

Coronavirus Impact on National TV Viewership: Aug. 31-Sept. 6



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Among the top 50 Nielsen-rated cable networks, here are the stations that experienced the highest increases and decreases in week-over-week (WoW) TV household viewership:

Week of August 31, 2020	
TOP FIVE	
ESPN2	137%
ESPN	110%
Freeform	64%
BET	18%
National Geographic	17%

Source: The Nielsen Co.

Week of August 31, 2020	
BOTTOM FIVE	
Lifetime	-23%
Fox News Channel	-22%
CNN	-14%
Disney Channel	-14%
Comedy Central	-9%

It was a great week for ESPN and ESPN2, as both networks increased week-over-week delivery by more than 100 percent. ESPN gained viewers on coverage of the NBA Playoffs, MLB games and the return of college football. The U.S. Open tennis championships also began on Aug. 31, airing across both networks and pulling in the highest average program ratings for the week on ESPN2.

Freeform saw a 64-percent gain in viewership, with the majority of increased viewing occurring Wednesday through Sunday. Movie selections were the driving factor in this week's ratings boost, with top rated movies including *Moana*,

Zootopia, *Monsters University*, and *Monsters Inc.*

BET increased 18 percent during the week of August 31. *House of Payne* and *Assisted Living* were among the top-rated programs this week. The network also partnered with Entertainment Tonight for an hour-long special honoring the late Chadwick Boseman.

National Geographic rounded out the top five, increasing 17 percent week-over-week. The largest increase in viewership occurred over the weekend, in which the network gained big on a marathon of *Life Below Zero*.

Lifetime was the week's biggest loser, declining 23 percent. The loss comes after

Lifetime placed in the top five last week, gaining on reruns of *Rizzoli & Isles* and the movies *Secrets in the Woods* and *Hidden Family Secrets*.

Fox News Channel and CNN declined 22 and 14 percent respectively. Both networks seemed to lose viewership following the prior week's coverage of the 2020 Republican National Convention.

Disney Channel dropped 14 percent this week, seemingly due to minor shifts in weekly programming.

Comedy Central declined 9 percent. The network saw Monday-through-Friday ratings drop by nearly 30 percent, with viewership dipping on reruns of *The Office* and *South Park*.

Media Spend by Category on Top/Bottom 5 Nets: Aug. 31-Sept. 6



TOP FIVE	Short-Form Products			Lead-Generation			Long-Form			Brand/DR (with phone number)			Brand/DR (web, mobile, SMS)		
	Units	Spend	WoW % Change	Units	Spend	WOW % Change	Units	Spend	WOW % Change	Units	Spend	WOW % Change	Units	Spend	WOW % Change
1. ESPN2	43	\$144,620	-59%	273	\$236,573	-36%				121	\$238,120	69%	1,595	\$1,342,104	0%
2. ESPN	18	\$46,761	-92%	154	\$517,001	-3%				195	\$1,321,184	62%	1,927	\$6,633,291	-13%
3. Freeform	27	\$31,404	88%	300	\$462,190	-2%	60	\$62,093	3%	273	\$584,620	-16%	1,877	\$2,463,480	-6%
4. BET	34	\$105,781	-38%	468	\$584,672	-7%	3	\$2,702	-29%	355	\$447,297	-8%	2,137	\$1,715,738	-3%
5. National Geographic	8	\$9,389	-19%	177	\$80,667	11%	42	\$64,397	0%	405	\$367,452	-14%	1,713	\$994,621	-5%

BOTTOM FIVE	Short-Form Products			Lead-Generation			Long-Form			Brand/DR (with phone number)			Brand/DR (web, mobile, SMS)		
	Units	Spend	WoW % Change	Units	Spend	WOW % Change	Units	Spend	WOW % Change	Units	Spend	WOW % Change	Units	Spend	WOW % Change
1. Lifetime	5	\$3,617	-97%	80	\$84,300	93%	56	\$355,783	-1%	475	\$1,634,804	19%	2,615	\$3,335,138	-13%
2. Fox News Channel	118	\$1,071,985	101%	994	\$6,253,499	16%				637	\$2,982,270	38%	1,879	\$5,561,338	4%
3. CNN	62	\$218,743	-28%	660	\$2,113,264	4%				480	\$1,821,908	40%	3,172	\$6,931,575	38%
4. Disney Channel															
5. Comedy Central	9	\$3,665	-2%	282	\$138,630	1%	26	\$31,164	-5%	235	\$484,952	19%	2,947	\$2,627,876	-5%

Copyright 2020, DRMetrix LLC. DRMetrix's charts show the ad units and estimated spend on the selected networks for different classifications of the direct-to-consumer television industry as follows. **Traditional Direct Response (DR) Campaigns** (campaigns using differing phone, web, or SMS codes in order to better track consumer results back to specific networks, dayparts, and TV creatives) include: **Short-Form Products:** Traditional call-to-order \$19.95 types of campaigns; **Lead-Generation:** Campaigns that don't advertise the full price of the product or service (i.e.: "call for free information"); **Long-Form:** Traditional 28.5-minute late-night advertisements. **Brand/Direct Campaigns** (Campaigns using a single vanity phone or URL which makes it more challenging to measure the immediate impact of television) include: **Vanity 800:** Campaigns using a vanity 800-number call-to-action; **Web/Mobile/SMS:** Campaigns that use a vanity web, mobile app, or SMS call-to-action. To learn more about these classifications, and historical trends over the past five years, please download DRMetrix's latest [industry study](#). You can also find DRMetrix's daily tracker of the effects of the coronavirus on the industry by [clicking here](#).