

Local News Numbers

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

What Does the Staffing Look Like for an “Average” TV Station? by Bob Papper

In real life -- or even in a newsroom -- it's not easy to divide people into fractions. Thankfully, it's no problem on paper. This is what the latest RTDNA/Hofstra University Survey says the “average” local TV news department of 40.5 people looks like:

News Director	1
Assistant News Director	0.7
Managing Editor	0.3
Executive Producer	1.2
News Anchor	5.2
Weathercaster	3.4
Sports Anchor	1.6
News Reporter	3.2
MMJ	4.9
Sports Reporter	0.6
Assignment Editor	1.3
News Producer	5.7
News Writer	0.2
News Assistant/AP	0.6
Photographer	6.1
Video Editor	1.6
Graphics Specialist	0.3
Digital Content Manager	0.8
Social Media Producer/Editor	0.3
Web/Mobile Writer/Producer	1.2
Other	0.3

Given that the average staff only went up 0.1, there's not a lot of movement generally from last year to this, and what incremental changes took place signaled no meaningful trends.

The tipping point for news reporter vs. MMJ is in markets 51 to 100. Bigger markets have more news reporters than MMJs, and markets smaller than that are overwhelmingly MMJs. In 51 to 100, the margin is 54 to 46 in favor of MMJs.

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“Other” positions are mostly technical (e.g. director, technical director) and then various one-off positions.

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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.