Methodology

This Pew Research Center 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, 2020, and 2021.

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 average Sunday circulations (print and digital combined) were over 50,000 in the fourth quarters of 2017-2019, and the third quarter of 2021.¹ 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 of the 2020 analysis, the same list of newspapers in 2019 was used for 2020.

¹ Fourth quarter circulation data was not available in AAM at the time the 2021 analysis was conducted.
In 2021, 73 newspapers fell into this category:

Akron Beacon Journal
Albuquerque Journal
The Arizona Republic
Arkansas Democrat-Gazette
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution
Austin American-Statesman
The Baltimore Sun
The Birmingham News
The Boston Globe
Boston Herald
The Buffalo News
The Charlotte Observer
Chicago Sun-Times
Chicago Tribune
The Cincinnati Enquirer
The Columbus Dispatch
The Courier Journal (Kentucky)
Daily Herald (Illinois)
The Dallas Morning News
Dayton Daily News
Democrat and Chronicle (New York)
The Denver Post
The Des Moines Register
Detroit Free Press
El Nuevo Dia (Puerto Rico)
Fort Worth Star-Telegram
The Grand Rapids Press
Hartford Courant
Honolulu Star-Advertiser
Houston Chronicle
The Indianapolis Star
The Kansas City Star
Las Vegas Review-Journal
Los Angeles Times
The Mercury News (California)
Miami Herald/El Nuevo Herald
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
The Morning Call
New York Daily News
New York Post
The New York Times
The News & Observer (North Carolina)
Newsday
The Oklahoman
Omaha World-Herald
The Orange County Register
The Oregonian
Orlando Sentinel
The Palm Beach Post
The Philadelphia Inquirer
The Plain Dealer
The Press Democrat (California)
Portland Press Herald
The Post-Standard (New York)
Richmond Times-Dispatch
The Sacramento Bee
San Antonio Express-News
The San Diego Union-Tribune
The San Francisco Chronicle
The Seattle Times
South Florida Sun-Sentinel
The Spokesman-Review (Washington)
The Star-Ledger (New Jersey)
Star Tribune (Minnesota)
St. Louis Post-Dispatch
St. Paul Pioneer Press
Tampa Bay Times
The Virginian-Pilot
The Wall Street Journal
The Washington Post
Times Union (New York)
USA Today
Wisconsin State Journal
In 2019, 86 newspapers fell into this category:

The Advocate (Louisiana)  
Akron Beacon Journal  
Albuquerque Journal  
Arizona Daily Star  
The Arizona Republic  
Arkansas Democrat-Gazette  
Asbury Park Press  
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution  
Austin American-Statesman  
The Baltimore Sun  
The Birmingham News  
The Blade (Toledo)  
The Boston Globe  
Boston Herald  
The Buffalo News  
The Charlotte Observer  
Chicago Sun-Times  
Chicago Tribune  
The Cincinnati Enquirer  
The Columbus Dispatch  
The Courier Journal (Kentucky)  
The Daily Herald (Illinois)  
The Daily Press (Virginia)  
The Dallas Morning News  
The Dayton Daily News  
The Democrat and Chronicle (New York)  
The Denver Post  
The Des Moines Register  
The Detroit Free Press  
The Fort Worth Star-Telegram  
The Fresno Bee  
The Grand Rapids Press  
The Hartford Courant  
The Honolulu Star-Advertiser  
The Indianapolis Star  
The Journal Gazette/News-Sentinel (Indiana)  

New York Daily News  
New York Post  
The New York Times  
The News & Observer (North Carolina)  
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  
The Plain Dealer  
The Post and Courier (South Carolina)  
The Post-Standard (New York)  
The Providence Journal  
Reading Eagle  
The Record (New Jersey)  
The Republican (Massachusetts)  
Richmond Times-Dispatch  
The Sacramento Bee  
San Antonio Express-News  
The San Diego Union-Tribune  
The San Francisco Chronicle  
The Seattle Times  
South Florida Sun Sentinel  
The Spokesman-Review (Washington)  
The Star-Ledger (New Jersey)  
Star Tribune (Minnesota)  
St. Louis Post-Dispatch  
Tampa Bay Times  
The Tennessean  
The Times (Indiana)  
The Virginian-Pilot
The Kansas City Star
Las Vegas Review-Journal
Lexington Herald-Leader
LNP (Pennsylvania)
Los Angeles Times
The Mercury News (California)
Miami Herald/El Nuevo Herald
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
The Morning Call

The Wall Street Journal
The Washington Post
Times Union (New York)
USA Today
Wisconsin State Journal
In 2018, 97 newspapers fell into this category:

The Advocate (Louisiana)  
Akron Beacon Journal  
Albuquerque Journal  
Arizona Daily Star  
The Arizona Republic  
Arkansas Democrat-Gazette  
Asbury Park Press  
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution  
Austin American-Statesman  
The Baltimore Sun  
The Birmingham News  
The Boston Globe  
Boston Herald  
The Buffalo News  
The Charlotte Observer  
Charlotte Sun (Florida)  
Chicago Sun-Times  
Chicago Tribune  
The Cincinnati Enquirer  
The Columbus Dispatch  
The Commercial Appeal (Tennessee)  
The Courier Journal (Kentucky)  
Daily Herald (Illinois)  
Daily News (New York)  
Daily Press (Virginia)  
The Dallas Morning News  
Dayton Daily News  
The Denver Post  
The Des Moines Register  
Detroit Free Press  
El Nuevo Día (Puerto Rico)  
The Florida Times-Union  
Fort Worth Star-Telegram  
The Fresno Bee  
The Grand Rapids Press  
Honolulu Star-Advertiser  
New York Post  
The New York Times  
The News & Observer (North Carolina)  
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 Providence Journal  
Reading Eagle  
The Record (New Jersey)  
The Republican (Massachusetts)  
Richmond Times-Dispatch  
Democrat and Chronicle (New York)  
The Sacramento Bee  
San Antonio Express-News  
The San Diego Union-Tribune  
The San Francisco Chronicle  
Sarasota Herald-Tribune  
The Seattle Times  
The Spokesman-Review (Washington)  
The Star-Ledger (New Jersey)  
Star Tribune (Minnesota)  
The State (South Carolina)  
St. Louis Post-Dispatch
Houston Chronicle
The Indianapolis Star
The Journal Gazette/News-Sentinel (Indiana)
The Kansas City Star
Knoxville News Sentinel
Las Vegas Review-Journal
Lexington Herald-Leader
Lincoln Journal Star
LNP (Pennsylvania)
Los Angeles Times
The Mercury News (California)
Miami Herald/El Nuevo Herald
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Tampa Bay Times
The Tennessean
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:

- The Advocate (Louisiana)
- Akron Beacon Journal
- Albuquerque Journal
- Arizona Daily Star
- The Arizona Republic
- Arkansas Democrat-Gazette
- Asbury Park Press
- The Atlanta Journal-Constitution
- Austin American-Statesman
- The Baltimore Sun
- The Birmingham News
- The Blade (Ohio)
- The Boston Globe
- Boston Herald
- The Buffalo News
- The Canton Repository
- The Charlotte Observer
- Charlotte Sun
- Chattanooga Times Free Press
- Chicago Sun-Times
- Chicago Tribune
- The Cincinnati Enquirer
- The Columbus Dispatch
- The Commercial Appeal
- The Courier Journal
- The Daily Gazette (New York)
- Daily Herald (Illinois)
- Daily News (New York)
- Daily Press (Virginia)
- The Dallas Morning News
- Dayton Daily News
- The Daytona Beach News-Journal
- The Denver Post
- The Des Moines Register
- Detroit Free Press
- El Nuevo Día
- Miami Herald/El Nuevo Herald
- Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
- The Morning Call
- New York Post
- 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
| The Florida Times-Union                     | South Florida Sun-Sentinel                     |
| The Fresno Bee                            | The Spokesman-Review                           |
| The Gazette (Colorado)                    | The Star-Ledger                                 |
| The Grand Rapids Press                    | Star Tribune                                    |
| Hartford Courant                          | Star-Telegram                                    |
| Honolulu Star-Advertiser                  | The State (South Carolina)                       |
| Houston Chronicle                         | St. Louis Post-Dispatch                          |
| The Indianapolis Star                     | The Tennessean                                   |
| The Journal Gazette/The News-Sentinel     | The Times (Indiana)                              |
| The Journal News (New York)               | The Times-Picayune                               |
| Journal Star (Illinois)                   | The Virginian-Pilot                              |
| The Kansas City Star                      | The Wall Street Journal                          |
| Knoxville News Sentinel                   | The Washington Post                              |
| Las Vegas Review-Journal                  | The Wichita Eagle                                |
| Lexington Herald-Leader                   | Times Union                                      |
| Lincoln Journal Star                      | Tribune-Review(Pennsylvania)                     |
| LNP                                       | Tulsa World                                      |
| Los Angeles Times                         | USA Today                                        |
| The Mercury News                          | Wisconsin State Journal                          |
Digital-native news outlets: Researchers used the list of digital-native news outlets originally created for Pew Research Center’s examination of 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 of the 2020 analysis, the same list of digital-native news outlets in 2019 was used for 2020. From that set of entities, Center researchers 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 34 entities met these criteria in 2021*:

247SPORTS.COM  IG.COM
ATLANTABLACKSTAR.COM INVERSE.COM
AXIOS.COM INVESTOPEDIA.COM
BGR.COM LIVESCIENCE.COM
BLEACHERREPORT.COM MARKETWATCH.COM
BUSINESSINSIDER.COM/INSIDER.COM PATCH.COM
BUSTLE.COM POLITICO.COM
BUZZFEED.COM/BUZZFEEDNEWS.COM POPCULTURE.COM
CNET.COM POPSUGAR.COM
COMICBOOK.COM SCREENRANT.COM
DIGITALTRENDS.COM STYLECASTER.COM
EATER.COM TECHRADAR.COM
ELITEDAILY.COM THEDAILYBEAST.COM
FASTCOMPANY.COM THEVERGE.COM
GAMESPOT.COM TMZ.COM
HOLLYWOODLIFE.COM TOMSGUIDE.COM
HUFFPOST.COM VOX.COM

* Note: For the analysis, Buzzfeed.com and Buzzfeednews.com were considered one entity, as were BusinessInsider.com and Insider.com.
The following 45 entities met these criteria in 2019:

247SPORTS.COM
BGR.COM
BLEACHERREPORT.COM
BUSINESSINSIDER.COM
BUSTLE.COM
BUZZFEED.COM
BUZZFEEDNEWS.COM
CNET.COM
COMICBOOK.COM
DIGITALTRENDS.COM
EATER.COM
ELITEDAILY.COM
GAMESPOT.COM
GIZMODO.COM
HOLLYWOODLIFE.COM
HUFFPOST.COM
IGN.COM
INVERSE.COM
INVESTOPEDIA.COM
JALOPNIK.COM
LIFEHACKER.COM
LIVESCIENCE.COM
LOOPER.COM
MARKETWATCH.COM
MASHABLE.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
TOMSGUIDE.COM
VOX.COM
WEBMD.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 37 entities met these criteria in 2018:

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

12UP.COM
247SPORTS.COM
BGR.COM
BLEACHERREPORT.COM
BREITBART.COM
BUSINESSINSIDER.COM
BUSTLE.COM
BUZZFEED.COM
CNET.COM
DEADSPIN.COM
DIGITALTRENDS.COM
EATER.COM
ELITEDAILY.COM
GAMESPOT.COM
GIZMODO.COM
HUFFINGTONPOST.COM
IBTIMES.COM
IGN.COM
INVESTOPEDIA.COM
JEZEBEL.COM
MASHABLE.COM
MAXPREPS.COM
POLITICO.COM
QZ.COM
REFINERY29.COM
SBNATION.COM
SLATE.COM
THEDAILYBEAST.COM
THEVERGE.COM
THRILLIST.COM
TMZ.COM
TOPIX.NET
UPROXX.COM
UPWORTHY.COM
VOX.COM
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, Center 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-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

Center 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 minimum number of layoffs for any individual outlet.