

Watching anything good this summer?

Written by Cheryl Pearson-McNeil
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Well, we're a little more than half-way through these lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer. You can tell because the barrage of back-to-school commercials, which started in July, has intensified. Like holiday advertising, they seem to begin earlier every year (the Pearson-McNeil household is already prepared)! Besides the back-to-school ads, the escalating plugs for the new fall line-ups have me excited about TV again. What are you watching this summer?

Working for Nielsen, which most of you think of as the "TV Ratings" Company, it should come as no surprise that I can actually share with you who's watching what (I can also share information on consumer purchases, online, and mobile habits and trends, but for today, we're going to stick with TV viewing). Traditionally, summer is designated for fun, sun, a spike in outdoor activities and vacationing, so broadcasters typically see a dip in ratings during this time period. Nonetheless, according to the latest *Nielsen Cross-Platform* report Americans overall were watching television an average of 22 minutes

more

per month per person than last year. Yes, even though today we have more innovative choices on which to view video content -- computers, tablets or even mobile phones -- old school television sets are still the leader in providing that viewing pleasure for all demographics.

The report confirms that Blacks still watch television (approximately 213 hours per month) more than any other ethnic group on both traditional television and our mobile phones. We average about 57 more hours of viewing per month than Caucasians, and almost four hours more than Hispanics, who follow Blacks in viewing habits. Asian-Americans watch the least amount of traditional television, but make up for it by leading the time spent watching video on the Internet.

African-Americans also watch less time-shifted television (think DVR) than the rest of the population. Television viewing service providers -- satellite, broadcast-only and wired cable -- are spread pretty evenly across the board among Blacks, Whites and Asians. Hispanics, however, are more likely to get satellite or be broadcast-only.

So I know you're wondering: in all that television viewing, are African-Americans watching the same programs as the rest of America? Yes and no. According to the ratings for the week of July 25, "*America's Got Talent*," was the most watched show with both the general population (11.5 million) and African Americans (1.2 million). An example of a glaring difference in viewing taste, however, is "*The Bachelorette*." It won the number five slot at 8.1 million viewers for the general population, but didn't even register a blip on the ratings radar screen for African-Americans (umm, perhaps if we saw people who looked like us on the show, more of us would tune in? I'm just sayin'). Conversely,

"So You Think You Can Dance

" made the African-American top 10 Television Viewing List, but failed to find a spot in the ratings that same week among the general population viewers. I haven't watched the show, but would I be safe in surmising there's diversity portrayed on it? Ya'll know I always go back to our power as consumers. Remember, both programmers and marketers take the viewing choices you make -- and

don't

make -- very seriously.

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In addition to race and ethnicity, Americans' television/video viewing habits also vary by age and gender. Nielsen data shows that women ages 25+ watch more television than men at 16 hours more per month. On the other hand, men are consistently bigger fans of streaming video online. It makes sense that older Americans (65+), spend more than twice as much time watching television as teenagers and about 37 percent more than the 35-49 demographic. Here are some other ways video consumption breaks down according to age in the report:

- 25 percent of Americans, 50-64, comprise the largest segment of the traditional television audience.
- 27 percent of adults, 35-49, represent the largest chunk of the Internet video audience.
- 30 percent of mobile video viewers are mostly 25-34 year olds.
- Younger Americans, 12 -17 spend a third of their Internet time watching video.

So, as the summer days near an end . . . what are *you* watching? Trust me, it matters.

Cheryl Pearson-McNeil is senior vice president of public affairs and government relations for The Nielsen Company. For more information and studies, please visit www.nielsenwire.com .