THE STATE OF MEDIA

2025

CROWD REACT MEDIA
A Division of harker bos group

harker bos group

Presentation of research findings by Crowd React Media, a division of Harker Bos Group

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CROWD REACT MEDIA

Welcome

A message from one of the founding parters of Crowd React Media, a division of Harker Bos Group, on this year's State of Media report.

KATIE MILLER
FOUNDING PARTNER

Thank you for reading the second annual State of Media report. Whether you're joining us for the first time or returning after last year's debut, we're glad you're here. This year's study builds on the foundation we laid in 2024, expanding our insights across radio, streaming TV, podcasts, social media, music streaming, YouTube, video games, and more.

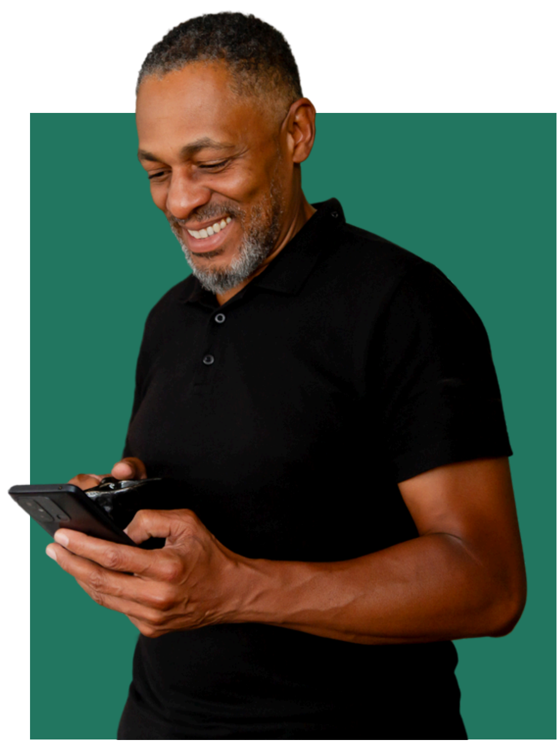
One of the biggest advantages of doing this work year-over-year is that we get to watch the media landscape shift in real time. And this year, there's a shift worth paying attention to: overall media usage is down. Not across the board — but noticeably so in certain demos and platforms.

2025 signals a return to the new media normalcy. We're seeing dips in engagement that seem to reflect broader lifestyle changes. Some audiences are pulling back. Some are overwhelmed by content fatigue. Some are being a little more selective. Others, let's be honest, are just tired of the algorithm.

This year's report isn't just a snapshot of where media stands today—it's a chance to understand how different audiences are evolving, what they're leaning into, and where they're quietly stepping away. We'll compare this year's data to 2024's data, break down what's growing, what's slowing, and what might be on the brink of something new.

Thanks again for being part of the conversation.

— Katie Miller, Co-Founder, Crowd React Media & VP of Client Relations, Harker Bos Group



A GUIDE TO THE REPORT

Who We Talked To

Between February and April 2025, we surveyed 1,091 U.S. adults (ages 18+) about their media habits, preferences, frustrations, and routines. The audience spans all regions of the U.S., a balanced mix of genders and age groups, and a wide range of household incomes and occupations. The data in this report reflects the diversity of today's media consumers—and how differently they engage across platforms.

Fielding:
February to April 2025

Who Counts in the Numbers?

To keep things consistent across the report, we define two key types of media engagement:

Audience Members
These are people who interact with a media type frequently (3–5 days per week) or occasionally (1–2 days per week). They are considered part of that media's active audience, and most of our media-specific insights are based on their responses.

Media Cume
This is a broader measure. It includes anyone who engages with the media type at all—whether frequently, occasionally, or rarely (less than once a week). Only those who say they never use the format are excluded. When we reference cume, we're showing overall reach, not just core users.

Why It Matters
We use "Audience Members" to reflect the people regularly tuning in, clicking in, or logging on. "Media Cume" helps us show the total footprint of a platform. Both help tell the full story of who's really engaging with today's media.

CURRENT STATE OF MEDIA IN 2025

Media engagement in 2025 remains incredibly high—across the board. When we zoom out and look not just at weekly users, but at total participation (including those who engage less than once a week), the numbers tell a clear story: media is a near-universal presence in our lives.

As mentioned earlier, we define this broader measure as Media Cume—the combined percentage of adults who engage frequently, occasionally, or even rarely with each media type. And in 2025, every platform cleared a major benchmark: not a single one fell below 50%. In fact, most are far above it.

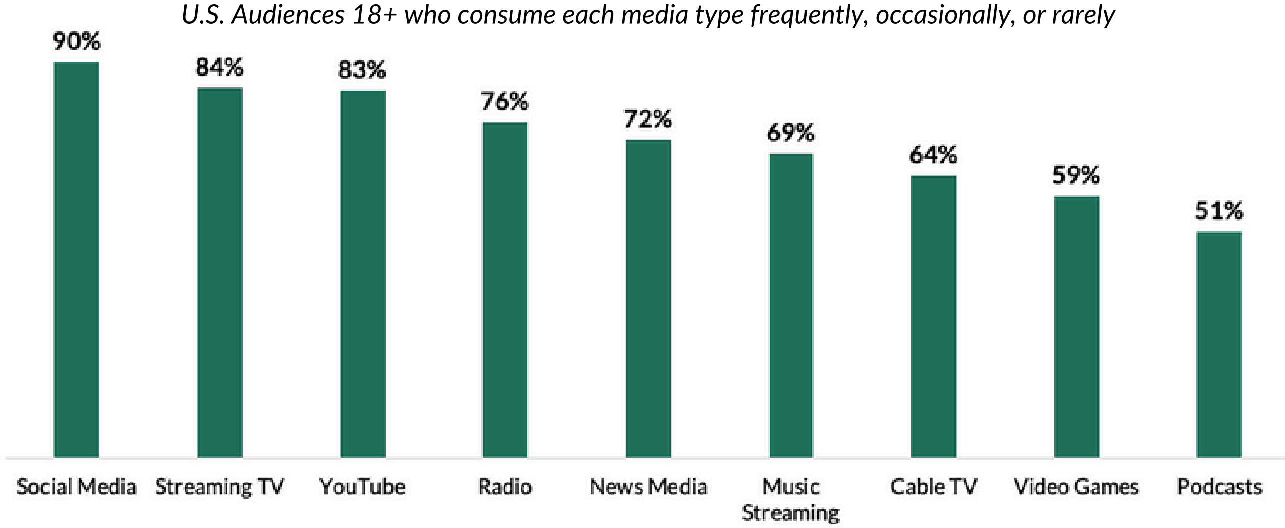
All media types have over 50% cume, meaning over half of American audiences 18+ consume them.

Think about that. If media were a product—and it is—having 50–90% of the population use your product at least sometimes would be a cause for celebration. This level of saturation is rare, and it shows how deeply integrated media is into everyday life.

Even traditional platforms like Cable TV (64%), Radio (76%), and News Media (72%) continue to draw significant audiences, proving that while habits evolve, legacy media is far from obsolete. These formats remain key players in the national media diet.

Weekly Media Cume

U.S. Audiences 18+ who consume each media type frequently, occasionally, or rarely



But What About Frequency?

While cume gives us a sense of total reach, conversion tells us something even more critical: how many of those users are coming back regularly—3 to 5 days a week.

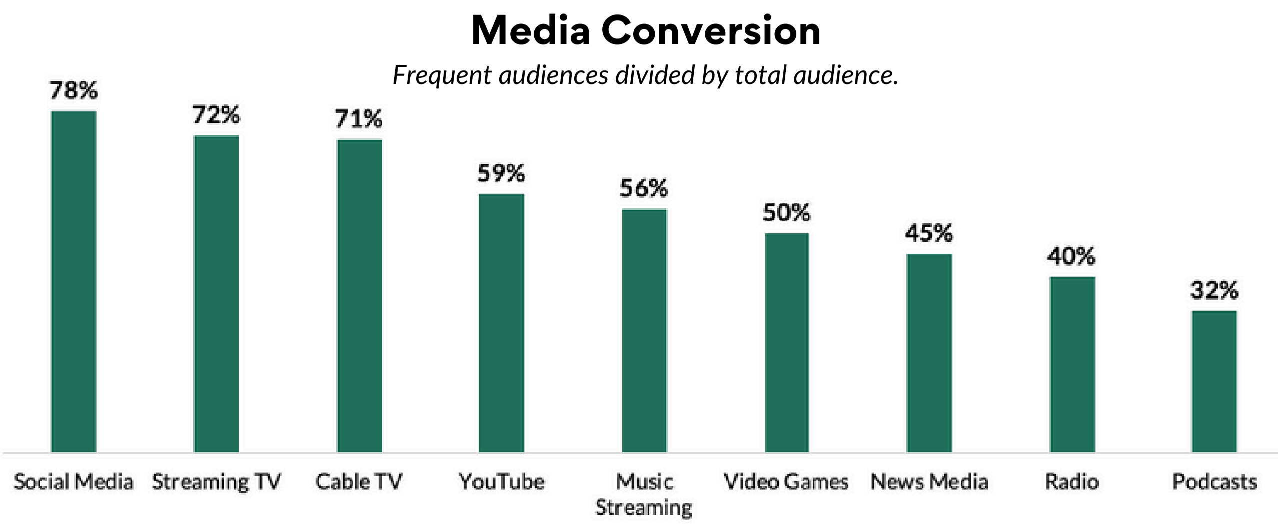
We define Conversion as the percentage of **frequency divided by cume**. This tells us which platforms are successfully embedding themselves into the audience's routines.

Why does that matter? Because daily habits drive loyalty. They create sustained attention, deeper engagement, and stronger advertiser value. It's one thing to be used—it's another to be a habit.

Here's what we see when we examine conversion rates:

- Social Media (78%), Streaming TV (72%), and Cable TV (71%) lead the pack. These platforms aren't just used—they're integrated into daily life.
- YouTube (59%), Music Streaming (56%), and Video Games (50%) sit in the middle tier—still strong, but more variable.
- Radio (40%), News Media (45%), and Podcasts (32%) are lower-conversion platforms. They're still present in people's lives—but they're not daily companions in the way they once were.

That drop in conversion is notable. These formats are being accessed less frequently by those who still consider themselves users. For programmers and advertisers alike, this shift is worth watching closely. It means we're not just competing for attention anymore—we're competing for habit.

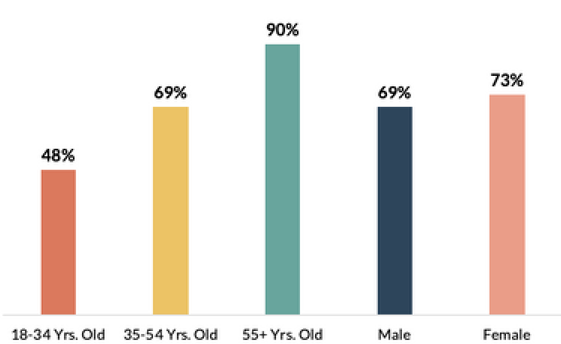


A Surprising Bright Spot: Cable TV's Stronghold

One format that deserves some gloating? Cable.

Yes, its total cume is down a bit year-over-year. But Cable's conversion rate is one of the highest on the board—71%. That means the people who are still watching, are watching often.

And when we break it down by demographics, the strength is even clearer:



- Among 55+ adults, Cable's conversion rate is nearly perfect—a staggering 90%.
- 35–54-year-olds remain highly loyal, with 69% conversion.

In other words: Cable may not be growing, but it's not fading—it's holding firm. For stations and advertisers targeting older or middle-aged consumers, that consistency is invaluable. The audience might be shrinking in size, but it's deepening in loyalty.

CONVERSION IS THE NEW KING

In a media landscape where nearly every platform can boast huge reach, the real competition is for frequency. It's not enough to be used—it's about being used often.

That's where conversion comes in.

Conversion = % of total users who are frequent users (3–5 days per week).

It's the clearest indicator of habit, loyalty, and long-term value.

High Conversion = Habit

Platforms like Social Media (78%), Streaming TV (72%), and Cable (71%) have cracked the code. They're part of the daily rhythm.

Low Conversion = At Risk

Formats like Radio (40%), News Media (45%), and Podcasts (32%) still attract users—but they're increasingly peripheral, not part of the core routine.

What It Means

For media companies: Fight for frequency. Your future depends on it.

For advertisers: Invest where the frequents are. That's where your impressions stick.

COMPARING 2025 TO 2024

What's Really Going on with Media Usage

Yes, most media formats are slightly down in 2025—but it's not bad news. Instead, it signals a realignment. After years of heightened consumption driven by the pandemic, election cycles, and massive lifestyle shifts, Americans are settling into more sustainable routines. This isn't disengagement—it's normalization.

From Lockdown Habits to Real-World Rhythms

Let's be honest—media usage surged when we were stuck at home. Streaming marathons, podcast binges, and endless news scrolls became part of everyday life during the pandemic. But as workplaces fill back up and routines normalize (return-to-office mandates, anyone?), those peaks were bound to settle. What we're seeing now is a recalibration—media use is still robust, just less around-the-clock.

Post-Peak, Not Post-Media

Across nearly every platform, total weekly use is down slightly. But here's the nuance:

- The steepest drops are among frequent users (3–5x per week), suggesting less binge behavior.
- Occasional use held steady—or even ticked up.
- It's not a collapse. It's a return to normalcy.

Post-Election Dip... Kind Of

The 2024 election year brought peak political engagement across news, talk formats, and social media. In 2025, with no active presidential race dominating headlines, some of that intensity has cooled. That said, with ongoing political chaos (yes, Trump is still very much making noise), engagement hasn't disappeared—it's just more episodic. Think fewer nightly deep-dives, more reactive moments when headlines break.

A Fractured Landscape With Sky-High Use

We're not witnessing media fatigue—we're witnessing media focus. Americans still consume a lot of media; they're just being more intentional. Instead of chasing every platform, users are gravitating toward the ones that truly fit their lives—YouTube, streaming TV, social media, cable news, radio, and podcasts among them. It's a fractured landscape, but a vibrant one, with deep engagement on the platforms people trust and enjoy most.

The Decline Isn't Universal

The biggest drops didn't happen across the board—they came mostly from **younger adults** and **men**. Women's usage held steadier, and **older adults (55+) actually increased** their engagement with some formats.

Key Demographic Trends

The shifts in media habits are far from universal—they're deeply influenced by age and gender. Among **young adults (18–34), we saw the most dramatic drops across several formats**. Cable TV, radio, podcasts, and news media all took significant hits with this group, suggesting that younger audiences are moving away from traditional platforms more quickly than others. Even more digital-native formats like streaming TV, music streaming, and video games saw moderate dips, though social media and YouTube usage remained strong and steady—confirming those platforms as daily mainstays for this demo.

Men also showed a noticeable overall decline in weekly media engagement. From cable and radio to podcasts, music streaming, and video games, most formats lost ground with the male audience. YouTube saw only a minor dip, and both streaming TV and social media held mostly steady—indicating that men may be shifting to a smaller set of core platforms rather than expanding their media use.

In contrast, **women's media habits were relatively stable** year over year. The most notable change was a decline in podcast usage, but other categories saw only minor drops. This steadiness suggests women may be maintaining more consistent routines in their media consumption, even as overall fragmentation increases.

Meanwhile, **older adults (55+) actually increased their weekly use of several platforms**. Cable TV, podcasts, news media, and streaming TV all rose among this group, suggesting growing comfort with a mix of traditional and digital formats. The only major decline was on YouTube, which may reflect shifting content preferences or a move toward other on-demand platforms. In general, 55+ audiences remain engaged and loyal to the media they trust.

LEGACY VS. DIGITAL MEDIA YEAR-OVER-YEAR

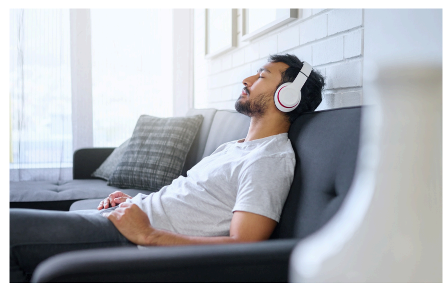
Legacy Media Holds Its Ground—Especially with Older Audiences

Despite digital disruption, Cable TV and radio remain essential, especially for Boomers and regional audiences.

- Cable TV now accounts for an even larger share of 55+ time, both in reach and conversion.
- Radio use declined among younger audiences, but stayed strong among 35+.

These formats offer something unique: habit, trust, and local relevance. Their value isn't disappearing—it's concentrating in specific demos.

Digital Platforms: Maturing, Not Fading



- Social media use held steady overall, with slight upticks in frequent users.
- Streaming TV and YouTube remain powerful, though growth has leveled off.
- Music streaming saw dips among men and younger users—but remains popular.
- YouTube is now stable rather than surging, with younger users showing consistent high use.

Why That Matters: We're moving into a mature digital landscape, where people aren't exploring more platforms—they're narrowing to the ones that matter most. For traditional platforms, that means the opportunity is in meeting digital users where they are, not trying to pull them back.

Podcasts & Video Games: Solid, But Shifting

- Both categories are down around 10 points in total weekly reach.
- Declines are concentrated among younger men and heavier media users.

These are time-intensive formats that often get squeezed when people get busier—especially with more in-office work, family demands, or shifting routines.

What This Means for Media Companies and Advertisers

- Declines aren't across the board—they're demographic-specific. Targeting by age and gender is more important than ever.
- Younger audiences are sampling more but committing less. Focus on quality engagement, not just reach.
- Older adults are increasing time on core platforms. Advertisers targeting Boomers should lean into these stable—and even growing—channels.
- Women are your most consistent audience. If your platform is holding female audiences, that's a core strength.
- Platform loyalty now matters more than novelty. It's not just where people show up—it's how often, and how deeply they engage.

CABLE / SATELLITE TV

Cable TV in 2025: Still a Player, Still a Powerhouse (If You Know Your Audience)

Despite the explosion of streaming and the rise of cord-cutting narratives, Cable TV remains a key part of the media diet—especially for older viewers. The story isn't just about slow decline; it's about demographic concentration and the power of retention.

Who's Watching Cable TV?

Across our national sample, 64% of adults say they use Cable TV sometimes—that includes frequent users (3–5 days/week), occasional users (1–2 days/week), and even those who watch rarely. That may not sound groundbreaking, but in a media environment filled with competition, 64% cume is a strong showing.

Where Cable really shines? **Conversion.**

Cable boasts a 71% conversion rate, meaning more than 7 in 10 people who use Cable TV are using it frequently. That's among the highest of any platform—higher than YouTube, music streaming, and even radio.

And when we break it down, the story gets even better:

- Among 55+ adults, Cable's conversion is a staggering 90%. Nearly everyone who watches is doing so often.
- In the 35–54 demo, conversion is a solid 69%, making it one of the most habit-driven platforms in middle age.
- Yes, 18–34s have lower frequency (32%)—but half still engage with Cable weekly. The conversion rate here is lower at 48%, but Cable is far from absent among younger adults.

Among 55+ adults, Cable's conversion is 90%.

Compared to 2024: Weekly reach dipped slightly across demos (down ~9 points overall), largely due to younger viewers tuning in less often. But among those who stay? They stay loyal. This is not a platform people are dabbling in—it's one they keep coming back to.

What Are They Watching?

- Cable TV isn't one-size-fits-all—it's driven by genre loyalty and life stage.
- News and current events dominate, with 43% watching frequently and another 23% occasionally.
- Movies and general entertainment are also strong: 37% frequent, 38% occasional.
- Sports draw a clear gender divide: 59% of men watch sports on Cable vs. 33% of women.
- Lifestyle and religious programming overindex with women and conservative audiences.

Programming Trends by Age:

- 18–34s and 35–54s lean into sports, movies, and entertainment.
- 55+ viewers are the backbone of news and religious programming.

Cable vs. Streaming in 2025

Streaming may dominate headlines—but not every corner of the media map.

- Cable TV is still the #1 source for live news and sports among older adults.
- Streaming leads for scripted dramas, documentaries, and kids' content.
- But Cable's hybrid future is already here—many local news viewers now mix linear and digital (e.g., watching highlights via YouTube or smart TV apps).

Don't Confuse Decline with Disappearance

Cable's total reach may have slipped—but its conversion rate is elite. Where it's strong, it's rock solid. For older and middle-aged adults, it's not just a media option—it's part of the routine.

Key Takeaways for Cable Networks & Stations

- Double down on your core demos.
  - Prioritize news, lifestyle, and religious formats for 55+.
  - Sports and general entertainment are still sticky for 35–54.
- Go hybrid.
  - Clip and share your content via YouTube or smart TV apps.
  - Make your digital platforms work as an extension—not a replacement—of your linear offering.
- Promote your consistency.
  - You're not "trending," you're trusted. That's what matters to advertisers.

Key Takeaways for Advertisers

- Cable delivers frequency. It's one of the best platforms for high-quality, repeat impressions—especially among older, affluent demos.
- Plan for dual-screen engagement. Many viewers watch on cable and follow up on digital—be visible in both places.
- Target by genre and time slot. Sports and news remain two of the highest-trust environments for advertisers looking to break through.

Cable is one of the best platforms for high-quality, repeat impressions among older, affluent demos.

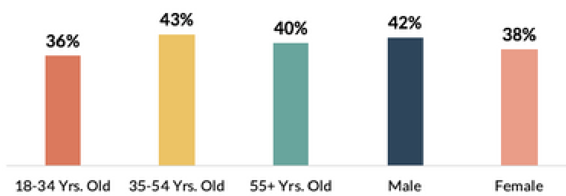
RADIO

Radio Remains a Staple in Media Diets—But the Daily Habit Is Fading

Radio continues to play a vital role in the lives of American adults. While streaming audio and podcasts have grown, traditional AM/FM radio still commands a broad and diverse audience, especially during commutes and work hours. Many listeners value the familiarity of their favorite stations, the companionship of local hosts, and the curated experience of radio programming.

Usage Snapshot:

Radio's total cume remains strong: 76% of adults say they listen to AM/FM radio at least occasionally. But the more important metric in 2025 is conversion—how many of those listeners are tuning in frequently (3–5 days per week)?



Radio's conversion by age & gender

That's the real challenge: Radio is still in people's lives—but it's not part of their daily rhythm the way it once was. This shift in frequency puts pressure on stations to re-earn their place in everyday routines.

Who's Listening?

Radio's weekly cume is strongest among 55+ adults (82%). Men are slightly more likely to tune in than women (77% vs. 75%). While reach among younger adults (18–34) has dropped to 69%, that still represents over two-thirds of the demo — a solid showing for a platform sometimes assumed to be aging out.

Still in the Mix

Radio may not lead the charts, but its reach remains remarkably stable—particularly among 35–54 and 55+ audiences.

Formats, Habits & Habitats

Let's dive into the different formats. Music remains the dominant use for radio, with 88% of listeners tuning in for music content. News/Talk comes next (36%), followed by Sports (20%) and Religious programming (11%).

Men are more likely to gravitate toward Music (84%), Sports (31%) and News/Talk (46%) formats, while women lead in Music (92%). The age groups all remain relatively similar.

MUSIC RADIO

The Heart of Radio Listening

Music remains the heart of radio listening—and it's not a one-genre-fits-all situation. When we asked listeners what types of music they regularly tune into on the radio, Rock came out on top at 60%, followed closely by Pop (50%), Hip-hop/Rap (41%), and Country (40%). Urban RnB (25%) also captured a solid audience, with smaller but notable shares for Jazz (11%), Classical (18%), Religious/Gospel (20%), and Spanish-language music (6%)*

**Note, The State of Media 2025 is an English-language study. To dive into Spanish-language radio, we conduct an annual State of Spanish-language Media study.*

Rock

Rock is the broadest tent in radio, pulling from every generation. Among rock fans, a whopping 85% say they regularly listen to Classic Rock, making it the single most dominant subgenre we measured. Modern Rock (48%) and Alternative Rock (41%) lean younger, but all three categories pull respectable numbers across demos.

Pop

Pop isn't just Top 40. The most popular subgenre is Classic Hits—songs from the '80s, '90s, and early 2000s—favored by 77% of pop fans. Adult Contemporary (55%) and Top 40 (51%) are both strong, while 34% prefer Easy Listening or Mellow pop formats. Women slightly over-index on Pop overall, and listeners aged 35–54 are particularly strong across most pop subformats.

Hip-Hop and RnB

Hip-hop and RnB radio continues to be youth-driven—but not exclusively. Among 18–34s, 75% say they regularly listen to Hip-hop/Rap on the radio, but even older demos still tune in. New Hip-hop is more popular with men, while women are significantly more likely to say they listen to throwbacks (79%). Urban RnB skews slightly older, with strong interest in both current tracks (61%) and throwbacks (86%).

Country

Country stands out for its cross-generational appeal. Whether you're 18 or 58, chances are you're listening to some combination of Classic Country (58%), 80s/90s Country (72%), or New Country (68%). Women lead in Country listenership, and the 35–54 demo is especially active across all subgenres.

Even formats with smaller audiences—like Jazz, Classical, Religious/Gospel, or Spanish-language music—play an important role in serving niche or culturally specific audiences. Their reach may be more modest, but their listener base tends to be loyal.

Music radio remains diverse in sound and in audience. The takeaway? There's no single "radio listener profile"—just many passionate groups tuning in for the music that fits their taste, age, background, or mood.

NEWS/TALK RADIO

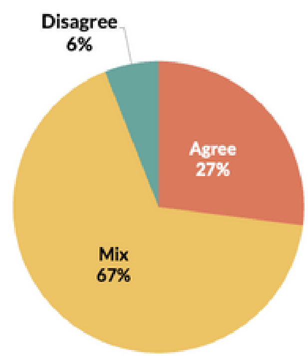
Variety, Reasons & Viewpoints

News/Talk radio is listened to by over one third of radio audiences (36%). News/Talk radio listeners are clear in their preference for variety, both in subject matter and presentation. A strong majority (81%) say they prefer shows that cover a mix of topics, rather than focusing narrowly on a single issue. This appetite for breadth also extends to tone and structure—67% of listeners want a blend of commentary and hard news, instead of content that leans heavily one way or the other.

The reasons people tune into News/Talk vary, but they consistently point toward intellectual engagement. Many listeners cite the desire to be more informed and to go beyond headlines, with 45% saying their primary reason is to become more informed, and another 41% seeking timely breaking news. Local relevance remains a major draw, with one in three listeners tuning in to stay up to date on what's happening in their community.

Entertainment also plays a role. Over a third of News/Talk fans (37%) say they listen because they enjoy the format, while others value the chance to hear opinions and debate—either from hosts (24%) or callers (24%). There's no single formula for the ideal News/Talk program structure. Preferences are split, but the most favored setup is a single host who brings on guests and takes calls (31%), followed by multi-host formats, either with aligned viewpoints (24%) or with larger panels (22%).

When it comes to how listeners relate to the hosts themselves, the vast majority (67%) want a mix of agreement and disagreement in viewpoints. Only 27% say they prefer to mostly agree with the host, while 6% actively seek out perspectives they typically disagree with. This suggests that News/Talk radio serves not just to reinforce beliefs but also to challenge and expand them.



Most News/Talk audiences prefer to experience a mix of agreement & disagreement with the host(s).

Finally, in terms of content focus, a broad approach is again preferred. Two-thirds of listeners want a mix of local issues, global affairs, and cultural topics. Interest in cultural content skews younger, with 16% of 18–34-year-olds indicating a preference for it, compared to virtually none of the 55+ audience.

Generational Divide in News/Talk Content Preferences

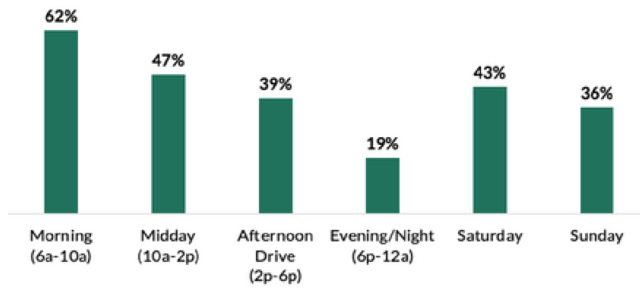
Gen Z is bringing a new appetite to the News/Talk format: 16% say they want cultural content woven into the conversation. For Boomers, that number drops to nearly zero—showing just how different generations approach what makes a show worth listening to.

The Commute is Key

For 72% of radio audiences —especially parents and professionals—radio remains the go-to medium while driving. This in-car dominance means local traffic, weather, and real-time updates are still sticky features, and great ad vehicles too.

The Rhythm of the Day

Radio remains a part of the everyday routine, with listening peaking in the morning hours (6–10 AM)—a time when 62% of listeners are tuned in. This aligns with long-standing commuting patterns and habit-driven consumption, making morning drive the crown jewel of dayparts for both programming and ad placement.



Radio Listenership by Daypart

But opportunity doesn't end there.

Midday: A Rising Moment for Reach

Nearly half of radio listeners (47%) tune in during midday (10 AM–2 PM)—a daypart often overlooked in strategy. As work-from-home and hybrid schedules become more common, this block has evolved from background music to active listening. It's a window where stations can connect with professionals, stay-at-home parents, and midday shoppers—groups that are harder to reach through other media.

Afternoons and Evenings: Tapering, Not Vanishing

Listening dips slightly in the afternoon drive (2–6 PM), with 39% of listeners still engaged—making it the third most popular block. Evening and night listening (6 PM–12 AM) is more niche, attracting 19% of the audience, and often geared toward music fans, hobbyists, or syndicated content followers.

Don't Sleep on the Weekends

While weekdays dominate, the weekend is far from quiet:

- Saturday listening holds strong at 43%, driven by errands, events, and on-the-go activity.
- Sunday listening still reaches over a third of the audience (36%), often powered by religious, community, or sports programming.

Together, these figures suggest that smart programming and advertising strategies should look beyond just the AM hours. The whole week—and the full day—offers meaningful touchpoints for brands and broadcasters alike.

Engagement, Trust, and the Power of Local

Radio remains a trusted source of news, entertainment, and community updates. 80% of listeners say local event coverage is important:

- 32% say it's very important (especially 42% of 18–34s)
- 47% say it's somewhat important
- Only 21% say it's not, with older adults more likely to fall in that group

This emotional and regional relevance is one of radio's biggest strengths.

Not Everyone's Watching: Radio Wins the Multitaskers

Radio doesn't require your eyes—and that's a strength. It fits into active routines: driving, working, cooking, cleaning. It's ambient, companionable, and low-friction.

The Cost of Cutting Identity

Here's the hard truth: If half the people in the building have left, **the audience can tell**. If the exuberance is gone, it's **palpable.**

Radio has always thrived because of its **hosts**—the live, local voices that create connection. They're not just reading liners—they're building community.

Take those voices away, and what do you have? Music streaming with commercials.

And that's a tough sell in a Spotify world.

The Host Factor

Radio DJs and hosts were the **original influencers**. Lose them, and you lose what makes you different.

Perspective: Radio was Never 90%

For years, research firms claimed radio had a 90%+ reach. But our own local studies, even pre-pandemic, told a different story. In reality, we saw radio cume in the **65–75% range** in most 18+ markets—still strong, but not omnipresent. That number has declined over time with broadband, smartphones, and digital audio.

What remains now is a platform with **loyal users, cultural value, and regional strength**—but one that must fight to stay relevant in people's daily lives, not just their awareness.

RADIO CONCLUSIONS

Key Takeaways for Radio Stations

Radio's not going anywhere—but it does need to evolve to stay sticky.

- Core listening remains strong, especially 35–54, 55+, and men.
- Conversion is lagging—radio needs to fight to become a daily habit again.
- In-car and workday listening still define the platform.
- Local content and live hosts are key differentiators—don't become just another playlist.
- Digital presence matters. Streaming, podcasts, social—meet your audience where they already are.

Key Takeaways for Advertisers

AM/FM is still a high-trust, high-impact channel—especially when your target is in the car or in the community.

- Strong reach among adults 35+, multicultural audiences, and homeowners.
- Local buys can drive real results, especially for retail, auto, healthcare, and services.
- Tailor your messaging to time slots, content types, and audience mood.
- Leverage the host. People believe people—not taglines.

PODCASTS

Podcasts Are a Staple—But Daily Listening Is Slipping

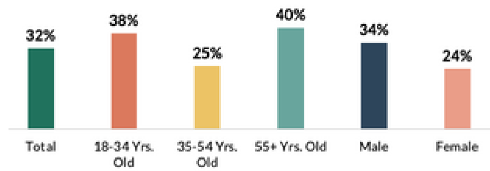
Podcasts are everywhere—or at least they feel that way. They're on your commute, in your kitchen, and increasingly... on your screen.

That last part matters more than you might think. As podcasts expand into video—on YouTube, TikTok, and even streaming platforms—the definition of what "counts" as a podcast is blurring. When we ask consumers about their podcast habits, it's not always clear whether they're thinking about their Spotify queue, the full video podcast they watched on YouTube, or the host clip they scrolled past on Instagram.

This evolving format landscape may be partially responsible for what we saw in this year's data: a surprising dip in podcast frequency, cume, and conversion.

Usage Trends: A Cooling-Off Moment

After several years of strong growth, podcast listening appears to be tapering off. In 2024, 58% of adults said they listened to podcasts at least sometimes. In 2025, that number is down to 51%. More importantly, frequent listening dropped from 21% to 17%.



Weekly Podcast Listenership (at least once per week)

And conversion—the share of users who listen frequently—**fell from 36% to 32%.**

That's not the end of the world. Podcasts still reach half the population. But the medium is slipping out of people's daily routines, especially compared to its pandemic-era highs.

Conversion's Importance

Total reach is nice. Daily listening is gold. With only 32% of podcast users listening frequently, the challenge now is less about reach—and more about staying top of mind.

Who's Tuning In?

Podcasts continue to attract a younger, male-skewing audience.

- 40% of 18–34-year-olds listen weekly, with 21% listening frequently
- Men show stronger loyalty: 35% conversion, compared to 28% for women
- For older adults, reach and frequency taper off: just 12% of 55+ adults listen frequently

Despite the dip in growth, younger adults still make up the heart of the podcast audience. But even among them, usage is leveling off.

Multitasking, Not Deep Listening

Podcasts are often a backdrop to everyday life—not a focal point. Nearly 8 in 10 listeners say they multitask while listening, with top activities including driving, chores, cooking, exercising, and working. Only 22% say they try to give full attention to the episode.

That doesn't mean podcasts are unimportant—it means they're woven into the fabric of a busy day.

Ideal episode length? Most listeners prefer something between **20 and 60 minutes**, with a sharp drop-off in interest for longer formats.

Discovery is Still a Puzzle

There's no dominant discovery method for podcasts—just a messy mix.

- Most listeners find new shows via podcast apps, like Apple and Spotify, using top charts, suggestions (55%), or search (51%)
- Others rely on social media (47%), search engines (26%), YouTube (59%), or recommendations from friends (29%)

Still a Discovery Desert

Podcast discovery is inefficient. Many listeners say they're open to new shows—but don't know where to look. Until discovery improves, most people will just keep playing the same 2–3 shows in rotation.

Genre Trends Reflect Overall Trends

As mentioned earlier, podcast listening in 2025 has seen a modest cooling compared to last year which can be seen across many individual genres. While overall interest in podcasts remains healthy, the data suggests that listening habits have become a bit less routine for some audiences. News/Politics and Comedy still top the list, with 59% and 58% weekly listenership respectively. However, only about a third of listeners in these top genres tune in three to five days per week, pointing to a shift toward more casual consumption.

Genres like Interview Shows (55%), Society & Culture (50%), and Film/TV (50%) continue to attract broad audiences, but much of their strength now comes from occasional listeners. In many cases, the share of frequent listeners has dipped into the teens, signaling that while people are still engaging with a wide variety of content, they may be doing so more selectively or seasonally rather than as part of a weekly routine.

Compared to 2024, this year's data reflects a general softening across the board. True Crime, Sports, and Health/Wellness—all strong performers in past years—have seen noticeable declines in total reach. Sports, for example, moved from 67% in 2024 to 44% in 2025. Film/TV dropped from 69% to 50%, and Society & Culture from 71% to 50%. Even niche categories like Travel and Science/Technology have slipped into the lower 30% range for total engagement.

Still, this shift doesn't suggest disinterest so much as realignment. As media choices continue to expand, podcast listening appears to be settling into a more flexible role in people's lives—something they still value, but perhaps not as a daily habit for as many listeners as before.

In 2025, podcast listening has softened—not disappeared. Fewer listeners are tuning in with the same frequency they did in 2024. While top genres like News and Comedy retain traction, most categories have seen shifts toward more occasional listening. This trend may reflect broader changes in media habits, with audiences continuing to explore podcasts—just on their own terms.

The Ad Tolerance Line

Ad skipping is real—and rising.

- Nearly half of listeners skip all ads, and another 39% skip some
- Only 13% listen to every ad in a show

Still, host-read ads are holding the line. Over 40% of listeners say they're more likely to consider a product if the ad is read by the podcast host. In contrast, non-host ads are not only less effective—they're more likely to drive skips or even early exits.

Trust the Host

Want your ad to land? Make sure the host reads it. Not only do listeners pay more attention—they associate the product with someone they already like and trust.

Podcasts in 2025: A Platform at a Crossroads

Podcasts aren't disappearing. They still offer intimacy, portability, and niche audience access. But they're no longer in hypergrowth mode.

This year, we saw a pullback in weekly listening, a dip in conversion, and signs that audiences are becoming more selective. Meanwhile, the explosion of podcast-style video on platforms like YouTube and TikTok means the line between formats is blurrier than ever.

The next phase of podcasting won't be about expansion—it'll be about focus. Who's returning often? Who's clicking through? And who's still listening when the ads start?

PODCASTS CONCLUSIONS

Key Takeaways for Creators

- Retention is the goal. Get listeners to make you a habit—not just a one-off
- Show notes matter. A third of users check them—and most want links included
- Host-read ads and short-to-mid-length formats still work best
- Consider cross-posting in video formats—your audience may already be watching

Key Takeaways for Advertisers

Think of podcasting not as a rising star—but as a proven player. It's no longer exploding. But it's still delivering, especially when content is trusted and ads feel authentic.

- Don't treat podcasts like radio. What works here is different
- Focus on shows with loyal listeners and high conversion
- Host voice matters. Pre-roll or dynamic ads underperform
- Target younger adults and niche interest groups for best engagement

NEWS MEDIA

Even with the rapid pace of change in the media ecosystem, traditional and digital news sources continue to command attention in 2025. While overall weekly reach dipped from 62% in 2024 to 54% this year, news media still reaches more than half of all adults each week.

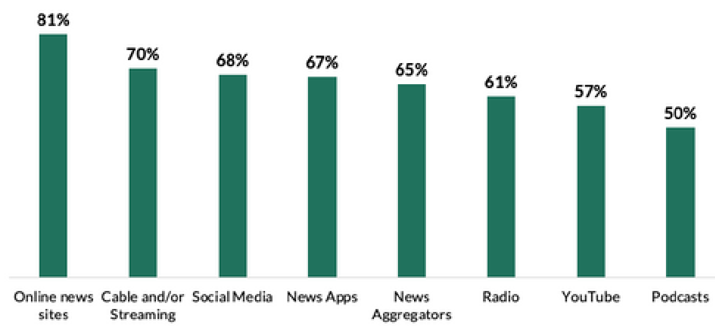
Reach & Audience Demographics

- 54% of all adults engage with news media either frequently or occasionally.
- Men are slightly more engaged (56%) than women (51%).
- By age: just 39% of 18–34-year-olds consume news media weekly, compared to 53% of 35–54-year-olds and 65% of those 55+.

The 55+ demographic remains the backbone of the news audience—nearly half (46%) consume news media frequently (3–5 days per week).

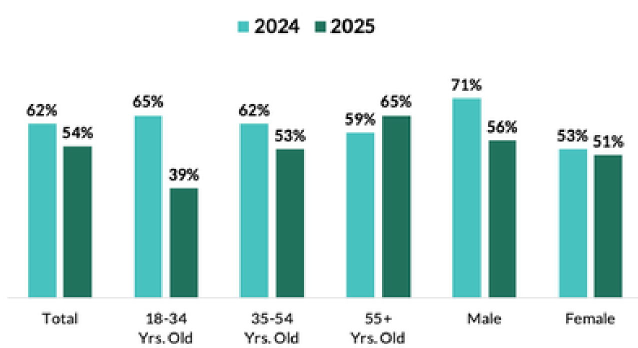
Among weekly news consumers, traditional online news sites continue to dominate, with over half (52%) engaging frequently. Cable and streaming news follow at 70% total, with a strong 42% tuning in frequently.

Social media and mobile news apps also play a major role, showing how multi-platform habits are shaping modern news consumption. However, News/Talk via podcast lags behind other formats, with just 24% listening frequently and 50% total engagement—suggesting that while podcasting holds a place in the news mix, it remains a secondary source for most.



Weekly News Media Sources

Changes from 2024



News Consumption Changes from 2024 to 2025

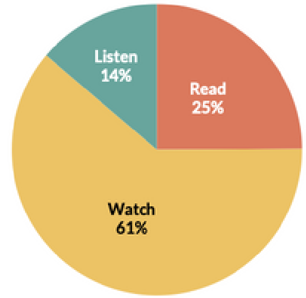
The total reach dropped from 62% to 54%, largely driven by significant declines in the youngest demo. Only 19% of 18–34-year-olds report frequent news media usage, compared to 46% of the 55+ group.

News Preferences and Habits

Local news continues to hold high appeal across demos, especially among women. National and world news also rank highly, while interest in culture war topics remains relatively niche—even though those topics tend to drive outsized attention online.

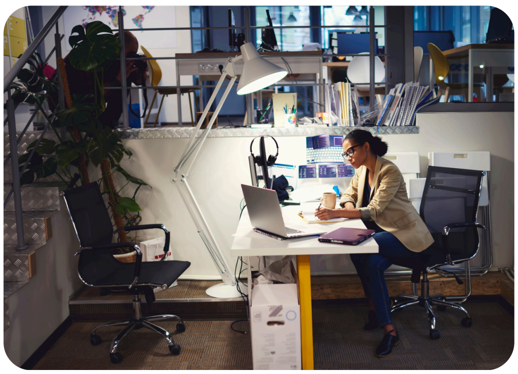
Most people say they prefer to watch the news (61%), rather than read it (25%) or listen (14%). This visual-first preference helps explain the popularity of cable news and the rise of YouTube for news video clips.

Younger adults are more likely to come across news passively (47%)—via social media or during entertainment browsing—while older adults are actively seeking it out (49%).



Preferred News Consumption Methods

Key Takeaways for News Media Industry



Despite year-over-year declines, news remains a core part of the media mix for many Americans. Traditional platforms like cable news and digital print continue to draw large audiences, especially among older adults.

To engage younger demographics, publishers and broadcasters must prioritize accessible video content, especially for social platforms and YouTube. Highlighting local relevance and community angles may also help reestablish news as a daily habit.

Key Takeaways for Advertisers

News consumers are attentive and often affluent, particularly older adults who actively seek out content. While the passive, scroll-based nature of younger audiences makes them harder to reach in this space, they are still reachable—especially via YouTube clips, news snippets on Instagram, or curated news aggregators.

Context matters: advertising alongside trustworthy and informative content can elevate brand credibility. Just ensure creative doesn't clash with the tone of the content.

SOCIAL MEDIA

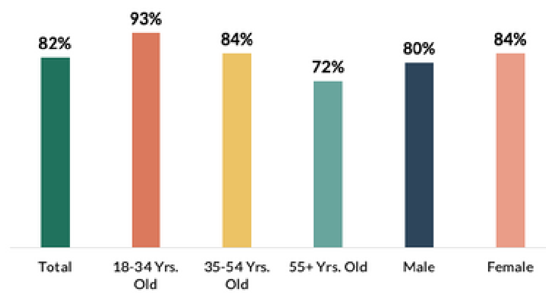
Social media continues to dominate the media landscape in 2025, with more Americans checking in daily than any other media format we measured. A remarkable 82% of respondents engage with social media at least once per week, and 70% report doing so frequently (3–5 days per week).

Reach & Audience Demographics

Social media is especially popular among women (84% weekly reach) and the 18–34 demographic (93%). Women are more likely than men to use it frequently (73% vs. 66%), and young adults lead all age groups in frequency (82%). Notably, social media's cume for younger audiences is 97%. That means only 3% of 18-34 year olds never use social media.

Changes from 2024

While many media types saw either stagnant or declining reach this year, social media continued to climb. Weekly reach increased to 82%, up from 78% in 2024. The most growth came from the younger demo, already high, which ticked upward by several points (91% in 2024 to 93% in 2025).



Weekly Use of Social Media

Top Platforms

Total	18-34	35-54	55+	Men	Women
Facebook 77%	Instagram 70%	Facebook 81%	Facebook 84%	Facebook 70%	Facebook 85%
Instagram 51%	TikTok 68%	Instagram 55%	Instagram 30%	Instagram 53%	Instagram 50%
TikTok 44%	Facebook 67%	TikTok 44%	Pinterest 23%	TikTok 41%	TikTok 47%
X 29%	Snapchat 53%	X 32%	TikTok 20%	X 38%	Pinterest 34%
Snapchat 28%	X 37%	Pinterest 27%	X 20%	Reddit 27%	Snapchat 29%

Reasons to Use & Impact on Mental Health

The most common reasons people use social media include staying connected to friends and family (63%), entertainment (57%), and for information and news (37%). Usage for activism (10%), politics (10%), or self or own brand promotion (14%) was much less common—but still notable among younger respondents.

Despite widespread concern about social media's effect on mental health, only 12% strongly agree that it has a negative impact. That number climbs to 17% among 18–34-year-olds. Additionally, 47% of that same age group has taken a break from social media at some point, suggesting a complex relationship.

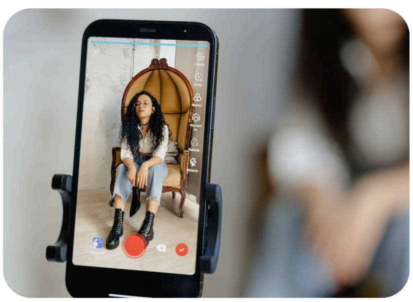
Does It Work? Purchase behavior from social media ads

Social media doesn't just drive attention—it drives sales.

- 32% of adults say they've made a purchase because of something they saw on social media.
- Among 18–34-year-olds, that number rises to 37%.
- The top drivers?
  - Influencer posts that felt authentic
  - Flash sales or promo codes in stories
  - "Shoppable" posts or reels that made it easy to click and buy

Even among older users (55+), 18% report at least one social media-inspired purchase in the past year—proof that a well-placed ad or post can work across demos.

Key Takeaways for Content Creators and Platforms



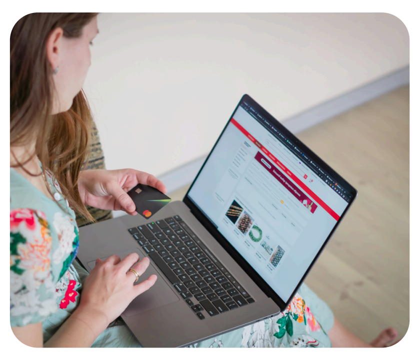
Social media remains the most ubiquitous media platform, with the broadest demographic appeal. Content that resonates here should be fast, mobile-friendly, and visually engaging. While younger adults are heavy users, older audiences still participate—just with slightly different motivations.

Visual formats like Reels, Stories, and TikToks continue to drive engagement, as do live updates and short-form content that reacts to current events.

Key Takeaways for Advertisers

Social media advertising continues to offer massive reach and real-time targeting. Younger users, in particular, are more likely to follow creators, trust product endorsements, and engage with branded content.

But attention is fleeting. Ads must be native to the platform and feel organic to the feed—whether that's through influencers, short-form video, or interactive formats.



Best Practices for Social Ads

Do:

- Design for mobile-first viewing
- Use short-form video with captions
- Make it feel native to the platform
- Partner with trusted influencers to build credibility
- Keep your call-to-action clear and clickable

Don't:

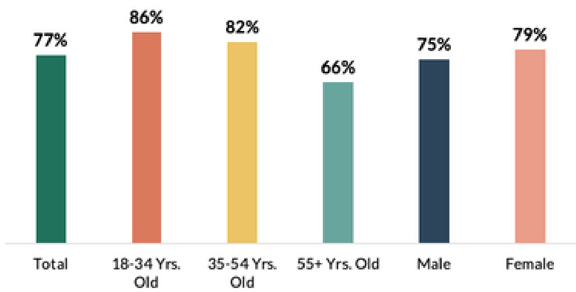
- Use overly polished creative that feels out of place in a feed
- Recycle TV or display ads without editing for format
- Overwhelm with too much text or cluttered design
- Assume one ad works across all platforms—test and tailor for each

STREAMING TV

Streaming TV remains a dominant force in 2025, ranked #2 (after social media) for both weekly usage and cume.

77% of respondents watch at least once a week, up from 73% in 2024. And more than 6 in 10 (61%) watch frequently, 3–5 days per week. Streaming TV also has a cume of 84%, meaning more than 4 in 5 audiences are streaming.

Reach & Audience Demographics



Weekly Use of Streaming TV

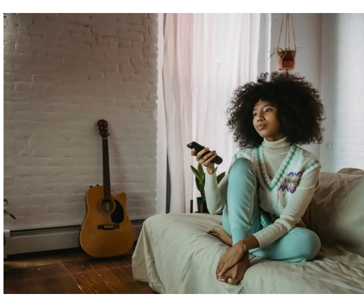
Streaming TV is widely watched across all demos, but 18–34-year-olds remain the most engaged: 86% watch weekly, and 66% do so frequently. They're followed closely by the middle demo of which 82% are weekly streamers. Older adults (66%) continue to stream steadily, but are lower than the other age demos, no surprise given their higher loyalty to cable TV. Women (79% total) edge out men (75%) in weekly reach,

Changes from 2024

Streaming TV usage in 2025 looks nearly identical to 2024—a sign of just how firmly it has cemented itself into daily life.

- Weekly reach is essentially flat (77% vs. 78% in 2024),
- Frequent usage edged up slightly (61% vs. 60%),
- Occasional use dipped just a bit (16% vs. 18%).

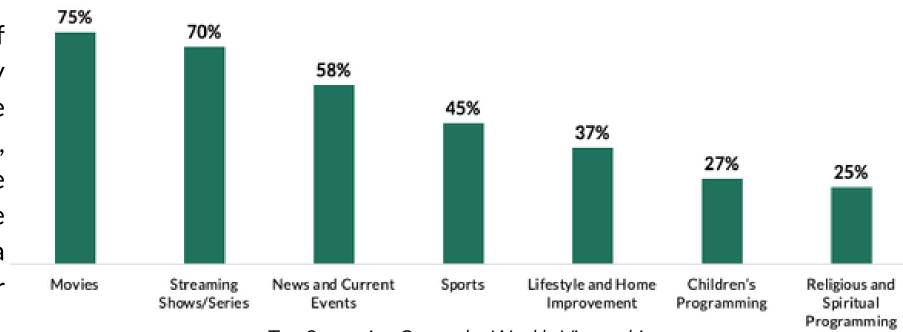
These changes are statistically insignificant, reinforcing the idea that streaming isn't a trend—it's a habit. Just as previous generations once turned to cable at the end of the day to unwind, today's audiences default to streaming platforms.



The shift from channel surfing to app browsing is complete. Streaming TV is no longer an emerging format—it's the new version of "watching TV," baked into daily routines across age groups. Whether it's a 30-minute show on a phone or a movie night on a smart TV, streaming is how we relax.

What We’re Watching

Movies are the anchor of streaming (75%), followed by shows (dramas, comedies, game shows, reality shows, etc. at 70%), news (58%), and sports (45%). We also saw notable usage of lifestyle programming, kids’ content and a small but consistent presence for religious content.



Top Streaming Genres by Weekly Viewership

Interestingly, younger audiences are also more likely to stream children’s programming than other age demos — a sign that parenthood and streaming go hand in hand.

Where We’re Watching

When it comes to platforms, Netflix remains the undisputed favorite, with 72% of respondents reporting a subscription. Amazon Prime Video (58%) and Hulu (51%) are close behind. Disney+ and Paramount+ tie at 38%, followed by Peacock (36%), and HBO Max (27%).

Men were significantly more likely than women (18% vs 9%) to subscribe to ESPN+ and sports-related platforms. Younger audiences gravitate toward services like HBO Max (37%) and Disney+ (54%), while older viewers lean more heavily into Amazon Prime (67%).

Gender and age breakdowns of major platforms

Netflix remains the top choice across all demos—but younger adults are flocking to Disney+ and Max (HBO), while older adults favor Amazon Prime Video.

Women drive subscriptions to Hulu, Peacock, and Paramount+, while men are more likely to subscribe to ESPN+ and sports streamers like Fox Sports and YouTube TV.

How We're Streaming

The smart TV is still king, with 58% of respondents using one to stream content. Roku devices are next at 37%, followed by smartphones or tablets (36%), and laptops or desktops (18%). Younger viewers are more likely to stream on mobile and Roku devices, while older viewers stick to smart TVs.

STREAMING TV CONCLUSIONS

Key Takeaways for Platforms

Streaming TV is a daily habit for millions of Americans, with particularly strong performance among younger and middle-aged adults. A focus on discoverability, curated collections, and ease-of-use interfaces will keep streaming sticky.

Content-wise, a balanced mix of bingeable shows, live content, and on-demand entertainment continues to perform. And don't sleep on news—more than half of viewers say they stream local or national news via their streaming device.

Key Takeaways for Advertisers

Streaming TV offers broad demographic reach, with plenty of daily engagement. As streaming platforms expand their ad-supported tiers, advertisers have more options to meet audiences where they are.

Advertisers should take advantage of streaming's data-rich environment to fine-tune targeting, personalize messaging, and measure campaign effectiveness more precisely. Genre-level targeting (sports, news, kids' content, etc.) can unlock valuable segments. And with smart TVs dominating device use, creative executions should be designed with the big screen in mind.

Smart Ad Strategies for Streaming

Streaming offers the best of both worlds: mass reach and precision targeting. To stand out:

Do:
- Design for the big screen – Bold visuals, minimal text, and high production quality work best on smart TVs.
- Use data to personalize – Tailor messaging by genre, demo, or even time of day.
- Take advantage of ad-supported tiers – They're growing fast and expanding access across income groups.

Don't:
- Assume one-size-fits-all – Different platforms = different viewer mindsets.
- Overload with detail – Viewers are lean-back, not lean-in.
- Skip frequency capping – Repetition works, but overexposure drives tune-out.

VIDEO GAMES

Video game usage remains widespread in 2025, with 46% of respondents playing at least once per week. That represents a decline from 56% in 2024, driven in part by a drop in frequent players—from 35% down to 30%.

Two Different Gaming Worlds

Video games aren’t a monolith. There's a stark divide between traditional console/PC gaming and mobile gaming—essentially two different ecosystems with distinct audiences. Console gaming (PlayStation, Xbox, Nintendo Switch) and PC platforms like Steam skew younger and more male. Meanwhile, mobile games dominate among women and older users, with 76% of women who game doing so on smartphones or tablets, compared to just 54% of men.

For younger gamers (18–34), console use is king: 52% use PlayStation consoles, 28% Xbox, and 17% Switch. Older gamers, on the other hand, are primarily mobile—74% of 55+ gamers play on smartphones or tablets, and less than 10% use any console.

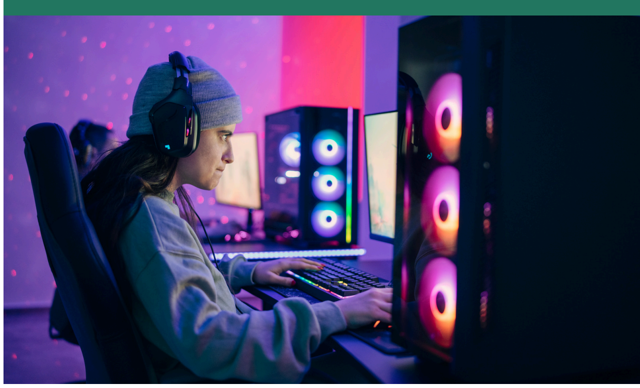
Console Kids vs. App Aunts: Generational Gaming Habits

Younger players (18–34) are the heart of console and PC gaming. They're the most likely to own a PlayStation or Xbox, prefer long-form immersive gameplay, and are the biggest spenders when it comes to in-game purchases and premium subscriptions.

Older adults (55+) aren’t logging into Call of Duty—they’re more likely to be logging moves in Candy Crush. Three-quarters of them play on smartphones or tablets, favoring quick, low-pressure games they can dip in and out of.

Women vs. Men: Women dominate mobile gaming, with 76% of female players choosing smartphones or tablets. Men are more likely to be console loyalists.

Insight: Treat these as two entirely different gaming audiences. What motivates a mobile gamer waiting in the dentist’s office isn’t what fuels a PS5 player grinding through Elden Ring.



Changes from 2024

Frequent gaming is down slightly (30% vs. 35% last year), and overall reach declined from 56% to 46%. This may be tied to time constraints, shifting habits, or competing entertainment formats. Still, younger adults remain highly engaged, with 62% playing weekly and 43% playing frequently.

Time's Tight – Why Some Gamers Are Logging Off

Not everyone has time to spend hours raiding dungeons or grinding levels. While gaming remains popular, 2025 saw a notable dip in weekly reach, down from 56% to 46%. The biggest drop came from frequent players—likely those with the least time to spare.

Many cited life changes like having kids, new jobs, or just not having the mental bandwidth to dive into longer games. For some, the pull of quicker, easier-to-consume media like social video or streaming shows is too strong to ignore.

Game Preferences: Short vs. Long Sessions

Despite stereotypes of short attention spans, younger players are more likely to prefer long, immersive gameplay sessions. Just 8% of 18–34-year-olds say they prefer short sessions, while 25% say they enjoy long-form gaming, and 66% like both. For the 55+ demo, it's the opposite: 51% prefer short sessions, and just 8% want long-form gameplay.

In-Game Spending & Services

About 23% subscribe to premium gaming services like Game Pass or PlayStation Plus, but in-game purchases are more common: 38% report buying skins, boosts, or extra lives. Among 18–34s, that jumps to 49%. Popular games mentioned include Fortnite, Roblox, and Candy Crush, with many citing purchases to pass tough levels or unlock limited-time content.

Game Discovery

Gamers still trust their friends. Forty-six percent discover new games through personal recommendations, followed by 50% who find games on social media and 40% through gaming websites. Younger players are especially influenced by social platforms (70%), while older players lean more on word of mouth.

Esports & Streaming Content

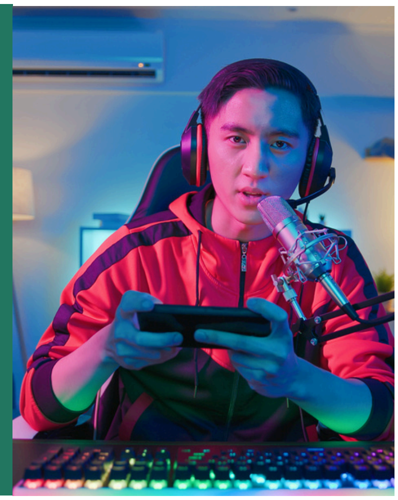
Esports remains niche—but mighty. Ten percent of respondents follow or participate in esports or competitive gaming events, with stronger interest among men (14%) and the younger demo (15%). While still a small audience, it's highly engaged and a sweet spot for advertisers targeting young, tech-savvy men.

Meanwhile, 43% of video game say they watch video game content—livestreams, speedruns, reviews—on platforms like YouTube or Twitch. That number climbs to 64% among younger adults and 53% among men, revealing a strong secondary audience of spectators alongside players. Conversley, women and older adults are **not** participating with the same gusto, only 29% of women and 13% of 55+ are watching.

Second Screens, First Fans

Gamers aren't just playing—they're watching. Platforms like YouTube and Twitch have given rise to a robust culture of spectatorship, especially among younger men. Whether it's competitive esports or casual Let's Plays, many gamers enjoy watching others as much as they enjoy playing themselves.

This "second screen" behavior—consuming content about the games you love—extends gaming into daily life and makes influencers and creators central to a game's success. For many, gaming is now a participatory, community-driven media experience.



Key Takeaways for the Gaming Industry

Gaming isn't shrinking—but it is fragmenting. Mobile and console gaming serve very different audiences, and success depends on knowing who you're trying to reach. Mobile devs should continue to build for short, frictionless sessions, especially for women and older players. Console and PC platforms must cater to immersive experiences with community features, competitive formats, and game depth.

The future isn't just multi-platform—it's multi-mindset.

Key Takeaways for Advertisers

Gaming offers multiple lanes for reaching engaged consumers. Console and PC games attract dedicated young male audiences, ideal for brand integrations or influencer partnerships. Mobile games are better for broad reach and light-touch brand exposure—especially with women and older users.

Consider both premium placements and in-game incentives like bonus lives or branded skins. And don't underestimate gaming's influence—43% of younger gamers have made in-game purchases, and nearly half are discovering new titles through social channels.

Play to Win: Smart Ad Strategies Across Mobile and Console Environments

When it comes to advertising, mobile and console gaming call for different playbooks.

On Mobile

- Timing is everything. Ads between levels or during loading screens are less disruptive and more tolerable.
- Reward-based ads work well—think bonus coins, extra lives, or power-ups in exchange for a quick watch.
- Broad reach. Mobile gaming audiences skew female and older, making them a great fit for lifestyle, retail, and household brands.

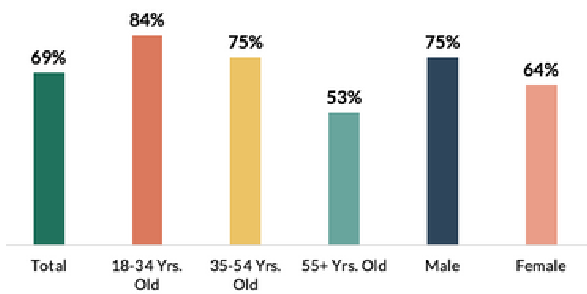
On Console/PC:

- Go immersive. Branded in-game content, partnerships with streamers, or even product placements in open-world games can feel native and effective.
- Targeted integrations. Console gamers are often passionate and loyal—smart sponsorships or community-based campaigns go further than pop-up ads.
- Influence matters. Streamers and esports figures can build trust with audiences when they feature your brand authentically.

YOUTUBE

YouTube continues to thrive in 2025, with 69% of respondents watching videos on the platform at least once per week. That's a slight decrease from 75% in 2024, consistent with our findings across most media types. What is different than the decreases in other media platforms is that the dip is driven by the occasional users, 20% in 2025, down from 26% in 2024. Frequent users stayed the same, as 49% of respondents say they watch YouTube 3–5 days per week in both years.

Reach & Audience Demographics



Weekly Use of YouTube

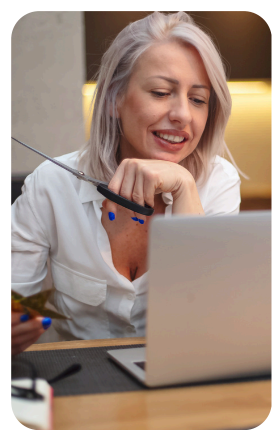
YouTube usage skews younger and male, though it still boasts wide appeal across all groups. Among men, 75% are weekly users, compared to 64% of women.

There are even larger age differences. Among 18–34-year-olds, that number jumps to 84%, with 66% of them watching frequently. Even in the older 55+ group, more than half (53%) watch weekly.

Top Content Categories

What are people watching? YouTube's content landscape is vast, but a few categories stand out:

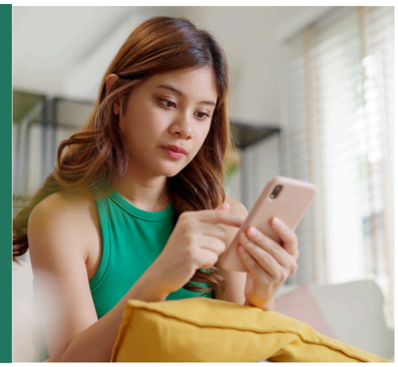
Total	18-34	35-54	55+	Men	Women
Music Videos 54%	Music Videos 52%	Music Videos 57%	Music Videos 53%	Music Videos 54%	Music Videos 55%
Education & How To 30%	Gaming 46%	Education & How To 33%	Cooking 32%	Gaming 30%	Cooking 40%
Cooking 29%	YouTube Creators 32%	Cooking 31%	Educational & How To 31%	Education & How To 28%	True Crime 33%
Reaction Videos 24%	Reaction Videos 32%	Life Hacks 27%	History & Documentaries 27%	Reaction Videos 27%	Education & How To 32%
Gaming 24%	Education & How To 26%	Nature & Wildlife 26%	Life Hacks 26%	History & Documentaries 26%	Beauty & Makeup 28%



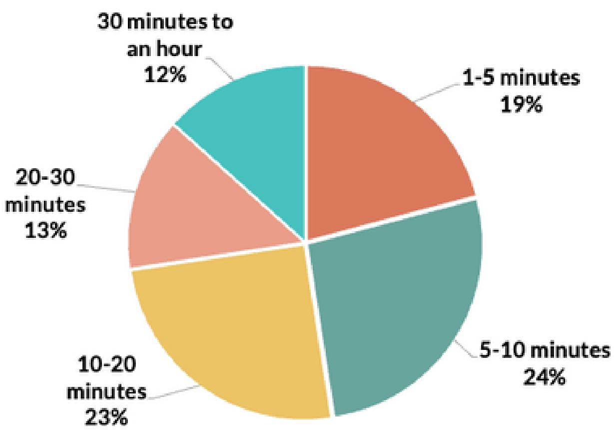
Across every demographic, Music Videos are the dominant YouTube genre, consistently ranking #1 with around half or more of each group engaging. Education & How-To content is the overall #2, but there are important shifts by group: Gaming is a strong #2 among 18–34s and men, while Cooking rises to #2 among women and 55+. Reaction Videos and Life Hacks gain more traction with younger audiences, while True Crime and History & Documentaries are stronger with older viewers. Beauty & Makeup also emerges as a top genre among women, while Nature & Wildlife appeals more to 55+ audiences.

Not Just Shorts - Younger Audiences Are Sticking Around

Younger users aren't just clicking for a quick fix. Despite the dominance of short-form platforms like TikTok, 18–34-year-olds on YouTube are actually spending more time with longer content. While only 11% prefer ultra-short videos, nearly half are happy with 10–30 minute sessions. For creators and advertisers alike, this opens the door to deeper stories, richer engagement, and longer watch time.



Session Length & Attention Span



Ideal YouTube Video Duration

There's a wide range of preferences when it comes to ideal video length.

The biggest divide is generational. Just 11% of 18–34s prefer ultra-short videos, compared to 27% of the 55+ group. This suggests younger audiences use YouTube for longer, more engaged sessions—short-form might be for TikTok.

Session Length & Attention Span

YouTube isn't just a viewing platform—it's a social one. In fact:

- 57% of users subscribe to channels
- 49% leave likes, comments, or dislikes
- 33% support creators via ads, merch, or platforms like Patreon

These numbers are higher among younger users and men, especially when it comes to interaction and monetary support.

The Comment Section Counts - YT as a Social Network

The comment section isn't just noise—it's community. Nearly half of YouTube users are engaging socially on the platform by liking, commenting, and subscribing. For many, YouTube functions more like a forum than a TV network, with fans building relationships with creators and each other. For brands and creators alike, this makes engagement—not just views—a key metric.

YouTube Discovery

Most YouTube users rely on a mix of algorithmic suggestions and their subscriptions page to find new content. In fact, 52% say they use both the homepage/recommendations and their subscriptions page, while 31% primarily browse recommendations. The homepage algorithm still matters—a lot—but loyal subscribers also check in on their favorite creators. Smart creators optimize for both discovery and retention, making thumbnails, titles, and content consistency just as important as algorithmic luck.

Trust, Influence & Monetization

There's good news for advertisers: YouTube creators have influence. While only 30% of users say they are more likely to buy a product featured by a creator, that number jumps to 41% for 18–34-year-olds. This influence surpasses that of podcast hosts in our study.

On the other hand, YouTube ads that aren't part of the content face a tougher road:
- 65% of users skip ads when given the option
- 13% pay for YouTube Premium to avoid them

When Influencer Marketing Works Better Than Pre-Roll

Only 13% of users pay to avoid ads altogether, but a full 65% skip ads when they can. When creators themselves introduce a product or service, it's more likely to get noticed—and remembered. Especially among younger viewers, creators hold more sway than any banner or bumper ad could hope to achieve.

Key Takeaways for the YouTube Creator Community

YouTube isn't just surviving—it's thriving. Its audience is large, engaged, and increasingly diverse in both content preferences and session lengths. The rise of longer sessions among younger viewers suggests a real opportunity for creators investing in quality, narrative-driven content.

Creators who inspire interaction—through community posts, comments, or merch—are more likely to foster loyalty. And educational content remains a powerful draw, especially across age groups.

Key Takeaways for Advertisers

YouTube ads are most effective when baked into the content. Creator integration continues to outperform traditional pre-rolls, particularly among the younger demo. Viewers trust familiar creators and are more likely to take action on recommendations.

Keep in mind the skip button: unless your ad is immediately engaging, it won't get seen. Brands should prioritize partnerships, sponsorships, and influencer-led campaigns when targeting this channel.

THANK YOU FOR READING

We appreciate you taking the time to explore the State of Media 2025 report. Media habits are changing fast—and understanding where audiences are leaning, shifting, and staying loyal is more important than ever. Our hope is that these insights help you make smarter decisions, spark new ideas, and meet your audience where they are today (and where they're headed tomorrow).

If you'd like to dig deeper, we invite you to get in touch.

- Email us at katie@crowdreactmedia.com
- Visit us at crowdreactmedia.com

State of Reports

You can also explore our other State of Reports on our website:

- **State of Sports Media**
- **State of Spanish-Language Media**
- **State of TV News**

And check out our downloadable sales tools, ready to help your team make the case:

- **State of Media 2024: Video Sales Deck**: A PowerPoint deck showcasing broadcast television's resilience and success—perfect for your next sales presentation.
- **State of Media 2024: Radio Sales Deck**: A PowerPoint deck highlighting radio's enduring strength—ready to plug directly into your sales team's materials.

Need Custom Research?

We're also available for custom media research projects. Whether you're looking to understand your audience better, prove your platform's value to advertisers, or navigate today's evolving media landscape, we'd love to chat about how we can help.

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