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PLATFORMS MOST USED FOR WATCHING VIDEO CONTENT

CivicScience’s new study of 2,651 adults asked respondents where they "mostly" watched video content in a typical week. CivicScience’s findings may come as a surprise to some since it’s commonly claimed that young adults have totally abandoned linear TV and now get a large portion of their TV/video content from YouTube and social media.

With this in mind, let’s consider the findings of the CivicScience study, as shown in the accompanying table. Taking all adults, in a typical week, 37% claimed that they do most of their viewing on streaming services while 24% named cable, 18% "live TV," 15% YouTube and a mere 6% primarily viewed on social media. By comparison, the streaming percentage for adults aged 18-24 was only slightly higher than the all-respondent norm at 40%, "live TV" came in at a surprising 24%, and cable lagged among this group at only 13%. And how did YouTube and social media do among the 18-24 respondents? Not much better than the overall norm. According to CivicScience, 16% of its 18-24s mentioned YouTube as their most watched source of video content while the corresponding figure for social media was 8%.

WHERE ADULTS BY AGE MOSTLY WATCH VIDEOS					
	18+	18-24	25-34	35-54	55+
Streaming Services	37%	40%	34%	45%	28%
Traditional Cable	24	13	14	19	41
"Live TV" ¹	18	24	21	17	13
YouTube	15	16	19	14	12
Social Media	6	8	6	6	6
¹ Includes YouTube TV, Fubo, etc.					
Source: CivicScience study of 2,651 adults, March 2026.					

The comparison between the youngest and oldest portions of the study sample may also raise eyebrows in some quarters. Adults aged 55+ were considerably more likely to favor cable over “live TV,” compared to the 18-24s, but contrary to what some believe, they are also users of streaming and, to a lesser extent, YouTube/social media.

It should be noted that studies of this type often generate highly impressionistic findings and, if conducted online, are biased in favor of digital media. So, this survey, like others of its kind, are not substitutes for more precise meter-based TV rating studies which are measured on a show-by-show basis. Still, meter-based studies have also found that traditional TV continues to attract viewing among younger adults, although considerably less than before. Moreover, reach and frequency calculators, such as our own interactive program, **TV AD Cume**, show that it is possible to attain a monthly reach of 45-50% among young adults with relatively large GRP buys that go beyond streaming and add broadcast TV networks, syndication and cable. **TV AD Cume** also demonstrates how important it is for advertisers who wish to tailor their TV ad "impression" weight across various age groups in proportion to their value as consumers, to utilize a combination of traditional and streaming TV, not just one or the other.