

Trends in Television Viewing

Source: Reginald W. Bibby, *The Boomer Factor*, 2006:96-97.

The emergence of the multi-channel television universe in the post-1960s seems to have contributed to an increase, in the 1980s and 90s, in the amount of television that people were watching. Perhaps in large part because of the availability of new information and entertainment options – notably videos, DVDs, and the Internet – the amount of TV viewing has declined slightly since the mid-1990s. As of 2005, 26% of Boomers are watching more than 15 hours of television a week, as are 39% of older Canadians, and 20% of Post-Boomers.

	1975	1985	1995	2005
> 30 hours	5%	7	3	6
16-30 hours	16	23	30	21
6-15 hours	47	47	48	49
5 hours or fewer	32	23	19	24

However, what is noteworthy is not so much the modest decline in television viewing as the ongoing importance of television in Canadian lives. Some 75% of us are watching at least six hours of TV each week – down only slightly from around 80% in 1995 and up from 68% in 1975.

Television, of course, has changed dramatically over the past 30 years. Specialty channels, including 24/7 news channels, and a wide offering of children’s programming made the old characterization of television as “the boob tube” passé years ago.

Beyond providing channels for just about everyone, television’s ability to provide live global coverage of major events and developments has solidified its place as an essential resource for anyone wanting to stay current with what’s happening in the world. In 1980, people who closely followed the news may or may not have watched a lot of television.

Today, there is a direct relationship between the amount of TV that people watch and their inclination to follow the news: some 75% of Canadians who watch more than 10 hours of television a week say they follow the news every day, compared to 55-65% of those who watch TV less often.

	2005	1995	1980
Follow the News	68%	76	80
Weekly TV Viewing			
>30 Hours	79	85	80
16-30	74	83	85
11-15	73	73	80
6-10	64	77	88
1-5	63	70	69
Rarely or never	55	62	69

* 1995 and 2005: keep up with the news on a “daily” basis; 1980: watch or listen to the news “very often.”