

News Innovation

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

TV Drone Use Soars Again by Bob Papper

For the first time, the latest RTDNA/Hofstra University Survey found that a majority of local TV stations now own drones. The percentage of “already own” rose 11 points, and every market size except 151+ has a majority of newsrooms with drones.

Does the TV station have a drone?

	Already own	Planning to buy	Considering	Lease/arrange for one as needed	We just use drone footage from others	No, not involved with drones
All TV Market	55.2%	6.5%	8.6%	6.5%	9.3%	14%
1 – 25	58.1	7	7	9.3	4.7	14
26 – 50	74.4	4.7	2.3	4.7	4.7	9.3
51 – 100	60	8	9.3	2.7	9.3	10.7
101 – 150	50.8	1.6	11.1	11.1	12.7	12.7
151+	36.4	10.9	10.9	5.5	12.7	23.6
Staff size						
51+	71	4.3	5.8	8.7	5.8	4.3
31 – 50	60.3	5.5	12.3	2.7	8.2	11
21 – 30	44.9	10.2	10.2	6.1	12.2	16.3
11 – 20	25.7	8.6	14.3	5.7	17.1	28.6
1 – 10	29.4	11.8	0	11.8	17.6	29.4

Fox affiliates lead all others with other commercial lagging behind affiliates generally. Stations in the Midwest are higher in drone ownership than others.

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About the Survey

2019 RTDNA/Hofstra University Newsroom Survey

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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.