

Record-breaking March: TV viewership in March was the highest in 17 years – due to coronavirus pandemic

The highest TV viewership overall was monitored in the first two weeks of effectiveness of the coronavirus measures which restricted free movement. The year-on-year growth was higher than an hour.

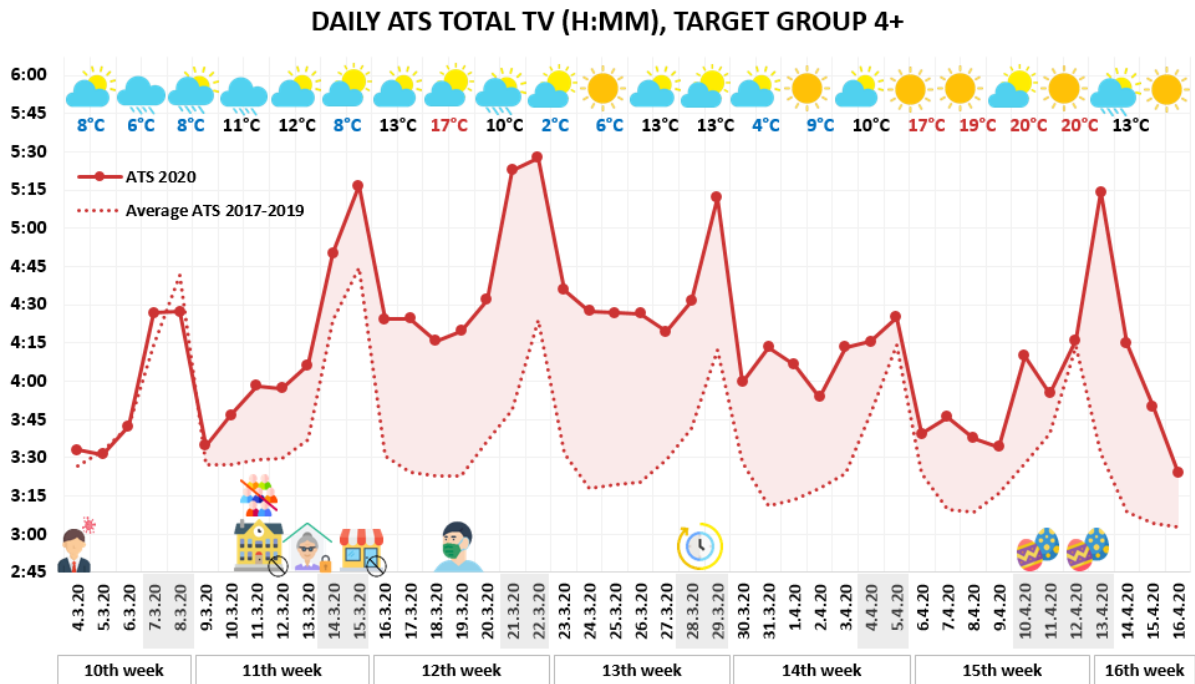
Media consumption in the time of pandemic has been mentioned a lot in various articles and reports. So let's take a closer look at television and its audience results in the past few weeks. In terms of television consumption, this March broke records: the average daily viewership reached the highest numbers of all months in the last 17 years. Since mid-March, TV viewership has been higher in all sociodemographic groups; in the last five weeks, the biggest interannual relative increase can be seen in the group of young viewers, people with academic education and the group „A” according to the socioeconomic classification ABCDE.

Viewership data come from the Project of Cross-platform Electronic Audience Measurement and Content Consumption that is currently based on a representative sample of 1,900 households that own a TV set (which is equivalent to 4,450 individuals). The project is implemented by the Czech research agency Nielsen Admosphere for the Association of Television Organizations.

The graph below shows a day-by-day comparison of daily TV viewing in the recent weeks with the average of the last three years (i.e. average of the years 2017–2019, considering the same days in the week and the same weeks). The data show that until about 9 March, the average daily viewership was quite close to the level of previous years. When the state of emergency for the whole country was declared by the government and the following regulations of outdoor activities came into effect by 11 March, the amount of time spent home increased as well as the time spent watching news programmes. **The overall effect was that TV viewership grew by almost 30 minutes a day.** Another sharp growth occurred by 16 March, after free movement was restricted. Since then, **TV viewership has been even one hour above the usual level in this time of the year.**

Such high levels of TV viewership lasted for the whole two weeks (the 12th and the 13th week). The average daily time spent in front of the television then started to drop – similar to other European countries. People likely adapted to the new situation and e.g. started to spend more time outdoors. The transition to summer time at the end of March helped this trend, too, because it provided an extra hour of light for the evening outdoor activities.

Although outdoor movement was limited only to parks and nature, we can spot a significant effect of weather on the volume of TV viewing. The long period of nice weather from April 5 to April 12 was essential for the decrease of TV viewership down to 20 minutes above the average of the last three years. **The increase of viewership was not restored until Easter holiday on Friday and Monday and the arrival of bad weather on Monday and Tuesday.**

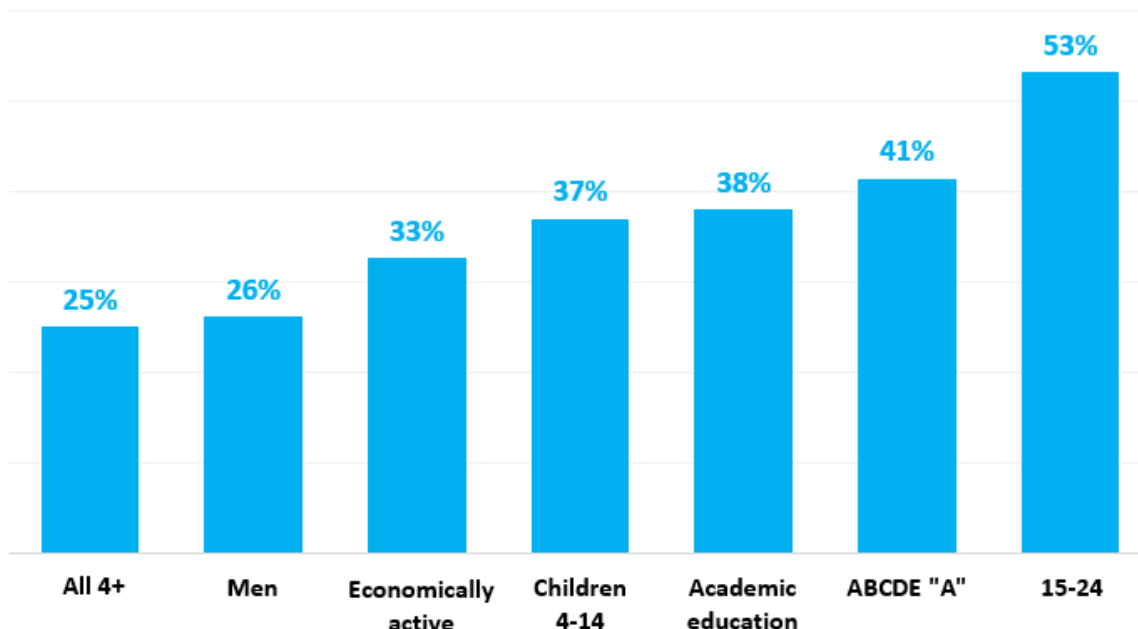


Source: ATO – Nielsen Admosphere, live + TS0-3, 17. 4. 2020

The year-on-year increase in TV viewership in the time period from 11 March to 14 April can be spotted across all groups of the Czech population. **The average increase is 25% (52 minutes).** There is not much difference between men and women, but there are certain groups of people with even much higher relative increase in TV viewing due to various reasons; those are for example economically active viewers (in comparison with the last year, the viewership in this group increased by 33%), children from 4 to 14 years of age (37% increase of viewing), people with academic education (38% increase), category „A” according to the socioeconomic classification ABCDE (42% increase) or young people in the age of 15-24 years (53% increase).

Interannual increase of total TV viewership

11th March - 14th April (5 weeks), 2020 vs. 2019



Source: ATO – Nielsen Admosphere, live + TS0-3, 17. 4. 2020

As for the time spent watching particular types of programmes, news and journalist broadcasts, both focused on the coronavirus pandemic and government measures, have been showing a major increase in viewership. **However, the increase can be also spotted in educational, religious and music programmes that substitute the corresponding activity in public space.** Movies are doing very well, too, since they benefit from the amount of time people spend at home and their need to unwind. On the contrary, TV series and entertainment programmes were limited by the impossibility of creating new, unseen content as well as sports programmes as most of the sport events had to be cancelled.

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