

Salary Numbers ... 2001 - 2002

Overall, the Annual RTNDA/Ball State University Survey found that television and radio news salaries were largely unchanged in 2001 from 2000. TV salaries rose five-hundredths of one percent; radio fell half a percent. Inflation in 2001 ran 1.6 percent, which means that real wages (after inflation) actually fell 1.6 percent in television news and 2.1 percent in radio news. For the last few years, salary increases had been running between 3 and 4 percent—just a bit above inflation.

“We didn’t give raises last year,” says Jacque Harms, news director at KNOP-TV in North Platte, NE. Rick Iler, director of news operations at KARK-TV in Little Rock, says several of his staffers got no raises, and those who did saw increases of 2 to 3 percent. That’s the same increase news people at KATC-TV in Lafayette, LA received, according to news director James Warner. John Rinkenbaugh, news director at KVLV-TV in Fargo, ND says his younger, lower-paid people got raises between two and a half and 3 percent last year—but only because people at the higher end got raises of half to one percent.

Mark Howell, news director at KUZZ AM-FM and KCWR-FM in Bakersfield, CA reported that raises there remained at about 3 percent. Dave Isaacs at KLBK in Austin, TX said 2001 was down only slightly from 2000. But most radio news directors talked of little or no raises at all. Tony Jordan, news director at WEUP AM-FM in Huntsville, AL and Scot Neu, news director at WMDC-FM in Mayville, WI both reported doing better in 2001 – but only by picking up added responsibilities at the station. That’s been an ongoing trend in radio for the last several years. Sharon Alseth, managing news editor at WIBC in Indianapolis and Network Indiana says her 12 full time and 6 part time people went through a salary freeze and then a 10 percent pay cut—made up with company stock. No one was laid off. “Basically, we’re just glad to have our jobs,” says Alseth, “because a lot of people don’t.”

Although the Survey doesn’t specifically track overall payroll, it’s clear that total broadcast news payroll is down in 2001 versus 2000. Stations accomplished that through a mix and match of layoffs, hiring freezes, salary freezes or minimal raises, and the hiring of less experienced, less costly replacements for vacancies that could be filled.

Not all positions suffered equally; see the various tables for this year’s salary winners and losers.

Television News Salaries

	Average	Median	Minimum	Maximum
News Director	\$73,800	\$64,000	\$18,000	\$250,000
Assistant News Director	62,300	57,000	19,000	150,000
Managing Editor	56,900	50,000	19,000	200,000
Executive Producer	48,900	47,000	18,000	115,000
Assignment Editor	32,800	30,000	17,000	85,000
News Producer	29,000	27,000	15,000	100,000
News Anchor	69,800	50,000	17,000	1,000,000
Weathercaster	54,000	43,800	16,000	1,000,000
Sports Anchor	50,600	35,000	16,000	1,000,000
News Reporter	32,300	26,000	17,000	300,000
News Writer	32,300	27,500	12,000	90,000
News Assistant	22,000	21,000	8,000	55,000
Sports Reporter	32,000	25,000	15,000	100,000
Photographer	27,600	25,000	8,000	110,000
Tape Editor	26,600	23,000	8,000	80,000
Graphics Specialist	28,700	25,000	13,000	60,000
Internet Specialist	31,900	30,000	10,800	75,000

Overall, television news salaries were virtually unchanged in 2001 from 2000 – more precisely, up five-hundredths of one percent. That’s well below last year’s increase of 3.75 percent and below last year’s modest inflation of 1.6 percent. That means real wages (after accounting for inflation) actually fell almost 1.6 percent. Up from last year: assistant news director, executive producer, news producer, news anchor, news assistant, sports reporter, photographer, and tape editor. Down from last year: news director, weathercaster, news writer, and Internet specialist. Unchanged: managing editor, assignment editor, sports anchor, news reporter, and graphics specialist. Over the last two years, only weathercasters, news producers, and photographers have gone up; news writers have dropped for two years in a row. The median—or midpoint—is the best gauge of what people typically make.

Five Year Median Television News Salary Comparisons 1996 to 2001

	2001	1996	Percentage Change
News Director	\$64,000	\$50,500	+26.7%
Assistant News Director	57,000	44,500	+28.1%
Managing Editor	50,000	44,500	+12.4%
Executive Producer	47,000	40,000	+17.5%
Assignment Editor	30,000	26,000	+15.4%
News Producer	27,000	24,000	+12.5%
News Anchor	50,000	40,000	+25.0%
Weathercaster	43,800	35,000	+25.1%
Sports Anchor	35,000	30,500	+14.8%
News Reporter	26,000	22,000	+18.2%
News Writer	27,500	23,000	+19.6%
News Assistant	21,000	19,000	+10.5%
Sports Reporter	25,000	20,000	+25.0%
Photographer	25,000	20,000	+25.0%
Tape Editor	23,000	22,000**	+4.5%
Graphics Specialist	25,000	25,000	nc
Internet Specialist	30,000	26,000*	+15.4%

Over the same five-year period, inflation grew by 12.87 percent, so real growth in wages over the last five years is the difference between the listed change and 12.87. The big winners: news director, assistant news director, weathercaster, news anchor, sports reporter, and photographer. Positions where growth failed to keep up with inflation: graphics specialist, tape editor, news assistant, managing editor, and news producer.

* 1997 Data

** 1998 Data

Median TV News Salaries by Market Size

	1 – 25	26 – 50	51 – 100	101-150	150+
News Director	\$140,000	\$98,000	\$75,000	\$55,000	\$46,500
Assistant News Director	102,500	65,000	55,000	43,000	44,000
Managing Editor	78,300	50,000	44,000	37,500	44,500
Executive Producer	78,000	55,000	45,000	35,000	29,000
Assignment Editor	48,000	35,000	32,000	26,500	24,000
News Producer	49,000	32,500	28,000	21,500	20,000
News Anchor	155,000	93,000	60,000	40,000	30,000
Weathercaster	105,000	78,000	45,000	36,300	27,400

Sports Anchor	121,000	67,000	43,000	30,000	26,000
News Reporter	68,000	36,000	28,000	21,000	19,000
News Writer	40,000	25,000	23,000	*	*
News Assistant	30,000	23,500	20,000	*	*
Sports Reporter	80,000	33,000	27,000	19,000	20,000
Photographer	47,500	30,000	25,000	20,000	19,000
Tape Editor	43,000	25,000	21,000	17,500	16,000
Graphics Specialist	40,000	24,000	27,000	24,000	21,500
Internet Specialist	48,000	30,000	33,500	26,000	20,500

As always, with rare exception, the bigger the market the bigger the salary. And, over the years, markets 1-50 have generally gained more than smaller markets. Overall, salaries in the northeast were higher than other regions, but there was no consistent variation otherwise. There were no meaningful differences between ABC, CBS or NBC affiliates, but Fox affiliates paid more, and independent commercial stations paid more still. That could reflect the generally larger markets in which Fox and independent stations are more likely to run news. News salaries at PBS stations were noticeably lower for managers and anchors but higher for some other positions. * Insufficient data.

Median TV News Salaries by Staff Size

	51+	31-50	21-30	11-20	1-10
News Director	\$121,000	\$75,000	\$55,000	\$47,000	\$39,000
Assistant News Director	78,000	51,000	48,000	33,800	24,000
Managing Editor	75,300	48,500	40,000	42,000	*
Executive Producer	68,500	43,000	37,000	25,000	*
Assignment Editor	40,000	31,000	26,000	24,500	20,500
News Producer	37,500	28,000	23,000	20,000	25,000
News Anchor	121,500	60,000	39,000	30,000	25,000
Weathercaster	94,500	50,000	38,500	25,500	20,000
Sports Anchor	97,500	45,000	30,000	25,000	21,000
News Reporter	52,500	30,000	23,000	20,000	19,500
News Writer	38,000	23,000	19,000	*	*
News Assistant	30,000	20,000	14,000	*	*
Sports Reporter	49,000	26,000	20,500	18,500	21,000
Photographer	41,800	25,000	21,000	19,500	19,000
Tape Editor	33,800	21,800	18,000	15,000	*
Graphics Specialist	37,500	30,000	24,000	25,500	*
Internet Specialist	35,000	29,000	32,500	*	*

Generally, the larger the news staff, the higher the salary. The salary variations among the smallest news departments reflect the mix of small news departments in very small markets along with small departments in some of the large and major markets. * Insufficient data.

Radio News Salaries

	Average	Median	Minimum	Maximum
News Director	\$31,400	\$30,500	\$10,000	\$72,000
News Anchor	30,500	27,500	10,000	150,000

News Reporter	22,600	22,000	12,000	45,000
News Producer	29,400	27,500	21,000	42,000
Sports Anchor	28,000	29,500	14,000	50,000

As with television, radio salaries were virtually unchanged in 2001 versus 2000 – more precisely, down half a percent. With last year’s modest inflation of 1.6 percent, that means real wages (after accounting for inflation) actually fell 2.1 percent. Generally, salaries in the northeast were a little lower and salaries in the west a little higher than the overall figures. The median—or midpoint—is the best gauge of what people make.

Median Radio News Salaries 1996 to 2001

	2001	1996	Percentage Change
News Director	\$30,500	\$23,000	+32.6%
News Anchor	27,500	21,000	+31.0%
News Reporter	22,000	20,000	+10.0%
News Producer	27,500	22,000	+25.0%
Sports Anchor	29,500	24,000*	+22.9%

Even after the slippage in 2001, radio salaries have gone up substantially in the last five years (since 1996)—except for news reporters, who are actually behind the five-year inflation figure of 12.87 percent. But consolidation has meant fewer people doing the news, and those who are left frequently have multiple responsibilities.

* 1998

Median Radio News Salaries by Market Size

	Major	Large	Medium	Small
News Director	\$46,000	\$33,000	\$28,500	\$23,000
News Anchor	38,500	29,000	24,000	22,000
News Reporter	34,900	22,000	21,000	18,500
News Producer	37,000	*	26,500	23,000
Sports Anchor	35,000	29,500	25,000	*

The only significant growth in salaries of news directors in 2001 came in the small markets. News reporters were down across the board, but only slightly in major markets. Major markets are those with 1 million or more listeners. Large markets are those from 250,000 to 1 million; medium markets are from 50,000 to 250,000; and small markets have fewer than 50,000 listeners. * Insufficient data.

Median Radio News Salaries by Full-Time Staff Size

	One	Two	Three and More
News Director	\$22,800	\$27,500	\$38,500
News Anchor	*	22,000	30,000

News Reporter	*	20,000	24,000
News Producer	*	*	27,000
Sports Anchor	*	*	30,000

As in the past, when radio stations have three or more full-time news staff members, salaries take a clear leap. Compared to last year, news directors and anchors rose, but all other groups fell.

* Insufficient data.

Median Radio News Salaries by Ownership

	Group-Owned	Independent
News Director	\$30,000	\$30,500
News Anchor	26,000	33,500
News Reporter	21,500	25,500
News Producer	27,500	30,500
Sports Anchor	29,500	*

As with every year since we started asking, radio news salaries are actually lower at group-owned stations than at independents. * Insufficient data.

Median Radio News Salaries by Number of Stations News Director Supervises

	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six+
News Director	\$31,000	\$25,000	\$30,000	30,000	30,500	33,000
News Anchor	41,000	29,000	24,000	24,500	30,000	25,500
News Reporter	34,300	18,500	20,000	19,500	27,800	22,000
News Producer	35,500	25,000	*	*	*	*
Sports Anchor	*	30,000	30,000	21,000	*	26,300

For the fourth year in a row, the number of stations in a group—and likely responsibility and workload—did not translate into higher pay. * Insufficient data.

About the Survey

The RTNDA/Ball State University Survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2001 among all 1,396 operating, non-satellite television stations and a random sample of 1,505 radio stations. Valid responses came from 818 television stations (58.6 percent) and 249 radio news directors and general managers representing 622 radio stations.