


Generation STREAM

GLOBAL EDITION

Presented by Disney Advertising



Intentional TV

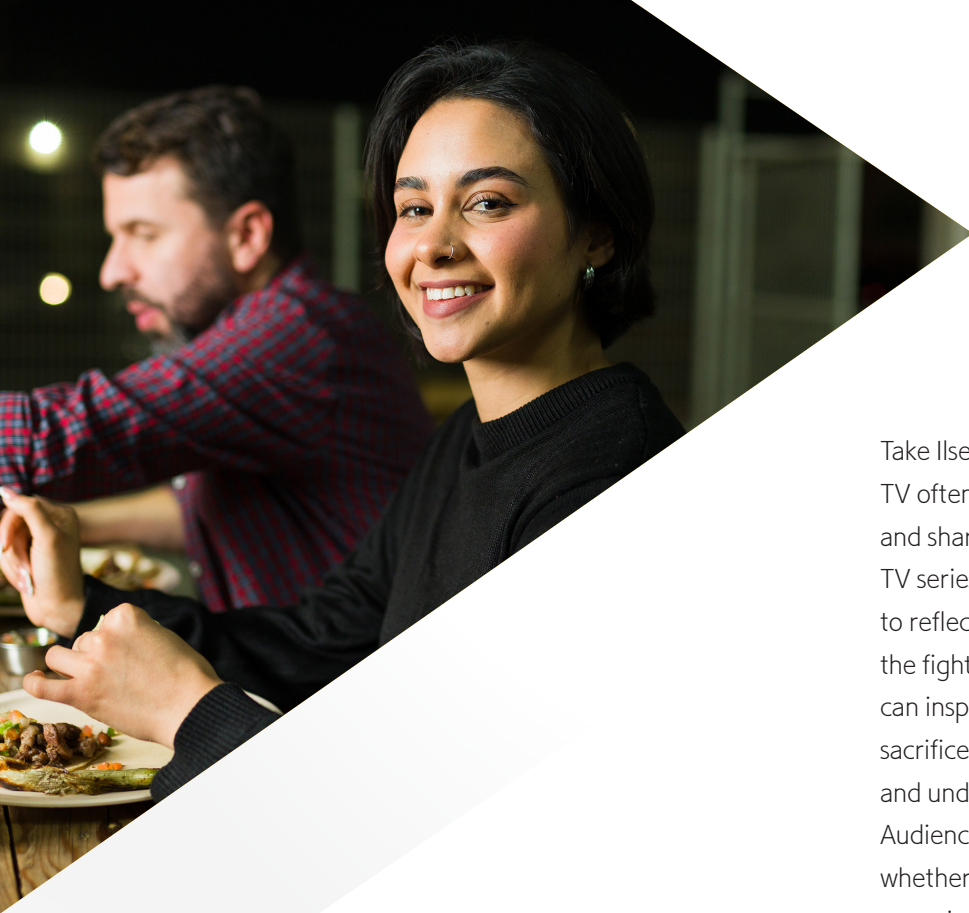


Streamers are prioritizing the TV time - and the added therapeutic benefits - to intentionally disconnect with their busy lives so they can reconnect with their friends, community, and themselves.

Viewers may have turned to TV for background noise, or a chance to zone out, in the past. But today, TV is taking an intentional turn. A combination of increased access to higher quality content, coupled with a more thoughtful approach to downtime, has elevated the role of TV in peoples' lives. Audiences are streaming with purpose and, rather than zoning out, they are using TV to tune in—both to themselves and to the world around them.

▶ **78%**

of Global Audiences like shows that make them deeply emotional.




Take Ilse, 30, of Guadalajara, Mexico, who says streaming TV often “sparks meaningful conversations, debates and shared reflections.” She spoke to us about a dystopian TV series that she and her partner watch and then take time to reflect and discuss after each show. “The story of survival, the fight for humanity, and the bonds between characters can inspire you to reflect on topics such as morality, ethics, sacrifice and resilience, enriching your own personal growth and understanding of the world around you.” 78% of Global Audiences enjoy shows that make them deeply emotional, whether that means laughing out loud or reflecting on serious themes and topics.

While TV has always provided emotional catharsis, audiences today, like Ilse and her partner, are valuing TV for its therapeutic benefits. Audiences are prioritizing it as more than just downtime - it’s a chance to decompress. Now, TV time is intentional time, carved out specifically to discuss life, reflect upon values, and connect with one another. As Ilse put it, TV is a platform for “personal growth.”



“TV not only entertains us, but also sparks meaningful conversations, debates and shared reflections.”

Ilse
30, Guadalajara, Mexico




The Big Chill

The global pandemic introduced a more thoughtful approach to downtime. As the world took a collective pause and sheltered at home, pastimes—including TV time—became more purposeful. “Relaxing with TV has always been a part of the medium’s appeal, but the pandemic brought that to the public consciousness as a more deliberate choice, and in a visible way,” Dr. Lauhona Ganguly, Associate Professor at The New School explained, adding that streaming became a lifeline not only for decompression but also for connection. “Families returned to ‘TV time’ and family time, view parties took off, and it was not uncool to spend date nights at home with TV.”

Today, the trend of more purposeful downtime continues. The #hustle culture of ten years ago has evolved, and more young people are opting to stay in and decompress or host friends/family rather than go out. The hashtag #softlife has over 1 billion views on social media, and *Bloomberg* has stated that the “introvert economy” is reshaping entertainment, nightlife, the food and beverage industry, and more¹. Naturally, streaming TV plays a more significant role in people’s lives as they spend more time at home.



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Dr. Lauhona Ganguly
Associate Professor, The New School

▶ Global Audiences say they spend over **3.5 hours** streaming TV and movies daily, and **34%** report they binge video content on streaming services daily.



“I value time very much. Everything I watch is a conscious decision.”

Vicky
19, Córdoba, Argentina



On average, Global Audiences say they spend over 3.5 hours streaming TV and movies daily, and 34% report they binge video content on streaming services daily. Many, like Andrea, 33, of Paris, France, are intentionally seeking out slow culture in the content they watch. “What I like about certain period dramas is their ‘slow’ vibe,” she explained. “Things happen slowly and so I’m not wired after watching it. I feel like it’s a perfect way to end a day.” Notably, period and historical dramas that channel slower times have become a beloved genre: 20% of Global Audiences say they are a favorite, placing them third on the list of favorite genres globally.



▶ **54%**

of global streamers say they watch TV to enrich their time rather than fill a void of time (46%).

Reinforcing the trend embracing this notion of slowing down, “Downtime : relaxing, TV time, and rejuvenating,” ranked as the most prized part of people’s lives outside of school and work, with **nearly every country we surveyed placing it first on their list of what mattered to them most in life.**² And for the majority of people around the world, this downtime is purposeful: 54% of Global Audiences say they watch TV to enrich their time rather than fill a void of time (46%). As Vicky, 19, of Córdoba, Argentina, put it, “I value time very much. Everything I watch is a conscious decision.”

Global Audiences named “Downtime: relaxing, TV time, and rejuvenating” as the **#1 most important part of their life.**



Key Insight

Streaming TV has become more central to audiences’ lives as spending time at home, and prioritizing the importance of downtime, continues to trend.



Decompression Sessions

Peggy, a Gen Z living in Sydney, Australia, says streaming TV is about carving out ‘me time,’ and intentionally decompressing as part of a daily mental health ritual. “I am quite introverted, and being able to watch something and drift off helps me recharge and feel comfortable and peaceful. This is especially true after work, school, or social events. I very often find myself coming home to eat dinner and stream something to cool down.” Like Peggy, 57% of Global Audiences stream to decompress, unwind, and escape.

TV is also a way to tap into a specific mood. In fact, the number one way people say they change their mood is by streaming TV or movies, surpassing other mood enhancers like listening to music, sleeping, exercising, hanging out with friends, playing video games, or getting fresh air. Topping their list of moods and emotions they seek most when streaming TV are laughing and relaxing, along with other therapeutic emotions like feeling better about myself, feeling love, and feeling empathy (see Top 10 Emotional Benefits of Streaming TV).

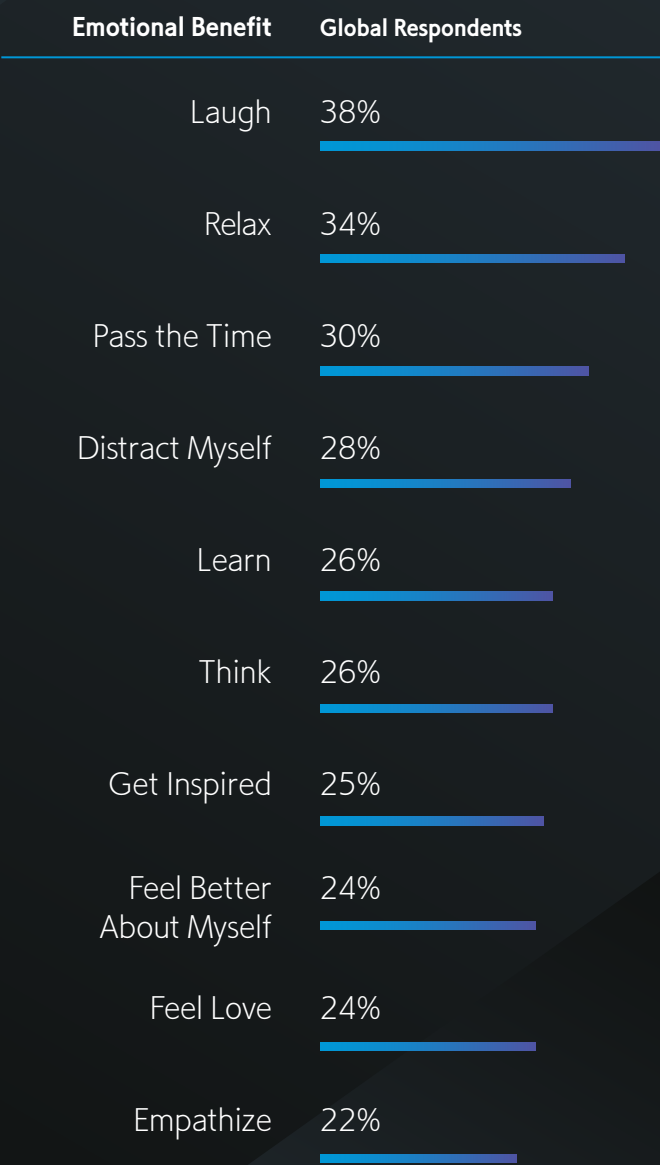
The **number one** way people change their mood is by streaming TV or movies, surpassing other mood enhancers like listening to music, sleeping, exercising, hanging out with friends, playing video games, or getting fresh air.

Top 10 Emotional Benefits of Streaming TV

Q:

I consider a TV show or movie good if it makes me...

► *Results among total Global Respondents*



Underscoring the more central role streaming has played in audiences' lives not just during, but well after the pandemic, Nielsen reported last year that Americans streamed 21 million years' worth of content in 2023 alone, describing this volume of content as "an incredible 21% increase from the 17 million years worth of content audiences streamed in 2022."³



Peggy, as part of Gen Z, was in her formative years during the pandemic, when prioritizing mental health became part of the global zeitgeist. For this generation, family life was their safe space, or 'pod,' and central to that space was TV. During this time, TV time was formative. For Silvia, 24, of Bari, Italy, streaming TV was like a "virtual hug" during the pandemic. "[Streaming] eased my anxiety and gave me a break from stressful thoughts. After watching a series, I felt more relaxed and positive. My mood improved, from a state of worry to a feeling of relief and tranquility."

Mental health continues to top Gen Z's list of the social issues that matter to them most⁴. For many, relaxing with TV has become an ad hoc form of therapy, or a "virtual hug" as Silvia aptly described it. Enzy, 20, a dance student at University of Southern California in Los Angeles, explained the therapeutic role TV plays in their life⁵. "It's good to be able to pick a show that I know is going to make me feel comforted. It helps me release." They added that intentional TV time allows them to decompress so they can ultimately "show up as [their] best self."

The need for 'decompression sessions' is a trend among Millennials and Gen Xers, who depend on 'TV time' to bookend busy days filled with work, friendships, and parenting. Andrea, 33, a young mom in Paris, France, sees streaming TV as a symbolic 'finish line' to her work day, and a chance to have some personal space. "When I get home from work, my mind is usually overloaded," she told us. "So the first thing I want to do is unwind. I appreciate the 'me time' TV gives me, and the space it gives me as well."



“When I stream something it’s usually to wind down after a busy day and switch off from the regular life. I watch TV to remove myself from problems and issues I am facing.”

Rie
40, Tokyo, Japan


▶ **68%**

of Global Audiences say they intentionally stream TV to relax and decompress at night.



Key Insight

Disconnecting from the daily grind through Intentional TV time is a form of ad hoc therapy that allows audiences to decompress and show up as the best version of themselves.

Similarly, Holly, also 33, of Boston, Massachusetts, covets the rare alone time streaming provides. “I had a night to watch TV by myself after putting the kids to bed. I was pretty stressed and tired after a long day, so it was really great to stream something fun and lighthearted. I definitely felt less stressed, happier and more relaxed by the end of the show.”

For parents in particular, this TV “nightcap” is an intentional time to separate themselves from the pressures of the day. According to recent research, moms and dads desperately need the break with 33% of parents report being highly stressed vs. 20% of other adults, and last year the US Surgeon General elevated parental stress to a public health crisis.⁶



Group Therapy

Intentional TV isn't just a solo activity: carving out "we time" is just as important for audiences, if not more so, as prioritizing "me time." When streamers were asked to choose who they enjoyed relaxing with most when watching TV—theirself, their partners, or their family—a majority (56%) chose relaxing with either their partners or family rather than relaxing by themselves (44%) (see Solo vs. Social Streaming). This is because, for many, TV time is sometimes the *only* time they have to come together and connect. 75% of audiences agree that, "watching TV helps my family relax and just be together."

Vicky, 19, of Córdoba, Argentina, uses TV time to connect with her grandparents, and learn more about who they are. "If I'm watching [TV] with my grandparents, they let me see parts of them. It doesn't happen at any other time really." For Simon, 50, of London, England, just the physical proximity of streaming TV with his wife is a bonding experience. "We look forward to settling down on the couch every night. [Watching TV] and not necessarily needing to talk really fulfills a daily need. The shared social experience is a massive part of [why we stream TV]."

TV time as a form of "couples therapy" is something we first heard in Generation Stream: Family Edition⁷, but it was confirmed by audiences around the world. Danielle, 38, in Hobart, Australia, connects with her husband over TV and uses the time to talk through their days; Holly and her husband bond over reruns of their favorite sitcom; and Rie in Tokyo, like most parents around the world, cherishes TV time with her husband once the kids have gone to bed. As Danielle put it, "I LOVE when we get the kids to bed on time and my husband and I get to catch up on shows."



▷ 75%

of Global Audiences agree,
"Watching TV helps my family
relax and just be together."

Streamers were more likely to self-identify as "**Family Streamers**," or streamers who stream most with their partner, kids, or other family members, than to self-identify with any other streaming type.

Beyond couples, TV time is intentional time for bonding with friends. Falk, 28, of Lippstadt, Germany, talked about a TV tradition with classmates that he began more than a decade ago. “In 2013, I started watching an anime series with my school friends. We met every Sunday, ordered Chinese food, and ate together while watching the series.” Even though he no longer meets as regularly with his friends, he still carves out that weekly ritual a decade later. “Over time, we met less, but I stuck to ordering food and watching the series every Sunday. It’s something I look forward to every week.” Nerissa, 34, of Madrid, Spain, says watching *Broad City* with her friends helped her to shake off a difficult week: “I left my friend’s house feeling reenergized.” And beyond these examples, **TV helps young people connect with their peers.** 68% of Global Audiences say they like pop culture-oriented shows that reflect the topics and trends of the times because it connects them with their friends and generation.

Solo vs. Social Streaming

Global Audiences would rather relax with each other than relax alone. 56% of streamers prefer social streaming (relaxing with partners and family) to solo streaming (44%, relaxing by myself).

Q:

When you stream content, which type of relaxing do you like best?

▶ Responses among Global Audiences.

	Relaxing with others	Relaxing by myself
EMEA	61%	39%
US	57%	43%
LATAM	55%	45%
APAC (AU/JP/KR only)	51%	49%



Key Insight

‘We time’ is just as important as ‘me time.’ Global Audiences intentionally carve out TV time with partners and friends as a core way to come together, share experiences, and create rituals, and connect with their generation.





“Unlike social media that requires immediate, constant and performative engagement, television is what we ‘come home to’, and can relax with.

Happy Days & Intentional Time

Audiences are not only intentional about who they watch TV with, but also the emotions they hope to feel through streaming. In keeping with the “soft life” trend and the prioritization of mental health, and as mentioned previously in “Decompression Sessions,” these days TV time is all about comfort. Familiar formats, happy endings, and nostalgic vibes are instant mood enhancers that audiences are actively seeking out. It also serves a different purpose in people’s lives than does social media. **Notably, global respondents were 2x more likely to stream TV or movies to change their mood than they were to scroll social media (31% vs. 15%).**

Back to Holly: part of the reason she watches reruns of her favorite sitcom with her husband is to deliver instant comfort before bed. Not only does the familiar format serve up nostalgia, it also economizes time—a key component of intentionality. “Since we’ve seen every episode, we have Siri choose a random episode from a random season,” she explains. “Then we can just sit together and hang out without spending too much time choosing what to watch.”

The ability to pause and return, differentiates it from doom scrolling. The content has a more complete narrative arc that allows for deeper emotional engagement. Viewers watch on their own time, which reflects a different relationship with the medium. It is more intimate and less intrusive.”

Dr. Lauhona Ganguly
Associate Professor, The New School

In Italy, Silvia also talked about the “comfort quotient” as something she intentionally prioritizes in her TV viewing. Her new favorite series, *Geek Girl*, ranks high on this criteria. “My overall mood changed significantly after watching the first five installments. Before, I felt anxious, worried and demoralized due to accumulated stress and tiredness from my daily routine and studying. I was looking for something that could give me back serenity and distract me from my problems,” she explained, adding that *Geek Girl* fulfilled this emotional need perfectly. “The story moved me, touching deep emotional chords and offering a sense of comfort.” Rodolfo, 26, also in Italy (Turin), says he watches *Dear Diary* on repeat for much the same reason Holly and her husband watch reruns of their favorite sitcom: for comfort. “*Dear Diary* is truly a comfort film. I watch it almost once every 5 to 6 months. I don’t think I’ll ever get tired of it.” Lee, 35, in Incheon, Korea, expressed what we heard from many others around the world more simply: “I don’t like sad endings.”

More than just providing comfort, however, **Intentional TV is about how streaming can enrich life.**

Jackson, 26, of Tasmania, Australia, explained how he has become “obsessed” with a travel series that he stumbled upon, noting that it delivers on educational value—a trend we talk about next in what we call **Culturetainment**. “The series educates audiences on living off the land and only taking what you need whilst being respectful,” he told us. “It shows you how important it is to get off your phone and get out there and explore the beautiful world that we live in.”



Key Insight

Audiences are intentionally seeking out content that comforts them, and ultimately improves their mood and enriches their lives.



Advertiser Takeaways



Mirror the mood of intentionality. Audiences are more thoughtful about their downtime— it is important for brands to reflect that in their messaging.



Emphasize comfort and decompression. TV is a daily escape; lean into warmth, joy, and digital rejuvenation.



Connect emotionally. Leverage storytelling that taps into love, empathy, nostalgia, and self-reflection.



Enhance the downtime experience. Brands have the opportunity to complement relaxation moments, such as those tied to food, wellness, or self-care.



For more information on Generation Stream: Global Edition, please visit <https://insights.disneyadvertising.com/generation-stream/global-edition/>

[1] Bloomberg, January 2024

[2] Eleven of the 14 global markets, including all countries except Germany, Spain, and Colombia, named downtime as the most important aspect of their life.

[3] Nielsen, January 2024

[4] National Library of Medicine, 2024 Park SY, Do B, Yourell J, Hermer J, Huberty J. Digital Methods for the Spiritual and Mental Health of Generation Z: Scoping Review. *Interact J Med Res.* 2024;13:e48929. doi: 10.2196/48929 - DOI - PMC - PubMed.

[5] Enzy uses the pronouns They/Them

[6] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, February 2025

[7] Generation Stream: Family Edition