

# Election Night Coverage Draws 56.9 Million Viewers Across 21 Networks

The 2020 presidential race between President Donald Trump and former Vice President Joe Biden has yet to be decided—but the Nielsen numbers are in.

*Editor's note: According to updated data from Nielsen, 56.9 million total viewers watched prime time coverage of election night 2020 across 21 networks, including Fox News, CNN, MSNBC, ABC, NBC, CBS, Fox, PBS, Fox Business Network, CNBC, Telemundo and Univision.*

Fox News was the network of choice, drawing 13.6 million viewers in prime time, and 10.5 million viewers in the 6 p.m.-3 a.m. common cable news coverage period.

This marks back-to-back presidential elections that the cable news juggernaut has finished as the most-watched network on election night.

Not only was Fox News No. 1 on election night, but its 13.6 million total viewer count represents a network and cable news election night audience record.

The network was also top in the 25-54 demo most coveted by news marketers, edging CNN by a small margin.

Meanwhile, CNN was the No. 2 network for election night coverage, beating rival MSNBC and all of the broadcast networks, both in total viewers and among adults 25-54. MSNBC came in third in total viewers, also beating all the broadcasters.

So how was election night 2020 viewership relative to election night 2016?

The 56.9 million preliminary total from Nielsen is down 20% compared to election night 2016, which drew 71.4 million total viewers.

Below are the prime-time audience figures broken down by network:

Fox News: 13.6 million total viewers, 4.9 million adults 25-54

CNN: 9.1 million total viewers, 4.4 million adults 25-54

MSNBC: 7.3 million total viewers, 2.4 million adults 25-54

ABC: 6.1 million total viewers, 2.3 million adults 25-54

NBC: 5.6 million total viewers, 2.5 million adults 25-54

CBS: 4.3 million total viewers, 1.7 million adults 25-54

Fox: 3.3 million total viewers, 1.6 million adults 25-54

Fox Business: 0.6 million total viewers, 0.2 million adults 25-54

CNBC: 0.1 million total viewers, 0.04 million adults 25-54

Fox News and MSNBC, both cable networks, were the only networks who delivered audience growth from 2016. All of the broadcasters were down from previous years. It appears election night audiences turned to the network whose coverage more closely aligns with their respective ideology.

Roughly 23.4 million people tuned in to the cable news networks from 6 p.m. to 3 a.m.:

Fox News: 10.5 million total viewers, 3.9 million adults 25-54

CNN: 6.7 million total viewers, 3.3 million adults 25-54

MSNBC: 5.4 million total viewers, 1.7 million adults 25-54

Fox Business: 0.6 million total viewers, 0.2 million adults 25-54

CNBC: 0.1 million total viewers, 0.03 million adults 25-54

It should be noted that the 2016 election was called for Trump at around 2:30 a.m. ET on Nov. 9, 2016. The 2020 election of course has yet to be called for either candidate.

Lastly, for reference, the 2016 election night prime-time numbers, broken down by network, in total viewers:

CNN: 13.3 million

Fox News: 12.1 million

NBC: 11.1 million

ABC: 9.3 million

CBS: 8.1 million

MSNBC: 6.0 million

Fox: 4.2 million

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