

Q2 2021 ABC/ VFD

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Local newspapers are once again the modest heroes in the newspaper category. Resisting the dramatic "print declines narrative" that seems to make news headlines globally - the South African local newspaper business model is proving resilient, stable and necessary as locally relevant news is fundamental to living in uncertain times.



Following on from a 1% increase in newspaper circulations in the last quarter (Q4 2020 to Q1 2021), the stability of overall newspaper circulations has been further cemented by the Q2 2021 ABC/ VFD release. This quarter's increase is 2% overall across the category, however the growth is driven primarily by free local newspapers.

The combined circulation of local newspapers (free and sold) continues to be strong at over 4.9 million copies in circulation every week. Despite the negative impact of Covid-19 on the newspaper industry, local papers continue to weather the storm, and circulation figures remain stable (quarter on quarter) with a slight upward trend (2%). This highlights the significant role local newspapers continue to play in providing communities with much-needed local journalism.

Unfortunately, the same can't be said about the Weekly/Weekend and Daily Newspapers. The Weekly/Weekend Newspaper category declined by 0.01% from the previous quarter (Q1 2021 to Q2 2021) and the Daily newspapers declined by 2.3%.

A closer look at free local papers

Free local newspaper circulation has increased by 2,1% (97,980 copies) from Q1 to Q2 2021. This shows there is growth and recovery from the early impact of Covid-19.

This increase can also be attributed to more local papers submitting their VFD figures e.g. Heidelberg/Nigel Heraut.

Go! & Express, shows the largest decline in this category, with a circulation decline of 4.5% and the newspaper with the largest growth is Eyethu Umgungundlovu with an increase of 50.17% (since Q2 2021).

Evaluating sold local papers

In contrast to free local papers, sold local papers shows a mild decline from the previous quarter (-1,6%).

This decline is in line with other sold newspapers (daily, weekly and weekend), facing similar pandemic pressures as readers try to cope with financial uncertainty and the realities of continued lockdown living.

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