



■ TV ADVERTISING

Stephen Colbert's Final Stretch Drove a Late-Night YouTube Surge

Plus a look at TV ad spend and impressions trends over the years, via iSpot

Eleanor Semeraro • May 22, 2026 • 3 min read



After 11 seasons, the lights have gone dark on *The Late Show With Stephen Colbert*. While many fans and industry professionals have expressed discouragement and even anger at the show's cancellation, Colbert is taking the high road: He told the New York Times "I've really liked working



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with CBS...They've been great partners. And I'd like to end it that way... I feel so much better to be 'grateful for' than to be 'mad about.'"

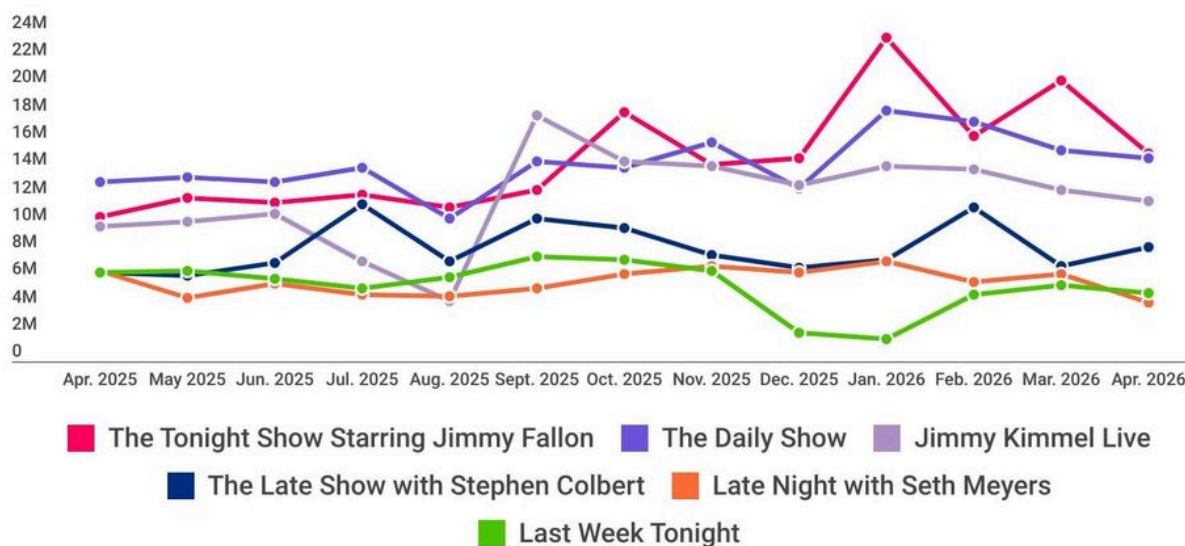
As Colbert closed out his iconic run, we looked at the show using data from *The Measure* partners Tubular Labs and iSpot, to uncover social video as well as TV advertising trends.

According to [Tubular Labs](#), unique U.S. YouTube viewers all increased in April year-over-year across the four major late-night programs — *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*, *The Daily Show*, *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* and Colbert's CBS flagship. But Colbert's growth stood out, particularly in the final stretch of his tenure.

- Colbert's show saw a 30% year-over-year increase in unique U.S. YouTube viewers, reaching 1.9 million viewers in April.
- U.S. minutes watched climbed 9% year-over-year to more than 534 million for the month.
- In recent months, the show's U.S. YouTube watch-time and unique viewers both jumped more than 20% month-over-month as viewers tuned in for increasingly loose, personal and politically sharp final episodes.
- Five of Colbert's 10 most-watched videos of 2026 have come since April 1, and the show's top-performing clip of the year remains Colbert's [interview with Texas senate nominee Jame Talarico](#) (9.4 million views).

State of Late Night YouTube Viewers

Late Night Shows By Unique U.S. YouTube Viewers, Apr. 2025-Apr. 2026 (via Tubular Labs)



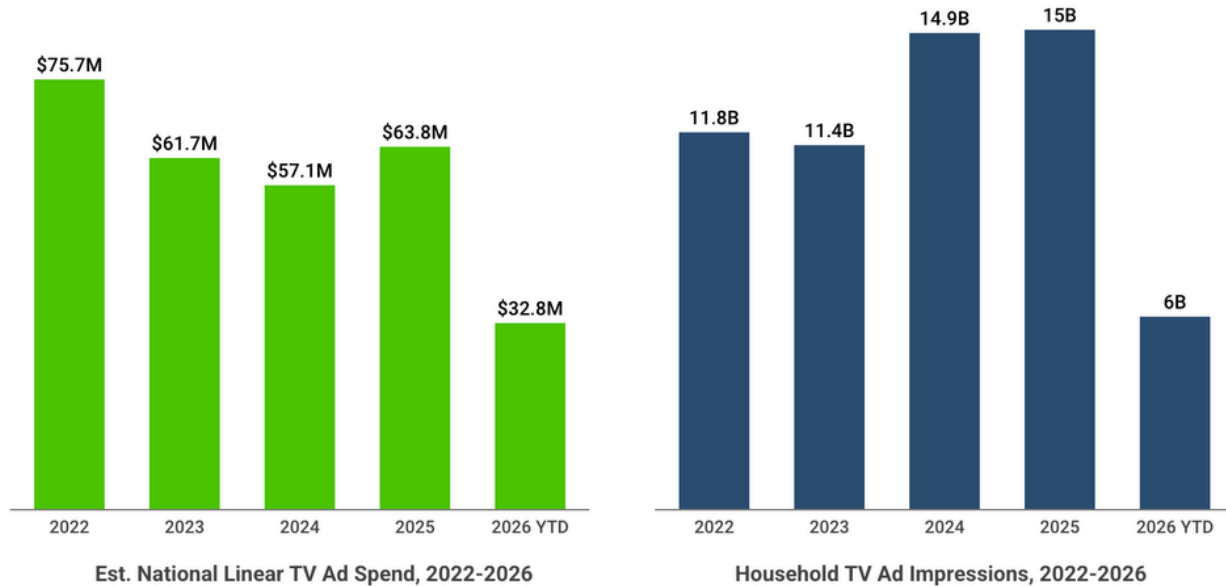
Moving to the TV side of things, according to [iSpot](#), estimated national linear TV ad spend during *The Late Show With Stephen Colbert* has generally declined since 2022. That year, advertisers spent an estimated \$75.7 million on ads; by 2025 spend was around \$63.8 million. By the show's final week in 2026, ad spend reached \$32.8 million, over half of 2025's total.

In terms of where Colbert's show ranks on CBS by ad spend, it's dropped from No. 10 in 2022 to No. 13 in 2025; So far in 2026 it's No. 12.

All of that being said, TV ad reach has increased overall since 2022, from 11.8 million household impressions to 15 million in 2025 and 6 million in 2026, suggesting that even as ad dollars shrank viewership has remained strong. In 2026, Colbert's show ranked No. 10 for reach on CBS through mid May.

The Late Show With Stephen Colbert Over the Years: Increased Reach, Reduced Ad Spending

After declining from 2022-2024, estimated national linear TV ad spend during *Colbert* rebounded in 2025, and as of May 2026 had reached over half of 2025's total. Meanwhile, household TV ad impressions have trended up over the years.



Colbert's time slot will be taken over by *Comics Unleashed With Byron Allen*. And though it may not have the cache of some of the late-night greats, there's no denying Allen's show has grown substantially year-over-year. iSpot found that:

- Although *Comics Unleashed* has less than half the ad impressions as *The Late Show* year to date, *Comic's* reach has exploded over the last year, up 1157% in the January - mid May time frame.
- During that same period, ad airings increased just 6.5%, suggesting that the show has been steadily building its audience.
- Several industries in particular are fueling the rise: OTC allergy, cold & flu brands saw reach during the show jump by nearly 81X year-to-date vs.

2025, while cleaning supplies and freshener brand impressions were up 40X and wireless brands grew impressions by 34X year-over-year.



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