

Study: Shocking Spike in Full Nudity on Broadcast TV

The Parents Television Council (PTC) on Monday released results of a research analysis of nudity on prime-time broadcast television—and the results may shock (and even disgust) you.

During the 2011-2012 season there were 76 incidents of full nudity on 37 shows compared to 15 incidents in 14 shows the previous year, representing a 407 percent increase in incidents. What's more, almost 70 percent of the scenes that depicted full nudity during the 2011–2012 study period were on shows that aired before 9 p.m. and as early as 7 p.m. In comparison, 50 percent of the full nudity scenes aired after 9 p.m. the previous year.

Out of 76 instances of full nudity during the 2011–2012 study period, only five of those depictions occurred on shows that contained an “S” descriptor alerting parents to the explicit adult content. And relative to full-frontal nudity, one instance occurred during the 2010–2011 study period and by the same time the following year, 64 instances of full-frontal nudity had aired. This represents a 6,300 percent increase in just one year.

In other findings, there was a 2,700 percent increase in the use of blurring or pixilation to cover body parts in 2011–2012 compared to the previous year. And during the 2010–2011 study period, black bars, logos and/or conveniently placed objects in a scene were used to block the view of sexual organs from the viewer 87 percent of the time. In contrast, during the 2011–2012 study period, 74 percent of the incidents of full nudity used blurring or pixilation to cover sexual body parts.

In light of the findings, PTC President Tim Winter sent a

letter to congressional members asking them to urge the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to move forward in clearing the backlog of 1.6 million unadjudicated indecency complaints. The following are excerpts from PTC's letter to congressional members:

"In 2006, Congress passed the Broadcast Decency Enforcement Act in response to growing outrage from the American people over the broadcast networks' abuse of the publicly owned broadcast airwaves. Yet since that time, we have seen a concerted effort on the part of the networks to constantly push the outer limit of what may be considered appropriate for the broadcast medium.

"Contrary to what executives from NBC, ABC and CBS told you in 2004 and 2005, and contrary to what attorneys for the networks recently argued before the Supreme Court, they are not acting in the public interest; they are aggressively pursuing a dangerous agenda to completely obliterate any remaining television taboos.

"During prime-time hours across all broadcast networks, use of the bleeped or muted f-word increased from 11 instances in 2005 to 276 instances in 2010—an increase of 2,409 percent. ... It's not just the language that's getting coarser. PTC research has found a staggering increase in the frequency and explicitness of pixelated nudity on the broadcast networks during prime-time hours.

"The networks have made it abundantly clear they have no intention of respecting either the broadcast licenses they've been granted or the public in whose interest they are licensed to serve. Therefore the American people, whose values are being assaulted on a nightly basis, must insist that the Federal Communications Commission vigorously enforce broadcast decency laws, as mandated by the Congress and affirmed by the Supreme Court.

"We call on you to give the FCC your full support for decency enforcement; to urge the FCC to move forward with all due haste in clearing the backlog of 1.6 million unadjudicated indecency complaints; and to give the FCC the tools it needs to ensure enforcement actions are meaningful and appropriate ... Because Our Children Are Watching."