

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/Lawrence Herbert School of Communication - Hofstra University Survey says the “average” local TV news department of 40.1 people looks like:

News Director	1
Assistant News Director	0.6
Managing Editor	0.3
Executive Producer	1.2
News Anchor	5.3
Weathercaster	3.2
Sports Anchor	1.5
News Reporter	3
MMJ	5.2
Sports Reporter	0.5
Assignment Editor	1.2
News Producer	5.6
News Writer	0.2
News Assistant/AP	0.2
Photographer	5.5
Video Editor	1.8
Graphics Specialist	0.3
Digital Content Manager	0.7
Social Media Producer/Editor	0.3
Web/Mobile Writer/Producer	1.4
Other	1.1

Not a lot of movement one way or the other from a year ago, but, as always, there were winners and losers. MMJs rose by 0.3 and news reporters fell by the same amount. Photographers fell by 0.6 – the biggest loser in the group. News assistant/AP fell by 0.4. Nothing else moved up or down by more than 0.2.

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 65 to 35 in favor of MMJs. That puts MMJs up 9 points from a year ago in markets 51 to 100.

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

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

Bob Papper is Adjunct Professor of Broadcast and Digital Journalism at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University and has worked extensively in radio and TV news.