

Journalism and Philanthropy:

Growth, Diversity, and Potential Conflicts of Interest

A study examining the role and influence of philanthropic funding of journalism in the United States

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KEY FINDINGS

Who participated?

129

Journalism funders

293

Nonprofit news organizations

138

For-profit newsrooms

59%

report increased grantmaking for journalism in the past five years

52%

anticipate increasing it in the future

More funders made grants over \$1 million

2022: 40%

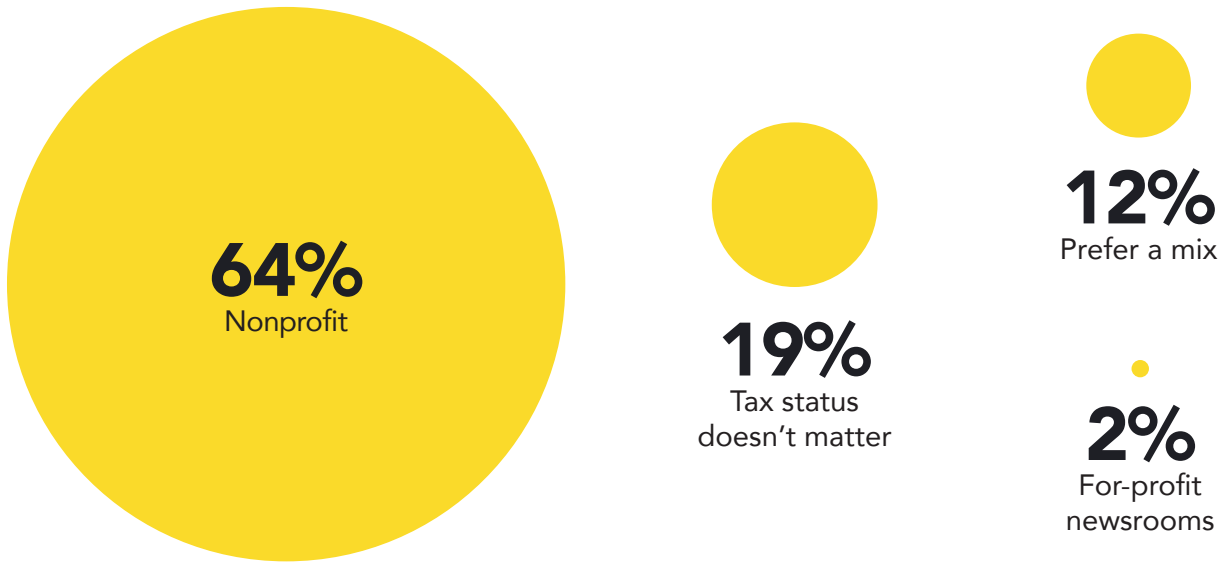
2021: 36%

2020: 30%

2019: 28%

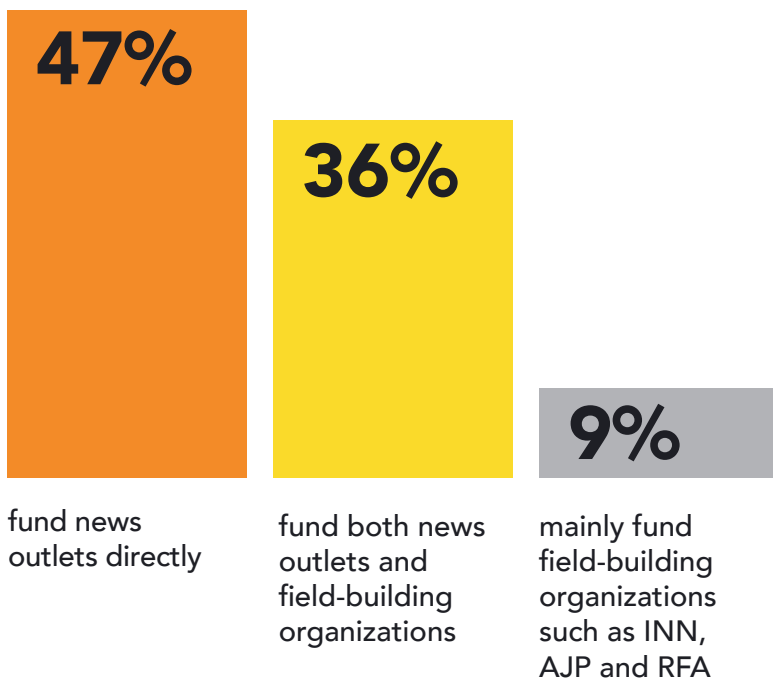
2018: 25%

Most funders prefer supporting nonprofit news organizations

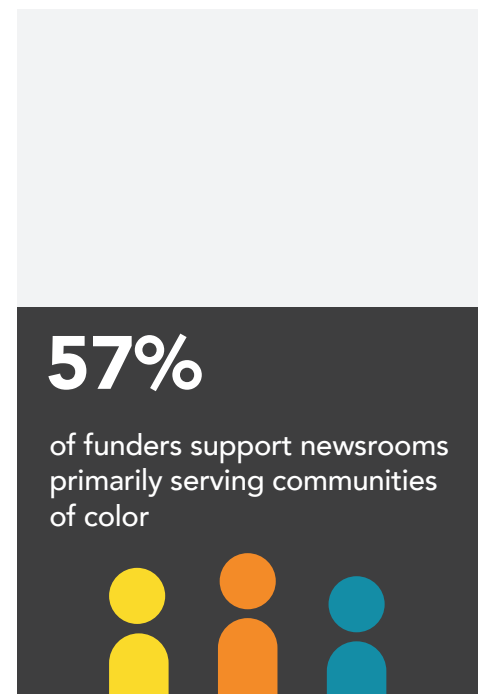


38% nonetheless direct funding to for-profit newsrooms, a new trend

A mix of direct and field-building funding



How diversity factors



Avoiding conflicts of interest

57%

of funders support journalism on topics where they also do policy work



In an era where anyone can publish a web page that looks like a news site, unflinching commitment to ethics will set independent news organizations apart.

—TOM ROSENSTIEL

NORC senior fellow and professor of practice at the University of Maryland

45%

of funders say they support journalism to strengthen a free press and to educate the public, regardless of the outcome of the reporting

20%

of funders say their aim is to advance the larger strategic agenda of the foundation

20%

say both equally

Embracing editorial independence

92%

of nonprofit newsrooms said funders did not see work prior to publication.

70%

said they never make editorial changes based on funder input.

45%

of funders say they never discuss with grantees what they are working on before publication.

19%

said they only spoke in general terms about coverage.

Transparency is key

86%

of nonprofit organizations disclose at least some of their donors

65%

of NPR/PBS stations disclose at least some of their donors

46%

of for-profit newsrooms disclose at least some donors

Adopting written guidelines

68%

of nonprofit news organizations have a policy about disclosing funders

Up from
50%
in 2015

48%

have written guidelines about who they accept money from

Up from
45%
in 2015

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The 2023 study was led by Jennifer Preston and conducted with NORC at the University of Chicago in partnership with Media Impact Funders and The Lenfest Institute for Journalism. This study builds on the last comprehensive survey of funders and newsrooms in 2015 by the American Press Institute, which developed a set of ethical guidelines for funders and the newsrooms they support.