

RTDNA / Hofstra Survey Shows Sharp Rise in TV & Radio News Salaries

TV Sees 7.3% Boost in 2010, Radio Has 9.8% Jump

By Bob Papper

Not only did TV news staffing go up noticeably this past year, so did salaries. The latest RTDNA/Hofstra University Annual Survey found that local television news salaries rose 7.3% during 2010. The numbers are a sharp contrast to the last two years, when salaries actually fell 4.4% two years ago before rising a modest 2.5% last year.

Radio news salaries this year were up 9.8% from a year ago, but that figure is inflated by more high-paying, all-news stations reporting this year than we usually see. Even taking that into account, it was a good year for radio salaries, too.

With inflation a low 1.6% in 2010, news people really did have a good year.

Television News Salaries – 2011

	Average	Median	Minimum	Maximum
News Director	\$95,600	\$82,000	\$18,000	\$300,000
Assistant News Director	74,400	65,000	27,000	190,000
Managing Editor	65,200	65,000	26,000	145,000
Executive Producer	60,700	60,000	25,000	140,000
News Anchor	90,500	70,000	18,000	737,500
Weathercaster	70,900	58,000	18,000	300,000
Sports Anchor	60,800	45,000	17,000	300,000
News Reporter	40,100	32,000	16,000	201,500
Sports Reporter	35,900	30,000	19,000	120,000
Assignment Editor	40,600	38,000	18,000	80,000
News Producer	35,100	32,000	18,000	86,000
News Writer	34,800	30,000	15,000	79,000
News Assistant	30,000	30,000	14,000	50,000
Photographer	34,900	30,000	12,000	175,000
Tape Editor	31,800	27,500	16,000	76,000
Graphics Specialist	33,200	29,000	11,000	76,000
Web/Mobile Writer	37,900	37,500	20,000	73,000
Web/Mobile Prod/Ed	42,400	37,500	18,000	83,000
Art Director	47,800	45,000	27,000	68,000

The median, or typical, salary is generally a better measure to look at. Of those medians, every salary went up this year except two (graphics specialist and art director). And most of the increases were significant. I cannot directly compare web-related salaries because we switched from one category (internet specialist) to two categories (web/mobile writer and web/mobile producer/editor). I can tell that had we left the title the same, that would have gone up as well.

Five and Ten Year Median Television News Salary Comparisons 2011 to 2006 to 2001

	2011	2006	5-Year Percentage Change	2001	10-Year Percentage Change
INFLATION			+8.2%		+23.1%
All TV news			+11.1		+25.6
News Director	\$82,000	\$75,000	+9.3	\$65,000	+26.2
Assistant News Director	65,000	62,500	+4.0	54,500	+19.3
Managing Editor	65,000	60,000	+8.3	50,000	+30.0
Executive Producer	60,000	49,500	+21.2	48,500	+23.7
News Anchor	70,000	58,500	+19.7	47,500	+47.4
Weathercaster	58,000	50,000	+16.0	44,500	+30.3
Sports Anchor	45,000	40,000	+12.5	35,000	+28.6
News Reporter	32,000	28,000	+14.3	26,000	+23.1
Sports Reporter	30,000	25,000	+20.0	24,000	+25.0
Assignment Editor	38,000	33,500	+13.4	30,000	+26.7
News Producer	32,000	29,000	+10.3	26,000	+23.1
News Writer	30,000	25,000	+20.0	29,000	+3.4
News Assistant	30,000	24,500	+22.4	20,000	+50.0
Photographer	30,000	27,000	+11.1	24,000	+25.0
Tape Editor	27,500	24,500	+12.2	22,000	+25.0
Graphics Specialist	29,000	30,800	-5.8	25,000	+16.0
Web/Mobile Writer	37,500		+7.1*		+7.1*
Web/Mobile Prod/Ed	37,500		+7.1*		+7.1*
Art Director	45,000	47,500	-5.3		

*Comparison is with Internet Specialist in 2006 and 2001

A year ago, almost all positions had five and 10 year salary increases below the level of inflation. Not this time. Compared to five years ago, only assistant news director, graphics specialist, web/mobile specialist and art director are below the rate of inflation. Graphics specialist and art director are actually down in salary from five years ago. In a 10 year comparison those positions (minus art director, which I didn't ask about 10 years ago) plus news writer are the only ones below the rate of inflation. News reporter and news producer increased at exactly the same rate as inflation.

Median TV News Salaries by Market Size – 2011

	1 – 25	26 – 50	51 – 100	101-150	150+
News Director	\$168,000	\$135,000	\$100,000	\$70,000	\$56,000
Assistant News Director	115,000	90,000	65,000	42,500	44,000
Managing Editor	85,000	75,000	55,000	55,000	33,000
Executive Producer	80,000	65,000	53,500	41,500	33,500
News Anchor	165,500	137,500	84,500	55,000	35,000
Weathercaster	123,800	97,800	68,000	46,000	34,500
Sports Anchor	115,000	96,500	50,000	35,000	29,000
News Reporter	65,000	53,300	35,000	25,000	21,000
Sports Reporter	70,000	48,800	32,300	25,000	21,000
Assignment Editor	50,000	40,000	40,000	31,000	28,000
News Producer	55,000	40,000	33,000	27,800	24,000
News Writer	40,000	25,000	16,800	25,000	*
News Assistant	35,000	35,000	29,000	20,000	20,800
Photographer	55,000	40,000	32,000	25,500	22,000
Tape Editor	47,500	31,500	24,500	22,000	17,500
Graphics Specialist	42,700	36,300	29,000	26,400	17,500
Web/Mobile Writer	40,000	40,000	32,800	35,000	30,000
Web/Mobile Prod/Ed	55,000	47,300	37,500	34,500	23,000
Art Director	*	53,800	50,000	27,000	*

*Insufficient data

As usual, the larger the market, the larger the salary. The top 25 market salaries would be even higher, but the group also includes a number of smaller, independent newsrooms which generally pay lower salaries than their network-affiliated counterparts. Only weathercasters went up from last year in every market size. Other big winners, based on market size, are news directors, news anchors, news assistants and photographers. At the lower end: sports anchor, assignment editor and tape editor.

Overall patterns by market size are hard to discern, but money was clearly tightest in the smallest markets.

Median TV News Salaries by Staff Size – 2011

	51+	31-50	21-30	11-20	1-10
News Director	\$168,000	\$100,000	\$70,000	\$58,000	\$50,000
Assistant News Director	95,000	55,500	43,000	36,000	65,000
Managing Editor	77,800	57,500	55,000	33,000	40,500
Executive Producer	67,500	55,000	40,000	45,000	*
News Anchor	152,500	80,000	46,500	45,000	30,000

Weathercaster	121,300	64,000	40,000	35,000	24,000
Sports Anchor	107,500	50,000	33,300	29,800	18,000
News Reporter	61,000	35,000	24,600	22,000	25,000
Sports Reporter	51,000	30,000	24,400	22,000	*
Assignment Editor	48,000	40,000	35,000	25,500	18,000
News Producer	46,500	32,000	25,300	25,000	35,500
News Writer	31,000	21,800	25,000	*	*
News Assistant	35,000	22,500	22,900	20,000	17,000
Photographer	47,300	32,000	25,000	25,000	27,000
Tape Editor	38,000	24,000	24,000	21,000	33,000
Graphics Specialist	40,000	28,000	26,500	25,000	11,000
Web/Mobile Writer	40,000	33,800	30,000	30,000	*
Web/Mobile Prod/Ed	46,500	36,300	26,000	27,500	*
Art Director	50,000	*	*	27,000	*

*Insufficient data

It's all in the perspective. By staff size weathercasters were down or even in four of the five groupings. It's the biggest stations that drove up the median. By staff size, the biggest raises went to news directors, executive producers, sports reporter, tape editor and web/mobile staffers. At the lower end: sports anchor, graphics specialist and art director.

As with market size, there's no overall pattern, but stations with staffs of 11 - 20 generally fared worse than others.

Don't write off TV anchors

Note that despite all the talk about the shrinking importance of anchors, there's no evidence to support that where it really counts: money. News anchors and weathercasters, in particular, have seen among the biggest jumps in salaries over the last five and 10 years. Ten years ago, news anchors had the fifth-highest median salary in the newsroom; five years ago, news anchors came in fourth. This year, they're second only to news directors.

Radio salaries

Radio News Salaries – 2011

	Average	Median	Minimum	Maximum
News Director	\$43,400	\$35,000	\$12,000	\$250,000

News Reporter	35,000	30,000	18,000	75,000
News Anchor	49,100	42,500	25,000	100,000
News Producer	32,000	31,300	17,000	47,000
Sports Anchor	36,400	35,000	25,000	50,000
Sports Reporter	33,500	35,000	29,000	35,000
Web Prod/Ed	34,800	31,500	20,000	75,000

Overall, radio news salaries were up 9.8% in 2010. That increase was driven by having more high-paying all-news stations in the survey this year than I usually see. News reporters were actually unchanged from a year ago.

Median Radio News Salaries by Market Size – 2011

	Major	Large	Medium	Small
News Director	\$60,000	\$42,000	\$33,000	\$28,000
News Reporter	40,000	30,000	30,000	18,500
News Anchor	52,500	28,000	30,000	*
News Producer	34,500	30,000	32,500	20,500
Sports Anchor	50,000	27,000	35,000	28,000
Sports Reporter	35,000	*	35,000	29,000
Web Prod/Ed	35,000	26,000	27,500	30,000

*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.

Five and Ten Year Median Radio News Salary Comparisons 2011 to 2006 to 2001

	2011	2006	5-Year Percentage Change	2001	10-Year Percentage Change
INFLATION			+8.2%		+23.1%
All radio news			+25.3		+23.1
News Director	\$35,000	\$30,000	+16.7	\$31,000	+12.9
News Reporter	30,000	25,000	+20.0	25,750	+16.5
News Anchor	42,500	23,500	+80.9	25,000	+21.4
News Producer	31,300	20,500	+52.7	26,000	+20.4
Sports Anchor	35,000	32,500	+7.7	30,000	+16.7
Sports Reporter	35,000	19,000	+84.2	*	*

*Insufficient data

The big, high-paying stations in this year's survey have really driven up the salaries for news anchor, news producer and sports reporter, and that inflates the overall numbers. Even so, almost all positions are running ahead of inflation over the last five years. Over a 10-year period, the overall increase for radio news is exactly the same as inflation.

Median Radio News Salaries by Full-Time Staff Size – 2011

	One	Two	Three	4 - 9	10+
News Director	\$32,000	\$35,000	\$39,000	\$41,500	\$70,000
News Reporter	*	28,000	30,000	30,000	37,000
News Anchor	*	30,000	25,000	35,000	59,000
News Producer	*	*	31,300	24,000	35,000
Sports Anchor	45,000	26,000	*	30,000	45,000
Sports Reporter	*	*	29,000	35,000	35,000
Web Prod/Ed	22,000	50,000	33,000	30,000	31,500

*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 – 2011

	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	6+
News Director	\$39,500	\$32,500	\$36,000	\$37,500	\$27,500	\$32,000
News Reporter	36,000	30,000	35,000	30,000	18,000	46,000
News Anchor	37,500	95,000	40,000	30,000	28,000	49,000
News Producer	21,000	32,500	*	30,000	*	46,000
Sports Anchor	*	35,000	26,000	45,000	*	42,500
Sports Reporter	29,000	35,000	*	*	*	35,000
Web Prod/Ed	21,000	30,000	33,000	50,000	*	35,000

*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 – 2011

	Group-Owned	Independent
News Director	\$35,000	\$38,000

News Reporter	30,000	32,500
News Anchor	51,400	43,000
News Producer	32,000	28,300
Sports Anchor	45,000	26,500
Sports Reporter	35,000	32,000
Web Prod/Ed	35,000	26,000

*Insufficient data

In the past, group-owned stations usually paid more the independent ones. Last year, it was the other way around. This year, there's no consistent pattern at all.

Contracts

TV Newsroom Employees Under Contract and Non-Competes

	Percent under contract	Percent with non-competes	Percent under contract with non-competes
News Director	27.7%	29.2%	79.3%
Assistant News Director	39.1	33.3	73.5
Managing Editor	16.9	22.0	80.0
Executive Producer	39.8	36.9	78.0
News Anchor	76.0	58.2	74.5
Weathercaster	74.1	58.5	77.6
Sports Anchor	69.0	53.3	76.4
News Reporter	61.9	48.5	74.2
Sports Reporter	48.4	38.7	71.1
Assignment Editor	19.2	20.0	80.0
News Producer	42.3	37.7	77.0
News Writer	4.2	8.3	100
News Assistant	5.3	5.4	100
Photographer	5.2	9.8	66.7
Tape Editor	0	5.7	na
Graphics Specialist	0	4.4	na
Web/Mobile Writer	10.0	13.7	80.0
Web/Mobile Prod/Ed	19.6	19.6	80.0
Art Director	5.6	11.1	100

It's been a few years since I last looked at contracts in depth. This year's contract numbers are all down – and down significantly. For news producers on up the chart, the percentages are down around 20% across the board. The others are down, too, but they were never high enough to go down that much. It's too soon to say whether this

marks a trend or it's a reaction to tougher economic times or something else. Maybe we'll learn the answers with next year's survey.

Radio Newsroom Employees Under Contract and Non-Competes

	Percent under contract	Percent with non-competes	Percent under contract with non-competes
News Director	22.3%	21.3%	57.1%
News Reporter	19.4	25.8	83.3
News Anchor	25.0	29.2	50.0
News Producer	13.3	20.0	50.0
Sports Anchor	6.3	12.5	100
Sports Reporter	16.7	33.3	100
Web Prod/Ed	5.6	11.1	100

In contrast to TV, the percentages of contracts in radio are up noticeably from a few years ago. But it's possible that those large, all-news stations are inflating the numbers. I should know that next year.

Starting Pay

TV news 2011 starting salaries for new employees with no fulltime experience

Position	Average	Median	Minimum	Maximum
All TV news	\$24,300	\$23,000	\$15,000	\$60,000
Reporter	23,100	22,000	15,000	60,000
News producer	24,600	23,500	17,000	50,000
Photographer	24,200	23,000	16,000	45,000
Multimedia journalist	24,000	24,000	18,000	32,000
News assistant	25,000	23,000	18,000	40,000
Tape editor	23,700	24,500	17,000	28,000
Assignment editor	30,000	30,000	25,000	38,000
News anchor	20,000	20,000	15,000	24,000
Weathercaster	18,500	19,000	15,000	21,000
Web	25,700	25,000	22,000	30,000
News writer	27,500	27,500	25,000	30,000
Sports reporter	22,800	22,800	22,000	24,000
Other	24,600	23,700	19,000	35,000

The TV positions above are listed in the order of number hired, and there's been a big change in which positions were most often hired in the last year. A year ago, news assistants were at the top of the list; this year, they're down to number five. Multimedia

journalists (one-man-bands) were eighth last year; this year, up to fourth. Reporters were second a year ago; this year, they're a dominant number one -- almost double second place news producers. And producers are almost double number three photographers.

The average salary was exactly the same as a year ago, but the median dropped a thousand to \$23,000. All told, 87% of the TV newspeople hired in the last year were replacements for those who left; 13% were new hires. There were fewer new hires in the West than any other region.

Radio news 2011 starting salaries for new employees with no fulltime experience

Position	Average	Median	Minimum	Maximum
All radio news	\$21,900	\$20,800	\$15,000	\$35,000
News reporter	24,000	22,500	15,000	35,000
Announcing	19,200	18,000	15,000	25,000
General news	23,600	24,000	17,000	33,000
News anchor	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000
Other	21,000	20,800	15,000	26,000

The radio positions above are listed in the order of number hired, and news reporter came in more than double the number two position. Overall, both average and mean starting salary in radio rose from last year, but last year was the lowest it had been in years.

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About the Survey

The RTDNA/Hofstra University Survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2010 among all 1,729 operating, non-satellite television stations and a random sample of 3,000 radio stations. Valid responses came from 1,360 television stations (78.7 percent) and 203 radio news directors and general managers representing 603 radio stations. Some data sets (e.g. the number of TV stations originating local news, getting it from others and women TV news directors) are based on a complete census and are not projected from a smaller sample.

