

Week of Feb. 23 Cable News Ratings: Viewers Turn to Cable During Iran War

This is TVNewser's basic cable network ranker and cable news report for the week of Feb. 23, 2026.

The early Saturday morning attacks by the U.S and Israeli military on Iran drove viewers to cable news networks as they all recorded double-digit growth in total viewers and the Adults 25-54 demo during primetime and total day. All three networks had over a million total viewers during primetime for the concluded week. Fox News grew by triple digits in the primetime demo and had the highest-rated Saturday since April 2003.

NETWORKS:

According to Nielsen big data + panel for the week of February 23, Fox News averaged 3.93 million total viewers and 482,000 A25-54 viewers during primetime. The network was up +58% in total viewers and +105% in the demo compared to the week prior (the week beginning February 16).

Fox News averaged 2.279 million total viewers and 259,000 A25-54 viewers in total day viewing. Based on its average from the previous week's measurements, the network grew by +40% in total viewers and +74% in the demo.

Fox News ranked first in total primetime viewership and moved to second place in the demo viewership among all basic cable networks. In total day, it finished in first place in total viewers and moved to the top from third in the total day demo.

MS NOW averaged 1.432 million total viewers and 167,000 viewers in the A25-54 demo for the week that just concluded. The network saw gains of +32% decline in total viewers and +49% in the demo compared to its average the week prior during primetime.

During total day, MS NOW averaged 846,000 total viewers and 95,000 demo viewers. It was up +27% in total viewers and +32% in the demo compared to the network's average the week prior.

Among all basic cable networks, MS NOW was up two spots to land in second place in total primetime viewers and finished in sixth place in the demo. It moved up to No. 2 from No. 3 in total viewers and was No. 6 in the total day demo.

CNN averaged 1.085 million total primetime viewers and 238,000 A25-54 viewers during primetime for the week of February 23. The network was up by +45% in viewers and +70% in the demo compared to the previous week.

During total day, the network had 730,000 total viewers and 137,000 viewers in the demo. CNN grew by +41% in total viewers and +67% in the demo during this daypart.

Among all cable networks, CNN moved from fifth to fourth place in total viewers and from sixth to third in the demo during primetime. It rose to the No. 3 spot in total day among total viewers and was also third place in the demo.

When looking at these networks' performance during the same period a year ago:

- During primetime, Fox News was up by +27% in total viewers and +23% in the A25-54 demo. During total day, the network grew by +15% in total viewers and +2% in the demo.
- MS NOW was up +17% in total viewers and +46% in the demo. During total day, the network was up +28% in total

viewers and +44% in the demo.

- In primetime, CNN grew by +83% in total viewers and +100% in the demo. During total day, it rose by +57% in total viewers and +63 in the demo.

PROGRAMMING:

Fox News had 13 out of the 15 spots of the most-watched cable news shows of the week, with The Five on top with 4.149 million total viewers at 5 p.m. ET. MS NOW was represented in the chart by The **Rachel Maddow** Show, airing only on Mondays at 9 p.m. ET, which landed in ninth place with 2.593 million total viewers. The Last Word with **Lawrence O'Donnell**, airing weeknights at 10 p.m. ET, took the No. 15 position with 1.542 million total viewers.

Jesse Watters Primetime, which airs weeknights at 8 p.m. ET on Fox News, was the most-watched program in the Adults 25-54 demo, averaging 431,000 viewers. Fox News held 13 of the 15 top spots in the demo, with MS NOW's The Rachel Maddow Show, airing only on Mondays at 9 p.m. ET, finishing in ninth place with 285,000 demo viewers. CNN had one show in the chart: **Anderson Cooper 360**, weeknights at 8 p.m. ET, with 195,000 demo viewers at No. 15.

February 23, 2026

Prime Time

	Fox News	MS NOW	CNN
• Total Viewers:	3,930,000	1,432,000	1,085,000
• A25-54:	482,000	167,000	238,000

Total Day

	Fox News	MS NOW	CNN
• Total Viewers:	2,279,000	846,000	730,000
• A25-54:	259,000	95,000	137,000

Week 2-23-26 Cable Ranker P25-54 BDP by Adweek

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