

News / Release[Back to Summary](#)**NFL TV Recap: 225 Million Americans Watched NFL Regular-Season Games In 2008**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
NFL 1/6/09**NFL 2008 TV RECAP****225 MILLION AMERICANS WATCHED NFL GAMES****NFL GAMES: RECORD 13 OF 15 MOST-WATCHED SHOWS THIS FALL &
14 OF 15 MOST-WATCHED SHOWS ON CABLE****NFL REGULAR-SEASON RATINGS EXCEED OTHER SPORTS' PLAYOFFS****NFL VIEWERSHIP 89 PERCENT HIGHER
THAN OTHER PRIMETIME PROGRAMMING**

Football fans across America continued to tune their televisions to NFL games in large numbers in 2008. **According to Nielsen Media Research, 225 million Americans watched NFL regular-season games in 2008.** That's nearly 100 million more than the record number of Americans who voted in the 2008 presidential election (131.2 million).

In addition, **a record 13 of the 15 most-watched TV shows among all programming this fall are NFL games** (chart below) – up from 11 of the top 15 shows in fall 2007. Five years ago, in 2003, NFL games accounted for one of the top 15 fall programs. Also this fall, NFL games were the week's most-watched TV program in 15 of the NFL's 17 regular-season weeks.

NFL games were the highest-rated programs locally a record 88 percent of the time – topping the mark set last season (86 percent). By comparison, NFL games topped local NFL market ratings 73 percent of the time five years ago (in 2003) and 55 percent of the time in 2001.

NFL viewership on broadcast television continued to out-draw network primetime viewership. NFL games on CBS, FOX and NBC averaged 16.6 million viewers – **89 percent higher than the average primetime viewership among the four major over-the-air networks** (8.8 million average on ABC, CBS, FOX, NBC). That advantage is roughly even with last year and up from a 56 percent edge five years ago (chart below).

More 2008 NFL TV highlights:

- For the entire TV season, NFL games rank at the top of weekly programs in average viewership with the top two, and three of the top seven programs on network television (chart below). In addition, NFL games and NFL pregame and postgame shows account for the top 10 programs among men 18-49 (chart below).
- 2008 NFL national games on NBC, CBS (Sunday national & Thanksgiving) and FOX (Sunday national & Thanksgiving) averaged a 10.1 rating which exceeds playoff broadcast averages for other sports: 2008 NBA Playoffs (3.7 rating) & NBA Finals (9.3 rating) on ABC; 2008 MLB NLCS (4.8 rating) & 2008 World Series (8.4 rating) on FOX.
- FOX's Sunday National Game (4:15 PM ET) was the most-watched weekly program on TV with an average of 22.3 million viewers (chart below).
- CBS' Sunday National Game (4:15 PM ET) was the second-most-watched weekly program on TV with an average of 21.7 million viewers (chart below).
- NBC *Sunday Night Football* ranked fifth among all primetime shows with an average of 16.8 million viewers (chart below).

- FOX's Dec. 7 Cowboys-Steelers game is the most-watched show of the broadcast season with 25.7 million viewers.
- CBS' Sept. 14 Patriots-Jets game (plus conclusion of Chargers-Broncos) was viewed by 25.2 million fans, making it the most-watched NFL game on a September Sunday since at least 1991. (Prior to 1991, Nielsen Media Research did not regularly measure individual program viewership).
- NBC's Cowboys-Giants game on Dec. 14 was the most-watched *Sunday Night Football* game ever (23.1 million viewers).
- ESPN's *Monday Night Football* was the most-watched series on cable with an average of 12.0 million viewers. Monday Night Football accounted for 14 of the 15 most-watched cable programs this fall.
- ESPN's Eagles-Cowboys telecast on Sept. 15 is the most-watched show in cable history with 18.6 million viewers
- NFL Network's eight *Thursday and Saturday Night Football* games ranked as the top-rated show of the day among all programs on ad-supported cable networks. All 24 of NFL Network's games dating to 2006 have earned cable's top rating for the night.
- NFL Network posted the week's highest average primetime cable rating (2.31) among all cable networks for the week of Dec. 15-21. NFL Network's Ravens-Cowboys telecast on Dec. 20 earned the fourth-highest cable rating (9.22) of any sporting event in 2008.

NFL VS. PRIMETIME VIEWERSHIP ON BROADCAST TV

	<u>NFL on Broadcast</u>	<u>Broadcast Primetime</u>	<u>NFL % Advantage</u>
2002 Avg. Viewers	15.8 million	10.3 million	52%
2003 Avg. Viewers	15.5 million	9.9 million	56%
2004 Avg. Viewers	15.4 million	9.8 million	57%
2005 Avg. Viewers	15.6 million	9.7 million	61%
2006 Avg. Viewers	16.3 million	9.8 million	66%
2007 Avg. Viewers	16.6 million	8.7 million	91%
2008 Avg. Viewers	16.6 million	8.8 million	89%

Source: NFL & Nielsen Media Research. NFL regular season on Broadcast television (CBS, FOX & NBC... ABC prior to 2006). Broadcast primetime on BIG 4 networks (ABC, CBS, NBC & FOX) all programs, NFL regular season dates used.

Following are the top network television **weekly** programs nationally in average total viewers:

<u>Network Program</u>	<u>Viewers</u>
1. FOX Sunday National Game	22.3 million
2. CBS Sunday National Game	21.7 million
3. Dancing With The Stars	19.2 million
4. CSI	18.8 million
5. NCIS	17.6 million
6. Dancing With The Stars Results	17.4 million
7. NBC Sunday Night Football	16.8 million
8. Desperate Housewives	16.2 million
9. The Mentalist	16.1 million
10. 60 Minutes	15.6 million

Following are this season's top 10 **weekly** programs on television in a key demographic (avg. rating):

Men 18-49

<u>Program</u>	<u>Rating</u>
1. FOX Sunday National Game	11.1
2. CBS Sunday National Game	10.4
3. NBC Sunday Night Football	8.7

4. FOX Sunday Single Game	7.9
5. CBS Sunday Single Game	7.1
5. The OT (FOX NFL Postgame)	7.1
7. ESPN Monday Night Football	6.8
8. NBC Sunday Night Pre-Kick	6.6
9. FOX Sunday Regional Game	6.3
10. CBS Sunday Regional Game	5.7

Broadcast Notes:

Regional -- First window of a doubleheader

National -- Second window of a doubleheader

Single -- Only window on network not airing doubleheader that week.

Source: NFL, Nielsen Media Research, 9/1/08-12/31/08

Following are the 15 most-watched shows of the current TV season:

<u>Program (Game)</u>	<u>Viewers</u>
1. FOX Sunday National (mostly Cowboys-Steelers), 12/7	25.7 million
2. CBS Sunday National (Broncos-Jets & Pats-Steelers), 11/30	25.5 million
3. CBS Sunday National (mostly Patriots-Jets), 9/14	25.2 million
4. 60 Minutes (Obama interview preceded by late SD-Pitt finish), 11/16	25.1 million
5. CBS Sunday National (mostly Steelers-Ravens), 12/14	24.4 million
6. FOX Sunday National (mostly Cowboys-Cardinals), 10/12	23.7 million
7. CSI (season premiere), 10/9	23.5 million
8. FOX Sunday National (mostly Cowboys-Giants), 11/2	23.3 million
9. FOX Sunday National (mostly Giants-Cardinals), 11/23	23.3 million
10. CBS Sunday National (mostly Colts-Packers), 10/19	23.2 million
11. NBC Sunday Night Football (Giants-Cowboys), 12/14	23.1 million
12. FOX Thanksgiving Day (Seahawks-Cowboys), 11/27	22.7 million
13. CBS Sunday National (mostly Colts-Steelers), 11/9	22.4 million
14. FOX Sunday National (mostly Giants-Steelers), 10/26	22.3 million
15. NBC Sunday Night Football (Cowboys-Packers), 9/21	22.2 million

Source: NFL, Nielsen Media Research, 9/1/08-12/31/08

Following are the 15 most-watched basic cable shows of the current TV season:

<u>Program, Date</u>	<u>Viewers</u>
1. ESPN Monday Night Football (Eagles-Cowboys), 9/15	18.6 million
2. ESPN Monday Night Football (Steelers-Redskins), 11/3	14.2 million
3. ESPN Monday Night Football (Packers-Bears), 12/22	13.8 million
4. TNT MLB ALCS (Red Sox-Rays Game 7), 10/19	13.4 million
5. ESPN Monday Night Football (Vikings-Packers), 9/8	12.5 million
6. ESPN Monday Night Football (Jets-Chargers), 9/22	11.88 million
7. ESPN Monday Night Football (49ers-Cardinals), 11/10	11.87 million
8. ESPN Monday Night Football (Ravens-Steelers), 9/29	11.78 million
9. ESPN Monday Night Football (Colts-Titans), 10/27	11.6 million
10. ESPN Monday Night Football (Bucs-Panthers), 12/8	11.58 million
11. ESPN Monday Night Football (Browns-Bills), 11/17	11.57 million
12. ESPN Monday Night Football (Giants-Browns), 10/13	11.42 million
13. ESPN Monday Night Football (Packers-Saints), 11/24	11.38 million
14. ESPN Monday Night Football (Vikings-Saints), 10/6	11.0 million
15. ESPN Monday Night Football (Broncos-Patriots), 10/20	10.8 million

Source: NFL, Nielsen Media Research, 9/1/08-12/31/08

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