



Radio Newsrooms Are More Diverse Than Ever

By Bob Papper with Keren Henderson

Nov. 16, 2022 – The latest RTDNA/Newhouse School at Syracuse University Survey found that the minority workforce in radio rose 2 points from last year to 17.8%. That’s the highest it’s been in the 28 years we’ve conducted the survey ... and surpasses the previous high in 1998, when it hit 16%. And that was before the DC Circuit Court of Appeals struck down the FCC’s EEO guidelines in Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod v. FCC.

Of course, the big, long-term picture for minorities in local radio news shows an industry well behind an ever-increasing minority population in the U.S.

Minority population v. minority broadcast workforce 1990 - 2022

	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2022
Minority Population in U.S.	25.9%	27.9%	28.6%	32.8%	34.9%	37.4%	39.6%	39.9%*
Minority Radio Workforce	10.8	14.7	10.0	7.9	5.0	9.8	15.4	17.8

*projected

Radio news work force - 1995 - 2022

	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2021	2022
Caucasian	85.3%	90%	92.1%	95.0%	90.2%	84.6%	84.2%	82.2%
African American	5.7	5	0.7	2.9	4.4	6.8	6.7	5.3
Hispanic/Latino	7.5	3	6.0	0.7	2.7	5	5.6	7.4
Asian American	0.6	1	0.7	0.4	1.7	3.1	2.6	4
Native American	1.0	1	0.5	1.1	1	0.5	0.9	1.1

All groups except African American are up from a year ago.

The commercial radio news workforce is 92.1% White, compared to 75.4% White at non-commercial radio.

Radio men vs. women

In radio news, historically, men have outnumbered women by about 50%. That trend has continued, with 60.5% men this year, compared to 39.5% women. That's identical to last year. The difference is almost entirely among Whites, where the percentage is 63% men versus 37% women. That's just a point closer than a year ago. With Hispanics, it's 57% men and 43% women; African American women outnumber men, 51.8% to 48.2%; Asian American women way outnumber the men, 65.1% to 34.9%; and Native American men and women are exactly even at 50% each.

Radio news directors

The percentage of radio news directors of color went up more than two and a half points this year to 9.9%.

Radio news directors – 1995 - 2022

	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2021	2022
Caucasian	91.4%	94%	89%	92.9%	94.9%	92.9%	92.8%	90.1%
African American	5.4	3	0.0	2.7	1.7	2.7	3.2	3.5
Hispanic/Latino	2.4	2	8.8	2.7	1.7	2.5	3	4.4
Asian American	0	0	0	0.9	0	0.5	0.5	1.5
Native American	0.8	1	2.2	0.9	1.7	1.4	0.5	0.6

For the first time I can recall, every single group of color went up from the year before. Hispanic/Latino rose the most although Asian American had the biggest percentage increase. As usual, the South had the highest percentage of minority news directors, but – not as usual – the Northeast lagged behind all other areas.

Minorities in local radio news – 2022

	News Staffs With Minorities	Minority News Directors	Minorities as Percentage of Work Force
All Radio	27.4%	9.9%	17.8%
Market size:			
Major Market	66.7	12.8	24.5
Large Market	36.5	16.1	20.8
Medium Market	21.1	5.3	10.6
Small Market	16.7	11	10.9
Commercial	12.1	7.2	7.9
Non-commercial	63.9	15.9	24.6

The percentage of news staffs with minorities rose 5 points in the last year with every market size going up. As a percentage of the workforce, minorities rose 2 points from a year ago with all markets except major ones moving up at least a little. But while the percentage of minorities at non-commercial stations rose by almost 3 points, the percentage at commercial stations fell by 0.4.

The bottom line here is that if it weren't for non-commercial stations, American radio news would still look blindingly White.

Radio women

Women in local radio news – 2022

	News Staffs With Women	Women News Directors	Women as Percentage of Work Force
All Radio	53%	24.3%	39.5%
Market size:			
Major Market	90	41	49.9
Large Market	69.2	37.1	40.9
Medium Market	45.9	16.5	30.6
Small Market	40	20.4	30.3
Commercial	40.4	17.4	23.9
Non-commercial	83.1	39.3	50.2

Women news directors are down a point from last year – which was down three and a half points from the year before. Their percentage went up in major and large markets but down in medium and small markets. Historically, women news directors have been much more common at non-commercial stations than commercial ones. Two years ago, the gap narrowed considerably, but it's widened again over the last two years – now by over 20 points. Geographically, women news directors are most likely to be found in the West and then the Northeast.

News staffs with women rose four and a half points while the percentage of women in the workforce remained exactly the same at 39.5%. As usual, the bigger the market and the bigger the newsroom, the more likely that women will be part of it. Especially at non-commercial stations.

Radio general managers

Radio general managers – 2022

	Percent Caucasian	Percent Minority	Percent Men	Percent Women
All Radio	92.3%	7.7%	74.9%	25.1%

The percentage of minority radio general managers rose by 0.7 again this year. They were more than twice as likely to be in major markets and – not coincidentally – at non-commercial stations than anywhere else, and a lot less likely in the Midwest – as usual.

African American GMs came in at 2.6% (down 0.4 from last year) and now behind Hispanic/Latino at 3.4% (up 0.4 from last year). Native American doubled to 1.2% and Asian American edged up 0.1 to 0.5%.

After moving up 3 points a year ago, women general managers lost 1.3 this year. Market size, staff size, geography and commercial/non-commercial made no consistent difference in the numbers.

LGBTQ+

A new question in the Survey this year asked whether “you or any members of the news staff were members of the LGBTQ+ community.” Overall, 15% said yes, but that doesn’t translate into 15% of the staff being members of LGBTQ+; it means that 15% of stations have one or more members of the LGBTQ+ community. LGBTQ+ is generally understood to include lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer or questioning. The plus represents other sexual identities.

Major markets, at 34% and non-commercial stations, at 38%, led the way saying that they had LGBTQ+ members on the staff. The bigger the staff, the more likely the positive response (no surprise there). Stations in the Northeast and West were both about 20% yes, with stations in the South at just 14% and stations in the Midwest coming in at 11%. Overall, 53% of news directors and general manager said no, there were no LGBTQ+ staff members, and 32% said they didn’t know.

Major markets are those with 1 million or more listeners. Large markets are from 250,000 to 1 million. Medium markets are 50,000 to 250,000. Small markets are fewer than 50,000.

For more information

Alliance for Women in Media (AWM)
202-750-3664
<https://allwomeninmedia.org>

Asian American Journalists Association (AAJA)
Phone: (202) 729-8383
www.aaja.org

The Association for Women in Communication (AWC)
Phone: (417) 409-2492
www.womcom.org

Emma L. Bowen Foundation for Minority Interests in Media
www.emmabowenfoundation.com/

International Women's Media Foundation
(202) 496-1992
www.iwmf.org

National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ)
Phone: (301) 405-0248
www.nabjonline.org

National Association of Hispanic Journalists (NAHJ)
www.nahj.org

The Association of LGBTQ Journalists
Phone: (202) 588-9888
www.nlqja.org

Native American Journalists Association (NAJA)
www.naja.com

Bob Papper is Adjunct Professor of Broadcast and Digital Journalism at Syracuse University and has worked extensively in radio and TV news.

Keren Henderson is Associate Professor of Broadcast and Digital Journalism at Syracuse University.

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About the Survey

The RTDNA/Newhouse School at Syracuse University Survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2021 among all 1,780 operating, non-satellite television stations and a random sample of 3,379 radio stations. Valid responses came from as many as 1,336 television stations (75.1%) and 765 radio news directors and general managers representing 2,310 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.