



News Engagement & Innovation

## Building News Relevance

How can the news media remain relevant, particularly with young audiences and underserved communities?

### CNTI's Assessment

CNTI aims to help news organizations and policymakers understand the current challenges of news relevance as a means to enabling more informed internet and media policy and a healthy information system. The importance the public places on the news media inherently impacts the digital news environment and any feasible solutions to its current challenges. Even the best internet policy cannot ensure the future of independent journalism and an open internet if the news media, at large, does not carry credibility and relevance with the audiences it strives to serve. This is particularly important when it comes to younger audiences and those in underserved communities.



### The Issue

The public's perceived relevance of journalists and the role they play in providing fact-based accounting of events and issues is an essential ingredient in building policy that protects a strong, diverse and independent press, a crucial principle of democracy. Yet, achieving relevance seems harder than ever.

In a digital environment where publishers no longer serve as the sole [gatekeepers](#) of news and information, they must find new ways to stand out by developing relationships with audiences that reflect their lifestyles and habits. This means rethinking the very concept of news: how people define it, what news they're looking for and where they access it.

Many newsrooms have taken significant steps to connect with and [serve](#) young audiences as well as marginalized and underserved communities, but there is still much ground to cover.

For journalism to be relevant today, publishers must listen to audiences and evaluate what they want and need so they can both meet their audiences' wants and needs and offer accountable, fact-based work.



Find the full issue primer, current legislation, events, and changemakers online

<https://go.innovating.news/FhmQCe>

## What Makes It Complex

- I. What publishers think about news “relevance” does not always align with what the public considers relevant to them.
- II. The primary challenges to producing relevant news are different in different contexts. In many cases, larger institutional or cultural shifts are required before we can address broader issues of relevance through changes to news practices or content.
- III. News publishers must make [trade-offs](#) to engage different groups.
- IV. Many people do not see the news as [central](#) to their lives.
- V. Young people’s media [habits](#) and attitudes make them harder for news publishers to reach than older audiences.

## State of Research

The question of news relevance, and the public’s [perceptions](#) of it, tie into a broad range of research topics, including media [trust](#) and [engagement](#), the [changing](#) media [environment](#) and [business](#) models, and the public’s news [choices](#) and [expectations](#) (and those of [young news audiences](#) specifically). Together, this work – detailed at various points throughout this primer – paints a clear picture of the challenges facing publishers attempting to remain and become relevant to their audiences.

Moving forward, audience-centered work quantitatively and qualitatively measuring public perceptions and attitudes of news relevance and public trust in non-U.S. and comparative contexts is critical. It would also be valuable for future research to explore new ways of thinking about news.

### Notable studies

[News for the powerful and privileged: how misrepresentation and underrepresentation of disadvantaged communities undermine their trust in news](#) - Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (2023)

*CNTI’s Takeaway:* The report offers four useful takeaways for newsrooms attempting to build trust among these audiences: focusing on accuracy and reducing biases, telling more complete stories and including positive coverage, diversification and better training of newsrooms, and making an effort to listen to different audience needs.

## State of Legislation

Legislation might not be explicitly designed to address the challenges of news relevance, but it nonetheless serves as a motivating factor behind a range of policies at the intersection of journalism and technology.



The Center for News, Technology & Innovation (CNTI), an independent global policy research center, seeks to encourage independent, sustainable media, maintain an open internet and foster informed public policy conversations.