

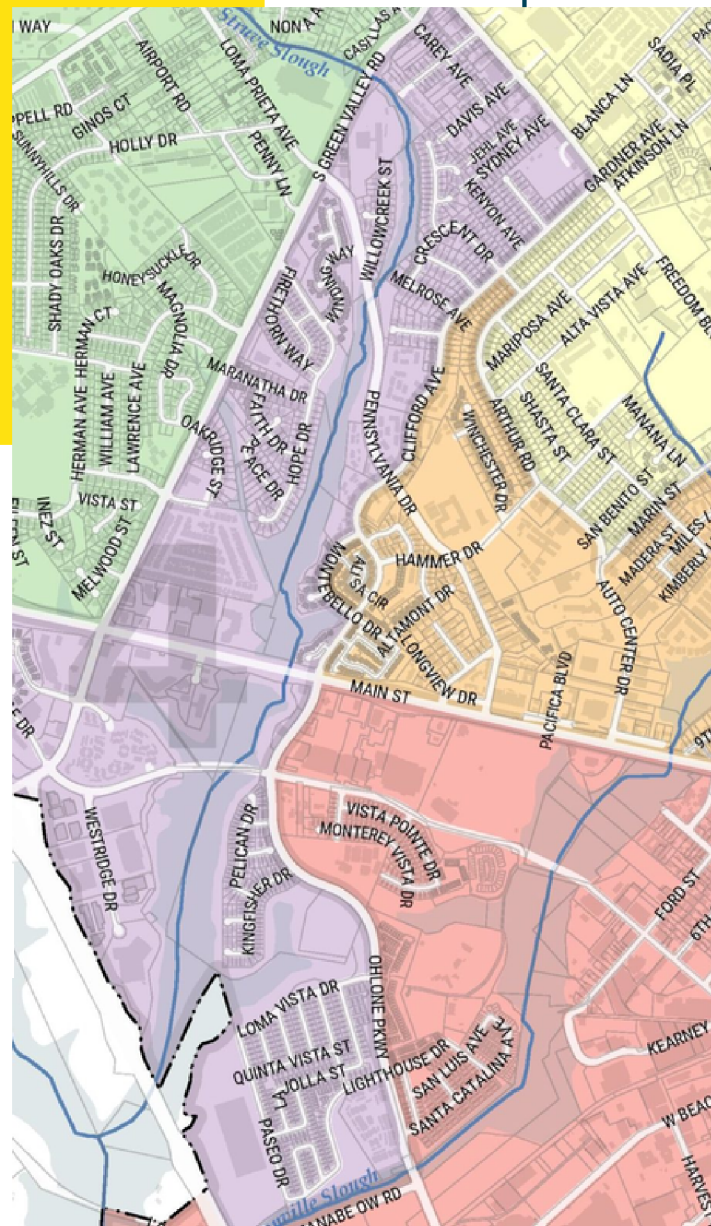
APRIL 2023

# WHAT DO SOUTH COUNTY RESIDENTS WANT FROM A NEWS OUTLET?

An information ecosystem  
assessment of South Santa  
Cruz County, California

Report by:

**SANTA CRUZ LOCAL**



## ABOUT SOUTH COUNTY

South Santa Cruz County has strong, diverse communities, a rich agricultural history, and a vibrant arts and cultural scene.

About **72% of South County residents speak Spanish as a first language**, yet most local media sources are English-only.

Sources for local news include:

- Univisión (Spanish TV news)
- KSBW (English TV news)
- Social media (TikTok, Instagram, Facebook)
- The Pajaronian (English weekly newspaper)
- Santa Cruz Sentinel (English newspaper)
- Spanish radio stations (KSQL, KBRG, KPRC)
- Schools
- Churches
- Whatsapp

## COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS AND COMMUNITY NEED

- About 76% of South County residents are Latino, according to [recent census data](#).
- About 40% of residents are [immigrants](#).
- The South County [median household income](#) is about \$79,600, lower than that of Santa Cruz County (\$102,000) and California (\$89,400).
- Many South County residents lack legal immigration status.
- About 73% of the South County workforce [drives to work alone](#).

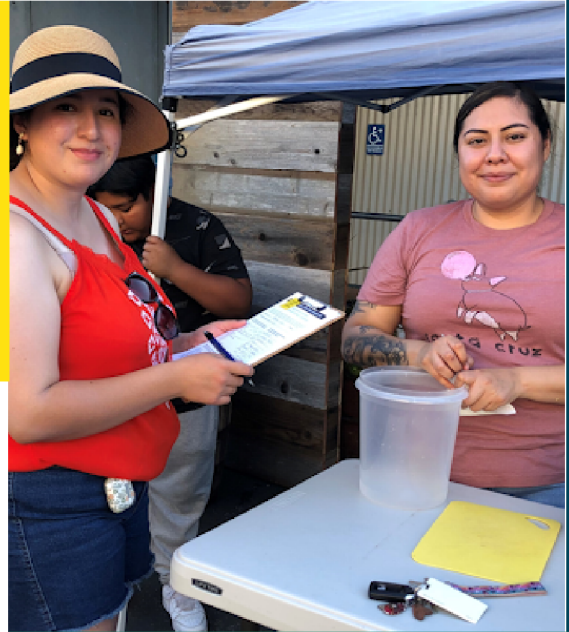


## METHODOLOGY

From May through September 2022, Santa Cruz Local staff interviewed 162 Spanish-speaking residents, mostly in South County.

Interviews took place at:

- Watsonville Farmers Market
- Aptos Junior High
- Watsonville's Strawberry Festival
- Watsonville-Aptos Adult School
- Arte Del Corazón's Mercado at Romo Park
- The Veterans of Foreign Wars hall in Watsonville
- "National Night Out" hosted by the sheriff's office near Pinto Lake
- El Mercado Farmer's Market
- A laundromat in Freedom
- A grocery store in Watsonville
- Cabrillo College Watsonville campus
- Fiestas Patrias in Santa Cruz
- The MexiPino Fest in Santa Cruz



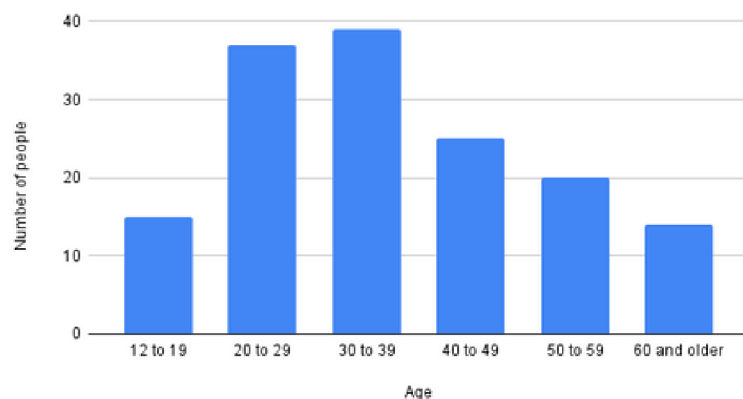
## OUR QUESTIONS

- Name, age and neighborhood
- Where do you get your news and information?
- What local issues do you want to learn more about?
- If you could change one thing about local news media, what would you change?
- What's the best way to keep in touch with you?.

## WHO WE HEARD FROM

- Most respondents lived in Watsonville. Many lived in Freedom. Some lived in Santa Cruz, Mid-County, Pajaro or Las Lomas.

Age of survey respondents



## TAKEWAYS

### What would you change about local news?

#### 1) LOCAL NEWS IN SPANISH

- South County residents want **local news in Spanish**.
- 57% of respondents emphasized the need for news in Spanish.

#### 3) EASY TO ACCESS

- South County residents get news on social media on their phones. They want news that's **on social media or easy to access**.
- "No cost to use or see." — Watsonville woman, 34
- I wish that "wherever you are you could hear the news, and it could be in every language." — 12-year-old Watsonville girl.

#### 2) A WAY TO LISTEN

- South County residents want to be able to **listen to local news**.
- 29% of respondents said they wanted to listen to the news. A few mentioned they would listen during their commute.
- "Radio or TV is easiest, otherwise I need training on how to use it," — Watsonville man, 65
- "I don't have the time to see news on TV and the phone," — Watsonville woman, 37

#### 4) COMMUNITY PRIDE

- 16% of respondents said they want **local news that makes them feel proud of their community**.
- "Focus less on crime or negative news." — Watsonville woman, 21
- "More positive achievements about South County." — Watsonville man, 24
- "I would like more positive news about achievements made by local students or youth." — Watsonville resident, 22



## TAKEAWAYS

### How residents access information

#### TWO

- **Radio** was the second most common way that South County residents access news. Residents mentioned: La Tricolor 99.5 FM, KBRG 100.3 FM, "El Bueno, La Mala Y El Feo" (Univisión online radio program), and KPRC 100.7 FM.

#### ONE

- Most survey respondents said they get local news from **television**. Residents mentioned KSBW-TV, Univisión Costa Central (Channel 67), UniMás (Univisión Channel 33), Telemundo (Channel 23).

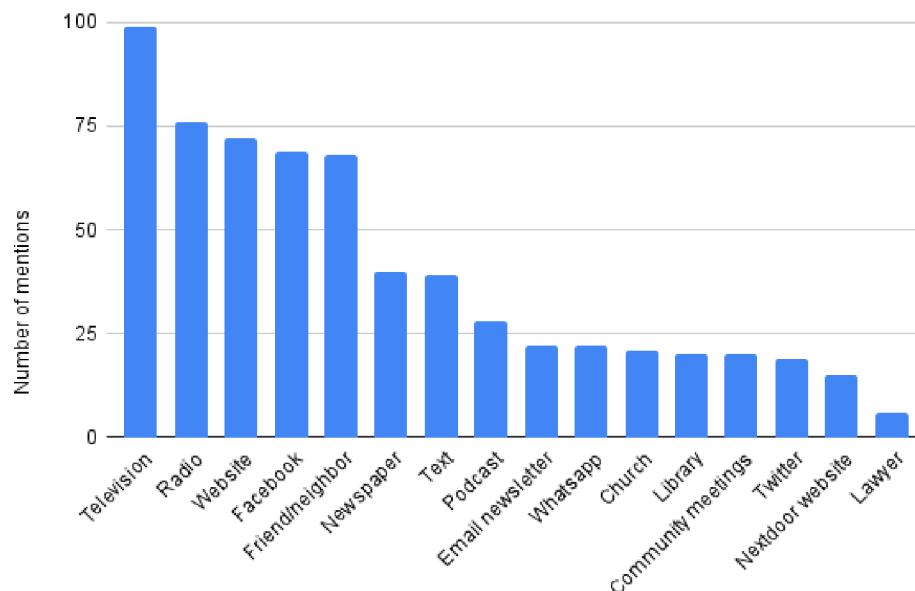
#### THREE

- **Websites:** Residents mentioned: the Pajaronian, the Santa Cruz Sentinel and the New York Times..

#### FOUR

- **Social media:** As an aggregate, social media was the most common way residents access news. Residents mentioned: YouTube, TikTok, Facebook and Instagram.

Where do you get your news?



## TAKEAWAYS

### Top issues

In order of frequency, respondents were interested in learning about (multiple-choice response):

- Health (77%)
- Housing (76%)
- Schools & education (75%)
- Public safety (65%)
- Environment (63%)
- Employment (61%)
- Discrimination (59%)
- Local government or politics (55%)

**"I want to make sure opportunities in our community are reaching the youth" — J.B., 27, Watsonville**

Other topics mentioned:

- Events
- Activities, classes and events for youth
- Job postings
- Resources including scholarships
- Agricultural news
- Small business
- LGBTQ+ news
- Mental health
- International news

## JOANNE SANCHEZ

Co-organizer, Watsonville  
Campesino Appreciation Caravan

Development and Admin Support,  
Watsonville Film Festival

"A lot of Latinos listen to radio while at work. Try to partner with some of the Spanish radio stations. There is not much news, and if there is, it's short or about Mexico."

### Key Takeaways:

- **A lot of the artists in our community feel unheard.** We don't have many theaters or spaces where art can be shown (other than the Pajaro Valley Arts gallery). I would love to read features about Watsonville's art scene.
- I would love to **figure out how to help the farmworkers.** For example, ask them what do they need when the harvest season ends? A lot of farmworkers speak Mixteco Bajo.
- **I want news that makes people proud about Watsonville.** The city needs to do a better job of marketing the community. There are a lot of nonprofits doing amazing work, like Digital NEST! There are mom-and-pop shops and an entrepreneurial scene.

## CONSUELO ALBA

Co-founder, Watsonville Film Festival, former local journalist

"Storytelling is powerful and inspiring. I would love to see more stories uplifting the experiences, challenges and success of visionary leaders, artists, educators, activists, farmworkers, business owners. There's a lot of heart, struggle and resilience in our community that needs to be recognized."

### Key Takeaways:

- There's a pervasive, negative perception of Watsonville. **Our community is complex, it deserves better coverage.** It would be great to see more stories about our **movement for the arts, our legacy of activism, our beauty and strengths.**
- Have social, in-person events with lunch. Explain "this is who we are and what we're doing." **Set up listening sessions.** Share your vision and your values. Invite people to be ambassadors.
- **Infographics** are fun, they convey complex information in a quick and accessible way. It's not about dumbing down — it's about creating a point of entry.
- Build **a Community Cultural calendar!** People want to know what's happening in town.



## RITA SANCHEZ

County of Santa Cruz staffer,  
former teacher, lifelong  
Watsonville resident

"Watsonville has  
diverse Latino  
communities. It's not  
just one Latino  
community."

### Key Takeaways:

- **Diversity of Latinos in South County:** Watsonville is home to different generations of immigrants. Residents come from Mexico and all over Central and South America. While many have shared experiences, Latino communities should not be treated as a monolith.
- People really want and **need to know what local government is doing** — not only what happens, but how it impacts the community. It's harder for the Watsonville community to demand services. As a teacher I was constantly reminding people - you're invited to speak. **Latinos want to be invited. Ask them what they think.**
- People want to know where they can get resources but **success stories** are also important. The community here feels like if somebody's doing well, we're all doing well. **Si tu ganas, todos ganamos.**

## FINAL ANALYSIS

- Our news needs to be free, easy to access and in Spanish.
- Our news needs to celebrate Watsonville's successes and strengths.



**Orientation:** To better serve South County residents, our newsroom needs to offer Spanish news that's tuned to the issues, questions and priorities of residents. Residents want news that makes them feel proud of their community. We heard a strong interest in news about health, housing and education. Residents also want connections to resources and events.

**Delivery:** Our news needs to be free and simple to access. Many respondents want news they can listen to while they are driving or multi-tasking.

**Relationships and trust:** We heard from community leaders that our newsroom needs to earn the trust of South County residents. Local media has ignored and harmed the community with its negative narratives and relative lack of nuanced coverage of South County issues. Our newsroom needs to listen to residents, introduce ourselves, and invite residents to participate.

**Our plan:** Based on our interviews, we plan to develop a Spanish audio news product that is delivered by text to residents' phones.

To develop this, we need to hire two bilingual journalists in 2023.

We will continue to host listening events in South County and invite feedback and questions. We'll test different types of stories, length, format, tone and frequency. We will adjust our news product based on residents' feedback.

**Impact:** To measure our progress and impact, we will track:

- Numbers of listens
- Click-through rates of links
- Total subscribers
- Responses to texts
- Voter turnout, including voting levels in down-ballot races

We will also run occasional surveys to ask residents:

- Do you trust our information?
- How does our news make you feel?
- Does our news make you feel more connected to the community?
- Does our news inspire you to get involved with local government?

## Meet us

We want to meet South County leaders, organizers and residents. We want to hear your priorities for South County local news. Contact Santa Cruz Local CEO Kara Meyberg Guzman at [kara@santacruzlocal.org](mailto:kara@santacruzlocal.org).

## Text us to sign up

Text "noticias" to 831-291-3456 to sign up free for our news service. We'll let you know when we launch. Unsubscribe at any time.

## Spread the word

Tell your friends, family and networks about our plans for Spanish news in South County. Please share this report!

## Donate or sponsor

Donate to support our newsroom here: [santacruzlocal.org/donate-scl/](https://santacruzlocal.org/donate-scl/)

Donate by check:  
Santa Cruz Local  
877 Cedar St., Suite #150  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

We are also looking for corporate sponsors for our Spanish news.

## SUPPORT OUR WORK

We invite you to join us!

Connect with us!

Contact Santa Cruz Local  
CEO/Co-founder Kara  
Meyberg Guzman:

- [kara@santacruzlocal.org](mailto:kara@santacruzlocal.org)
- cell: 831-291-3456

## Partner with us

Do you lead an organization that serves South County residents? We are interested in collaboration. Please reach out to us.