MDI
MEDIA DYNAMICS INCORPORATED

THE 2026-27 PRIMETIME UPFRONT: THE SHIFT TO STREAMING ACCELERATES

Media Dynamics, Inc. releases preliminary estimates in advance of its annual upfront and CPM-CPP reports

Nutley, NJ, August 11, 2026 - The big news is that, for the first time, streaming captured more primetime upfront ad dollars than linear TV as the shift to streaming continues. We estimate that advertisers invested $16.6 billion in linear TV buys and $17.2 billion in streaming for a grand total of $33.8 billion. This is up 9.1% over last season's allocation thanks to a nearly 30% increase in streaming spending. In contrast, the broadcast TV networks, though still benefiting from advertiser interest in their major sports programming, were down by 5.3%. Finally, cable once again took the biggest hit, down 7.7%.

Continuing their pressure on all sellers to keep a lid on CPM hikes, the buyers paid only $41.65 per thousand adults for 30-second announcements on the broadcast TV networks, down 4.2% from last season, while cable's average CPM tumbled by 8.5% to only $17.70. Similar pressures contributed to the ongoing decline in streaming CPMs, with FASTs, in particular, lowering their CPMs in a bid to increase their share of time sales. Overall, the average streaming CPM for adults declined by 4.9% to $25.90. As a result, primetime CPMs—counting both linear TV and streaming—were down by 6.2%. As always, there are exceptions, with some sellers holding the line and a few raising their CPMs.

It should be noted that an additional $12 billion was probably invested in upfront linear TV buys when non-primetime buys are included for linear TV's early AM, daytime, weekend, early news and late-night TV fare, plus national syndication. Consequently, this platform still captures more upfront dollars in aggregate than the various ad-supported streaming services. In addition, streaming accounts for only 25% of the available primetime ad GRPs, due to the fact that a sizeable proportion of its viewing time consists of ad-free services, while those that do carry ads feature many fewer per hour than their linear TV counterparts. Despite this, streaming received more than half of the 2026-27 upfront's primetime ad dollars.

The following table summarizes our primetime upfront estimates for the 2025-26 and 2026-27 seasons. A more detailed breakdown of upfront CPMs and CPPs by demos and dayparts—including trending for past seasons—will be released this week to **MDI Direct** subscribers in our **Upfront Tracker** report. This publication is also available to non-subscribers for $550. A $75 discount is currently available on orders through Labor Day. Find out more **here**.

PRIMETIME TV UPFRONT AD SALES AND ADULT CPMs FOR THE 2025-26 & 2026-27 SEASONS

	B'cast. TV Nets.	Cable	Linear TV Total	Streaming	Grand Total
Ad Spend ($ Mil.)					
2025-26	9,110	8,675	17,785	13,200	30,985
2026-27	8,630	8,010	16,640	17,150	33,790
% Change	- 5.3	- 7.7	-6.4	+ 29.9	+ 9.1
Adult CPM (:30s)					
2025-26	$43.50	$19.35	$31.80	$27.25	$29.80
2026-27	41.65	17.70	30.10	25.90	27.95
% Change	- 4.2	-8.5	-5.4	-4.9	-6.2

Source: Media Dynamics, Inc.

About Media Dynamics, Inc.

Media Dynamics Inc. is a publishing & consulting company founded in 1982 by Ed Papazian, the former Media Research Director and Media Director of BBDO (1960-75) and co-creator/publisher of **Ad Forum** and **The Media Cost Guide**. MDI's **Dimensions** series has served as *the* reference source for data trending and insights on radio, magazines, TV and intermedia. Media Dynamics' library includes several research annuals and numerous special reports and white papers that focus on targeted areas of the media, including spot TV, cable, ad receptivity, CPMs and upfront cost estimates. Media Dynamics, Inc. has also spent more than 30 years consulting on various media issues, including agency/client interactions on the media function, the hiring of independent media buying services and the evaluation of agency/media buying performance. Past clients include a cross section of TV networks, cable services, magazines, TV & radio reps, advertisers, ad agencies, research companies and new media.