converting newspaper reading and television news viewing to a common index by setting the average "yesterday" exposure for both media at 100 reveals similar patterns in the relative levels of reading or viewing within various population groups. The college-educated and older adults are more likely to read newspapers and to see TV news programs than are young adults or people with only grade school educations.

In spite of the overall similarities between patterns of newspaper reading and TV news viewing, there are two notable differences. People with family incomes of less than \$5,000 are the least likely of all income groups to report reading a daily newspaper yesterday, but the percentage of this group viewing TV news is identical to the percentage for the entire sample. A second difference is that yesterday readership of the daily newspaper remains fairly constant after age 50, at a level 10% above the average for all age groups, while TV news viewing is much higher among those 65 or older than it is for any other age group. These exceptions to the generally similar patterns of reading and viewing may reflect the greater viewing of TV programs of almost all kinds among the old and the poor rather than a specific interest in TV news programs as such.

### News and Editorial Content of Morning and Evening Newspapers

Any attempt to compare morning and evening newspapers must take into account the strong relationship between time of publication and city size. Morning papers are mostly located in large cities, while evening papers are more likely to be in suburbs and small cities. In this study, for instance, *all* of the newspapers with less than 5,000 circulation were evening publications, but among the dailies with more than 500,000 circulation, 73% were morning papers. Therefore, any apparent differences between morning and evening papers reflect the influence of other factors in addition to the time of publication as such.

On the whole, the content of morning and evening newspapers is very similar. An examination of the proportion

of items devoted to a particular topic shows that in 16 out of 36 content categories, the variation between morning and evening dailies is a meaningless one-tenth of one percentage point or less. (Table 14)

Table 14  
Distribution of News and Editorial Content  
by Time of Publication

	Morning	Evening
General local news	6.2%	8.1%
State and local govt.	5.3	5.5
Vietnam (not U.S. Govt.)		
other wars, rebellions	4.4	4.5
U.S. Government (Vietnam)		
armaments, defense	2.8	2.7
International, diplomatic		
news (U.S., foreign)	3.3	2.8
U.S. government, domestic	7.6	6.5
Crime	4.0	3.8
Education, school news	3.0	3.5
Comics	2.4	2.4
Cultural events, reviews	2.6	2.6
Public health, welfare	2.4	2.4
Puzzles, horoscopes	2.0	2.7
Accidents, disasters,		
natural phenomena	2.4	2.3
Social problems, protest	2.0	2.2
Obituaries	1.8	2.3
Labor, wages	2.1	1.7
Environment	1.5	1.6
General non-local human		
interest	1.4	1.2
Racial news, minorities		
(peaceful)	1.5	1.0
TV/radio logs	1.2	1.2
Weather	1.1	1.1
Science, invention	1.0	1.1
Travel	0.9	1.0
Taxes	1.0	0.9
Entertainers, Hollywood news	0.9	1.0
Letters to the editor	0.7	0.6
Religion	0.6	0.6
Sports	15.7	13.3
Business, finance	8.2	6.1
Fashion, society, etc.	2.8	4.6
Food, home, garden	1.0	1.8
Advice columns	2.7	3.3
Political columns	1.2	1.0
Humor columns	0.7	0.9
Gossip columns	0.5	0.2

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Since one of the goals of the study was a reliable estimate of the frequency of newspaper reading, interviewing was conducted in two waves approximately one week apart. In the second wave, up to three callbacks were made in an attempt to recontact everyone interviewed in the first wave. These measures also enabled the researchers to estimate the cumulative audience (or "reach") of newspapers over a period of five days.

A total of 1,714 respondents were interviewed in the first wave; 1,102 of these were reinterviewed. The data were collected June 15-19 and 22-26, 1971.

### Analysis of News and Editorial Content

Unlike some previous studies of news and editorial content, this research employed a coding system based on the content of entire items, not on headlines alone.

All news and editorial items of 75 agate lines (approximately 5½ column-inches) or more were coded. An analysis of a sub-sample of randomly selected newspaper pages indicated that the average page contains 3.6 news and editorial items of such length and 1.6 shorter items, so this study includes the bulk of news and editorial content.

A detailed summary of the major findings of the study follows:

### Reach and Frequency of Daily Newspaper Reading

The first measurement ever made of the total reach of the daily newspaper as a national medium was carried out by Audits and Surveys in 1961. At that time, 79% of all adults, age 21 and older, read one or more newspapers "yesterday." A number of studies of national probability samples made since that time by various researchers have produced remarkably consistent results, with the figure for "yesterday" reading rarely straying more than one or two percentage points from that obtained in 1961.

This study employed a slightly broader definition of "adult." Even so, with people age 18 to 20 included, essentially the same one-day audience figure emerged: 77.4%

Men are slightly more likely than women (79% to 76%) to have read a newspaper yesterday. (Table 1) As education goes up, so does the reading of the daily newspaper. Among college graduates, 88% read yesterday, compared to 70% of those who did not go beyond the eighth grade.

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	Morning	Evening
Racial news, minorities (peaceful)	28	28
TV/radio logs	22	21
Weather	27	23
Science, invention	28	23
Travel	26	24
Taxes	36	28
Entertainers, Hollywood news	19	22
Letters to the editor	32	37
Religion	26	29
Sports	13	17
Business, finance	15	21
Fashion, society, etc.	24	27
Food, home, garden	27	20
Advice columns	30	33
Political columns	16	23
Humor columns	24	23
Gossip columns	29	19
ALL ITEMS	24	25

Some of the content categories used for this analysis were better read in the morning papers, while others were better read in the evening papers. Content that seems to be favored by morning paper readers includes news of the federal government, obituaries, weather, science and invention, taxes, food-home-garden, and gossip columns. Topics that appear to be more popular among readers of evening papers include accidents and disasters, environment, non-local human interest, letters to the editor, sports, business, and political columns.

While the morning papers contain a somewhat higher percentage of "men's interest" items, reported readership for both sports and business is higher in the evening papers. In the area of "women's interest," fashion and society items are more widely read in the evening papers, but food, home and garden content receives more attention in the morning papers.

As previously stated, morning and evening papers differ in meaningful respects besides times of publication, so that they cannot be treated as otherwise comparable. In particular, the morning papers tend to have larger circulations, to be found in larger cities, and to have a greater number of pages. This suggests that the needs and interests of their readers are somewhat different, so the moderate differences as to readership of different types of content may not be a function of the time of publication.