

Q3 2021 ABC/ VFD Summary

Issued by [Spark Media](#)

23 Nov 2021

A good news story: In South Africa, the newspaper category as measured by the Audit Bureau of Circulations is showing an 11.4% increase when compared to the same period in 2020. The total number of South African newspaper copies circulated is 5,808,965 in Q3 2021 up from 5,215,921 in Q3 2020.



In South Africa, 83% of all circulating newspapers are local publications (sold, free and hybrid titles). In Q3 2021 the category of local newspapers circulated 4,814,684 copies. This is 4.8 times the amount of daily and weekly/weekend newspapers which circulated 994,281 copies in Jul–Sept 2021.

A year-on-year analysis, comparing to the previous period (Q3 2020) shows that the local news component of the newspaper industry is up by 8.6% (382,986 copies) which is further proof of the resilience, relevance and importance of local newspapers in South Africa.

A closer look at free local papers

In South Africa, the titles that have seen the most growth in the free local newspaper category include: *City Vision* (Khayalitsha), *Rekord Noweto*, *City Vision* (Langa/Gugulethu), *Randburg Sun* and *Rekord Central/Sentraal*. The average increase in their circulation figures is between ±10,000 and ±34,000 copies.

In contrast, the titles that have seen circulation declines have only seen between ±1,000 to 7,700 copy decreases, these titles include *Maritzburg Echo*, *Msunduzi Eyethu* (former Edendale), *Southern Courier*, *Maritzburg Sun* and *North Coast Courier*.

Evaluating sold local papers

In South Africa, sold local newspapers have typically struggled in a similar way to sold daily and weekend/weekly titles during the tough economic times faced during lockdown living. However, the year-on-year comparison shows a 3.8% increase in sold local newspaper circulations. The titles that have shown the largest growth include *Witbank News*, *Middelburg Observer*, *Mpumalanga News*, *Vaalweekblad* and *Paarl Post* with some circulation increases up as much as ±5,500 copies

In contrast, the sold local titles that have decreased the most include *The Representative*, *African Reporter*, *Newcastle and District Advertiser*, *Zululand Observer Weekend* and *Zululand Observer Monday*. The highest decline was at most ±1,500 copies.

Hybrid local papers

In South Africa, the category of hybrid local newspapers is proving to be an effective one, titles such as the *South Coast Herald* incorporating *UGU District News* and *Lowvelder Friday / Lowvelder Express* are showing market dominance and decent circulation stability.

In South Africa, a press schedule of national/regional daily and weekly titles can circulate a maximum of ±0.9 million copies, whereas a local newspaper strategy can distribute ±4.8 million newspapers a week. The ability to group local newspapers in combinations to effectively reach specific areas or a particular audience is the ideal way to use modern day print media to effectively reach people in their homes in 2021 and beyond.

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