

**Another Record Amount of Local TV News
by Bob Papper**

The year of COVID undoubtedly helped in setting a new, record high for local news in the latest RTDNA/Newhouse School at Syracuse University Survey. The median amount remained the same, but the average amount rose by 18 minutes per hour. The medians for Saturday and Sunday stayed the same, but the average amount fell by 12 minutes on Saturday and 6 minutes on Sunday. Overall, a small net gain.

Hours of local TV news per day – 2021

	Average weekday	Median weekday	Weekday maximum	Average Saturday	Median Saturday	Saturday maximum	Average Sunday	Median Sunday	Sunday maximum
All TV news	6.2	6	15	2.4	2	9	2.4	2	9
Big four affiliates	6.4	6	15	2.5	2	6	2.5	2	7
Other commercial	5.7	4.5	15	2	1	9	2	1	9
Market size:									
1-25	7.1	6.5	15	2.8	4	6	3.1	3.5	7
26-50	7.6	7	15	3.7	4	9	3.5	4	9
51-100	6.4	6	13	2.7	2	6	2.7	2	7
101-150	6	6	13	1.9	2	6	1.8	1.8	4
151+	4.4	4	8	1.2	1	3	1.1	1	3
Staff size:									
Staff 51+	8.3	8	15	3.6	4	6	3.6	4	7
Staff 31-50	6.4	6	12	2.3	2	8	2.3	2	7
Staff 21-30	5.3	5	13	1.6	1	6	1.6	1	4
Staff 11-20	3.5	4	6	0.9	1	3	0.9	1	3
Staff 1-10	2.6	2	15	0.9	0	9	1	0	9
Affiliation:									
ABC	5.8	6	10	2.4	2	6	2.3	2	5.5
CBS	6.7	6	13	2.5	2	6	2.4	2	6
Fox	7.4	8.5	15	2.7	2	6	2.7	2	6
NBC	6.5	6	12	2.5	2	6	2.6	2	7
PBS	1.1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0

All market sizes except the smallest went up in amount of news in the last year. Newsroom staffs of 21 and larger all went up. Among network affiliates, only Fox affiliated stations went down.

Amount of TV news changes ... the past year (2020)

	Increased	Decreased	Same	Not sure
All TV News	34.5%	2.3%	62.8%	0.4%
Big four affiliates	34.4	0.9	64.3	0.4
Other commercial	34.5	13.8	51.7	0
Market size:				
1-25	45.2	7.1	47.6	0

26-50	44.4	0	55.6	0
51-100	40.3	2.6	57.1	0
101-150	31.7	1.7	65	1.7
151+	10.9	0	89.1	0

Overall, the percentage of stations increasing news rose by a significant 7.3 points; the percentage of stations decreasing local news rose by about 1 point. CBS affiliates were the most likely to increase local news, while stations in the Northeast were markedly less likely to expand news than stations in all other areas.

Amount of TV news planned ... the next year - 2021

	Increase	Decrease	Same	Not sure
All TV news	26.8%	0.4%	60.5%	12.3%
Big four affiliates	26	0.4	61.7	11.9
Other commercial	34.5	0	51.7	13.8
Market size:				
1-25	23.8	0	64.3	11.9
26-50	11.1	0	75	13.9
51-100	32.9	1.3	51.9	13.9
101-150	28.8	0	62.7	8.5
151+	28.9	0	57.8	13.3

Clearly, most news directors expect 2021 to be a year of minimal changes in the amount of news. "Same," which has almost always been the winner, jumped by almost 7 points; "not sure" rose by nearly 5, and almost all of that came from "increase" – which fell by nearly 11 points. Every market size went down in "increase" and up in "same" and "not sure." Interestingly, almost no news director in the Northeast expected to add news this year.

More stations run local news than ever before ... and a surprise increase in the number of stations producing it

The latest RTDNA/Newhouse School at Syracuse University Survey found that the number of TV stations originating local news actually went up from the previous year -- from 705 to 710. Over the last decade and more, industry consolidation led to the number of local TV newsrooms dropping by an average of seven per year. Three years ago, the number went down by nine. Since then it has more or less stabilized. Not all of this year's increase in stations came in the last year. I also located a few stations that started local news the year before, but I hadn't picked up on them. It would probably be more accurate to look at the increase as a two-year phenomenon. The overall increase is also notable because it had to overcome the loss of two PBS-affiliated stations. Likely COVID-related, the universities stopped producing daily newscasts so I had to drop them from the list. Hopefully, they'll be back later this year. Those 710 TV stations run news on those and another 406 stations. That last number is up 13 from a year ago.

That puts the total number of stations running local news at 1,116. So we're up 18 overall from the previous all-time high reached last year.

For those keeping score by affiliation, here's how those 710 newsrooms break down:

- 181 NBC affiliates ... same as last year
- 169 CBS affiliates ... down 1
- 165 ABC affiliates ... up 1
- 79 Fox affiliates ... up 1
- 35 Univision affiliates ... same
- 26 Telemundo affiliates ... same
- 18 Independents (four of which are Hispanic) ... same
- 11 PBS affiliates ... down 2
- 9 CW affiliates ... same
- 5 Youtoo America ... up 1
- 3 MyNet ... same
- 2 This TV ... same
- 2 EstrellaTV ... up 1
- 1 FamilyNet ... same
- 1 AMG ... new to list
- 1 Antenna ... new to list
- 1 AztecaAmerica ... new to list
- 1 NewsNet ... new to list

A fair number of changes in the last year.

And here's how those 406 stations that get news from another station break down:

- 98 Fox affiliates ... up 2
- 71 CW affiliates ... up 5
- 47 MyNetworkTV affiliates ... down 1
- 45 CBS affiliates ... same
- 38 ABC affiliates ... down 2
- 33 NBC affiliates ... up 2
- 27 Independents ... up 3
- 14 Telemundo affiliates ... up 2
- 8 UniMás ... down 4
- 8 Univision affiliates ... same
- 4 MeTV affiliates ... up 2
- 1 PBS affiliate ... same
- 1 Canal de las Estrellas ... same
- 1 ThisTV ... same
- 1 FamilyNet ... same
- 1 America Teve ... same
- 1 CoziTV ... same
- 1 Milenio ... same
- 1 Diya TV ... new this year
- 1 Heroes & Icons ... new this year
- 1 Mega TV ... new this year
- 1 Newschannel Nebraska ... new this year
- 1 NewsNet ... new this year
- 1 True Crime ... new this year

Disappearing from this year's list: an Azteca America station

The biggest jump was among CW stations – up 5, and the biggest drop came with UniMás stations, down 4. There were 6 new entries this year.

Without getting into the whole list, I show no daily local news on the following affiliates:

- 156 PBS affiliates
- 75 ion stations
- 34 MyNet affiliates
- 26 MeTV
- 16 CW affiliates
- 19 UniMás affiliates
- 9 Univision affiliates
- 6 Telemundo affiliates
- 5 Fox affiliates
- 4 CBS affiliates
- 3 ABC affiliates
- 2 NBC affiliates

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About the Survey

The RTDNA/Newhouse School at Syracuse University Survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2020 among all 1,762 operating, non-satellite television stations and a random sample of 3,379 radio stations. Valid responses came from as many as 1,358 television stations (77.1%) and 765 radio news directors and general managers representing 2,310 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.