



## MEDIA USE AMONG INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

August 2009

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*At the request of Open Source Center, InterMedia commissioned the La Paz-based research firm Apoyo Bolivia to conduct a qualitative research study in Bolivia to analyze the use of media among indigenous groups, including their media consumption, habits and opinions. The study involved 10 depth interviews that took place in August 2009 in four departments: Cochabamba, Chuquisaca, La Paz and Oruro. This qualitative study represents the views of these participants only and does not necessarily represent the view of all Bolivians.*

This report presents the results of 10 depth interviews conducted with indigenous people in the Andean region regarding their media consumption, habits and opinions. Bolivia has the largest indigenous communities and population in South America. According to the National Institute of Statistic in Bolivia (INE), 4,133,138 of Bolivians are indigenous; they represent half the population of Bolivia. Approximately 55 percent of indigenous Bolivians live in rural areas. According to INE, there are five indigenous communities in Bolivia: Quechuas, Aymaras, Chiquitanos, Mojeños and Guaranís.

The 10 interviewees' hometowns cover four of Bolivia's departments: Cochabamba, Chuquisaca, La Paz and Oruro. They range from small towns to the capital city of Sucre. Their media access and habits vary widely depending on their location. Those living in small towns, such as Calamarca (La Paz) and Machacamarca (Oruro), have very limited media access—only a few radio and TV stations, and little or no local access to newspapers and internet. Respondents in Sucre and Punata (Cochabamba) have easy access to multiple media sources, including local internet cafés and a variety of national and local TV and radio stations.

The media most readily accessible to respondents in all locations are TV, radio and cell phones. All respondents have their own cell phone and have a TV and radio set at home. For most respondents, however, newspaper access is limited to once or twice a week depending on traveling vendors. No respondents have a computer at home; they use the internet at an internet café or other public place.

Most respondents follow the news daily or several times a day. They rely on national TV stations as their primary source of news, although they consult a variety of available sources. They generally consider national TV newscasts the most credible and comprehensive source of Bolivian news. For community news, however, they primarily rely on community radio stations and/or community meetings. Most respondents do not rely on information from the internet. Although all respondents have cell phones, they do not use their phones for accessing information (whether via internet or news services) because of the high cost and, in some cases, lack of interest. Due to limited access, newspapers and internet are generally secondary sources.

Respondents vary in their satisfaction with the media available to them and quality of information they receive. Most respondents feel the national news (on TV or radio) keeps them well informed; those who read newspapers are satisfied with the depth and breadth of information provided. However, those respondents with limited media access express frustration about the lack of information and sources available to them. Some respondents without access to multiple media sources do not completely trust the information offered by any individual media outlet. These respondents believe the Bolivian media are not objective and they can only find the truth by consulting various sources.

Respondents said people do not use traditional media, such as posters, flyers and megaphones, for spreading news. Community radio is mentioned as the most-used medium to spread news. Furthermore, respondents affirm that word-of-mouth plays an important role in their communities. Due to their lack of confidence in their primary news sources, many respondents like to verify news they have learned from TV or radio by checking another source. A few do this by going on the internet; others ask a trusted relative, friend or colleague if they have heard the same news elsewhere.

Despite the global explosion of internet and cell phone use over the past several years and the increased presence of both mediums in their lives, interviewees did not report any major changes in either their own media habits or in that of their communities. Although some said the internet is becoming more important in their field of work or study, it has not yet affected the daily lives of most respondents. Respondents suggest the internet will not make a major impact where they live until computers and the internet become easily and inexpensively accessible either at home or in their communities.

## MEDIA USE

### GENERAL MEDIA HABITS

Participants consider television the most important source of information and use it most often. As in other parts of the world, they prefer TV to radio because it allows them to see as well as hear what is happening. Some respondents pointed out TV newscasts generally cover both local and international news; most local radio stations cover only local news. Some respondents consider TV news “more complete;” several gave “comfort” as a reason for watching TV news at home.

*I use TV most often because I can see the news. They communicate what I really need to know because it is a medium with more complete information, in terms of both culture and [general] information. (Male, 27, builder, Punata)*

*The most important news medium for me is TV because they show news from here [local] and national and international news. With radio, you only find out about [what's going on] here in town. (Female, 20, medical student, Totorá)*

*I always watch TV at night because I can see it, plus it's easier for me because I'm already at home. I'm more comfortable there—I can sit and watch. (Female, 29, biochemist/pharmacist, Huanuni)*

Respondents also consider radio an important source of information. Some said radio is available everywhere and the signal is better than the TV signal; it is also the only medium that broadcasts programs in indigenous languages, such as Quechua and Aymara.

*I use the radio more often than other media because my mother only speaks and understands Aymara and the radio offers some programs in Aymara. (Female, 23, nurse, Calamarca)*

### Access to Media

Most respondents have access to TV, radio, newspapers and cell phones, although newspaper access is limited in some places. Cable TV is mostly unavailable where interviewees live.

*In Machacamarca, there is no cable. Most communities around here do not have access to cable. (Female, 42, teacher, Machacamarca)*

Although some respondents can go online, many said access is difficult, expensive or unavailable where they live. Some respondents indicated they have better access to internet at work than at home.

*It's difficult to access the internet; there isn't much internet here. I think it's mostly because of the cost [charged] by the company; for one hour they charge*

*five or six bolivianos, but if you go to Oruro, it's very cheap. (Female, 29, biochemist/ pharmacist, Huanuni)*

*I don't have internet access because the signal is very weak, from what I've heard. I have wanted to [get internet], but it cuts off, then you have to reconnect. There's a big difference [in speed] from what I used to get in the city. [Here the signal] gets lost and you have to recover all the information. (Male, 40, business owner, Laja)*

## **Importance of Being Informed**

Most respondents agree it is important to stay informed about current events and news in Bolivia, mostly because they need to know what is happening in case there is a strike, demonstration or road closure—this affects their travel plans. A couple of respondents also consider domestic news essential for knowing about health issues or making life decisions.

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*It's very important [to be informed about the news]. Sometimes there is going to be a road closure or they are demonstrating in the city, so we avoid going [there]. (Female, 27, business owner, Batallas)*

*It's very important [to be informed about the news] to make decisions now and to make decisions in the future. (Male, 22, law student, Sucre)*

*I think it's very important [to be informed about] current events. For example, we have information about the swine-avian flu that I imagine is something very important for us all and at the same time it helps us to prevent spreading it. It is also helpful for us to learn about the reality that we are living in. (Female, 22, teacher, Yotala)*

Others generally feel it is important to know what is happening around them, especially now when there is great political turmoil in the country. Most respondents use television and radio to stay informed about current events; none uses the internet for news and information.

## **Daily Media Habits**

The majority of respondents turn on the radio or TV for news first thing in the morning, between 06:00 and 08:00 (see following table.) A few listen to the radio all day at work, both to music and news. At noon, almost all respondents turn on the radio or TV for news or entertainment. At night, most people watch TV, although a few prefer radio.

**Table 1. Daily Media Habits**  
*Type of programming listened to (# of respondents)*

	<b>06:00-08:00</b>	<b>09:00-12:00</b>	<b>At Work Throughout the Day</b>	<b>Noon/Lunch</b>	<b>14:00-17:00</b>	<b>17:00-19:00</b>	<b>19:00+</b>
<b>TV</b>	News (4)			News (6) Novellas (1)	Local news (1)	News (2)	Unspecified (5) News (2)
<b>Radio</b>	News (4) Music (1)	Unspecified (3)	Music/news (3)	Unspecified (3) News (1)	News (2)	Unspecified (4)	Unspecified (2) News (1) Music (1)
<b>Internet</b>					(1)		(1)
<b>Newspaper</b>			(1)				

Only one respondent reads newspapers as part of her daily routine. Only one mentioned the internet and often goes to an internet café in the afternoon or evening. Several other respondents also use the internet and/or read newspapers on a regular basis (discussed in other sections), but not every day and not necessarily at a specific time of day.

### **Changes in Media Habits**

Although most interviewees did not report any major changes in their media habits over the past three years, a few said they watch more TV now due to greater access. A couple of respondents said more TV channels are now available where they live—before there may have been only one or none. Some respondents also noticed a similar trend with radio—more stations are available than before. Two respondents now use the internet regularly for information; two read newspapers more than they did before.

*[My use of radio and TV] has increased because recently the number of radio broadcasters in town has increased, and also the number of TV channels. (Male, 35, tailor, Punata)*

*To get informed I used to watch television. Since I started using the internet, I prefer to use it for information. My habits have changed in the sense that now I use the internet more, and television and radio less. (Male, 22, student, Sucre)*

## **TELEVISION**

### **Viewing habits**

For respondents who generally watch TV daily, it is the most popular medium and most important source of information. Most watch the news at noon (or just after lunch) and then turn the TV on again in the

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evening, for both news and entertainment. Several interviewees also watch TV news in the early morning before work. Respondents generally prefer watching TV at home, either alone or with family members. Only two respondents sometimes watch TV at work; a few said they occasionally watch at relatives' homes.

By far the most popular type of TV programming is news, followed by documentaries. A couple of respondents also named movies, soap operas or cultural programs as favorites.

### **National Channels**

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*The three main TV stations respondents watch are ATB, Bolivisión and Boliviana.*

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Respondents mainly watch national TV channels; a few watch regional or local channels regularly. The channels respondents watch most often are the private stations ATB, Bolivisión and Unitel, and the state-run Televisión Boliviana. However, three interviewees—located in Calamarca (La Paz), Batallas (La Paz) and Machacamarca (Oruro)—stated only a few TV channels are accessible in their towns. They watch what is available to them, rather than selecting channels based on preference.

*Sometimes, not all the channels come through—only channel 7 (Televisión Boliviana) and channel 2 (Unitel), and at 12:00 the news comes on. Here in Calamarca, channel 7 is the only channel. (Female, 23, nurse, Calamarca)*

*[I like to watch] mostly news and sometimes novellas, that's it. And movies on Sundays. That's all there is. (Female, 27, business owner, Batallas)*

*I usually watch the TV national channels Unitel, ATB, RTP and PAT. I also watch the local TV channel Canal Universitario. (Female, 22, teacher, Yotala)*

For the most part, respondents are satisfied with the quality of information and programming on national channels, despite some complaints about objectivity (discussed below). Compared to radio news, they consider TV news more comprehensive and informative, partly due to the visual element. Respondents consider much of the information provided in TV news essential to their lives—current events, social trends and the overall situation in Bolivia; day-to-day information, such as weather, traffic and city shutdowns or strikes; and economic news and information.

*I feel satisfied [with the quality of information, at least on the national channels much more than the local ones. There is logic in what they say, plus they keep us well informed of the current situation in the country, and they comment on things happening in our society. (Female, 22, teacher, Yotala)*

*[The TV news] is very useful when we need to make a trip to the city or somewhere else. They give us information about whether there are shutdowns and what the weather's like in other places, so we can get organized in our work. (Male, 35, tailor, Punata)*



Several also said the news is useful for their jobs. One law student appreciates the coverage of laws and court cases; a medical student finds useful information on health and diseases; and a builder gets crucial information about new technologies in his field.

Among the three main TV stations respondents watch (ATB, Bolivisión and Boliviana), there is no clear distinction between the advantages or disadvantages of any. Several respondents consider ATB the most credible source of information. Several cited Televisión Boliviana for its interesting documentary and feature programs about different parts of the country, including coverage of indigenous people.

*People say Unitel exaggerates—that's why I prefer sometimes to watch Channel 4 (ATB); it is more reliable for news because it is more credible; it's a more serious channel. (Female, 20, medical student, Totora)*

*On Channel 7 [Televisión Boliviana], I have been most attracted to programs about indigenous peoples; second to [programs about] agriculture, what they harvest, etc. (Male, 40, business owner, Laja)*

Several respondents believe the national channels are not objective; some perceive ATB or Televisión Boliviana as pro-government. They believe each channel supports a particular point of view and it is necessary to watch several channels to gain a full understanding of events. They do not consider any particular channel less objective than any other channel.

*I don't trust the national channels; they are biased. They are just a mask always looking to favor one side or another. The only way to find objectivity in the news is to watch many newscasts and draw your own conclusions. (Male, 22, law student, Sucre)*

*That's why I change [channels], always to confirm...because sometimes they distort [the information]. They don't show everything that happened, only what affects them. (Male, 40, business owner, Laja)*

These respondents feel the same way about other media (discussed in subsequent sections of this report).

## **Local Channels**

Only a few respondents watch local channels on a regular basis. Based on their responses, the quality of and type of programming available on local channels varies widely by region. Two respondents in Punata (Cochabamba) regularly watch two local stations—Televisión de Valle Alto and Canal de las Estrellas. One respondent considers the latter station the most credible source of information because it provides local as well as national news.

*It's very important to have local stations because generally, what happens in our town is not shown on national channels, but if the channel is local, we can learn a bit more about what's happening in our own town. (Male, 35, tailor, Punata)*

A few other respondents, however, said their local stations have very limited programming, mainly movies, news flashes and occasional soccer games. A couple of respondents also consider the news on local stations less reliable than news on national stations.

*Sometimes, much of their information is based on propaganda, so the information is not good. (Male, 27, builder, Punata)*

## Cable TV

Only two respondents, both located in the department of Chuquisaca, have cable TV. The others specified cable is not available in their area or that they do not have it.

Both respondents who have cable watch international channels primarily for entertainment—including documentaries, movies and music—rather than news. They prefer to watch the news on Bolivian channels that provide information about the country; both perceived international channels as “distant” from Bolivia.

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*Only two respondents, both located in Chuquisaca, have cable TV.*

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The international channels these respondents like to watch include Cinemax, TNT, Discovery, National Geographic and the History Channel. Both like to watch documentaries on international channels.

When comparing international broadcasters to Bolivian stations, one respondent appreciates the wider selection of interesting programs they offer; the other believes international broadcasters have better quality overall.

*In most cases, the programming is more varied. The Bolivian media underestimate us by putting on a buffet of horrible programming; novellas always repeat the same argument ... They are always the same, they just change the make-up. (Male, 22, law student, Sucre)*

*What I like most about these channels is they are much clearer because they have a better way of giving information. (Female, 22, teacher, Yotala)*

## RADIO

### Listening Habits

Most respondents listen to the radio regularly both for news and music. Some prefer to listen to music on the radio and watch news on TV, but they mostly appreciate hearing both. Only one respondent, in Sucre, does not listen to the radio habitually.

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*Most respondents listen to the radio regularly both for news and music.*

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Respondents generally listen to the radio every day; those with jobs conducive to radio listening keep it on all day at work. These respondents listen primarily for music, but most also appreciate hearing newscasts broadcast on music stations throughout the day. Several respondents listen in the morning before work, at noon, and/or in the evening.

As with TV, the most popular place to listen to the radio is at home; many respondents listen to the radio with other people, such as family members or co-workers.

## **Stations**

Most respondents listen to local radio; some local stations have a link to a national news station. Only a few respondents listen to national radio stations such as Fides and Panamericana. As with TV, several respondents explained they only pick up reception for a few radio stations where they live, so they listen to whatever stations are accessible (usually local stations). The respondent in Batallas said in her locality, she has access to only two local radio stations that air music only. She has no access to national or regional stations. Some respondents said it is difficult to get a signal for FM stations.

One respondent said she listens to local stations because they broadcast in Aymara and her mother has limited knowledge of Spanish.

*[The local radio station] is very valuable; many people listen to it here. They broadcast in Aymara, so we mostly listen to Radio San Gabriel. My mom doesn't know Spanish well, and since they broadcast in Aymara, we mostly listen to that station because of her. (Female, 23, nurse, Calamarca)*

For the most part, respondents consider radio news credible, useful and informative. A few cited the national station Fides as particularly credible because it has many professional journalists, as well as correspondents reporting from throughout the country.

*The people who work at that station [Fides] are very responsible. They also try to give 100 percent facts; they don't invent information as other stations do. (Male, 35, tailor, Punata)*

*[Fides] has a network of various correspondents in different departments, so each one gives his information. This makes people believe the information they are listening to more [than on other stations]. (Male, 27, builder, Punata)*

## **Community Radio**

All but two respondents (in Sucre and Machacamarca) have community radio stations in their towns. Among those who have access to community stations, all listen at least once a week, but most listen every day. Several respondents keep the radio on all day; these respondents generally listen to local stations.

Community radio stations provide some combination of the following elements—local news and announcements, music, and newscasts from national stations. Most respondents agree information provided by the radio, especially local radio, is important for their work and daily routine—it informs them about community events, problems in the community, and possible strikes or public demonstrations in the city nearby. Community radio is an important source of information for many respondents.

*I regularly listen to local stations because there are some interesting programs about the work on the “field” which is important for us. Also, they inform us about prices. (Male, 40, business owner, Laja)*

*San Salvador, our community radio, informs us about what is happening in our community. I like to listen to this local radio station because it focuses on our community. San Salvador understands the need of people in our community. (Female, 20, student, Totora)*

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*It is difficult to generalize about community radio stations because the programming and quality varies from one station to another.*

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Some local stations air music only; some focus primarily on community information. One respondent in Laja said his local station provides the same programming as do national stations, but in Aymara. It is difficult to generalize about community radio stations because the programming and quality varies from one station to another.

For this reason, respondents differed in their level of satisfaction with information offered by local stations. For the most part, they are satisfied with the local information provided, but some are not satisfied with the national news, which they consider incomplete and/or not entirely credible. Those whose local stations provide music only are dissatisfied with the lack of information.

*[I am not satisfied with the information] because there is very little; they don't do their own [reporting]; they get it from another source. (Male, 27, builder, Punata)*

*There's no information, only music. ... They should at least have programs like those on Radio Chaca from Pucarani where they take an issue from La Razón and tell us in Aymara everything that has happened, all the news. (Female, 27, business owner, Batallas)*

One respondent, in Calamarca, repeatedly complained her local station only broadcasts from 19:00 to 23:00 on certain days of the week; she wishes the station had more airtime and gave more information.

Respondents almost unanimously believe the government should launch more local stations around the country. Most agree it is important for people to have access to information on local news and events, and for residents of a community to have a forum for sharing information and discussing local issues. Some respondents pointed out in some rural areas there may not be access to national media; a community radio station might be the only available source of information.

*It's very important [that a community has its own radio station] because if one did not have information about where one lived, it would be as if he did not know anything about the place ... A town without access to a local station is like a forgotten town. (Male, 35, tailor, Punata)*

*It's very important because one way of communicating with each other is to air an advertisement or announcement about the community that can help somebody.... [These stations] have helped people in various ways because people can announce what they need or want to buy and sell, and this helps the whole population. (Male, 27, builder, Punata)*

*[It's important] because we have a medium through which we can communicate what is happening and express some of our demands or things that are not good within our community. (Female, 22, teacher, Yotala)*

*[It's important because] it informs us about the most local [news]—what is happening, especially here in Huanuni, and what we are missing. (Female, 29, biochemist/pharmacist, Huanuni)*

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*In many cases, newspapers are available on weekends only, if at all.*

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## **PRESS**

### **Availability of Print Media**

In most localities where interviews were conducted, newspapers and magazines are available in central public plazas or markets and/or distributed by occasional traveling vendors. A few respondents said print media are also sometimes available in stores, banks and hair salons. One shop owner in Batallas said vendors bring newspapers directly to her store on Saturdays. In many cases—wherever the source—newspapers are available on weekends only.

Respondents in Calamarca and Machacamarca, however, said print media are not available in their towns; they must go to a larger city to buy newspapers or magazines.

*There are no [newspapers] here; it would be in La Paz when we travel there. Here, we don't have anywhere to buy them. (Female, 23, nurse, Calamarca)*

*I am always going back and forth to Oruro, and whenever I pass close by the corner newspaper vendors, I take the opportunity to read whatever I can. (Female, 42, professor, Machacamarca)*

### **Reading Habits**

Although many respondents enjoy reading newspapers or magazines, the limited availability of print media directly affects their reading habits. Most read the newspaper about once a week, usually on weekends. Several respondents also bring the newspaper to work with them during the week and read sporadically throughout the day when they have downtime. Those who do not have ready local access to newspapers only read one when they can buy one—typically on weekends.

*[I read] once a week, just on Saturdays. They only bring [the paper] on weekends because there isn't anybody who sells them here. (Female, 27, business owner, Batallas)*

*[I read] whenever the moment presents itself; I am always reading and [customers] always come by. ... I read in the morning—between 09:00 and 12:00— it’s always a little empty. (Male, 40, business owner, Laja)*

Only a few respondents specifically read magazines; a couple read them occasionally whenever they come across them; one reads them “constantly.” However, their comments indicate they read magazines primarily for entertainment or education, not for news.

*For magazines, [I read] mostly the educational ones ... I like one I’ve read called Vida y Salud (Life and Health). (Female, 29, biochemist/pharmacist, Huanuni)*

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*La Razón is the most popular newspaper among respondents*

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## Newspapers

*La Razón* is the most popular newspaper among respondents Respondents like it for its accurate, credible national news and its wide variety of topics, including social and economic stories.

**Table 2. Newspapers Read by Respondents**  
(City of publication in parentheses, where known)

<b>Newspaper</b>	<b># of Readers</b>
<i>La Razón</i> (La Paz)	4
<i>Los Tiempos</i> (Cochabamba)	2
<i>Correo del sur</i> (Sucre)	2
<i>El diario</i> (La Paz)	2
<i>La Patria</i> (Oruro)	2
<i>Gente</i>	2
<i>Opinión</i>	1
<i>El Potosi</i>	1
<i>El Extra</i>	1
<i>La Prensa</i>	1

As with other types of media, many respondents have a limited selection of newspapers from which to choose, based on what vendors sell in their area. In many cases, when respondents were asked why they read a particular paper, they answered it is the only one available.

*[I read] Correo del Sur because it is the only one they bring [here]. (Female, 22, teacher, Yotala)*

Respondents are mostly satisfied with the quality of information provided in newspapers and consider it accurate and credible. A couple of respondents describe newspapers as the most credible medium in Bolivia.

*[M]any radio and TV broadcasters get information from the newspaper. ... We can see newspapers report what actually happened, the truth. (Male, 35, tailor, Punata)*

A couple of respondents, however, believe newspapers are no more objective than any other medium; each one portrays the news from a particular point of view and they must verify its credibility by comparing it with other sources.

*I'm not so [satisfied with the information] because one newspaper says one thing, and another newspaper says it in a different way. It's not always the case, but it seems one newspaper is lying and another is telling the truth. (Female, 42, professor, Machacamarca)*

### **Community Newspapers or Bulletins**

Only a few respondents said their communities have a local newspaper or bulletin; they do not necessarily read it regularly. One respondent said his community distributed a newspaper a few years ago, but it only lasted two months.

*A few years ago, a local newspaper was distributed. It cost around one boliviano. The newspaper covered stories and legends from the community, but after two months, it stopped circulating. I guess people from our community are not interested in this type of information. (Male, 35, tailor, Punata)*

In a few cases, communities produce occasional bulletins for special events.

*There is a newsletter from the mayor's office and one from the prefecture, I think, but I have never read them. (Male, 22, law student, Sucre)*

*There is one I have seen ... They print it for every anniversary of Huanuni and it's very good because it's like a magazine. It's as if they are doing a historical summary of what happened in Huanuni. (Female, 29, biochemist/pharmacist, Huanuni)*

## **INTERNET**

### **Internet Habits and Access**

All the interviewees have used the internet; most of them used it for the first time more than five years ago. Several specified they first went online when they were at school or university. Currently, most respondents use the internet at least occasionally; several go online at least once a week. A couple of respondents, however, do not currently use the internet, mostly because there is no internet access in their communities.

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*All the interviewees have used the internet; most used it for the first time over five years ago.*

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*[I use it] once a month, when I need to look for information. (Male, 35, tailor, Punata)*

*[I don't use it] too much, probably about three or four times a month. It's a cheaper way for me to communicate with my son [in Buenos Aires]. (Female, 42, professor, Machacamarca)*

*I used it for assignments only, practical assignments when I was in school in '98. (Female, 27, business owner, Batallas)*

Most respondents go online at internet cafés or another public place; a few have access at work or school. No respondents said they have access at home. Respondents in Laja and Machacamarca pointed out their towns have no internet access; they have to go to the nearest city to use an internet café. As with other types of media, access varies widely depending on where interviewees live. For example, one of the Punata respondents reported there are many internet cafés in that town.

*Since I don't have a computer at home, I go to an internet café. There are many here. (Male, 35, tailor, Punata)*

*[I access the internet] in La Paz because the signal does not enter [here]; it is cut off. (Male, 40, business owner, Laja)*

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*The main reason respondents use the internet is to search for information.*

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## **Internet Activities**

The main reason respondents use the internet is to search for information; Google was the website most often mentioned. Several respondents said the internet is useful for their work—both a builder and a pharmacist use it to stay abreast of developments in their fields.

*It is very useful for me personally because instead of going to the city to check how many taxes are owed for buying a car that was stolen, I can access the information [online]. (Male, 35, tailor, Punata)*

*It is very useful because it is a window for getting certain information that is not easy to find [elsewhere]. (Male, 22, law student, Sucre)*

*More than anything, I look at information about machinery. Recently, I also used information about customs. These are pages that can help a company—or my company—to innovate. (Male, 27, builder, Punata)*

*In my work, it is useful because I can look for information to stay up-to-date [in my field]. (Female, 29, biochemist/pharmacist, Huanuni)*

Several respondents also use the internet for email and/or for communicating with friends or relatives out of the country (via cell phone or instant messaging), or for music-related activities, such as downloading music or following news about favorite performing artists.



Only one of the 10 respondents is familiar with blogs; in fact, this respondent has his own blog. Otherwise, respondents simply guessed at what a blog might be, with ideas ranging from a mouse button to a cell phone feature.

## Opinions about the Internet

Interviewees had mixed responses regarding the credibility of information available online. Many do not trust the internet as a source of information because anyone can post information online. These respondents do not regularly access news online and are not experienced in distinguishing between authoritative and non-authoritative sources.

*The information they put [online] is not very credible because anyone can post information. It can be false, so you have to pay attention where to where the information comes from. (Male, 35, tailor, Punata)*

Others use the internet as one of many sources of news and information; they consider it about as trustworthy as any other medium.

*I don't completely trust [the information] that's on the internet, but it helps me have a broader perspective on events. You see an international news item—one site shows the other side and another shows what somebody thinks happened. You get all that and it balances out. (Male, 22, law student, Sucre)*

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*A couple of respondents noted the internet has made it easier for students to do their schoolwork and has changed the way they learn.*

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A couple of respondents like to use the internet to verify or get more details about information they have seen on TV or elsewhere. These individuals know how to locate authoritative online news sources.

*If I've already seen something on TV and I want to look for more information to verify it or go into more depth, I go online. (Female, 20, medical student, Totorá)*

When asked about changes brought about in their communities by the internet, responses varied widely. Several respondents—especially those who have no internet access in their towns—said the advent of the internet has not affected their communities. Most said the internet has influenced young people the most. A couple of respondents—including a medical student who regularly uses the internet to complete her assignments—noted the internet has made it easier for students to do their schoolwork and has changed the way they learn.

*Before, when you needed to look for an assignment, you didn't know where to look, but now you have the internet. (Female, 20, medical student, Totorá)*

*Young people have more access to be able to complete their assignments and they already have more knowledge about things perhaps they never would have learned [without the internet]. Young people today are much more up-to-date on scientific and technological advances. (Male, 35, tailor, Punata)*

A couple of respondents, however, were concerned about what they perceived as the negative influence of internet on young people due to the availability of “bad information,” such as pornography or violent images.

*The changes have been a little for the worse. From seeing so much information on the internet, they [young people] start acting like what they see on the internet, and much of it is not good.... (Male, 27, builder, Punata)*

*Most young people are changing with the internet. One time I saw underage youths surfing porno sites; that doesn't strike me as a good use of the internet. (Female, 22, teacher, Yotala)*

## **CELL PHONES**

### **Accessibility**

All respondents own a cell phone. Most have phones with the capacity for text messaging, although others have phones they can only use for making and receiving calls.

Available cell phone companies in the areas where respondents live are Tigo, Viva and/or Entel; in some areas, only one company has reception locally. Respondents generally selected their cell phone carrier based on the quality of its reception or the price. All respondents have a pre-paid plan; it is the cheapest and most accessible plan in those communities. In Bolivia, people who have a pre-paid plan do not pay for incoming calls.

*I have Tigo because, not long ago, this company became available here in town; they say Entel will have a signal here in the future. (Female, 20, medical student, Totorá)*

*I have Viva because the rates they offer are substantially reduced ... and they have wide [geographic] coverage. (Male, 27, builder, Punata)*

All respondents—except for the one in Machacamarca—can purchase cards, chips or “credit” for their phones locally. These items are available at cell phone company kiosks, some stores and independent vendors in public areas, such as central plazas. A business owner in Laja said he expects to be able to start offering cell phone recharging services soon.

*Recently, there has been an inundation of places that sell chips and cards; even in the plaza, you can see young women selling cards to people there. If you can get to any place where there are, for example, Entel or Comteco kiosks, they sell cards, chips and credit cards (for cell phones). (Male, 35, tailor, Punata)*

*In all the stores, they have that. (Female, 27, business owner, Batallas)*

*There are various stores where you can buy the card to recharge your credit ... or you can get a virtual recharge at newspaper stands where there are Entel vendors. (Male, 22, law student, Sucre)*

*We are so behind; you have no choice but to travel to Oruro to get anything. (Female, 42, professor, Machacamarca)*

*I'm going to start doing business in that, recharging phones and all that. (Male, 40, business owner, Laja)*

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*Some respondents mentioned they prefer to send a text message than to make a call because it is much cheaper.*

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## **Activities**

Interviewees use their cell phones primarily for communication, whether phone calls or text messages. Several use their phones to take photos. Only a couple of respondents play games on their phones; a couple of others have played games on other people's phones.

Some respondents said they prefer to send a text message than to make a call because it is much cheaper.

*I prefer to send text messages; it is cheaper than calling. For instance, a text message costs 20 cents per minute; a phone call costs 1.50 bolivianos per minute. If I buy a card of 10 bolivianos, I can only make about 10 calls, but I can send more than 20 text messages. In my community, text messaging is very common. (Male, 35, tailor, Punata)*

Although most respondents have the option of accessing the internet via their cell phones, none use it regularly because of the high cost and/or because they do not know how to use this function.

*We don't use it because it is more expensive. For example, if we have five [points] and we start to connect to the internet, the five are gone already. It eats up [the points] quickly. (Female, 27, business owner, Batallas)*

*So far, I haven't been able to access [the internet], but from what I've seen, it's possible. But I haven't tried because I think it's more expensive. (Male, 40, business owner, Laja)*

*It's possible, but I've never tried to connect to the internet from my cell phone because of the configuration or simply because I don't have time. (Female, 22, teacher, Yotala)*

Several respondents do receive information via their cell phones. In particular, some said they regularly receive announcements of local events or concerts. From respondents' comments, it seems these announcements come from the service provider rather than from a subscription.

*The Viva network provider sends messages about events in the country, about [musical] groups that are coming, about what problems are going on; there are always text messages coming through on my cell phone. (Male, 35, tailor, Punata)*

*I get many messages about events or performing artists coming to the country, where they invite you to attend the events. (Male, 27, builder, Punata)*

*[I receive information] about upcoming concerts, for example. (Female, 22, teacher, Yotala)*

Some respondents said their cell phone provider offers news subscriptions, but they have not subscribed, primarily due to the cost.

*I have not signed up for any of those programs, which for a ton of money will send you a variety of information via [text] messages. I think it is a way to waste money unnecessarily. (Male, 22, law student, Sucre)*

*[I don't receive such messages] because when they send news it reduces your credit. For example, if you have 10 bolivianos, you receive a news message and then you have no credit left. (Female, 23, nurse, Calamarca)*

## Usefulness

Respondents agreed it is quite useful to have a cell phone for communicating with family and for work purposes. Many also pointed out the importance of cell phones as a way to communicate with loved ones in case of an emergency. A couple of respondents also said they find the camera useful.

*Cell phones are very useful both for work and for your personal life because you can be easily located or receive an emergency call, or there are people who need it for work. I think everyone can make good use of a cell phone. (Male, 35, tailor, Punata)*

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*The majority of respondents use their cell phones for work.*

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*It is useful because I can keep up ... with what my siblings are doing ... and sometimes I take pictures with my cell phone. (Male, 40, business owner, Laja)*

*The cell phone is very useful in case of emergencies. For example, if my husband is in the city and something happens in the community, I can call him and he will be back as soon as he can. (Female, 27, business owner, Batallas)*

The majority of respondents use their cell phones for work for communicating with coworkers, customers or distributors. One respondent finds his cell phone camera indispensable for taking photos of construction projects he's working on.

*At work [I use my cell phone] to locate my colleagues. (Female, 22, teacher, Yotala)*

*Since my business is selling blouses, I can easily communicate with those who provide me [with materials]. People who have my number can also locate me when they need my services. (Male, 35, tailor, Punata)*

*At my work, it is very useful because I can communicate with providers, place orders. (Female, 29, biochemist/pharmacist, Huanuni)*

*I use [my cell phone] constantly at work because I communicate with the workers and my boss. ... The cell phone is also very important because I can use it as a camera to take a photo of a construction project I'm working on and use it to show what I am doing. (Male, 27, builder, Punata)*

## TRADITIONAL MEDIA

### Types of Traditional Media

With the exception of the respondent in Sucre, all respondents described at least one type of traditional medium used for information sharing in their communities. For example, most respondents live in communities that have community meetings, whether weekly, monthly or occasionally; these meetings are a common way of staying informed about local news, issues or events.

*People know the last Saturday of every month there are community meetings, where the authorities gather to provide information or organize something. (Female, 42, professor, Machacamarca)*

*[I get local news at] the neighborhood meetings. ... Everyone attends the meetings. (Female, 27, business owner, Batallas)*

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*Many communities use flyers, posters or banners to announce community meetings and/or local cultural events.*

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Many respondents' communities also use flyers, posters or banners to announce community meetings and/or local cultural events, such as upcoming concerts or festivals.

*Sometimes when they are advertising—for example, the town agricultural fair or the traditional food festival—they use posters. (Female, 20, medical student, Totorá)*

In some communities, other means of announcing information—especially community meetings—are via megaphone, church bell or door-to-door leafleting. Respondents said the community sometimes uses megaphones (or microphones) to announce a death, an emergency, or major events in town.

*Members of the neighborhood association use the megaphone to announce what is happening—when there are meetings or when somebody dies, or when something has happened. Because honestly, people listen, whereas when they pass out flyers or something, people lose them or they fly away in the wind. (Male, 40, business owner, Laja)*

*They use the loudspeaker for emergencies only; when there is a meeting planned by the authorities, they pass out leaflets door-to-door 24 hours beforehand. (Female, 27, business owner, Batallas)*

Most respondents said word-of-mouth is important in their communities. News about the country or the community spreads quickly through community members.

*Sometimes you get informed about news about the community through another community member; He tells me, I tell another person, the person tells another person, etc. In our communities, everybody talks. (Male, 22, lawyer student, Sucre)*

*When there is an important community event or meeting, there are a few people in the community that go door-to-door inviting people to attend. They call them "Voceros." (Male, 35, tailor, Punata)*

However, "traditional media" are used mainly for informing community residents of meetings and/or local events, not for news. For hard news, respondents rely on TV, community and national radio, and other major media. Local radio is the most popular way of getting community news.

*Generally, when the community wants to talk about problems that occur in the community, they use mass media like community radio to spread information. (Male, 35, tailor, Punata)*

Only a few respondents mentioned public places in their community where people get together to watch, listen to or use media. For example, a couple of respondents in Cochabamba talked about internet cafés in their towns.<sup>1</sup> A few mentioned places where local residents occasionally gather to watch TV, such as a popular restaurant, a community store or a movie theater. A respondent in Punata (Cochabamba) also said older people sometimes gather in the central plaza to listen to news on their portable radios and discuss their opinions.

*Some people come [to my store to watch TV]. Most of them always come when they're drinking, and say, "Turn it on for me" or "Put that game on for me," and they watch the game. But only with that particular group [of people]. (Male, 40, business owner, Laja)*

*There is the movie theater where they have a big screen. They use it to watch TV, but more often to hold meetings, sometimes to share information. For example, if it is something presented by the mayor's office ... they put their information there. (Female, 29, biochemist/pharmacist, Huanuni)*

*In the restaurant The Orient there is a huge 32-inch screen where people go to eat and watch TV. Many older people go to the plaza with their portable radios*

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<sup>1</sup> Although other respondents mentioned the presence of local internet cafés in their comments about the internet (in the internet section), they did not mention it in response to this question.

*to chat while they listen to the news and comment on events. (Male, 35, tailor, Punata)*

## Sharing and Obtaining Information via Word-of-Mouth

When it comes to hard news—such as national, political or economic news—most

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*Many respondents like to discuss or analyze news with family members.*

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respondents rely on mass media as their main sources. Sometimes respondents will ask a trusted relative or friend to verify information they have heard on the radio or TV (especially if they doubt the accuracy of the news) or to fill them in on information they might have missed.

Many respondents like to discuss or analyze news with family members; several also discuss news with friends or colleagues. In many cases, respondents usually watch the news with specific family members—such as a spouse, parent or child—and discuss while they watch. In some cases, family members, friends or colleagues like to share information to keep each other informed or current on relevant news. Several respondents, whose work involves interacting with people, also share information with their customers, patients or students.

*[I share news] with my mom. We are always commenting on what is going on, when we agree, when we disagree, what we think. (Female, 29, biochemist/pharmacist, Huanuni)*

*With my family, if there is something they have not heard about, I inform them, and they do the same. For example, if there is some information they should be careful about [I tell them] or they let me know about it. (Female, 20, medical student, Totorá)*

*I usually share information I see with my coworkers during break, or [sometimes] while we are working we discuss what's going on, we talk about the news we've seen. ... One of them mentions a piece of news; then another coworker mentions another one, and at the end, we are all talking what is happening. (Male, 27, builder, Punata)*

Respondents' habits differ, however, when it comes to community news or information. In this case, respondents or other community members will ask each other what's going on in the community, especially if they miss the local radio program or a recent meeting. Also, if they have not seen a flyer for an upcoming community meeting, they ask a family member or other community member when the meeting will be.

*If you haven't had a chance to listen to the radio, sometimes other people let you know [about community news]. (Female, 20, medical student, Totorá)*

## Community Members as Information Sources

For the most part, interviewees consider community members or leaders reliable or trustworthy, including elders, specific family members, trusted friends and local authorities.

*The mallkus [are more trustworthy] because they have the ability to punish even the mayors or other community authorities. (Female, 42, professor, Machacamarca)*

*Relatives are the most reliable. Elders are reliable to get more information; [the information they give] is more reliable. (Male, 40, business owner, Laja)*

At the same time, a few respondents specifically stated they believe their community leaders are not trustworthy.

*Nobody goes to the leaders; if they want to say something, they do it at a meeting. Anyway, they don't have valuable information. Nobody goes to the elders [for information]. (Female, 27, business owner, Batallas)*

*I don't think there is a leader in Sucre, but if there were I wouldn't think s/he would be trustworthy. (Male, 22, law student, Sucre)*

## CONCLUSIONS

For the most part, respondents are satisfied with the information provided by the Bolivian media, including national TV stations, radio stations and newspapers. However, some respondents repeatedly said Bolivian media cannot be completely trusted to provide objective news. For local and community news, many respondents are satisfied with the information provided by community radio stations and community meetings.

Respondents with limited access to media—perhaps only a few TV and radio stations—crave more options. They are frustrated by the lack of access to media in their towns, including multiple TV and radio stations, newspapers and internet.

Many respondents indicated they would probably read newspapers more often—and might rely on them more as a primary source of news—if they were available locally on a more regular basis, such as daily. A few respondents emphasized everyone in their town is literate, which makes newspapers a viable information source.

Respondents would probably use the internet more often if it were cheaper and more convenient. Similarly, it is possible some respondents would be interested in accessing the internet via cell phone if it were more affordable. However, based on the interviews, respondents would not necessarily use the internet as a primary news source, even if they had regular access to it.

Despite the increased availability of new technology media, such as internet and cell phones, community radio still plays a key role in most towns included in this study. Respondents



believe this trend will continue in the future. They want more radio stations, more airtime and increased variety of programming. Regarding traditional media, respondents agree word-of-mouth is still very important and plays an important role in their communities.