

PRT Survey Results Show Strong Support, Concerns about Bias

By Kathryn Schrag

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The Patagonia Regional Times received a grant last year from the Patagonia Regional Community Foundation to conduct a Community Survey to hear from our readers (and non-readers) what they think about our paper. We are pleased to share the results of the survey here.

20 questions were created and published in paper form in the PRT, and on line. We reached out to the community through announcements in the PRT, by sending postcard invitations to all post-box holders in Elgin, Patagonia and Sonoita, by email, and in person at the Santa Cruz County Fair, the Patagonia Fall Festival, and the Patagonia Senior Center. The survey was open for four months, closing in early December. This survey was a project of the PRT Board of Directors with the assistance of Diana Jolles PhD, a university professor and researcher.

We received 282 responses; 204 of them were entered directly on-line, and 78 were paper surveys. The respondents represent approximately 12% of the households in our community.

Listed below are the survey results:

Question 1: How often do you read the PRT? (272 responses)

- 49% every issue; 36% 7-9 issues, 10% 4 issues or less.

Question 2: How much of each issue do you read?

(270 responses)

- 72% read most of the content, 6% read only a few pages.

Question 3: How many times in the last year have you looked at the PRT on-line? (267 responses)

- 59% have not looked at it on line, 15% have looked more than 5 times.

Question 4: What features of the paper do you enjoy the most? (262 responses)

- Top 4: regional news items, local history, reports on local government and public agencies, and calendar of events
- Highest numbers of negative responses: games and opinion pieces.

Question 5: What new content would you like added to the PRT? (246 responses)

- Stories about people in our community, profiles of local organizations and businesses, local science features.

Question 6: If we charged for the paper, what is the most you would pay for a single issue? (251 responses)

- 42% would pay \$1; 33% would pay \$2; 14% would pay less than \$1, 11% would not buy the paper.

Question 7: How do you feel about the length of the PRT? (254 responses)

- 87% feel it is just right; 9% think it is too short, and 4% feel it is too long.

Question 8: How do you feel about the current amount of advertising? (249 responses)



- 90% feel it's just right; 8% feel there should be more, and 2% feel there should be less

Question 9: How would you feel about including "ad inserts" as a way to increase advertising revenue? (253 responses)

- 50% are OK with the idea, 35% hate the idea, and 15% have no opinion.

Question 10: Should we change the frequency of publication? (254 responses)

- 73% feel that 10 issues are a good amount, 24% want more, 2% want less.

Question 11: Would you like the option of a paid subscription with delivery to your home? (251 responses)

- 39% yes, 61% no.

Question 12: How likely is it that you would recommend the PRT to a friend or colleague? (251 responses)

- 66% are promoters, 17% are detractors, 17% are passive.

Question 13: Do you have any comments about why it is (or is not) a good thing for the community to have the PRT?

- 137 comments were submitted.

Question 13 elicited many comments about the importance of a local newspaper for our community. Examples are:

- "A community paper is part of our community. We may not all agree on issues but the PRT belongs to ALL of us. It helps to create a community continuity."
- "Your paper is a lopsided paper. It needs more balance. And because it is divisive, it goes against the stated mission of your paper."
- "Its existence is essential to the community it serves. It is informative, well-presented and entertaining."
- "Anything that fosters community I think is good. We need more understanding between our community members... we need to know each other."
- "This is the best way to get news of our area. There is no other source of local information. Without it we would lack information about the town and people."
- "The quality of the writing, variety of topics, artwork sketches and articles bring richness to life in Patagonia. This is a terrific publication and deserves to continue."
- "Knowledge is power, we must be informed!"
- "I can't imagine the community without the PRT."
- "PRT is vital to our community. It gives us a voice and connects us."

Question 14: What other suggestions or comments do you have to improve the paper?



This 'Word Cloud' is a graphic representation of the 6700 words of comments submitted by the respondents to the PRT survey, with the largest size word being the most frequently used.

- 78 comments were submitted. Response to the comments section was robust, with 313 individual responses. They represented widely diverse opinions and suggestions.

There were many suggestions for topics and features that the PRT, including more history of the area, interviews of local residents with longtime family histories, content about environmental issues, stories about local organizations and business, and expanded coverage of regional news items (border patrol, law enforcement, water resources, mining, jobs, local economy, public lands, and the border wall).

Respondents offered suggestions for monthly columns on topics such as astronomy, gardening, birding, wildflowers, genealogy, health, the wine industry, weather patterns, and pros/cons of local issues. Many people mentioned wanting more art and photographs, information on area resources and local things to do.

Question 15: Would you like to be involved in the PRT? (247 responses)

- 20% are donors/advertisers, volunteers or staff. 45% might want to be more involved in the future.

Questions 16-20: Demographics

- Gender** (246 responses):

- o 68% female; 32% male

- Age** (243 responses):
 - o 60% over 65; 30% 40-65, 8% 19-39, 1% younger than 19.

- Zip code** (244 responses):
 - o 54% (131) Patagonia, 21% (51) Sonoita, 18% (43) other, and 8% (19) Elgin. Non-local zip codes (43 total): 14 Nogales, 17 other Arizona, 12 out of state.

- Do you live in Arizona at least 8 months per year** (246 responses):
 - o 91% yes, 9% no

- What is your annual household income** (229 responses):
 - o 28% \$20-50K, 23% \$50-100K, 15% > \$100K, 7% < 20K. 27% of respondents chose "I prefer not to share this information."

Questions for people who do not read the PRT (12 responses)

- Please tell us why you do not read the PRT.**
 - o I don't like the attitude(58%). I don't have time (25%). I have trouble finding a copy (17%).

Profile of demographics of those who don't read the PRT.

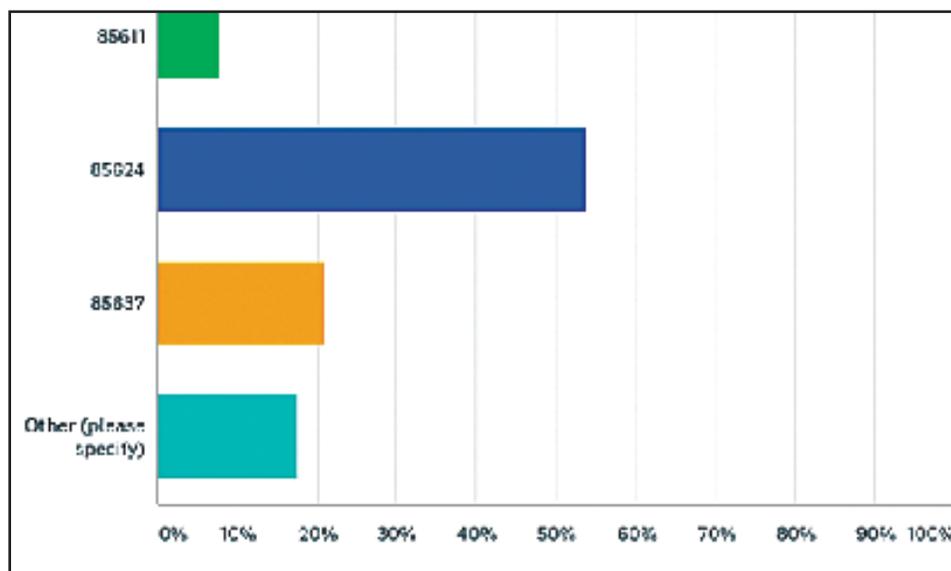
- o 90% female, 44% over 65, 44% live in Patagonia, 90% live in AZ at least 8 months/year, and 38% had income \$50-100K.

Although most respondents answered most of the questions, the sample is a small fraction of the community and very likely over-represents those who read the PRT.

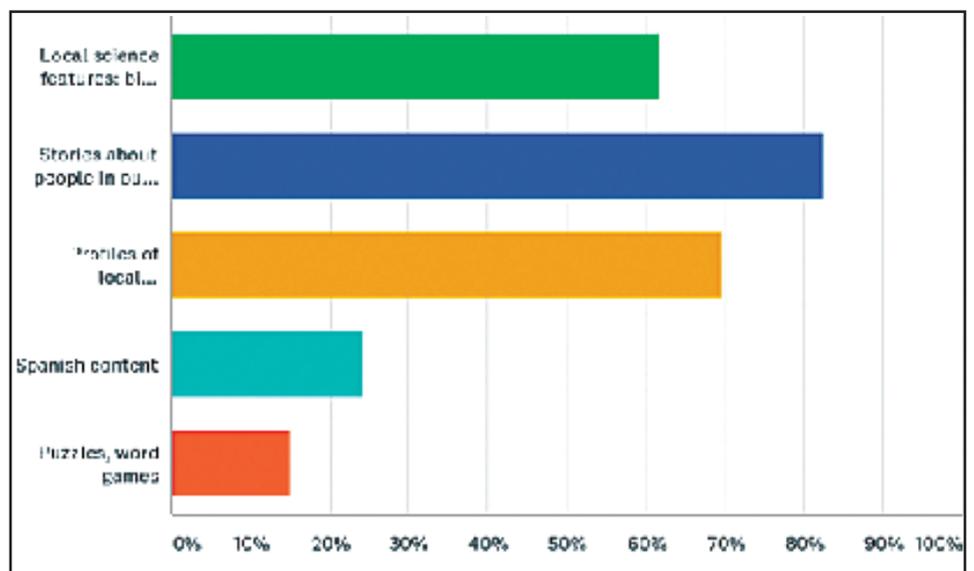
Summary: Most respondents read most issues of the PRT, and most of each issue. They like the features, frequency, length and advertising in each issue. The comments indicate strong support for the PRT, although there was a concern from the critics that the paper was biased or too liberal.

The complete results of this survey were made available to all Board of Directors and staff of the PRT, and a summary presentation was part of our January Strategic Planning meeting. It will guide us in our formal planning for the next two years.

To see the complete set of data graphs and statistics please go to the Survey link on our website www.patagoniaregionaltimes.org. A summary of strategic planning decisions will be published in the next issue of the PRT.



Survey results showing the location by zip code of PRT readers.



Survey results for the question: What new content would you like added to the PRT?