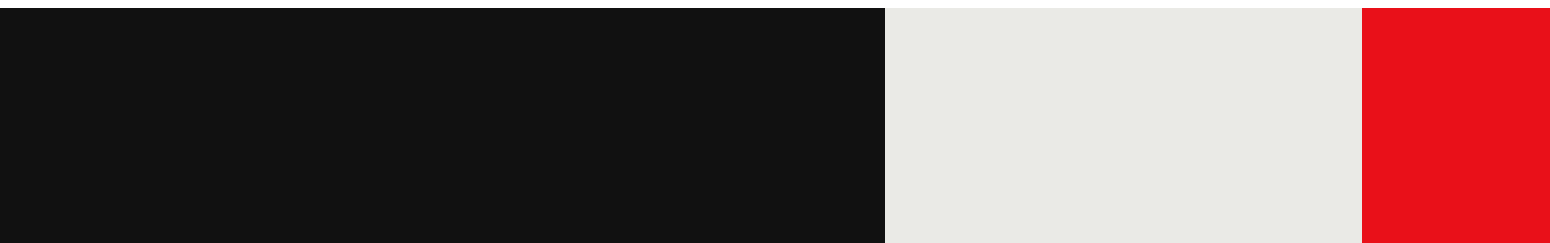



# Video dominates social time—but it's reaching a saturation point

Article

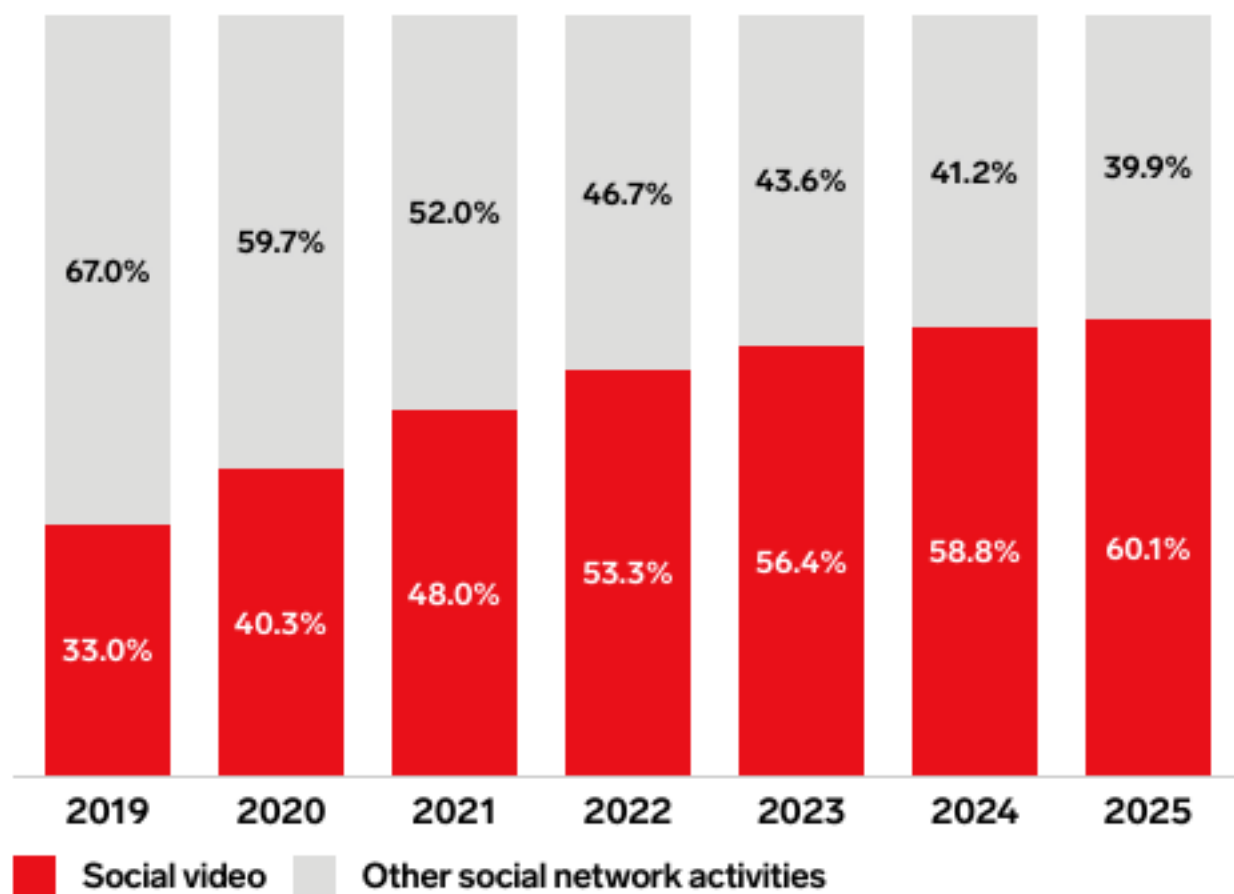


Social users in the US will spend more than half their daily social time watching videos in 2023 —up from one-third pre-pandemic. But social video's growth is slowing, suggesting there's a limit to the amount people want to consume daily.

- **Video's share of daily social user time will rise more slowly than previously.** Between 2019 and 2022, that share rose by more than 20 points, reaching 53.3%, per Insider Intelligence forecasts. But users will add successively fewer social video minutes between 2023 and 2025: 4.5 in 2023, 3.0 in 2024, and just 1.7 in 2025, to reach 65.3 minutes per day.

## Video's Share of Average Daily Social Network Time Is Huge but Approaching a Plateau, 2019-2025

% share among US adult users



*Note: ages 18+; social video time includes all time spent with online video activities on social network platforms; includes usage via any device; does not include YouTube time*  
 Source: Insider Intelligence | eMarketer, June 2023

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Insider Intelligence | eMarketer

- **TikTok's average daily time among users is rising slower than expected.** We've adjusted our forecast for growth down since our last estimate. Data from Sensor Tower cited in a July note from investment bank JMP Securities supports this view: It found that US time spent fell on a YoY basis in Q1 2023 before recovering to grow in the low single digits in Q2. This year, we forecast that daily user time will increase just 3.5%, down from 14.9% in 2022.
- **Time spent on other types of social video hasn't kept up with TikTok.** Snap Originals, Instagram's IGTV, and Facebook Watch all struggled to capture user interest, leading to their subsequent abandonment. (Facebook recently rebranded its Watch tab to Video, in fact). Reels hasn't helped Instagram and Facebook close the gap with TikTok in daily time. Only **YouTube** (whose time isn't included in our social video forecasts) comes close.

## The changes stem from shifting patterns and priorities among both users and platforms.

- **Instagram is taking a more balanced approach to content.** In 2022, Instagram made video one of its top three companywide priorities. This year, after some **backlash** from creators and users, video is no longer on that list, replaced by format-agnostic goals such as inspiring creativity and discovering new things. Video—and growing Reels—is still very important to Meta, but it must coexist with other types of content.
- **Text-based apps are poised to take more social time.** X, formerly known as Twitter, is struggling to stay relevant, but that doesn't mean text-based communication is passe. The initial download success of Meta's Threads app demonstrates that social users are still interested. These formats could take a larger share of time and divert some attention away from video.
- **Users still value social media for connecting with friends and family.** Nearly half (48.2%) of worldwide social media users said that keeping in touch with friends and family is a primary reason for using social media, per Q4 2022 research by GWI. That share was significantly greater than the 29.2% who cited finding content, like articles or videos, as a primary reason. Even among the video-crazed 16-to-24 age group, connections are more likely than content to be a primary social media use case (46.5% versus 33.4%).

## What does this mean for advertisers?

- **Continue to invest in social video advertising.** The slowing growth in social video time is not a signal to cut back expenditures; more than 4 in 10 video ad dollars will go to social video this year. But now is not the time to overindex on these ads versus ads in feeds, Stories, and other social media placements.
- **Balance social video ad investments with image ads.** For brands that use Instagram, photo carousels perform nearly as well as Reels, with 74 median post interactions worldwide in Q2 2023, compared with 75 for Reels, per Emplifi research. Video is tops for creativity and for capturing user attention, but it should be rounded out with other ad formats like those using static images, which are easier to create and can help with lower-funnel goals.
- **Watch how usage of text-based communication develops.** Until ads are available on Threads, advertisers can experiment with sponsored creator content.

Report by Debra Aho Williamson Aug 15, 2023

## US Time Spent With Social Media 2023

