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AMERICANS WATCH MORE TV THAN EVER

Nielsen Documents Steady Increase

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NEW YORK (AdAge.com) -- American families are watching more TV today than they were a decade ago, according to Nielsen Media Research.



U.S. families are watching more TV today than ever.

8 hours daily

From September 2004 to September 2005 -- what Nielsen defines as the broadcast year -- the average American family viewed eight hours and eleven minutes of TV programming a day, according to figures provided by the measurement firm. That's up 2.7% from September 2003-04, when the figure came in at eight hours and one minute. A decade ago, from September 1994-95, average total viewing was seven hours and 15 minutes.

Steve Sternberg, director of audience analysis at Magna Global, attributed the gains to the increasing amount of TV available to audiences, noting that the average household now receives around 100 channels. "Ten years ago you didn't have shows on poker and gardening. There are so many niches, that's what happens when the audiences splinters.

Summer and new season

Nielsen's figures show that TV viewing this summer and for the start of the new fall season are up from last year. This summer, 61.1 million homes had their TV sets on compared with last summer's 60 million, when NBC Universal broadcast the Summer Olympics from Athens.

Networks and cable channels saw a boost in "premiere week" -- the week new and returning shows debuted -- that began Sept. 19, with a total of 68.9 million homes tuned to the new season compared with the same week of September 2004, when 66.2 million homes were tuned in. Nielsen recorded a 6.3% jump in the number of people (109 million), as opposed to households, watching TV during that week.

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