

THE STATE OF TV NEWS

2025



**CROWD
REACT
MEDIA**

A Division of  Harker
bos
group

*Presentation of research findings
by Crowd React Media, a division
of Harker Bos Group*

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Welcome

A message from one of the founding partners of Crowd React Media, a division of Harker Bos Group, on the inaugural State of TV News report.



SEAN BOS
FOUNDING PARTNER

Welcome to the inaugural State of TV News 2025 report! The way audiences consume news is shifting, and the battle between traditional TV and digital platforms is more intense than ever. While streaming has overtaken cable in overall media consumption, linear TV remains a force—especially when it comes to local news. The vast majority of cable news viewers still tune in to their local broadcasts, underscoring the enduring importance of traditional TV news.

At the same time, digital audiences are rapidly embracing streaming platforms like YouTube for news, creating new opportunities for broadcasters to reach younger viewers. The question isn't whether audiences want local news—it's how news organizations can evolve to meet them where they are. The future of TV news isn't about choosing between linear and digital—it's about leveraging both to stay relevant in an increasingly fragmented media landscape.

Let's dive into the key insights shaping the future of TV news.





INTRODUCTION TO THE REPORT

The landscape of TV news in 2025 is marked by a shifting balance between traditional cable and satellite television and the continued rise of digital and streaming platforms. While cable TV remains a stronghold for many viewers—especially those seeking local news—the digital revolution is reshaping how audiences access and engage with news content. Streaming platforms like YouTube have emerged as key destinations for news consumption, particularly among younger demographics, signaling a fundamental transformation in viewing habits.

This evolution reflects the broader trend of audiences demanding news on their own terms. Gone are the days when TV news was confined to scheduled broadcasts—today’s viewers expect on-demand access, real-time updates, and a seamless cross-platform experience. As local and national news outlets navigate this transition, the challenge is not just about maintaining viewership but about meeting audiences where they are, whether through linear broadcasts, streaming services, or social media.

Despite the momentum of digital, the enduring appeal of cable news is undeniable. Many audiences still prefer the familiarity of traditional news formats, with structured broadcasts and trusted anchors guiding them through the day’s events. However, as streaming continues to grow, the pressure is mounting for news organizations to innovate, ensuring they remain relevant in an increasingly fragmented media environment.

In this report, we explore the state of TV news in 2025, examining key trends in audience behavior, the role of streaming in the news ecosystem, and the enduring significance of local news. By understanding these shifts, media organizations can better position themselves for the future—one where traditional and digital platforms must work in tandem to deliver news in ways that resonate with today’s evolving audiences.

About the Study

- Fielded: December 2024 – January 2025
- Sample Size: 500+ TV news audiences
- Geographic Scope: Nationwide (U.S.)
- Demographics: Balanced representation of men, women, ages (18+), and ethnicities, weighted to U.S. census data

CABLE/SATELLITE NEWS



TV News Sources



90%

Streaming TV/YouTube



80%

Cable/Satellite TV

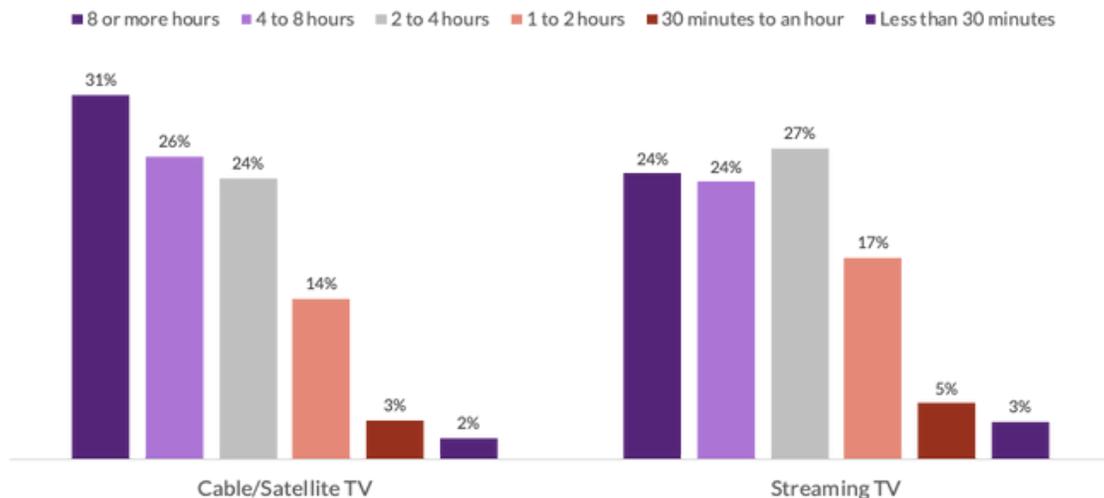
**News sources engaged with at least one day per week*

STREAMING VS CABLE/SATELLITE TV

Streaming is a good 9-10 points higher than Cable/Satellite TV with regards to media activities. The shift to digital/streaming is now official.

CABLE TV VIEWING DURATION

57% of Cable audiences report watching cable at least 4 hours each day. 31% state they watch for 8 hours or more. This is slightly higher than streaming rates among news audiences, with 48% reporting to watch at least 4 hours each day, and around a quarter streaming 8 or more hours each day. A lot of audiences leave cable TV on in the background while they perform other tasks, which might explain the longer viewing duration over Streaming TV audiences. The younger demo of 18-34 is most likely to watch 8 or more hours of cable/satellite tv per day (37%).



Q: How long do you engage in the following media activities?



LOCAL NEWS CONSUMPTION ON CABLE

Virtually all surveyed Cable News audiences report watching the local news (94%). Local news broadcasts are a staple of linear TV. There are set times at which people watch local news on linear TV and it is easy for audiences to find these channels. Habituated watching behaviors of linear TV audiences distinguish themselves from the scattershot, on-demand nature of streaming news consumption, which we will get further into later in the report.

94%

of cable news audiences watch the local news.

99%

of cable news audiences watch national news.

NATIONAL NEWS CONSUMPTION ON CABLE

Effectively all Linear TV news consumers also watch national news channels.

Fox News leads among all cable news channels, with 63% of cable news audiences indicating they regularly watch the network. In a distant second, 47% regularly watch CNN. They both do even better with younger cable audiences. Fox news captures over three quarters of the 18-34 demo (76%), while 68% of this same age demo report watching CNN. MSNBC makes up 28% of the entire cable news audience.



CABLE/SATELLITE SUBSCRIPTIONS

The vast majority of cable/satellite audiences are subscribed to a provider (80%). Of those subscribed to a Cable/Satellite provider, 27% report using a Satellite service (DirecTV, DISH, etc.)

80%

of cable news audiences subscribe to a cable/satellite provider.

27%

use a Satellite service (of those subscribed to a Cable/Satellite provider)

BUNDLING

75% of Cable/Satellite subscribers bundle their internet with their linear TV service.

NON-SUBSCRIBERS AND ALTERNATIVES

For the 20% of linear audiences who are not subscribed to cable/satellite services, HD Antenna is the popular option. That roughly translates to about 10% of the total linear TV audience using HD Antenna.

STREAMING NEWS

LOCAL NEWS CONSUMPTION AMONG STREAMING AUDIENCES

Compared to the 94% of linear audiences who watch the local news, streaming audiences lag in local news viewership. This is one area that local news outlets need to prioritize. 76% of streaming audiences watching local news means there is a lot of room to grow. All audiences nowadays are effectively digital natives, and local outlets need a strategy to maximize their digital/streaming footprint. Instead of getting lost in the digital sauce, here are some general tips:

Local News Streaming Tips

Use Multiple Streaming Platforms

Expand to different platforms like YouTube, Facebook Live, Twitch, the Roku and Apple TV App Stores. A variety of platforms increases your potential reach.

Social Media Integration

Promote your live streams and on-demand content on your social media channels (Facebook, X, Instagram). Encourage your audience to share content to increase its reach.

Collaborate with Local Influencers

Partner with local figures or influencers to tap into their audience. If they promote your stream, it can increase exposure to new potential viewers.

Produce On-Demand Content

Many streaming viewers prefer on-demand content. Consider creating shows or segments that people can watch at their convenience, such as interviews, breaking news stories, or investigative reports.

YouTube, YouTube, YouTube

Algorithms are geographically manipulated and YouTube will automatically sort your content onto its news landing page if you are a reputable outlet. Always encourage audiences to visit and subscribe to your YouTube page to juice the algorithm.





IMPORTANCE OF YOUTUBE

Among all streaming news audiences, 74% watch local news segments via YouTube. Keep in mind that 76% of streaming audiences stream local news. This should further demonstrate the importance of regularly putting one's news content on YouTube and having a devoted YouTube operation. Interestingly, only 59% of digital news audience stream national news segments via YouTube. This is markedly lower than the percentage of those who stream local news segments via YouTube (15pt difference). Once again, this shows that there is a healthy audience for local news.

LOCAL VS. NATIONAL NEWS STREAMING

Digital news audiences index higher on national news streaming than local news streaming (84% vs. 76%). However, the notion that local news is unimportant or unviable in this new media economy is utterly false. Audiences crave local news; it is merely a matter of getting your content in front of digital news audiences. The more tech local outlets become at content-delivery the quicker local news streaming rates will catch up with national news streaming rates (and with linear national/local news consumption rates, as well).

It must be noted that the 18-34 demographic is an outlier with regards to content consumption on both linear and digital. Those aged 18-34 consume content and information as if their lives depend on it.



PARTISAN PREFERENCES IN STREAMING NEWS

Digital audiences have a notably similar preference for news outlets to that of linear audiences. While the perception of Fox News, CNN, and MSNBC as partisan outlets can be true, it is not as clear-cut as stating that only Republicans watch Fox News and Democrats watch CNN. Fox News, despite its salient political leanings, attracts all audiences. CNN attracts a varied audience, but not nearly to the same extent as Fox News. MSNBC, on the other hand, attracts almost exclusively a left-leaning viewership. Again, the 18-34 demo is double dipping in the CNN and Fox News pools (72% and 73% respectively).



AUDIENCES' SPLIT ATTENTION

50% of digital news audiences are streaming TV at least 4 hours each day. A fifth (21%) are streaming 8 or more hours each day. Audiences' attention are regularly split between multiple devices (e.g., scrolling social media on one's phone while a video podcast is playing in the background, and crunching an expense report). This is the nature of content consumption. One should assume that an audience is engaging in other activities while they consume your content.

PREMIUM STREAMING SERVICES

Nearly all digital audiences pay for a premium streaming service. The idea that there isn't a monoculture in our day and age is hogwash; look at the top-billed offerings on any platform like Netflix or Amazon and you can safely presume that tens of millions of people that have watched or are watching that particular show/program/film (think *Breaking Bad*, *The Office*, *Beast Games*). There are, however, more options nowadays, and the real struggle is getting your content in front of audiences who crave it.

DEVICE USAGE FOR STREAMING

SmartTV's are user-friendly, in that you do not need external streaming hardware such as Roku or Apple TV. The vast majority of digital audiences (71%) simply use pre-loaded software that comes with their SmartTV. A substantial 42% of digital audiences use their SmartPhone/Tablet to stream TV, with more than half (56%) of the younger demo watching on their SmartPhones. It's easy to imagine a young person propping their phone on a table, watching local news clips on YouTube while they eat dinner.



HOW TO WIN AT YOUTUBE

TIPS FOR LOCAL NEWS STATIONS

While national news outlets have their own unique difficulties in this moment, the appetite for local news is strong. There is considerable doomsaying over the future of local news. This report should serve as a rebuttal to those narratives: audiences, both digital and linear, crave local news. The question is not whether audiences want local news (they clearly do), it is how news outlets adapt their operations to more efficiently deliver their content to a particular viewership. It is a question of adaptation and means of delivery, as opposed to a question of outright survival.



YouTube is the gateway, not the endpoint

Local news outlets need to start thinking beyond just uploading content to YouTube and consider it as a stepping stone to drive viewers back to their own apps and websites. YouTube, while a powerful tool for expanding reach, comes with a hefty price tag in the form of ad revenue splits. By leveraging YouTube's massive audience base to generate traffic, local broadcasters can create a pathway for viewers to consume news directly on their proprietary platforms, where they control the ad inventory and keep a larger portion of the revenue.

Tease Videos

One effective strategy is to use YouTube as a teaser platform. Short form clips or breaking news segments can be used to attract attention, with links embedded in the video description or comments directing viewers to the full story on the station's app or website. To further boost engagement, broadcasters should utilize YouTube's community features, like live chats or polls, to engage audiences in real-time and encourage them to visit the main site for more interactive or in-depth content.

Exclusive Content to Drive Traffic

Additionally, offering exclusive content on the app or website — such as live-streamed events, on-demand investigative reports, or behind-the-scenes access — provides a compelling reason for viewers to make the switch. This approach not only drives traffic but also solidifies the outlet's brand identity as more than just a YouTube channel, ensuring that revenue stays in-house while maximizing the digital footprint.

Don't Forget to Link!

And one more tip! On the end card of every video you upload to YouTube ensure that you include links to your website, apps, etc. and a QR code for example that links to your station's app in an app store.

CABLE VS. STREAMING

WHERE TV NEWS AUDIENCES TURN MOST

The Question:

"During a typical week, which of the following sources do you use to watch TV news the most?"

A notable majority of TV news audiences prefer Cable/Satellite TV as their primary source for news, with +18 percentage points more choosing it over Streaming (36%). This strong preference underscores the continued loyalty to traditional broadcast formats, even as digital and social media become dominant in overall media consumption.

While audiences engage frequently with newer digital platforms, when it comes to their go-to news source, many still gravitate toward the structured, familiar, and trusted format of linear television. Cable and satellite news offer appointment viewing, habitual routines, and a consistent news experience that audiences expect.

In contrast, Streaming news is gaining ground, particularly among younger audiences who value on-demand content. The challenge for streaming news is that it lacks the standardized format of cable news. News producers and station managers must navigate this transition carefully, defining what Streaming TV news should look like in order to compete with the well-established broadcast model.

BREAKING IT DOWN

Why Cable/Satellite Still Leads

- Familiarity & Routine: Viewers are accustomed to cable's structured news programming.
- Live & Breaking News: Many rely on cable for up-to-the-minute reporting.
- Trusted Networks & Anchors: Established credibility remains a key factor.
- Ease of Access: Cable news is readily available without requiring app navigation or subscriptions.

Why Streaming is Gaining Ground

- On-Demand Access: Viewers can watch when and where they want.
- Younger Audience Appeal: Digital-native generations are shifting away from traditional TV.
- Platform Flexibility: News clips, live streams, and analysis can be consumed across multiple devices.
- Personalized Experience: Streaming platforms allow audiences to tailor their news consumption.

THE TRANSITION PERIOD: WHAT'S NEXT?

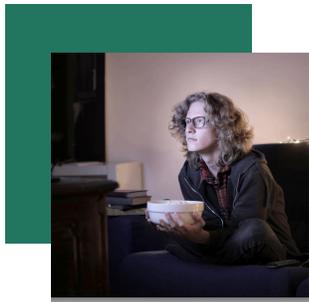
TV news is in an awkward transition phase, where audiences want both the reliability of cable and the flexibility of streaming. While linear TV still dominates as the primary news source, digital consumption is increasing, forcing news organizations to adapt and redefine their delivery strategies. The future isn't about choosing between cable and streaming—it's about integrating both into a seamless, accessible news experience that meets viewers where they are.

QUICK HITS



VIEWING HABITS

Audiences will pretty much watch the news at any time. 70% watch in the evening whereas 62% watch in the morning. Fewer watch in the afternoons presumably due to work/life obligations but that doesn't stop 44% of them watching at that time.



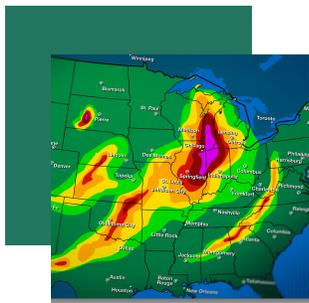
AUDIENCE RETENTION

82% of the news viewing public watch at least most of a given news broadcast. 39% are sticking it out until the end of the broadcast. Some would ostensibly like to tape their eyes open when they watch news.



NEWS CONSUMPTION TRENDS POST-2024 ELECTION

There was talk in major publications of a news recession in the aftermath of the 2024 general election. This is not really the case. 33% of news audiences say they are watching the news 'more', while 55% report watching the 'same amount of news'. Only 12% are indeed watching 'less'.



BREAKING NEWS & WEATHER

Breaking News is the bread and butter of the industry. 87% consider breaking news to be 'Important' to feature during a broadcast; 63% consider it to be 'Very important'. It is evergreen to assume that news audiences are tuning in to feel a certain rush that accompanies a 'breaking news' chyron. They also want to hear about the weather – if you're reading this whitepaper then this should not be groundbreaking!



CREDIBILITY CONCERNS

There is a lot of talk about the overall loss of credibility of news media in the public eye. Not to be blasé, but the American public has always been generally skeptical of news media. Your chief concerns should be whether people are watching or not and whether there is a viable audience to show ads to. Yes, be accurate and reliable, but also be entertaining.



PARTISAN PREFERENCES

Anecdotally, people will say that they want news that challenges their views and attitudes. Research says they want news outlets to basically agree with them. 66% of news audiences state they watch news that at least leans towards their views on matters. More than a 1/3rd state (36%) say the channels they watch most often align closely with their views. An aspirational 19% state they watch news sources that lean away from their news but value the differing perspectives. The lesson? We live in a hyper-partisan news media environment. Find out how your audience feels about issues and don't deviate from that too heavily. This may be showing how the sausage is made but it is the truth - it's backed by research.



ANCHORS AS INFLUENCERS

News anchors influence audiences' viewing habits. 74% say that an anchor's style or personality is an important element to a local news broadcast. 36% outright state that they choose programs based on specific personalities.



OTHER NEWS SOURCES

TV news audiences have a news itch that means they are going to other mediums to get news. Given a choice of the medium they most prefer to get news from outside of TV news, 30% state 'News websites or apps is a go-to source', whereas 17% go to AM/FM radio. This 17% is, interestingly, higher than 13% of news podcast listeners. Only 15% are getting their sole news fill for the day from TV/Streaming.



CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF TV NEWS IN A HYBRID WORLD

TV news is in the midst of a profound transformation. While linear TV remains dominant, particularly for local and national news, the steady growth of streaming platforms signals an undeniable shift in audience behavior. The challenge for news organizations isn't choosing between cable and digital—it's integrating both to meet audiences where they are.

Cable and satellite television continue to lead as the primary source for news, driven by habitual viewing patterns, structured programming, and the credibility of established news anchors. Local news, in particular, remains a staple for cable audiences. However, as younger demographics increasingly turn to digital platforms, streaming has become a growing force in the news ecosystem. Unlike cable, streaming lacks a standardized format for news consumption, making it more fragmented. While platforms like YouTube have emerged as key destinations for news, digital-first organizations must establish clear structures and formats to compete with the familiarity of traditional TV broadcasts.

One of the most significant opportunities lies in local news. While cable news audiences overwhelmingly watch local broadcasts, streaming audiences lag behind, presenting a major growth opportunity for local stations that can expand their digital presence and create compelling, on-demand content. At the same time, audiences across both platforms are showing a clear preference for fast, accessible news. Breaking news, shorter segments, and real-time updates have become increasingly important, reinforcing the need for media organizations to deliver news across multiple platforms in an engaging and immediate format.

For news organizations, the message is clear: adapt or risk falling behind. Legacy media must modernize their distribution strategies without alienating core audiences, embracing a hybrid model that balances linear broadcasts with streaming-first content. Investing in digital growth will be crucial, as platforms like YouTube, streaming apps, and on-demand services become essential touchpoints for younger viewers. Additionally, leveraging the strength of local news in digital spaces will help broadcasters expand their reach and secure long-term audience loyalty.

As technology continues to evolve, so will viewer expectations. Whether through personalized content, interactive engagement, or AI-driven news delivery, the next wave of TV news will be defined by innovation. The future of TV news isn't about choosing between cable or streaming—it's about leveraging both to deliver trusted, engaging, and accessible news wherever audiences consume it. The challenge for news organizations is to stay agile, remain relevant, and anticipate the shifting habits of an increasingly digital-first world.

Thank you for reading the inaugural State of TV News Report, brought to you by Crowd React Media, a division of Harker Bos Group.

We specialize in custom research solutions tailored to fit any budget, and specialize in research for local TV news stations. Our insights are designed to help you maximize audience engagement and grow your reach in the rapidly evolving TV News landscape.

We'd love to hear your feedback on our inaugural report! Let's chat about how we can support your organization's research needs. Reach out today at [CrowdReactMedia.com](https://www.CrowdReactMedia.com) or email Sean Bos directly at sean@crowdreactmedia.com to start the conversation.