



Viewership and PEG Access Channels

- *In community surveys, PEG access television frequently fares as well or better in viewership compared to its commercial cable and network counterparts.*
- *PEG access television frequently receives a 1% to 2% viewership share as compared with premium pay television and hundreds of cable channels that receive far less.*
- *PEG access television is non-commercial and its purpose is to meet the needs of the community.*

PEG Access Television Compared with Commercial Cable and Network Television

Cable operators frequently claim that PEG access channels receive too small an audience to merit carriage on their systems or PEG financial support through PEG fees. However, in survey after survey of PEG channel viewership, we have found that PEG access television channels fare as well, *or in some cases better*, than other channels carried on the cable systems.

Consistently in studies of local communities, we have found a 1% to 2% viewership rating. In the cable environment (particularly digital environment) where there are hundreds of channels to choose from, a 1% to 2% viewership rating is good.¹

In a study conducted by Dr. Connie Book in 2003 for the National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors, Dr. Book found that no cable network was watched with any great frequency.² This included the most “popular” cable networks such as TBS, TNT, USA, NICK, CNN, etc. According to Dr. Book:

Cable television does not operate on a programming policy of mass audience, but rather niche audiences. The ability of the cable industry to engage niche, smaller audiences is its primary purpose.

This is even more true given cable has added hundreds of channels to their systems. The chart below shows the viewership during prime time of all network channels, all premium pay channels and all advertiser supported Basic tier.³

¹ Studies conducted by Group W Communications in twenty-five communities over a ten year period.

² TV Ratings and Cable, Summer 2005, NATOA Journal.

³ Viewing to advertiser supported cable networks. Includes TBS and WGN cable. Source

<http://tvbythenumbers.zap2it.com/2008/12/03/updated-where-did-the-primetime-broadcast-audience-go/9079>

Season	Network Affiliates	Premium Cable	PayAd/Basic Cable
2001-02	30.3	3.5	28.2
2002-03	29.6	3.6	29.4
2003-04	28.9	3.4	30.9
2004-05	27.8	3.1	32.8
2005-06**	29.1	2.8	33.5
2006-07***	28.1	2.6	33.8
2007-08***	26.9	2.6	35.1

Network affiliates as defined as follows:

December 26, 2005-January 29 2006: ABC, CBS, NBC, FOX, WB, UPN, UNI, PAX affiliates
January 30, 2006-February 26, 2006: ABC, CBS, NBC, FOX, WB, UPN, UNI, TEL, PAX affiliates
February 27, 2006-August 27, 2006: ABC, CBS, NBC, FOX, WB, UPN, UNI, TEL, TF, PAX affiliates
August 28, 2006 – September 3, 2006 : ABC, CBS, NBC, FOX, WB, UPN, UNI, TEL, TF, AZA, PAX affiliates
September 4, 2006 – Present : ABC, CBS, NBC, FOX, WB, UPN, UNI, TEL, TF, AZA, PAX, MNT affiliates

While all Network Affiliates received a 26.9% viewership, it must be noted that the 26.9% is being shared by 12 separate network affiliates. If we were to average this viewership, evenly splitting the viewership among all 12, we would say that the affiliates are receiving an average viewership of 2.2%.

However, we know that not all affiliates are watched equally; therefore some would receive a higher viewership rate, while others would receive a much lower viewership rate. Meaning, there are Network Affiliates that receive much less than 1% audience viewership, yet they are still carried on the cable systems.

Premium pay channels (as a group) only receive 2.6% of the total prime time audience share. Meaning, all premium pay channels receive a share of that 2.6%. If a system has 4 premium pay channels, such as HBO, Showtime, Cinemax, Starz and specialty channels such as Acton Max, Thriller Max, HBO Family, etc., these channels are sharing the 2.6% viewership. Therefore, these channels receive far less viewership than PEG television channels, yet the consumer is paying a much greater fee to receive them. It would seem popularity of these channels does not dictate their value to the cable operator and what price the operator sets for subscribers to receive these channels

The final number of 35.1% for all other advertiser supported cable channels on the Basic (and Expanded Basic) tier is split between approximately 70 channels.⁴ Again, with some receiving more viewership than others and low viewership numbers being well below one half of 1%.

In this environment, PEG channels fare very well. That 1% to 2% of subscribers watch at least one of the PEG channels daily would indicate the PEG channels have greater viewership per channel than the premium pay channels carried on the system and greater viewership than many Network Affiliates or advertiser supported channels.

Purpose of PEG Access Television Channels

Even given the favorable viewership numbers of PEG access television channels, it must be noted that PEG channels are not intended to be commercial vehicles; therefore “ratings” are not applicable to PEG access television in the same way they are to commercial channels. The primary purpose of PEG channels is to meet *community need*.

For instance, there was a show in Cincinnati called “All About Lupus.” This show was directed at persons with Lupus or friends and family of persons with Lupus. The intention of the show was to provide information about Lupus that would contribute to the quality of life of those suffering from the disease.

In Macedonia, Ohio the Channel airs programming called “Macedonia Mayor’s Report,” “Aurora Mayor’s Report,” and “Twinsburg Mayor’s Report.” It also airs high school sports games and a show called “Mt. Zion Church.”

In Worcester, Massachusetts the Channel airs a program called “Miller Chat.” The program focuses on persons with disabilities.

There are thousands of instances of PEG access television programming meeting the needs of the community and certainly meeting the needs of the underserved in communities. Needs that are not met on any other channels on the cable systems.

This is the value of PEG access television.

⁴ Cable operators use different terms to describe these tiers.