Americans' TV Time Will Grow for First Time Since 2012

Pandemic gives TV viewership boost, but will be short-lived

As stay-at-home orders remain in effect due to COVID-19, TV viewership and time spent is getting an unexpected bump. But once the pandemic is over, we expect both to decline again, according to eMarketer's latest forecast on US time spent with media.

Traditional TV* will add 8.3 million US viewers this year, the first time viewership has seen positive growth since 2011. In 2020, the number of TV viewers will increase to 287.3 million, driven by older Americans, but with growth across age groups. Total viewership will begin falling again in 2021.

TV Viewer Growth in the US, by Age, 2019-2022
% change

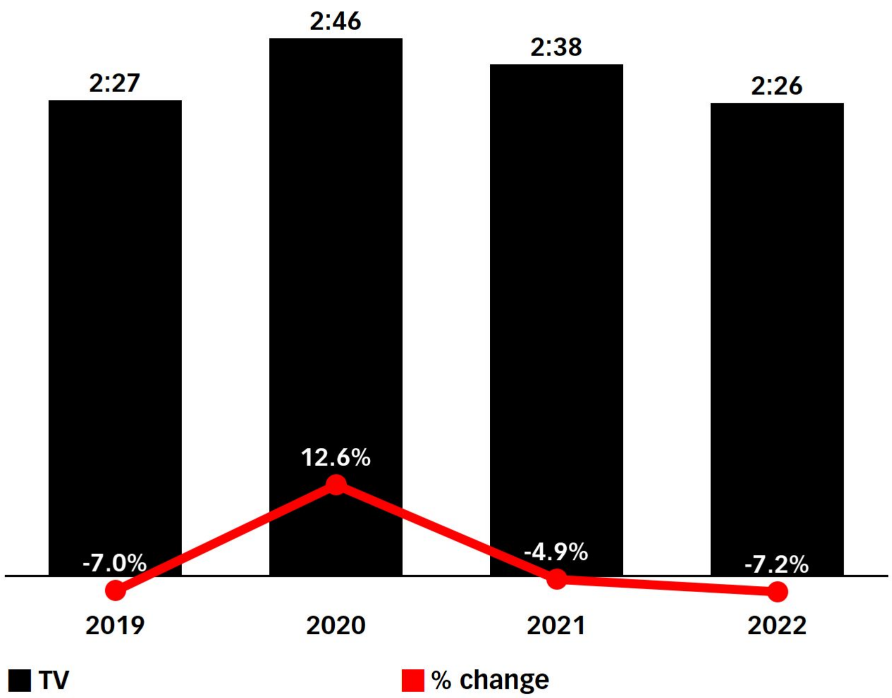
	2019	2020	2021
0-11	-1.5%	2.0%	-4.1%
12-17	-2.2%	2.0%	-4.9%
18-24	-4.0%	2.8%	-4.9%
25-34	-3.2%	4.3%	-3.1%
35-44	-3.8%	3.1%	-4.2%
45-54	-4.4%	2.0%	-5.6%
55-64	-2.2%	1.8%	-3.8%
65+	0.6%	4.9%	-0.2%
Total	-2.4%	3.0%	-3.5%

Note: individuals who watch live or recorded video on a television set at least once per month; includes DVR and other prerecorded video such as video downloaded from the internet but saved locally; excludes digital
Source: eMarketer, April 2020

T10998 www.eMarketer.com

More people are watching TV and spending more time doing so. We expect average daily TV viewing time among Americans to grow this year by 19 minutes to 2 hours, 46 minutes per day. This is the first time since 2012 that time spent with traditional TV will grow. Our previous forecast from Q4 2019 expected TV time to decline this year to 2 hours, 20 minutes.

TV: Average Time Spent in the US, 2019-2022
hrs:mins per day among population and % change



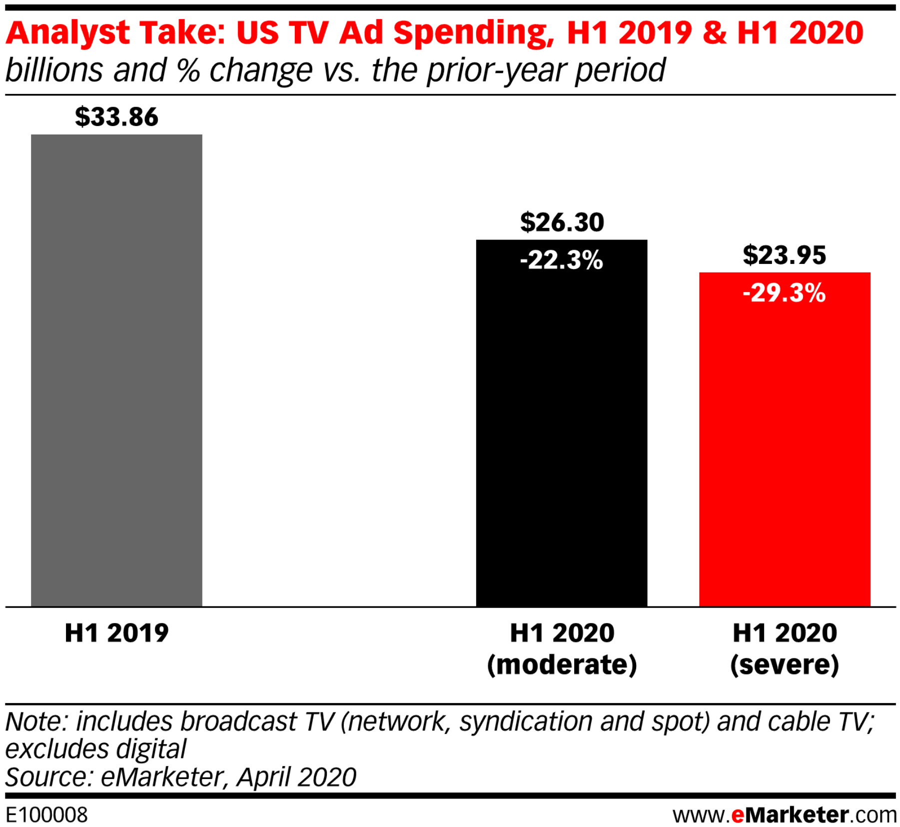
Note: all ages; includes live, DVR, and other prerecorded video (such as video downloaded from the internet but saved locally); includes all time spent watching TV, regardless of multitasking; excludes digital
Source: eMarketer, April 2020

T10999 www.eMarketer.com

"Consumers will undoubtedly be fixated on their TVs more in 2020 due to stay-at-home orders, continued interest in up-to-date news on the pandemic and increasingly, more leisure time due to increasing unemployment rates," said eMarketer forecasting analyst Oscar Orozco.

The 2020 boost in TV time will not last beyond the pandemic, however. Once things return to normal, we expect TV time to continue its downward trajectory. By the end of 2021, we project daily TV time among Americans to decline by 8 minutes to 2 hours, 38 minutes per day. Coming off the 2020 bump, this will be higher than the 2 hours, 12 minutes per day that we previously forecast for 2021.

More viewers and viewing time are not translating into increased ad spending, however. US TV ad spending will decline by between 22.3% and 29.3% in H1 2020. That's about $10 billion to $12 billion less than the $72.00 billion we previously anticipated.



"The loss of sports programming will directly cause a large drop in ad spending," said eMarketer principal analyst Nicole Perrin. "We expect TV advertisers to take a wait-and-see approach as the economy continues to stall. With consumers stuck at home, many find themselves having more time on their hands and thus greater interest in watching TV. But that coincides with millions of newly unemployed or underemployed consumers who will have to keep an eye on their personal finances."

**TV includes live, DVR, and other prerecorded video (such as video downloaded from the internet but saved locally); includes all time spent watching TV, regardless of multitasking; excludes OTT, CTV, streaming services*

Methodology

eMarketer’s forecasts and estimates are based on an analysis of quantitative and qualitative data from research firms, government agencies, media firms and public companies, plus interviews with top executives at publishers, ad buyers and agencies. Data is weighted based on methodology and soundness. Each eMarketer forecast fits within the larger matrix of all its forecasts, with the same assumptions and general framework used to project figures in a wide variety of areas. Regular re-evaluation of available data means the forecasts reflect the latest business developments, technology trends and economic changes.