

## A Record Amount of Local TV News by Bob Papper

The amount of weekday local news on TV remained at its record high this year in the latest RTDNA/Lawrence Herbert School of Communication - Hofstra University Survey. But the average amount of news on both Saturday and Sunday went up by about 20 minutes on each day, so you could argue that total week local news hit a new, record high.

### Hours of local TV news per day – 2020

	Average weekday	Median weekday	Weekday maximum	Average Saturday	Median Saturday	Saturday maximum	Average Sunday	Median Sunday	Sunday maximum
All TV news	5.9	6	18	2.6	2	30	2.5	2	30
Big four affiliates	6.2	6	18	2.6	2	30	2.5	2	30
Other commercial	4.6	3.5	12	3	1	15	3	1	15
Market size:									
1-25	6.8	7	18	3.2	3.3	8	3.4	3	8
26-50	7	7	12	3.8	4	15	4	4	15
51-100	5.9	6	13	2.6	2	8	2.6	2	8
101-150	5.8	6	12	1.8	2	4	1.8	2	4
151+	4.5	4	8	2	1	30	1.7	1	30
Staff size:									
Staff 51+	7.9	7	13	3.9	4	8	3.9	4	8
Staff 31-50	6	6	12	2.3	2	4	2.2	2	4
Staff 21-30	5.2	5	9	1.5	1	4	1.5	1	4
Staff 11-20	3.7	4	6	2.5	1	30	2	1	30
Staff 1-10	2.1	2	8	1.2	0	15	1.1	0	15
Affiliation:									
ABC	5.6	6	10	2.5	2	6.5	2.5	2	6
CBS	6.1	6	12	2.2	2	8	2.2	2	8
Fox	7.7	8.5	13	2.8	2	8	3.1	2	8
NBC	6.2	6	18	2.8	2	30	2.6	2	30
PBS	0.7	1	2	0.5	0	2	0.5	0	2

By the numbers, larger markets and larger newsrooms remained the same, but smaller markets and smaller newsrooms rose, and that pushed the numbers up slightly compared to a year ago.

### Amount of TV news changes ... the past year (2019)

	Increased	Decreased	Same	Not sure
All TV News	27.2%	1.2%	71.2%	0.4%
Big four affiliates	27.4	0.4	71.7	0.4
Other commercial	30	5	65	0
Market size:				
1-25	36.4	3	57.6	3
26-50	31	2.4	66.7	0

51-100	22.1	1.5	76.5	0
101-150	25	0	75	0
151+	28	0	72	0

The amount of news changes in 2019 looks a lot like 2018. Staying the same was the runaway winner -- with more than two-thirds of all stations. That's usually the case. The biggest markets and the biggest staffs were the most likely to increase the amount of news. Network affiliation made no meaningful difference, but stations in the Northeast and then the South were more likely to add news than stations in the West or Midwest. Again.

### Changes in TV newscasts in the past year (2019)

	Added a newscast	Cut a newscast	Both added and cut	No change
All TV news	22.1%	0.8%	1.2%	75.8%
Big four affiliates	23	0.9	1.4	74.7
Other commercial	20	0	0	80
Market				
1 – 25	24.1	0	3.4	72.4
26 – 50	21.1	0	2.6	76.3
51 – 100	26.2	3.1	0	70.8
101 – 150	20	0	1.5	78.5
151+	19.1	0	0	80.9
Staff size				
51+	29.6	0	1.9	68.5
31 – 50	21.1	1.4	0	77.5
21 – 30	27.3	0	0	72.7
11 – 20	21.7	0	0	78.3
1 – 10	0	0	0	100

Clearly, most stations neither added nor cut back on newscasts in the past year. But beyond that, stations were more than 20 times more likely to add newscasts than cut them. Stations in the South were most likely to add a newscast.

Newscasts added included almost every time period imaginable, with morning and afternoon tied for the lead. Evening and weekend tied well behind.

There were too few newscasts cut to be able to draw any conclusions from them.

Note the rows won't necessarily add up to 100% because some stations both added and cut newscasts.

### Amount of TV news planned ... the next year - 2020

	Increase	Decrease	Same	Not sure
All TV news	37.3%	1.2%	53.8%	7.7%
Big four affiliates	36.5	1.3	54.5	7.7
Other commercial	50	0	40	10
Market size:				
1-25	45.5	0	36.4	18.2

26-50	42.9	0	50	7.1
51-100	37.1	1.4	55.7	5.7
101-150	32.3	3.1	56.9	7.7
151+	34	0	62	4

Historically, this table has been a pretty good predictor of what the next year will look like, and that was certainly true a year ago. The big news this year is a 50% increase in the percentage of news directors expecting to increase the amount of news during 2020. And that increase appears to be spread fairly evenly across the board, regardless of staff size, network affiliation or geography.

### **About the Survey**

The RTDNA/Newhouse School at Syracuse University Survey, funded in part by the Lawrence Herbert School of Communication at Hofstra University, was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2019 among all 1,702 operating, non-satellite television stations and a random sample of 3,427 radio stations. Valid responses came from 1,313 television stations (77.1%) and 673 radio news directors and general managers representing 1,996 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.

### **About Bob Papper**

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