

Post-COVID TV Viewership

A 2021 report analyzing subscription preferences, costs and viewing expectations in a post-COVID world.



Overview

The COVID-19 pandemic surged TV viewership across the country. With the majority of Americans confined to their homes, 5.4 trillion minutes* of streaming and cable television were consumed in 2020.

Television became essential to many, but at what cost? Cord-cutting leader, Antennas Direct, understands that affordability continues to be a major concern for TV viewers. As streaming and cable prices continue to rise, we wanted to understand how heightened TV demand impacted the average consumer's wallet and how that will influence their choices in a post-COVID world.

How have higher prices impacted consumers wellbeing? Will consumers cut TV services post-COVID? What services will remain as critical or important? To answer these questions, Antennas Direct surveyed 1,200 consumers** who regularly use cable or streaming services on subscription preferences, costs and viewing expectations.

In this report, our data reveals:

- Subscription thresholds and how Americans are viewing more with less
- The importance of entertainment and what consumers are willing to give up to pay for the viewing services they need
- What cuts consumers will make post-COVID and what TV features will be in-demand

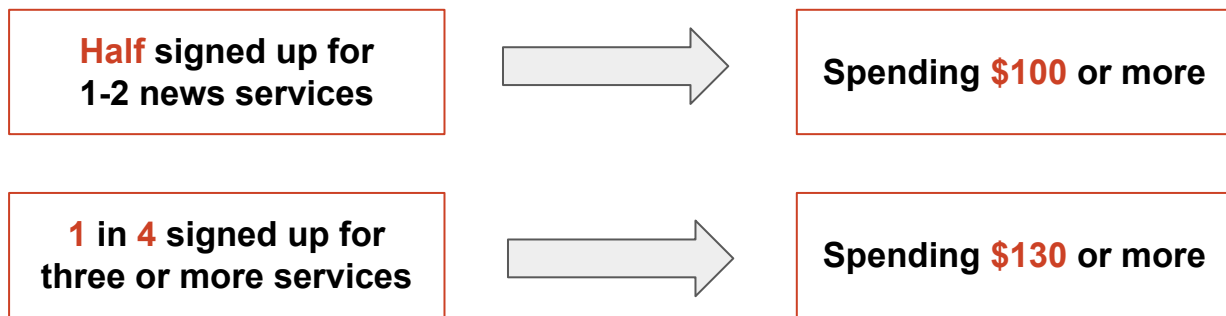
*According to [Nielsen's PUT data](#)

** Survey conducted March 30, 2020 with a mobile survey platform

Key Takeaways

Higher Viewership, Higher Cost?

Americans not only watched more TV during the pandemic, but more than four in five subscribed to new services during the pandemic to feed their binge-watching habits. With the average price of a streaming service at least \$15* and cable service at least \$100**, new subscriptions could mean a big hit to consumers' wallets.



Despite new subscriptions to services, more than half of Americans spend less than \$50 a month on TV services.

How is this possible? To keep their costs low, many consumers admit they shared accounts or split the subscription bill with friends and family to make subscriptions to multiple platforms more affordable.

60%

of Americans currently share their streaming services with friends and family

73%

share subscriptions to make streaming more affordable for friends and family

65%

share subscriptions to reduce costs in their own budget

*The Balance: [What's the Average Cost of Video Streaming Services?](#)

**Statista: [Average monthly spending on cable television in the United States as of July 2019](#)

Key Takeaways

Consumers Are Feeling the Pressure (Financially and Personally) to Maintain Their Entertainment Options

Even with account sharing, consumers say the cost of their subscriptions is creating unnecessary financial strain and many have cut spending in other areas to afford their TV services.

2 in 5 have had to limit spending elsewhere to afford streaming and cable subscriptions

4 in 5 admit they'll need to cut back on TV services post-COVID to pay unaddressed bills or household utilities costs

Not only are consumers feeling the pinch financially, they also feel personally responsible for giving friends and family access to the services they use and would feel guilty if they ended services they share with friends and family.

Should We Put a Price on Accessing Information?

Subscriptions to TV services are not just about finding the next series to binge while housebound, they also fulfill consumers' need to remain informed about the world around them. In 2020, half of Americans started a new streaming or cable subscription just to access their local news channels. This included **Gen Zers who were 48% more likely than other generations to start a local news service during the pandemic.**

And it's not just COVID driving interest in local news sources. Misinformation, reporting bias and the chaotic dynamics of our world today are driving consumers to their local news stations to get critical information that impacts their daily lives.

74% trust their local news more than national news

75% pay for local news access to receive emergency updates

Key Takeaways

Bingeing on a Budget Post-COVID

With more Americans getting vaccinated everyday and communities across the country reopening, we could see a major shift in TV subscriptions and services as many consumers look for more affordable entertainment options. Streaming providers are likely to see the biggest impact.

Half

will keep all their TV services post-COVID

1 in 3

already have plans to cut cable or streaming services

2 in 5

plan to cut more than one type of service

While the majority of consumers may spend under \$100 on TV services, they're looking to go lower and cut streaming costs in 2021. One in four plan to cutback up to \$50 a month post-COVID so they can resume activities, travel and other hobbies they had before the pandemic:

86% will use subscription savings to travel

66% will use subscription savings to go back to bars + restaurants

71% will use subscription savings for a wedding or other life event

Who will come out on top in the new normal?

Consumers want services that are affordable, but also offer a high-quality experience that isn't confined to their TV set. Even while they were stuck at home **one in five Americans primarily used a mobile device or laptop to watch TV, and one in four plan to watch even more TV on their mobile device post-COVID.**

4K will continue to be a huge driver of viewership, but only if it's affordable. For example, one in three Americans today aren't watching 4K because they can't afford the technology or subscriptions needed for a 4K experience.

Survey Analysis: Subscriber Behaviors

Subscription + Cost

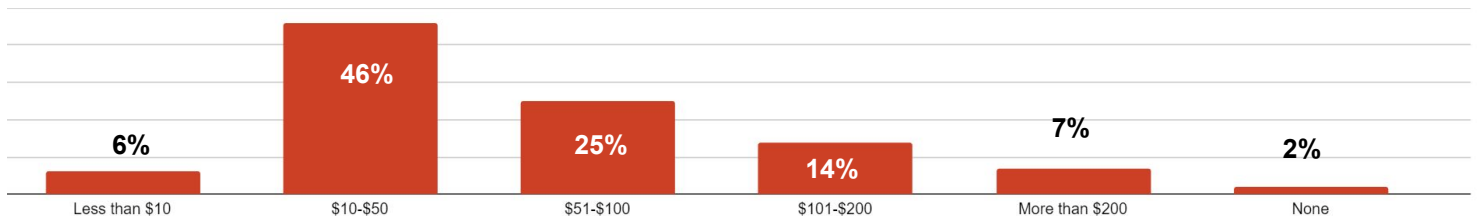
Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, how many new streaming or cable subscriptions have you started?

| | 1-2 | 3-4 | 5 or more | None | I don't know |
|------------|-----|-----|-----------|------|--------------|
| All | 45% | 28% | 13% | 12% | 2% |
| Gen Z | 35% | 34% | 20% | 7% | 4% |
| Millennial | 44% | 31% | 13% | 10% | 1% |
| Gen X | 48% | 21% | 17% | 12% | 2% |
| Boomers | 57% | 15% | 3% | 23% | 2% |

Americans were not only watching more TV during the pandemic, they were also subscribing to more services for more options. **More than four in five subscribed to new services during the pandemic.** Two in five signed up for three or more.

Gen Zers were 35% more likely than Gen Xers and 20% more likely than Millennials to subscribe to 3 or more new services during the pandemic.

On average, how much have you spent per month on streaming or cable subscriptions during the pandemic?



| | <\$10 | \$10-\$50 | \$51-\$100 | \$101-\$200 | >\$200 | None |
|------------|-------|-----------|------------|-------------|--------|------|
| Gen Z | 10% | 40% | 24% | 16% | 6% | 4% |
| Millennial | 5% | 45% | 27% | 14% | 6% | 2% |
| Gen X | 5% | 41% | 24% | 17% | 11% | 2% |
| Boomers | 10% | 55% | 20% | 8% | 4% | 3% |

Despite subscribing to multiple new services, **half of Americans spent less than \$50 a month** on streaming or cable subscriptions during the pandemic.

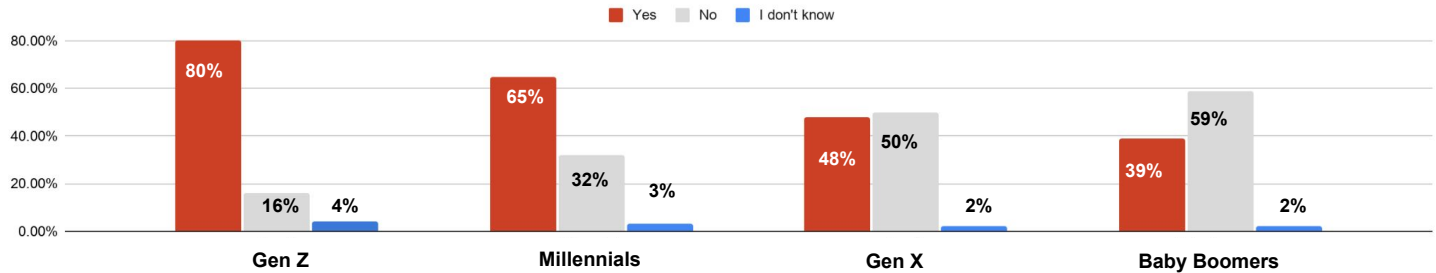
Boomers were 32% more likely than Gen Zers to pay \$50 or less on TV subscriptions.

Meanwhile, Gen Xers were 24% more likely than Gen Zers to pay over \$100 a month.

60%

of Americans currently share their streaming services with friends/family

Despite stereotypes that younger generations are milking their parents' streaming subscriptions, four in five Gen Zers are actually sharing their subscriptions with friends/family, making them 69% more likely than Baby Boomer and 50% more likely than Gen Xers to do so.



Responses to question: Do you currently share your streaming services with family or friends?

Sharing subscription services may be helpful in cutting costs, but as streaming prices rise it's putting unneeded financial stress on consumers who feel responsible for providing these services to friends/family.

- **3 in 4** share subscriptions to make streaming more affordable
- **Half** feel financially responsible for giving friends/family streaming access

Gen Zers are just as likely as Millennials to share subscriptions to help out friends/family and feel financial pressure to maintain streaming services for friends/family.

| | I give access family/friends who can't afford the subscription | I split subscriptions to reduce costs | I feel obligated to keep services I no longer use | I feel financially responsible for providing friends/family with access | I've had to limit spending elsewhere to afford subscriptions |
|-------------|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| All | 73% | 65% | 39% | 47% | 40% |
| Gen Z | 75% | 63% | 42% | 47% | 37% |
| Millennial | 74% | 67% | 38% | 48% | 42% |
| Gen X | 76% | 63% | 49% | 56% | 45% |
| Baby Boomer | 61% | 58% | 25% | 30% | 28% |

Subscription + Cost

Do you currently pay to access your local news channels ?

| | Yes | No | I don't know |
|------------|-----|-----|--------------|
| All | 54% | 42% | 4% |
| Gen Z | 58% | 32% | 10% |
| Millennial | 53% | 44% | 3% |
| Gen X | 55% | 39% | 6% |
| Boomers | 49% | 48% | 3% |

Many consumers may be cost conscious, but findings show they still consider access to local news programming important. **Half of consumers still pay to access local news channels.**

While Gen Z has always lived in an age where national news was popular, they are actually 17% more likely than Baby Boomers to pay for local news access.

1 in 3 are more likely to subscribe to services that offer local news versus the latest feature films

The events of 2020 increased consumer interest in local and national news. What was once a nice to have became a critical channel for staying informed about the state of the world and their community.

Half of Americans started a new subscription to access local news during the pandemic.

Gen Zers gave the biggest boost to local news subscriptions with two in three subscribing to a news subscription service during the pandemic, making them 48% more likely than other generations.

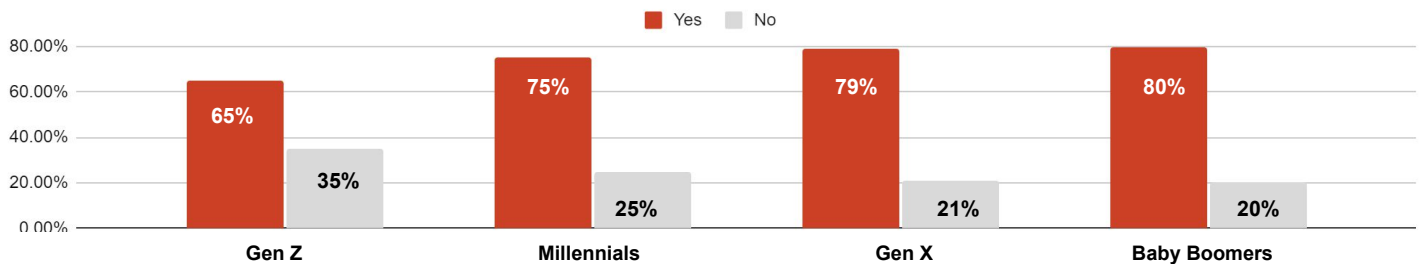
Did you start a new subscription service to access local news in the past 12 months?

| | Yes, cable subscription | Yes, streaming subscription | No | I don't watch local news | I don't know |
|------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|-----|--------------------------|--------------|
| All | 15% | 32% | 46% | 5% | 2% |
| Gen Z | 20% | 48% | 22% | 7% | 3% |
| Millennial | 15% | 34% | 45% | 5% | 1% |
| Gen X | 17% | 31% | 48% | 3% | 1% |
| Boomers | 10% | 17% | 67% | 4% | 2% |

74% of Americans trust their local news more than national news

With concerns about political bias and misinformation in national news programs, consumers are looking to their local news stations for accurate, up-to-date information.

Gen Xers and Baby Boomers are the most likely to trust their local news stations over national news programs, but almost the same number of Millennials agree. Gen Zers were 21% less likely to trust local news stations more.



Responses to question: "Do you trust your local news more than national news programs?"

"Why did you start a subscription service that provided local news?"

| | Community updates on COVID-19 | Emergency updates for natural disasters | Emergency updates on protests + other events |
|------------|-------------------------------|---|--|
| All | 76% | 75% | 73% |
| Gen Z | 79% | 69% | 69% |
| Millennial | 77% | 76% | 76% |
| Gen X | 76% | 76% | 69% |
| Boomers | 61% | 73% | 71% |

Three in four Americans pay for local news access to receive emergency updates.

COVID-19 wasn't the only reason consumers subscribed to local news stations. With a rise in extreme weather and social unrest across the U.S., Americans are looking to local news for updates on what's impacting their community.

Despite being at higher risk during the pandemic, Boomers were 26% less likely than Gen Zers to subscribe to local news for COVID-19 updates. However, Boomers were just as likely as other generations to look to local news for emergency updates.

Survey Analysis: Post-COVID Expectations

33%

of Americans plan to cut TV services post-COVID

As COVID restrictions ease, do you have plan to cancel any streaming or cable services?

| | Yes, 1-2 services | Yes, 3-4 services | No | I don't know |
|------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----|--------------|
| Gen Z | 25% | 16% | 49% | 10% |
| Millennial | 27% | 9% | 53% | 11% |
| Gen X | 24% | 7% | 62% | 7% |
| Boomers | 13% | 4% | 73% | 10% |

As businesses reopen and Americans feel more comfortable leaving home, many plan to reevaluate and cut entertainment subscriptions. **One in three consumers plan to cut TV subscriptions post-pandemic.**

For Gen Z subscribers, the love doesn't last long. While they were most likely to spend money for new services during the pandemic, they're the most likely to cut those services post-pandemic.

Do you plan to cancel any of the following types of TV services post-COVID?

| | Cable | Live streaming | On-Demand | Sports Packages |
|------------|-------|----------------|-----------|-----------------|
| All | 38% | 39% | 40% | 37% |
| Gen Z | 45% | 52% | 52% | 40% |
| Millennial | 40% | 42% | 43% | 38% |
| Gen X | 39% | 36% | 40% | 40% |
| Boomers | 20% | 20% | 19% | 30% |

When it comes to the types of services that will get cut no one is safe. In fact, **two in five consumers plan to cut more than one type of service.**

On-demand services may see the biggest drops in subscriptions post-pandemic. In fact, Gen Zers are 26% more likely to cut on-demand subscriptions versus sport streaming channels.

Post-COVID Expectations

How much do you plan to cut back on spending for streaming or cable subscriptions post-COVID?

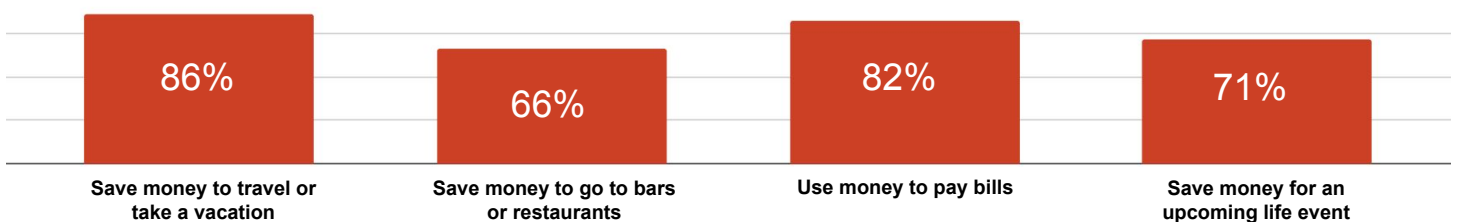
| | < \$10 | \$10-\$50 | \$51-\$100 | \$101-\$200 | I won't cut back |
|------------|--------|-----------|------------|-------------|------------------|
| All | 16% | 24% | 14% | 7% | 39% |
| Gen Z | 18% | 28% | 19% | 8% | 27% |
| Millennial | 16% | 26% | 15% | 7% | 37% |
| Gen X | 12% | 13% | 17% | 14% | 45% |
| Boomers | 19% | 21% | 5% | 1% | 54% |

Despite the majority of Americans spending less than \$50 a month on TV services, many are looking to lower the bills even more post-COVID. **One in four consumers plan to cut spending by up to \$50 a month.**

Gen Zers will make the biggest cut with one in five reducing their monthly spending by up to \$100, making them 4X more likely than Boomers to do so.

4 in 5 consumers are cutting TV services to catch up on bills

Why do you plan to cancel services post-COVID?



| | Travel/ take a vacation | Go to restaurants + bars | Pay bills | Save for a life event |
|------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------|--------------------------|
| Gen Z | 81% | 47% | 90% | 71% |
| Millennial | 88% | 69% | 81% | 70% |
| Gen X | 89% | 70% | 84% | 84% |
| Boomers | 70% | 63% | 67% | 53% |

Financial hardships faced during the pandemic are pushing consumers to cut non-essential services post-COVID.

More than four in five Americans will cancel TV subscriptions to travel. This is the priority for Millennials and Gen Xers who are the most likely to use their savings to take a vacation.

Post-COVID Expectations

Does your household currently own a TV set?

| | Yes | No | I don't know |
|------------|-----|----|--------------|
| All | 94% | 4% | 2% |
| Gen Z | 86% | 8% | 6% |
| Millennial | 95% | 3% | 2% |
| Gen X | 94% | 3% | 3% |
| Boomers | 97% | 2% | 1% |

The majority of Americans today still own a TV.

While streaming and cable services can be viewed across numerous mobile devices, the majority of consumers still use a TV to view their programs.

Findings show that device preferences are starting to shift with Gen Zers less likely to own a TV set than other generations.

However, mobile is quickly an important viewing source.

One in five Americans primarily watch TV on a mobile device, such as their mobile phone, tablet or laptop.

Gen Zers were twice as likely as the general population to primarily use a mobile device to watch TV and even 50% more likely than Millennials to do so. This shows how consumers are continuing to look for more flexibility in their TV experience, watching where and when they want.

What is the primary way you watch TV?

| | Television | Other device (e.g. laptop, tablet or smartphone) | I don't know |
|------------|------------|--|--------------|
| All | 79% | 18% | 2% |
| Gen Z | 63% | 33% | 4% |
| Millennial | 79% | 20% | 2% |
| Gen X | 84% | 12% | 5% |
| Boomers | 91% | 7% | 3% |

Post-COVID Expectations

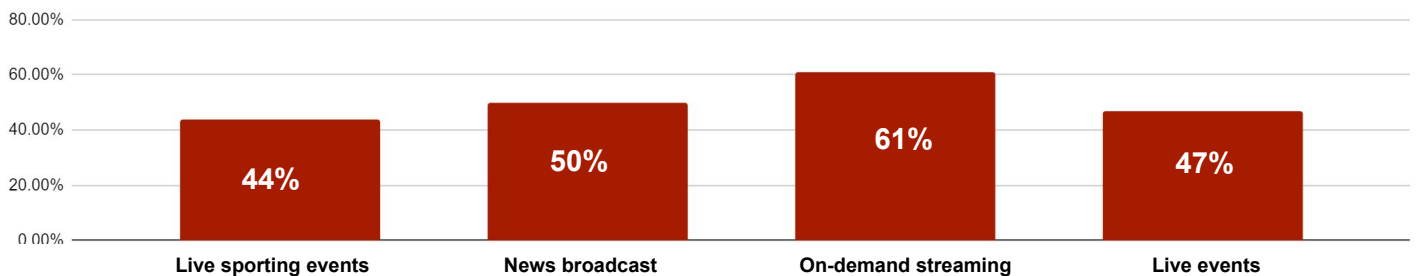
Post-COVID, one in four Americans plan to watch more TV on-the-go.

As consumers spend more time outside of their homes, mobile viewership will continue to grow, creating new demands for content and services. The biggest spike in mobile usage will come from Gen Zers who are 46% more likely than Millennials or Gen Xers to watch TV on a mobile device.

Once COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, do you expect to watch TV more from a mobile device?

| | I will watch more TV on a mobile device | I will watch the same amount of TV on a mobile device | I will watch less TV on a mobile device | I don't know |
|------------|---|---|---|--------------|
| All | 25% | 44% | 17% | 13% |
| Gen Z | 40% | 39% | 11% | 10% |
| Millennial | 25% | 46% | 17% | 11% |
| Gen X | 25% | 43% | 18% | 14% |
| Boomers | 12% | 42% | 23% | 23% |

Do you watch any of the following types of content primarily on a mobile device?



| | Live sports | News broadcast | On-demand streaming | Live events |
|------------|-------------|----------------|---------------------|-------------|
| Gen Z | 48% | 57% | 76% | 68% |
| Millennial | 48% | 51% | 65% | 46% |
| Gen X | 45% | 54% | 61% | 46% |
| Boomers | 27% | 37% | 36% | 30% |

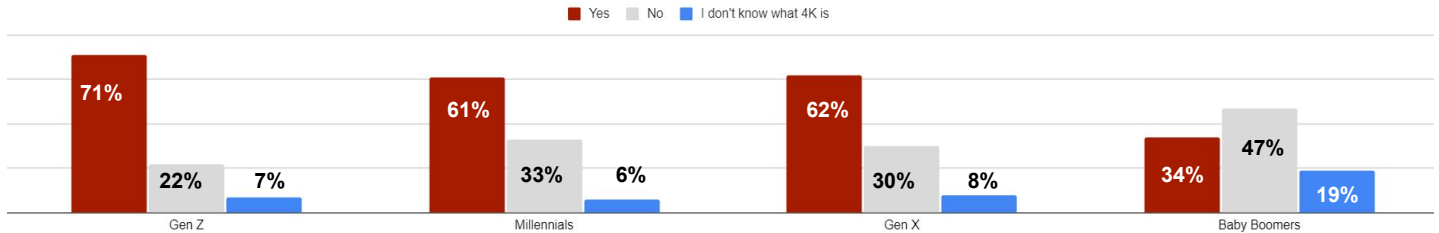
Mobile viewing is no longer just about catching the game or staying up-to-date on the news.

Three in five primarily watch on-demand streaming from a mobile device.

Leading mobile viewership, Gen Zers are also 22% more likely to primarily use mobile devices for on-demand streaming.

58% of Americans are watching TV in 4K

Demand for the highest quality resolution is growing, especially with younger generations. Almost three in four Gen Zers are watching TV in 4K resolution. Meanwhile, just three in five Millennials and Gen Xers are watching TV in 4K.



What are consumers watching in 4K?

72% Live sports

73% Live events

91% Feature films

The direct release of feature films is driving 4K demand with the majority of consumers preferring a higher resolution to get the full cinematic experience. However, Americans limited ability to attend live sporting events is creating more demand for immersive viewing experience.

Why do you currently not watch TV in 4K?

| | Can't afford 4K subscriptions | Limited internet access or data caps | Can't afford a 4K TV |
|------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------|
| All | 35% | 40% | 51% |
| Gen Z | 41% | 53% | 53% |
| Millennial | 33% | 35% | 50% |
| Gen X | 26% | 41% | 57% |
| Boomers | 42% | 48% | 48% |

It's no surprise that 4K viewing is out of budget for most Americans.

The high cost of 4K TV sets, streaming services and the internet broadband needed to support higher resolution prevents at least one in three consumers from trying the new technology.

While Gen Zers lead 4K adoption, they are also the most likely to face issues with affording the higher resolution service.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 boosted the value of TV in the eyes of the American consumer. With so many of us stuck in our homes, we turned to TV to be entertained and informed in 2020. The high prices for cable and streaming services forced consumers to get creative, sharing accounts to cut cost and maintain access.

While Americans have tolerated the financial strain that has come with subscribing and sharing services, this simply isn't feasible in the post-COVID world. Our research shows that many plan to cut services and lower costs to fund household expenses or experiences outside of the home. This doesn't just hurt providers, it hurts consumers who are forced to choose between paying their electric billing and having access to their local news to stay informed.

Americans Should Be Able to Access Live TV for Free

Cord cutting should be about creating low-cost, flexible access to TV programming. As the streaming competition intensifies and cable providers try to keep up, consumers are falling victim to overspending to access news and entertainment content. Our mission is to finally change the narrative around TV entertainment consumption and ensure every American has access, regardless of their financial situation.

Over-the-air TV is part of the solution. Broadcast TV has always been available for free, but many aren't equipped with the knowledge or tools to access it. As the leading provider of digital antennas for over-the-air TV, we are committed to supporting consumers on their cord cutting journey, enabling them to access free and local broadcast programming and lower their monthly TV costs.

THANK YOU

For more information about this survey and Antennas Direct, please visit www.antennasdirect.com.

To receive more insight or executive commentary on these survey findings, please contact Antennas Direct at AntennasDirect@SHIFTcomm.com.

