Epsilon Pulse

More subscriptions, less loyalty: TV viewership in 2025

How consumers across generations watch TV today

Introduction

The media landscape in 2025 is constantly shifting. Are you meeting your audiences where they are?

Streaming platforms continue to dominate the entertainment landscape, capturing audiences with abundant content across genres and interests, but traditional cable and satellite television remains a strong contender. As media habits evolve, your brand needs to be ready to meet them on any screen at any time. Building on the findings from our 2023 study, this research dives deeper into the shifting dynamics of media consumption.

Let's begin.

What's in this report?

- How people feel about subscription overload, subscription fatigue and content availability
- Preferred channels and reasons people switch platforms and providers
- Key factors driving channel choice such as price, exclusive content and bundling
- How consumers budget their entertainment dollars across multiple subscriptions

Methodology

Survey Respondents (Total n=2,040)
To qualify for the research, respondents had to be between 18 and 77 years of age.
Sample was weighted (by age and gender) to align with census distribution.

	Number of completes (unweighted base)	**Sample distribution for reporting** (weighted)
Gen Z *(18 to 28 yrs old)*	327	16%
Millennials *(29 to 44 yrs old)*	551	30%
Gen X *(45 to 60 yrs old)*	558	27%
Boomers *(61 to 77 yrs old)*	604	28%

This survey was in field from March 25 to April 2, 2025.

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Key findings

KEY FINDINGS

Viewers' attention is spread across an increasing number of platforms.

While cable, Netflix, YouTubeTV, Amazon Prime Video and Hulu are the top five platforms consumers use **most often,** our data shows there are **13 platforms used by at least 15% of total respondents** (including free, ad-supported, shared and premium accounts). So even though some platforms have the heaviest usage, overall TV viewership is spread across a decent number of platforms based on individual preferences.

Channels used to watch shows, movies, sports or news

Netflix	57%
prime video	56%
Cable or satellite TV	41%
Disney+	37%
Paramount+	35%
peacock	34%
hulu	31%
HBO max	29%
YouTubeTV	27%
tubi	27%
tv+	17%
pluto tv	17%
ESPN+	15%

Total (n=2,040)

4.5

average subscriptions per consumer

- YouTubeTV jumped up two spots in the ranking of platforms used most often since 2023. A free, basic YouTube account is most popular across generations.
- Having a premium account skews younger (25% of Gen Z; 24% of millennials), while having a free basic account skews older (64% of Gen X; 60% of boomers).

Viewers’ attention is spread across an increasing number of platforms.

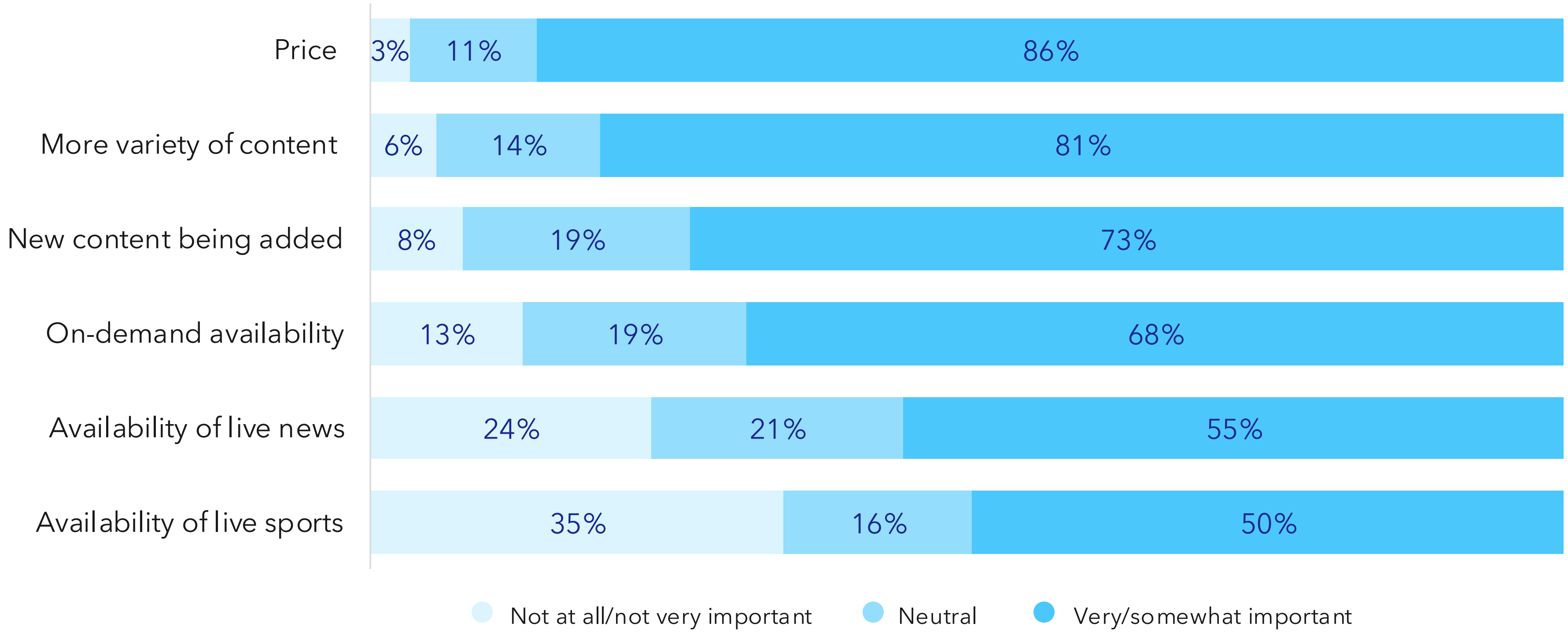
While price will always be important, the increasing number of platforms to balance means that variety is becoming a crucial factor in the TV viewing offerings people buy.

Gen Z especially values access to live sports.

Boomers are the most likely to prioritize live news compared to other generations.

Millennials stand out with a preference for on-demand content.

Important factors for using cable and satellite TV or streaming services



$120

spent on cable and satellite TV per month

$41

spent on streaming per month

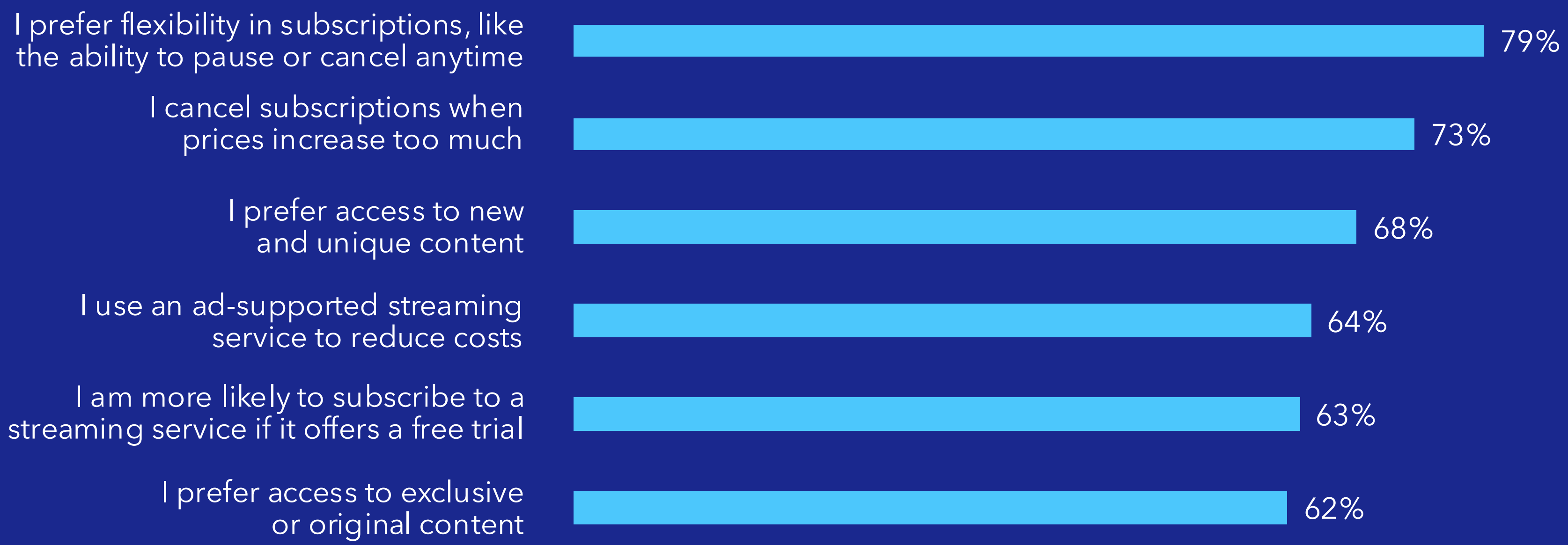
KEY FINDINGS

People want more flexibility in subscriptions.

Almost 80% of people say they want flexibility (like options to pause or cancel at any time), and 73% say they would cancel their subscriptions if the prices increase too much. Additionally, **64% of consumers turn to ad-supported subscriptions to save costs** so they can access a variety of content across platforms (like a consumer wanting to watch *Severance* on Apple TV and *The White Lotus* on HBO Max at the same time).

Overall, this speaks to people's desire to keep things fluid in how they watch TV, as their situations and needs change frequently, impacting their viewing habits and which platforms make sense for them to pay for at that time.

Important factors for using cable and satellite TV or streaming services

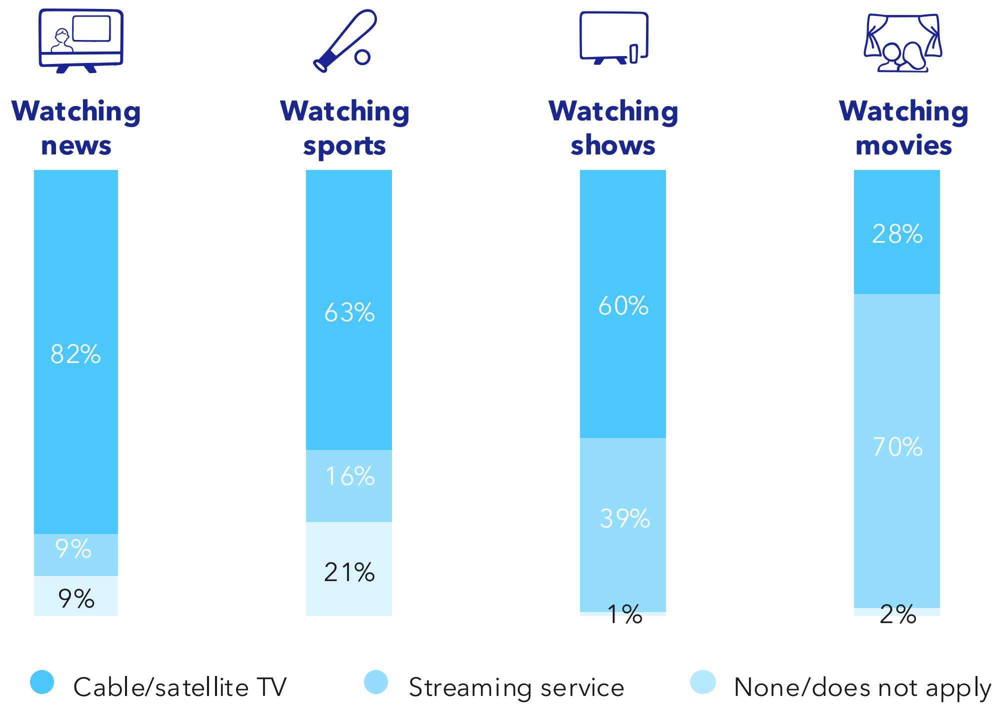


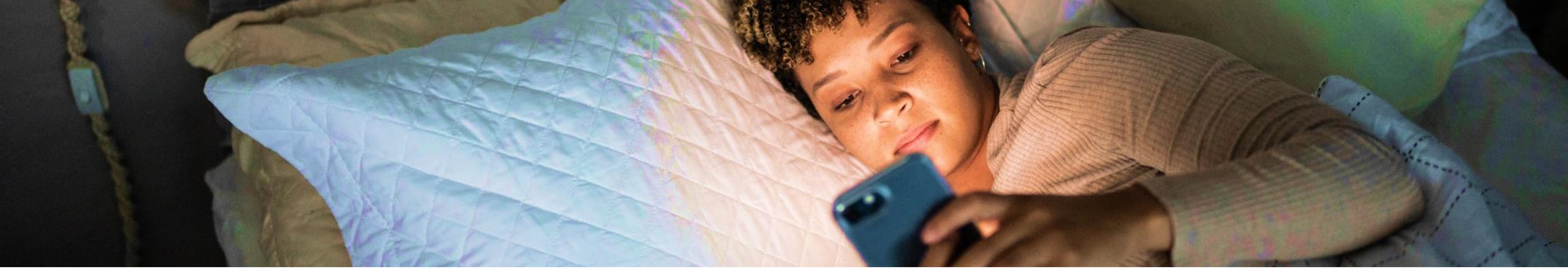
KEY FINDINGS

Where people watch depends on *what* people watch.

Cable is one of the most used platforms overall, and consumers clearly prefer to watch live sports and news on cable over streaming services. This means that marketers and brands can't just assume everyone is in one place based on their demographics (e.g., younger people aren't exclusively streaming). Where to reach people really depends more on what they're watching.

Where people watch different kinds of content





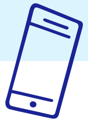
TV viewing is becoming a cross-device experience.

Although TVs are still the top device for watching shows and movies, cell phones are the second most popular device at 28%. Looking at younger audiences, more than half of Gen Z watches on a cell phone (51%), which is just shy of those that watch on an actual TV (64%). The context in which someone receives an ad is important. If people are increasingly watching TV on mobile devices—which may be in transit, waiting in line or at the airport, say—that can dramatically change how an advertiser may want to talk to them. The reality of TV-watching today is becoming far more "on the go" than "relaxed, on the couch," which marketers typically associate with consumers watching TV ads.

Devices used to watch shows, movies, sports or news

Regularly	Total	Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	Boomers
Television	82%	64%	77%	87%	92%
Cell phone	28%	51%	39%	20%	9%
Laptop computer	17%	28%	23%	13%	8%
iPad or tablet	15%	25%	21%	10%	6%
Gaming console / device	12%	31%	17%	6%	1%
Desktop computer	11%	22%	13%	9%	6%
	(n=2,040)	(n=327)	(n=551)	(n=558)	(n=604)

Across generations, regularly using a cell phone to watch TV has increased from 14% to 28% since 2023—a 100% increase.



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Detailed findings

Channel use and preferences

There's a clear correlation between the subscriptions consumers use the most and find the most essential.

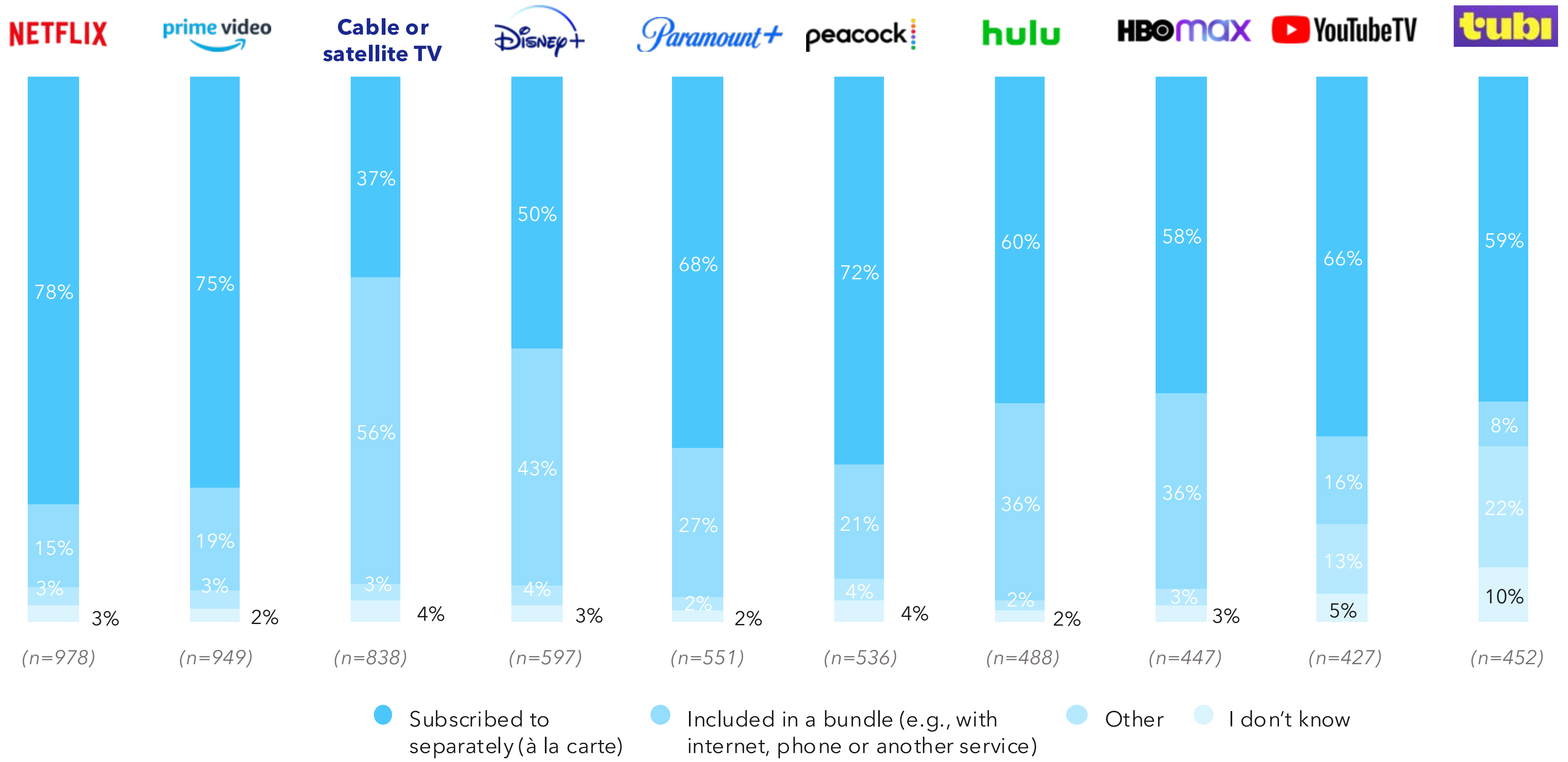
Essential subscriptions (always have)

Top 10	Total	Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	Boomers
1 prime video	44%	41%	**47%**	**50%**	36%
2 NETFLIX	43%	**58%**	**48%**	**44%**	29%
3 Cable or satellite TV	37%	21%	26%	38%	**58%**
4 Disney+	24%	**38%**	34%	19%	10%
5 YouTubeTV (paid version + live channels)	22%	**33%**	27%	16%	14%
6 hulu (paid version + live channels)	21%	**30%**	28%	18%	10%
7 Paramount+	21%	22%	23%	22%	16%
8 peacock	21%	24%	24%	20%	15%
9 tubi	20%	18%	22%	22%	15%
10 HBO max	19%	26%	25%	17%	11%
	(n=2,040)	(n=327)	(n=551)	(n=558)	(n=604)

- Overall, **cable is still in the top three essentials for consumers,** so it can't be discounted in media buys.
- Cable and satellite TV remain a staple in many boomer households, but younger generations tend to have a wider variety of streaming subscriptions, including Paramount+, Peacock, YouTube and Tubi. Netflix and Amazon Prime Video are fairly standard across most groups, with boomers most likely to subscribe to these platforms.

Standard membership plans dominate, but there's high variability for à la carte and bundled services.

Membership types: Top 10 channels used



- Millennials (30%), Gen X (32%) and boomers (36%) are more likely than Gen Z (15%) to pay for a premium cable or satellite TV plan. One in four (24%) of Gen Z respondents has a standard or premium Amazon Prime Video plan that someone else pays for and shares with them.
- Compared to the other generations, boomers are more likely to subscribe to Hulu and HBO Max à la carte. Gen Z respondents (25%) are most likely to have a standard or premium HBO Max plan that someone else pays for and shares with them.

Base: Respondents that use the service noted (bases vary): *Q7. You mentioned that you use the following to watch shows, movies, sports, or news. Which type of membership or subscription do you currently have for each one? (please select one for each)* Q8. For each of the following services, please indicate whether it is part of a bundle or subscribed to separately / on its own. (please select one for each)

Cable and satellite TV vs. streaming services

Seven in 10 cancel subscriptions when the prices increase too much.

Attitudes and behaviors related to service offerings

Strongly agree or somewhat agree	Total	Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	Boomers
I prefer flexibility in subscriptions, like the ability to pause or cancel anytime	79%	76%	80%	79%	79%
I cancel subscriptions when prices increase too much	73%	69%	**74%**	**74%**	**75%**
I prefer access to new and unique content	68%	**69%**	**76%**	67%	59%
I use an ad-supported streaming service to reduce costs	64%	61%	**67%**	**65%**	59%
I am more likely to subscribe to a streaming service if it offers a free trial	63%	**68%**	**72%**	60%	50%
I prefer access to exclusive or original content	62%	**65%**	**69%**	60%	55%
	(n=1,797)	(n=324)	(n=524)	(n=495)	(n=454)

- Eight in 10 streaming service users agree that they value flexibility in their streaming service subscriptions, specifically the ability to pause or cancel at any time.
- Many respondents are more likely to subscribe to a streaming service if it offers a free trial, but this is less common among boomers.

Q12. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. (please select one for each) [Strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, neutral, somewhat agree, strongly agree]
Base: streaming service users

People want subscription options; flexibility, bundles and discounts top the list. Some are also willing to pay more to go ad-free.

Attitudes and behaviors related to service offerings

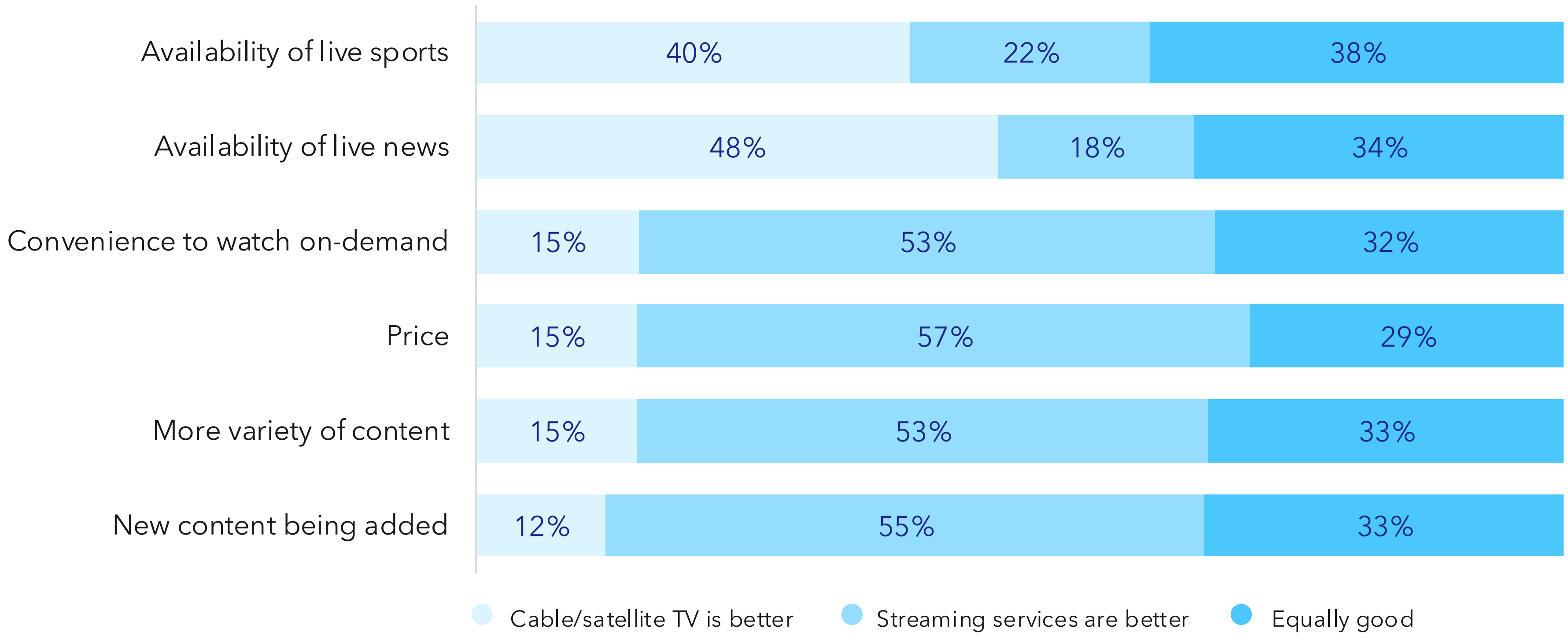
Strongly agree or somewhat agree	Total	Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	Boomers
I like the ability to stream on multiple devices at the same time	60%	**71%**	**72%**	57%	40%
I prefer subscriptions that are offered as part of bundled deals or discounts	58%	**63%**	**63%**	56%	49%
I only keep streaming services that consistently provide new content	54%	**61%**	**60%**	50%	44%
I sometimes subscribe to a streaming service for a specific show or movie and then cancel after	45%	**57%**	**55%**	40%	26%
I am willing to pay more for ad-free experiences	38%	**53%**	**49%**	32%	19%
I feel like I have too many subscriptions to keep track of	38%	**48%**	**47%**	33%	24%
	(n=1,797)	*(n=324)*	*(n=524)*	*(n=495)*	*(n=454)*

- Gen Z and millennials are most likely to say they only keep services that consistently provide new content and that they sometimes subscribe to a streaming service just for a specific show or movie.
- About half of Gen Z and millennials stated having too many subscriptions to keep track of.

Q12. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. (please select one for each) [Strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, neutral, somewhat agree, strongly agree]
Base: Streaming service users

For live sports and news, cable is best, but streaming services are better for everything else.

Which is better: cable and satellite TV or streaming services?



- Respondents agree that streaming services are better because of on-demand convenience, pricing, content variety and additional new content. When watching live sports and news, many still prefer cable and satellite TV. That said, streaming services are starting to dabble with live content, so it'll be interesting to see how that develops.
- For all factors, about a third of consumers across generations believe that cable and streaming services are equally good.

Q13. Do you think cable / satellite TV or streaming services are better for each of the following? (please select one for each) [Cable / satellite TV is better, Streaming Services are better, Equally good]
Base: All respondents (n=2,040)

Overall, people are happy with what they're getting from streaming services.

Satisfaction score for new content on streaming services (Very satisfied or satisfied)

	Total	Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	Boomers
The variety of content available	78%	76%	**81%**	**80%**	74%
The availability of new content	75%	75%	**78%**	76%	69%
The availability of unique content	73%	70%	**78%**	73%	67%
	(n=1,797)	(n=324)	(n=524)	(n=495)	(n=454)

Rating score on the quality of content Top 3 Box: score (8 to 10 excellent)

	Total	Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	Boomers
Cable/satellite TV users					
The quality of content	55%	58%	**62%**	51%	52%
	(n=838)	(n=78)	(n=163)	(n=232)	(n=365)
Streaming service users					
The quality of content	69%	68%	**73%**	70%	65%
	(n=1,797)	(n=324)	(n=524)	(n=495)	(n=454)

- Streaming service users are satisfied with the availability and variety of content available. Satisfaction with streaming services is highest among millennials and Gen X and lowest among boomers. In general, quality ratings for streaming content are stronger than cable.
- On average, it takes 10 minutes for consumers to find something to watch, with Gen Z and millennials taking a few minutes longer than boomers.

Base: Streaming service users: Q15. Thinking of your streaming services, how satisfied are you with each of the following? (please select one for each) [Very dissatisfied, dissatisfied, neutral, satisfied, very satisfied]
Base: Cable / satellite TV users: Q16. How would you rate the quality of the content on cable / satellite TV for shows, movies, sports, or news? (please select one) [1 - poor, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 – excellent]
Base: Streaming service users: Q17. How would you rate the quality of the content on streaming services for shows, movies, sports, or news? (please select one) [1 - poor, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 – excellent]
Base: Respondents that use at least one service: Q19. Approximately how many minutes do you spend looking for something to watch? (please input a number)

People feel confident navigating the amount content on streaming platforms.

7 in 10
agree there's always something new to watch and it's easy to navigate search menus.

Only 36%
say they never know what to watch or give up searching.

Gen Z and millennial
streaming users are more likely to struggle with what to watch compared to Gen X and boomers—often giving up the search and rewatching the same shows and movies, which they enjoy doing.

Perceptions of streaming services *(Strongly agree or somewhat agree)*

One to watch:

NETFLIX

In May, Netflix announced a rare interface update to increase personalization and make it easier for users to find what they're looking for. This aligns with an industry trend: Streaming services are focused on personalizing content for users holistically, similar to advertisers, to potentially attract more advertisers to their platforms.

Q18. Thinking about the different streaming services you have, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. (please select one for each) [Strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, neutral, somewhat agree, strongly agree]
Base: Streaming service users

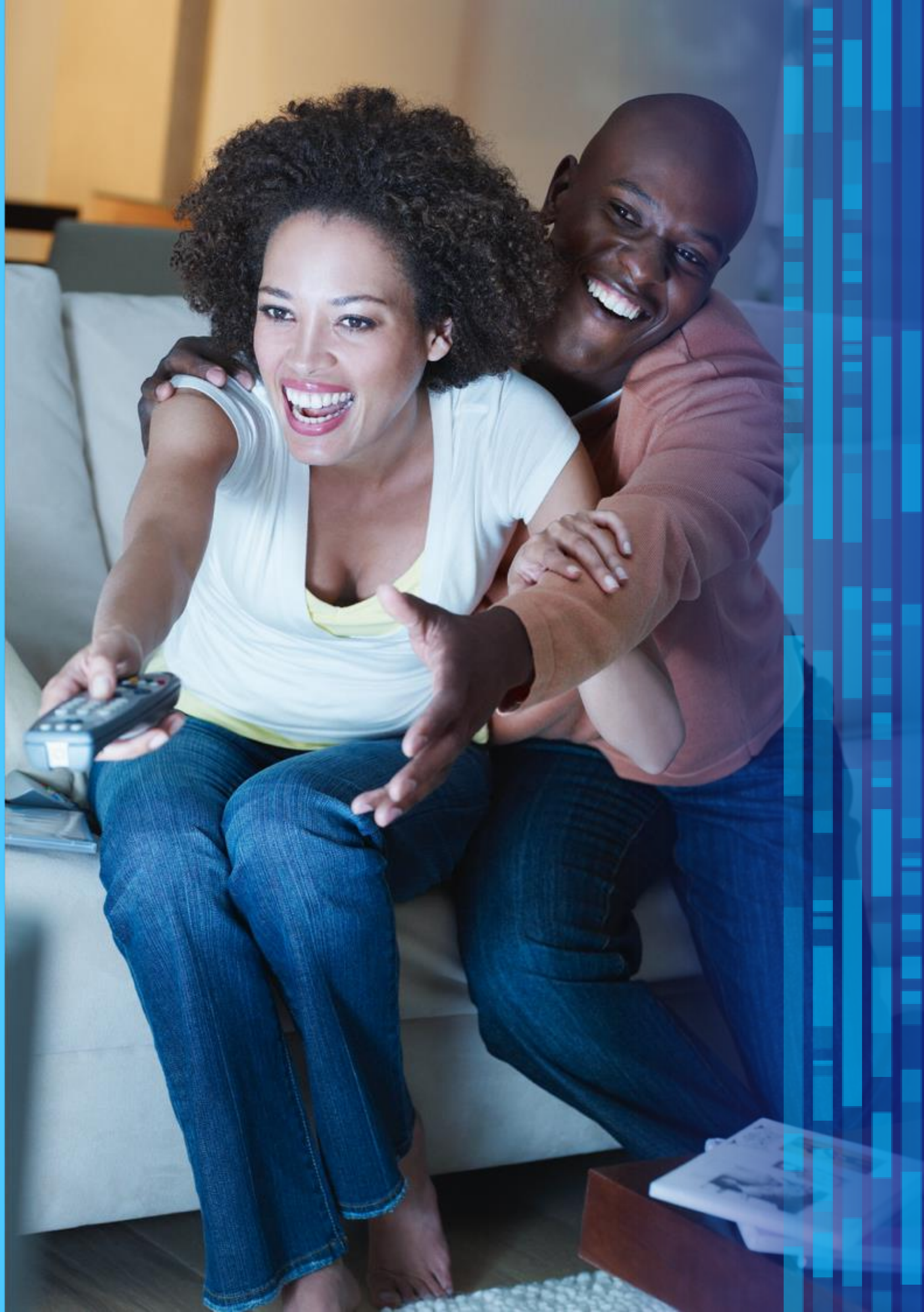
Price is always a factor, whether cable and satellite or streaming. With so many streaming options, services must prioritize value to keep customers.

Reasons for cancelling streaming services (top 5 reasons overall)	Total	Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	Boomers
The price increased	43%	39%	**47%**	**50%**	36%
I wasn't watching enough to justify the cost	33%	31%	34%	**37%**	31%
It no longer fit within my budget, or I had to prioritize other expenses	25%	**27%**	24%	**30%**	21%
I no longer saw the value	25%	23%	22%	27%	26%
Personal financial reasons	19%	**24%**	**24%**	**20%**	11%
	(n=2,040)	(n=327)	(n=551)	(n=558)	(n=604)

Reasons for cancelling cable or satellite TV (top 5 reasons overall)	Total	Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	Boomers
The price increased	44%	33%	**42%**	**51%**	**47%**
Streaming services offer better value for the price	20%	17%	**25%**	**23%**	13%
Personal financial reasons	18%	20%	19%	19%	16%
I wasn't watching enough to justify the cost	18%	20%	17%	19%	16%
I prefer the flexibility of streaming services	15%	**19%**	**18%**	**15%**	7%
	(n=2,040)	(n=327)	(n=551)	(n=558)	(n=604)

Q22. Thinking about cable / satellite TV that you've canceled in the past, what were the main reasons for canceling? (pleaseselect all that apply)
Base: All respondents

Key takeaways

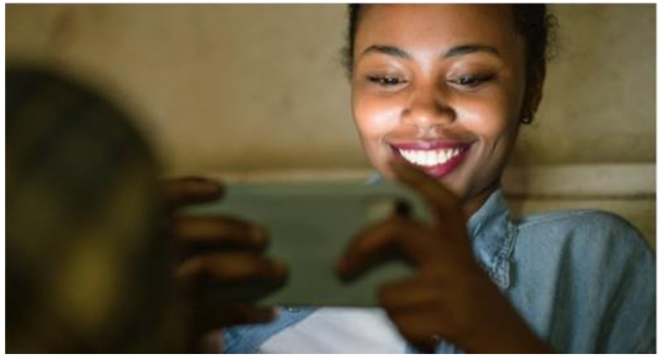


Consumers are fluid, and your marketing should be too.

1

First, know where your current and potential customers actually are.

When it comes to ad spending, we know consumers watch cable and satellite TV, Netflix, YouTubeTV, Amazon Prime Video and Hulu every day—and those are just the top five channels. People are on many different platforms—across streaming services, cable and satellite—and you need to be able to reach them wherever they're watching.



2

Optimize to the individual.

Adtech is getting better at delivering ads across TV and streaming platforms, but there's wide variation in actual execution (and many people are saying the same thing). To connect with your audience more effectively, partner with a solution that focuses on understanding *who* you're targeting and can reach them where they're watching. That way, you know you're always relevant.

3

Reach and connect with the right people.

Marketers need to understand what matters to each consumer, engage them with a message that reflects that understanding, and learn more about the individual with every interaction to inform what they say next in the conversation.

Reach your audience wherever they're watching with Epsilon.

Top-ranked consumer database in the U.S.

With insights into 250 million U.S. consumers, we provide unparalleled coverage and breadth of consumer data.

The largest cooperative transactional database

Abacus is the largest cooperative database in the U.S., with more than 3,000 contributing brands in B2C and B2B.

Real data from real people

All Epsilon data is based on verified individuals and can be activated across all channels. Our data includes name, address and vital data, as well as multiple identifiers on virtually every U.S. consumer.

More transactional data

Epsilon has developed the most complete set of transactional data for marketing purposes to be used across all marketing channels.

Privacy first

Privacy is core to Epsilon business operations, technology development and client engagement. Following privacy-by-design principles, Epsilon proactively prepares to meet changing legal requirements.

Learn more about Epsilon Data

Epsilon

Epsilon is a global data, technology and services company that powers the marketing and advertising ecosystem. The world's leading brands use Epsilon to harmonize consumer engagement across their paid, owned and earned channels, leveraging capabilities that include data, identity resolution, customer data platforms, clean rooms, digital media, retail media, site personalization, direct mail, loyalty, email marketing and measurement.

By applying artificial intelligence against privacy-centric consumer recognition–embedded in data-enriched analytic,marketing and media solutions—Epsilon allows marketers to bridge the divide between marketing and advertising technology, engaging consumers with 1 View, 1 Vision and 1 Voice.

1 View of their universe of potential buyers. 1 Vision for engaging each individual.
And 1 Voice to harmonize engagement across paid, owned and earned channels.

For more information, visit epsilon.com/data to connect with our team.

Reach out to sales

Epsilon Pulse

Epsilon Pulse is the beating heart of Epsilon's proprietary research. Designed to produce relevant and up-to-date insights about consumers, marketers and their preferences, Epsilon Pulse helps brands better understand the AdTech and MarTech industry so they can make informed, data-driven marketing decisions.

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