

RTNDA/Ball State University Survey—2004

Additional Data: Newsroom Staffing and Amount of News

Television

- Hours of Local TV News Per Day
- TV News Budgets: Up, Down or Same?
- TV News Profitability by Size and Affiliation
- Percentage of TV Revenue Produced by News
- Percentage of TV News Departments Providing Content to Other Media
- Percentage of Newsroom Staff Under Contract, by Position
- Percentage of Newsroom Staff Under Contract or Non-Competes

Radio

- Average Minutes of Locally Produced Radio News
- Radio News Profitability by Market Size
- Daily Use of Digital Equipment and New Technology in Radio News
- Percentage of News Material Gathered, Edited and Aired Digitally
- Percentage of Newsroom Staff Under Contract or Non-Competes

TELEVISION

Hours of Local TV News Per Day

	Average Weekday	Weekday Maximum	Average Saturday	Saturday Maximum	Average Sunday	Sunday Maximum
All TV News	3.7	20.0	1.4	5.0	1.3	5.0
Big Four Affiliates	3.9	20.0	1.5	5.0	1.4	5.0
Other Commercial	2.3	10.0	1.3	5.0	1.3	5.0
Market Size:						
1-25	4.1	10.0	2.0	5.0	2.0	5.0
26-50	4.4	20.0	2.0	4.5	2.1	5.0
51-100	3.9	9.0	1.5	5.0	1.3	4.0
101-150	3.4	15.0	1.2	4.5	1.0	2.5
151+	2.8	5.0	0.8	1.5	0.8	2.0
Staff Size:						
Staff 51+	5.3	20.0	2.3	5.0	2.3	5.0
Staff 31-50	3.7	6.0	1.3	5.0	1.1	3.5
Staff 21-30	3.0	5.0	0.9	1.5	0.9	1.5
Staff 11-20	2.7	15.0	0.7	1.0	0.7	1.0
Staff 1-10	1.8	7.5	0.9	4.0	0.8	2.0
Affiliation:						
ABC	3.9	15.0	1.3	4.0	1.3	4.0
CBS	4.3	20.0	1.6	5.0	1.5	5.0
Fox	3.3	8.0	1.3	4.5	1.3	4.5
NBC	3.7	5.5	1.5	5.0	1.3	5.0
PBS	0.7	1.0	0	0	0.6	2.0

After a decline two years ago, the overall amount of news increased again this past year—rising by 12.1 percent on weekdays—or 24 minutes per weekday. That puts the total average weekday news 12 minutes more than the previous all time high. The

weekends also edged up after remaining steady the year before. All market sizes and staff sizes saw increases except markets 151+, which remained the same, and staff size 1-10, which dropped slightly. There was no consistent pattern by region, although stations in the West tended to have a little less news than the others.

TV News Budget—2004 vs. 2003

	Increase	Decrease	Same	Don't Know
All TV News	51.2%	13.8%	31.2%	3.8%
Big Four Affiliates	54.1	12.1	30.7	3.0
Other Commercial	33.3	16.7	38.9	11.1
Market Size:				
1-25	61.1	8.3	22.2	8.3
26-50	48.6	11.4	37.1	2.9
51-100	49.3	14.1	35.2	1.4
101-150	50.0	19.2	25.6	5.1
151+	50.0	10.0	37.5	2.5

News budgets rose again this year. All categories of stations rose, with a higher percentage saying their budget went up and a lower percentage saying the budget fell. For the first time in three years, a majority of stations said the news budget went up. Generally, the bigger the news staff, the more likely that the budget went up. In fact, the largest newsrooms were more than twice as likely to have had budget increases as the smallest ones. CBS affiliates were most likely to have had budget increases and Fox affiliates and “other commercial” stations the least. Stations in the South and West were far more likely to have budget increases than stations in the Northeast or Midwest.

TV News Profitability by Size and Affiliation

	Showing Profit	Breaking Even	Showing Loss	Don't Know
Market Size				
1-25	47.2%	16.7%	19.4%	16.7%
26-50	60.6	6.1	12.1	21.2
51-100	63.1	12.3	6.2	18.5
101-150	64.1	7.7	6.4	21.8
151+	47.4	10.5	7.9	34.2
Staff Size:				
51+	66.1	11.9	10.2	11.9
31-50	72.4	9.2	5.3	13.2
21-30	50.0	11.9	4.8	33.3
11-20	41.5	14.6	17.1	26.8
1-10	26.3	5.3	15.8	52.6
Affiliation:				
ABC	64.9	12.3	7.0	15.8
CBS	64.4	9.6	5.5	20.5
Fox	63.3	10.0	13.3	13.3
NBC	58.7	7.9	9.5	23.8
Big Four Affiliates	62.8	9.9	8.1	19.3
Other Commercial	33.3	22.2	11.1	33.3

Stations in markets 26-150 were most likely (over 60 percent) to report a profit on news. Markets 1-25 and 150+ were well below that (about 47 percent). Keep in mind that markets 1-25 include quite a few small, independent stations. Generally, the larger the staff, the more likely to report a profit on news, although the very largest operations (51+) fell a bit behind the second largest group. NBC affiliates were a little less likely to report a profit than other network affiliates, and “other commercial” stations were about half as likely to report a profit on news. Fox affiliates were slightly more likely to report losing money on news—even though the same percentage of Fox stations said they make a profit as ABC and CBS stations. News departments at stations in the South were the most likely to be profitable, and the Midwest, as usual, lagged slightly behind the others.

Percentage of TV Station Revenue Produced by News

	Average	Median	Minimum	Maximum	Not Sure
All TV News	46.1%	50.0%	0	90.0%	74.5%
Market Size:					
1-25	41.1	39.0	5.0	67.0	78.1
26-50	40.6	39.0	14.0	90.0	60.0
51-100	50.1	50.0	32.0	70.0	74.2
101-150	44.4	47.5	0	65.0	74.7
151+	57.1	60.0	45.0	75.0	83.3
Staff Size:					
51+	46.8	50.0	14.0	90.0	56.6
31-50	42.7	45.0	0	75.0	68.8
21-30	52.2	50.0	40.0	60.0	81.0
11-20	49.2	51.0	30.0	65.0	86.8
1-10	-	-	-	-	100.0
Affiliation:					
ABC	46.6	50.0	0	70.0	64.8
CBS	53.2	50.0	25.0	90.0	72.5
Fox	27.3	25.0	14.0	40.0	78.6
NBC	46.9	49.0	25.0	65.0	79.0
Big Four Affiliates	47.0	50.0	0	90.0	73.2
Other Commercial	33.4	35.0	5.0	67.0	76.5

The overall percentage of station revenue generated by news rose substantially in the last year, from 39.7 percent a year ago to 46.1 percent this time. All market sizes rose except 101-150, which slid slightly from a year ago. On the other hand, view the figures with some care. Given the high percentage of news directors who say that they don't know (including all the news directors at non network affiliates), view these numbers cautiously.

Percentage of TV News Departments Providing Content to Other Media

	Station Website	Another TV Station	Cable TV Channel	Local Radio
All TV	66.0%	18.1%	10.9%	43.0%
Big Four Affiliates	70.2	19.1	11.9	45.1
Other Commercial	26.3	10.5	5.3	15.8
Market Size:				
1-25	42.1	21.1	5.3	36.8
26-50	80.0	17.1	8.6	37.1
51-100	63.0	16.4	16.4	47.9
101-150	68.4	19.0	11.4	44.3
151+	77.5	17.5	7.5	42.5

These figures are little changed from a year ago.

Percentage of TV News Staff Under Contract by Position

	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999
News Director	33%	36%	37%	32%	32%	29%
Asst. News Director	47	46	47	31	31	27
Executive Producer	58	41	45	55	39	42
Managing Editor	47	41	52	54	33	27
News Producer	62	56	59	57	48	40
Assignment Editor	26	26	32	33	26	23
News Anchor	90	85	85	78	74	75
Weathercaster	86	83	82	76	74	66
Sports Anchor	84	82	80	71	71	64
News Reporter	77	70	65	60	54	53
News Writer	3	8	9	21	7	11
News Assistant	2	11	5	14	5	2
Sports Reporter	57	48	43	48	39	38
Photographer	11	9	14	17	10	11
Tape Editor	1	3	9	11	2	3
Graphics Specialist	9	8	6	8	12	9
Internet Specialist	10	7	17	20	12	15

Most of the job categories rose this past year, but it's not consistent. The biggest jump came among executive producers.

Percentage of TV News Staff Under Contracts & Non-Competes

	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999
Percentage of TV News Staff Under Contract	55.1%	51.8%	52.5%	50.2%	44.3%	42.2%

After a few years of leveling off at just over half, the percentage under contract in television has gone up to its highest level since we started asking the question. More than four of five (80.4 percent) of those with contracts also have non-compete agreements.

RADIO

Average Minutes of Locally-Produced Radio News

	All Radio	Major Market	Large Market	Medium Market	Small Market
Weekdays:					
AM Drive	15.4	16.1	20.3	14.1	15.5
Midday	6.4	13.3	4.1	5.1	5.9
PM Drive	6.7	10.7	6.3	6.1	5.6
Night	1.7	5.7	1.6	1.2	0.6
Total Weekday	30.2	45.8	32.3	26.5	27.6
Saturday:					
AM Drive	5.5	7.6	7.1	5.0	4.6
Midday	1.9	3.0	1.7	1.4	2.4
PM Drive	1.4	3.1	1.7	1.0	1.2
Night	0.9	2.3	1.1	0.8	0.2
Total Saturday	9.7	16.0	11.6	8.2	8.4
Sunday:					
AM Drive	2.7	7.6	0.9	1.9	2.0
Midday	1.3	2.6	1.4	0.8	1.4
PM Drive	1.2	2.4	1.7	0.9	0.8
Night	0.7	2.3	1.1	0.5	0.2
Total Sunday	5.9	14.9	5.1	4.1	4.4

All time periods for all categories of stations show less total news than a year ago. But, as with other radio data, consolidation makes it difficult to be sure that that's what is taking place.

Radio News Profitability by Market Size

	Showing Profit	Breaking Even	Showing Loss	Don't Know
Major Market	13.3%	13.3%	13.3%	60.0%
Large Market	18.2	27.3	0	54.5
Medium Market	18.4	18.4	6.1	57.1%
Small Market	33.3	13.9	8.3	44.4

Major markets are those with more than 1 million listeners. Large markets are from 250,001 to 1 million. Medium markets are 50,000 to 250,000. Small markets are fewer than 50,000.

Daily Use of Digital Equipment and New Technology in Radio News

	Digital Audio Recording	Digital Editing and Mixing	Digital or Cellular Phones	Field Laptops for Editing	MPEG Audio Layer 3	Internet Research or Email
All Radio	79.8%	71.9%	71.1%	11.4%	55.3%	90.4%
Major Market	86.7	86.7	73.3	33.3	66.7	93.3
Large Market	83.3	50.0	66.7	0	16.7	75.0
Medium Market	84.6	76.9	69.2	9.6	55.8	94.2
Small Market	68.6	65.7	74.3	8.6	62.9	88.6

After steady growth in the past, these numbers reflect relatively small changes from a year ago. Group-owned stations are a little more likely to be more technologically advanced—but that could be because groups are more likely to own in larger markets, which are a little more likely to have more new technology.

Percentage of News Material Gathered, Edited and Aired Digitally

	Percent of News Gathered Digitally	Percent of News Material Mixed and Edited Digitally	Percent of News Material Aired Digitally
All Radio - Average	57.0%	72.2%	73.6%
All Radio - Median	62.5	100	100
Major Market - Average	73.6	92.9	81.4
Major Market - Median	97.5	100	100
Large Market - Average	67.2	81.1	78.4
Large Market - Median	75.0	100	100
Medium Market - Average	62.2	71.4	78.4
Medium Market - Median	72.5	100	100
Small Market - Average	38.6	61.5	64.3
Small Market - Median	30.0	75.0	90.0

Most of these numbers have edged up from a year ago, although the smallest markets are less consistent.

Radio News ... Percentage Under Contract or Non-Compete

	Under Contract	Under Non-Compete
News Director	21%	55%
News Anchor	28	36
News Reporter	17	50
News Producer	20	67
Sports Anchor	13	67

Most of the radio categories rose modestly from last year.

About the Survey and Authors

The RTNDA/Ball State University Survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2003 among all 1,295 operating, nonsatellite television stations and a random sample of 1,482 radio stations. Valid responses came from 838 television stations (64.7 percent) and 133 radio news directors and general managers representing 437 radio stations.

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Additional research is available in the September 2004 issue of *Communicator*.