The upper third

Television, age, modern life and nostalgia

GREAT!

2026

Foreword

Our not young audience is having a moment, and we're here to shine a light on it.

Last year, our report asked the media and broadcast industries to look again at what it means to be 'not young'. We'd found an audience that was large, varied, optimistic and far more comfortable with technology than many lazy stereotypes suggested.

We'd also found people who loved television, but didn't feel loved back.

One year on, that story has moved forward. Our new research shows how qualities that may appear old fashioned seem to have very wide appeal in 2026 as pressures mount in everyday life. Knowing what you enjoy, returning to trusted favourites, valuing simplicity and making time to watch together – oldies, but definitely goldies.

When entertainment is built around more platforms, more passwords and more choice, familiarity can feel fresh. Scheduled television can be social. And programmes from the past can keep finding entirely new audiences. Nostalgia in action.

At Great!, we see every day how telly's trusted shows, memorable characters and easy access can bring pleasure to millions. This report explores how we watch, what we watch, and why. And from that why, we look more intently at the bigger picture of how people of all ages experience everyday life in 2026 – what they feel, what they see and how they want to find balance by looking to simpler ways and simpler times.

But it's not just in television. We talked to wonderful people in the spaces of gaming, music, technology, charity, sport and live shows and found powerful stories about new old ways of enjoying, celebrating and sharing the things we love.

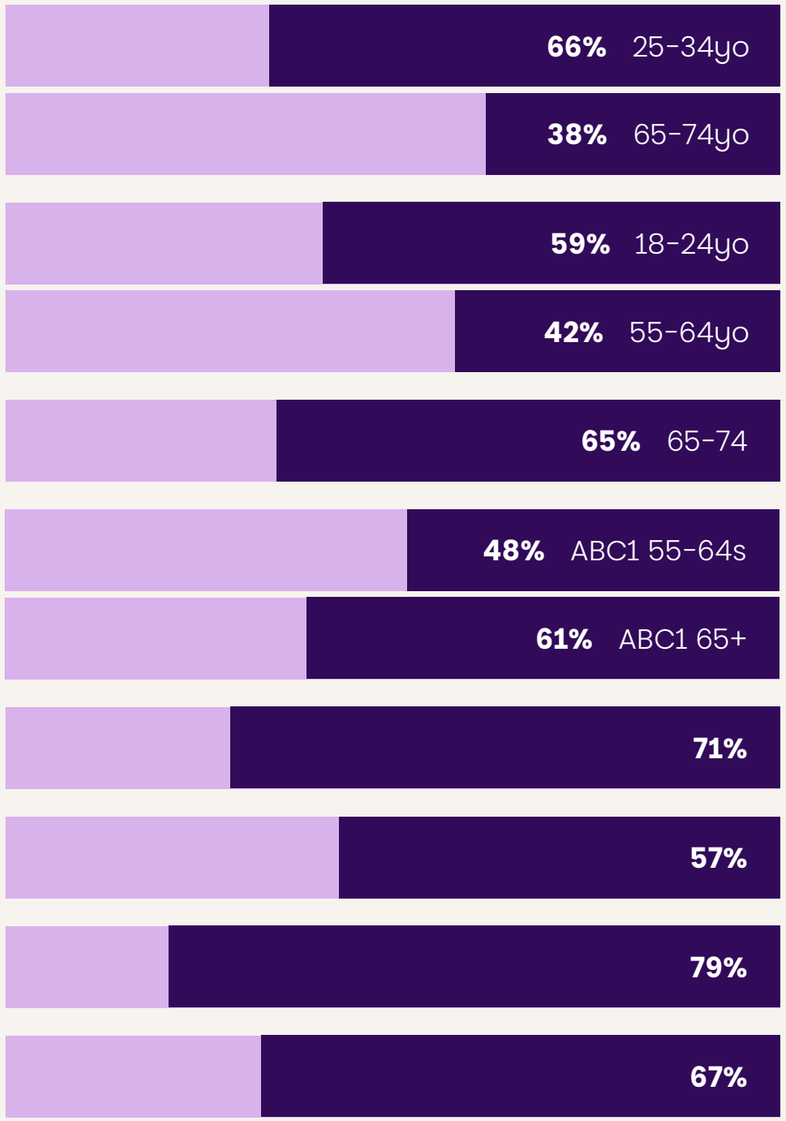
Increasingly, it seems the values of the 'not young' part of our audience are exactly what everyone else is looking for too.



Kate, from Great! x
Great! Marketing Director

At Great!, we see every day how telly's trusted shows, memorable characters and easy access can bring pleasure to millions. This report explores how we watch, what we watch, and why.

Highlights



Feel overwhelmed by the amount available to watch

Feel pressurised to be online for everything

Watch broadcast television every day

Watch TV daily, but 58% feel current TV programming is more geared towards younger audiences

Wish for a simpler time before smartphones and social media dominated life

Return to familiar TV favourites because they feel comforting

Feel more fondly about programmes watched years ago than recent television

Believe television is a good way to bring family generations together

Our research

4000
people from across the UK

18-24 to 75+
age groups

July 2026
through Walr for Great!

The Upper Third today

Despite the media industry portrayal, people aged 55 and over are not a small group at the edge of the population.

One, there's 22 million of them. Two, 'they' represent a hugely diverse group. And, three, that diverse group has real spending power and real cultural influence.

And the Upper Third is continuing to grow.

The UK population is aging in every part of the country. The latest ONS data reports the number of people aged 65 and over increased by 2.0% in both Scotland and Northern Ireland, 1.8% in England and 1.5% in Wales. The UK's 55+ population increased by around 1.5%, while the 75+ population grew particularly quickly, by 2.8%.

The working-age population also increased in all four nations, but at a slightly slower rate. Meanwhile, the number aged 15 and under rose by just 0.6% in England and fell in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland.

The Upper Third still represents almost exactly a third of the country, but its absolute size is continuing to increase, and growth is strongest among the oldest audiences.

That long-term shift makes the language of a single '55+' audience increasingly inadequate.

22million

55+ ↑

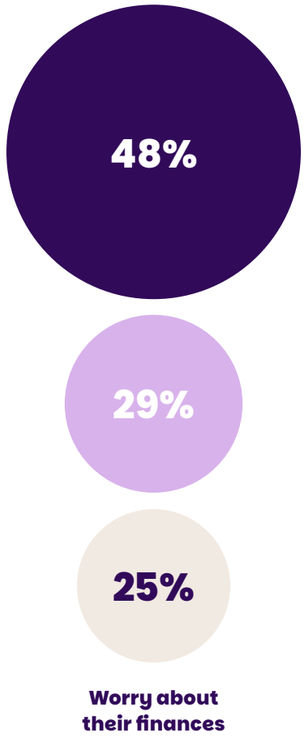
UK Population

One age bracket. Three different stages of life.

55–64: still in the thick of it
42% have money left over each month, yet 48% worry about making ends meet. More than half (52%) have had to rethink what retirement will look like. This is an audience experiencing both financial pressure and significant spending power.

65–74: stability and perspective
Just over half (51%,) have money left each month and only 29% worry about making ends meet. Two-thirds (67%) feel younger than their actual age, while only 21% feel stressed most of the time.

75+: a distinctive picture
70% have money left each month, three-quarters feel financially prepared for the future and 77% are proud of their budgeting. Only 18% say they feel stressed most of the time, while 63% feel younger than their age.

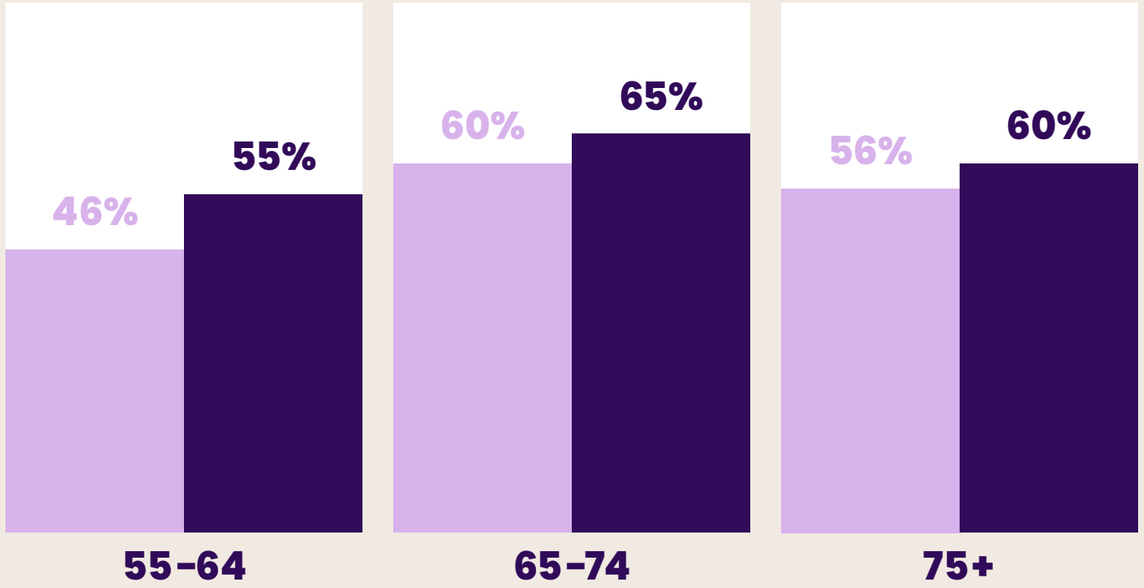


One year on...

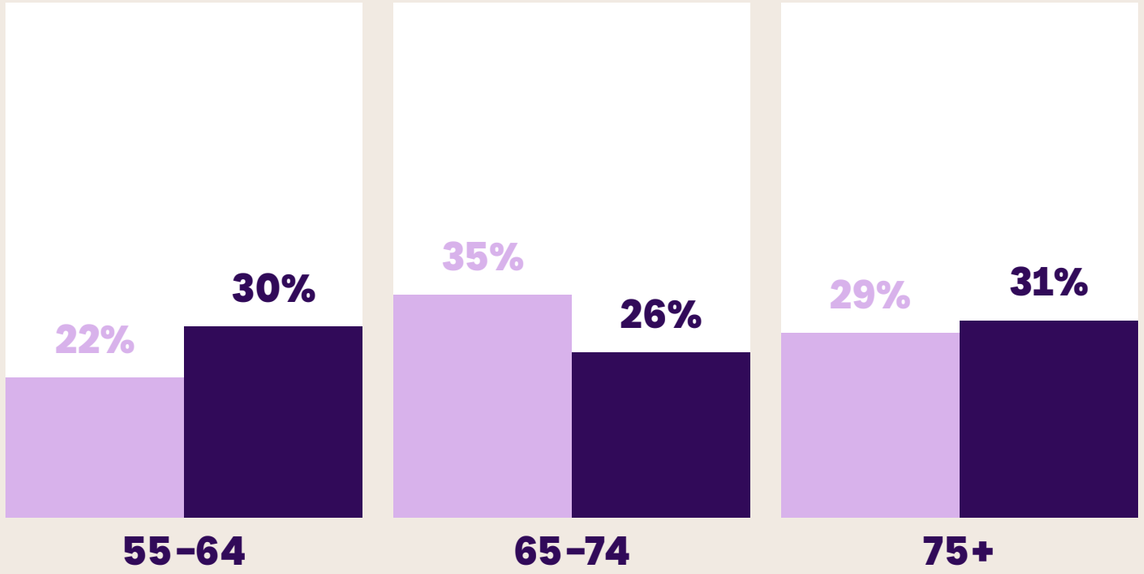
Broadcast TV's everyday role has strengthened among the 55+ age groups. But the feeling of being left behind by modern television has not gone away.

2025 **2026**

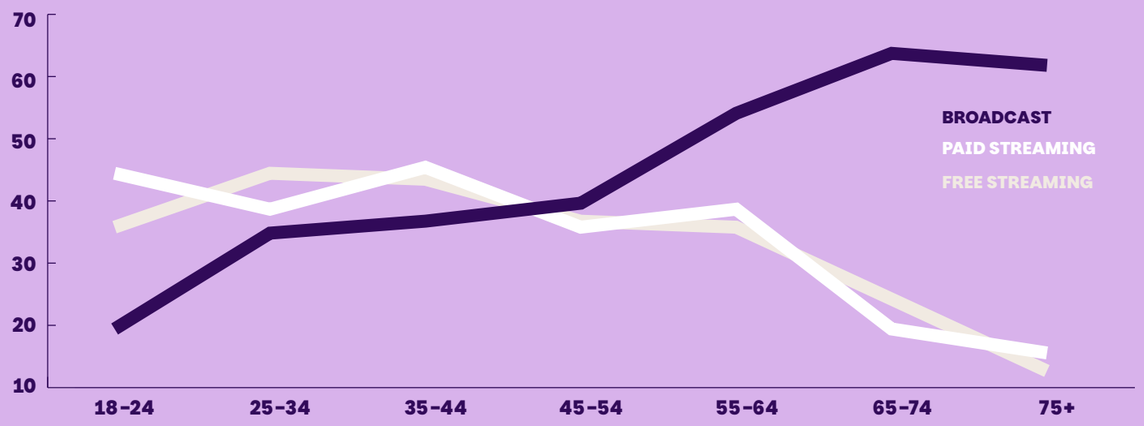
Report watching broadcast TV daily



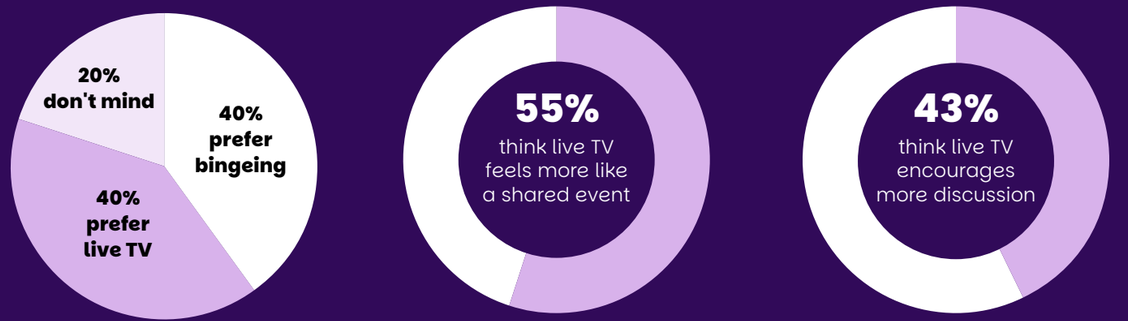
Say they feel left behind by modern TV



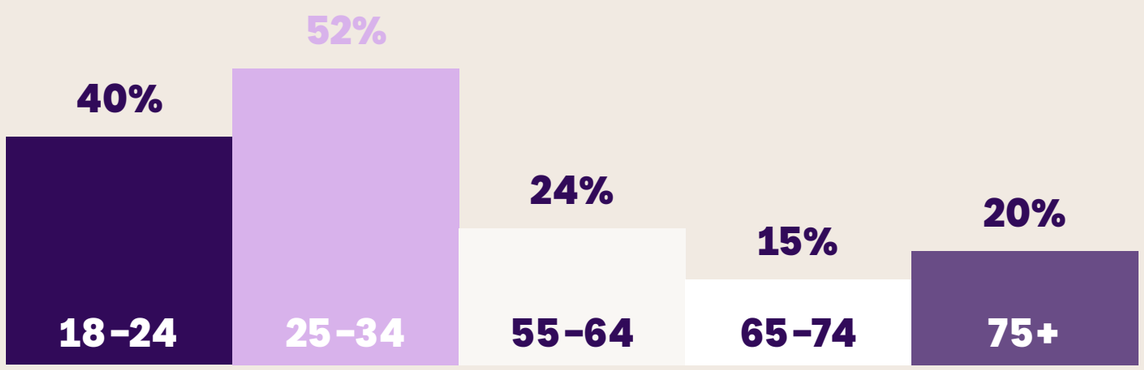
Use of broadcast TV vs digital subscription streaming vs free streaming, by age



Watching live TV vs bingeing for all ages



Number of people who say they watch TV for company



How we watch

The options (and complexities) have grown, but broadcast TV remains the favourite.

Ease of broadcast still a powerful pull
Across the whole sample, 47% say they watch free-to-access broadcast television daily, compared with 36% watching a streaming service.

Age changes the balance. Daily broadcast viewing rises steadily with age, peaking at 65% for 65-74s. Paid streaming moves in the opposite direction, falling from 45% among 18–24s to 15% among the oldest group.

This is not a contest with a single winner. Viewers combine services. But for millions of people, broadcast remains the most reliable and popular route into television.

That's partly because broadcast does something increasingly unusual and valuable: it makes a decision for us. Turn it on. Something is already there. And you know what's coming next. No algorithm to navigate, subscription to manage or series to select.

In an age of infinite choice, curation has a new value. Broadcast doesn't ask viewers to search a catalogue before they can be entertained. The schedule relieves you of the burden of choosing, and this research suggests that can increasingly feel like a feature, not a limitation.

Scheduled or all at once? Both have a place
Binge viewing has not swept away the weekly rhythm. The national preference is evenly divided: 40% prefer programmes released at regular intervals and 40% prefer a whole series at once; 20% have no preference.

What scheduling retains is a sense of occasion. 55% agree that watching live at a set time feels more like a shared event than watching on demand. 43% also believe staggered releases encourage more discussion. Convenience matters, but so does having something to anticipate, and someone else to talk to about it afterwards.

Togetherness
More than a quarter of adults watch television with family members in the same room every day. The habit is especially visible among older viewers: 31% of 55–64s, 39% of 65–74s and 35% of people aged 75+ watch together daily.

Television can offer company too, but that is not primarily an older-person behaviour. 40% of 18–24s and 52% of 25–34s often or always rely on television for company, compared with 24% of 55–64s, 15% of 65–74s and 20% of those aged 75+.

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What we want

Wasn't it all just a bit easier when....

The appeal of a simpler time
71% of people say they wish they could return to a simpler time before smartphones and social media dominated life. And it's an amazingly consistent view: only four percentage points separate all the generations.

And more choice hasn't helped
There's never been more content available than there is today. Which sounds great, until choosing becomes part of the work

Half of adults feel overwhelmed by the amount available to watch. The pressure peaks among 25–34s, at 66%, compared with 49% of 55–64s, 38% of 65–74s and 37% of people aged 75+.

The contrast becomes sharper when people consider the time spent choosing. 62% of 25–34s say they spend more time deciding what to watch than actually watching, compared with 29% of 55–64s, 19% of 65–74s and 22% of those aged 75+.

Keeping track of subscriptions, services and passwords frustrates 63% of 25–34s, but only 35% of people aged 75+. Older viewers may simply be better at knowing what they want — and more comfortable with curation.

Digitally capable, but selective
A preference for simplicity should not be confused with an inability to use technology. Three-quarters of 55–64s, 73% of 65–74s and 63% of people aged 75+ feel confident with most technology. 66%, 57% and 67% respectively say technology has made their lives better.

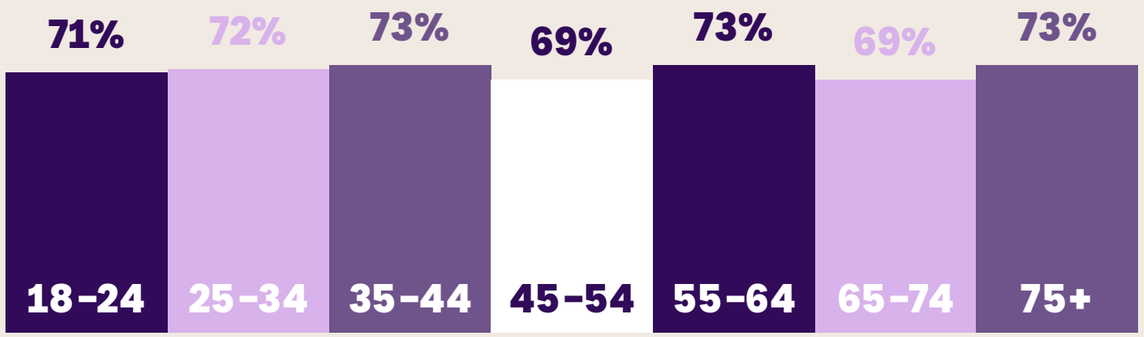
But competence does not mean wanting every experience to become more dependent on technology. 42% of 55–64s feel pressured to be online for everything, falling to 40% of 65–74s and 28% of those aged 75+. The equivalent figure is 57% among both 18–24s and 25–34s.

Familiarity, simplicity, shared experiences and less dependence on technology. Qualities that may look old-fashioned are increasingly attractive across all ages in society.

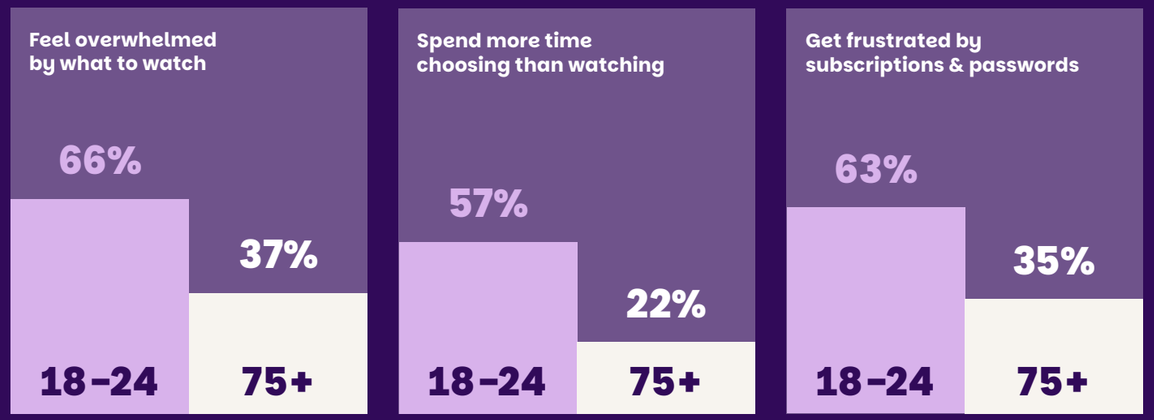
And broadcast television provides one of the easiest ways to find those qualities, housed in an experience that doesn't begin with searching, scrolling, signing in or keeping up.

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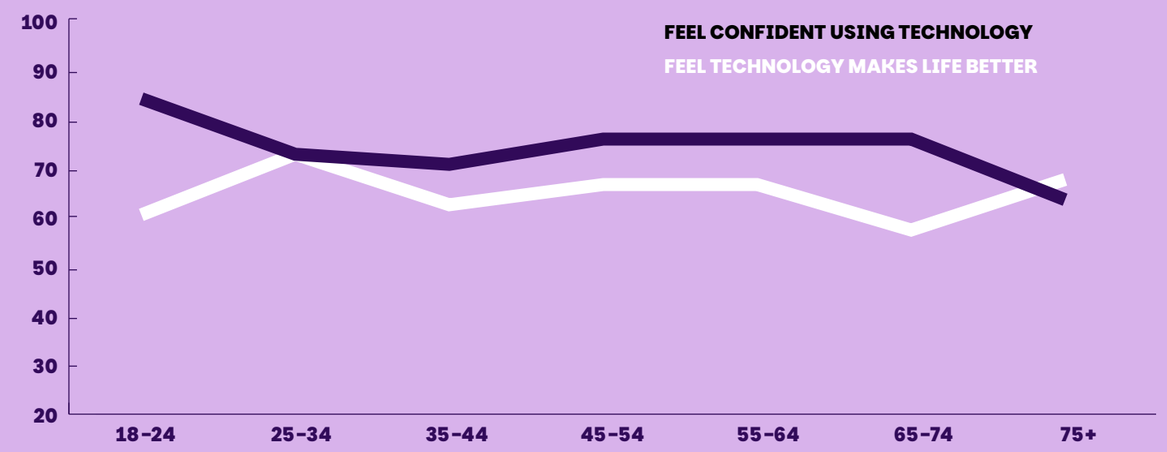
Everyone would like a return to simpler times



People are overwhelmed by choice



Most people feel comfortable with technology



People feel pressure to be online

People don't want every experience to become dependent on technology.

18-24 57%

25-34 57%

35-44 49%

45-54 45%

55-64 42%

65-74 40%

74+ 28%



CASE STUDY

Elite Obsolete Electronics

with Austin Lucas

"It was the coolest toy to have when I was a kid," says 29-year-old Austin Lucas when we chat from his office in Kansas. "I grew up with an admiration for them, and a desire to own one."

Now that coolest toy is his business, and a booming one at that.

Because Elite Obsolete Electronics, founded by Austin in 2019, has just passed 100,000 transactions, repairing, selling and customizing the iconic Apple iPod.

Apple discontinued the music player in 2022, having sold more than 400 million devices.

"I've devoted the last almost eight years to helping people get the iPod they want. Sometimes that's a totally unique one, and we can customize it with hundreds of options.



"Sometimes it's getting hold of the one they had when they were younger."

Austin tells us about the customers he has from all over the world (and shows us the world map, with pins for every customer location, that proudly hangs in the office), and it's clear that a real passion for music brings them together.

"This is a well-informed group," Austin tells us. "They love music and they love the intentional design of the iPod – this is a precisely engineered audio player.

"They also want to keep the iTunes libraries they've built over the last couple of decades. For my customers, a replacement iPod is better than jumping to Spotify."

And for Austin himself, it's a blend of old and new tech that comes together. "My iPhone 17 Pro Max is the best device I've owned – and I need it to run the business. But I get so many notifications – it's non-stop."

"I have an iPod Classic 4 and a Classic 7 and I when I don't want anything bothering me, I can use those at home and really switch off."

www.ihateipods.com
www.eoe.works

"I've devoted the last almost eight years to helping people get the iPod they want. Sometimes that's a totally unique one, sometimes it's getting hold of the one they had when they were younger."

CASE STUDY

SLOW Football

with Lee Price

"I'd come back from the US and needed to unwind, but everywhere seemed to be overtaken by this urgency," begins Lee, setting the scene for producing his radically retro version of fantasy football, 'SLOW Football'.

"Learn AI. Read these 20 things. It was FOMO gone wrong for me.

"I just wanted to escape from it, so I went to where I find refuge."

That place was Football Manager, and Lee's mind went back to the old play-by-mail fantasy football from the 90s – he wanted to see if that could be recreated.

"I expected to fail. But I went down a rabbit hole, created a system, published it, shared it on LinkedIn, and expected nothing. Then people loved it," says Lee, with clear surprise in his voice.

"The key to the SLOW Football premise is you manage one game per week. You can't speed it up. There's no constant phone notifications, no all night sessions. The pacing is important, because you have to keep room for real life.

"It's a safe place, away from urgency and information overload."

The idea was originally going to be entirely paper-based, but the global take-up (with players from the US, Thailand, Australia, Netherlands and Belgium) meant post couldn't be relied upon.



"We've built a community on WhatsApp – it's become a circle of friends. We're going to a Derby County game this season, and then hiking in the Peaks."

"A lot of us, myself included, think of the 90s and 00s as our era for football, but there's a wide age range – our youngest player is 22; when the chat turned to Championship Manager he said 'that game came out before I was born.'"

And Lee is playing into that retro feel with Teletext-inspired league tables, text-based game updates, pricing (£2 per week) inspired by the 90s pay-to-play fantasy football competitions in newspapers – and even bringing back ex-footballer legends to the game.

"We auction a legend – a SLOW Icon – someone like Dion Dublin or Jay Jay Okocha. The 'streets don't forget' players, as younger people today would call them.

"It's fun, and another way to celebrate the retro feel of the game – keeping up that nostalgic look-back as a central part of the SLOW Football experience. It's football management, the way it used to be."

www.slowfootball.club



25–34s: the nostalgia generation

The group most exposed to limitless digital entertainment is also the group showing the strongest appetite for familiarity, simplicity and inherited television as the antidote to modern life.

66% Overwhelmed by content choice

62% Spend more time choosing than watching

63% Frustrated by subscriptions/ passwords

72% Sometimes wish for a simpler pre-smartphone/social-media time

76% Associate particular TV programmes with happier periods

70% Still watch programmes introduced by older relatives

64% Enjoy shows first broadcast before they were born



CASE STUDY

CALM

with CEO Simon Gunning



"Loneliness is something so many of us experience," says Simon Gunning, CEO of Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM).

"We're social creatures. We need connection with other people and with the world around us, but that isn't always easy. Busy schedules, life changes, struggling with our mental health and even the pressures of social media can all contribute to feelings of loneliness."

For CALM, the suicide prevention charity that provides life-saving services and practical mental health support to anyone who needs it, tackling loneliness and helping people feel connected is an important part of its work.

And sometimes connection can come from somewhere as simple as switching on the television.

"TV is often a solitary activity, but it doesn't necessarily feel that way," says Simon.

"Your favourite programmes can help you to feel part of a community, and research shows that it can even help to regulate your emotions. You know the characters, you know the jokes, you know what's coming next.

"There's reassurance and comfort in spending time in a world you already know."

"There's a reason we go back to the same TV programmes," Simon continues. "When everything else feels busy, unpredictable or overwhelming, familiarity can be comforting.

"You don't have to learn the rules of a new world or concentrate on something complicated. You can just spend half an hour with characters you already know and enjoy."

And those familiar shows can provide connections beyond the screen, too, says Simon.

"TV gives us things to talk about and a reason to connect with others. It could be something you message a friend about, or something that reminds you of another time in your life."

"You can be reminded of watching television with your parents, your children or your friends. Then suddenly it's about much more than just the programme itself."

"Connection doesn't always have to mean a big, important conversation," adds Simon.

"If putting on an old episode of a programme you love gives you a feeling of being part of a community, a sense of calm or a reason to reach out to the people around you, then there's real value in it."

www.thecalmzone.net

"Your favourite programmes can help you to feel part of a community, and research shows that it can even help to regulate your emotions."

CASE STUDY

Age UK Barnet Record Club

with Phil Hilton

"We really dive into rock history," says Phil, host of the Age UK Barnet 55+ Vinyl Club.

"We listen to the records and re-tell the famous stories – the sex and drugs and rock n roll. That's what people want to hear. And age doesn't change that."

Phil – a renowned magazine editor and journalist – is as passionate about his community as he is about the music.

"They love to share their own favourites – there's quite a bit of competition to be chosen, and anticipation to see who reacts to the song you've picked. It's just like putting your coin in the jukebox in the bar," Phil says with fondness (and immediately we're celebrating our favourite juke box bars in London).

"I assumed we'd focus on the 60s and 70s. But I've been reminded that the 80s and 90s were actually a long time ago – and this group loves those decades!

"I'm learning all the time what my group likes. I'm learning about them as people.

"One of our community, for example, could have some mobility issues and seem quite shy. Then when it's time to share their record, they pull out a storming heavy rock classic and bang, that's it – that's who they really are. Time doesn't change that."

"We've created a community and a very 'in the room' experience. Even when it's hard to get there – with the heatwave, for instance – there's a passion for being there and we have a full room and great interactions."

When Phil first set up the Vinyl Club, the intention was to help to tackle male loneliness, but the reality has been a roughly equal split of men and women in attendance.

"We've created a community and a very 'in the room' experience. Even when it's hard to get there – with the heatwave, for instance – there's a passion for being there and we have a full room and great interactions.

"I think there's a comfort in looking back. Rock history stories are hard, with a lot of problems and addiction – they're far from cosy! – but they're history, and there's comfort because there are no surprises."

"It's a format that works, and I think – hope – others will adopt it."

Phil hosts the 55+ Vinyl Club every Tuesday at 5pm in Barnet.

www.ageuk.org.uk/barnet/



What we watch

Taste in television is personal, but there are very clear trends.

News: a universal need, with an older centre
News and current affairs reach every age group. More than a quarter of 18–24s watch every day, rising steadily to 52% of 55–64s, 68% of 65–74s and 70% of people aged 75+. Even when half of adults say political news and global crises can feel overwhelming, staying informed seems to be a powerful motivator.

Drama, comedy and movies: enduring pleasures
Drama is one of television's strongest common languages. 65% watch drama at least weekly, with consistent habits among the Upper Third: 64% of 55–64s, 73% of 65–74s and 61% of people aged 75+.

Movies are similarly durable. 64% watch films at least weekly across the sample, including 65% of 55–64s, 51% of 65–74s and 60% of people aged 75+.

Comedy remains widely shared too. 53% watch at least weekly overall, while half of 55–64s and 44% of 65–74s do so. The oldest group is less frequent, but still far from absent: 35% watch comedy at least weekly.

Reality TV: divisive
Reality TV attracts dedicated viewers, but outright rejection rises markedly with age. 34% of 55–64s, 40% of 65–74s and 47% of people aged 75+ say they never watch the genre. Among men, the divide is sharper still: 54% of men aged 65–74 and 63% of men aged 75+ say they never watch.

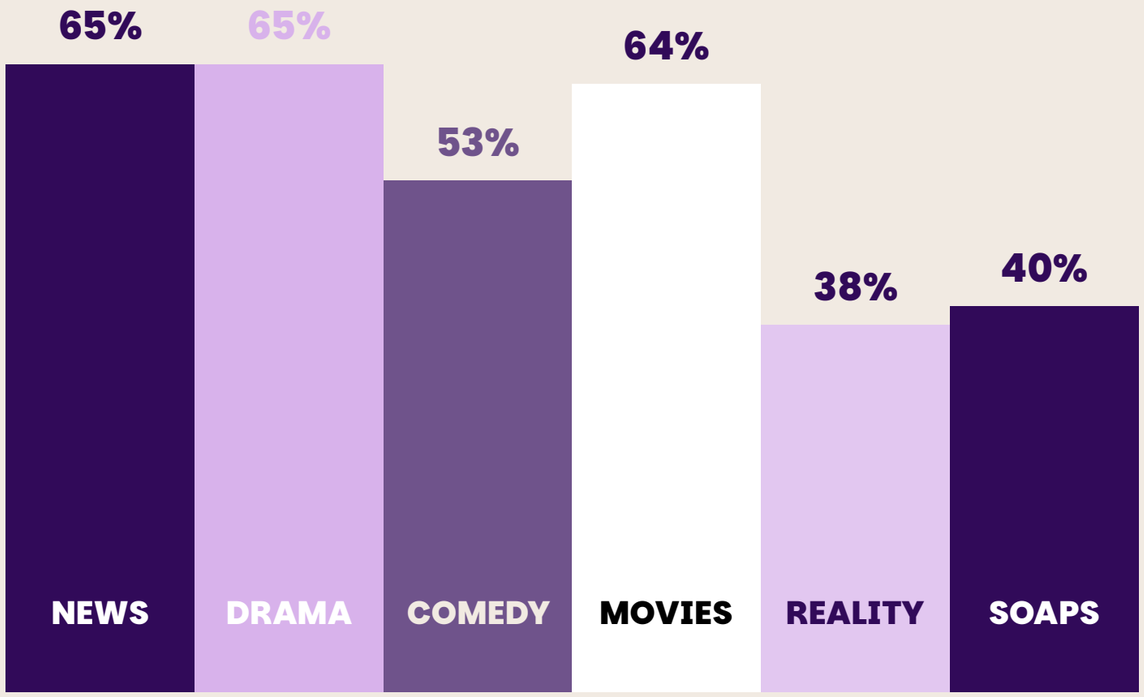
Soaps: anything but a safe assumption
Soap operas are sometimes treated as an older-audience staple. Our report data jars with that assumption. 45% of 55–64s and 54% of 65–74s never watch what is traditionally assumed to appeal. This reinforces a theme that runs throughout this report's findings: knowing what you like in an age of infinite choice may be an advantage.



Little House on the Prairie (1974–1983)

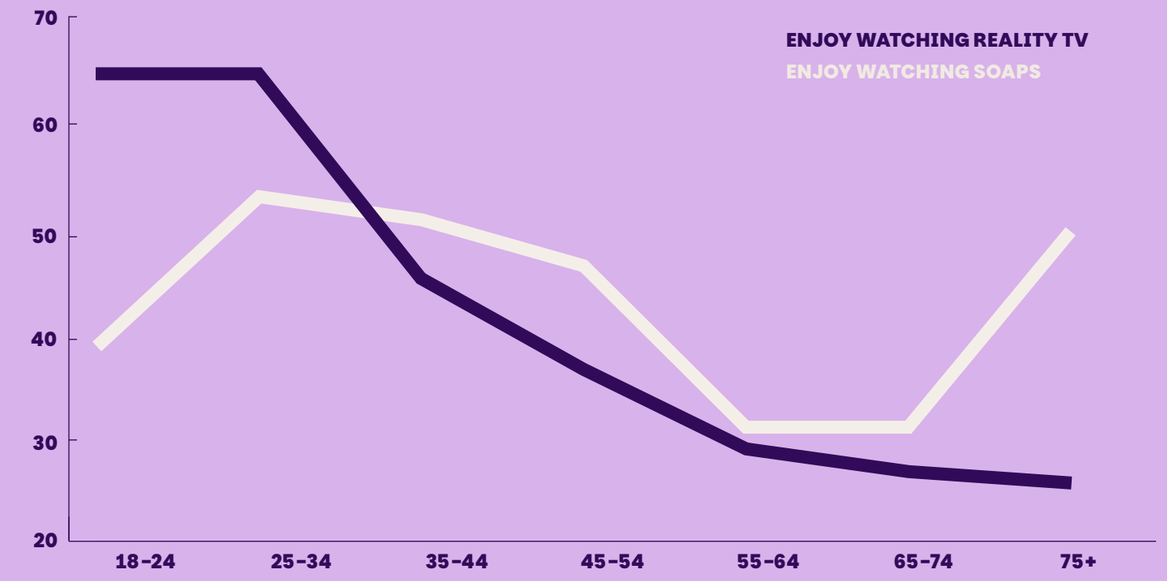
The picture is one of distinctive but not predictable tastes. The Upper Third consistently wants news, drama, films and comedy, but many actively reject genres.

What people regularly tune into



Percentage of people across all ages who watch at least every day or weekly

Soaps and reality TV are divisive



CASE STUDY

Murder, She Wrote Solve Along

with Tim Benzie

"People always tell me that they used to watch it with their mum or their nan," says Tim, creator and host of the international hit show 'Solve-Along-A-Murder, She Wrote'.

"It's multi-generational, 'G-rated' programming – good enough to entertain your mum or your nan, but safe enough for kids to enjoy."

Murder, She Wrote ran for 264 episodes from 1984 to 1996, pulling in 24 million viewers every week in its prime.

"There's an association with comfort, and ritual – it was on once a week, at the same time in the evening. "We'd call it 'Event TV' these days, but it was just television back then – and it was so much better to watch it live, even after VHS became popular."

We're talking to Tim in a break from his shows at the annual Agatha Christie Festival in Torquay (he reminds us that the title 'Murder, She Wrote' is a play on 'Murder, She Said', the film adaptation of Christie's 4.50 From Paddington), and we quickly get onto the rising category of 'cosy crime'.



"It's a relatively new sub-genre, and it's in part a reaction to terribly violent content in True Crime.

"Murder, She Wrote isn't quite cosy crime, but it's much easier than true crime. Death is presented in a neat, compact and palatable way; it's explained, and then it stops; and no one really grieves.

"And as it was set and filmed in the 80s and 90s, DNA evidence wasn't actively used in the plots, so the characters – and the armchair detectives at home – have to solve the crime in other ways, focused on logic and instinct.

"There's also no mobile phones – the whole show is unencumbered by the tedium of technology, so people meet, they talk, they play chess. It's fabulous."

But it isn't just about the content, Tim insists. "The structure is comforting – each show is split into four parts, with three ad breaks, and recaps of the important plot parts after each break – it's all designed to be relaxed and comforting."

And how does this style compare to modern TV?

"It's just an easier way of watching. It's not smarter, but it's less demanding. Take 'The Pitt' – it's brilliant, but it's noisy and naturalistic, and hard to hear; sometimes people just want to relax!"

www.solvealongamurdershewrote.com

"It's multi-generational, 'G-rated' programming – good enough to entertain your mum or your nan, but safe enough for kids to enjoy."

CASE STUDY

Retro Delights

with Lee Murray



"There's something really refreshing about a device that's focused on one thing," says Lee as we're delving into the history of gaming and consoles.

"The internet's made retro game emulators widely available to play on your computer and phone – but they come with constant notifications and distractions as well.

"When I'm commuting to the office in Manchester now, I put my phone away and spend the time playing retro games on my Super Pocket. It's a welcome change to social media, the doomscrolling and the anxiety that can bring."

Where did it all start for Lee?

"I was obsessed with gaming from being a kid – I had a Spectrum 128K. You'd put the cassette in, and there was real excitement to see the loading title screen. Real anticipation.

"Retro Delights is about celebrating retro gaming through good design and storytelling – of the games, the machines and the cartridges or cassettes.

"Top illustrators worked on the Atari 2600 cartridges and box art, producing some of the best and most iconic game artwork in gaming history – they're stunning.

"It's fascinating to think about the constraints the developers were working with – like the 8-bit NES. And the simplicity, creativity and playability of the games they created is hugely appealing, still.

"Today, games are more story-driven – set in sprawling open worlds that demand a massive time commitment. But the simpler games are timeless, and we see people of all generations coming back to them – whether on the original consoles or a 'mini' version with an HDMI – that has made the classics available to a whole new audience."

One of the most famous examples of that open-world game style is the GTA series – and we have to ask about GTA 6, the gaming world's biggest release of the year.

"I will buy it," says Lee. "I really admire the time and effort that goes into the world, design and the gameplay. I just wish the violence was less prominent.

"Some of my favourite memories of the GTA series are just driving around, listening to music and exploring the world – that's what I loved about it."

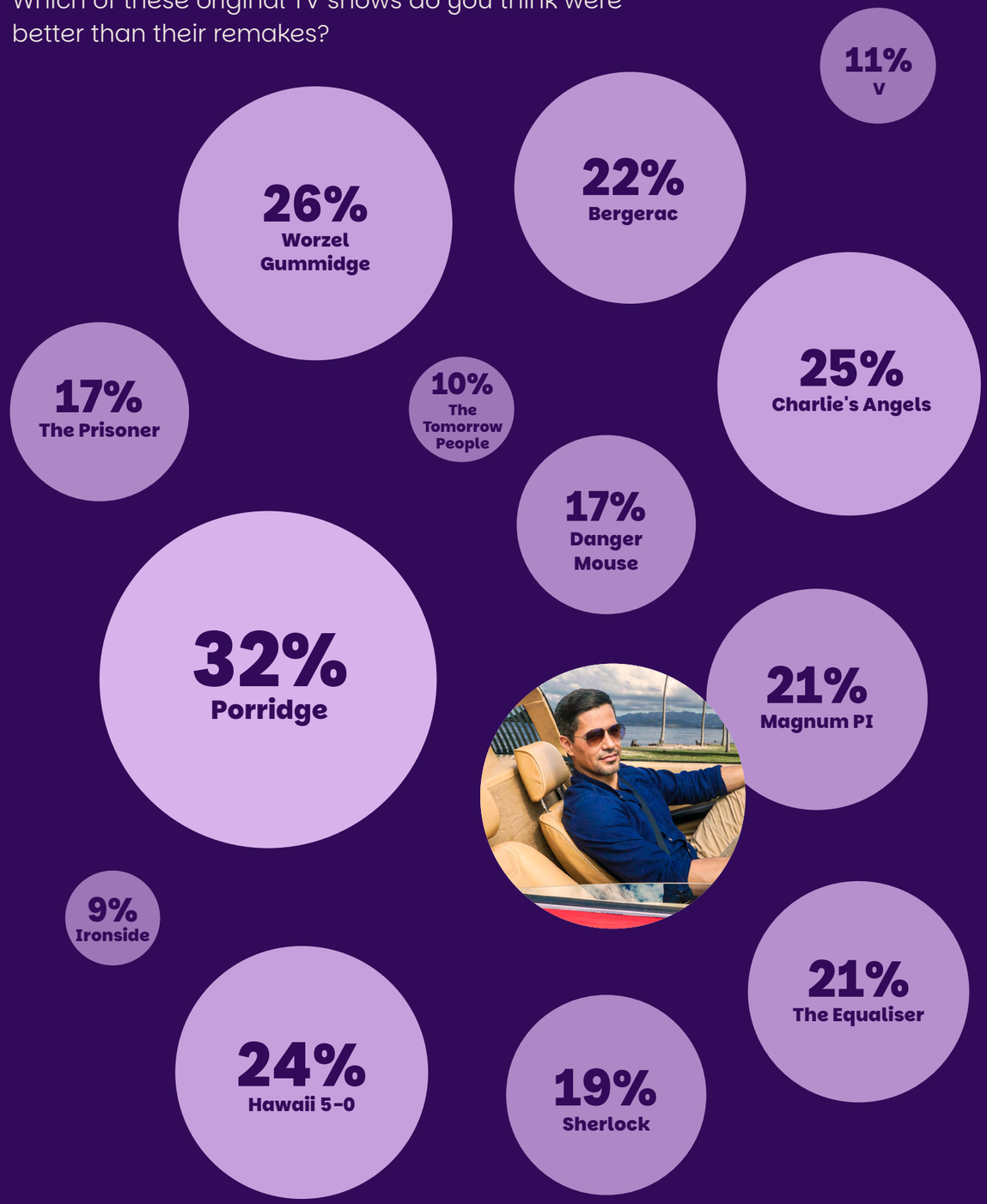
www.retrodelights.co.uk

"Retro Delights is about celebrating retro gaming through good design and storytelling – of the games, the machines and the cartridges or cassettes."



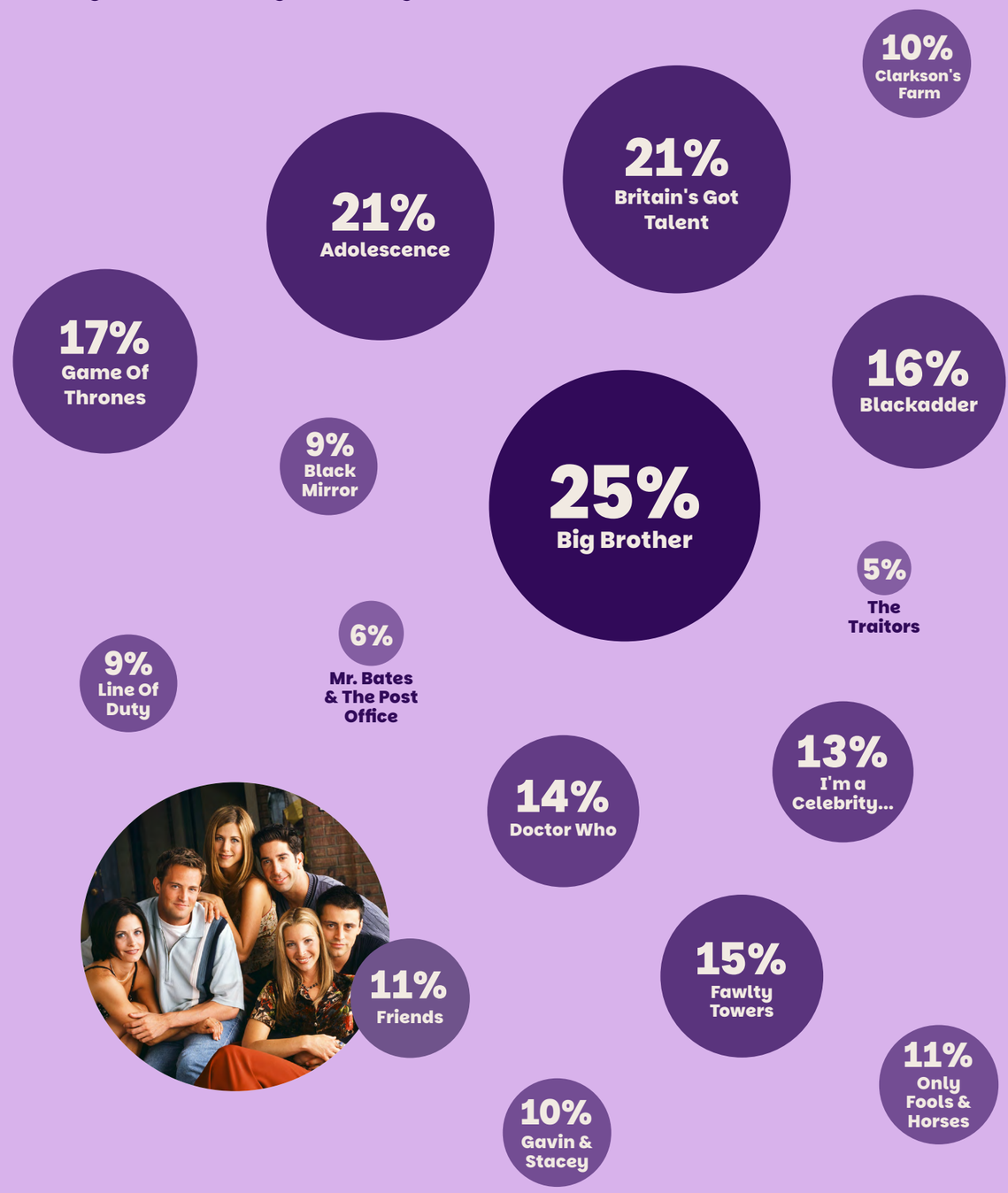
Reboots and memorable shows

Which of these original TV shows do you think were better than their remakes?



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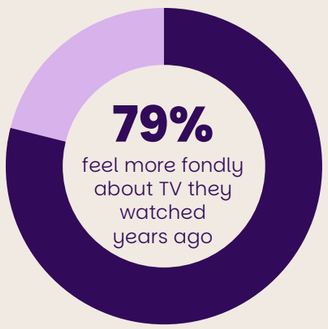
Which of these shows do you remember everyone talking about the day after they were broadcast?

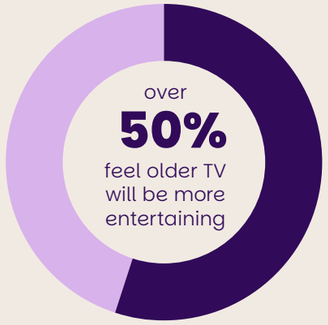


©CBS via Getty Images

Television is comforting







Television is inherited

53% **Watch shows introduced by an older relative**

42% **Watch shows considered classic TV**

The reboot contradiction

58% **Think there are too many reboots**

53% **Say remakes make them want to watch an original**

Why we watch

Perhaps it isn't surprising that nostalgia is having a moment.

Familiar does not mean old-fashioned
When everyday life means more platforms, more passwords, more notifications and seemingly infinite choice, knowing exactly what you're going to get has value. Television is entertainment, but it is also a powerful reminder of happier times, and something to pass on.

Broadcast television recreates some of what people tell us they miss: familiarity, simplicity, shared experiences and the pleasure of not having to make another decision. Telly delivers on nostalgia for simpler times, no matter the age group.

69% of all age groups say certain programmes remind them of happier periods in their lives. 79% feel more fondly about programmes they watched years ago than recent shows. And more than half trust older programmes to entertain them more than newer ones.

Happier times
That emotional pull is not confined to later life. 76% of 25–34s say particular programmes recall happier times - the highest figure of any age group. Nostalgia is not simply older people remembering their youth. It is a mainstream way of finding comfort, continuity and pleasure.

57% say they return to a familiar favourite because it feels comforting. Nearly half (47%) would choose an old favourite rather than risk something new. When coming soon, brand new, première and exclusive are the currencies of television, the reassurance of knowing what comes next has its own value.

Television is inherited
Programmes travel through families as well as schedules. 53% still watch shows introduced by an older relative. Among 25–34s that rises to 70%, while almost half of 18–24s say the same.

The wider idea of enjoying programmes introduced by an older relative or first aired before the viewer was born attracts 42% nationally – 55% of 18–24s and 64% of 25–34s. Classic television is a shared joy, not confined to the audience that watched it the first time around.

Reboots can draw viewers back
Audiences are in two minds about remakes. 58% believe there are too many, yet 53% say a modern remake can make them want to watch or discover the original. The two ideas can coexist: viewers can be sceptical about repetition while remaining curious about where a story began.

Our own stalwart show Little House on the Prairie got a reboot by Netflix this summer, and the Great! Player saw a surge in viewers looking for the original.

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What we see

The Upper Third is large, varied and central to television viewing. Not that you can tell by watching.

Representation has not caught up with reality
The older the viewer, the less likely they are to feel that modern television reflects them.

57% of 18–24s and 66% of 25–34s say their age group is well represented in modern UK television. That falls to 35% among 55–64s, 32% among 65–74s and just 23% among people aged 75+.

Interestingly, the figures rise slightly when isolating for older ABC1s – combining the 55–64 and 65+ ABC1 groups, 39% agree that their age group is well represented.

The pattern is also visible when viewers are asked about accuracy and positivity. 48% of 55–64s feel their age group is accurately represented on screen, falling to 46% among 65–74s and 42% among those aged 75+. Positive representation follows a similar path: 44%, 43% and 37% respectively.

The conclusion: visibility is not the same as recognition. Putting 'not young' people on screen doesn't mean viewers see their own lives, interests or capabilities represented.

Still feeling left behind
In 2025, 26% of people aged 55 and over said they felt left behind by the way modern television was made and broadcast. In 2026 that figure is 30% — a four percentage-point increase. Within the Upper Third, the feeling does not rise neatly with age: it is shared by 31% of 55–64s, 28% of 65–74s and 33% of people aged 75+.

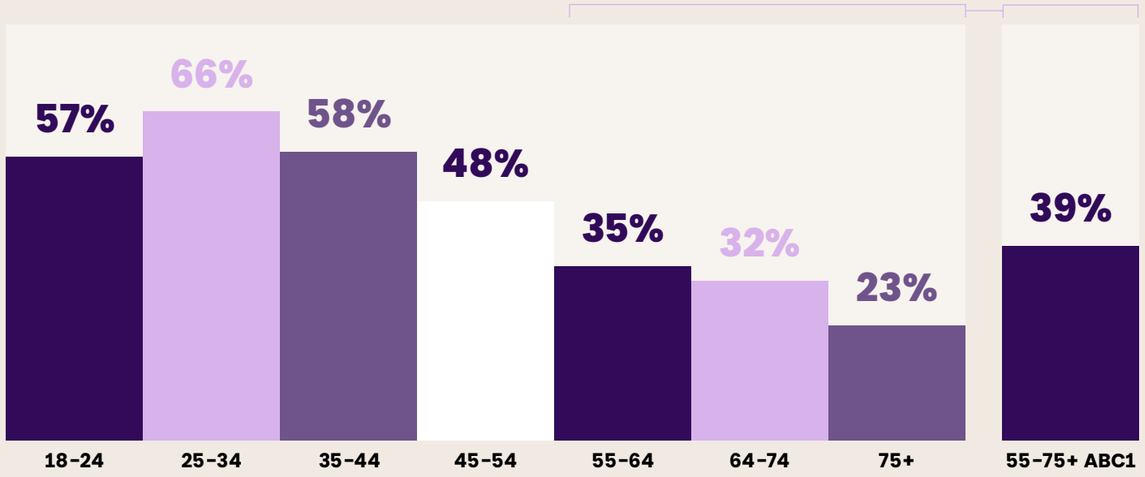
More than half of adults also believe current television programming is geared towards younger audiences. Among the Upper Third, 60% of 55–64s, 50% of 65–74s and 62% of those aged 75+ agree.

Advertising repeats the problem
Advertising has its own gap to close. More than half of adults agree that advertising often uses lazy stereotypes when representing older people. Among 55–64s the figure is 56%; among 65–74s, 51%; and among people aged 75+, 52%.

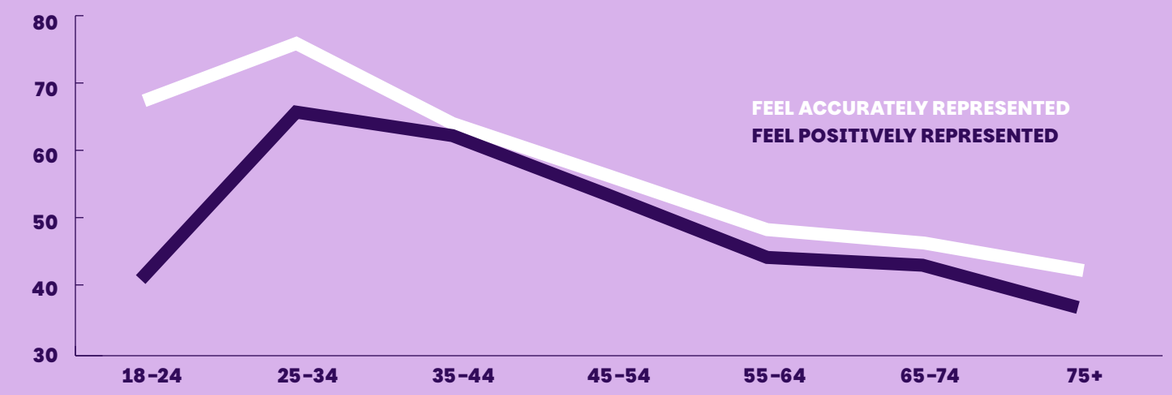
This is not only a matter of fairness. Half of adults say they would be more likely to use or buy a brand that represents people like them realistically. Better representation is a clear route to greater commercial success with this large and often financially powerful group.

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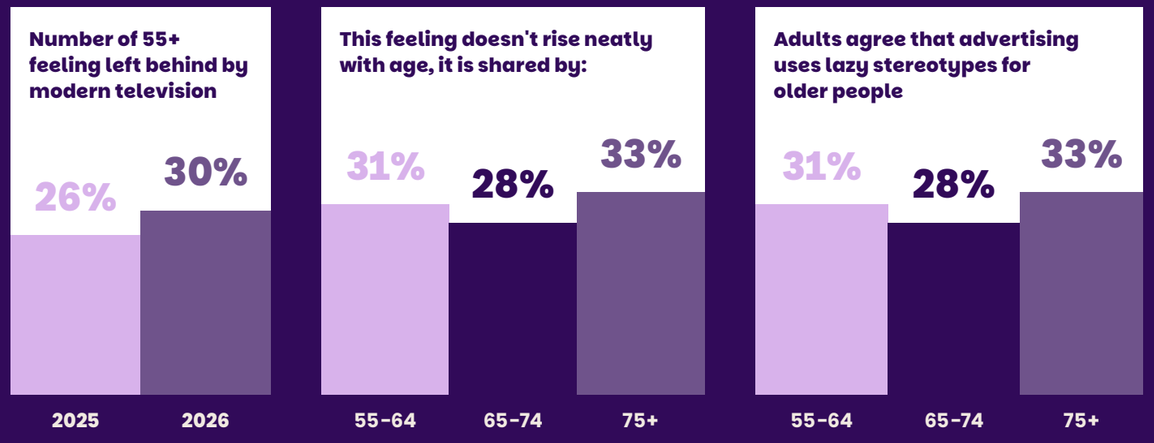
Which age ranges feel represented on TV

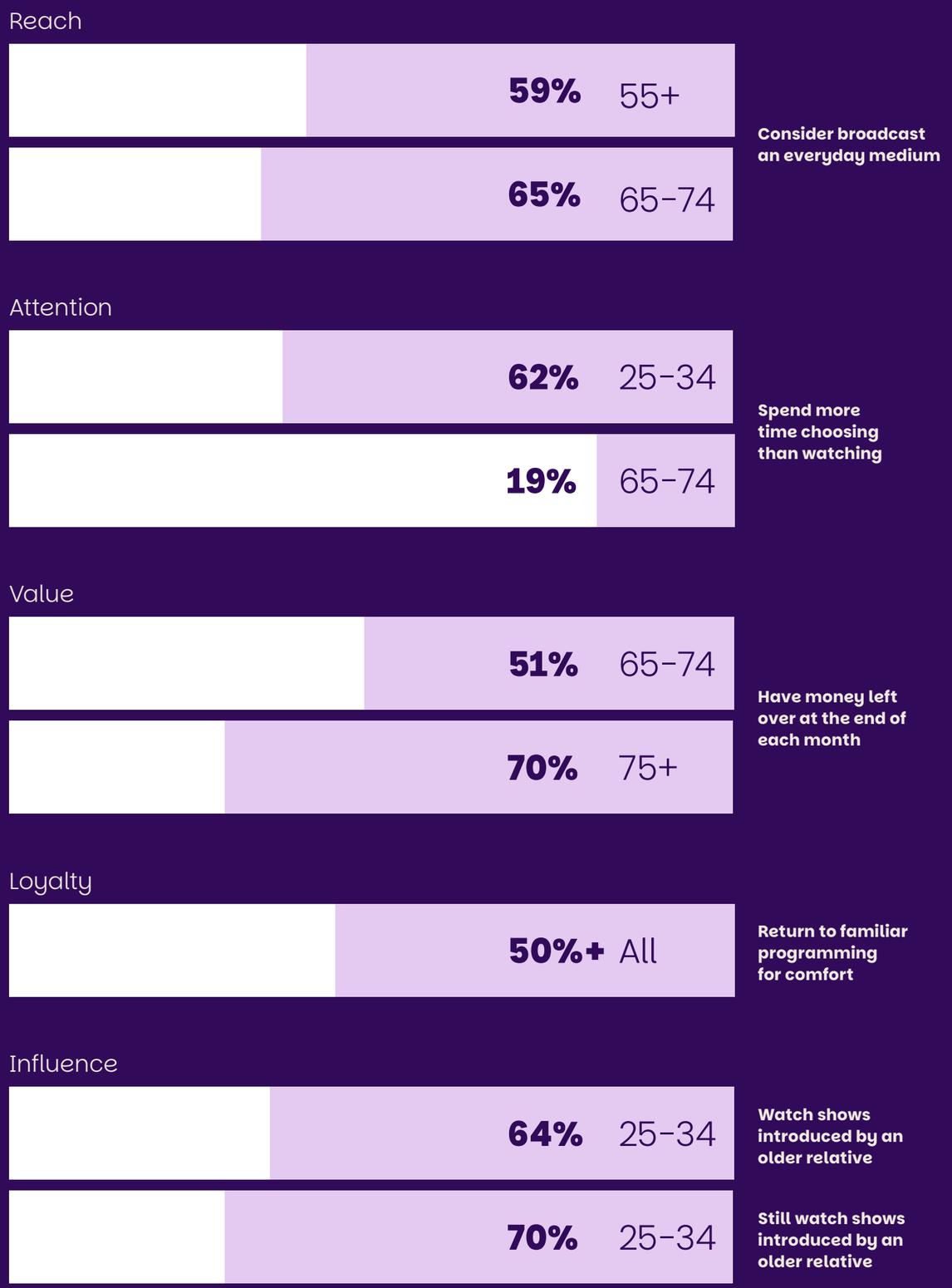


How do we feel we are represented on TV?



Not young people feel left behind





Not young, but very valuable

The Upper Third combines scale, attention and, for significant parts of the audience, financial stability and comfort.

They sit at the centre of a television culture that travels well beyond its own age group.

Reach
Broadcast remains an everyday medium for 59% of people aged 55 and over, rising to 65% among 65–74s. These are not occasional viewers. They form a dependable centre of gravity for television.

Attention
Older audiences spend less of their entertainment time navigating. Only 19% of 65–74s say they spend more time choosing than watching, compared with 62% of 25–34s. Clear schedules and effective curation remove friction rather than limiting choice.

Value
Financial circumstances vary, particularly among 55–64s. But stability increases sharply in later life: 51% of 65–74s and 70% of people aged 75+ have money left over each month. Three-quarters of the oldest group feel financially prepared for the future.

Loyalty
Familiar programmes earn repeat attention. More than half of adults return to favourites for comfort and trust older programmes to entertain them. For many viewers, new does not equal ‘must watch’.

Influence
Older and familiar content does not stay within an older demographic. 64% of 25–34s enjoy programmes introduced by an older relative or first broadcast before they were born; 70% still watch programmes passed on by an older family member.

The commercial takeaway should not simply be to spend more against older audiences. It is to understand the difference between an older viewer and older content. Buying against the Upper Third can reach people with taste, attention and spending power. Targeting familiar (read: older) content can also reach viewers far beyond a show’s original audience.

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Conclusion

Television is always looking for what comes next. But looking back matters too. Great programmes travel across generations. Broadcast still makes viewing simple. A schedule can still create a moment.

Because some of television's simplest qualities haven't changed, and what it offers is a powerful antidote to the pressures of modern life – no matter what age bracket you're in.

Broadcast still makes viewing simple, and an old favourite can still take us to a time or place we were happy before.

These things might be associated with the 'not young' audiences that we celebrate with The Upper Third, but they can't be dismissed as older people's preferences. Younger people — particularly 25–34s — are displaying some of them most strongly.

Knowing what you enjoy. Returning to familiar favourites. Watching something together. Wanting technology to make life easier rather than more complicated. Finding pleasure in the programmes and memories that came before.

These are sources of comfort, familiarity and connection that people across the age spectrum actively seek out. They're a throw-back to past times, but they're being sought out by younger people who crave a simpler and more familiar day-to-day experience.

Whether it's how we're watching, what we're watching or why we're watching, television gives us something increasingly valuable: the chance to make the complicated simple, the old new again, and the familiar something worth sharing.



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The upper third

Television, age, modern life and nostalgia

GREAT!