An introductory note, if you will. 2014 marks my 20th year conducting the

RTDNA (before that, RTNDA) Annual Survey. First at Ball State University and now at Hofstra University. It has been my privilege to do this, and I want to thank RTDNA, Ball State and Hofstra for the support and opportunity to keep this going. Most of all, I want to thank all of you who spend what I know is way too much time poring over the way too many questions that I ask on this survey. Thank you.

- Bob Papper

**News director profile ... 2014**

**by Bob Papper**

After an exhaustive look at radio and television news directors in the latest RTDNA/Hofstra University Annual Survey, I've discovered a few, largely irrelevant, data points about news directors.

**Age**

The typical TV news director remained in the mid 40s. The average age was 46.1, and the median was 45.5. That's a half year younger than the median last year.

In the past, there wasn't much age difference based on market size, and the differences still aren't large, but they do exist.

News director age by market size

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Market size | Average age | Median age |
| 1 - 25 | 49 | 49.5 |
| 26 - 50 | 47.7 | 47 |
| 51 - 100 | 46.4 | 46 |
| 101 - 150 | 45.1 | 43 |
| 150+ | 43 | 41.5 |

The same stair step appeared by staff size, but the differences are much smaller. There was no meaningful variation based on geography or network affiliation.

Overall, the age ranged from 23 to 71 ... so, apparently, last year's 78-year-old news director either retired or didn't fill out this year's survey.

The average TV news director has been news director at that station for 5.7 years -- although the median was only 3. That's exactly the same as last year, which means that exactly the right number moved in the last year to keep that number from edging up. The longest serving news director at the same station has been there for 29 years, but there were several who hit 25, 26 and 27.

The averages varied erratically by market size, but the median tenure for news directors is just 2 years in top 25 markets and 3 in markets 26 - 50. Medians at network affiliates varied as well. CBS was highest at 4 years, followed by ABC at 3.5, NBC at 3 and Fox at 2. The averages were all about the same for ABC, CBS and NBC stations (almost 6 years), but news directors at Fox averaged under 4. Keep that in mind at your next job interview.

About half of all TV news directors have been news director elsewhere before. The average news director has been in that role (somewhere or other) for a total of 9.5 years ... and a median of 7. That experience was especially common, not surprisingly, in the biggest markets and at the biggest stations. With staffs of 51+, the average news director had been in that role (somewhere) for over 12 years and a median of 11.

But exactly half of all TV news directors (49.6%) are currently news director at the one and only station where they have ever been news director. Not surprisingly, this was most likely to happen in the smallest markets (151+), where more than 70% of news directors have only been news director at that station ... falling to 53% in markets 101 - 100 ... and less than half in larger markets. More than half the news directors at all the staff sizes except the largest (51+ news people) are in their first news director job.

Radio news directors averaged about 3 years younger than TV news directors (46.4) -- but the median age was just about the same (49). News directors' ages ranged from a youngster of 19 to as old as 83. Commercial station news directors were 5 years older than non-commercial ones.

The average radio news director has been news director at his or her station for just over 9 years (9.2) ... although the median was just 5. In other words, some serious longevity on the part of some radio news directors masks the more typical moving around. Still, radio is not nearly as nomadic as TV. Radio news directors were most stable at commercial stations versus non-commercial and in both the largest and smallest markets.

The average radio news director has been a news director somewhere for 11.7 years, and the median is almost as high at 10 years. Radio news directors are an experienced lot ... except for non-commercial ones and those in the Midwest. I have no idea why those are so different.

Almost two-thirds of radio news directors (63.4%) are news director at the one and only station where they have ever been news director. That was especially true for non-commercial news directors, where the percentage exceeded three-quarters (77.3%). There was no difference based on geography or ownership, but the percentage was actually highest in the very largest markets.

**Names**

Apparently I have too much time on my hands because I decided to see what the most common names for TV news directors are (thankfully, I don't have the data to do this with radio news directors). Most common male names for news director:

1. Mike (combined with Michael)

2. Jim (combined with James and Jamie)

3. David (combined with Dave ... apparently this is a more formal group)

4. John (combined with Jonathan and Jon). If you throw in Jack, the name comes in at #3

5. Bob (combined with Rob, Robert and Robb). I didn't count Robin because who knows about Robin?

6. Scott

7. Mark

8. (tie) Tom and Jeff

10. Rick (combined with Richard and Rick). All told, it's a tie with #8, but Tom and Jeff didn't need any help from other variants so I bumped Rick down to #10

Most common female names for news directors:

1. (tie) Jennifer and Kelly

3. Julie (combined with Juli ... which is why it's #3 instead of a 3-way tie for #1)

4. Karen (combined with Karin)

5. (tie) Andrea and Susan

7. Lori (combined with Lorri ... which is why it's #7 instead of another #5)

8. (tie) Bridget and Denise and Heather

I have no idea of what possible use this could be, but someone, somewhere may have been wondering.

***Bob Papper is Emeritus Distinguished Professor of Journalism at Hofstra University and has worked extensively in radio and TV news. This research was supported by the Lawrence Herbert School of Communication at Hofstra University and the Radio Television Digital News Association.***

**About the Survey**

The RTDNA/Hofstra University Survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2013 among all 1,659 operating, non-satellite television stations and a random sample of 3,263 radio stations. Valid responses came from 1,300 television stations (78.4%) and 249 radio news directors and general managers representing 649 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.