**Is There Discrimination Against Minorities in Local TV News?**

**by Bob Papper**

Maybe. Certainly, the progress women have made hasn’t been duplicated by minorities. When I started doing the survey nearly a quarter century ago, minorities made up about 17% of the local TV news workforce and 9% of the news directors. I didn’t calculate non-Hispanic stations separately, so there’s no way to know how many of those minorities worked at Hispanic stations.

The first year for those additional calculations is 2001, when 24.6% of the TV workforce were minorities along with 8% of the news directors. At non-Hispanic stations, those numbers dropped down to 21.8% and 5.3%.

That’s a huge differential between workforce and news director, and it’s important to note that 2001 was, overall, the best year for minorities in local TV news until this year.

So, in those 17 years, the minority workforce has gone, overall, up and down, from 24.6% to 24.8%; the minority workforce at non-Hispanic stations has gone from 21.8% to 22.7%. Well, at least the numbers are up.

Minority news directors have gone, overall, from 8% to 17.4%; at non-Hispanic stations, it’s moved from 5.3% to 14.3%. That *is* substantial progress.

But while the numbers of women in local TV news are close to parity with the workforce, minority numbers are not. The minority population in the U.S. is about 38%.

But it’s also more complicated than that.

Almost all the jobs in local TV news require a college degree. We can debate whether that *should* be the case, but it is. So what does the college-graduate workforce look like? First, the only ethnic group where more than half the group gets a college degree is Asian American. Overall, just under 35% of the American workforce, ages 25 to 65, have a college degree or higher. Here’s the ethnic breakdown of that, roughly, 35% of the workforce population:

* Caucasian 71.6%
* Asian American 10.8
* African American 9.1
* Hispanic 8.2
* Native American 0.3

Even altering the diversity target to this lower goal still doesn’t get the local TV news workforce to where it should be. Of course, what would really help the situation would be improving the educational opportunities not being offered to so many young people.

What about salary? The only position I can determine salary discrimination for is news director. It’s really the only position with substantial numbers and for which a station only has one.

Overall, minority local TV news directors actually make more money than white local TV news directors. Here are the averages and medians:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Average salary | Median salary |
| Minority TV news directors | $121,100 | $99,000 |
| White TV news directors | 106,400 | 98,500 |

That’s about a 14% difference on average, but median (or typical) salary is almost identical. But that doesn’t tell the whole story. We need to look at the numbers by market size, by staff size, by network affiliation, and so on, because other factors could account for any differential in salary. If, in fact, there’s salary discrimination against any group, then we would expect to find one group winning a disproportionate number of comparable circumstances. But we don’t.

When we look at market size, we find that white news directors make more money in every market size cluster – except median salary in markets 101 to 150. That’s an edge of 9 to 0 with 1 tie.

But when we look at newsroom staff size, minority news directors come out on top 7 to 2 with 1 tie.

Looking at the 18 possible comparisons: overall, market size, staff size, network affiliation … times 2 for median and average salaries … whites win 18 matchups; minorities win 16; and there are 2 ties. That’s close enough to a draw to say, no, there isn’t salary discrimination against anyone – at least not at the news director level.

I cannot run these numbers for radio because there are too few minority news directors to be able to have confidence in the results.

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**About the Survey**

The above data comes from the RTDNA/Hofstra University Survey, which 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.