An introductory note, if you will. 2019 marks my 25th 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

**Radio Salaries Up … Modestly**

**by Bob Papper**

The latest RTDNA/Hofstra University Annual Survey found that local radio news salaries rose by 1.7% from last year. That’s down from last year’s 2.8. Factor in low inflation of 1.9%, and radio salaries almost held even over the last year … with a loss against inflation of 0.2%.

While it was a largely stagnant year overall, some positions fared a lot better than others.

**Radio news salaries – 2019**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Average | Median | Minimum | Maximum |
| News Director | $48,900 | $45,000 | $15,000 | $120,000 |
| News Reporter | 43,300 | 43,500 | 15,000 | 325,000 |
| News Producer | 45,000 | 45,000 | 20,000 | 99,000 |
| News Anchor | 53,100 | 48,000 | 20,000 | 265,000 |
| Sports Anchor | 42,100 | 31,500 | 18,000 | 100,000 |
| Sports Reporter | 27,400 | 28,000 | 25,000 | 35,000 |
| Web Prod/Ed | 44,500 | 45,000 | 12,000 | 82,000 |

# Average and median radio news director, news reporter and news producer salaries all went up. But sports anchor salaries were mixed (the average was up but the median fell) and news anchor and web producer/editor both dropped.

# Sports reporters made a comeback this year. After not finding enough last year to report the salaries, there were just enough reported to be listed overall. Barely.

# Five and ten year median radio news salary comparisons 2019 to 2014 to 2009

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2019 | 2014 | 5-Year Percentage Change | 2009 | 10-Year Percentage Change |
| INFLATION |  |  | +7.5% |  | +19% |
| All radio news |  |  | +13.8 |  | +62.1 |
| News Director | $45,000 | $42,000 | +7.1 | $31,000 | +45.2 |
| News Reporter | 43,500 | 35,000 | +24.3 | 25,000 | +74 |
| News Producer | 45,000 | 39,000 | +15.4 | 26,000 | +93.1 |
| News Anchor | 48,000 | 45,000 | +6.7 | 30,000 | +60 |
| Sports Anchor | 31,500 | \* | na | \* | na |
| Web editor/producer | 45,000 | 38,000 | +18.4 | \* | na |

Other than news director and anchor, five-year comparisons look strong, with overall salary growth well ahead of inflation. Aided by the disastrous year of 2009, the 10-year comparison is strong across the board. This is only the second year in a row where overall radio news salaries have exceeded inflation in a five-year comparison. At least for quite a few years. Ten-year comparisons have been stronger, but that’s heavily based on some very low salaries a decade ago.

**Median radio news salaries by market size – 2019**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Major | Large | Medium | Small |
| News Director | $80,000 | $52,000 | $40,000 | $35,000 |
| News Reporter | 50,000 | 42,000 | 36,000 | 30,000 |
| News Producer | 50,000 | 37,000 | 26,000 | 20,000 |
| News Anchor | 60,000 | 44,000 | 41,000 | 29,000 |
| Sports Anchor | 60,000 | 40,500 | 30,000 | 27,500 |
| Sports Reporter | \* | \* | 28,000 | 25,000 |
| Web Prod/Ed | 49,000 | 42,400 | 42,500 | 32,500 |

\*Insufficient data

If you were a news director, news anchor or web producer, this was a much better year in medium and small markets than in large and major ones. The opposite was true if you were a news producer. If you were a news reporter, it was a good year no matter where you were. News reporters were the only position to move up across the board.

Mostly, salaries go up as market size goes up. No surprise there. They also tend to go up as staff size increases, but much of that is a function of market size as well. Number of stations in a local group has no consistent effect on salaries, and region makes no consistent difference, either.

What makes a huge difference in pay is commercial radio versus non-commercial. Overall, non-commercial salaries are 37.4% higher than commercial ones. But that’s not a fair comparison. The vast majority of non-commercial stations in the Survey are in large and major markets. So I compared commercial and non-commercial salaries only in the two largest market groups:

**Commercial and non-commercial radio salaries in large and major markets - 2019**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Commercial average | Non-commercial average | Commercial median | Non-commercial median |
| News Director | $46,300 | $69,600 | $40,000 | $68,500 |
| News Reporter | 48,700 | 48,200 | 34,000 | 47,000 |
| News Producer | 39,300 | 47,800 | 36,000 | 45,300 |
| News Anchor | 66,400 | 56,200 | 60,000 | 55,000 |
| Sports Anchor | 58,500 | \* | 55,000 | \* |
| Sports Reporter | \* | \* | \* | \* |
| Web Editor/Producer | 46,700 | 47,500 | 43,500 | 48,000 |

Using median (or more typical) salaries, non-commercial radio salaries come out 23.6% higher than commercial radio salaries – just looking at comparable market sizes.

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.

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**About the Survey**

The RTDNA/Hofstra University Survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2018 among all 1,685 operating, non-satellite television stations and a random sample of 3,481 radio stations. Valid responses came from 1,310 television stations (77.7%) and 645 radio news directors and general managers representing 1,938 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.