Methodology

This study used digital news articles to compile information on layoffs occurring at the highest-circulation U.S. daily newspapers and highest-traffic digital-native news outlets in 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020.

Selecting news outlets

For each year, we examined daily newspapers and digital-native news sites with the largest audience reach in the country.

Newspapers: The daily newspapers were selected based on circulation data provided by the Alliance for Audited Media (AAM) and include all papers whose total Sunday circulations (print and digital combined) were over 50,000 in the fourth quarter of each year analyzed. The Wall Street Journal was then added to the list as it is one of the largest papers in the U.S. that does not report Sunday circulation to the AAM. Since newspaper audience data for 2020 was not yet available at the time this analysis was conducted, the same list of newspapers in 2019 was used for 2020.

In 2019, 86 newspapers fell into this category:

The Advocate (Louisiana)       New York Daily News
Akron Beacon Journal           New York Post
Albuquerque Journal            The New York Times
Arizona Daily Star             The News & Observer (North Carolina)
The Arizona Republic            Newsday
Arkansas Democrat-Gazette      The Oklahoman
Asbury Park Press              Omaha World-Herald
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution The Orange County Register
Austin American-Statesman      The Oregonian
The Baltimore Sun              Orlando Sentinel
The Birmingham News            The Palm Beach Post
The Blade (Toledo)             The Patriot-News (Pennsylvania)
The Boston Globe               The Philadelphia Inquirer
Boston Herald                  Pioneer Press
The Buffalo News               The Plain Dealer
The Charlotte Observer         The Post and Courier (South Carolina)
Chicago Sun-Times              The Post-Standard (NewYork)
In 2018, 97 newspapers fell into this category:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Advocate (Louisiana)</th>
<th>The Atlanta Journal-Constitution</th>
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<tr>
<td>Akron Beacon Journal</td>
<td>Austin American-Statesman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Albuquerque Journal</td>
<td>The Baltimore Sun</td>
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<td>Arizona Daily Star</td>
<td>The Birmingham News</td>
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<td>The Arizona Republic</td>
<td>The Boston Globe</td>
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<td>Arkansas Democrat-Gazette</td>
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<td>Asbury Park Press</td>
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The Times (Indiana)
The Times-Picayune
The Virginian-Pilot
The Wall Street Journal
The Washington Post

Times Union (New York)
Tribune-Review (Pennsylvania)
Tulsa World
USA Today
Wisconsin State Journal

In 2017, 110 newspapers fell into this category:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Advocate (Louisiana)</th>
<th>Dayton Daily News</th>
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<tr>
<td>Akron Beacon Journal</td>
<td>The Daytona Beach News-Journal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Albuquerque Journal</td>
<td>The Denver Post</td>
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<td>Arizona Daily Star</td>
<td>The Des Moines Register</td>
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<td>The Arizona Republic</td>
<td>Detroit Free Press</td>
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<td>Arkansas Democrat-Gazette</td>
<td>El Nuevo Dia</td>
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<td>Asbury Park Press</td>
<td>The Florida Times-Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Atlanta Journal-Constitution</td>
<td>The Fresno Bee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Austin American-Statesman</td>
<td>The Gazette (Colorado)</td>
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<td>The Baltimore Sun</td>
<td>The Grand Rapids Press</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Birmingham News</td>
<td>Hartford Courant</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Blade (Ohio)</td>
<td>Honolulu Star-Adviser</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Boston Globe</td>
<td>Houston Chronicle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boston Herald</td>
<td>The Indianapolis Star</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Buffalo News</td>
<td>The Journal Gazette/The News-Sentinel (Indiana)</td>
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<td>The Canton Repository</td>
<td>The Journal News (New York)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Charlotte Observer</td>
<td>Journal Star (Illinois)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charlotte Sun</td>
<td>The Kansas City Star</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chattanooga Times Free Press</td>
<td>Knoxville News Sentinel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chicago Sun-Times</td>
<td>Las Vegas Review-Journal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chicago Tribune</td>
<td>Lexington Herald-Leader</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Cincinnati Enquirer</td>
<td>Lincoln Journal Star</td>
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<td>The Columbus Dispatch</td>
<td>LNP</td>
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<td>The Commercial Appeal</td>
<td>Los Angeles Times</td>
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<td>The Courier Journal</td>
<td>The Mercury News</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Daily Gazette (New York)</td>
<td>Miami Herald/El Nuevo Herald</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daily Herald (Illinois)</td>
<td>Milwaukee Journal Sentinel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily News (New York)</td>
<td>The Morning Call</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Press (Virginia)</td>
<td>New York Post</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Dallas Morning News</td>
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</table>
The New York Times
The News & Observer
The News Journal (Delaware)
The News Tribune (Washington)
The News-Press (Florida)
Newsday
The Oklahoman
Omaha World-Herald
The Orange County Register
The Oregonian
Orlando Sentinel
The Palm Beach Post
The Patriot-News (Pennsylvania)
The Philadelphia Inquirer
Pioneer Press
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
The Plain Dealer
The Post and Courier (South Carolina)
The Post-Standard (New York)
The Press Democrat (California)
The Press-Enterprise (California)
The Providence Journal
Reading Eagle
The Record (New Jersey)
The Republican (Massachusetts)
Richmond Times-Dispatch
Rochester Democrat and Chronicle
The Sacramento Bee
San Antonio Express-News
The San Diego Union-Tribune
Sarasota Herald-Tribune
The Seattle Times
South Florida Sun-Sentinel
The Spokesman-Review
The Star-Ledger
Star Tribune
Star-Telegram
The State (South Carolina)
St. Louis Post-Dispatch
The Tennessean
The Times (Indiana)
The Times-Picayune
The Virginian-Pilot
The Wall Street Journal
The Washington Post
The Wichita Eagle
Times Union
Tribune-Review (Pennsylvania)
Tulsa World
USA Today
Wisconsin State Journal

Digital-native news outlets: Researchers used the list of digital-native news outlets originally created for Pew Research Center’s research on the state of the news media for the Digital News sector, as follows. First, all domains from 11 Comscore categories (Business to Business, Directories/Resources, Entertainment, Games, Lifestyles, Multi-Category, News/Information, Services, Social Media, Sports and Technology) with at least 10 million average monthly unique digital visitors in the fourth quarter of the year were identified. Since digital audience data for 2020 was not yet available at the time this analysis was conducted, the same list of digital-native news outlets in 2019 was used for 2020. From that set of entities, they then selected digital-native news outlets using the following criteria:
1. Must be “born on the web,” i.e., not the website of a legacy news brand (though it may be owned by a legacy media company).

2. It is a publisher of original content about news, defined as current events affecting public life (can include both original reporting and commentary/analysis). Sites are judged by an assessment of the material appearing on their homepage. A review of top stories on the home page must render some evidence of original reporting, such as interviews, eyewitness accounts or referral to source documents, by a dedicated reporter/editorial staff. Sites are also judged as news publishers if they self-describe as an organization that produces news, either in the subject headers/navigation bar and/or in their “about” or advertising section through usage of terms like “news,” “journalism,” “covering” or “informing.”

3. It is not entirely focused on reviews, advice, recipes or unedited raw data.

4. It is not primarily a user-generated or aggregated content platform (such as Medium, Reddit or Wikipedia). Branded content such as NBA.com was also excluded.

The following 45 entities met these criteria in 2019:

- 247SPORTS.COM
- BGR.COM
- BLEACHERREPORT.COM
- BUSINESSINSIDER.COM
- BUSTLE.COM
- BUZZFEED.COM
- CNET.COM
- COMICBOOK.COM
- DIGITALTRENDS.COM
- EATER.COM
- ELITEDAILY.COM
- GAMESPOT.COM
- GIZOMO.COM
- HOLLYWOODLIFE.COM
- HUFFPOST.COM
- IGN.COM
- INVERSE.COM
- INVESTOPEDIA.COM
- JALOPNIK.COM
- MASHABLE.COM
- MAXPREPS.COM
- MAXPREPS.COM
- MEDICALNEWSTODAY.COM
- PATCH.COM
- PINKNEWS.CO.UK
- POLITICO.COM
- POLYGON.COM
- POPCULTURE.COM
- POPSUGAR.COM
- QZ.COM
- REFINERY29.COM
- SCARYMOMMY.COM
- SCREENRANT.COM
- SLATE.COM
- SNOPES.COM
- TECHRADAR.COM
- THEDAILYBEAST.COM
- THEVERGE.COM
- TMZ.COM
The following 37 entities met these criteria in 2018:

247SPORTS.COM INSIDER.COM
90MIN.COM INVESTOPEDIA.COM
BGR.COM MARKETWATCH.COM
BLEACHERREPORT.COM MASHABLE.COM
BUSINESSINSIDER.COM MAXPREPS.COM
BUSTLE.COM POLITICO.COM
BUZZFEED.COM POLYGON.COM
BUZZFEEDNEWS.COM* REFINERY29.COM
CNET.COM SBNATION.COM
COMICBOOK.COM SLATE.COM
DEADSPIN.COM TECHRADAR.COM
DIGITALTRENDS.COM THEDAILYBEAST.COM
EATER.COM THEROOT.COM
ELITEDIARY.COM THEVERGE.COM
ENGADGET.COM THRILLIST.COM
GIZMODO.COM TMZ.COM
HOLLYWOODLIFE.COM UPROXX.COM
HUFFINGTONPOST.COM VOX.COM
IGN.COM

*Note: For Buzzfeednews.com researchers did not perform a separate search since any layoffs would have been captured in searches for Buzzfeed.com. For the analysis, these two entities were considered one.

The following 35 entities met these criteria in 2017 (see methodology for how these entities were selected):
Overlap: When both the 2017 and 2018 groups are combined, the analysis included 156 outlets (excluding duplicates). Overall, 78% of all news outlets studied appeared in both years, including 85% of newspapers and 61% of digital-native news sites.

Searching for news articles citing layoffs

Researchers then sought to identify any publicly reported instances of layoffs at these news outlets. A number of steps were taken when searching for news articles mentioning layoffs. A round of searches was first conducted on Google using the following criteria:

- For each news outlet, researchers used the following search query: the name of the news outlet in quotations (e.g., “Chicago Tribune”) and “~layoff” – a Google Search feature that captures variations of the word “layoff” and related terms, including “lay off”, “layoffs”, “lay-offs”, “laid off”, “laid-off”, and “job cuts”.
- Articles were filtered by publication date, ranging from Jan. 1 to Dec. 31 of each year. However, searches were conducted by fiscal quarters to better ensure that every layoff that occurred in the time period was identified.
- Researchers performed searches in Incognito mode on Google Chrome so that previous browser activity did not bias search results.
The search for articles was limited to the first page of results.

**Identifying newsroom layoffs**

Researchers were careful to include only layoffs directly impacting the news organizations’ employees. For example, layoffs at a parent or holding company were excluded unless the announcement or coverage specified that the layoffs affected a given news outlet studied. Layoffs in an organization’s international branch or newsroom were included unless they affected a different product within the news organization. This was done to guarantee that the analysis did not overcount layoffs, since many outlets share the same parent company. Cuts to vacant positions and terminations of employees not connected to layoffs were also excluded.

The news articles examined did not always mention the kinds of positions being eliminated, so the layoffs analyzed here may include the full range of employees at newspapers and digital-native news outlets, rather than just newsroom employees. Additionally, there may have been other reasons for the reported layoffs not covered by media accounts, and the results of the analysis are limited to the information provided by the news articles examined.

Once all instances of layoffs were recorded, researchers determined the number of people each round of layoffs affected. Many news articles gave an exact number of people who were laid off, but several gave approximations or ranges, while some gave no indication at all.

When a news article cited a range of laid-off staff, the stated minimum and maximum were recorded. For articles that provided an exact number or estimate of laid-off staff, the stated number was recorded as both the minimum and maximum. When only the maximum was mentioned (e.g., “up to 10”), the stated maximum was used and one was recorded as the minimum. Conversely, when only the minimum was mentioned (e.g., “at least 10”), the stated number was used as both the minimum and maximum. This was done to be as conservative as possible. The study relied on the estimated maximum number of layoffs for any individual outlet.