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Is TV Media Dying? Once a Dream Job, Now Just Survival

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There was a time when a job at a television channel carried prestige. Journalists were respected, recognized, and viewed as influential public figures. Television journalism was more than a profession—it was a symbol of status and credibility. Today, that reality is rapidly fading.

A Wave of Layoffs Across the Industry

The numbers tell a troubling story. In 2025, more than 17,000 jobs were cut across television, news, film, and streaming—an 18% increase from the previous year. Since 2018, the media industry has eliminated an average of 14,000 jobs annually.

Major organizations have not been spared. CBS News closed its radio division, KTLA dismissed long-serving anchors, CNBC merged its television and digital operations while reducing staff, NPR announced buyouts and layoffs after funding losses, the BBC revealed plans to cut around 2,000 positions, and the Associated Press reduced editorial staff across multiple states. These are not struggling startups; they are some of the world's most established media institutions.

Journalists Working Without Pay

Beyond layoffs lies a less visible crisis: unpaid wages.

In May 2026, journalists in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, protested outside the Peshawar Press Club after months of unpaid salaries. Media workers were forced to demand payment for work they had already completed, while union leaders urged authorities to withhold government advertising from channels that failed to pay employees.

Similar concerns emerged in Malaysia, where the International Federation of Journalists criticized a media company for withholding wages and ignoring contractual obligations. The organization emphasized that press freedom cannot exist without fair compensation.

Even in developed economies, financial pressures persist. A study in New Jersey found that many journalists struggle to meet basic living expenses. Broadcast salaries increased by only 3.2% in 2024, failing to keep pace with inflation.

Young journalists face particularly difficult conditions. Many endure unpaid internships, produce content across television, digital, and social platforms, and receive minimal compensation. In some regions, financial hardship can even create pressure to accept payments from sources, threatening journalistic independence. What is often presented as opportunity increasingly resembles exploitation.

How Did the Industry Reach This Point?

The decline of television media has been gradual rather than sudden. Advertising revenue migrated online as platforms like Facebook and Google captured a growing share of the market. Brands found digital advertising cheaper, more targeted, and often more effective than traditional television campaigns.

Streaming services further transformed audience habits. Viewers no longer wait for scheduled news bulletins when information is available instantly on their phones.

In response, many broadcasters invested heavily in streaming platforms while reducing newsroom resources. At the same time, artificial intelligence has begun reshaping the workforce.

A Columbia University report found that AI can replace certain journalistic functions, and nearly 55,000 jobs across industries were reportedly lost to AI-related restructuring in 2025. New York State even introduced legislation requiring employers to disclose when AI contributed to job terminations.

The End of Television's Glamour

Television journalism once held a unique authority. Anchors and correspondents were trusted public figures with audiences numbering in the millions. Today, that influence is increasingly challenged by social media creators.

A teenager with a smartphone can often reach larger audiences than experienced reporters working for traditional broadcasters. Between 2022 and 2024, employment in Los Angeles' broadcast and film industry fell by 27%, while the creator economy continued to expand. Audiences moved online, advertising revenue followed, and traditional media was left struggling to adapt.

Why Journalists Stay

Despite shrinking opportunities and financial uncertainty, many journalists remain committed to the profession because journalism still matters.

Investigative reporting can expose wrongdoing, influence policy, and give voice to overlooked communities. Yet passion alone cannot pay rent or justify months of unpaid wages.

The industry's challenges are not the result of journalists losing commitment; they stem from business decisions that prioritize cost-cutting over investment in the people producing the work.

What Comes Next?

Television journalism is unlikely to disappear, but it will almost certainly become smaller. More mergers, restructuring, layoffs, and increased workloads are likely in the years ahead.

What must not be overlooked is the human impact. Every layoff represents a person rebuilding a career. Every unpaid salary places a family under financial strain. Every unpaid intern is investing time and effort in a profession that may never provide stability.

Television media is not dead, but it is under significant pressure. The reporters, producers, camera operators, editors, and other professionals keeping it alive deserve better—starting with something fundamental: being paid fairly and on time.

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