
Georgia

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We collected quantitative data and interviewed local stakeholders for 10 news and information ecosystems, including eight states (Arizona, Colorado, Georgia, Michigan with a focus on Detroit, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, and Oklahoma) and two cities (Chicago and Washington, D.C.). This report is an analysis of the baseline health of these news and information ecosystems, with a focus on the intersection of media and democracy. This chapter lays out the findings for the Georgia news and information ecosystem. For a detailed explanation of overall research methods and limitations, see the [Introduction](#).

Summary

Georgia has a wide array of community news and information providers, growing infrastructure to support local news, and some signs of increased civic engagement, including greater attention to and high participation in the most recent presidential and midterm elections. However, quantitative data and information from local stakeholders indicated issues around trust in media in the state. Additionally, many news organizations are clustered in and around metro Atlanta, but other parts of the state, and rural communities in particular, are often not as well served. And while the state has received significant attention in conversations about national elections, and stakeholders noted that residents do rally around national issues, they also felt that civic engagement overall was not particularly high. Nonprofit news outlet Atlanta Civic Circle reported on a disparity in participation in national and local contests, citing local Atlanta races where participation has declined in recent years.¹ Declining local election participation amid increased national turnout could suggest that Atlanta residents are more focused on national news and issues or that local stories are often placed in a national context.

Georgia's electorate was key in determining control of the Senate in the 2022 midterm election, and voters set an all-time high for early voting turnout in the state.² However, researchers noted a widening racial gap in voter turnout — the Brennan Center for Justice published research showing turnout among non-white voters in Georgia fell in the 2022 midterms.³ Other measures of civic engagement, including data from the 2022 Harvard Cooperative Election Study

1 Ryan Zickgraf, "What's missing in the praise for Georgia voters' big turnout in 2022," Atlanta Civic Circle, <https://atlantacivic-circle.org/2023/05/30/whats-missing-in-the-praise-for-georgia-voters-big-turnout-in-2022/>.

2 "Georgia Voters Set All-Time Midterm Early Turnout Record," Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, Georgia Secretary of State, published November 5, 2022, <https://sos.ga.gov/news/georgia-voters-set-all-time-midterm-early-turnout-record>.

3 Sara Loving and Kevin Morris, "Georgia's Racial Turnout Gap Grew in 2022," Brennan Center for Justice, Brennan Center for Justice at NYU Law, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/georgias-racial-turnout-gap-grew-2022>.

(CES), show non-voting civic participation in the state just below national levels.⁴ Stakeholders said that Georgians are not always consistently engaged on the national or local level, but noted that participation varies widely across different geographic and demographic communities in the state.

Quantitative data and conversations with local stakeholders suggest Georgians may also not be getting the information they need to encourage greater civic participation due to a lack of local coverage for their area, distrust of their existing local outlets, or distrust of the media more broadly.

Georgia is a diverse state, with nearly one-third of residents identifying as Black or African American, compared to 13.6% nationally, according to data from the 2022 American Communities Survey.⁵ Georgia also has a large Hispanic or Latino population at 10.5%, though this is smaller than the national average.⁶ The state has many community news and information providers, ranging from legacy newspapers serving Black and African American audiences to digital-only newsletters to local Facebook groups with thousands of members. We found 43 community news and information sources in our research, though we know that existing lists and databases do not capture every outlet — especially when it comes to community media — so this count is not comprehensive.⁷ Stakeholders noted that non-traditional community news sources are often under-resourced and have sometimes been overlooked or excluded from conversations about collaboration, funding, or other ecosystem-wide topics. With that in mind, the ecosystem might benefit from further research to identify and understand what news sources communities are relying on in order to ensure they are included in important conversations and in lists of local news organizations in the state. Many community news sources in Georgia got their start on social media and may not fall into traditional format categories like newspapers or broadcast media.

Community news and information providers have often gotten their start because their founders noticed gaps in the news landscape, stakeholders noted. Some Georgians do not have high levels of trust in local media — particularly when it comes to legacy news outlets — due to harmful coverage of their communities. In some cases distrust or disenfranchisement is driven by a continued feeling that reporting on issues important to some communities is not fair or depicts those communities negatively, or that outlets are primarily focused on garnering clicks rather than providing information most needed by their audience.

4 Schaffner, Brian, Stephen Ansolabehere, and Marissa Shih. “Cooperative Election Study Common Content, 2022.” Harvard Dataverse, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/PR4L8P>.

5 “U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Georgia,” United States Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/GA/PST045223>.

6 United States Census Bureau, “U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Georgia.”

7 We searched databases and resources from the State of Local News Project, the Center for Community Media, Corporation for Public Broadcasting, National Federation of Community Broadcasters, and local broadcast affiliate lists.

Additionally, while Metro Atlanta and cities in the state are often better-served, rural communities receive less coverage, and outlets based in those areas have difficulty recruiting talent. Roughly a quarter of Georgia's population resides in rural areas, almost six percentage points more than the national figure.⁸ Some of Georgia's rural counties lack robust county government websites, potentially contributing to a lack of access to information that might help residents stay up to date about local issues and motivate them to get involved.

Despite these challenges, Georgia's ecosystem has seen a number of new projects and networks spring up in recent years. Organizations like 285 South, a publication that started on Substack and covers immigrant and refugee communities in metro Atlanta, and Pasa La Voz Savannah, a nonprofit Spanish-language outlet, have worked to fill gaps in the ecosystem and meet their audiences where they are. Georgia Trust for Local News, a subsidiary of the National Trust for Local News, launched in January 2024 and is working to support and revitalize 19 local newspapers in middle and south Georgia. Georgia Trust launched a new outlet, The Macon Melody, in June. The Georgia ecosystem is supported by the Georgia News Collaborative for editorial collaborations, as well as The Pivot Fund, an Atlanta-based funder and backbone organization. The Pivot Fund conducted a landscape analysis for the Georgia news ecosystem in fall 2023, in partnership with the Georgia News Collaborative.

This chapter presents Georgia at a glance with topline information about the state's community, information providers, and civic engagement and voting, then dives deep into each of these areas, pulling on both quantitative data and information gathered through interviews and primary research.

8 "Urban and Rural," United States Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/geography/guidance/geo-areas/urban-rural.html>.

Opportunities

Support for community information providers:

Non-traditional, startup, and small community media outlets might benefit from more formal networks and collaboratives. This could allow for more shared learning that could be beneficial for sustainability and audience growth. It might also help ensure outlets are not passed over in conversations about major funding initiatives in the state. Additional cataloging of these kinds of information providers and inclusion in databases of news sources could help increase their visibility among local news consumers and national funders.

Meeting community information needs and building trust:

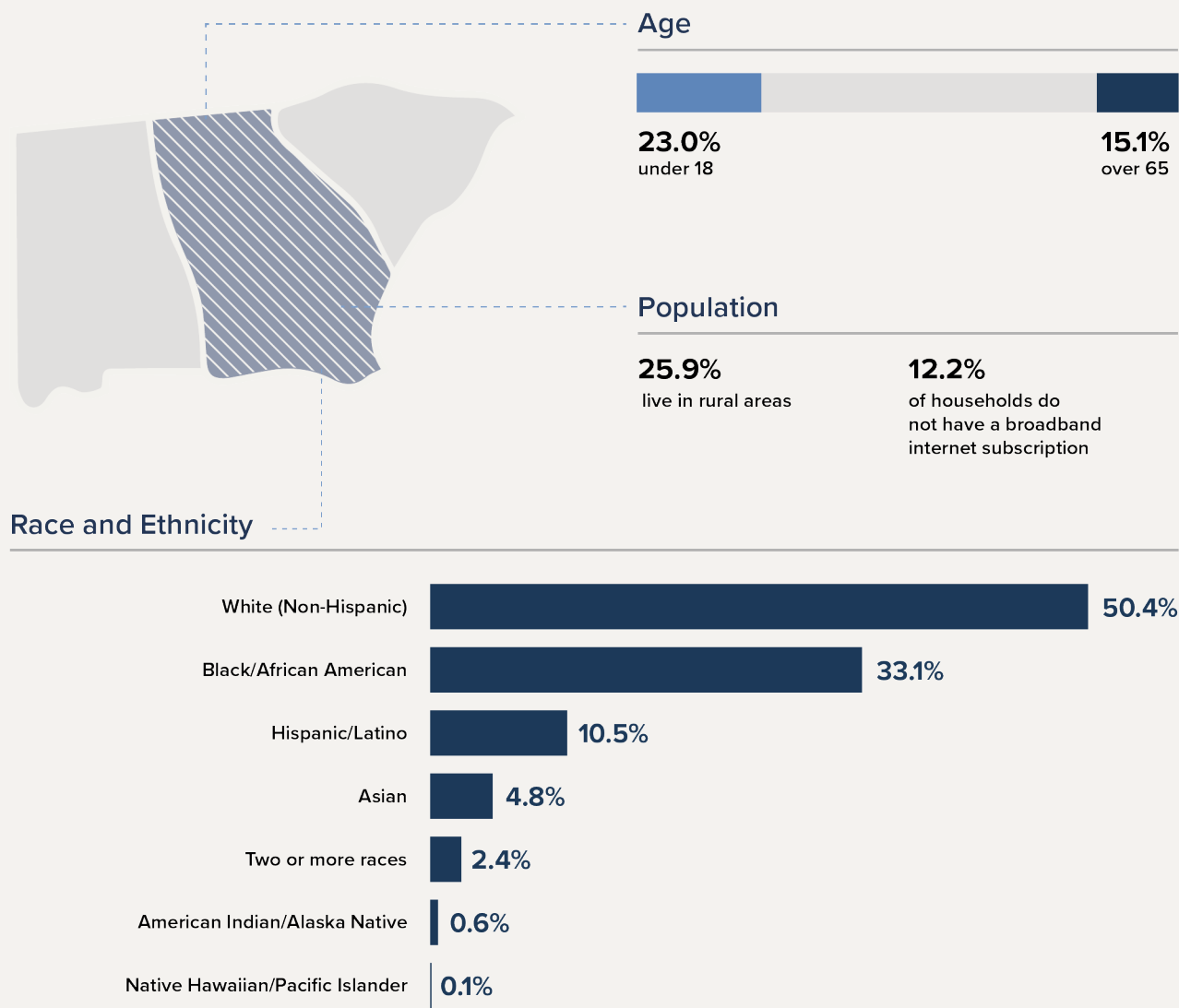
Stakeholders highlighted how existing local news outlets often do not serve Black Georgians and other communities of color, and in some cases perpetuate negative stereotypes about communities through their coverage. These issues highlight the need for more — and more support for — media for and by communities of color. Additionally, conducting public, ecosystem-wide community listening and information needs assessments could help all information providers, including legacy news organizations that have harmful past or present relationships with their communities, better understand how to build relationships with disenfranchised communities.

Georgia at a Glance

Topline indicators about Georgia’s community, information providers, and civic engagement and voting to provide broad context for its local news and information ecosystem.

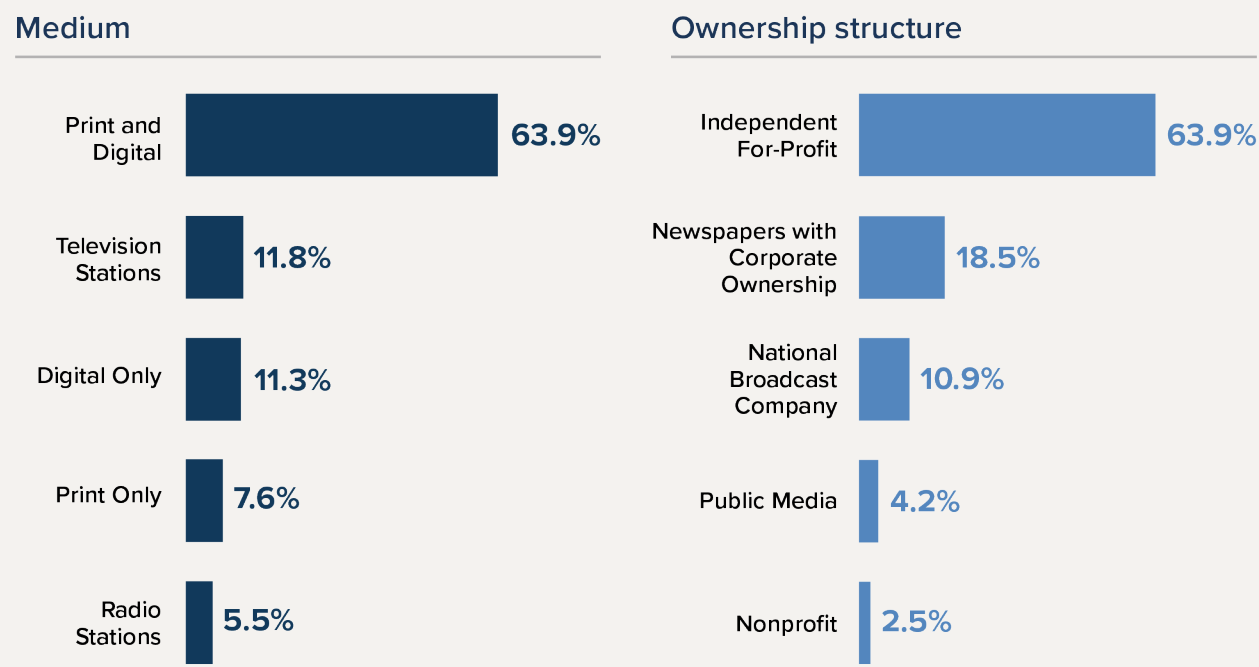
Community Indicators

Community indicators are from the state’s U.S. Census Bureau [QuickFacts](#) page and U.S. Census Urban and Rural [data](#).



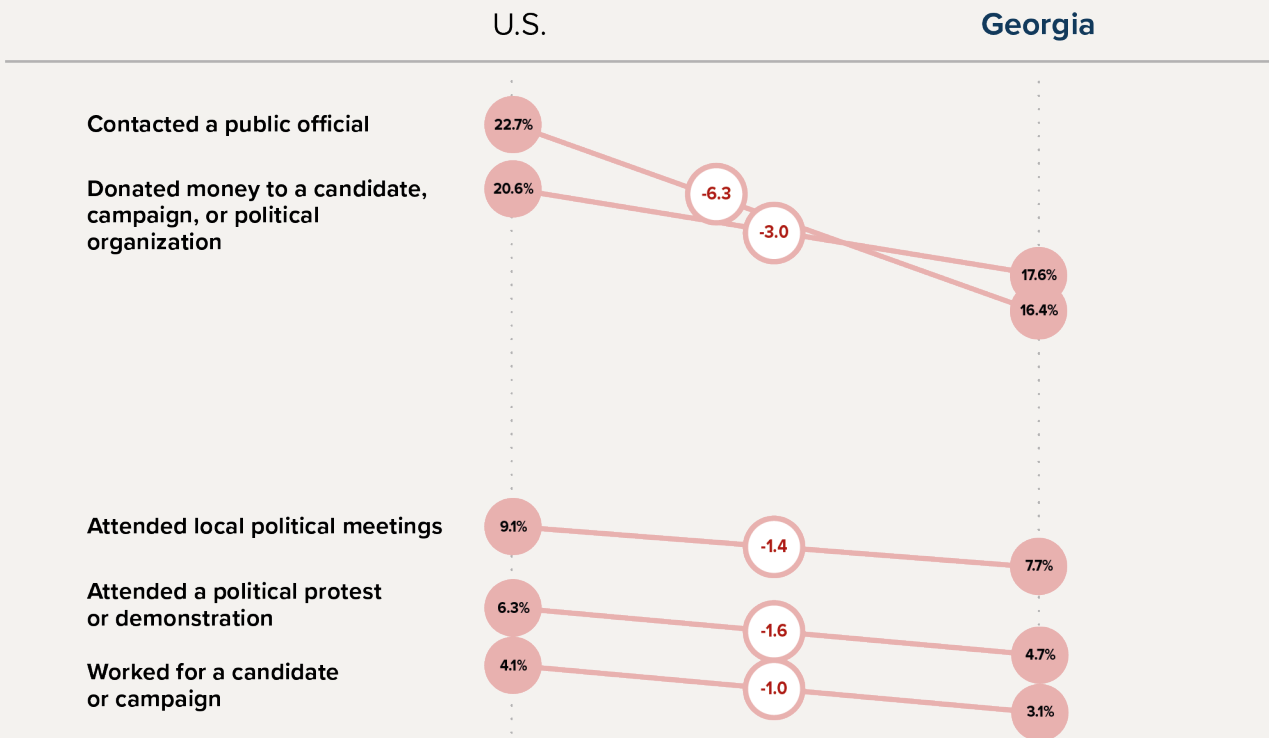
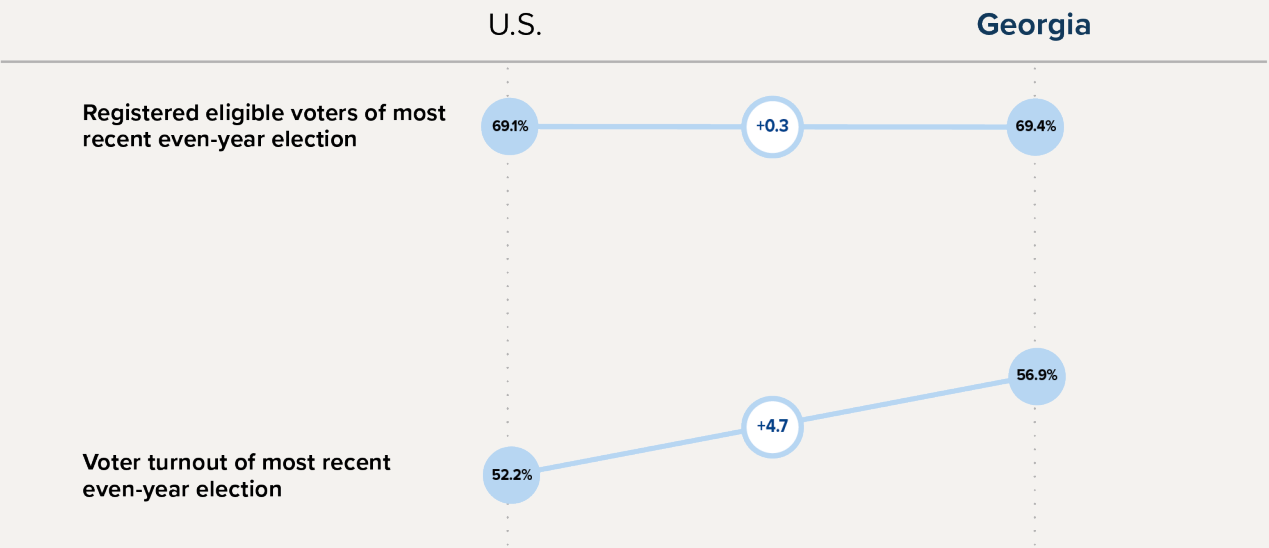
Information Providers

Data for information providers is an aggregation of information from the [State of Local News Project](#), the [Center for Community Media](#), [Corporation for Public Broadcasting](#), [National Federation of Community Broadcasters](#), local broadcast affiliate lists, and Media Impact Funders' Candid [database](#).



Civic Engagement and Voting

Civic engagement data is from the [2022 Harvard Cooperative Election Study](#) and the [U.S. Census Bureau](#).



Georgia Deep Dive

The following sections present quantitative information from a variety of publicly available data sources and qualitative information gathered through primary research and interviews with residents of Georgia to dig deeper into the current state of Georgia’s news and information ecosystem. Our findings are presented by category: civic engagement, media and democracy, information providers and community, community information needs, information providers, and diversity in newsrooms. We also present a case study about Pasa La Voz, a nonprofit Spanish-language news outlet that first launched on Facebook and now also reaches audiences through its website and WhatsApp group.

Civic Engagement

Research shows that civic engagement, including but not limited to voting, is correlated with access to quality local news and information. In this section, we rely on 2022 Harvard CES survey data, the Cost of Voting Index, voting registration and turnout data, and primary research to document the current state of civic engagement in Georgia.

Georgia’s voter turnout in the 2022 midterm election was nearly five percentage points higher than the national turnout, although other measures of civic engagement in the state fall just below national averages.⁹ However, it’s worth noting that national measures of civic engagement set a low bar, and Georgia’s Senate contest in 2022 was closely watched across the country due to its potential to determine control of the Senate. Increased attention to Georgia on the national political stage could explain the increase in voter turnout for the midterm election.

Nearly 57% of Georgia citizens voted in the 2022 midterm elections, almost five percentage points higher than the national turnout for that election.¹⁰ The percentage of registered eligible voters in Georgia (69.4%) is similar to the national number (69.1%).¹¹ Georgia’s high voter turnout in 2022 is particularly impressive as Georgia’s cost of voting index value is 0.48, indicating that voting in Georgia is more difficult than in many other U.S. states based on an

⁹ “Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2022,” United States Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/voting-and-registration/p20-586.html>.

¹⁰ United States Census Bureau, “Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2022.”

¹¹ United States Census Bureau, “Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2022.”

analysis of the state’s election laws and policies.¹² In 2021, the Georgia legislature passed SB 202, a bill that was criticized and challenged by civil rights groups and the Department of Justice, who said its provisions would make it more difficult to vote and could disproportionately impact voters of color.¹³ The law made it illegal to

provide food or water to people waiting in line to vote (though this was blocked for the 2024 election by a federal court ruling in 2023¹⁴) and limited absentee voting options, among other changes.¹⁵

Civic and community engagement	U.S.	Georgia	Difference from U.S.
% who attended local political meetings (such as school board or city council)	9.1%	7.7%	-1.4 ▼
% who donated money to a candidate, campaign, or political organization	20.6%	17.6%	-3.0 ▼
% who attended a political protest, march or demonstration	6.3%	4.7%	-1.6 ▼
% who contacted a public official	22.7%	16.4%	-6.3 ▼
% who worked for a candidate or campaign	4.1%	3.1%	-1.0 ▼

Data is from the 2022 Harvard Cooperative Election Study. n = 1,988

In terms of non-voting forms of civic engagement like attending local political meetings, attending protests, and working for a campaign, Georgia residents participate at rates close to the national average. However, significantly fewer surveyed Georgia residents (16.4%) said they had contacted a public official in the past year compared to a national percentage of 22.7%, and only 17.6% donated money to a candidate or political organization, compared to 20.6% of all surveyed U.S. residents.¹⁶ A 2023 assessment of civic health in Georgia, published by the National Conference on Citizenship, ranked Georgia in the middle of the 50 states and D.C. when it came to indicators such as donating to a political organization, voter turnout, and attending a public meeting.¹⁷ According to the report, Georgia falls below national averages for many metrics related to discussion of political issues, donating time or money, and helping or spending time with community members.¹⁸ The report also suggests that Georgians are engaging with news related to civic issues at low levels relative to other U.S. states. Georgia ranks 51st out of 51 in terms of whether residents “frequently read, watch, or listen to news or information about political, societal, or local issues,” according to the report.¹⁹

Stakeholders shared that, while there may not be a sustained, high level of civic engagement every day, Georgia residents come together around national cultural and political issues. Stakeholders described Georgia communities

12 Schraufnagel, Scot, Michael J. Pomante, and Quan Li. “Cost of Voting in the American States: 2022*.” *Election Law Journal: Rules, Politics, and Policy* 21, no. 3 (2022): 220–28. <https://doi.org/10.1089/elj.2022.0041>.

13 Aaron Mendelson, “Voting rights under attack in Georgia as state turns purple,” *The Center for Public Integrity*, October 6, 2022, <https://publicintegrity.org/politics/elections/who-counts/voting-rights-under-attack-in-georgia-as-state-turns-purple/>.

14 “Federal Court Sides with Civil Rights Groups and Lifts Georgia’s Ban on Line Relief and Birthdate Requirement on Absentee Ballot Envelopes for 2024 Elections,” *ACLU, American Civil Liberties Union*, published August 18, 2023, <https://www.aclu.org/press-releases/federal-court-sides-with-civil-rights-groups-and-lifts-georgias-ban-on-line-relief-and-birthdate-requirement-on-absentee-ballot-envelopes-for-2024-elections>.

15 Mendelson, “Voting rights under attack in Georgia as state turns purple.”

16 Schaffner, Ansolabehere, and Shih, “Cooperative Election Study Common Content, 2022.”

17 “2023 Georgia Civic Health Index,” *National Conference on Citizenship*, published December 13, 2023, p. 6, <https://ncoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/2023-Georgia-Civic-Health-Index.pdf>.

18 National Conference on Citizenship, “2023 Georgia Civic Health Index,” p. 6.

19 National Conference on Citizenship, “2023 Georgia Civic Health Index,” p. 6.

organizing in summer 2020 following the murder of George Floyd and again in 2020 and 2022 around the election. On the local level, some stakeholders said that Georgians are not regularly engaged across the board, but they will turn out for public meetings or seek other avenues for ensuring their voices are heard for the issues that impact them and their communities. Other stakeholders noted challenges with working across organizations and building cross-sector coalitions. “I think the engagement level is high, but I also think it’s highly siloed, unfortunately,” said Staci Fox, president and CEO of Georgia Budget and Policy Institute. She also described shifts in the landscape of civic engagement due in part to cycles of giving, noting that giving ramps up during an election cycle and falls during off years, sometimes preventing organizations from building on their work year over year. “There’s not equitable investment off cycle to allow people to sustain work, and so we’re dealing with that right now — a lot of leadership changes have happened, a lot less resources to work with, and it kind of feels a little bit to me like starting over,” she said.

Unsurprisingly, civic engagement varies across different geographic and demographic communities. One stakeholder described strong civic engagement in their metro Atlanta community, with residents participating in neighborhood meetings and engaging with community Facebook groups that provided information on how to get involved. However, they noted that fragmented information infrastructure is a challenge and can result in people not getting information they need to be more civically engaged on the local level.

We did not find comprehensive quantitative data regarding the impact of a fragmented information infrastructure in Georgia, and more research is needed to determine how this is affecting information access and what resources are needed to strengthen and raise the profile of existing information providers. However, we found some evidence of fragmentation and inconsistencies in the information infrastructure when we collected data on a sample of Georgia county government websites.²⁰ For example, the government website for Calhoun County — located in southwestern Georgia and home to a little under 17,000 people, including a large Hispanic or Latino population (27.3%)²¹ — does not include any information about past or upcoming public meetings and no details about local committees or boards, though the county appears to share more information on its Facebook page. The website also does not include built in translation resources. In Echols County — which is home to just under 3,700 residents and also has a large Hispanic or Latino population

20 In addition to a county with a large metro area, a county with two news outlets, and a county with one news outlet, our analysis included nine counties with zero outlets according to the State of Local News Project as of Jan. 5, 2024. We analyzed the county government websites for the following counties: Banks, Calhoun, Dade, Echols, Fulton, Glascock, Haralson, Macon, McIntosh, Monroe, Terrell, and Twiggs.

21 “U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Calhoun County, Georgia,” United States Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/calhouncountygeorgia/PST045223>.

(30.4%)²² — the government website similarly includes little information that would allow residents to engage in local decision-making, though it does list contact information for elected officials. Some county government websites, such as the one for Glascock County — home to less than 3,000 people²³ — appear to have no recent information about the local government. Information on government sites for other sampled counties varied in terms of the amount of materials published before and after meetings, the accessibility of meetings and meeting materials, the timeliness of meeting material publication, and the amount of detail provided about local representatives and representative bodies. Most, however, at least included the dates and times for county commissioners meetings.

Considering this environment, residents might not know where to look for information about their local governments, and journalists and other information providers might struggle to create guides for accessing resources with so much variability from community to community. One stakeholder pointed to the number of counties in Georgia as a challenge when it comes to reporting on local government. Georgia has 159 counties, the second most of any state in the country, and navigating the different structures and systems for each is time-consuming and difficult for journalists.

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Stakeholders described a variety of barriers to civic engagement, including infrastructure issues like insufficient public transportation, high poverty rates, illiteracy, and economic barriers. Stakeholders also noted the disenfranchisement of marginalized communities and, in some cases, how legacy media contributed to this disenfranchisement. One stakeholder described how the Albany Herald published negative coverage of the majority Black residents of Albany who showed up at a public meeting and expressed their disagreement with how their local representatives planned to use federal pandemic aid dollars. The representatives ended the meeting and later held a new one, which community members were barred from attending, the stakeholder said. This incident highlights a continued need for information providers that amplify Black voices, especially in towns and cities where existing outlets exclude Black community members and perpetuate harmful stereotypes.

²² “U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Echols County, Georgia,” United States Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/quick-facts/fact/table/echolscountygeorgia/PST045223>.

²³ “U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Glascock County, Georgia,” United States Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/quick-facts/fact/table/glascockcountygeorgia/PST045223>.

Media and Democracy

This section explores the relationship between the media in Georgia and democratic institutions. A key way we explore this is through press freedom in the state, which we define as the press's ability to access government information and to conduct its work without physical harm or intimidation.

Georgia journalists and other residents have faced structural challenges to press freedom and information access. Similar to other legislatures included in this report, Georgia's General Assembly exempted itself from the state open records act, according to reporting from Axios.²⁴ Stakeholders noted that Georgia's open records laws are not the strongest, and that access to public records varies significantly depending on the municipality or agency in question. Rural areas are often unable or slow to fulfill records requests due to understaffing or inexperience, stakeholders said.

A search of the Press Freedom Tracker for incidents from 2022 and 2023 pulled up four instances of physical intimidation and five regulatory incidents.²⁵ These incidents ranged from injury and detainment of reporters at protests to subpoenas of reporters and news outlets during the grand jury investigation into alleged election interference on the part of the Trump campaign.

Journalists have also been arrested or detained while covering protests against the proposed Atlanta police training facility, sometimes referred to as "cop city." A filmmaker arrested in 2021 while filming a protest outside a city councilmember's home filed a lawsuit against the city and the police.²⁶ In 2022, another filmmaker was detained by police while filming a protest to protect forested area that would be cut down to make way for the new training facility.²⁷ The filmmaker filed a lawsuit against the city and several police officers in 2023, alleging that officers pressured him to show them or delete his footage.²⁸ And also in 2022, a freelance photojournalist was arrested while photographing the detention of training facility protestors at a Georgia State University construction site.²⁹ He filed a lawsuit against university police and the construction company in July 2024.³⁰ Access to information about the training facility has effectively been reduced in other ways besides arrests and detentions of individual journalists. In May 2024, the dean of the University of Georgia's law school ordered the school's first amendment

24 Thomas Wheatley, "Georgia transparency law exempts General Assembly," Axios Atlanta, Axios Media, last modified March 14, 2024, <https://www.axios.com/local/atlanta/2024/03/14/georgia-open-records-foia-transparency>.

25 "The U.S. Press Freedom Tracker," U.S. Press Freedom Tracker, <https://pressfreedomtracker.us/>.

26 "Filmmaker arrested at 'Cop City' protest, sues Atlanta and police," U.S. Press Freedom Tracker, <https://pressfreedomtracker.us/all-incidents/filmmaker-arrested-at-cop-city-protest-sues-atlanta-and-police/>.

27 "Filmmaker detained, pressured to delete footage," U.S. Press Freedom Tracker, <https://pressfreedomtracker.us/all-incidents/filmmaker-detained-pressured-to-delete-footage/>.

28 U.S. Press Freedom Tracker, "Filmmaker detained, pressured to delete footage."

29 Rob DiRienzo, "Photojournalist sues GSU police after they arrest him for taking pictures," Fox5 Atlanta, FOX Television Stations, published July 8, 2024, <https://www.fox5atlanta.com/news/photojournalist-sues-gsu-police-after-arrest-him-taking-pictures>.

30 DiRienzo, "Photojournalist sues GSU police after they arrest him for taking pictures."

clinic, which provides free legal assistance to journalists and newsrooms, to stop work related to public records law, according to The Guardian.³¹ This work included a lawsuit against the Atlanta Police Foundation — the organization behind the police training facility — filed by a local news outlet and a research organization after their information requests went unfilled.³²

While just one hyperpartisan news outlet, the conservative outlet Georgia Business Daily based in Atlanta, is listed on a 2020 map by researcher Jessica Mahone and Philip Napoli, local stakeholders have indicated that “pink slime” outlets are a problem in Georgia.³³ According to the 2023 Georgia News Landscape Analysis, there are 30 sites in Georgia owned by Metric Media,³⁴ a network of news organizations that a Tow Center investigation found “promotes interests of advocacy groups without explicit disclosures” and often doesn’t cover important local events.³⁵ Updated mapping of “hyperpartisan” and “pink slime” outlets across the ecosystems might be useful for understanding and comparing the landscape of partisan news sources. However, pink slime outlets often rely on aggregated information from other websites or AI-generated content, allowing them to operate with little to no staff and to be run by organizations based outside of the areas they supposedly cover.³⁶ This could make it tricky to maintain up-to-date lists of pink slime outlets since they can launch — or shut down — quickly relative to regular news outlets.

Information Providers and Community

In this section, we analyzed survey data and information from interviewees to better understand Georgians’ perception of local news organizations. The 2022 Gallup/Knight American Views survey “Trust, Media and Democracy” asked a series of questions about perception of media and how respondents access the news. The survey showed that negative views of American media have grown since Gallup/Knight began tracking them in 2017, and assessed trust in local and national media across five dimensions: competency, reliability, benevolence on a societal level, benevolence on an individual-level, and integrity.

31 Timothy Pratt, “University of Georgia pulls out of ‘Cop City’ lawsuit requesting public records,” The Guardian, Guardian News & Media Limited, last modified May 17, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/article/2024/may/17/university-of-georgia-cop-city-lawsuit>.

32 Pratt, “University of Georgia pulls out of ‘Cop City’ lawsuit requesting public records.”

33 Jessica Mahone and Philip Napoli, “Hundreds of hyperpartisan sites are masquerading as local news. This map shows if there’s one near you.” NiemanLab, last modified July 13, 2020, <https://www.niemanlab.org/2020/07/hundreds-of-hyperpartisan-sites-are-masquerading-as-local-news-this-map-shows-if-theres-one-near-you/>.

34 Jean Marie Brown, Tracie Powell, Jessica Leigh Lebos, and Sheena Louise Roetman, “Georgia News Landscape Analysis,” The Pivot Fund, published April 30, 2023, pp. 10–13, <https://thepivotfund.org/georgia-news-landscape>.

35 Priyanjana Bengani, “Advocacy groups and Metric Media collaborate on local ‘community news,’” Columbia Journalism Review, last modified October 14, 2021, https://www.cjr.org/tow_center_reports/community-newsmaker-metric-media-local-news.php?preview=true.

36 Scott A. Leadingham, “Pink Slime Journalism: Separating Ethical News From Propaganda,” Freedom Forum, <https://www.freedomforum.org/pink-slime-journalism/>.

The vast majority of Georgians feel that local news outlets are equipped to report stories accurately and fairly, but fewer feel they reliably deliver the information they need, care about them and their communities, and are unbiased.³⁷

Disaggregated data showed that nearly three quarters of Georgians surveyed — nine percentage points more than the national percentage — feel that local news has the resources and opportunity to report the news accurately and fairly.³⁸ However, Georgians' trust in local news falls below the national figures across the other four dimensions measured in the survey. Trust in the integrity of local news providers is particularly low, with less than 40% of Georgians surveyed saying that local news does not intend to mislead, misinform, or persuade the public.³⁹ Given that stakeholders described some issues around historical or present-day disenfranchisement of communities by legacy outlets, it is perhaps unsurprising that measures of trust — especially regarding perceived media bias — fall below the national figures.

Information providers and community	U.S	Georgia	Difference from U.S
Local news has the resources & opportunity to report the news accurately and fairly.	65%	74.0%	9.0 ▲
Local news can be relied on to deliver the information I need.	52%	50.9%	-1.1 ▼
Local news cares about how their reporting can affect their community broadly.	53%	59.9%	-2.1 ▼
Local news cares about the best interest of their readers, viewers, and listeners.	47%	42.4%	-4.6 ▼
Local news does not intend to mislead, misinform, or persuade the public.	44%	39.0%	-5.0 ▼

Data is from the 2022 Gallup/Knight American Views survey. n = 177

In which format do you get most of your news?	U.S	Georgia	Difference from U.S
From a printed newspaper or magazine	3%	1.7%	-1.3 ▼
From TV	31%	36.4%	5.4 ▲
Online using a computer, smartphone, or app	58%	54.3%	-3.7 ▼
From a radio	7%	7.5%	0.5 ▲

Data is from the 2022 Gallup/Knight American Views survey. n = 177

How often, if at all, do you use each of the following for staying up-to-date on news?	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Less than monthly	Never
A newspaper	20.0%	17.1%	8.6%	22.3%	32.0%
A website or app	34.7%	19.7%	9.2%	17.3%	19.1%
A radio station	29.9%	17.8%	6.9%	15.5%	29.9%
A TV station	50.6%	16.5%	6.3%	14.2%	12.5%
Direct communication with people in your area	28.5%	28.5%	12.8%	14.0%	16.3%
A magazine	1.1%	6.9%	14.4%	24.7%	52.9%
A social media platform	38.5%	16.7%	5.7%	9.2%	29.9%

Data is from the 2022 Gallup/Knight American Views survey. n = 177

37 “American Views 2022: Part 2, Trust Media and Democracy,” Knight Foundation, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, published February 15, 2023, <https://knightfoundation.org/reports/american-views-2023-part-2/#:~:text=Only%2026%25%20of%20Americans%20have,53%25%20hold%20an%20unfavorable%20view.>

38 Knight Foundation, “American Views 2022: Part 2.”

39 Knight Foundation, “American Views 2022: Part 2.”

Similar to news consumers nationally, Georgia residents often rely on television for getting their daily news, though in even greater numbers. Just over half of Georgians surveyed rely on a TV station for staying up-to-date on news on a daily basis, compared to 47% of people nationally, and nearly three quarters of surveyed Georgia residents reported relying on TV news at least monthly.⁴⁰ Additionally, 36.4% of Georgians surveyed said they get most of their news from TV.⁴¹ Georgians also rely significantly on digital means for getting news — a little more than a third of those surveyed said they rely on a website or app for news on a daily basis, and 38.5% of those surveyed said they use a social media platform for staying up-to-date daily, numbers that are in line with the national percentage.⁴² More than half of Georgians surveyed get most of their news online, compared to 58% of people surveyed nationally.⁴³

Community Information Needs

A critical aspect of the health of a local news ecosystem is the degree to which all community members' information needs are being met. Currently, there is not a national or local survey that is repeated regularly to document the degree to which community information needs are being met. Organizations like Outlier Media and the Listening Post Collective, among others, have conducted deep, qualitative community information needs assessments in the communities they serve. In this section, we explore information needs in Georgia, including gaps and opportunities identified in a recent landscape analysis.

Additional research assessing how Georgia residents access news and information similarly found an increasing reliance on digital and non-traditional formats. While there are no recent, publicly available ecosystem-wide information needs assessments for Georgia, a fall 2023 landscape analysis by The Pivot Fund — which supports BIPOC-led community news organizations with funding, training, and capacity building — provides insight into the ways Georgians are seeking news and information. The report found that those under age 50 are more often turning to digital means for accessing news, such as a smartphone or computer, rather than print or broadcast options.⁴⁴ The report also detailed the findings from a 2021 media consumption poll of registered voters aged 18 to 39, highlighting how respondents are often not relying on traditional platforms

40 Knight Foundation, “American Views 2022: Part 2.”

41 Knight Foundation, “American Views 2022: Part 2.”

42 Knight Foundation, “American Views 2022: Part 2.”

43 Knight Foundation, “American Views 2022: Part 2.”

44 Brown et al., “Georgia News Landscape Analysis.” p. 3.

to access news and information.⁴⁵ The largest number of respondents said they got information about their communities by word of mouth from family or friends, followed by Facebook, the report said.⁴⁶ A majority of Black respondents and 42% of white respondents cited social media as the type of media they most commonly used to get information about their communities.⁴⁷ The report also details a number of information providers that are based on or got their start on social media platforms, many of them on Facebook.⁴⁸ When it comes to meeting Georgia audiences where they are, it's clear that providing news and information on social media is an important need in the ecosystem.

Many Georgia communities are lacking digital or print newspapers and broadcast media. The State of Local News Project's 2023 map shows 21 counties in Georgia with no local news source and 116 counties with only one, though it should be noted this map may not be comprehensive and likely does not include informal or non-traditional news sources like community Facebook groups.⁴⁹ Some communities have local news sources, but the outlets are not seen as non-partisan or are not engaged with and connected to the community.

Stakeholders noted that some areas in the state have newspapers that provide content that feels disconnected from the audiences they serve or that has disenfranchised parts of their communities. Stakeholders described some outlets that had a poor relationship with communities of color, with one stakeholder noting that a community member had described news in their city as predatory and destructive. The state's flagship paper, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, has also faced recent challenges with trust among community members that help highlight historical issues, particularly when it comes to the paper's relationship with communities of color. The AJC and its owners have drawn criticism for their support and coverage of plans for the police training facility referred to as "cop city" by critics. The president and publisher of the AJC wrote an [op-ed](#) in the paper advocating for the new training facility in December 2023.⁵⁰ The AJC is owned by Cox Enterprises, which is a financial contributor to the organization behind the facility, the Atlanta Police Foundation, through its charitable arm.⁵¹ These connections have created a perception among some audience members that the paper supports the project and is contributing to suppression of opposition to the facility.

45 Brown et al., "Georgia News Landscape Analysis." p. 5–9.

46 Brown et al., "Georgia News Landscape Analysis." p. 5.

47 Brown et al., "Georgia News Landscape Analysis." p. 5.

48 Brown et al., "Georgia News Landscape Analysis." p. 5–9.

49 "Georgia," Local News Initiative, Northwestern University, <https://localnewsinitiative.northwestern.edu/projects/state-of-local-news/explore/#/state-localnewslandscape?state=GA&stateCode=13>.

50 Andrew Morse, "Opinion: Atlanta, we need the new public safety training center," The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, last modified December 2, 2023, <https://www.ajc.com/opinion/opinion-atlanta-we-need-the-new-public-safety-training-center/VVG5FA7QLFG23EIKPL5JTGSB6Q/>.

51 "The Battle Over 'Cop City,'" The New Republic, last modified October 11, 2023, <https://newrepublic.com/article/176032/battle-cop-city-atlanta-climate-justice>.

Information Providers

In this section, we aim to provide an overview of the landscape of information providers in an ecosystem, particularly journalism organizations. We relied on databases from the State of Local News Project, the Center for Community Media, Corporation for Public Broadcasting, National Federation of Community Broadcasters, local broadcast affiliate lists, and interviews to identify journalism organizations in Georgia. We manually identified the platform(s) and business model for each organization. Based on research, we assume that the more diverse an ecosystem is with respect to the number and types of information providers, the more healthy the ecosystem. A full [list](#) of included information providers is in the More Resources section of the [report page](#).

Georgia's news and information ecosystem has a mix of independent digital and print news, nonprofit outlets, broadcast and public media, and papers owned by national newspaper brands. Independent for-profit print and digital outlets account for the largest piece of Georgia's ecosystem, with nearly half of Georgia news sources falling into this category. Most of Georgia's local news and information providers are independent for-profits, nonprofits, or public media — only about 18.5% of Georgia outlets are newspapers with corporate ownership, and 10.9% are national broadcast chain affiliates.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, many outlets in Georgia are clustered within the metro Atlanta area, with fewer — and sometimes no — outlets in counties outside of it. Stakeholders felt that Atlanta's ecosystem was fairly robust, and noted that it includes a number of community media outlets, but that these outlets are often under-resourced. For local newsrooms across the state, shrinking staff size and more limited resources are a challenge, particularly in areas where a single news outlet with only a few reporters is tasked with providing coverage for multiple counties. Even papers in Georgia's smaller cities — like the Columbus Ledger-Enquirer, a McClatchy paper that stakeholders said was once seen as a “behemoth” in the southwestern part of the state — have similarly shrunk. One significant staffing challenge for papers outside of metro Atlanta is acquisition of new talent. Stakeholders said it can be hard to get trained reporters to move for journalism jobs in rural parts of Georgia, and it can also be difficult to find or train contributors among local community members. One stakeholder described how they have learned they cannot pull from the talent pool in Atlanta, or even tap unemployed journalists in the city, because those journalists often don't want to move to more rural parts of Georgia, especially areas where racial tensions are high. Instead, the stakeholder said they had to recruit talent from rural communities with slightly bigger markets.

One important piece of supporting the local news ecosystem in Georgia is getting buy-in from local funders. “It’s been really, really hard to get Georgia funders to support Georgia newsrooms. They don’t understand why they should support journalism,” said Tracie Powell, founder of The Pivot Fund. “Now we’re seeing more of that, but we need to channel those dollars to hyperlocal newsrooms.” Powell highlighted not only the critical role local funders can play in supporting newsrooms as they work to increase capacity and revenue, but also how that support can impact local communities more broadly. When The Pivot Fund helped Davis Broadcasting, the oldest Black radio network in the state, hire their first digital sales manager, they saw the newsroom generate \$100,000 in new revenue within one year, Powell said. And, in addition to training the network’s sales team on digital products, The Pivot Fund found that the new digital sales manager was working with the local small businesses that advertised with the network to help facilitate their digital transformation.

Information Providers	Number	Percentage
Number of Organizations	238	
Population per Organization	45,008	
Medium		
Digital only (including email newsletters)	27	11.3%
Print and digital (newspapers, alt weeklies, monthly magazines)	152	63.9%
Print only (newspapers, alt weeklies, monthly magazines)	18	7.6%
Radio stations	13	5.5%
Television stations	28	11.8%
Organization Type		
Independent for-profit	152	63.9%
National broadcast chain	26	10.9%
Newspapers with corporate ownership	44	18.5%
Nonprofit	6	2.5%
Public media	10	4.2%
Community Media		
African American / Black	17	
Hispanic / Latino	6	
Asian / Asian American	20	

See the Methodology in chapter one for information on how this list of providers was compiled.

Trust is another major challenge within the Georgia news ecosystem, and the specific issues around trust look different for different communities. For some, newspapers have disenfranchised segments of their audience because of how they have portrayed them historically. Sonam Vashi, an Atlanta-based journalist and co-founder of Canopy Atlanta who now works at City Bureau as the director of Documenters Network Success, spoke about listening sessions she conducted in primarily working class Black and Brown neighborhoods in Metro Atlanta. “Pretty regularly, we just heard that there was distrust of media writ large, partially because narratives about those communities were usually very negative, usually about crime in the area, usually about abandoned and vacant properties — things that residents also wanted to see addressed in meaningful ways, but the narrative health of these communities, I would say, was not great,” Vashi said. In other cases, trust intersects with visibility and brand awareness for local media. Caleb Slinkard, executive director of

the Georgia Trust for Local News, said that “It’s hard to build trust in a news organization when people don’t really know where the news is coming from,” given people’s reliance on Facebook and other platforms for information.

Georgia has a small set of nonprofit outlets, comprising about 2% of the information providers in the state ecosystem. Many are based in metro Atlanta and have coverage focused primarily on that area, such as Atlanta Civic Circle and Canopy Atlanta. But others, like Georgia’s States Newsroom affiliate, Georgia Recorder, and DeKalb County-based Georgia Health News are located in metro Atlanta but have a statewide scope. The Georgia ecosystem has seen investment in the form of a number of reporting and journalism support projects in recent years, including the formation of the Georgia News Collaborative, the launch of the Georgia Trust for Local News in January 2024, and

the creation of Atlanta Documenters, part of City Bureau’s Documenters Network, launched by Canopy Atlanta in 2022. Georgia also has many small startup or social media-based news sources. Stakeholders said these kinds of outlets often need sales support, management assistance, and leadership and other kinds of training.

While there are a number of community news and information sources in Georgia, particularly in metro Atlanta, many of these organizations do not have the funding and resources they need to ensure sustainability, stakeholders said. They are also often not connected to each other through formal networks or collaborations, and are not always included in conversations about major funding initiatives or other journalism projects that English-language and general news organizations within the state are often part of. One stakeholder also noted that there are tensions between legacy media — including legacy media geared towards communities of color — and non-traditional information providers in the ecosystem. Legacy outlets sometimes view non-traditional news outlets as biased because their approach to coverage of communities can differ from journalism’s traditional emphasis on objectivity.

“Pretty regularly, we just heard that there was distrust of media writ large, partially because narratives about those communities were usually very negative, usually about crime in the area, usually about abandoned and vacant properties — things that residents also wanted to see addressed in meaningful ways, but the narrative health of these communities, I would say, was not great.”

Sonam Vashi,
Co-founder of Canopy Atlanta and Director of Documenters Network Success, City Bureau

Georgia’s community media ranges from traditional print or digital newspapers to Facebook groups to locally owned and operated broadcast stations. Seeing a need for timely Spanish-language news during hurricane season, Elizabeth Galarza started the nonprofit news outlet Pasa La Voz Savannah on Facebook to serve Spanish-speaking communities that were not receiving critical information. The outlet now has a website where it posts articles and video content.

Other communities have worked to fill information gaps using social media. Facebook groups like “Indians in Cumming, Ga.” and “Indians in Atlanta” serve as important information sources for Indian diaspora communities and have attracted thousands of members.⁵²

Communities of color are also served by more traditional formats like print or broadcast media. Many of these outlets are based in or focused on Atlanta, including the Atlanta Daily World, which serves the Black community in the city, and Atlanta K, which provides Korean-language news coverage. Others are located in cities across the state like Columbus or Savannah, but we found few community newspapers outside of metro areas.

	Independent for-profit	National broadcast chain	Newspapers with corporate ownership	Nonprofit	Public media
Digital only	9.2%			2.1%	
Print and digital	45.4%		18.5%		
Print only	7.6%				
Radio	1.7%			0.4%	3.4%
Television		10.9%			0.8%

See the Methodology in chapter one for information on how this list of providers was compiled.

Diversity in Newsrooms

In order to effectively meet community information needs and to be trusted by community members, newsrooms must reflect the lived experience and heritage of their audiences. We scanned the Georgia ecosystem to determine whether newsrooms have conducted staff demographic surveys and, if so, published the results. We also consulted with stakeholders to determine the degree to which they observe newsrooms being reflective of the communities they serve.

While there are no recent statewide newsroom diversity assessments for Georgia, some outlets have released journalist diversity information or published source diversity tracking data. In 2020, Gannett committed to gender

52 Brown et al., “Georgia News Landscape Analysis,” p. 7.

and racial parity in its newsrooms by 2025 and announced plans to release staff demographics each year. We found staff diversity data from 2022 published by two Gannett newsrooms in Georgia: Savannah Morning News and the Augusta Chronicle. Savannah Morning News saw increased diversity in their staff in 2022,⁵³ while the Augusta Chronicle did not compare staff demographics to previous years but noted the paper still had work to do in order for staff demographics to reflect the demographics of their coverage area.⁵⁴

WABE, a PBS and NPR affiliate in Atlanta, tracks their sources and most recently published a report for October through December of 2023. The report compares WABE's source diversity data to metro Atlanta demographics, showing that WABE relies on a greater percentage of white and Black sources and more male sources than are reflected in the metro Atlanta community.⁵⁵

53 Jill Nevels, "Inclusivity, diversity in coverage, staff are priorities for Savannah Morning News," Savannah Morning News, [www.savannahnow.com](https://www.savannahnow.com/story/news/2022/07/27/diversity-coverage-staff-priority-savannah-morning-news/10154185002/), published July 27, 2022, <https://www.savannahnow.com/story/news/2022/07/27/diversity-coverage-staff-priority-savannah-morning-news/10154185002/>.

54 John Gogick, "Efforts to diversify The Augusta Chronicle newsroom, news coverage continue," The Augusta Chronicle, [www.augustachronicle.com](https://www.augustachronicle.com/story/news/local/2022/07/27/efforts-diversify-augusta-chronicle-newsroom-coverage-ongoing-amid-progress/10151093002/), published July 27, 2022, <https://www.augustachronicle.com/story/news/local/2022/07/27/efforts-diversify-augusta-chronicle-newsroom-coverage-ongoing-amid-progress/10151093002/>.

55 "Source Tracking," WABE, last modified January 10, 2024, <https://www.wabe.org/app/uploads/2024/01/2023-Q4.pdf>.

Case Study – Pasa La Voz Noticias

A Spanish-language community news and information source working to meet audiences where they are.

Amid gaps in the Spanish-language news offerings in Georgia, particularly when it came to timely information during hurricane season, Elizabeth Galarza founded Pasa La Voz in 2018. The outlet started on Facebook and focused heavily on providing critical news and information on a platform that was accessible to those who had just arrived in the U.S. Even as Pasa La Voz has grown, finding ways to meet audiences where they are continues to be central to the outlet’s mission.



Fernando Soto

Pasa La Voz Noticias team with community members representing Latinos in the St. Patrick's Day Parade in Savannah, GA.

Now, as a nonprofit news outlet with its own website and a team working to provide coverage to local audiences, Pasa La Voz has continued to find alternative means to reach Spanish-speaking communities. It has continued to rely on Facebook and, similar to Spanish-language outlets in other states such as Enlace Latino, the news source has a WhatsApp group where staff can share critical news more quickly. It’s also allowed them to provide timely information to audience members who work irregular hours or otherwise might not have access to news throughout the day. As of this writing, the outlet is also working to launch a new version of their site with built-in translation options for English, Korean, and Portuguese.

“To me, in Georgia, I feel like there’s really not enough being invested, not enough news media or organizations in the state of Georgia, because there are so many counties that are left out,” Galarza said. While her outlet covers communities along the eastern side of Georgia and into the Carolinas, she said there is often no other local information source for Spanish-speaking communities to turn to, and there are many farm workers, for example, who must rely on Facebook for information.

The outlet has worked hard to build trust with their audience, Galarza explained, centering community information needs and serving as an informal resource coordinator for people who message them looking for information or help. “The news that we do, it’s what matters to our community,” Galarza said. She and her team try to put themselves in the shoes of those they are serving. “What would I need if I had just arrived to Savannah from Central America and I have nothing,” she said. “I have no language, and I have no money. What

do I need to know?” The outlet tries to include links to or information about resources and assistance in all of their coverage, Galarza said, and inform readers about their rights.

The outlet’s role as an informal hub for coordinating resources and information reflects the trust they have built with their audience.

“They come to us for everything, and when I say everything, it’s like everything,” Galarza said. They often receive direct messages from community members asking for help with anything from tracking down a stolen car to questions related to immigration. “We try to find the time, anyone from the team, to respond to those messages, to reply, because they have the need,” she said. “There’s no one else who they can go to.” In those cases, Pasa La Voz staff will send information about resources or phone numbers for local organizations that can help. “If I can take a minute of my day to help, I mean, there’s nothing wrong with that,” Galarza said. “That’s how I feel. I know a lot of people and mentors and people I have talked to think different, but that’s because they don’t know, really, the need out there.”

The outlet also provides information in video format, recognizing that a portion of their audience may not have had opportunities to attend school and cannot read, Galarza said. They also work to avoid using unnecessarily complex language throughout their reporting for the same reasons.

Conversations about immigration are at the forefront in both Georgia and the U.S. more broadly, especially heading into the 2024 election. In Georgia, Gov. Brian Kemp signed HB 1105 into law in May. The new bill, which would cut state funding for local law enforcement if they do not check detainees’ immigration status and notify federal officials when undocumented immigrants are arrested, rose to prominence following the killing of 22-year-old Augusta University student Laken Riley.⁵⁶ As the bill has progressed through the statehouse, Pasa La Voz has been focused on keeping their audience informed, combating misinformation about the bill, and looking for ways to inform Georgia residents broadly about the important and often overlooked role immigrants play in their communities.

Galarza has seen an environment of increased tension when it comes to discussing immigration, including racist and anti-immigrant sentiment. Amid this environment, Pasa La Voz is slated to release a series of videos — titled *Vida Inmigrante*

“The news that we do, it’s what matters to our community... What would I need if I had just arrived to Savannah from Central America and I have nothing?”

Elizabeth Galarza,
Founder, Pasa La Voz

⁵⁶ Stanley Dunlap, “Kemp signs bill into law forcing sheriffs to enforce federal immigration law,” Georgia Recorder, last modified May 1, 2024, <https://georgiarecorder.com/2024/05/01/kemp-signs-bill-into-law-forcing-sheriffs-to-enforce-federal-immigration-law/>.

or Immigrant Life in English — that highlights how immigrants are contributing to local communities. The series will shadow local business owners or employees throughout their day, allowing them to tell the stories of how they arrived in the U.S. and what they are doing now, from start to finish. Galarza hopes this will disrupt some of the misinformation she has seen in Georgia. “I want them to know that, yes, we are here, we work, we provide, we create jobs,” she said. “I want people to be able to see that other side of what the misinformation is. I want to tell them the truth.”

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