



How is the U.S. using YouTube?

Saturday Night Live, YouTube Shorts and the rise in TV viewing in H1 2025

2025

Market disruptor

YouTube has emerged as a major disruptor, drawing viewers away from TV and streaming, while establishing itself as a rich ground for new creators to grow and established brands to expand their reach.

Understanding what is working on YouTube is vital to shape content strategy, which is why Digital i is sharing some of the insights we have observed in the U.S. market over the first half of 2025.

In this report, we look at what U.S. viewers are watching, where they watch, and how the platform offers further engagement with content from those same streamers and networks with which it competes.



HOW IS THE U.S. USING YOUTUBE?

National news channels dominate YouTube U.S. reach, but SNL is the last one laughing



Top YouTube Channels by Reach in the U.S., H1 2025

Rank	Channel Name	Primary Category	Reach (Millions)
1	Saturday Night Live	Entertainment	38.6
2	YouTube Movies	Movies	35.4
3	ABC News	News & Politics	33.3
4	NBC News	News & Politics	30.7
5	IGN	Gaming	30.0
6	CNN	News & Politics	29.7
7	ESPN	Sports	29.0
8	Forbes Breaking News	News & Politics	28.4
9	Netflix	Entertainment	27.8
10	NFL	Sports	27.7

News channels typically dominate national top 10 YouTube reach tables – and the U.S. is no different. But in H1 2025, news did not take the top spot.

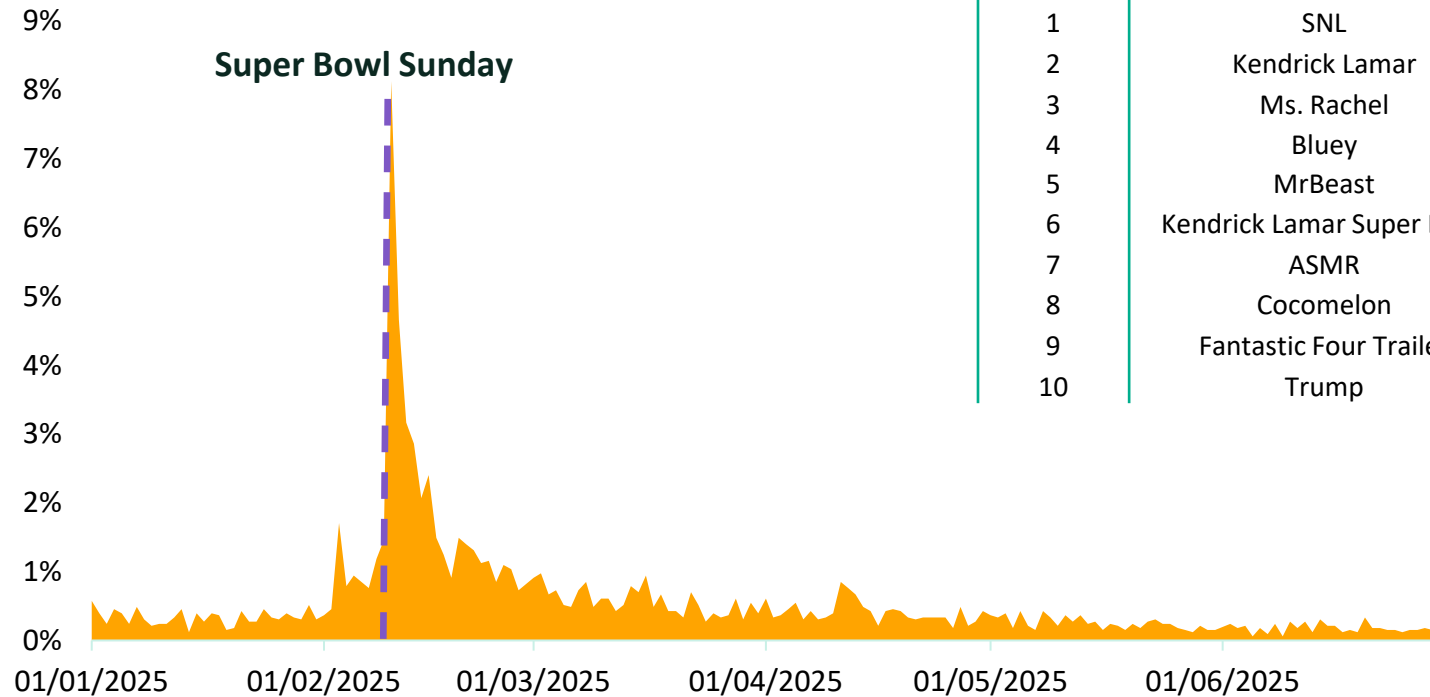
In the first half of the year, the official channel for NBC sketch show *Saturday Night Live* reached 38.6 million U.S. YouTube users – more than any other.

Its skits, monologues and musical performances make ideal short-form clips once repackaged for YouTube.

YouTube users seek SNL, while Kendrick Lamar gets a Super Bowl search boost



Percentage of YouTube Searches to 'Kendrick Lamar' by day – U.S., H1 2025



Top YouTube Searches – U.S., H1 2025

Rank	Search Term
1	SNL
2	Kendrick Lamar
3	Ms. Rachel
4	Bluey
5	MrBeast
6	Kendrick Lamar Super Bowl
7	ASMR
8	Cocomelon
9	Fantastic Four Trailer
10	Trump

While *Saturday Night Live* was also the most searched for topic in H1, broadcast events such as the Super Bowl impact YouTube searches.

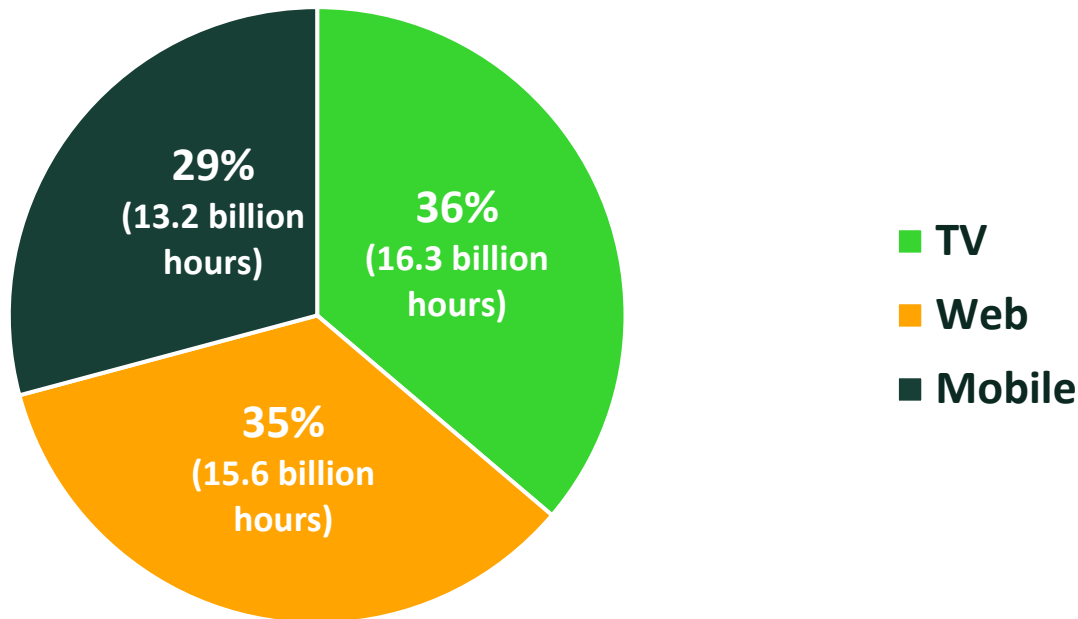
The day after Kendrick Lamar's Super Bowl half time show on 9 February, there was a spike in searches to his name – around 8-9% of all searches to his name during H1 – as users seemingly looked to rewatch his performance.

What users actively search for on YouTube offers a different insight into evolving audience interests.

The TV set inches out online & mobile viewing time as the YouTube U.S. device of choice



Share of YouTube Viewer Hours by Device Type in the U.S, H1 2025



While YouTube has been synonymous with web and mobile viewing, it is increasingly being watched on TV screens.

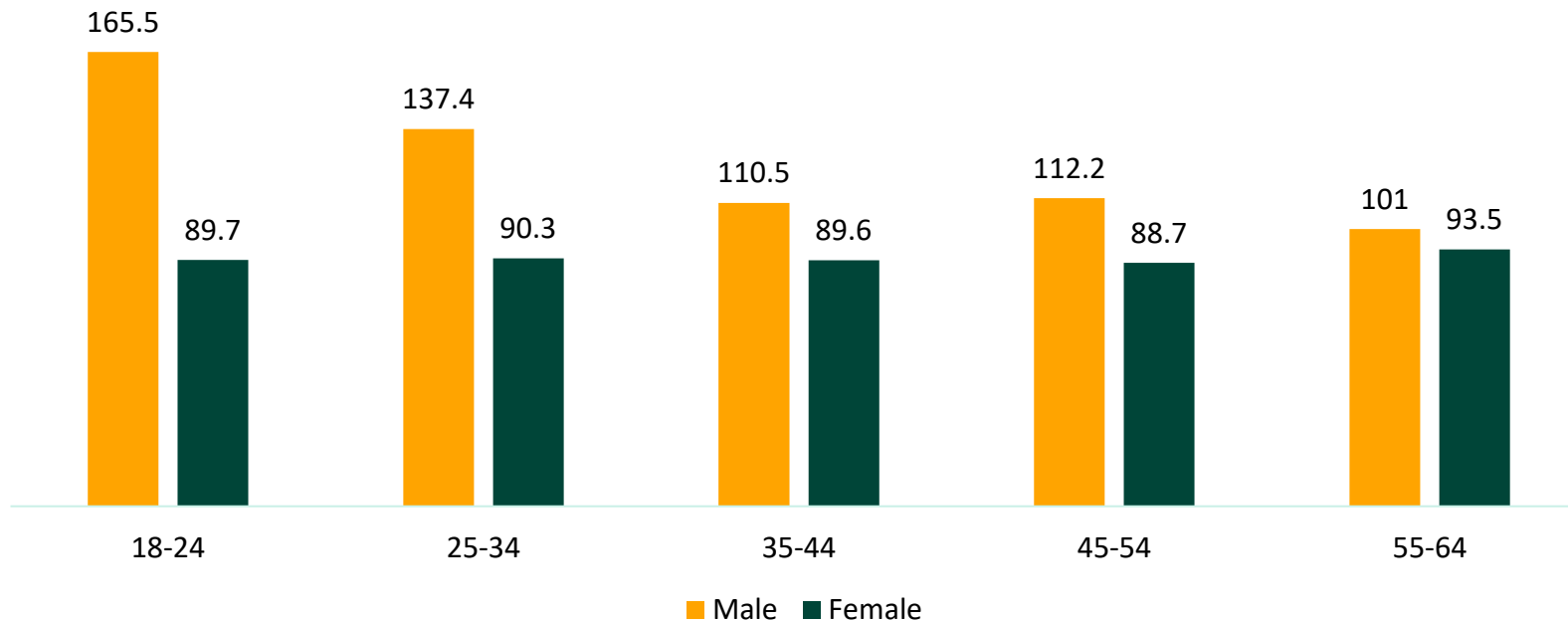
We estimate that U.S. users spent 16.3 billion hours watching YouTube via their TV sets in H1 2025, accounting for 36% of the total 45.1 billion hours in the period.

This puts TV just ahead of the 35% of web viewing across 15.6 billion hours.

Young men lead YouTube U.S. viewing, averaging more than two hours per day



Average Daily Minutes by Age Group – U.S., H1 2025



YouTube viewing behaviour differs by demographic.

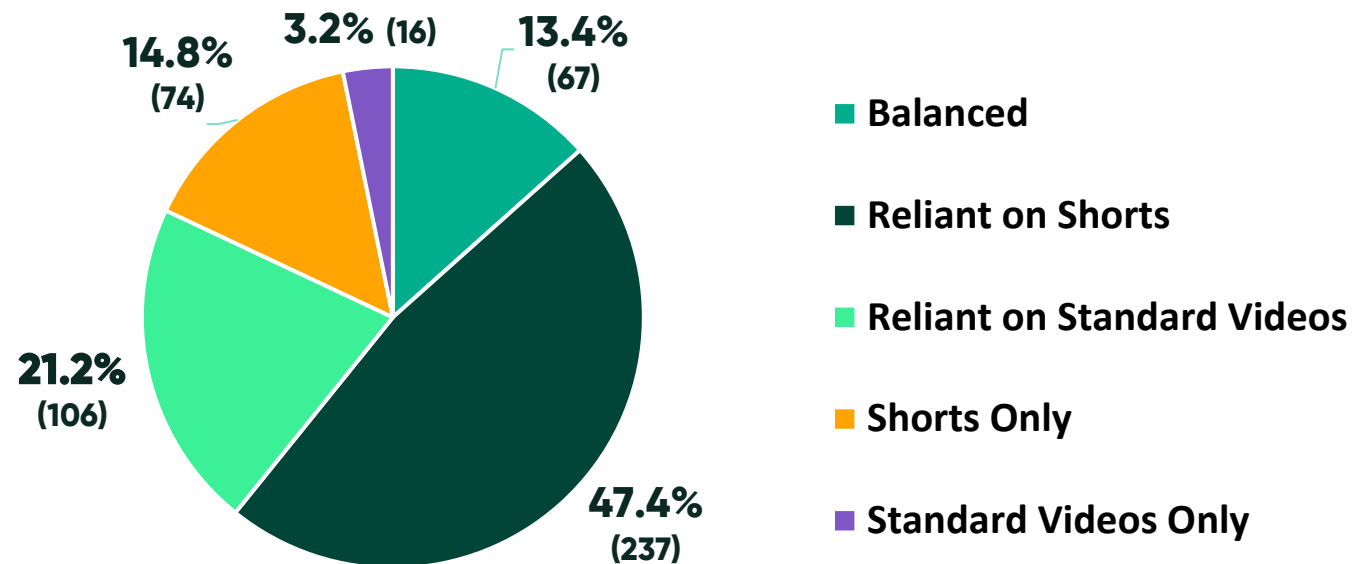
The heaviest users in H1 2025 were young males, with those under the age of 34 viewing an average of more than two hours of content per day.

Viewership among female users remained consistent, with all age groups averaging around 1.5 hours per day.

YouTube channels with highest reach overwhelmingly carry Shorts



Long-form vs Short-form: Top 500 Channels by Reach – U.S., H1 2025



Out of the top 500 channels in the U.S. in H1, ranked by reach, only 16 did not carry Shorts.

Almost 15% of those channels (74) only released Shorts content, while a further 47.4% were reliant on Shorts.

While we have seen increasing global viewing time to long-form content, Shorts remain key to the most widely-viewed channels.

*Reliant: More than 75% of Videos

Source: Digital i. Interval: 01/01/2025– 30/06/2025, Active YouTube users in the U.S.



Need help shaping YouTube strategy?

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No one knows viewers like us.**

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