

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

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 (New York)
Chicago Tribune	The Providence Journal
The Cincinnati Enquirer	Reading Eagle
The Columbus Dispatch	The Record (New Jersey)
The Courier Journal (Kentucky)	The Republican (Massachusetts)
Daily Herald (Illinois)	Richmond Times-Dispatch
Daily Press (Virginia)	The Sacramento Bee
The Dallas Morning News	San Antonio Express-News
Dayton Daily News	The San Diego Union-Tribune
Democrat and Chronicle (New York)	The San Francisco Chronicle
The Denver Post	The Seattle Times
The Des Moines Register	South Florida Sun Sentinel
Detroit Free Press	The Spokesman-Review (Washington)
Fort Worth Star-Telegram	The Star-Ledger (New Jersey)
The Fresno Bee	Star Tribune (Minnesota)
The Grand Rapids Press	St. Louis Post-Dispatch
Hartford Courant	Tampa Bay Times
Honolulu Star-Advertiser	The Tennessean
The Indianapolis Star	The Times (Indiana)
The Journal Gazette/News-Sentinel (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)	New York Post
Akron Beacon Journal	The New York Times
Albuquerque Journal	The News & Observer (North Carolina)
Arizona Daily Star	Newsday
The Arizona Republic	The Oklahoman
Arkansas Democrat-Gazette	Omaha World-Herald
Asbury Park Press	The Orange County Register
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution	The Oregonian
Austin American-Statesman	Orlando Sentinel
The Baltimore Sun	The Palm Beach Post
The Birmingham News	The Patriot-News (Pennsylvania)
The Boston Globe	The Philadelphia Inquirer
Boston Herald	Pioneer Press
The Buffalo News	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
The Charlotte Observer	The Plain Dealer
Charlotte Sun (Florida)	The Post and Courier (South Carolina)
Chicago Sun-Times	The Post-Standard (New York)
Chicago Tribune	The Press Democrat (California)
The Cincinnati Enquirer	The Providence Journal
The Columbus Dispatch	Reading Eagle
The Commercial Appeal (Tennessee)	The Record (New Jersey)
The Courier Journal (Kentucky)	The Republican (Massachusetts)
Daily Herald (Illinois)	Richmond Times-Dispatch
Daily News (New York)	Democrat and Chronicle (New York)
Daily Press (Virginia)	The Sacramento Bee
The Dallas Morning News	San Antonio Express-News
Dayton Daily News	The San Diego Union-Tribune
The Denver Post	The San Francisco Chronicle
The Des Moines Register	Sarasota Herald-Tribune
Detroit Free Press	The Seattle Times
El Nuevo Día (Puerto Rico)	South Florida Sun Sentinel
The Florida Times-Union	The Spokesman-Review (Washington)
Fort Worth Star-Telegram	The Star-Ledger (New Jersey)
The Fresno Bee	Star Tribune (Minnesota)
The Grand Rapids Press	The State (South Carolina)
Honolulu Star-Advertiser	St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Houston Chronicle	Tampa Bay Times
The Indianapolis Star	The Tennessean
The Journal Gazette/News-Sentinel (Indiana)	The Times (Indiana)
The Kansas City Star	The Times-Picayune
Knoxville News Sentinel	The Virginian-Pilot
Las Vegas Review-Journal	The Wall Street Journal
Lexington Herald-Leader	The Washington Post
Lincoln Journal Star	Times Union (New York)
LNP (Pennsylvania)	Tribune-Review (Pennsylvania)
Los Angeles Times	Tulsa World
The Mercury News (California)	USA Today
Miami Herald/El Nuevo Herald	Wisconsin State Journal
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel	

In 2017, 110 newspapers fell into this category:

The Advocate (Louisiana)	Miami Herald/El Nuevo Herald
Akron Beacon Journal	Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
Albuquerque Journal	The Morning Call
Arizona Daily Star	New York Post
The Arizona Republic	The New York Times
Arkansas Democrat-Gazette	The News & Observer
Asbury Park Press	The News Journal (Delaware)
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution	The News Tribune (Washington)
Austin American-Statesman	The News-Press (Florida)
The Baltimore Sun	Newsday
The Birmingham News	The Oklahoman
The Blade (Ohio)	Omaha World-Herald
The Boston Globe	The Orange County Register
Boston Herald	The Oregonian
The Buffalo News	Orlando Sentinel
The Canton Repository	The Palm Beach Post
The Charlotte Observer	The Patriot-News (Pennsylvania)
Charlotte Sun	The Philadelphia Inquirer
Chattanooga Times Free Press	Pioneer Press
Chicago Sun-Times	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
Chicago Tribune	The Plain Dealer
The Cincinnati Enquirer	The Post and Courier (South Carolina)
The Columbus Dispatch	The Post-Standard (New York)
The Commercial Appeal	The Press Democrat (California)
The Courier Journal	The Press-Enterprise (California)
The Daily Gazette (New York)	The Providence Journal
Daily Herald (Illinois)	Reading Eagle
Daily News (New York)	The Record (New Jersey)
Daily Press (Virginia)	The Republican (Massachusetts)
The Dallas Morning News	Richmond Times-Dispatch
Dayton Daily News	Rochester Democrat and Chronicle
The Daytona Beach News-Journal	The Sacramento Bee
The Denver Post	San Antonio Express-News
The Des Moines Register	The San Diego Union-Tribune
Detroit Free Press	Sarasota Herald-Tribune
El Nuevo Día	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	IGN.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	MARKETWATCH.COM
BGR.COM	MASHABLE.COM
BLEACHERREPORT.COM	MAXPREPS.COM
BUSINESSINSIDER.COM	MEDICALNEWSTODAY.COM
BUSTLE.COM	PATCH.COM
BUZZFEED.COM	PINKNEWS.CO.UK
BUZZFEEDNEWS.COM	POLITICO.COM
CNET.COM	POLYGON.COM
COMICBOOK.COM	POPCULTURE.COM
DIGITALTRENDS.COM	POPSUGAR.COM
EATER.COM	QZ.COM
ELITEDAILY.COM	REFINERY29.COM
GAMESPOT.COM	SCARYMOMMY.COM
GIZMODO.COM	SCREENRANT.COM
HOLLYWOODLIFE.COM	SLATE.COM
HUFFPOST.COM	SNOPE.COM
IGN.COM	TECHRADAR.COM
INVERSE.COM	THEDAILYBEAST.COM
INVESTOPEDIA.COM	THEVERGE.COM
JALOPNIK.COM	TMZ.COM
LIFEHACKER.COM	TOMSGUIDE.COM
LIVESCIENCE.COM	VOX.COM
LOOPER.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	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
ELITEDAILY.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:

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