

Study: Pandemic speeded trends away from live TV viewing

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Chicago White Sox pitcher Lance Lynn warms up in the outfield before a baseball game against the New York Yankees, Thursday, Aug. 12, 2021 in Dyersville, Iowa. The Yankees and White Sox are playing at a temporary stadium in the middle of a cornfield at the Field of Dreams movie site, the first Major League Baseball game held in Iowa. Credit: AP Photo/Charlie Neibergall

The pandemic accelerated changes in how people use their televisions, further reducing the dominance in traditional live viewing of what networks are showing, a new study has found.

Nearly two-thirds of people said in June that they viewed free video on demand content on their televisions once a week, up from 46% in February 2020, according to Hub Entertainment Research.

Hub also found that 39% of people said they paid to watch a movie at least once a week, and 39% also said they paid to watch a TV show. In both cases, that doubled the percentage of people who said the same thing before the COVID-19 shutdown.

"People had a lot more time so they had a vacuum to fill," said Jon Giegengack, Hub principal and founder. "The people who didn't get laid off had more money to spend."

While these trends predated the pandemic, the time at home speeded things up, Giegengack said. Forty percent of the people who own smart TVs bought them since the initial COVID-19 shutdown, he said. Hub surveyed 3,000 U.S. consumers aged 14 to 74 who watch TV at least an hour a week.

The shift is also illustrated in the sharp declines of people watching live network television over the past few years.

Traditional television ratings by the Nielsen company illustrated two winners last week. Fox's broadcast of the "Field of Dreams" baseball game from a field built out of an Iowa cornfield was the third most-watched program all week.

HBO said Sunday's finale of its six-episode limited series, "The White Lotus," was seen by nearly 2 million people across all formats. The

viewership was more than triple what it was for the series debut.

In an otherwise quiet TV week, ABC led with an average of 2.69 million viewers in prime time. NBC had 2.65 million, CBS had 2.4 million, Fox had 2.2 million, Univision had 1.3 million, Ion Television had 1.1 million and Telemundo had 1 million.

Fox News Channel led the cable networks, with an average of 2.2 million viewers in prime time. MSNBC had 1.29 million, HGTV had 1.14 million, TLC had 1.05 million and Hallmark had 829,000.

ABC's "World News Tonight" led the evening [news](#) ratings race, with an average of 7.8 million viewers last week. NBC's "Nightly News" was second with 6.5 million and the "CBS Evening News" had 4.7 million.



The scoreboard is shown in the outfield during a baseball game between the New York Yankees and Chicago White Sox, Thursday, Aug. 12, 2021 in Dyersville, Iowa. The Yankees and White Sox are playing at a temporary stadium in the middle of a cornfield at the Field of Dreams movie site, the first Major League Baseball game held in Iowa. Credit: AP Photo/Charlie Neibergall

For the week of Aug. 9-15, the 20 most-watched programs, their networks and viewerships:

1. "America's Got Talent" (Tuesday), NBC, 7.14 million.
2. "60 Minutes," CBS, 6.51 million.
3. "Field of Dreams Game: N.Y. Yankees vs. Chicago White Sox," Fox, 5.85 million.
4. "America's Got Talent" (Wednesday), NBC, 5.67 million.
5. "The Bachelorette," ABC, 4.6 million.
6. "Celebrity Family Feud," ABC, 4.5 million.
7. "Big Brother" (Wednesday), CBS, 3.96 million.
8. "Big Brother" (Thursday), CBS, 3.86 million.
9. "Big Brother" (Sunday), CBS, 3.78 million.
10. "The \$100,000 Pyramid," ABC, 3.68 million.

11. "America's Funniest Home Videos," ABC, 3.59 million.
12. ABC News Special: War in Afghanistan, ABC, 3.47 million.
13. "American Ninja Warrior," NBC, 3.45 million.
14. "NCIS," CBS, 3.41 million.
15. "Press Your Luck," ABC, 3.28 million.
16. "Field of Dreams Post-Game," Fox, 3.15 million.
17. "Tucker Carlson Tonight" (Monday), Fox News, 3.124 million.
18. "The Neighborhood," CBS, 3.118 million.
19. "Tucker Carlson Tonight" (Tuesday), Fox News, 3.1 million.
20. "Tucker Carlson Tonight" (Thursday), Fox News, 2.91 million.

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