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Women in TV News at a Record High … but Minorities Drop

by Bob Papper

The latest RTNDA/Hofstra University Annual Survey finds women make up over 41 percent of the TV news workforce and over 29 percent of TV news directors. Both are record highs, and it’s the second year in a row that the percentage of women TV news directors has set a new record. The percentages of women in radio news and women as radio news directors also rose.

In contrast, the minority numbers in both TV and radio fell from last year. A year ago, the percentage of minority news directors in TV set a new record, and the minority percentage in TV news overall was just shy of a record. Both numbers fell back in the latest survey. Some of the drop is due to fewer Hispanic stations responding to the survey and smaller staffs at Hispanic stations. But, even factoring that out, minority numbers fell.

Minority numbers – both overall and for news directors – also fell in radio news.

The bigger picture remains unchanged. In the last 19 years, the minority population in the U.S. has risen 8.5 percent; but the minority workforce in TV news is up 4.0 percent, and the minority workforce in radio is actually down. Still, TV news diversity remains far ahead of newspaper (see sidebar).

Minority Population v. Minority Broadcast Workforce

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 | 2005 | 2000 | 1995 | 1990 |
| Minority Population in U.S. | 34.4%\* | 34.0% | 33.6% | 33.2% | 32.8% | 28.6% | 27.9% | 25.9% |
| Minority TV Workforce | 21.8 | 23.6 | 21.5 | 22.2 | 21.2 | 21.0 | 17.1 | 17.8 |
| Minority Radio Workforce | 8.9 | 11.8 | 6.2 | 6.4 | 7.9 | 10.0 | 14.7 | 10.8 |

\*projected

Broadcast News Work Force … Television

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 | 2005 | 2000 | 1995 |
| Caucasian | 78.2% | 76.3% | 78.5% | 77.8% | 78.8% | 79.0% | 82.9% |
| African American | 9.6 | 10.1 | 10.1 | 9.5 | 10.3 | 11.0 | 10.1 |
| Hispanic | 8.8 | 10.3 | 8.7 | 9.6 | 8.7 | 7.0 | 4.2 |
| Asian American | 3.0 | 2.7 | 2.3 | 2.7 | 1.9 | 3.0 | 2.2 |
| Native American | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0.4 | 0.5 | 0.3 | <1.0 | 0.6 |

Broadcast News Work Force … Radio

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 | 2005 | 2000 | 1995 |
| Caucasian | 91.1% | 88.2% | 93.8% | 93.6% | 92.1% | 90% | 85.3% |
| African American | 5.4 | 7.8 | 3.3 | 2.5 | 0.7 | 5 | 5.7 |
| Hispanic | 2.3 | 3.6 | 0.7 | 1.9 | 6.0 | 3 | 7.5 |
| Asian American | 0.6 | 0.4 | 1.1 | 1.8 | 0.7 | 1 | 0.6 |
| Native American | 0.6 | 0 | 1.1 | 0.2 | 0.5 | 1 | 1.0 |

After a record-breaking year last year, the percentage of minorities in both television and radio news slid back in the latest RTNDA/Hofstra University Annual Survey. In TV, both African Americans and Hispanic Americans dropped half a percentage point, while Asian Americans rose three-tenths of a percent and Native Americans held steady.

Much of the drop in minority employment actually came from a drop at Hispanic stations. Among non-Hispanic stations, minority employment slipped by just half a percent to 19.6 percent, down from last year’s 20.1 percent.

At non-Hispanic stations, the minority break down is:

* 9.8 percent African American
* 6.2 percent Hispanic
* 3.1 percent Asian American
* 0.5 percent Native American.

At non-Hispanic stations, African Americans dropped 0.7 percent; Asian Americans rose 0.2 percent; Hispanics and Native Americans were unchanged.

Overall, 72.0 percent of the TV news workforce at Hispanic stations are Hispanic. That’s down 10.0 percent from last year. Another 23.4 percent are white, 4.4 percent are African American and 0.3 percent are Asian American.

As usual, men outnumber women for all minority groups except Asian Americans, where women outnumber men 2:1. Otherwise, differences are greatest among whites: 47.4 percent male to 30.7 female; Native Americans: 0.3 percent to 0.2 percent; Hispanics 5.0 percent to 3.8 percent; blacks 5.0 percent to 4.6 percent.

In radio, the picture was mixed. The percentage of African Americans and Hispanics dropped while the percentage of Asian Americans and Native Americans went up.

Broadcast News Directors … Television – 2009

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 | 2005 | 2000 | 1995 |
| Caucasian | 88.8% | 84.5% | 89.1% | 86.8% | 88.0% | 86% | 92.1% |
| African American | 3.5 | 3.7 | 2.0 | 4.2 | 3.9 | 3 | 1.6 |
| Hispanic | 6.0 | 9.3 | 7.2 | 6.0 | 5.8 | 9 | 3.8 |
| Asian American | 1.1 | 1.7 | 1.0 | 1.2 | 1.3 | 2 | 1.5 |
| Native American | 0.7 | 0.8 | 0.7 | 1.8 | 1.0 | <1 | 1.0 |

Broadcast News Directors … Radio – 2009

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 | 2005 | 2000 | 1995 |
| Caucasian | 97.8%% | 94.1% | 88.0% | 95.6% | 89.0% | 94% | 91.4% |
| African American | 0 | 1.7 | 4.4 | 1.9 | 0.0 | 3 | 5.4 |
| Hispanic | 1.1 | 3.4 | 3.8 | 1.3 | 8.8 | 2 | 2.4 |
| Asian American | 1.1 | 0.8 | 1.9 | 0.6 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Native American | 0 | 0 | 1.9 | 0.6 | 2.2 | 1 | 0.8 |

The percentage of minority radio and television news directors also slid back down. In TV, minority news directors are at about 20 percent in the two largest market categories, 1-25 and 26 – 50, but they’re 10 percent or less in the three smaller market groups – as well as the three largest newsroom categories. Only 6.9 percent of TV news directors at big four commercial stations were minorities, while over half of the news directors at other stations were minorities.

At non-Hispanic TV stations, the percentage of minority news directors dropped from a record 9.1 percent last year to this year’s 7 percent. At 3.3 percent, nearly half were African American. Hispanic Americans were 1.9 percent; Asian Americans were 1.1 percent, and Native Americans 0.7 percent. All were essentially the same as a year ago except Hispanic, which dropped from last year’s 3.0 percent. At Hispanic stations, two-thirds of the news directors are Hispanic (66.7 percent), with 27.8 percent white and 5.6 percent black.

Every minority group of radio news directors except Asian Americans fell back from last year’s figures. There were no consistent and meaningful patterns based on ownership, market size or geography.

Women in Local TV News – 2009

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | News Staffs  With Women | Women News  Directors | Women as  Percentage of  Work Force | Average  Number of  Women on Staff |
| All Television | 99.3% | 29.1% | 41.4% | 14.5 |
| Network Affiliates | 100.0 | 27.7 | 41.4 | 15.3 |
| Independents | 50.0 | 33.3 | 38.5 | 7.3 |
| Market: |  |  |  |  |
| DMA 1-25 | 100.0 | 37.0 | 41.5 | 23.8 |
| DMA 26-50 | 98.5 | 29.8 | 39.7 | 21.0 |
| DMA 51-100 | 98.8 | 23.0 | 40.1 | 15.1 |
| DMA 101-150 | 98.8 | 27.6 | 42.9 | 11.2 |
| DMA 151+ | 100.0 | 24.2 | 44.5 | 9.3 |
| Staff size: |  |  |  |  |
| Staff 51+ | 100.0 | 25.7 | 40.8 | 26.7 |
| Staff 31-50 | 100.0 | 25.6 | 41.4 | 15.3 |
| Staff 21-30 | 100.0 | 30.4 | 40.6 | 9.7 |
| Staff 11-20 | 100.0 | 39.6 | 46.6 | 7.0 |
| Staff 1-10 | 85.7 | 18.8 | 47.3 | 3.4 |

At 29.1, the percentage of women TV news directors has set a new record – up 0.8 percent from last year’s record. It’s worth emphasizing that the percentage of women TV news directors in the RTNDA/Hofstra University Annual Survey is based on a complete station census – not projected from a smaller sample. So 29.1 percent isn’t a rough figure, it’s an exact one. And women TV news directors are nearly as likely to be found in the biggest newsrooms and in the biggest markets. That wasn’t the case even two years ago. There were no meaningful differences based on geography or network affiliation.

Women have been right around the 40 percentage mark of the TV workforce for a decade, but the number edged up to 41.4 percent this year – the highest level ever.

Women in Local Radio News – 2009

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | News Staffs  With Women | Women  News Directors | Women as  Percentage of  Work Force | Average  Number of  Women on Staff |
| All Radio | 30.1% | 27.7% | 28.1% | 0.5 |
| Major Market | 25.0 | 0 | 30.0 | 0.8 |
| Large Market | 35.3 | 37.5 | 31.6 | 0.7 |
| Medium Market | 35.9 | 29.4 | 28.0 | 0.5 |
| Small Market | 22.7 | 23.8 | 25.0 | 0.3 |

The percentages for women in the radio news work force are up this year as well. The percentage of women radio news directors rose from last year’s 20.0 percent to this year’s 27.7 percent – higher than the last few years. The percentage of women in the radio news workforce also grew – up to 28.1 percent from last year’s 22.7 percent. Generally, women news directors were less common in stations with the largest staffs.

Major markets are those with 1 million or more listeners. Large markets are from 250,000 to 1 million. Medium markets are 50,000 to 250,000. Small markets are fewer than 50,000.

Minorities in Local TV News – 2009

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | News Staffs  With Minorities | Minority News  Directors | Minorities as  Percentage of  Work Force | Average Number of Minorities on Staff |
| All Television | 97.2% | 11.2% | 21.8% | 8.3 |
| Network Affiliates | 97.7 | 6.9 | 19.8 | 8.2 |
| Independents | 66.7 | 56.3 | 22.7 | 12.0 |
| Market size: |  |  |  |  |
| DMA 1-25 | 89.5 | 19.6 | 27.9 | 16.5 |
| DMA 26-50 | 95.5 | 20.9 | 24.9 | 13.2 |
| DMA 51-100 | 100.0 | 6.1 | 21.5 | 8.1 |
| DMA 101-150 | 97.6 | 9.2 | 18.5 | 5.3 |
| DMA 151+ | 100.0 | 5.6 | 14.4 | 4.0 |
| Staff size: |  |  |  |  |
| Staff 51+ | 97.0 | 9.0 | 21.4 | 14.2 |
| Staff 31-50 | 100.0 | 8.5 | 22.8 | 8.6 |
| Staff 21-30 | 100.0 | 6.7 | 18.4 | 5.0 |
| Staff 11-20 | 100.0 | 18.6 | 22.2 | 4.1 |
| Staff 1-10 | 93.8 | 26.7 | 29.0 | 2.7 |

PBS stations were low enough in the percentage of minorities that they brought down the overall number. Otherwise, there was little difference based on network affiliation. The West and South were about double the diversity of the Midwest and Northeast. That’s actually closer than usual.

Minorities in Local Radio News – 2009

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | News Staffs  With Minorities | Minority  News Directors | Minorities as  Percentage of  Work Force | Average  Number of  Minorities on Staff |
| All Radio | 9.7% | 2.2% | 8.9% | 0.2 |
| Major Market | 25.0 | 0 | 20.0 | 0.5 |
| Large Market | 11.8 | 0 | 5.3 | 0.1 |
| Medium Market | 12.8 | 5.8 | 9.3 | 0.2 |
| Small Market | 4.5 | 0 | 9.1 | 0.1 |

The numbers are so small that there were no meaningful distinctions that show up in sub-groups.

TV General Managers – 2009

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Percent Caucasian | Percent Minority | Percent Men | Percent Women |
| All Television | 96.0% | 4.0% | 84.6% | 15.4% |
| Network Affiliates | 97.3 | 2.7 | 84.6 | 15.4 |
| Independents | 81.8 | 18.2 | 90.9 | 9.1 |
| Market size: |  |  |  |  |
| DMA 1-25 | 94.1 | 5.9 | 91.4 | 8.6 |
| DMA 26-50 | 93.9 | 6.1 | 82.9 | 17.1 |
| DMA 51-100 | 97.7 | 2.3 | 93.0 | 7.0 |
| DMA 101-150 | 100.0 | 0 | 83.3 | 16.7 |
| DMA 151+ | 92.3 | 7.7 | 73.2 | 26.8 |

The women numbers look a lot like last year, with women GMs (at stations that run local news) more likely to be found in larger newsrooms and at ABC affiliates, less likely in smaller newsrooms, Fox affiliates and independent stations and way less likely to be found in the Northeast. Minority GM numbers plunged by 6 percent from a year ago -- pretty much across the board.

At non-Hispanic stations (which run local news), minority GM numbers were cut by two-thirds from a year ago. Compare this year’s 3.1 percent minority GMs at non-Hispanic stations to last year’s 9.8 percent. Half were African American. All the GMs at Hispanic stations were Hispanic.

Radio General Managers – 2009

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Percent Caucasian | Percent Minority | Percent Men | Percent Women |
| All Radio | 94.7% -94.9% | 5.3% -5.1% | 83.2% -74.6% | 16.8% -25.4% |

At radio stations that run local news, female general managers plunged from 25.4 percent last year to 16.8 percent. Minority general managers were little changed from last year’s 5.1 percent.

***Bob Papper is professor and chair of the Department of Journalism, Media Studies, and Public Relations at Hofstra University and has worked extensively in radio and TV news. This research was supported by the School of Communications at Hofstra University and the Radio Television News Directors Association.***

MORE STUFF:

# Newspapers and TV

The 2009 survey by the American Society of Newspaper Editors found that minority journalists make up 13.4 percent of newsroom employees at daily newspapers. That’s down 1.1 percent from the revised 2008 number.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Daily Newspapers | TV News |
| Minority population | 13.4% | 21.8% |
| African American | 5.2 | 9.6 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 4.5 | 8.8 |
| Asian American | 3.1 | 3.0 |
| Native American | 0.6 | 0.5 |
|  |  |  |
| Women | 37.0 | 41.4 |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Daily Newspapers | TV News (non-Hispanic only) |
| Minority population | 13.4% | 19.6% |
| African American | 5.2 | 9.8 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 4.5 | 6.2 |
| Asian American | 3.1 | 3.1 |
| Native American | 0.6 | 0.5 |
|  |  |  |
| Women | 37.0 | 41.4 |

NOTE, BELOW, THAT I DON’T HAVE THE CONTACT INFO OR EMAIL FOR RTNDA’S PROJECT.

**For More Information**

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International Women’s Media Foundation

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National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ)

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