**TV Salaries Up ... Slightly**

**by Bob Papper**

The latest RTDNA/Hofstra University Annual Survey found that local television news salaries rose by 2.7% in 2017. That's less than the last two years. Salaries were up 4% a year ago and 4.8% the year before that. But it’s at least a bit above inflation, which remained low at 2.1% -- the same as a year ago. Still, it’s a bit below U.S. average hourly wage gains of 2.9% for 2017. So the real growth in wages in the last year was 0.6%. Not much.

**Television news salaries – 2018**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Average | Median | Minimum | Maximum |
| News Director | $109,000  | $100,000  | $23,000  | $400,000  |
| Assistant News Director | 84,000  | 80,000  | 24,000  | 250,000  |
| Managing Editor | 69,100  | 65,000  | 27,000  | 166,000  |
| Executive Producer | 59,100  | 55,000  | 27,000  | 170,000  |
| News Anchor | 89,100  | 70,000  | 18,000  | 550,000  |
| Weathercaster | 74,600  | 60,000  | 21,000  | 420,000  |
| Sports Anchor | 61,600  | 50,000  | 20,000  | 350,000  |
| News Reporter | 54,500  | 45,000  | 21,000  | 349,000  |
| MMJ | 38,100  | 34,000  | 18,000  | 135,000  |
| Sports Reporter | 37,200  | 33,000  | 22,000  | 150,000  |
| Assignment Editor | 43,800  | 40,000  | 17,000  | 110,000  |
| News Producer | 38,600  | 35,900  | 20,000  | 130,000  |
| News Writer | 40,600  | 36,000  | 15,000  | 105,000  |
| News Assistant | 30,500  | 27,500  | 15,000  | 66,000  |
| Photographer | 39,900  | 36,800  | 15,000  | 130,000  |
| Video Editor | 35,600  | 32,500  | 18,000  | 115,000  |
| Graphics Specialist | 44,700  | 39,500  | 20,000  | 90,000  |
| Digital Content Manager | 50,300  | 45,000  | 20,000  | 165,000  |
| Social Media Prod/Editor | 40,700  | 36,000  | 15,000  | 80,000  |
| Web/Mobile Writer/Prod | 40,000  | 35,000  | 20,000  | 120,000  |

It was a good year in salaries in that almost two-thirds of newsroom salaries (65%) went up and just 10% dropped, with 25% staying the same. Only news assistant and weathercaster went down; digital content director, assignment editor, news and sports anchors and executive producers stayed the same. All others went up.

I separated MMJ from news reporter four years ago. And, once again, it’s clear that reporters get paid a lot more money, overall, than MMJs. The spread this year was $11,000. Last year, it was $12,000, but it was a bit closer the two previous years. Some of that difference is due to market size: more reporters are in bigger markets. But even taking market size into account, reporters make more money.

Note that I use median salaries for most comparisons because medians tend to be more reflective of what people actually make.

**Five and ten year median television news salary comparisons 2018 to 2013 to 2008**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2018 | 2013 | 5-Year Percentage Change | 2008 | 10-Year Percentage Change |
| INFLATION |  |  | +7.4% |  | +17.4% |
| All TV news |  |  | +14.2 |  | +21.9 |
| News Director | $100,000  | $85,000  | +17.6 | $74,000 | +35.1 |
| Asst. News Director | 80,000  | 65,000  | +23.1 | 63,000 | +27 |
| Managing Editor | 65,000  | 62,000  | +4.8 | 58,000 | +12.1 |
| Executive Producer | 55,000  | 50,000  | +10 | 52,000 | +5.8 |
| News Anchor | 70,000  | 64,000  | +9.4 | 60,000 | +16.7 |
| Weathercaster | 60,000  | 55,000  | +9.1 | 53,300 | +12.6 |
| Sports Anchor | 50,000  | 45,000  | +11.1 | 40,000 | +25 |
| News Reporter\* | 45,000\*  | 30,000\*  | +50 | 29,500\* | +52.5 |
| MMJ\* | 34,000\*  | 30,000\* | +13.3 | 29,500\* | +15.3 |
| Sports Reporter | 33,000  | 30,000  | +10 | 29,000 | +13.8 |
| Assignment Editor | 40,000  | 37,000  | +8.1 | 34,000 | +17.6 |
| News Producer | 35,900  | 31,000  | +15.8 | 30,000 | +19.7 |
| News Writer | 36,000  | 36,500  | -1.4 | 24,000 | +50 |
| News Assistant | 27,500  | 28,000  | -1.8 | 25,500 | +7.8 |
| Photographer | 36,800  | 30,000  | +22.7 | 27,000 | +36.3 |
| Video Editor | 32,500  | 28,000  | +16.1 | 25,000 | +30 |
| Graphics Specialist | 39,500  | 31,800  | +24.2 | 29,500 | +33.9 |
| Digital content mgr\*\* | 45,000 | 35,000\*\*  | +28.6 | 33,800\*\* | +33.1 |
| Social Media prod/ed\*\* | 36,000 | 32,000\*\*  | +12.5 | 33,800\*\* | +6.5 |
| Web/Mobile Writer/Prod\*\*\* | 35,000 | 32,000  | +9.4 | 33,800\*\*\* | +3.6 |

\*News reporter comparison is problematic because I now separate reporter from MMJ

\*\*Comparison is with web/mobile writer/prod in 2013 and 2008

\*\*\*Comparison is with internet specialist in 2008

After 5 straight years of overall salary increases ahead of inflation, the big, long-term salary picture looks better than it has in quite a few years. Overall, TV news salaries have risen at nearly twice the rate of inflation over the last 5 years, and all positions have done better than inflation except managing editor, news writer and news assistant. It’s a tighter comparison over the last decade, where local TV news salaries edged out inflation by four and a half points. A year ago, the 10 year comparison had inflation winning. Over the last decade, 11 positions are ahead of information, but 9 are running behind.

Keep in mind that wages in this country, generally, had not kept pace with inflation until 2017.

**Median TV news salaries by market size – 2018**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1 – 25 | 26 – 50 | 51 – 100 | 101-150 | 151+ |
| News Director | $200,000  | $150,000  | $107,000  | $80,000  | $60,000  |
| Asst News Director | 125,000  | 90,000  | 75,500  | 59,000  | 45,000  |
| Managing Editor | 107,500  | 72,500  | 70,000  | 50,000  | 32,800  |
| Executive Producer | 80,000  | 70,000  | 50,000  | 45,000  | 36,500  |
| News Anchor | 160,000  | 126,300  | 80,000  | 55,000  | 40,000 |
| Weathercaster | 127,500  | 107,500  | 65,000  | 50,000  | 40,000  |
| Sports Anchor | 116,000  | 80,000  | 52,500  | 40,000  | 30,000  |
| News Reporter | 71,000  | 50,300  | 44,800  | 36,000  | 25,500  |
| MMJ | 63,800  | 47,500  | 35,000  | 28,300  | 25,000  |
| Sports Reporter | 66,500  | 45,000  | 35,000  | 28,500  | 27,000  |
| Assignment Editor | 55,000  | 45,000  | 40,000  | 40,000  | 32,000  |
| News Producer | 52,500  | 44,300  | 37,000  | 30,000  | 25,000  |
| News Writer | 43,800  | 35,000  | 28,500  | 31,500  | \*  |
| News Assistant | 40,000  | 30,000  | 27,500  | 20,000  | 18,500  |
| Photographer | 55,000  | 45,000  | 37,800  | 30,300  | 27,000  |
| Video Editor | 42,000  | 34,000  | 30,000  | 24,500  | 20,000  |
| Graphics Specialist | 55,000  | 45,000  | 35,000  | 23,500  | 39,000  |
| Digital Content Mgr | 80,000  | 55,000  | 50,000  | 35,000  | 31,000  |
| Social Media Prod/Ed | 52,500  | 45,000  | 33,500  | 31,000  | 25,000  |
| Web/Mobile Writer/Prod | 51,500  | 40,000  | 34,000  | 27,900  | 23,000  |

\*Insufficient data

The table of salaries by market size allows me to take a closer look at both salaries by market size as well as salaries by position.

There is an overall tendency for last year’s winners to become this year’s losers and vice versa. And that’s what happened. Markets 51 to 100 did the worst a year ago, but they were the easy winner this time around, with 17 of 20 positions going up, only 1 down and 2 the same. Markets 26 to 50, which were second from the bottom a year ago, came in second place this time around, with more winners than losers. That wasn’t the case for markets 1 to 25 and 151+. Both had down positions edge out winners. The worst group was market 101 to 150, with twice as many positions going down as up. That group came in first a year ago, so things do tend to even out over time.

**Median TV news salaries by staff size – 2018**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 51+ | 31-50 | 21-30 | 11-20 | 1-10 |
| News Director | $153,800  | $100,000 | $78,500  | $65,000  | $50,000  |
| Asst News Director | 100,000  | 75,000  | 50,000  | 40,000  | \* |
| Managing Editor | 77,500  | 55,000  | 45,000  | 45,000  | \* |
| Executive Producer | 70,000  | 50,000  | 39,000  | 40,000  | \* |
| News Anchor | 120,000  | 80,000  | 49,000  | 40,000  | 45,000  |
| Weathercaster | 100,000  | 65,000  | 42,000  | 40,000  | 35,000  |
| Sports Anchor | 80,000  | 50,000  | 35,500  | 30,000  | 26,000  |
| News Reporter | 55,000  | 44,000  | 28,000  | 27,000  | 25,500  |
| MMJ | 50,000  | 35,000  | 27,500  | 25,000  | 30,000  |
| Sports Reporter | 45,000  | 35,000  | 27,000  | 28,000  | 24,000  |
| Assignment Editor | 45,000  | 41,500  | 32,500  | 35,300  | 35,000  |
| News Producer | 44,500  | 35,800  | 27,000  | 26,000  | 41,000  |
| News Writer | 36,000  | 38,000  | 24,000  | \* | \* |
| News Assistant | 32,500  | 22,500  | \*  | 25,000  | \*  |
| Photographer | 45,000  | 34,000  | 29,000  | 28,000  | 34,500  |
| Video Editor | 36,000  | 30,000  | 24,500  | 20,000  | 37,000  |
| Graphics Specialist | 50,000  | 30,000  | 35,000  | \* | \*  |
| Digital Content Manager | 62,000  | 48,000  | 30,000  | 30,000  | 23,000  |
| Social Media Prod/Ed  | 45,000  | 32,000  | 45,000  | 15,000  | \* |
| Web/Mobile Writer/Prod | 40,000  | 35,000  | 27,000  | 29,400  | \* |

\*Insufficient data

The two smallest newsroom groups include a number of newsrooms in the biggest markets, so salary numbers for those group tend to be erratic. “Other commercial” station salaries tended to be higher than most, and non-commercial salaries tend to be lower (as they usually are). Differences by network or region were inconsistent and inconsequential.

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**About the Survey**

The RTDNA/Hofstra University Survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2017 among all 1,683 operating, non-satellite television stations and a random sample of 3,542 radio stations. Valid responses came from 1,333 television stations (79.2%) and 415 radio news directors and general managers representing 1,110 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.