

News salaries stabilize

By Bob Papper

The good news in broadcast news salaries in 2009 is that there isn't bad news, according to the latest RTDNA/Hofstra University Annual Survey. Local television news salaries rose a modest 2.5 percent during 2009, and local radio news salaries were unchanged. That compares with drops for both local TV (4.4 percent) and local radio (1.8 percent) the year before.

With inflation non-existent in 2009 (negative 0.3 percent), news people really did hold their own.

Television News Salaries – 2010

	Average	Median	Minimum	Maximum
News Director	\$88,600	\$75,000	\$25,000	\$200,000
Assistant News Director	72,100	63,000	23,000	112,500
Managing Editor	63,200	60,000	29,000	95,000
Executive Producer	56,700	55,000	30,000	135,000
News Anchor	75,100	59,000	18,000	600,000
Weathercaster	62,300	50,000	18,000	350,000
Sports Anchor	61,600	40,000	18,000	350,000
News Reporter	37,400	29,000	17,000	280,000
Sports Reporter	33,700	26,500	18,000	190,000
Assignment Editor	40,100	37,000	20,000	114,000
News Producer	33,600	30,000	18,000	110,000
News Writer	35,300	26,500	16,000	80,000
News Assistant	27,900	25,000	20,000	40,000
Photographer	32,100	28,000	13,000	85,000
Tape Editor	31,100	27,000	15,000	80,000
Graphics Specialist	34,900	30,000	22,000	60,000
Internet Specialist	37,400	35,000	21,000	100,000
Art Director	66,500	55,000	25,000	120,000

A mixed picture in TV salaries. Eleven positions went up from last year; four dropped; three stayed the same. But no position changed much, which is probably the more important point. Overall, salaries rose by 2.5 percent. The only salaries that moved much were reporter, managing editor and art director. All rose by about 10 percent. The biggest loser was sports reporter, which fell by about the same amount. Because the largest, highest-paying stations can raise the average salaries out of proportion, the median -- or midpoint -- is usually considered a better gauge of typical salaries.

Five and Ten Year Median Television News Salary Comparisons 2010 to 2005 to 2000

	2010	2005	5-Year Percentage Change	2000	10-Year Percentage Change
INFLATION			+13.6%		+28.8%
All TV news			+2.9		+17.6
News Director	\$75,000	\$73,000	+2.7	\$59,000	+27.1
Assistant News Director	63,000	60,000	+5.0	54,000	+16.7
Managing Editor	60,000	55,000	+9.1	50,000	+20.0
Executive Producer	55,000	50,000	+10.0	49,000	+12.2
News Anchor	59,000	55,500	+6.3	45,000	+31.1
Weathercaster	50,000	50,000	n/c	40,000	+25.0
Sports Anchor	40,000	40,000	n/c	35,000	+14.3
News Reporter	29,000	30,000	-3.3	24,000	+20.8
Sports Reporter	26,500	28,000	-5.4	23,000	+15.2
Assignment Editor	37,000	32,500	+13.8	30,000	+23.3
News Producer	30,000	30,000	n/c	25,000	+20.0
News Writer	26,500	27,000	-1.9	30,000	-11.7
News Assistant	25,000	25,000	n/c	21,000	+19.0
Photographer	28,000	27,000	+3.7	23,000	+21.7
Tape Editor	27,000	25,000	+8.0	24,000	+12.5
Graphics Specialist	30,000	31,000	-3.2	30,000	n/c
Internet Specialist	35,000	37,500	-6.7	30,000	+16.7

This table gives the longer term picture, comparing salaries with five years ago, ten years ago and with inflation over those periods. Overall, in the last five years, TV news salaries have slipped further behind inflation, growing less than a quarter as much as the consumer price index, 2.9 percent versus 13.6 percent. The ten year picture is better, but overall salary growth, 17.6 percent, still lags well behind inflation, 28.8 percent.

Over the last five years, only assignment editors have kept up with inflation; four positions are unchanged from five years ago; and five positions have actually dropped during that time. Over the last 10 years, only news anchors have kept pace with inflation, although news directors and assignment editors are close.

Median TV News Salaries by Market Size – 2010

	1 – 25	26 – 50	51 – 100	101-150	150+
News Director	\$150,000	\$130,000	\$90,000	\$74,000	\$55,000
Assistant News Director	112,500	90,000	60,000	41,000	45,000
Managing Editor	90,000	66,000	50,000	55,000	30,000
Executive Producer	85,000	60,000	49,000	47,500	38,000

News Anchor	117,500	100,000	70,000	53,300	35,500
Weathercaster	117,500	89,500	60,000	45,000	33,500
Sports Anchor	100,000	100,000	50,000	35,500	30,000
News Reporter	65,000	47,500	34,000	25,000	22,000
Sports Reporter	42,000	50,000	30,000	25,000	22,000
Assignment Editor	53,800	42,500	40,000	32,000	30,000
News Producer	55,000	41,500	32,000	26,500	24,000
News Writer	42,000	28,000	24,500	23,500	*
News Assistant	30,000	33,500	25,000	24,500	15,000
Photographer	50,000	40,000	30,000	23,000	22,000
Tape Editor	55,000	34,000	25,000	20,000	18,500
Graphics Specialist	33,500	52,500	28,000	35,000	23,000
Internet Specialist	53,000	40,000	36,000	34,000	25,500
Art Director	120,000	67,500	40,000	37,500	*

*Insufficient data

As usual, the larger the market, the larger the salary. The top 25 market salaries would be even higher, but it also includes a number of smaller, independent newsrooms which generally pay lower salaries than their network-affiliated counterparts. Of all the positions in TV news, only two went up in median salary in every market size: assignment editor and photographer. News producer, tape editor and internet specialist came close. In most years, some market sizes fare better -- or worse -- than others. This year, there's surprisingly little difference from one market size to the next, although, overall, markets 101 - 150 fared just slightly better than the others.

Median TV News Salaries by Staff Size – 2010

	51+	31-50	21-30	11-20	1-10
News Director	\$133,500	\$85,000	\$65,000	\$55,000	\$49,000
Assistant News Director	91,000	48,500	42,000	40,000	*
Managing Editor	70,000	60,000	50,000	60,000	*
Executive Producer	65,000	50,000	40,000	40,000	30,000
News Anchor	101,000	60,000	50,000	36,300	24,500
Weathercaster	94,000	57,500	40,500	35,000	25,000
Sports Anchor	90,000	45,000	34,500	30,000	23,500
News Reporter	54,500	32,500	22,900	23,900	23,500
Sports Reporter	43,500	30,000	23,800	21,000	25,000
Assignment Editor	41,000	39,000	30,000	29,000	*
News Producer	41,000	30,000	25,900	25,000	35,000
News Writer	29,000	22,500	24,500	*	*
News Assistant	34,000	25,000	17,500	*	21,800
Photographer	40,000	27,800	23,000	25,500	20,000
Tape Editor	33,500	25,000	20,500	19,000	*
Graphics Specialist	45,000	29,000	27,000	27,000	*
Internet Specialist	42,500	35,000	28,000	25,500	*
Art Director	75,000	30,000	40,000	35,000	*

*Insufficient data

Usually, when I break down salaries by staff size, I see some pattern of differences with salaries going up and down. Not this year. If there's a pattern, it's the uniformity of the small changes in salaries, regardless of how they're broken down. And not a single job moved either uniformly up or down across all staff sizes. With rare exception, the bigger the newsroom, the bigger the salaries -- as always. There are no meaningful differences based on network affiliation. Salaries in the Northeast and West tended to be higher than the South and Midwest.

Radio News Salaries – 2010

	Average	Median	Minimum	Maximum
News Director	\$37,300	\$32,000	\$19,200	\$65,000
News Reporter	29,500	30,000	20,000	46,000
News Anchor	33,500	34,000	15,000	60,000
News Producer	31,100	30,000	20,000	45,000
Sports Anchor	33,300	28,000	20,000	40,000
Sports Reporter	21,000	29,000	20,000	40,000

Overall, radio news salaries were unchanged in 2009. News directors rose slightly. News reporters, producers and sports reporters rose, but news and sports anchors fell. Because the largest, highest-paying stations can raise the average salaries out of proportion, the median -- or midpoint -- is usually considered a better gauge of typical salaries.

Five and Ten Year Median Radio News Salary Comparisons 2010 to 2005 to 2000

	2010	2005	5-Year Percentage Change	2000	10-Year Percentage Change
INFLATION			+13.6%		+28.8%
All radio news			+5.2		+25.2
News Director	\$32,000	\$33,000	-3.0	\$24,000	+33.3
News Reporter	30,000	24,500	+22.4	20,000	+50.0
News Anchor	34,000	26,000	+30.8	28,000	+21.4
News Producer	30,000	38,000	-21.1	26,000	+15.4
Sports Anchor	28,000	27,000	+3.7	25,000	+12.0
Sports Reporter	29,000	25,500	+13.7	*	*

*Insufficient data

Overall, local radio news salaries have risen less than half as fast as the rate of inflation, 5.2 percent versus 13.6 percent. Over the last 10 years, radio news salaries are much closer to the inflation rate, although still falling behind. In some years, the numbers reported for some positions are fairly low, so I'd recommend looking at the overall figures rather than comparing position by position.

Median Radio News Salaries by Market Size – 2010

	Major	Large	Medium	Small
News Director	\$53,500	\$40,000	\$30,500	\$32,000
News Reporter	35,000	40,000	29,000	25,000
News Anchor	39,500	50,000	28,000	24,000
News Producer	40,500	32,000	29,000	24,000
Sports Anchor	*	26,000	29,000	27,000
Sports Reporter	*	*	15,500	32,000

*Insufficient data

As usual, the larger the market, generally, the higher the salary. Major markets are those with 1 million or more listeners. Large markets are those from 250,000 to 1 million; medium markets are from 50,000 to 250,000; and small markets have fewer than 50,000 listeners.

Median Radio News Salaries by Full-Time Staff Size – 2010

	One	Two	Three or 4	5 or more
News Director	\$27,500	\$32,000	\$33,000	\$43,500
News Reporter	*	25,000	28,000	35,000
News Anchor	42,000	32,500	29,000	35,000
News Producer	43,000	25,000	24,500	35,000
Sports Anchor	*	27,000	24,000	37,000
Sports Reporter	*	*	29,000	17,000

*Insufficient data

The salaries by staff size are almost always highly variable, although there is a general tendency for the largest news operations to pay more.

Median Radio News Salaries by Number of Stations News Director Supervises – 2010

	One	2-3	Four	5-6	7 or more
News Director	\$27,500	\$32,000	\$25,000	\$31,500	\$40,000
News Reporter	30,000	35,000	25,000	26,500	20,500
News Anchor	36,000	32,000	44,000	25,000	*
News Producer	20,000	29,000	44,500	*	*
Sports Anchor	*	28,000	18,000	37,000	*
Sports Reporter	*	15,500	*	*	*

*Insufficient data

As with previous years, there is no consistent pattern to salaries based on the number of stations a news director supervises.

Median Radio News Salaries by Ownership – 2010

	Group-Owned	Independent
News Director	\$32,000	\$32,500
News Reporter	25,500	35,000
News Anchor	29,000	40,000
News Producer	35,000	29,000
Sports Anchor	26,000	34,000
Sports Reporter	15,500	32,000

*Insufficient data

This year – unlike most years – independent stations paid more than group-owned ones.

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About the Survey

The RTDNA/Hofstra University Survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2009 among all 1,770 operating, non-satellite television stations and a random sample of 4,000 radio stations. Valid responses came from 1,355 television stations (76.6 percent) and 203 radio news directors and general managers representing 301 radio stations. Some data sets (e.g. the number of TV stations originating local news, getting it from others and women TV news directors) is based on a complete census and is not projected from a smaller sample.