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March 12, 2020

Associated Press
California AG drops challenge to T-Mobile-Sprint merger

Led by Comcast and Charter, the cable industry increased its dominance of US home Internet in 2019, finishing the year with a 67-percent market share.

Leichtman Research Group's latest broadband-market review found that the top eight cable companies combined to add 3.14 million broadband subscribers in 2019, reaching a total of 67.98 million. Comcast and Charter accounted for most of the total subscribers and most of the gains: Comcast added 1.41 million subscribers in the year to reach 28.63 million, and Charter added 1.41 million to reach 26.66 million. Cox, the third biggest cable company in the Leichtman review, added 110,000 subscribers to hit 5.17 million. The net additions for each company were slightly higher than in 2018.

Los Angeles Times
Digital entertainment spending passes global box office as streaming transforms Hollywood

The top eight traditional phone companies, which offer a mix of copper and fiber services, lost a combined 619,605 subscribers to reach a low of 33.24 million in 2019. The top four telcos—AT&T, Verizon, CenturyLink, and Frontier—all lost subscribers.

Ars Technica
Porn, gore, and gambling habits airs in Virgin Media breach

AT&T lost 312,000 subscribers, dropping to 15.39 million, after losing only 18,000 subscribers in 2018. Verizon lost just 5,000 subscribers in 2019, remaining steady at 6.96 million. CenturyLink lost 134,000 to drop to 4.68 million at the end of 2019. Frontier was in especially bad shape, losing 235,000 subscribers to drop to 3.5 million overall. Frontier is expected to file for bankruptcy this month.

IndieWire

Disney Boss Shuts Down Shareholder Claiming LGBTQ Content Is Hurting the Company

BuzzFeed The Traffic Merchant – Daniel Yomtobian built an empire on dubious online advertising traffic.

"At the end of 2019, cable had a 67 percent market share vs. 33 percent for telcos," up from a 65 percent/35 percent split a year earlier, Leichtman wrote, adding that "telcos had more net losses in 2019 than in any prior year." The cable/telco split was 63 percent/37 percent in early 2017.

The Leichtman review of 16 broadband providers accounts for about 96 percent of the US market. Combined, the cable and telco firms added 2.53 million subscribers in 2019 to hit a total of 101.22 million.

Not enough fiber

The telco industry has the technology to overtake cable, if only it would deploy more of it. Fiber-to-the-home service can deliver gigabit speeds both upstream and downstream, while Comcast's gigabit cable is paired with paltry 35Mbps uploads. (Comcast also offers fiber service with symmetrical speeds in some areas.)

But phone companies haven't deployed fiber to enough homes to offset the declining relevance of copper-based DSL networks. Anyone who ditches DSL is likely to sign up for cable—if they can get it, a big if given that large portions of rural America lack both cable and fiber access.

While customers in cable territory generally have access to high-speed broadband, they often pay high prices because there's so little competition. In July 2018, an analysis of Federal Communications Commission data found that Comcast was the only choice for 30 million Americans when it came to broadband speeds of at least 25Mbps downstream and 3Mbps up. Charter was the only choice for 38 million Americans. Cable companies rarely compete against each other, so customers usually have only one high-speed option unless there's both a cable and fiber provider on their street.

FCC Chairman Ajit Pai claims his net neutrality repeal and other deregulatory initiatives have increased broadband expansions. But Pai has struggled to provide any proof and has resorted to taking credit for deployments that were planned during the Obama administration. Comcast, Charter, and AT&T have all been reducing capital expenditures instead of increasing them. — ***Ars Technica***

