



Journalism Jobs Are Declining and Often Don't Pay Well, Georgetown CEW Report Says

Communication and journalism majors earn a median of \$39,700 net of debt three years after graduation, ranking 14th out of 34 majors

(Washington, DC, December 8, 2022) As the newspaper industry faces ongoing disruption, the number of journalism jobs will continue to decline over the next decade. More than one-third of journalism jobs will be lost between 2002 and 2031, according to a report from the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce (CEW). *Stop the Presses: Journalism Employment and the Economic Value of 850 Journalism and Communication Programs* explores the transformation of the journalism profession and ranks journalism and communications programs at 850 institutions by their payoff for graduates in the labor market.

Projected job losses for journalists are the result of decades of decline, primarily due to newspaper downsizing and closures. Since the 1980s, average employment by newspaper publishers has fallen by 63%. In recent decades, by contrast, average employment increased by more than six times in internet publishing, broadcasting, and web search portals, and by nearly 9% in broadcasting (except internet). However, these gains were not sufficient to offset job losses at newspapers. As the number of available jobs dwindles, reporters and editors face a competitive job market, with just 15% of journalism majors becoming editors or news analysts, reporters, and correspondents early in their careers.

The average profile of journalists is changing too. Today's journalists are more likely to be women and less likely to be White, though their changing demographics have not kept pace with the changing composition of the US workforce. Editors and news analysts, reporters, and correspondents employed in newspaper publishing are more highly educated than in the past, with 90% or more holding a bachelor's degree or higher. Journalists are also now more likely to be reporters than editors: there were three reporters for every two editors in the 2010s, compared to two editors for every reporter in the 1980s.

"Our democracy relies on a free and robust press, but that is at risk as the newspaper industry contracts. The recent layoffs raise the urgency of this issue," lead report author and CEW Director Anthony P. Carnevale said. "With far fewer available jobs, new journalists must navigate the rising cost of higher education and relatively low future earnings, which can make paying off debt difficult."

At the bachelor's and master's degree levels, journalism and communication majors have moderate financial payoffs compared to other majors. Bachelor's degree holders in this field earn a median of \$39,700 net of student-loan debt payments three years after graduation, ranking 14th out of 34 major groups. For master's degree holders, financial returns for these majors rise to \$49,300 three years after graduation, ranking 12th out of 26 master's degree major groups.

At the bachelor's degree level, median earnings net of debt are highest three years after graduation for communication and media studies majors who graduated from Cornell University (\$63,600); George Washington University (\$52,800) for journalism majors; Georgia Institute of Technology-Main Campus

(\$66,000) for radio, television, and digital communication majors; and California Lutheran University (\$50,400) for other communication, journalism, and related programs.

“The economic value of a bachelor’s degree in communication and journalism is not as high as for STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), health, or business, but it still exceeds the financial returns from degrees in education, history, psychology, or English,” report author and CEW Strategic Communications Specialist Emma Wenzinger said. “For master’s degree students, however, the payoff of a degree in journalism is often questionable.”

At the master’s degree level, median earnings net of debt are highest three years after graduation for communication and media studies majors who studied at Columbia University (\$87,600); the University of Georgia and University of Missouri-Columbia (both \$52,800) for journalism majors; the University of Washington-Seattle Campus (\$72,000) for radio, television, and digital communication majors; and Northwestern University (\$80,400) for other communication, journalism, and related majors.

The University of Southern California, Northwestern University, New York University, and the University of Texas at Austin all have programs in journalism or radio, television, and digital communication that leave students with lower median earnings net of debt at the master’s degree level than at the bachelor’s degree level. By contrast, communication and media studies majors generally see an earnings boost from a master’s degree over a bachelor’s degree.

Among bachelor’s degree holders in communication and journalism, women’s median earnings are the same or higher than men’s three years after graduation. In fact, women’s median earnings are higher than men’s for 64% of journalism programs; 58% of communication and media studies programs; and 60% of radio, television, and digital communication programs.

Pell Grant recipients in journalism and communication majors generally have lower earnings than their peers. Students who received Pell Grants earn a median of more than \$40,000 three years after graduation in less than 40% of programs in each communication and journalism major. For Pell Grant recipients, journalism is the major with the highest share of programs that lead to median earnings above \$40,000 three years after graduation, at 37%, while just 12% of radio, television, and digital communication programs lead to median earnings above \$40,000.

Journalism majors represent less than 1% of bachelor’s or master’s degrees awarded each year, and the number of each type of degree awarded has been in decline since the early 2010s. In 2020, just 12,000 bachelor’s degrees and 1,400 master’s degrees were awarded in journalism, representing 25% and 30% fewer graduates, respectively, than at their peaks.

Visit cew.georgetown.edu/journalism to view a sortable table of more than 850 journalism and communication programs ranked by metrics including earnings, debt payments, and earnings net of debt payments.

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