

# 2019 RTDNA/Hofstra University Newsroom Survey

## Business of News

An introductory note, if you will. 2019 marks my 25th year conducting the RTDNA (before that, RTNDA) Annual Survey. First at Ball State University and now at Hofstra University. It has been my privilege to do this, and I want to thank RTDNA, Ball State and Hofstra for the support and opportunity to keep this going. Most of all, I want to thank all of you who spend what I know is way too much time poring over the way too many questions that I ask on this survey. Thank you.  
- Bob Papper

### Radio News Profits Edge Down but Budgets Edge Up by Bob Papper

The latest RTDNA/Hofstra University Annual Survey found that radio news profitability edged back down to 12.4%. The biggest change was a jump in breaking even; the percentage saying that radio news lost money dropped by 2 points. As usual, don't know was well out in front.

#### Radio news profitability ... 2000 - 2019

	2000	2005	2010	2015	2017	2018	2019
Showing profit	25%	19.6%	13.9%	13.2%	12.1%	13%	12.4%
Breaking even	15	14.4	13.9	12.1	14.2	13	17.2
Showing loss	7	3.1	9.8	13.7	8.9	8.3	6.3
Don't know	53	62.9	62.3	40.5	42.1	40.7	38
Non-profit	na	na	na	20.5	22.7	25	26.1

Usually there are some patterns to the profitability picture, but those were hard to find this time around. The biggest markets and the smallest markets were more likely to be profitable than large or medium markets. Local groups of three or more stations were also higher in profitability and lower in the loss category.

Only 16% of station news directors and general managers reported what percentage of station revenue comes from news, so view these numbers accordingly. The managers reported that, on average, 16.7% of station revenue came from news. But the median – or typical -- percentage was just 5%. The average is up from last year's 10.4%, but the median is identical to a year ago

#### Radio news profitability by market size – 2019

	Showing profit	Breaking even	Showing loss	Don't know	Non-profit
Major market	14.9%	7.5%	3%	29.9%	44.8%
Large market	3	14.9	6	25.4	50.7
Medium market	11.9	20.7	10.4	40	17
Small market	17.3	20	3.6	48.2	10.9

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### Radio news budgets

Radio news budgets were more likely to go up this past year than the year before. But that increase was driven entirely by public radio stations. Commercial stations actually fared a little less well than the year before. Still, little or no change in budget came in on top for virtually every subgroup and every variable

### Changes in radio budget in the last 12 months

	Increase	Decrease	Same	Don't know
All radio news	15.5%	7.3%	61.1%	16.1%
Market size:				
Major market	26.1	5.8	53.6	14.5
Large market	27.5	8.7	55.1	8.7
Medium market	7.3	11.7	65	16.1
Small market	11.7	1.8	64.9	21.6
Commercial	9.4	7.5	64.5	18.5
Non-commercial	28.9	6.6	53.7	10.7

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

***Bob Papper is Emeritus Distinguished Professor of Journalism at Hofstra University and has worked extensively in radio and TV news. This research was supported by the Lawrence Herbert School of Communication at Hofstra University and the Radio Television Digital News Association.***

### About the Survey

The RTDNA/Hofstra University Survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2018 among all 1,685 operating, non-satellite television stations and a random sample of 3,481 radio stations. Valid responses came from 1,310 television stations (77.7%) and 645 radio news directors and general managers representing 1,938 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.