

La Raza

RESEARCH ANALYSIS | SEPTEMBER 2023

LaRaza

Northwestern | MEDILL
Local News Accelerator

Introduction

This report summarizes the results of the survey put forth by Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism. The purpose of the survey was to learn new details about the behaviors and desires of La Raza's readership and, importantly, its potential readership. The qualitative portion of the study gathered 144 respondents total, with 34 who responded in English and 110 in Spanish. The organization also conducted five hours of deep-dive interviews with La Raza customers. These conversations provided rich qualitative color that added context to the survey results.

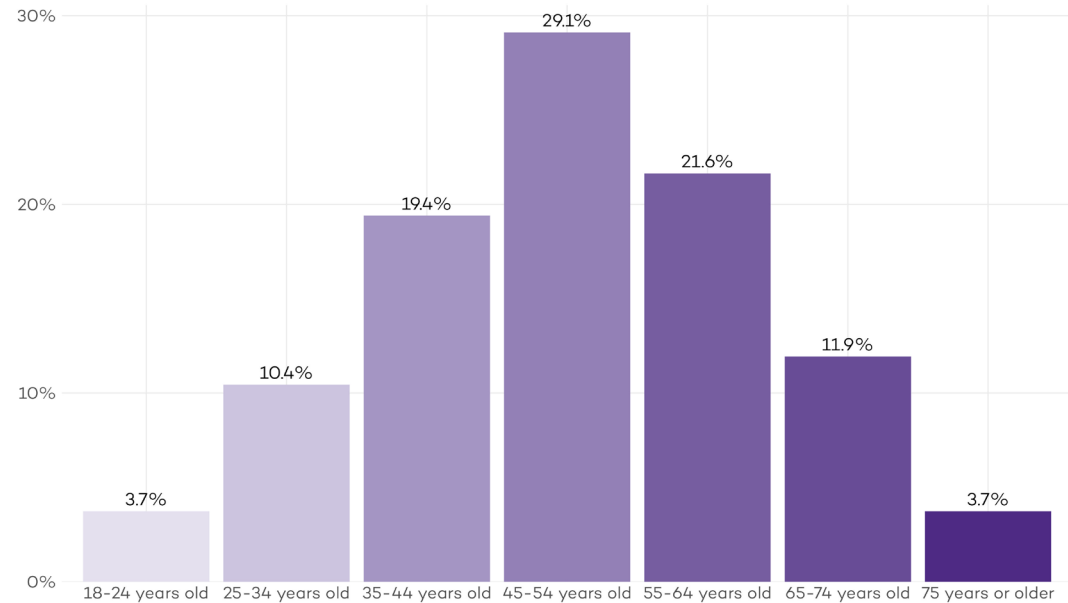
In the quantitative portion, 63 Spanish respondents and 16 English respondents completed the entire survey. Therefore, the data described below is often listed as applying to Spanish readers, English readers, or both. Although there is some variation in details about news consumption in both groups, most big-picture issues tend to trend the same, regardless of the language in which language respondents answered. The primary objective was to better understand La Raza's customers and how they live their lives, along with what content they're most interested in receiving from La Raza.

Through La Raza's partnership with Medill's Local News Accelerator, the publication is hoping to drive digital engagement and cater more content towards Chicago's younger, second-generation Latino community. The focus is particularly on ages 25-34 — an economically upward, culturally vibrant segment with deep roots in businesses, schools, houses of worship and other insititutions. One of the avenues with which La Raza is seeking to create new content is through its newsletter, which will help push engagement to LaRaza.com. The responses gathered in this survey help illuminate who the readers are, how they interact with La Raza, and what they want in the future.

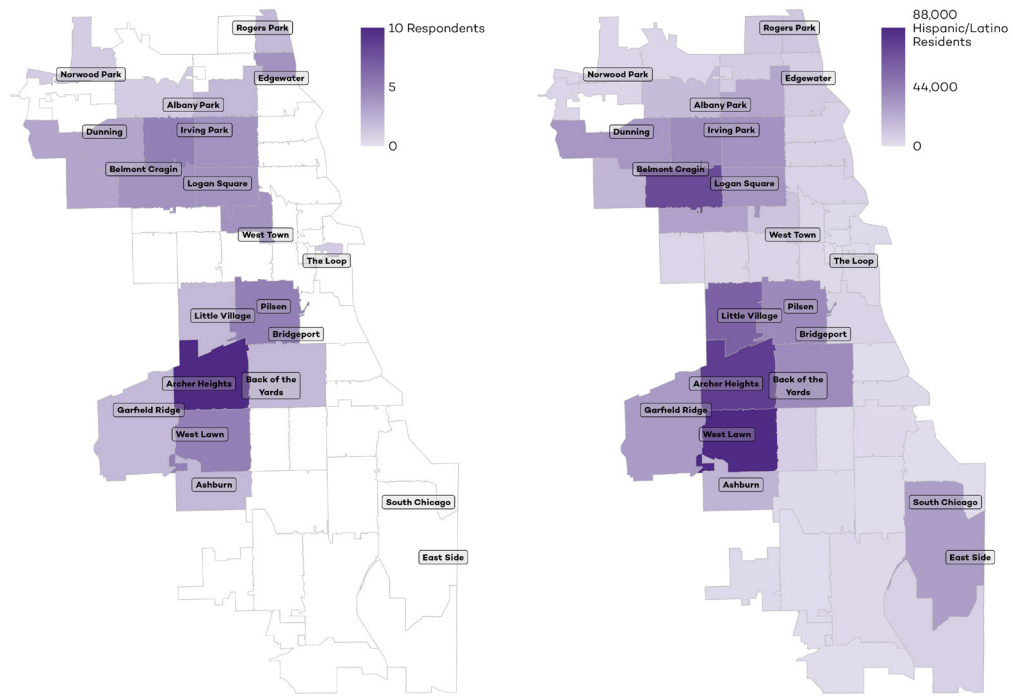
Who responded?

True to what was expected, the largest group of responses (50.7%) came from the 45-54 and 55-64 age groups, highlighting why La Raza chose to focus its project on attracting a younger, second-generation audience. Readers between the ages of 25-34 only accounted for 10% of their respondents.

Most respondents were also female (60.3%), and a large majority identified themselves as Latino (90.8%). 60.9% of Spanish respondents reported having up to an associate's degree, while 65.6% of English respondents reported a bachelor's degree or higher.



La Raza's survey respondents indicated they live primarily in the far Northwest and Southwest sides of Chicago. With a higher number of respondents living in Archer Heights and West Lawn region. This aligns with the U.S. census data shown in the map on the right, although there are neighborhoods on the South Side with a high number of Latino residents that went unrepresented in survey responses. These neighborhoods could present an opportunity to expand La Raza's readership.



*Data from the U.S. Census

How do they live their lives?

Almost half (48.4%) of respondents earn less than \$50,000, and just over half (50.3%) report working a full-time job. Of the remainder, 18.9% work part-time, and 11.8% are retired. There is variety across the board when it comes to readers' career paths — some of the most selected professions included education (15.2%), health services (12.8%), and information services (12%). Respondents indicated education is one of the main topics they want to see more coverage of, which relates to 15.2% of their careers. More than half (54.9%) reported

having children in their home. With more than half of La Raza's respondents having children at home and education being the most requested topic, La Raza has a good opportunity to further its reach by reporting more education-based content.

News consumption data

The majority of survey respondents (79.3%) report reading news about their community one or more times a day. Compared with last year, readers reported their consumption of Chicago, Illinois, national and international news remained about the same, with potentially a slight increase. Spanish respondents reported a slightly higher interest in international news, highlighting how a number of Spanish-speaking readers have ties through themselves or their parents to their countries of origin. This is crucial because, as second-generation customers further assimilate into Chicago culture, they make a point of maintaining links to their family's past. This also suggests Spanish-speaking respondents or their families may have family, business, or other external connections to their countries of origin.

"I don't speak English. But I understand that sometimes there is a difference between the American and the Latino newscasts. [...] I trust in our people, in our professionals in television or those who are writing," said Edna Rodriguez, a first-generation 55 to 64-year-old reader living in Chicago's southwest suburbs. "It is always good that, for example, in their pages, you in your websites, [you] include who the people being interviewed are, what their background is, who that person is, because that gives us confidence."

Almost half (42.3%) read their news in the morning, which provided insight that La Raza's newsletter should be released then, not in the afternoon as it has been. **Although the majority (58.5%) of La Raza's readers report reading in Spanish, 32.9% read in both languages,**

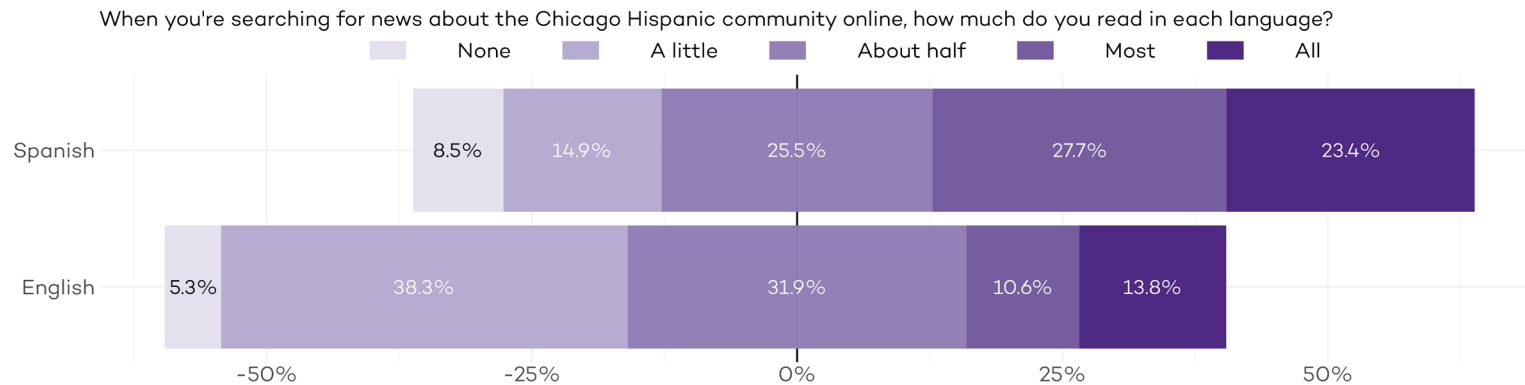
providing insights into the bilingual reader community and the potential to tap into English content.

When searching online via social media or other sources for news on the Hispanic community, there is a good bit of variance on language used — around 25-30% use Spanish and English equally. “I do follow a mix of Spanish and English, not only one or the other,” said Imelda Rodriguez, a first generation Latina living in Chicagoland southwest suburbs, during her interview. Other readers like Rosalinda Raza, a second generation Latina from Chicago’s 60608 area code, expressed reading in both languages to maintain her fluency.

“I read in English, but I still like to keep up with my Spanish. So I also like to read in Spanish,” said Razo.

This speaks further to the complex identities second-generation Chicagoans maintain. It can be hypothesized that La Raza would benefit greatly by producing content in both English and Spanish at a more frequent rate. This content strategy could get their content in the hands of a younger audience who is more prone to reading in English.

Respondents’ most-used social media is Facebook (56.9%), but 45.6% reported wanting



to engage with La Raza on Instagram and 24.1% said the same of TikTok. The higher use of Facebook is likely due to La Raza's middle-aged audience, but the use of other social media shows that there are readers across many different platforms. If La Raza hopes to meet younger, second-generation Latinos where they are, it would do well to build out Instagram, Threads, and/or TikTok strategies. When asked about her reliance on social media to read the news, Rosalinda Razo said, "I think whatever information I get, I get from Instagram. I don't have time to see the news."

WhatsApp could be particularly fruitful, especially given its popularity in Latin America as a secure, no-cost international communications platform. This is discussed further in the section on readership patterns below

Competition

Looking at digital news options across Chicago and the nation, the most-used platforms to consume news amongst respondents are national television (15.7%), Chicago social media (12.8%), and Chicago news organizations' digital websites (12.8%). Overall, news consumption across all platforms has remained constant from last year, with 45% or more respondents reporting their consumption is the same on six out of nine platforms.

Local news is also a favorite of respondents like Inci Narvaez a young, first generation reader living in the Archer Heights/Brighton Park area, who said, "The front cover is always what catches my eye, especially if it's something that's happening in the Chicago area." 42.5% of respondents prefer local coverage to national or other types of news. La Raza shifted to being hyperlocal once the pandemic hit, which aligns with what readers are looking for.

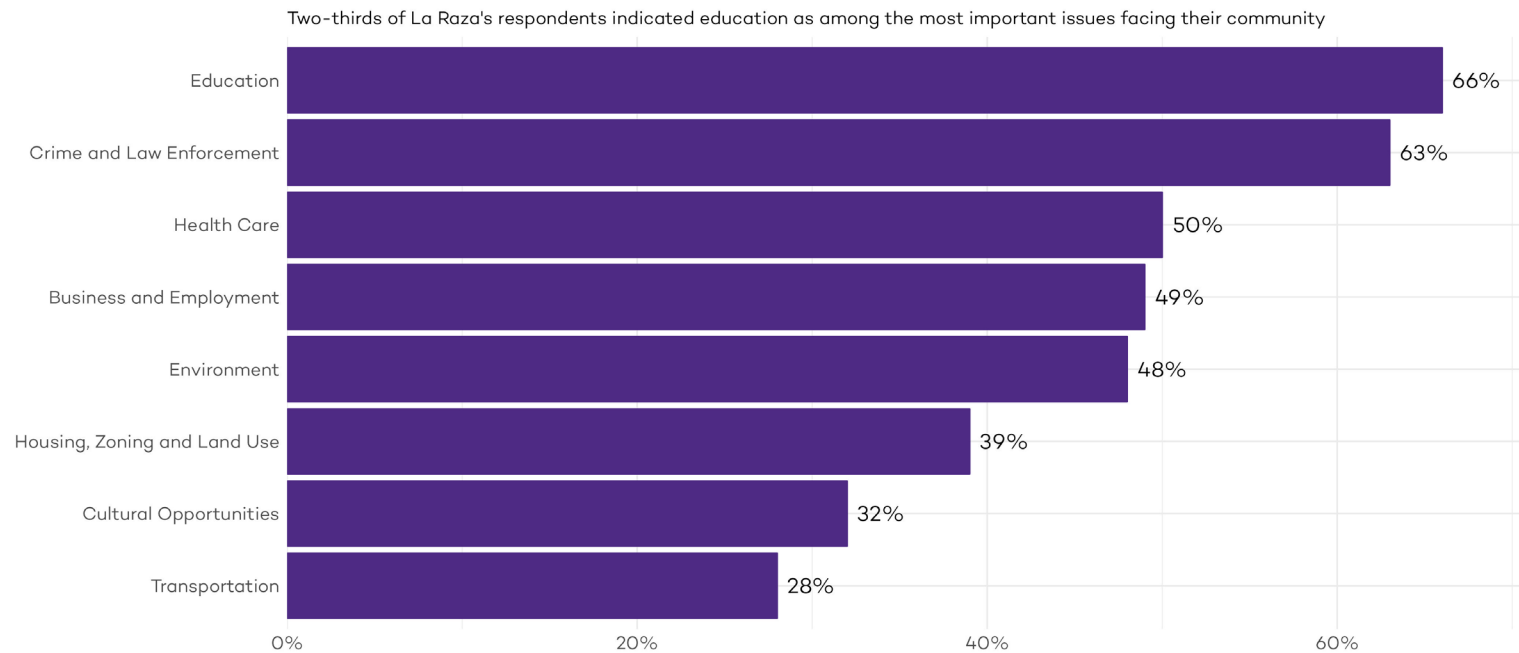
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Willingness to pay for news

Nearly two-thirds of respondents (63.3%) said they believe nobody should pay for news, and about a quarter (25.7%) said those who can pay, should. Two-thirds (67%) do not currently pay for any local news coverage, with just 14% subscribing to at least one publication and 8% subscribing to two or more.

La Raza is currently a completely free platform, but 26.6% reported they’d be interested in a donation to support La Raza, and 44.3% said they maybe would consider it.

However, almost all readers in La Raza’s focus group interviews have expressed that they would be interested in subscribing to La Raza content or participating in a donation. Some readers said it would depend on the time of year or additional content that would be provided. “It would depend on what time they were asking,” said Rosalinda Razo. “Right now for back to school, it’s like I left every penny at Staples. So they would want to time that well.”



News content + coverage gaps

La Raza’s readers are interested in a wide variety of coverage topics. **Although many of the listed topics had similar rankings of importance to them, the most desired were education (66%), crime and law enforcement (63%), and health care (50%).**

This trend held in focus groups as well, as these were some of the main topics requested by readers there. A younger reader in college specifically expressed an interest in finance due to her major and wanted to see more about Chicago businesses.

“Personally, I would say I [am most drawn to] the economy. I know that that’s a nerdy thing coming from me, but that’s my major, so I’m drawn towards that. Like in Chicago, I know small businesses are a huge part of how it impacts the state economy and eventually the federal economy. So that’s what I focus on,” said Melynna Hakim Arreola-Quiroga, 19 or younger first generation Latina living in Chicago’s north side.

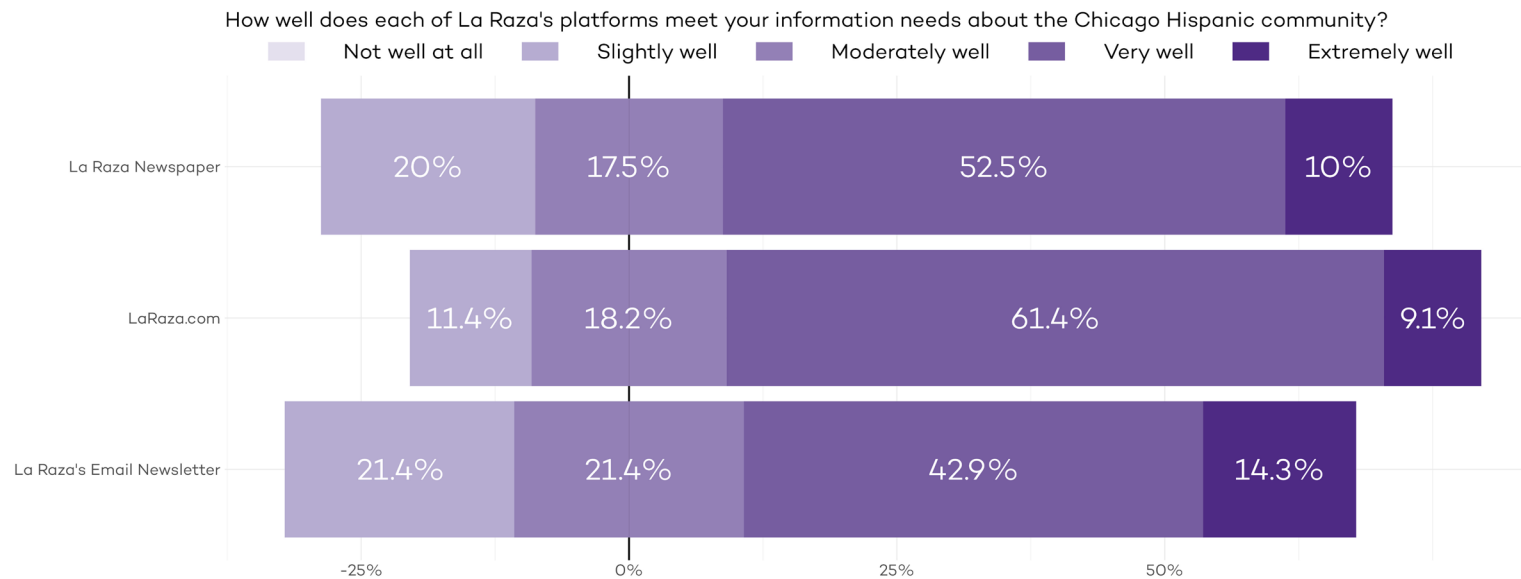
When asked to rate how well local news covered these issues, the most selected option was “slightly well,” the second lowest option on a five-point scale. A number of respondents also selected “moderately well,” the neutral option. Although readers report consuming news from a wide variety of print and visual media in the last three months, the most-consumed by far were Spanish-language television networks Univision (70.1%) and Telemundo (66.1%). This seems to track with the fact that most survey respondents did so in Spanish.

Looking at why readers feel the local media doesn’t inform them thoroughly on their chosen topics, the number one selected reason was that they simply don’t cover the issue often enough.

59.5% of respondents said access to Spanish news about Chicago’s Hispanic community is either very or extremely important to them. The topics La Raza’s readers are interested in, on a broader scope than the previous question, show a preference for Chicago-based news, with 11.2% (second-highest response) reporting that as an important topic. Other general news on politics or the Hispanic community across local, national, and international scales fell at 4.1% or less for each option. The highest number (17.2%) of respondents reported crime and security was important to them.



Melynna Hakim Arreola-Quiroga,
first-generation reader of La Raza



La Raza readership patterns

44% of La Raza's respondents indicate they read La Raza's newspaper, 55% of respondents said they do not. **Of those who said they read La Raza's newspaper, 62.5% reported La Raza's newspaper does very or extremely well in providing news and information about Chicago's Hispanic community, indicating that La Raza has a high level of trust with its readers.**

"I remember ever since I was young, my parents would always get La Raza. It was like Univision, Telemundo, all of them. I used to always just see them," said Narvaez.

Almost exactly half of respondents (50.5%) report reading La Raza's website, and 27% report reading it once a day and 34% a few times a week. 70.5% feel the website does very or extremely well at providing them information about the community.

When it comes to the newsletter, 67% do not currently subscribe, but 33.9% reported

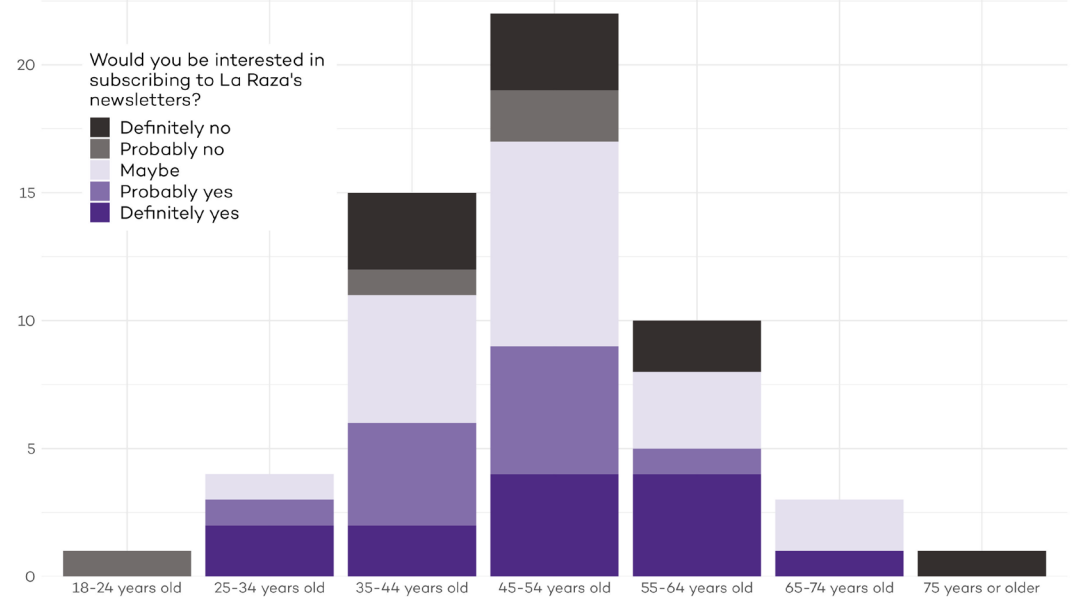
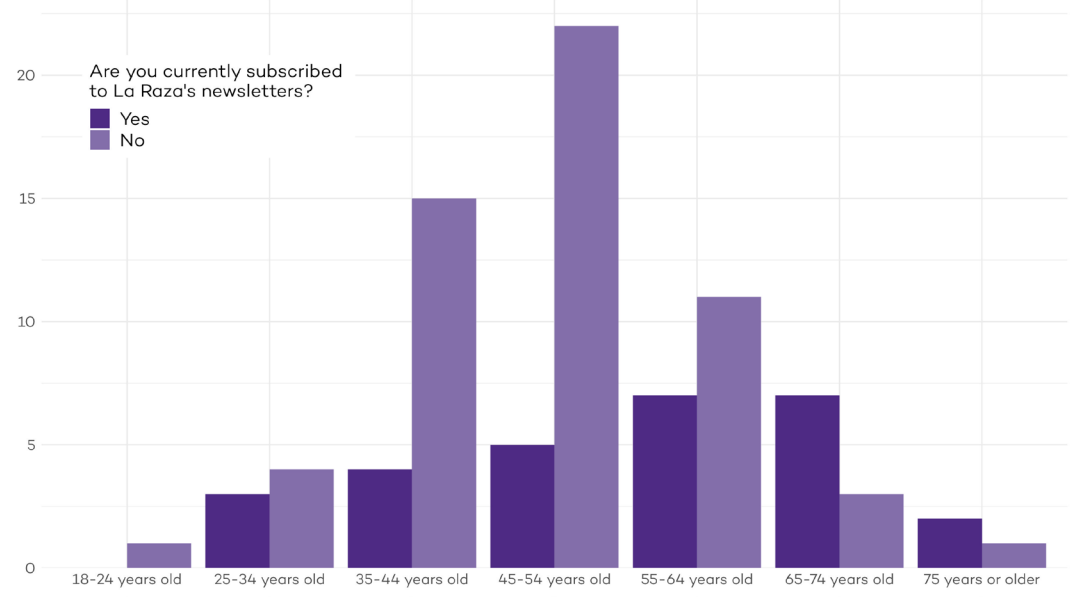
potential interest and 25% would probably or definitely subscribe. For those who do subscribe, 57% find La Raza’s newsletter informs them very and extremely well about their community.

On social media, 46.8% of respondents report following La Raza’s content on Facebook. Other platforms readers want to see La Raza on include Instagram (45.6%), TikTok (25.3%), and WhatsApp (24.1%).

Interview takeaways

In order to gather more qualitative data and speak directly with consumers, La Raza has been hosting virtual interviews with its readers to find out more about what content they want to consume and how they consume it. By placing QR codes in the front cover of La Raza’s newspaper and promoting it on social media, the organization was able to host eight 1-on-1 interviews by the time this report was written. The original goal was to host 10 interviews, but it is on track to exceed

An opportunity to expand newsletter engagement lies with readers under 55



that number. La Raza has a goal to interview a total of twenty 1-on-1 interviews with the last ten targeting 25-34 year olds. **Although most of the interviews have been with those above the targeted age group, La Raza found that readers' desires and hopes for the publication align fairly closely with those in the younger generation.**

Most of the interviewees read La Raza online or through Facebook, and many have ties to La Raza through older relatives reading the print copies in the past. All of the interviewees expressed a trust in La Raza to provide them with quality community news and a willingness to also subscribe to La Raza if there was ever a monetary donation opportunity.

"I [read La Raza] as many times as I can. It's one of those things that's been around awhile. [I take] every opportunity that I can pick it up and go through it." said Laurita Doane, a 65-74 year-old, second generation Latina living in the Bedford Park neighborhood of Chicago.



Laurita Doane, a second-generation reader of La Raza

“
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Almost all the readers La Raza interviewed also said they'd like to receive a daily newsletter with important stories to get a quick idea of what's going on in their community, and a majority of readers also would like to see podcasts or audio-based stories that they can listen to while doing other activities.

The three topics La Raza is investing new resources into covering — home ownership, community safety, and democracy — were all well-supported by interviewees as topics they'd like to see more about. Almost all are active voters and want to see more coverage about candidates, especially the impacts candidates would have on the Hispanic community.

“I feel like for the Latino community, just in general, we are not in ... the very important decision tables. [I'm looking to read about] people who care, people who care about us specifically,” said Rodriguez on what topics related to democracy she would like to see La Raza reporting.

La Raza also showed interviewees different headlines (see screenshots) relating to some of its main coverage topics and had readers pick which one they'd be more interested in reading and why.

Comunidad inmigrante se moviliza para promover el voto en Illinois

Las elecciones intermedias al Congreso y la de gobernador y otros cargos estatales se realizarán el próximo martes 8 de noviembre de 2022.



Organizadores comunitarios tocan puertas y hacen llamadas invitando a los potenciales electores a salir a votar en las elecciones de medio #8 de noviembre. (Cortesía ICJRR) Crédito: Contrasto

Translated headline: Immigrant community mobilizes to promote voting in Illinois

Translated subhead: The Congressional, gubernatorial and other state elections will be held next Tuesday, November 8, 2022.

“[From 1-10 in importance], voting rights is 10. It’s important to have a voice. Homeownership, 8, I think it’s important, but it’s not for everybody ... [community safety] is 10. Security is important and [readers] need to know what programs are available,” said Harry Ward, a 45-55 year-old, non-Latino reader living in Norwood Park, a suburb of Chicago.

Jefe interino de la Policía de Chicago recomienda despedir al oficial que mató a Adam Toledo

La Junta de Policía de Chicago realizará audiencias sobre el posible despido del oficial Eric Stillman a partir del 1 de mayo



Activistas repudieron el asesinato del menor Adam Toledo en abril de 2021 en el barrio de La Villa. (Belho Sanabria / La Raza) Crédito: Impremedia

Translated headline: Interim Chicago Police Chief recommends firing officer who killed Adam Toledo

Translated subhead: Chicago Police Board to hold hearings on officer Eric Stillman’s possible firing starting May 1st.

Inquieta a propietarios de barrios latinos de Chicago drásticas alzas del impuesto a la propiedad

Entre los vecindarios que vieron aumentos porcentuales de dos dígitos en sus impuestos a la propiedad figuran Pilsen con 46% y Avondale con al menos 27%



Ella Higuera, sentada afuera de su vivienda en Pilsen. (Belho Sanabria / La Raza) Crédito: Impremedia

Translated headline: Homeowners in Chicago’s Latino neighborhoods concerned by drastic property tax hikes

Translated subhead: Neighborhoods that saw double-digit percentage increase in their property taxes included Pilsen with 46% and Avondale with at least 27%

Readers were interested more in stories that showed a younger audience and specific people in the community, and those with hopeful headlines that provided solutions to the issue at hand.

Through a partnership with a Medill graduate student, La Raza currently working on writing three “evergreen” stories related to topics La Raza wants to cover more — home ownership, safety, and education — that will provide ongoing engagement points targeting a younger (25-34 year olds), second-generation audience.

Biggest opportunities

The responses of this survey and individual interviews highlight how willing La Raza’s readers would be to support the publication and receive more content.

The majority of quantitative survey respondents would at least consider donating to La Raza, and all focus group readers so far have said they’d be open to a monetary donation, as well. By potentially offering different prizes or content for donations or even a subscription service for extra content, La Raza can be more financially supported through its readership base.

All focus group interviewees also said they’d be interested in a newsletter from La Raza, with the majority wanting to receive a newsletter with important stories every day. By experimenting in the future with general or targeted newsletters, La Raza can tap into the niches that cater most to a younger Latino audience.

Survey respondents and focus group interviewees alike also expressed a desire for La Raza to be more present on social media. The publication currently doesn't have an Instagram presence. These responses highlight how this constitutes an untapped market and can be especially beneficial to younger readers (Instagram's main age demographic in the U.S. is 25-34, followed closely by 18-24).

La Raza is currently investing new resources to cover three main topics — community safety, democracy, and home ownership. The first two were some of the most desired topics indicated by readers in the survey, highlighting that La Raza is on the right track to meet this demand. Seeing as a number of readers also work in education-related fields, the additional requests for more education coverage line up with their lifestyle. Through that new data, La Raza can also dedicate more resources to covering education and reaching those readers.

Biggest threats

Some of the biggest threats come from La Raza's competition — Spanish television has a strong following and trust among La Raza readers. Quite a few readers also wrote in answers on the survey about what they're looking for from La Raza, and there was a trend of respondents calling for a more interesting story variety and more stories about entertainment news. In order to meet this demand and keep readers with us instead of the competition, La Raza may have to vary some topics on which it reports or even expand their beat variety.

Perhaps La Raza relies too much on attracting readers to their owned-and-operated LaRaza.com digital home. Study after study suggests young digital natives interact with digital brands through third-party social platforms. TikTok is outstripping Instagram among young adults, as it already has among teens. Facebook, while still an important path to reach Boomers and Gen-Xers, is de-emphasizing news in its algorithm. WhatsApp in particular has a substantial following among people who have family in other countries, because the messaging feature is free, confidential and easy to use. However, this is a more simple issue to remedy with the correct social media marketing strategy and the creation of La Raza accounts on readers' most preferred platforms.

Biggest surprises & challenges to status quo

One of the biggest surprises was the traction La Raza's website is already getting — just over half of survey respondents reported reading the website, and just over 27% read it once a day. This data point demonstrates that La Raza already has a decent following on its digital platform, and isn't starting from scratch when it comes to recruiting digital readers.

La Raza also has a strong base of bilingual readers, with almost a third of Qualtrics respondents reporting they read the news in both English and Spanish. La Raza's content is currently all in Spanish, but this response highlights how there is an untapped market for English content among La Raza's readership base.

Conclusion

One of the biggest takeaways from this survey is the high level of trust readers have in La Raza's ability to give them quality news coverage. With big picture data trending similarly across both groups, this also allows the publication to make clearer choices about how to better itself across the board. As La Raza continues to work on growing its digital audience and improving its newsletter, the willingness of respondents to subscribe to a newsletter as well as read online highlights these areas as strong opportunities for La Raza to grow its engagement.