**TV salaries fall ... radio stagnant**

by Bob Papper

* Salaries lose ground ... again
* Winners and losers and starting pay
* Contracts and non-competes

The latest RTDNA/Hofstra University Annual Survey found that local television news salaries actually fell 1.9% in 2012. With inflation a modest 2.1%, that meant that TV news salaries dropped in purchasing power by 4% last year.

Radio salaries fared only slightly better, with an increase of 0.8% last year. That's not enough to compensate for 2.1% inflation, leaving radio news salaries down 1.3% in terms of real wages.

Television news salaries – 2013

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Average | Median | Minimum | Maximum |
| News Director | $100,400 | $85,000 | $30,000 | $400,000 |
| Assistant News Director | 76,100 | 65,000 | 30,000 | 225,000 |
| Managing Editor | 69,300 | 62,000 | 26,000 | 220,000 |
| Executive Producer | 57,000 | 50,000 | 22,000 | 200,000 |
| News Anchor | 87,100 | 64,000 | 15,000 | 1,000,000 |
| Weathercaster | 69,600 | 55,000 | 15,000 | 500,000 |
| Sports Anchor | 58,800 | 45,000 | 17,000 | 369,000 |
| News Reporter | 39,400 | 30,000 | 16,000 | 200,000 |
| Sports Reporter | 38,300 | 30,000 | 15,000 | 200,000 |
| Assignment Editor | 40,200 | 37,000 | 12,000 | 110,000 |
| News Producer | 35,100 | 31,000 | 18,000 | 140,000 |
| News Writer | 42,200 | 36,500 | 18,000 | 100,000 |
| News Assistant | 29,000 | 28,000 | 12,000 | 85,000 |
| Photographer | 34,500 | 30,000 | 15,000 | 95,000 |
| Tape Editor | 32,100 | 28,000 | 13,000 | 95,000 |
| Graphics Specialist | 34,900 | 31,800 | 15,000 | 95,000 |
| Web/Mobile Writer | 32,600 | 32,000 | 14,000 | 60,000 |
| Web/Mobile Prod/Ed | 37,900 | 35,000 | 16,600 | 90,000 |
| Art Director | 49,000 | 50,000 | 18,000 | 90,000 |

No matter how you look at it, it was a lousy year for TV news salaries. It's true that nine average salaries went up, four went down and one stayed the same. But the increases were almost all extremely small, and median salary is a better gauge of what's happening. Eleven median salaries went down with four each going up and staying the same. In an unusual move, the poor benefitted the most in the last year, with the biggest salary jumps (proportionally) for news writers and news assistants. Other than those two positions, only managing editors rose in both average and median salaries.

Five and ten year median television news salary comparisons 2003 to 2008 to 2013

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2013 | 2008 | 5-Year Percentage Change | 2003 | 10-Year Percentage Change |
| INFLATION |  |  | +9.6% |  | +27.3% |
| All TV news |  |  | +8.1 |  | +21.8 |
| News Director | $85,000 | $74,000 | +14.9 | $64,000 | +32.8 |
| Assistant News Director | 65,000 | 63,000 | +3.2 | 57,000 | +14.0 |
| Managing Editor | 62,000 | 58,000 | +6.9 | 50,000 | +24.0 |
| Executive Producer | 50,000 | 52,000 | -3.8 | 47,000 | +6.4 |
| News Anchor | 64,000 | 60,000 | +6.7 | 50,000 | +28.0 |
| Weathercaster | 55,000 | 53,300 | +3.2 | 43,800 | +25.6 |
| Sports Anchor | 45,000 | 40,000 | +12.5 | 35,000 | +28.6 |
| News Reporter | 30,000 | 29,500 | +1.7 | 26,000 | +15.4 |
| Sports Reporter | 30,000 | 29,000 | +3.4 | 25,000 | +20.0 |
| Assignment Editor | 37,000 | 34,000 | +8.8 | 30,000 | +23.3 |
| News Producer | 31,000 | 30,000 | +3.3 | 27,000 | +14.8 |
| News Writer | 36,500 | 24,000 | +52.1 | 27,500 | +32.7 |
| News Assistant | 28,000 | 25,500 | +9.8 | 21,000 | +33.3 |
| Photographer | 30,000 | 27,000 | +11.1 | 25,000 | +20.0 |
| Tape Editor | 28,000 | 25,000 | +12.0 | 23,000 | +21.7 |
| Graphics Specialist | 31,800 | 29,500 | +7.8 | 25,000 | +27.2 |
| Web/Mobile Writer | 32,000 | 33,800\* | -5.3 | 30,000\* | +6.7 |
| Web/Mobile Prod/Ed | 35,000 | 33,800\* | +3.6 | 30,000\* | +16.7 |
| Art Director | 50,000 | 42,000 | +19.0 | na | na |

\*Comparison is with internet specialist in 2008 and 2003

Last year's dismal 5 and 10 year comparisons have now gotten worse. Last year, only four positions beat both 5 and 10 year inflation rates. It's the same this year -- but only because the relatively few writers and news assistants that were hired got nice jumps in pay. Only news directors and sports anchors really kept pace (and more) with inflation over both the last five years and the last decade. Assignment editors came reasonably close, but keeping up with inflation isn't much of a target -- even though relatively few positions managed to stay even close. In fairness, the median salaries of some positions fell because more of them were hired (like executive producers and meteorologists), and new hires tended to be staff expansions filled with lower paid, less experienced people.

Median TV news salaries by market size – 2013

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1 – 25 | 26 – 50 | 51 – 100 | 101-150 | 150+ |
| News Director | $200,000 | $135,000 | $100,000 | $80,000 | $62,000 |
| Assistant News Director | 130,000 | 86,300 | 62,500 | 48,000 | 40,000 |
| Managing Editor | 95,000 | 77,500 | 60,000 | 50,000 | 35,000 |
| Executive Producer | 88,800 | 65,000 | 51,500 | 40,800 | 30,000 |
| News Anchor | 180,000 | 122,500 | 85,000 | 55,000 | 40,500 |
| Weathercaster | 130,000 | 110,000 | 70,000 | 49,500 | 36,200 |
| Sports Anchor | 105,000 | 82,500 | 53,800 | 39,000 | 30,000 |
| News Reporter | 72,000 | 50,000 | 34,500 | 26,800 | 23,000 |
| Sports Reporter | 61,500 | 50,000 | 35,000 | 26,500 | 23,000 |
| Assignment Editor | 50,000 | 45,000 | 40,000 | 33,000 | 27,500 |
| News Producer | 50,300 | 44,500 | 33,000 | 27,000 | 23,000 |
| News Writer | 48,800 | 30,000 | 23,000 | 26,800 | \* |
| News Assistant | 32,000 | 30,000 | 25,000 | 25,000 | 13,000 |
| Photographer | 49,000 | 45,000 | 31,500 | 27,000 | 25,000 |
| Tape Editor | 46,000 | 33,300 | 25,000 | 25,000 | 23,000 |
| Graphics Specialist | 55,000 | 24,000 | 31,800 | 29,000 | 21,500 |
| Web/Mobile Writer | 40,500 | 40,000 | 32,800 | 30,000 | 25,000 |
| Web/Mobile Prod/Ed | 43,000 | 50,000 | 35,000 | 29,000 | 28,000 |
| Art Director | 85,000 | 45,000 | 50,000 | 40,000 | \* |

\*Insufficient data

As usual, not everyone fared the same. Last year's big salary winner was the smallest market group, 151+. Not this year. Salaries in those smallest markets were stagnant. The biggest winners were markets 1 - 25 (which did well last year as well) and markets 101 - 150. Markets 26 - 100 were also largely unchanged.

Median TV news salaries by staff size – 2013

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 51+ | 31-50 | 21-30 | 11-20 | 1-10 |
| News Director | $155,000 | $95,000 | $75,000 | $60,000 | $50,000 |
| Assistant News Director | 97,500 | 58,000 | 45,000 | 41,200 | \* |
| Managing Editor | 75,000 | 55,000 | 44,000 | 50,000 | 28,000 |
| Executive Producer | 70,000 | 50,000 | 40,000 | 40,000 | 31,500 |
| News Anchor | 140,000 | 76,500 | 47,900 | 42,500 | 26,000 |
| Weathercaster | 116,500 | 58,000 | 41,000 | 40,000 | 28,000 |
| Sports Anchor | 95,000 | 47,500 | 38,000 | 30,000 | 24,800 |
| News Reporter | 53,000 | 33,800 | 25,000 | 24,000 | 25,000 |
| Sports Reporter | 50,500 | 30,000 | 25,500 | 23,500 | 23,000 |
| Assignment Editor | 46,500 | 37,000 | 33,000 | 30,000 | 23,000 |
| News Producer | 45,000 | 30,500 | 26,000 | 27,500 | 32,000 |
| News Writer | 38,900 | 24,000 | \* | \* | \* |
| News Assistant | 33,000 | 17,000 | 15,000 | 28,000 | \* |
| Photographer | 45,000 | 30,000 | 27,500 | 27,800 | 30,000 |
| Tape Editor | 35,000 | 25,000 | 22,000 | 26,500 | 35,000 |
| Graphics Specialist | 36,500 | 27,300 | 30,500 | 20,400 | 18,000 |
| Web/Mobile Writer | 40,000 | 32,800 | 25,000 | 27,300 | \* |
| Web/Mobile Prod/Ed | 43,000 | 35,600 | 26,000 | 32,500 | \* |
| Art Director | 50,000 | 40,000 | \* | \* | 18,000 |

\*Insufficient data

Generally, the rich got richer, and the poor didn't. Almost all the salaries rose at the biggest stations, but the picture tended to be spottier after that. And it looks like the smallest stations took advantage of a weak economy and generally hired cheap.

**Radio salaries**

Radio news salaries – 2013

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Average | Median | Minimum | Maximum |
| News Director | $43,000 | $35,000 | $15,000 | $130,000 |
| News Reporter | 37,200 | 33,000 | 17,000 | 110,000 |
| News Producer | 39,000 | 40,000 | 26,000 | 70,000 |
| News Anchor | 50,400 | 45,000 | 26,000 | 120,000 |
| Sports Anchor | 36,700 | 35,000 | 17,000 | 75,000 |
| Sports Reporter | 59,500 | 59,500 | 24,000 | 95,000 |
| Web Prod/Ed | 48,700 | 45,000 | 30,000 | 85,000 |

Overall, radio news salaries edged up 0.8% in 2012. But you really have to burrow into the numbers to see what took place.

Median radio news salaries by market size – 2013

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Major | Large | Medium | Small |
| News Director | $67,000 | $41,500 | $35,500 | $30,000 |
| News Reporter | 50,000 | 32,000 | 32,500 | 24,000 |
| News Producer | 40,000 | 41,500 | 33,500 | \* |
| News Anchor | 50,000 | 66,800 | 38,000 | 35,000 |
| Sports Anchor | \* | \* | 27,500 | 35,000 |
| Sports Reporter | \* | \* | 24,000 | \* |
| Web Prod/Ed | 40,000 | 56,500 | \* | \* |

\*Insufficient data

Major market salaries rose in 2012 -- and rose by quite a bit. The overall number was so much lower because median salaries actually fell in large, medium and small markets, although the small market results were a bit more mixed. As usual, the larger the market, generally, the higher the salary.

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.

Five and ten year median radio news salary comparisons 2003 to 2008 to 2013

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2013 | 2008 | 5-Year Percentage Change | 2003 | 10-Year Percentage Change |
| INFLATION |  |  | +9.6% |  | +27.3% |
| All radio news |  |  |  |  |  |
| News Director | $35,000 -$37,000 | $32,000 | +9.4 | $30,500 | +14.8 |
| News Reporter | 33,000 -34,500 | 25,000 | +32.0 | 22,000 | +50.0 |

The comparisons this year are problematic because of two coincident factors. First, a disproportionate percentage of major market news directors are skewing this year's numbers out of line on an overall basis, and, second, that's throwing off the numbers of other positions, like producer, anchor and sports anchor, which are becoming less and less common in smaller and medium sized markets.

The salaries by staff size are almost always highly variable, although there has almost always been a general tendency for the largest news operations to pay more.

As with previous years, there is no consistent pattern to salaries based on the number of stations a news director supervises.

Median radio news salaries by ownership – 2013

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Standalone AM or FM | Combo AM/FM | Standalone + combo | Group of 3 or more |
| News Director | $35,000 | $35,000 | $35,000 | $40,000 |
| News Reporter | 30,000 | 32,000 | 32,000 | 33,000 |
| News Producer | 40,400 | 42,000 | 40,400 | 37,500 |
| News Anchor | 45,900 | 54,700 | 50,300 | 50,500 |
| Sports Anchor | 32,500 | 25,000 | 30,000 | 37,500 |
| Sports Reporter | \* | \* | \* | 59,500 |
| Web Prod/Ed | 51,000 | 65,000 | 58,000 | 40,000 |

\*Insufficient data

This is the second year that I've broken down the stations differently than in the past. I asked about standalone AM or FM, combo AM/FM and groups of 3 or more stations. This year, as in most years, group-owned stations usually paid more the independent ones.

**Contracts**

TV newsroom employees under contract and non-competes - 2013

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Percent under contract | Percent with non-competes | Percent under contract with non-competes |
| News Director | 37.4% | 46.6% | 92.8% |
| Assistant News Director | 43.8 | 53.3 | 91.9 |
| Managing Editor | 36.4 | 42.9 | 88.9 |
| Executive Producer | 52.2 | 55.6 | 85.5 |
| News Anchor | 94.4 | 88.2 | 90.4 |
| Weathercaster | 94.1 | 86.9 | 90.4 |
| Sports Anchor | 90.7 | 86.7 | 91.6 |
| News Reporter | 83.0 | 80.3 | 91.3 |
| Sports Reporter | 72.9 | 75.0 | 91.2 |
| Assignment Editor | 27.5 | 38.2 | 89.3 |
| News Producer | 63.6 | 67.2 | 92.6 |
| News Writer | 11.5 | 9.1 | 100 |
| News Assistant | 0 | 13.3 | 0 |
| Photographer | 10.9 | 24.0 | 90.9 |
| Tape Editor | 1.5 | 12.5 | 100 |
| Graphics Specialist | 3.3 | 4.2 | 100 |
| Web/Mobile Writer | 31.5 | 37.8 | 93.8 |
| Web/Mobile Prod/Ed | 31.7 | 37.0 | 94.4 |
| Art Director | 28.6 | 23.1 | 100 |

Contract numbers tended to languish in the recession, but they moved up noticeably in TV news last year and edged up again this time around. Almost all job categories rose in the percentage under contract. Note that non-competes are illegal in a number of states.

Radio newsroom employees under contract and non-competes - 2013

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Percent under contract | Percent with non-competes | Percent under contract with non-competes |
| News Director | 8.5% | 17.8% | 85.7% |
| News Reporter | 20.0 | 28.6 | 83.3 |
| News Producer | 22.2 | 12.5 | 50.0 |
| News Anchor | 33.3 | 33.3 | 66.7 |
| Sports Anchor | 45.5 | 77.8 | 100 |
| Sports Reporter | 33.3 | 50.0 | 100 |
| Web Prod/Ed | 14.3 | 0 | 0 |

Up and down for various positions, overall, radio numbers this year are generally in line with last year.

**Starting Pay**

TV news 2013 starting salaries for new employees with no fulltime experience

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Position | Average | Median | Minimum | Maximum |
| All TV news | $25,000 | $24,000 | $15,000 | $50,000 |
| Reporter | 23,200 | 22,500 | 16,500 | 34,000 |
| News producer | 25,200 | 25,000 | 19,500 | 45,000 |
| Multimedia journalist | 25,000 | 25,000 | 15,000 | 32,000 |
| Photographer | 25,600 | 24,000 | 16,000 | 50,000 |
| News assistant | 28,500 | 29,000 | 21,000 | 50,000 |
| Multimedia journalist | 25,000 | 25,000 | 15,000 | 32,000 |
| Tape editor | 26,300 | 25,000 | 21,000 | 45,000 |
| Assignment editor | 25,900 | 27,500 | 20,000 | 30,000 |
| Studio technical | 26,600 | 26,000 | 20,000 | 33,500 |
| News anchor | 24,800 | 24,000 | 19,000 | 30,000 |
| News writer | 32,000 | 31,000 | 25,000 | 40,000 |
| News anchor | 24,800 | 24,000 | 19,000 | 30,000 |
| Web | 26,300 | 25,000 | 25,000 | 29,000 |
| Sports reporter | 22,000 | 22,000 | 22,000 | 22,000 |
| Other | 24,500 | 24,000 | 15,000 | 50,000 |

The TV positions above are listed in order of number hired, and the sequence is virtually identical to last year (and pretty similar to the last few years). The only meaningful change was that multimedia journalist moved from number 5 on the list last year to a distant number three this year. But it was only one ahead of number four, and MMJ was half the number of producers and well under half the number of reporters. Starting salaries were flat this year, with the overall average edging up $500 but the median staying exactly the same

Radio news 2013 starting salaries for new employees with no fulltime experience

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Position | Average | Median | Minimum | Maximum |
| All radio news | $24,700 | $24,000 | $15,000 | $40,000 |
| News reporter | 25,800 | 25,000 | 15,000 | 40,000 |
| General news | 24,200 | 24,000 | 17,500 | 32,000 |
| Other | 24,900 | 24,000 | 15,000 | 40,000 |

More than half of all new, starting positions in radio news were reporters. About a third as many news anchors were hired next, followed by news directors and then random positions. Average radio news starting salaries rose just $200 in the last year, and median starting salaries -- as with TV -- were unchanged.

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**About the Survey**

The RTDNA/Hofstra University Survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2012 among all 1,732 operating, non-satellite television stations and a random sample of 3,000 radio stations. Valid responses came from 1,377 television stations (79.5%) and 217 radio news directors and general managers representing 575 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.