

Comparing Estimates of Newsroom Employees in U.S. Government and Private-Sector Surveys

Elizabeth Grieco and Mason Walker

Pew Research Center

Introduction

There are four main surveys that produce estimates of newsroom employees in the United States: two private-sector and two government surveys. This poster assesses the comparability of estimates of the size and characteristics of news workers derived from these four surveys.

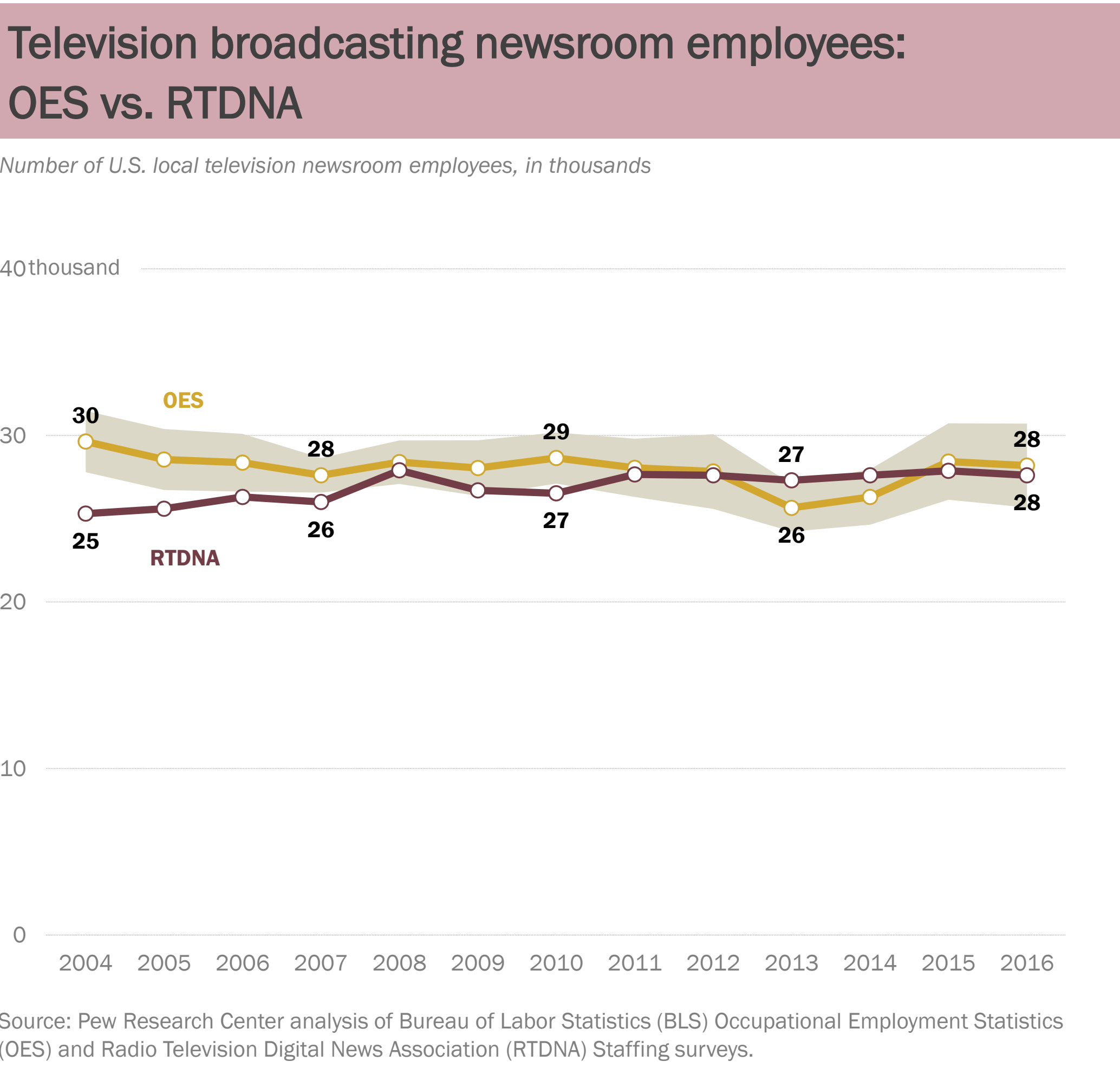
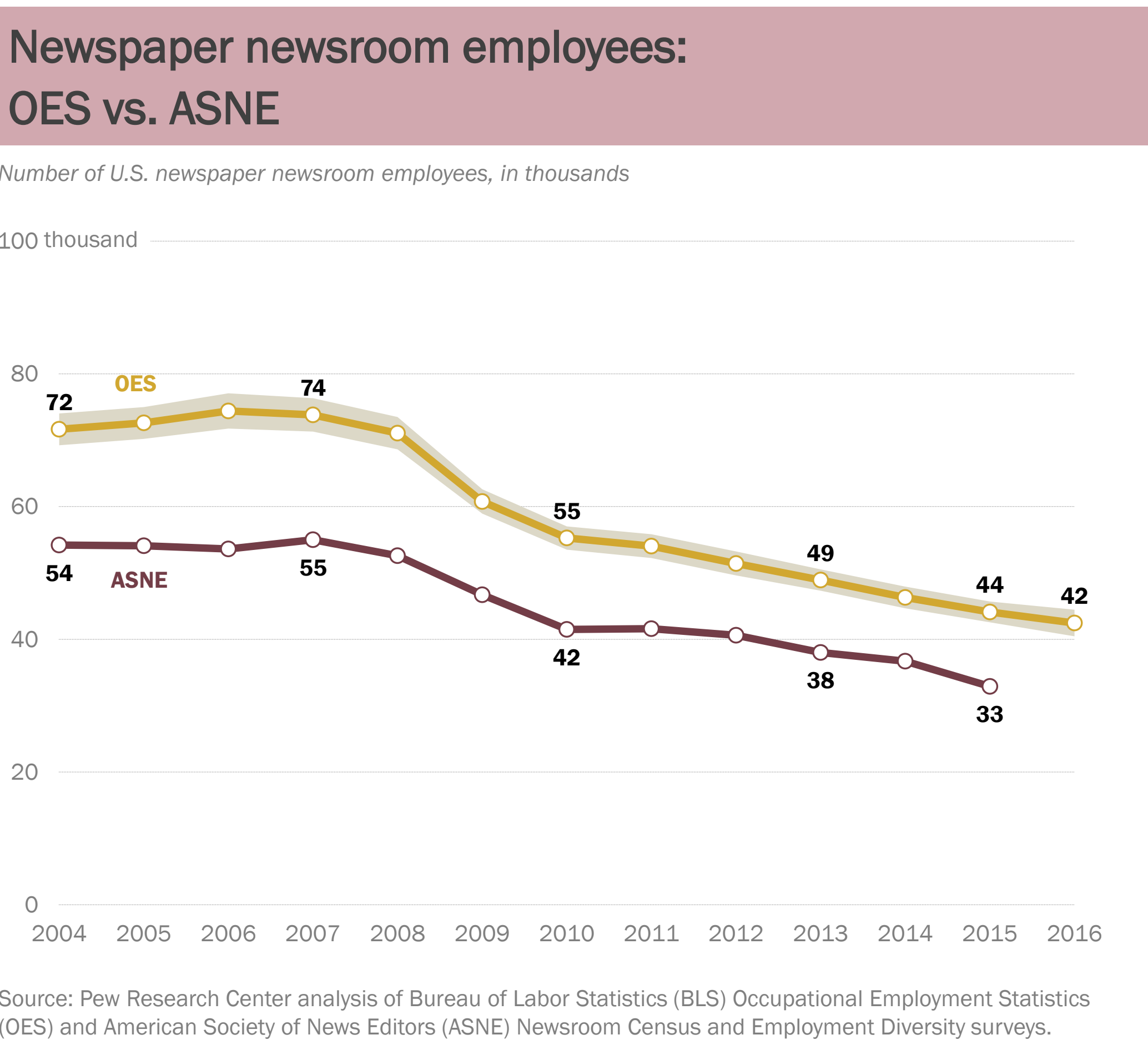
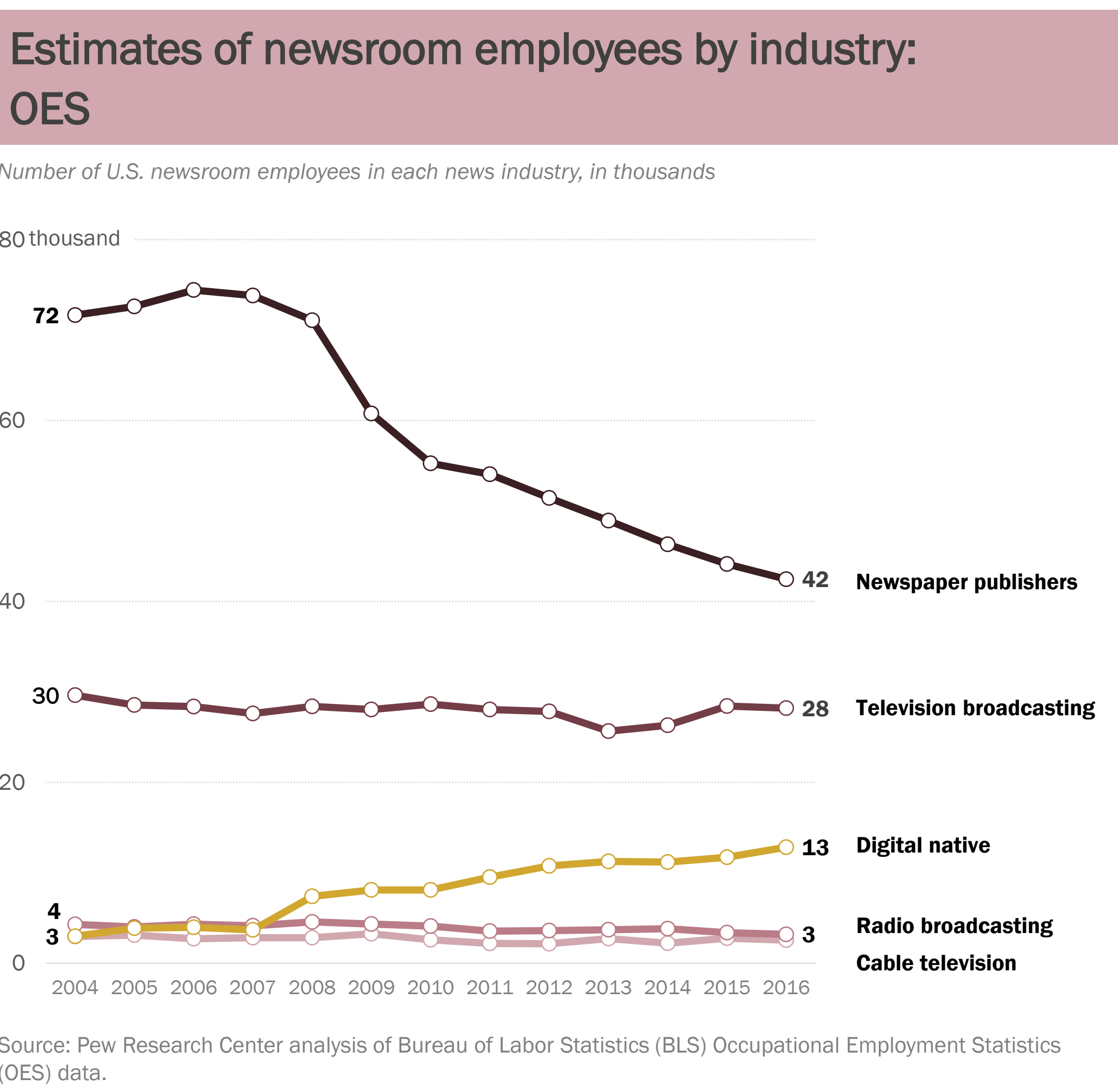
Data sources

Media researchers have traditionally relied on survey data produced by two professional organizations for estimates of newsroom employees:

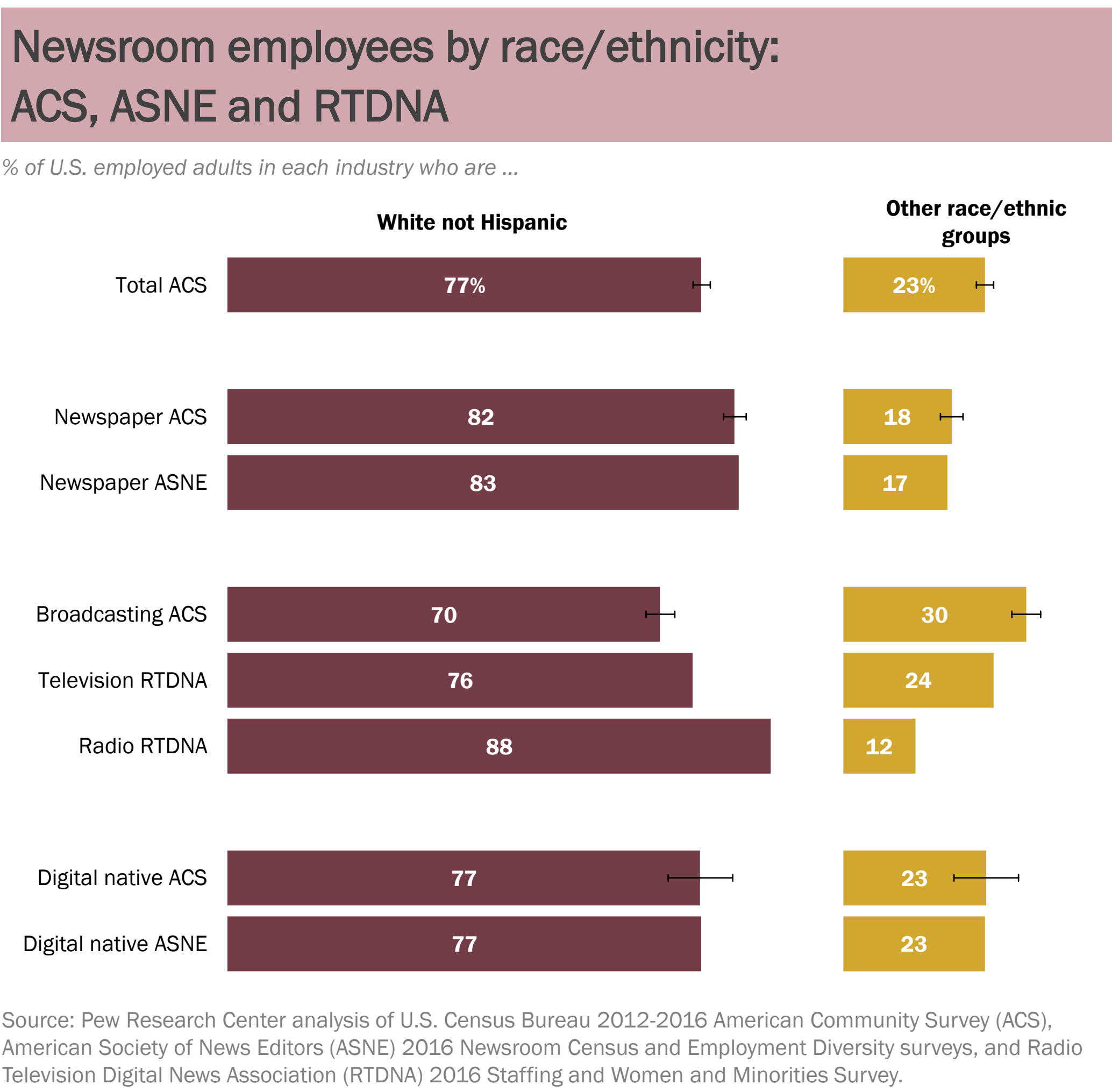
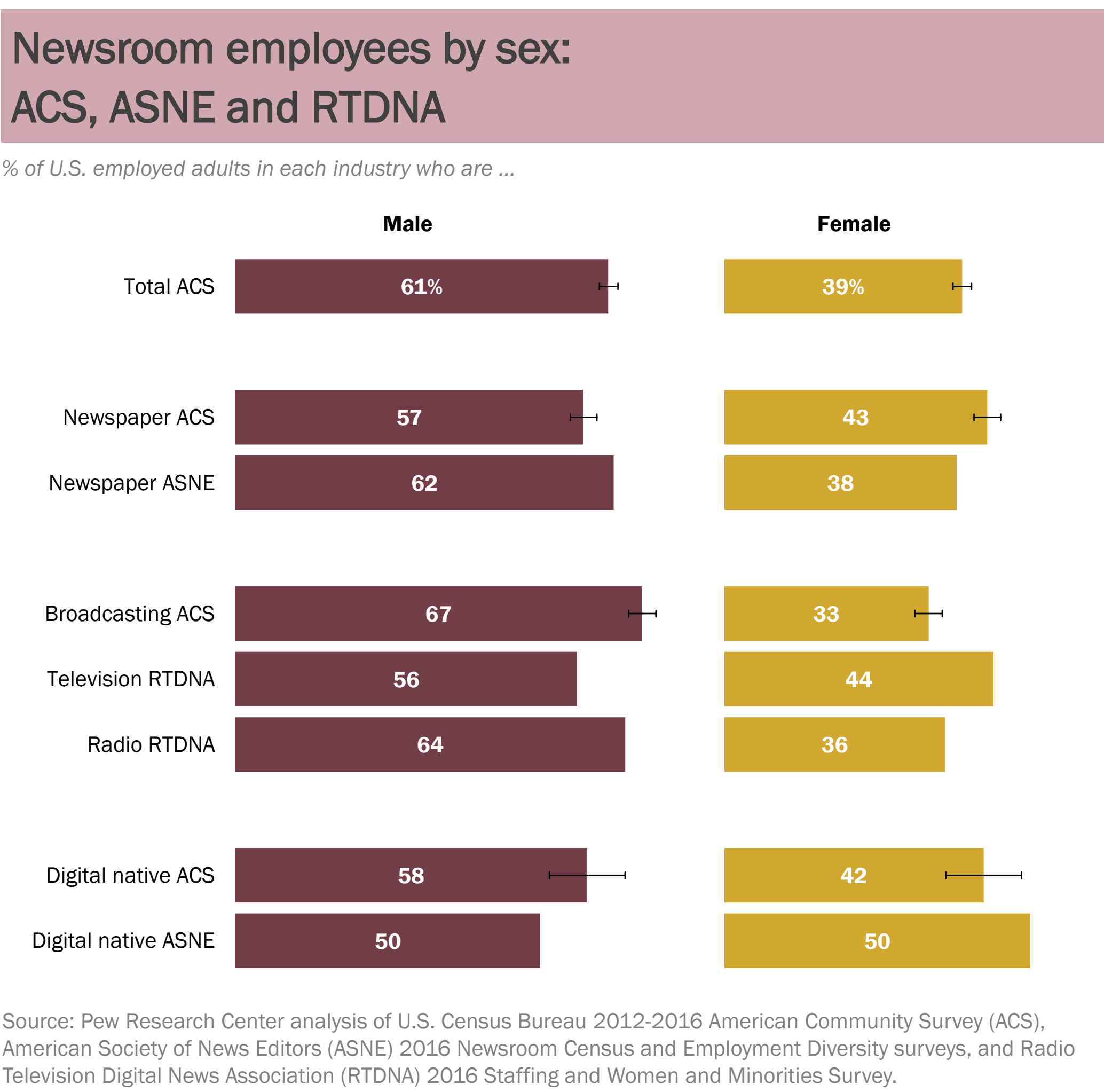
- American Society of News Editors (ASNE)** Newsroom Census and Employment Diversity Survey for information on the newspaper industry
 - Radio Television Digital News Association (RTDNA)** Newsroom Staffing and Women and Minorities Surveys for information on the broadcast television and radio industries
- Two government surveys, while less used by media researchers, include industrywide as well as sector-specific estimates:
- Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Occupational Employment Statistics (OES)** survey produces estimates of the overall number of newsroom employees as well as by media sector (newspaper, radio, television, cable, and digital native), but includes no demographics
 - U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS)** produces demographic and social characteristics estimates of newsroom employees, but its estimates of the number of news workers by sector are limited

Survey characteristics: ASNE, RTDNA, OES and ACS				
Characteristic	ASNE	RTDNA	OES	ACS
Survey type	Establishment	Establishment	Establishment	Household
Estimates produced	Number of working journalists in newsrooms by job type (1997-2015); percent of women and minorities in newsrooms (2016-present)	Total local TV news employment and radio station staffing by job type; percent of women and minorities in TV and radio newsrooms	Employment and wage estimates for more than 800 occupations and by industry	Selected social, economic and housing characteristics of the population for many geographic areas and subpopulations
Universe	Full-time, part-time and freelance workers at newspapers and online news sources	Full-time and part-time workers at local TV news and radio stations	Full-time and part-time workers in nonfarm establishments; excludes self-employed	U.S. resident population
Sampling frame	Internally maintained list of contacts at newspapers and online news sources	Internally-maintained list of operating non-satellite TV stations and radio stations	State unemployment insurance (UI) files	Master Address File (MAF) maintained by the U.S. Census Bureau
Sample size	About 1,700 news organizations, including 1,400 daily print newspapers and 300 online-only news sites	About 1,700 operating, non-satellite TV stations and 3,500 radio stations	About 1.2 million establishments (in semiannual panels of about 200,000 establishments collected over a three-year period)	Over 2 million households (monthly samples used to produce one-year and five-year period estimates)
Data collection period	Annual – May to September	Annual – October to December	Semiannual (reference months are May and November)	Annual – continuously
Data collection method	Email and phone	Mail, email and telephone	Mail, internet, email, telephone or personal visit	Mail, internet or personal visit
Weighting and representation	Self-selecting organizations; results not generalizable	Attempted census of all TV stations and random sample of radio stations	Weighted and imputed to represent all establishments for the reference period	Weighted and imputed to represent individuals in all households for the reference period
Response rate	43% (2016) 40% (2017) 17% (2018)	TV 79% (2017) Radio 31% (2017)	Establishments 72% (2017) Weighted sample employment 68% (2017)	97% (2012) 90% (2013) 97% (2014) 96% (2015) 95% (2016)
Occupation coding	Survey specific	Survey specific	Standard Occupational Classification (SOC)	Standard Occupational Classification (SOC)
Industry coding	N/A	N/A	North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)	North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)
Race/ethnic coding	Census	Census	N/A	Census
Data availability	Annual report and detailed tables	Annual report	Publicly available tables released annually	Publicly available tables and microdata released annually
For more information	www.asne.org	www.rtdna.org	www.bls.gov/oes	www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/

Industry estimates



Characteristics



Defining “newsroom employees”

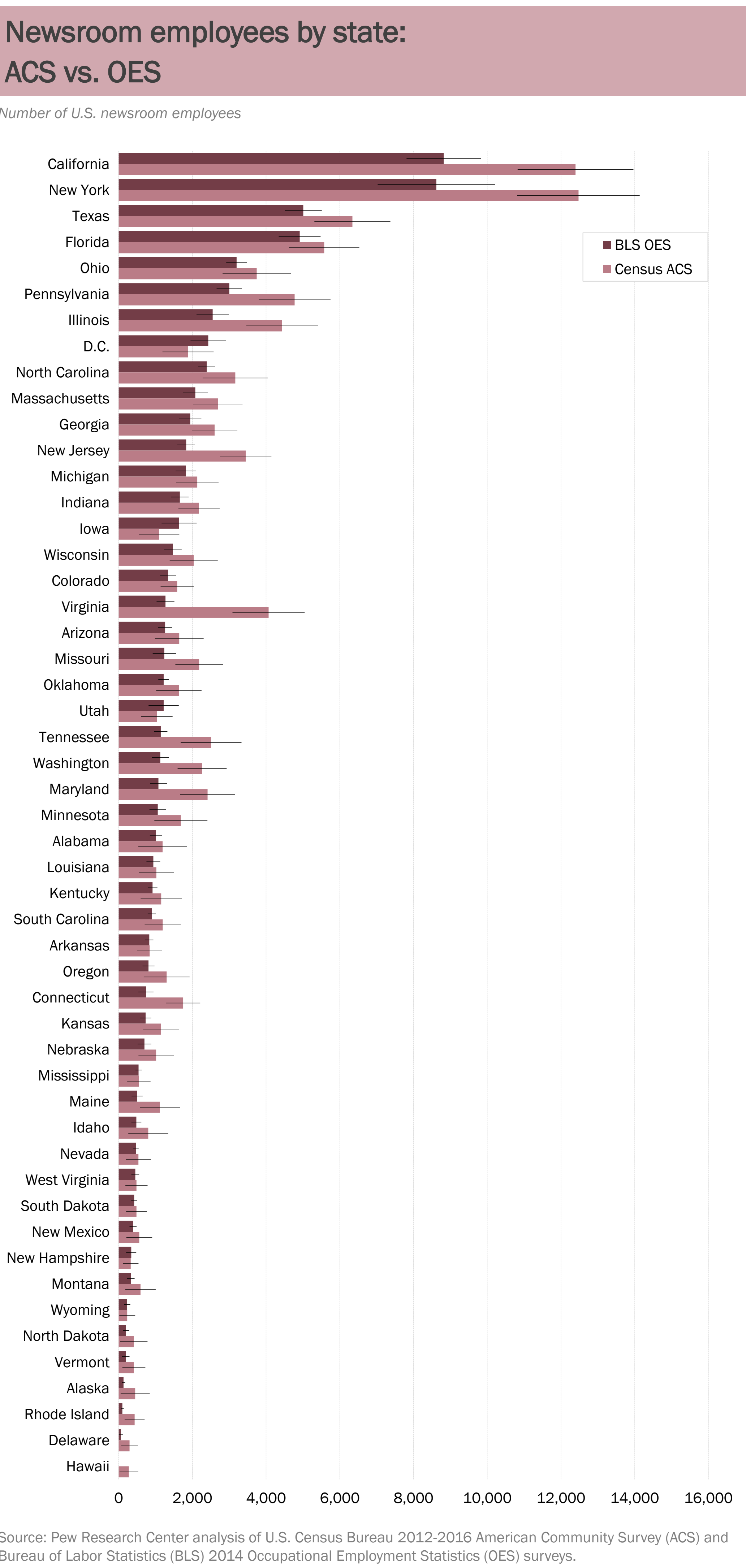
To separate newsroom employees from other workers in the OES data, we used information on both industry and occupation.

Newsroom employees include workers in five industries: 1) newspaper publishers; 2) television broadcasting; 3) cable and other subscription programming; 4) radio broadcasting; and 5) other information services (best match for digital-native publishers).

Within each industry, the number of newsroom employees is limited to four occupations: 1) news analysts, reporters and correspondents; 2) editors; 3) photographers; and 4) television, video and motion picture camera operators and editors.

The ACS has the same four occupation groups as OES but is limited to the following three industries: 1) newspaper publishers; 2) broadcasting, except internet; and 3) internet publishing and broadcasting and web search portals.

State estimates



Conclusions

As the analysis shows, estimates from government data sources generally track with those from private-sector sources, with differences generally explained by differences in data collection methodology.

This suggests that, as declining response rates push the cost of conducting surveys beyond the reach of many private organizations, government surveys may be an alternative source for some – but not all – of the information on newsroom employees traditionally provided by private-sector surveys.

Presentation information:

egrieco@pewresearch.org
mwalker3@pewresearch.org