

Yes, Super Bowl ads are expensive, but compared to what?

Article

At an estimated \$7 million for 30 seconds of airtime this year, Super Bowl ads were by far the priciest ad inventory anywhere. The cost of advertising in the big game has doubled since Super Bowl XLVI in February 2012, according to Nielsen data cited by [Superbowl-ads.com](https://www.superbowl-ads.com). Back then, advertisers had to “only” shell out \$3.5 million for a 30-second spot.

That translates to a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6.5% over that 11-year span. Yet, in that same time frame, viewership has barely risen, TV ad spending is down slightly, and the consumer price index (CPI) doesn't come close.

So if Super Bowl ads were a return specialist, they'd be returning the opening kickoff for a touchdown. Here's how other indicators changed in the same time frame:

- **Super Bowl viewers are up 0.2%.** Yes, that's a decimal point, so viewers grew by two-tenths of a percent, according to Superbowl-ads.com citing Nielsen.
- **US TV ad spending is down 0.3%.** Again, fractional, but this is a decrease rather than an increase, according to our estimates.
- **US TV viewers were down 22.1%,** according to our estimates.
- **The US CPI was up 2.6%,** according to the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)' latest data for January 2023.

That said, there's one metric that's actually ahead of Super Bowl ads: average costs per thousand for primetime upfront broadcast and cable ads. Those prices rose by CAGRs of 8.4% and 8.3%, respectively, in the 11 years from the 2008–2009 upfront season to the 2019–2020 season, according to Media Dynamics Inc.

Granted, it's a different time period from the one cited earlier, but that's the last time Media Dynamics released this data. In the same 11-year time span, Super Bowl ad prices rose by 6.0%. At least by one measure, Super Bowl ad price increases aren't so, well, pricey.

For more discussion of Super Bowl ads, from pricing to favorite spots, tune in to [this episode of "Behind the Numbers: The Daily."](#)

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