Daytime TV Usage Soars Among At-Home Workers and Students

As people continue working and attending school remotely because of Covid-19, they're also able to work a lot more TV watching into their daytime routines, according to new data from Nielsen.

Television usage is up considerably between the hours of 9 a.m. and 4 p.m., highlighting just how much viewing and consumption patterns have changed since the beginning of the pandemic that sent many office workers and students home indefinitely.

Office professionals and managers increased their total TV time (which includes live and time-shifted viewing through internet-connected devices and game consoles) by 21% between the hours of 9 a.m. and 4 p.m., according to data released today by Nielsen. In October, professionals spent an average of two hours and 10 minutes more per week using the TV between those hours than they did a year ago.

And that increased daytime viewing isn't replacing nighttime television usage: Those people who increased their daytime viewing also spent more time watching television from 5 to 8 p.m., Nielsen found.

The data highlights just how much the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has upended media-watching and consumption patterns that long ruled the media and advertising ecosystems. With widespread vaccinations still months away, those habits may be here to stay—and present a new reality for advertisers looking to reach consumers.

Kids, many of whom are experiencing remote learning setups, are unsurprisingly spending far more time on internet-connected devices and game consoles than they were a year ago. Kids 2-5 spent an average of 50 minutes more per week on the TV during typical school hours than they did a year ago, according to Nielsen, while kids 6-11 spent a whopping three hours and 25 minutes more per week. Usage for kids 12-17 increased two hours per week.

While most of that increased TV time is happening through internet-connected devices and video game console usage, it’s also occurring on TV: Kids age 6-11 and 12-17 saw double-digit increases in time watching live or time-shifted TV and DVDs compared to a year ago.

Among professionals and managers, it’s not just TV watching that’s up: Internet-connected device usage overall has also increased consistently throughout the day. Daytime internet-connected device usage was up by about 50% or more among professionals and managers between the hours of 8 a.m. and 8 p.m., with the highest spikes at noon and 1 p.m., where usage grew more than 60%.

While daytime internet-connected device usage was up across all groups, total TV usage among nonprofessionals and those not in the workforce was down or flat in most weekday hours, according to Nielsen.

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