

The Passive Viewers

Orientation to Television

Passive Viewers comprise the second largest segment in the Canadian television viewing audience. Twenty-seven per cent of Canadian television viewers are classified as members of the passive television audience.

Passive Viewers treat television as a companion that helps them fill the interstices of their lives. Unlike the Discriminating Viewers who actively control their relationship with television, Passive Viewers share a relationship with television on a more mutual basis.

The distinguishing feature of the Passive Viewers is that six out of 10 frequently watch television to help fill in the time when they have nothing else to do. This percentage is almost double the national average. Furthermore, 37 per cent of Passive Viewers frequently watch television because it keeps them company, exceeding the national average by 14 per cent.

At the other extreme, relatively small percentages of Passive Viewers use television to obtain information that is incorporated into an active learning experience. One-quarter of Passive Viewers report watching television regularly to learn about what is happening in the world and 15 per cent indicate they use television to learn about new things and ideas.

Although the label Passive Viewers appears to have a negative connotation, they do not have as high degree of dependency on television as other audience segments. For example, only six per cent of Passive Viewers frequently watch television to get a feeling of adventure and excitement and six per cent watch to lift their spirits. Passive Viewers do not experience life vicariously through television, even though they frequently watch television just to pass the time.

Demographic Characteristics

Passive Viewers generally are members of less affluent households and have less education than the members of other audience segments. Sixty-one per cent of Passive Viewers reside in households with incomes less than \$30,000, and 72 per cent have not attended post-secondary educational institutions.

Members of the Passive Viewers audience segment are more likely to live in small communities or rural areas of Canada than in urban or metropolitan regions. One-half of Passive Viewers live in communities with less than 100,000 residents. Of these individuals, 63 per cent live in communities of less than 5,000 people. Although the largest numbers of Passive Viewers are found in Quebec and Ontario, there are more Passive Viewers per capita in British Columbia than elsewhere in Canada.