

Summary

Slightly more than one-quarter of the Canadian television viewing audience is composed of Passive Viewers who look to television as a means of filling in life's gaps. Passive television viewing, in part, can be explained by a large amount of leisure time that remains unfilled by other activities.

In many ways, Passive Viewers are typical of the Canadian television viewing public. There are greater number of similarities than differences in the viewing patterns, attitudes towards television and opinions of television commercials in comparison to the general television audience.

Passive Viewers, however, tend to be younger than other television viewers and are more likely to live in rural areas of Canada. Both factors help to explain larger amounts of unfilled leisure time. Younger, particularly single, individuals are unencumbered by family obligations; and, rural residents have fewer opportunities to pursue out-of-home leisure activities.

Television Dependent Viewers

Orientation to Television

Television Dependent Viewers are the third audience segment to be found in the Canadian population. Although this segment accounts for a relatively small percentage of the total Canadian television audience (15% of the Canadian audience), it is significant because of the Television Dependent Viewers' multi-faceted use of and attachment to television. It should be noted that studies of the American television audience conducted in the early 1980's have discovered similar viewers in the United States.

Television Dependent Viewers possess above average scores on 10 of the 12 television orientation dimensions and have average scores on the remaining two dimensions. In comparison to other television viewers, Television Dependent Viewers more frequently watch television to learn about something new (70% of Television Dependent Viewers frequently watch for this reason), to fill in the time when there is nothing else to do (69% of Television Dependent Viewers), to keep them company (60% of Television Dependent Viewers), to forget about personal problems (59%), to lift their spirits (57%), to get a feeling of adventure and excitement (55%) and to see how other people deal with problems (38%). Furthermore, 40 per cent of Television Dependent Viewers frequently watch more than one program simultaneously by switching channels back and forth.