AT&T raises DirecTV prices again despite losing millions of customers

Enlarge / A DirecTV satellite dish seen outside a bar in Portland, Oregon in October 2019.
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AT&T announced another round of DirecTV and U-verse TV price increases, saying that monthly rates will rise by up to $8 per month starting on January 19. “Because our programming costs went up, we have to raise our monthly prices for select packages,” AT&T said in a notice titled “TV price changes for 2020.” An additional $2 increase on the Regional Sports Network fee means that some customers will pay another $10 per month.

The $8-per-month increase will apply to the DirecTV Premier plan that currently costs $189. A $7 increase will apply to the Ultimate package that costs $135 and to the Xtra package that costs $124; a $5 increase will apply to the Choice plan that costs $110; a $4 increase will apply to the Select package that costs $81 a month and to the Entertainment package that costs $93; and increases of $1 or $3 will apply to basic plans.

Customers who have promotional pricing will “keep that discount until it expires” and pay the new, higher price

afterward, AT&T said. The promotional pricing generally lasts for one year and has discounts ranging from $21 to $55 a month.

Besides raising general service-plan rates, AT&T said its Regional Sports Network fees will rise by $1.50 to $2 a month. The sports fee varies by location but is about $10 in many big cities; you can look up the fee by ZIP code at this AT&T page.

For U-verse TV, AT&T's wireline service, $3 will be added to the U-family plan that currently costs $84.99; $5 will be added to both the U-200 and U-300 plans that cost $107 and $124, respectively; and $7 will be added to the U-450 plan that currently costs $154. The Broadcast TV fee that costs $6.99 or $7.99 will rise $2 a month.

AT&T previously raised prices by similar amounts in January 2019. Previous price increases have contributed to AT&T losing nearly 5 million satellite-and-wireline TV customers since the end of 2016 and more than 1.3 million in the most recent quarter alone.

Comcast is also raising prices this month and eliminating the option to get one DVR set-top box for free, Cord Cutters News reported. Comcast's average Broadcast TV fee is going up from $10 to $14.95 starting this month. "Overall, most Comcast customers will see bills rise by about 3.3 percent—a weighted average based on subscribers with one to three products—versus 3.4 percent last year," Broadcasting & Cable reported. Cox and Charter are also raising rates.

Comcast blamed the increases on "rising programming costs—most notably for broadcast TV and sports." Comcast and AT&T are partly to blame for the industry's rising programming costs because of Comcast's ownership of NBCUniversal and AT&T's ownership of Time Warner.

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