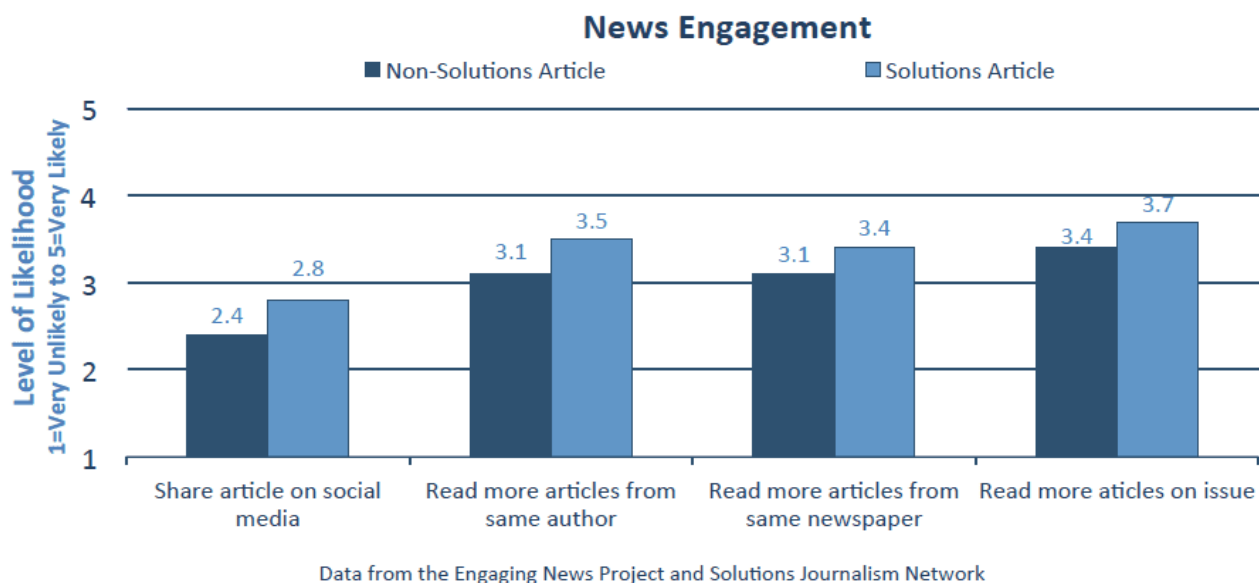# Handout

Impacts of constructive journalism (more in depth)

The data supporting constructive journalism is beginning to speak for itself. Media studies and anecdotal evidence show that audiences engage with constructive journalism more deeply than they do with traditional reporting. Trust levels are higher as well as engagement rates. Higher trust and more engagement keeps readers loyal and attracts new ones, which can boost an outlet's bottom line. The studies carried out so far are based in the US and Europe, but many results should be applicable to other regions.

- **More sharing with constructive stories:** Negative headlines might get more clicks, but constructive stories are shared more often.
- **Stronger ties with audiences:** Readers of solutions stories say they would read more articles from the journalist who wrote the article or the newspaper which published it.
- **Higher youth engagement:** Younger audiences in particular are more engaged with solutions stories than traditional ones. A BBC survey of young online audiences found that 64% of people under 35 wanted solutions-oriented news.
- **Potential to win over "indifferent audiences":** For an untrusting public, the issue is indifference rather than hostility. To win these people over, the Reuters Institute recommends moving beyond just reporting on the intricacies of daily politics as well as covering the good along with the bad – just what a constructive approach does.
- **Psychological Boost:** A 2014 experiment conducted by researchers at the University of Texas's Engaging News Project found that readers of solutions-oriented stories reported higher levels of self-efficacy, optimism and agency as compared to readers of non-solutions stories. That result was replicated in a 2016 study.
- **Spending more time and more money:** News consumers spend more time with constructive stories and seem more willing to spend money on subscriptions and memberships. However, more long-term research is needed to draw a definitive link between a constructive approach and stronger revenue streams.

News Engagement

■ Non-Solutions Article ■ Solutions Article

Level of Likelihood
1=Very Unlikely to 5=Very Likely

Share article on social media: 2.4 / 2.8
Read more articles from same author: 3.1 / 3.5
Read more articles from same newspaper: 3.1 / 3.4
Read more aticles on issue: 3.4 / 3.7

Data from the Engaging News Project and Solutions Journalism Network

Source: SmithGeiger

Studies

Engaging News Project (2014, University of Texas, Austin):
Solutions stories heightened audiences' perceived knowledge and sense of efficacy,
Strengthened connections between audiences and news organizations, and catalyzed
potential engagement on an issue.
mediaengagement.org/research/solutions-journalism

Connecting to young, online audiences (2015, BBC World Service)
64% of people under 35 years of age wanted solutions-oriented news.
www.journalism.co.uk/news/five-key-research-findings-about-young-online-audiences-
from-bbc-world-service/s2/a588021

Solutions Journalism & News Engagement (2016, University of Texas, Austin)

Readers of the solutions story spent about 25 percent more time on the page (roughly 30 seconds more) than did readers of the non-solutions version.
mediaengagement.org/research/solutions-journalism-news-engagement

The Keys to Powerful Solutions Journalism (2019, University of Texas, Austin)
The study out of Texas looked at core components of solutions journalism and found that articles using that approach improved readers' perception of article quality, increased readers' intentions to engage, increased readers' interest in and knowledge about the issue, and boosted readers' positivity.
mediaengagement.org/research/powerful-solutions-journalism

News Experiences and Opinions in Denmark (2020, Constructive Institute)
A third of the population feel that news often puts them in a bad mood. More than half of the population believes that news focuses more on negative than positive perspectives on events. 57 % of Danes would prefer to read a news article with a constructive rather than a conventional news headline.
constructiveinstitute.org/why/epinion-report

Transforming Engagement - (2021, SmithGeiger)
A US study found that solutions storytelling offers key benefits for journalists and news consumers alike across platforms and demographics.
sjn-static.s3.amazonaws.com/SmithGeiger2020.pdf