May sweeps make it official: New Orleans TV news is a three-station ratings race now

At left, WVUE's 10 p.m. news team, Juan Kincaid, Lee Zurik, Kim Holden and David Bernard won their time slot in the New Orleans’ May sweeps ratings race. Meanwhile, WDSU's 6 p.m. team, right, led by Margaret Orr, Sula Kim and Scott Walker, won their time slot. (File images)

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What's the most-watched TV news station in New Orleans? For decades, the answer was the same: WWL. Now, in the suddenly hyper-competitive local TV landscape, the answer is: Depends what time it is.

In the recently concluded May sweeps ratings period, Fox affiliate WVUE was champ in the 10 p.m. hour, winning the late local news battle for the second consecutive sweeps period, according to Nielsen weekday ratings figures. (Note: NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune and WVUE-FOX 8 have been news partners since 2013.)

NBC affiliate WDSU boasted the most-watched local weekday news program at 6 p.m., while CBS affiliate WWL still owned the ratings crown at 4:40, 5 and 6 a.m., noon and 5 p.m. weekdays.

But while each station can boast of its own May wins, the underlying story is the continued easing of the ratings death grip that WWL had on the market in almost every time period over the last 40 years.
In May 2016, WVUE unseated WWL as the 10 p.m. news champ after an unbroken streak of 38 years. This year, WDSU overtook it for the 6 p.m. crown as well, marking the first time in decades WWL has lost in two key time slots, at 6 and 10 p.m.

If there's good news for WWL, it's that it hangs onto a solid grip on the noon time slot. It's also still leading at 5 p.m., even in the face of a surging WDSU. The gap, however, appears to be closing: Last year at this time, WWL's 5 p.m. newscast boasted a 7.6 rating, compared to a 6.4 for WDSU. This year, WWL posted a 7.2, compared to 6.7 for WDSU.

WWL still leads in the early-morning time slots, but many viewers are not switching from Channel 4 to 54 at 7 a.m., when the WWL morning show migrates to sister station WUPL to make room for "CBS This Morning."

CNN fires Kathy Griffin from New Year's gig
Comic's attempt at humor drew swift condemnation from both sides of the aisle.

Both WDSU and ABC affiliate WGNO air network morning shows ("Today" and "Good Morning America") at the same time, leaving WVUE's morning show and WUPL's carrying of the WWL morning show as the only local news option between 7 and 9 a.m. In that two-way race, WVUE finished ahead in both hours.

Below, find the full weekday local news ratings averages for May 2017 from Nielsen, with each rating point representing 1 percent of total TV homes, or about 6,400 households.
• **4:30 a.m.**: WWL, 2.2; WVUE, 1.3; WDSU, 1.2; WGNO (network), 0.7
• **5 a.m.**: WWL, 3.7; WDSU, 2.0; WVUE, 1.9; WGNO, 0.7
• **6 a.m.**: WWL, 5.5; WDSU, 4.0; WVUE, 3.2; WGNO, 0.9
• **7 a.m.**: WDSU (network), 4.6; WVUE, 3.7; WWL (network), 3.6; WUPL, 2.0; WGNO (network), 1.5
• **8 a.m.**: WDSU (network), 3.7; WVUE, 3.3; WWL (network), 3.0; WUPL, 1.9; WGNO (network), 1.1
• **Noon**: WWL, 8.8; WVUE, 3.0
• **4 p.m.**: WDSU, 4.6; WVUE, 3.4
• **5 p.m.**: WWL, 7.2; WDSU, 6.7; WVUE, 4.6; WGNO, 1.1
• **5:30 p.m.**: WDSU (network), 8.18; WWL (network), 6.8; WVUE, 4.6
• **6 p.m.**: WDSU, 7.15; WWL, 7.05; WGNO, 0.8
• **9 p.m.**: WVUE, 6.33
• **10 p.m.**: WVUE, 6.8; WWL, 6.3; WDSU, 5.9; WGNO, 0.7