

How social media ranks fall TV's hit shows

We asked Nielsen to tell us the best-rated series* from the start of the fall TV season—and then had buzz-tracker Trendrr.tv and check-in service GetGlue give us their numbers. Here's how and why they do and don't match up

	NIelsen RATINGS	TRENDRR.TV SOCIAL BUZZ	GETGLUE CHECK-INS
1	 <p>Two and a Half Men (CBS, Sept. 19) 16.7</p>	 <p>Two and a Half Men (CBS, Sept. 19) 510,175</p>	 <p>Dancing with the Stars (ABC, Sept. 19) 19,801</p>
2	 <p>Dancing with the Stars (ABC, Sept. 19) 12.3</p>	 <p>Dancing with the Stars (ABC, Sept. 19) 185,681</p>	 <p>Big Bang Theory, 2 episodes (CBS, Sept. 22) 16,277 average (32,554 total)</p>
3	 <p>NCIS (CBS, Sept. 20) 12.2</p>	 <p>Criminal Minds (CBS, Sept. 21) 146,481</p>	 <p>See above for aggregate score for the two back-to-back BBT episodes</p>
4	 <p>2 Broke Girls (CBS, Sept. 19) 11.5</p>	 <p>Dancing with the Stars Results Show (ABC, Sept. 20) 90,259</p>	 <p>Two and a Half Men (CBS, Sept. 19) 10,732</p>
5	 <p>NCIS: Los Angeles (CBS, Sept. 20) 10.3</p>	 <p>Big Bang Theory, episode 1 (CBS, Sept. 22) 52,809</p>	 <p>Dancing with the Stars Results Show (ABC, Sept. 20) 6,901</p>
6	 <p>Dancing with the Stars Results Show (ABC, Sept. 20) 9.8</p>	 <p>Big Bang Theory, episode 2 (CBS, Sept. 22) 49,391</p>	 <p>NCIS (CBS, Sept. 20) 5,769</p>

SOME EPISODES OF SHOWS BECOME SOCIAL 'EVENTS'

The "Two and a Half Men" season premiere became a social flashpoint thanks to the departure of Charlie Sheen; fans (and nonfans) wanted to render their verdict on his absence and his replacement.

SOME SHOWS' STARS ARE BETTER SOCIAL SALESPEOPLE

New "Two and a Half Men" star Ashton Kutcher, for instance, has more than 7.7 million followers on Twitter.

SOME SHOWS HAVE MORE SOCIAL 'HOOKS'

Reality competitions give social-chatters plenty to latch onto and comment on—from favorite judges and contestants (especially when it comes to elimination time) to specific challenges and even wardrobe malfunctions (hello, Nancy Grace!).

DIFFERENT DEMOS SOCIALIZE DIFFERENTLY

Ratings champ "NCIS" is fronted by 60-year-old Mark Harmon; fans of the show and the network it airs on (CBS) tend to skew older—and less likely to be tweet-happy or hip to new services like GetGlue.

SOME NETWORKS ARE PUSHING SOCIAL MORE THAN OTHERS

Is your favorite show promoting an official Twitter hashtag—like #2BrokeGirls"—onscreen and in off-network promotions? That can make a big difference in social buzz.

SOME NETWORKS ARE REWARDING THEIR MOST SOCIAL FANS

CBS, for instance, incentivizes viewers of "The Big Bang Theory" to check in to the show on GetGlue by sponsoring "BBT" collectible stickers that GetGlue mails out to superfans.

Source: Nielsen Household Ratings (Live+SD)

Source: Trendrr. The Trendrr.tv Total Activity score includes tweet volume, public Facebook updates and GetGlue check-ins

Source: GetGlue. Viewers can "check in" to shows at GetGlue.com or through GetGlue's suite of free mobile apps

*For the purposes of this comparison, we looked at new and returning prime-time series. News, sports and special-events programming are excluded.

SO WHY DO NETWORKS SEEM TO CARE SO MUCH ABOUT SOCIAL TV?

Show-to-show social-TV ratings might not always correlate to Nielsen ratings in a linear sense, but rising and falling social engagement from week to week for individual shows can be very illuminating for networks. "Social buzz does tend to signal tune-in intent," says Trendrr CEO Mark Ghuneim. "People who are socially engaged with a show this week are much more likely to also tune in next week."

Networks are increasingly making the case to advertisers that a highly engaged audience is icing on the cake of solid ratings—icing worthy paying a premium for.

Sinking social engagement over time can serve as the canary in a coal mine for network execs. For instance, declining social engagement for former social-TV champ "Glee" signaled that the show was losing steam. Last year's season premiere garnered over half a million tweets; this year's season premiere dropped by roughly 200,000 tweets—and Nielsen ratings fell 29%. —SIMON DUMENCO