Methodology

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

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.

In 2018, 97 newspapers fell into this category:

The Advocate (Louisiana)	The Columbus Dispatch
Akron Beacon Journal	The Commercial Appeal (Tennessee)
Albuquerque Journal	The Courier Journal (Kentucky)
Arizona Daily Star	Daily Herald (Illinois)
The Arizona Republic	Daily News (New York)
Arkansas Democrat-Gazette	Daily Press (Virginia)
Asbury Park Press	The Dallas Morning News
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution	Dayton Daily News
Austin American-Statesman	The Denver Post
The Baltimore Sun	The Des Moines Register
The Birmingham News	Detroit Free Press
The Boston Globe	El Nuevo Día (Puerto Rico)
Boston Herald	The Florida Times-Union
The Buffalo News	Fort Worth Star-Telegram
The Charlotte Observer	The Fresno Bee
Charlotte Sun (Florida)	The Grand Rapids Press
Chicago Sun-Times	Honolulu Star-Advertiser
Chicago Tribune	Houston Chronicle
The Cincinnati Enquirer	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

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 (Pennsylvania)

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

South Florida Sun Sentinel

The Spokesman-Review (Washington)

The Star-Ledger (New Jersey)

Star Tribune (Minnesota)

The State (South Carolina)

St. Louis Post-Dispatch

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

The Florida Times-Union

The Fresno Bee

The Gazette (Colorado)

The Grand Rapids Press

Hartford Courant

Honolulu Star-Advertiser

Houston Chronicle

The Indianapolis Star

The Journal Gazette/The News-Sentinel
(Indiana)

The Journal News (New York)

Journal Star (Illinois)

The Kansas City Star

Knoxville News Sentinel

Las Vegas Review-Journal

Lexington Herald-Leader

Lincoln Journal Star

LNP

Los Angeles Times

The Mercury News

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 Tennessean
The Sacramento Bee	The Times (Indiana)
San Antonio Express-News	The Times-Picayune
The San Diego Union-Tribune	The Virginian-Pilot
Sarasota Herald-Tribune	The Wall Street Journal
The Seattle Times	The Washington Post
South Florida Sun-Sentinel	The Wichita Eagle
The Spokesman-Review	Times Union
The Star-Ledger	Tribune-Review (Pennsylvania)
Star Tribune	Tulsa World
Star-Telegram	USA Today
The State (South Carolina)	Wisconsin State Journal
St. Louis Post-Dispatch	

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. 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 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 or buyouts 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):

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	REFINERY29.COM
GAMESPOT.COM	SBNATION.COM
GIZMODO.COM	SLATE.COM
HUFFINGTONPOST.COM	THEDAILYBEAST.COM
IBTIMES.COM	THEVERGE.COM
IGN.COM	THRILLIST.COM
INVESTOPEDIA.COM	TMZ.COM
JEZEBEL.COM	TOPIX.NET
MASHABLE.COM	UPROXX.COM
MAXPREPS.COM	UPWORTHY.COM
POLITICO.COM	VOX.COM
QZ.COM	

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.

Researchers separately searched for news articles on Mediagazer, an aggregator site for media news. This additional search was done as a check on the Google searches.

Buyouts: Separately, researchers sought to identify any publicly reported instances of buyouts at these news outlets, using the same method. As with layoffs, a round of searches was first conducted on Google news using the "~buyouts" search term, which captured variants and related terms (e.g., "buy outs"). Researchers also searched for news articles about buyouts on Mediagazer as a check on the Google searches.

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. Mentions of buyouts that were offered or taken were counted and recorded separately, using the same approach.

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.

Acknowledgments