

Beyond Age 2026: Rethinking Audiences

Age and changing media habits



What can age reveal about the changing media behaviours of Britain's adults? Here we draw on our TGI data to examine where age fits today in understanding and targeting consumers.

This infographic is the first in our Beyond Age content series, which explores the ways age has a role to play in media and marketing campaigns today. Here we reveal three key trends:

1. Social media age profiles are moving fast
2. The paradox of young video streaming subscribers
3. The growing importance of newsbrand media diversification

The **65+** age group is the fastest growing group of Instagram users

% change 2021-2026 in proportion of adults using the Instagram app ('last 7 days') by age group

-18% 16-24 **76%** 65+

The changing profile of Instagram users by age over the last five years is driven by the over 65s, who have seen a **76% increase in users**, compared to a drop of 18% for 16-24s.

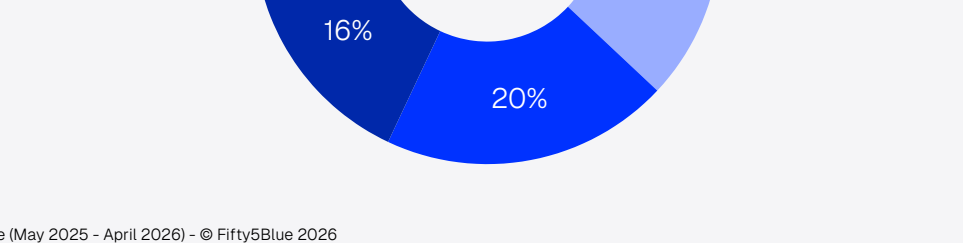
This trend of ageing users is, or has been, true for a number of other social media platforms, such as Facebook.

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Social media age profiles are moving fast

Perceptions of which age groups are using social platforms can easily be out of sync with reality as usage changes quickly.

% Instagram app users ('last 7 days') in each age group



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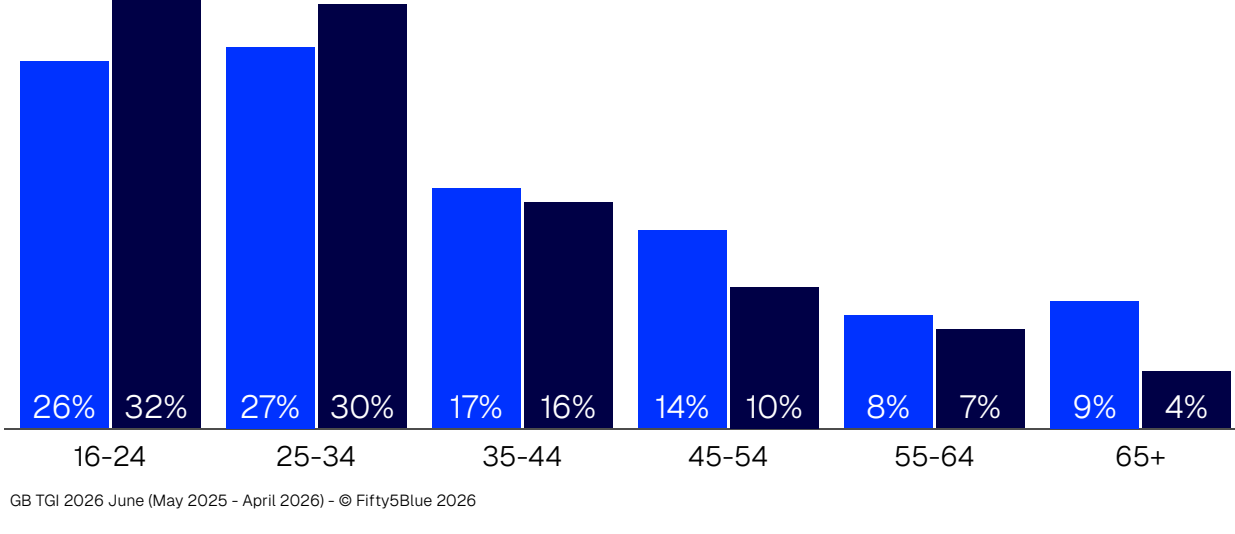
It is not 16-24 year olds who represent the largest share of Instagram users, but 35-44 year olds.

There are also almost as many 45-54 year olds using the app as 16-24 year olds: **4.7 million vs 4.9 million.**

But...younger adults dominate time spent on social media

And yet, social media is dominated by younger adults. In terms of time spent, they are the bulk of people posting and liking.

5+ hours on social media on a typical weekday: proportion in each age group



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If we look at those who spend five hours or more on social media during a typical weekday, it is heavily skewed towards younger adults.

They may not be dominating user numbers, but they are dominating time – and across recent years this dominance has only grown.

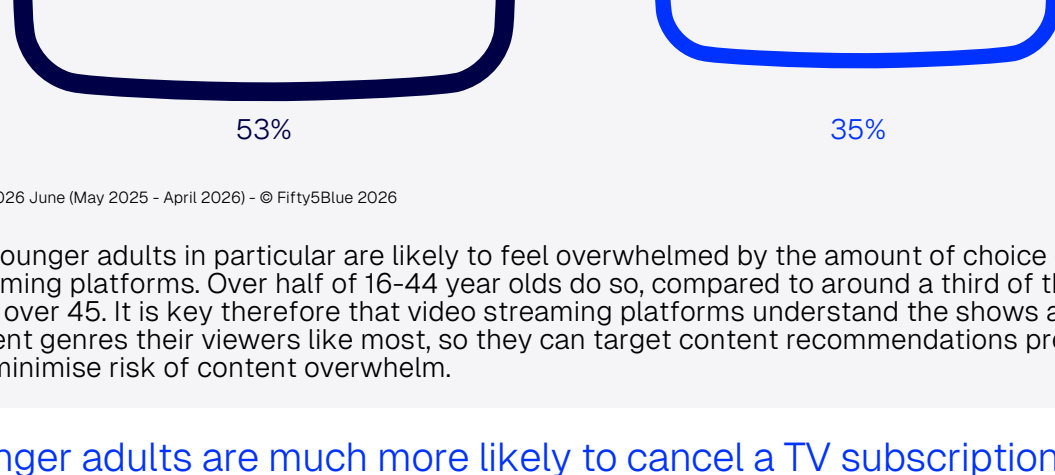
More choice on streaming platforms can be good...but also bad for younger adults

Amid intense video streaming competition, platforms are seeing increased consolidation – the most recent being the proposed merger of Paramount and Warner Bros Discovery.

Streaming giants need to be mindful when bringing enormous content catalogues together. On the one hand it provides greater choice to consumers all within one platform, making subscribers more likely to stay.

% in age group who feel overwhelmed by the amount of choice on streaming platforms

16-44 45+



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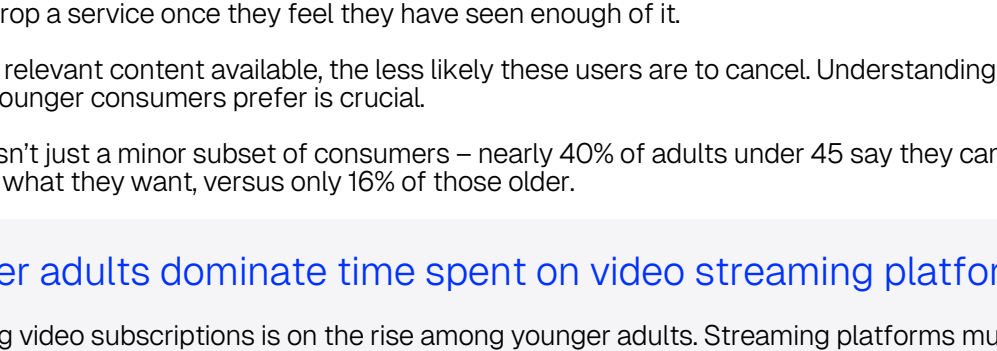
But younger adults in particular are likely to feel overwhelmed by the amount of choice on streaming platforms. Over half of 16-44 year olds do so, compared to around a third of those aged over 45. It is key therefore that video streaming platforms understand the shows and content genres their viewers like most, so they can target content recommendations precisely and minimise risk of content overwhelm.

Younger adults are much more likely to cancel a TV subscription when they have watched what they want

Platforms must balance not overwhelming younger consumers with choice, whilst giving them plenty of the content they want.

% in age group who agree "Once I have watched everything I want to on a paid-for TV subscription service, I cancel it and subscribe to another"

16-44 45+



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A wide range of compelling content is an important advantage because younger adults are far more likely to drop a service once they feel they have seen enough of it.

The more relevant content available, the less likely these users are to cancel. Understanding what content younger consumers prefer is crucial.

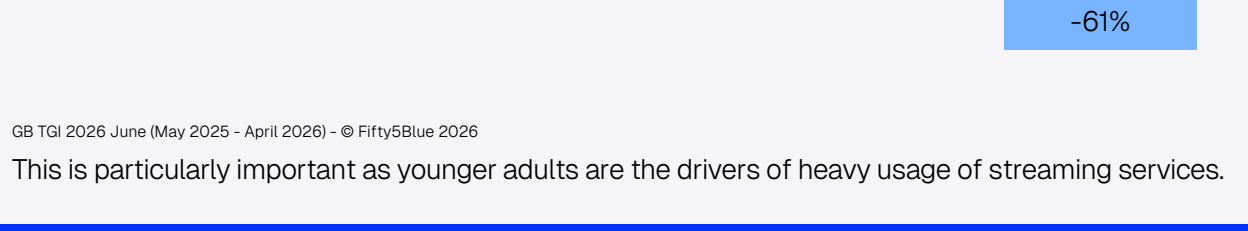
And this isn't just a minor subset of consumers – nearly 40% of adults under 45 say they cancel after watching what they want, versus only 16% of those older.

Younger adults dominate time spent on video streaming platforms

Cancelling video subscriptions is on the rise among younger adults. Streaming platforms must be mindful that if they don't continue to provide what consumers want in the long term, subscribers are increasingly likely to leave.

% more/less likely than the average adult to be among 20% heaviest viewers of SVOD services

16-24 25-34 55-64 65+



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This is particularly important as younger adults are the drivers of heavy usage of streaming services.

Digital newsbrand readership shift is driven by older consumers

When it comes to newspapers and magazines, one might assume older people are still very much attached to print copies, whilst younger adults are more likely to dominate on digital format. But the reality is different.

Older adults are outpacing younger ones in consuming newsbrands in digital formats. This highlights the importance for marketers to understand the fast changing complexion of who they will be reaching via digital advertising on newsbrands.

65+ age group as a proportion of those who read newspapers/magazines on a tablet



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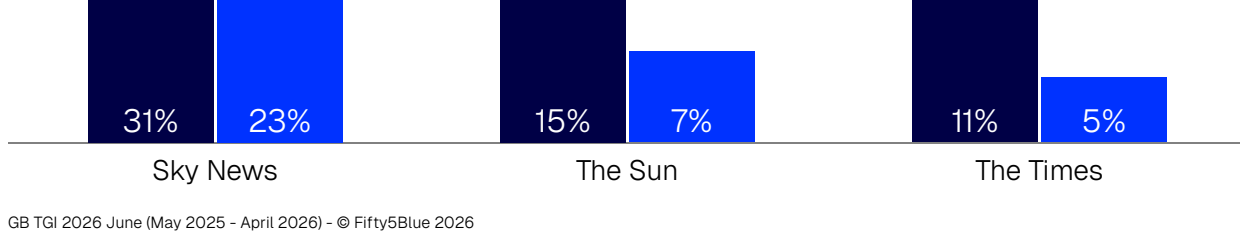
Younger adults are more likely to get their news from social platforms

One reason behind older consumers increasingly dominating digital newsbrand consumption is younger adults are more likely to pick up their news from social sites.

For example, TGI shows that younger social media-using adults are more likely to like or follow Sky News on these platforms than older social media users.

% social media users in age range who like/follow this newsbrand on social media

16-44 45+



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So whilst newsbrands may be seeing older adults driving digital consumption of their site/app, many are picking up more younger adults than older ones on their social accounts.

This highlights the importance of optimising content by platform to reach different ages.

Podcasts can be a great way for newsbrands to reach younger consumers

16-34 year old listeners to podcasts over one hour per week are...

54% ...more likely than the average adult to read The Times
(11% of them read The Times 'occasionally' or more often, compared to 7% of adults generally)

Newsbrands are increasingly turning to podcasts to engage a broader audience base. Overall, podcast listeners are not predominantly young, but for some newsbrands they can be a good way to reach younger consumers.

Understanding that diversification into audio is a great way to broaden its base, a few years ago The Times launched Times Radio to tap into new audiences. This station certainly serves them well for reaching a younger audience. TGI shows that 16-24 year olds represent 14% of all adults, but 25% of adults who claim to have listened to Times Radio 'in the last month' are in this age group.

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*Why Beyond Age?

Our Beyond Age content series explores the role of age in media and marketing campaigns. This is more important today than ever, as:

- Age is still often the go-to differentiator when buying audiences – but it doesn't have to be and other more discerning metrics should always be considered when campaign building.
- It is important to be wary of where age can be a 'false friend'. Preconceptions about the age of users of a brand can stay fixed, whilst its true age profile changes rapidly.
- Media, tech and other sectors are seeing an accelerating rate of change in consumer behaviour, making it more important than ever to understand where age fits in the adoption of new brands, products and activities.

Our Beyond Age content explores the role of age across a range of sectors including media, AI/tech and finance, with an infographic of key insights released for each theme across the coming weeks.

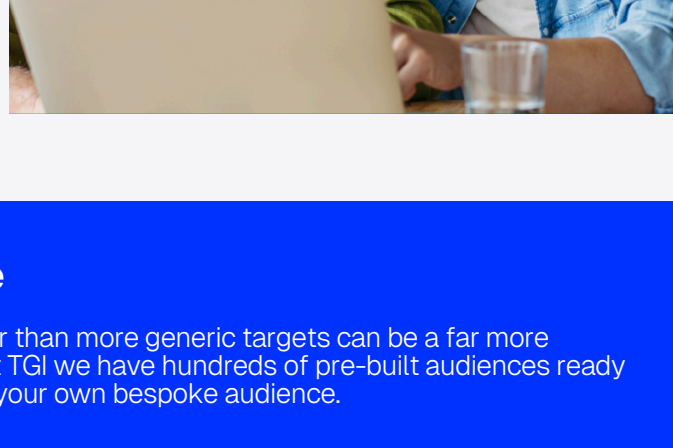
[Click here to download the age and media habits PDF](#)

Let us guide your next steps in media understanding and targeting

At TGI we have a wide range of options to support your understanding and targeting of consumer targets in relation to their media usage.

Here are just some of the ways we can further support your business. For more, please get in touch with your TGI account manager or contact us at:

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Target richly-built targets online

Targeting online with richly built audiences rather than more generic targets can be a far more efficient means of reaching a target audience. At TGI we have hundreds of pre-built audiences ready for immediate online activation, or you can build your own bespoke audience.

Directly connect your data to TGI for enriched insights

Combining the depth of your own consumer data with the unique breadth of behaviours, attitudes and characteristics means you can engage audiences with greater impact. We provide a range of options for integration TGI into your existing data, including API, flat file and - for AI linkage - MCP.

Target at pinpoint geographic resolution

Discover exactly where specific consumer audiences are located, right down to district and sector postcode level for better targeted campaigns, with TGI's dedicated geo-targeting capabilities.

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