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Tuning into YouTube: UK's media habits revealed

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Features

- **Gen Alpha turn to YouTube first on their TV set at home, while over 55s double their time on the service**
- **Fewer than half of 16-24-year-olds watch broadcast TV weekly**
- **Despite declines, traditional broadcasters' content still makes up majority of in-home viewing**

YouTube is leading the charge in the streaming takeover of TV sets, with the service now the first place younger viewers go as soon as they switch on, according to [Ofcom's annual report](#) on the nation's media habits.

Overall people spent an average of 4 hours 30 minutes per day watching TV and video content at home in 2024. And while broadcast TV still accounts for the majority of in-home viewing (56%), audiences are increasingly turning to YouTube. The platform is now the second most-watched service in the UK, behind the BBC and ahead of ITV.

At home, people spent 39 minutes on YouTube per day in 2024, with 16 minutes of this via the household's TV set. Younger adults aged 16-34 are driving this trend, watching 18 minutes of YouTube a day on TV, while one in five (20%) children aged 4-15 head straight to the app as soon as they turn the set on.

But it's not just Gen Z and Alpha driving this trend. Over 55s are now watching nearly double the amount of YouTube content on their TVs compared to the previous year (11 minutes per day in December 2024, up from just 6 minutes in January 2023). Last year, 42% of all YouTube viewing by this age group was on a TV set (up from 33% in 2023).

YouTube content evolving

The content audiences are watching on YouTube has evolved too. Half of the platform's top-trending videos now more closely resemble

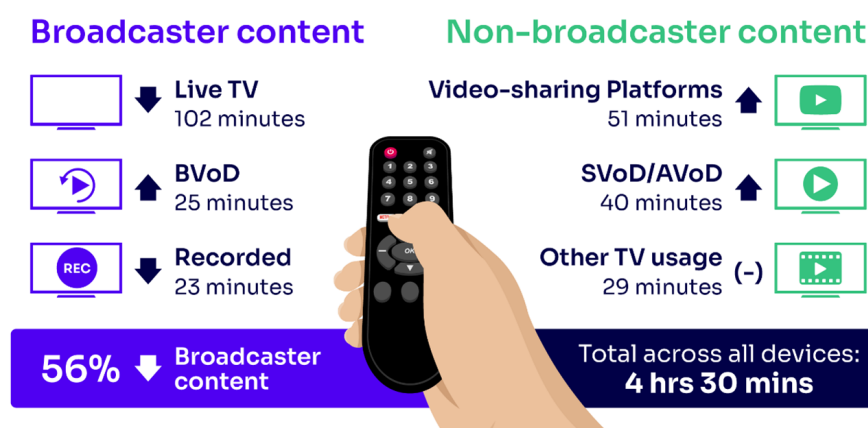
traditional TV, including long-form interviews and game shows. This shift positions YouTube as a direct competitor to ad-supported TV services, while offering broadcasters a way to reach wider and younger audiences.

Some broadcasters are increasingly offering their own programmes on YouTube, for example ITV and Channel 4 make full length programming available on their channels, retaining control over adverts. Ofcom has identified these sorts of partnerships, making public service content available and prominent on online platforms, as critical to sustain the future of public service media in its recent report, [Transmission Critical](#).

Public service broadcasters (PSBs) are seeing success with their online services, especially the BBC. For the first time, people are watching more online programmes from broadcasters than they are recorded programmes.

Ed Leighton, Ofcom's Interim Group Director for Strategy and Research, said: *"Scheduled TV is increasingly alien to younger viewers, with YouTube the first port of call for many when they pick up the TV remote. But we're also seeing signs that older adults are turning to the platform as part of their daily media diet too."*

"Public service broadcasters are recognising this shift - moving to meet audiences in the online spaces where they increasingly spend their time. But we need to see even more ambition in this respect to ensure that public service media that audiences value survives long into the future."



Generational divide

Overall, people spent 4% less time watching broadcast TV in 2024 than the previous year, with average viewing dropping to 2 hours 24 minutes a day on TV sets. This trend was particularly driven by young

adults (16-24), who watched just 17 minutes of live TV daily. Only 45% of this age group tuned into broadcast TV weekly, down from 48% in 2023.

Less than a quarter of 16-24s' in-home video viewing is now to broadcaster content, versus 90% for those aged 75 and over.

Overall, people watched content from video-on-demand platforms for an average of 40 minutes per day. Netflix continues to be the most popular service, watched for an average of 22 minutes per day, and accounting for more than half of all viewing on streaming platforms.

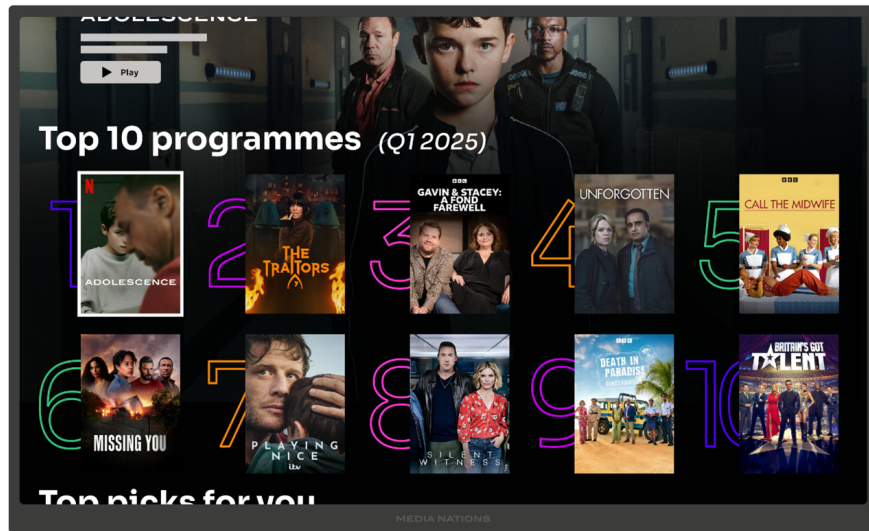
Festive favourites top the list of most-watched moments

But broadcasters proved they can still bring the nation together for shared major TV moments, with the BBC and ITV boasting the top three most-watched shows of 2024.

Gavin and Stacy: The Finale (18.6 million) was the most watched programme last year, followed by *Wallace and Gromit: Vengeance Most Fowl* (16.9 million), with the fourth episode of *Mr Bates vs The Post Office* (14.7 million) coming in third. The top two most-watched programmes both aired first on Christmas day.

The *Spain v England Euro 2024 final* was the most-watched live sports event of the year across the BBC, ITV and STV, with 19.8 million people tuning in on the day.

Netflix's *Adolescence* was the most-watched TV event in the first quarter of 2025 with 12.2 million viewers until the end of March. This marked the first time a streaming title topped weekly TV ratings [2].



Podcasts eat up audio diets

Our Media Nations Report also has its ear to the ground on how the nation's listening habits are evolving. More than nine in ten UK adults (93%) listen to some form of audio content each week, increasing to 98% of 16-34-year-olds. YouTube (47%) and Spotify (36%) are the most popular online audio services, while BBC Sounds is the most popular from a radio broadcaster (24%).

Music streaming and podcasts continue to be an important part of our audio diets, particularly for younger people. People aged 15-34 now spend more than half of their weekly listening time with streamed music and podcasts (58%, up from 40% in 2019), which is close to double the amount for the average listener (30%) [3].

Podcasts are also increasingly available in video as well as audio form. Platforms such as YouTube, Spotify, and Global Player now regularly host video versions of UK podcasts, helping creators engage with broader audiences.

More top trends from our Media Nations reports are available on our [news centre](#).

Notes to editors

1. Our total video viewing analysis refers to audiovisual content viewed inside the home, whether on TV sets or other devices connected to a home's WiFi network. It does not include viewing outside the home or any viewing over a cellular network.
2. Barb Audiences Ltd (Barb)
3. Figures on weekly reach and listening to live radio come from

RAJAR

4. Data on time spent listening to music streaming and podcasts sourced from IPA TouchPoints

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