



TVB Calls for More Accurate Representation of Ad-Supported TV Viewing Following Nielsen's Q1 Gauge Report

NEW YORK, (July 1, 2026) – The Television Bureau of Advertising (TVB) shared new insights on the Q1 Ad-Supported viewing numbers released by Nielsen on June 26. While the reported 46.6% streaming share sounds significant, it is missing key context that would help advertisers, brands, the public, and the media accurately understand today's viewing landscape.

TVB today highlighted several critical factors that call into question the application of these numbers.

The Gauge Uses an Older Nielsen Methodology:

The Advertising Research Foundation's DASH study, as well as studies conducted by TVB, found lower penetration of Broadband-Only households than Nielsen's estimates. Higher Broadband-Only penetration estimates could inflate streaming's audience and undercount linear audiences. Nielsen, working with the MRC, updated their national TV estimates to align with the ARF DASH study's penetration numbers. This change took effect nationally in February 2026 and currently billions of ad dollars are transacted using the new methodology. Initially Nielsen's Gauge used this new methodology as well, which resulted in lower streaming numbers. However, Nielsen subsequently reverted the Gauge back to its previous methodology, resulting in a higher reported share for streaming.

Persons 2+ Is Not a Consumer Demographic:

TVB also noted that Nielsen's public reporting focuses only on persons 2+, a population that includes children and teenagers who are not consumers in key advertising categories. When this same methodology is applied to adults 18+, linear television's share increases while streaming's share decreases, providing what TVB believes is a more accurate representation of the viewing habits essential to advertisers.

YouTube Represents a Significant Streaming Share:

YouTube can account for as much as one-third or more of streaming's Ad-Supported viewing in the Gauge. Because YouTube's content is primarily user-generated and shorter form, and due to inherent qualitative differences between YouTube's content and linear long form content, it should be considered separately.

Sports Continue to Command Strong Linear Audiences:

Broadcast sports remained a major driver of linear television viewing during the first quarter of 2026. Broadcast sports telecasts on ABC, CBS, CW, FOX, NBC, TEL, and UNV & UniMas, generated almost 3.2 billion viewers aged 2+ and 3 billion viewers A18+, representing an 11% increase in broadcast sports viewing compared to the same period last year.

This year's NBA season also saw a 132% increase in P2+ viewers for total telecasts as well as a 133% increase in A18+ viewers on Broadcast versus last season. The five-NBA Finals games had a combined audience 30% higher among P2+ than last year's total seven-game Finals, with Adults 18+ up 29%.

TVB believes it is essential for Nielsen to use current and consistent measurement methodologies for its related products in reporting broadcast and streaming percentages. Providing a complete picture of both broadcast and streaming viewership, with context, helps advertisers make better informed decisions and aids the public's understanding of the nation's viewing habits.

About TVB

TVB is the not-for-profit trade association representing America's local broadcast television industry, including linear and digital platforms. Its members include the U.S. television stations, television broadcast groups, advertising sales reps, syndicators, international broadcasters, and associate members. TVB actively promotes local media marketing solutions to the advertising community and works to develop advertising dollars for the medium's multiple platforms, including on-air, online, and mobile. TVB provides a diverse variety of tools and resources, including its website, to support its members and to help advertisers make the best use of local ad dollars. For more information, visit www.tvb.org.

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