



TV Viewing Habits in 2021: Television: a unique medium, many screens

What remains of 2020, this “exceptional” year during which the medium of Television proved essential in supporting French people throughout the health crisis and beyond?

A first observation stands out: in a growing and diversified video offer, viewers are increasingly involved in their choices and consumption. And television remains the preferred medium for French people to watch content.

Isabelle Maurice, Director of Studies, Monitoring and Forecasting at Médiamétrie: “In 2021, French people spent an average of 3 hours 41 minutes a day watching TV programmes, which is 1 minute more than in 2019. ***In short, we’re getting back to a certain “normality”.***”

“TV screen time has meanwhile increased by 10% compared to 2019, adds Laurence Deléchant, Director of TV & Cross Media at Médiamétrie, ***a sign that the television set is also a gateway to complementary uses. In this context, however, TV programmes account for 81% of time spent in front of the TV screen!***”

After 2020

TV viewing time is stable compared to 2019, after an exceptionally high 2020.

This stability conceals two realities. In 2021, there were more TV viewers every day: **44.5 million** on average. On the other hand, they stayed in front of their TV screens for a shorter time.

While the viewing time of 15-24 year olds remains stable, the viewing time of the youngest age group (4-14 years old) is down **18** minutes per day (compared to 2019). People in the upper SPC, who returned to the small screen in 2020, continued to reconnect with the medium in 2021: their daily viewing time recorded a growth of **10%** compared to 2019 at **2 hours 56 minutes**.

In terms of programmes, news consolidated its leading position and showed an increase of **18%** compared to 2019 in time spent. The appointments made by French people with the TV News in 2020 continued in 2021, since an average of **20.7 million** of them watched the evening news every day in 2021, compared to **17.5 million** in 2019. Continuous news channels also benefited from the habits adopted in 2020 for obvious news needs during the health crisis with its successive waves. Every day in 2021, these TV news channels attracted **16.6 million** viewers in 2021, compared to **12.4 million** in 2019.

TV: a unique medium

A medium that brings people together: a speech by the French President in the midst of a health crisis? “Only television can bring together nearly 1 in 2 French people to watch a speech” **points out Laurence Deléchapt. 31.4 million** viewers actually watch Emmanuel Macron’s address to the nation on 31 March 2021 (Extension of the curfew to all departments + modification of the school holiday calendar).

A medium that adapts: to decipher the candidates' programmes, television channels adjust their programming in the run up to elections. TV news channels also contribute to public enlightenment and invest in a niche centered around debates. **9.7 million** French people saw at least some of the Mélenchon-Zemmour debate which aired on BFM TV on 23 September.

A responsive medium, especially when it comes to paying tribute to deceased celebrities. **33.5 million** French people watched a film or programme dedicated to Jean-Paul Belmondo in the days following his death.

Finally, an inspired medium, which gains inspiration from social issues, such as teenage prostitution (*Fugueuse* on TF1) or even the prison world (*Le bruit des trousseaux* on France 2), to offer fiction, often followed by debates that help viewers understand the subject.

A sporting summer, a record summer

After being deprived of sport in 2020, viewers reconnected with the genre in 2021. While the offer of sports programmes has made considerable progress (**+34%** compared to 2019), the time spent watching these programmes has shot up (**+65%** compared to 2019).

Euro 2020 (broadcast in 2021), the Tokyo Olympic Games and the Tour de France all broke their viewership records. In particular, by taking into account viewers watching outside of their homes. With **54.2 million** viewers in total, Euro 2020 broke both the record for a European Football Championship and the away-from-home audience record, with **2.6 million** viewers for the final between Italy and England. This record was carried by 15-24 year olds, since nearly half (**46%**) of them watched it outside their home.

So, thanks to sport, the summer of 2021 saw record TV viewing times, with a daily average of **3 hours 25 minutes** in July-August.

Access and Prime made their mark in 2021

This year, even more than in previous years, television viewing time was driven by Access (6:30 pm to 9 pm) and Prime (9 pm to 11 pm). **“As an essential crossroads for audiences, these two time slots attract nearly half (46% compared to 44% in 2019) of the medium's daily audience”**, commented Isabelle Maurice. From year to year, the peak audience is confirmed in the evening, with **24.1 million** viewers at 9:29 pm in 2021. This represents **1.1 million** more people than in 2019 (at 9:29 pm).

Some performances... The 8 episodes of the Franco-Belgian series *HPI (Haut potentiel intellectuel)* brought together an average of **11.9 million** viewers. Or **9 million** viewers watching live, as well as **2.9 million** fans who watched the replay of the series. In terms of films, *Le sens de la fête*, with Jean-Pierre Bacri, who died on 18 January, stood out (best score for a film in 2021) by attracting an average of **7.5 million** viewers on 24 January 2021.

“Beyond this crossroads of audiences, Access and Prime also constitute a crossroads of uses of TV screens”, said Isabelle Maurice.

Television sets as a gateway to complementary uses

“Video games, films and personal photos, VoD/SVoD, DVD, programme guides, video platforms, Smart TV applications... Every day, French people spend 50 minutes more on their TV screens for complementary uses, of which 39% on Access and Prime, which is 1 point more than in 2019”, said Laurence Deléchant.

On average each day, **8.7 million** French people aged 15 and over watched an SVoD programme. Of the programmes consumed, **72%** are viewed on TV screens. That represents an increase of **3** points compared to 2020. And this is even truer for series phenomena such as *Lupin* (**77%** of viewing on TV screens) or *Squid Game* (**78%**).

Boosted by the 2020 lockdowns, video games are attracting more and more recurring players: the discipline has **55%** "regular" players (every day or almost or several times a day). And here again, **61%** of gamers aged 15 to 24 use TV screens to play their games.

Finally, connected TVs also allow for many complementary uses, such as watching other video content (**39%** of uses by regular users* performed from a connected TV), such as watching other video content, listening to the radio or podcasts and simply surfing the internet.

These complementary uses, which are often made possible by the Internet, take up a growing share of the time spent in front of TV screens. At the same time, television also takes over Internet screens a little more each year. In fact, every day, **3.7 million** people watch a TV programme on digital screens (computer, mobile phone, tablet). And half of them are under 25.

* Every day or almost

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In 2020, the Médiamétrie Group achieved a turnover of nearly €100 million and processed over one billion data items every day.

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