

US media consumption hits saturation point

Article



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"Media saturation is here," said our analyst Ethan Cramer-Flood in [a new episode of "Behind the Numbers,"](#) describing a fundamental shift in how Americans consume content. "We have always been able to count on Americans spending an ever-increasing amount of their day with media... We're basically saying that this is now coming to an end."

US consumers now spend around 12 hours and 42 minutes (12:42) daily with media across traditional and digital channels—a figure that has plateaued for the first time.

The zero-sum media

For years, digital media consumption grew faster than traditional media declined, creating a net increase in overall media time. That dynamic has fundamentally changed.

US consumers are now reallocating their media time in a zero-sum fashion, with approximately 10 minutes of traditional media time (TV, radio, print) shifting to digital platforms.

- It's a significant departure from 2023, when people added 20 minutes of digital time, while cutting just 10 minutes of traditional media consumption.

"We've got some major categories that are stagnant or even declining, which is not something that we've ever seen before at this level," said Cramer-Flood. "Things like social media, things like digital gaming, things like digital audio instead of going up, up, up, they're flatlining and they're even starting to go down."

Netflix's first-ever decline

"Netflix last year suffered its first-ever decline in average daily time spent with it by its own users," said Cramer-Flood. US viewers spent 1.5% less time with the platform in 2024, an average of a couple of minutes per user, per our January forecast.

Netflix's successful password-sharing crackdown brought in many new subscribers, but these new subscribers spend less time with the service than established users.

"Those new subscribers don't seem to be watching as much Netflix as the old subscribers did," Cramer-Flood explains. "Specifically those who are choosing the ad-supported tier, the cheaper option, don't seem to be watching as much Netflix as the older traditional members."

FAST services emerge as video's growth engine

Free ad-supported streaming TV (FAST) services represent the fastest-growing video format, with platforms like Tubi, Roku Channel, and Samsung TV Plus gaining significant traction.

The average adult now spends about 19 minutes (0:19) daily with FAST services in the US—nearly double the time spent in 2021, according to our January forecast. Among actual FAST users, we forecast that figure is 51 minutes (0:51) daily and grew 10% last year.

"Cable TV is too expensive, so we've had cord-cutting for years. Digital pay TV we thought maybe was going to be competitive. Now that's too expensive. These things are free, and they're just sitting there waiting for you," said Cramer-Flood.

Reddit defies social media stagnation

While we forecast overall time spent with social media will begin to decline among US users in 2025, Reddit is bucking the trend.

"Reddit is really positioned to continue growing," said our analyst Oscar Orozco in the episode. "When you think about just the amount of total minutes that Americans spend on social networks, by next year we think Reddit will take up about 10% of that time."

US Reddit users will spend about 34 minutes (0:34) daily on the platform, per our January forecast, after growing 15% in 2024.

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