

FROM LIVING ROOMS TO LOCAL ECONOMIES

HOW CREATORS
ARE RESHAPING
THE AMERICAN
ENTERTAINMENT
INDUSTRY

JUNE 2026

A PUBLIC FIRST REPORT
COMMISSIONED BY



ABOUT PUBLIC FIRST

Public First is an independent consultancy that works to help companies and organizations develop new policy proposals, better understand public opinion, and model their economic and social impact.

Public First is a member of the Market Research Society.

PUBLIC FIRST

EMAIL

info@publicfirst.co.uk

ADDRESS

Public First Ltd, Ashleigh
Villa, 143 Tamworth Road,
Long Eaton, Nottingham,
NG10 1BY

WEB

www.publicfirst.co.uk

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	03
CREATORS AS AN ECONOMIC FORCE	10
CREATORS AS AN CULTURAL FORCE	16
THE OPPORTUNITY AHEAD	20
METHODOLOGY	22

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, creators have become an established part of the U.S. entertainment landscape. From individual creators creating content at home to large-scale creator-led teams that employ editors, producers, and designers – the creator economy is driving economic growth and redefining how audiences watch, learn, and participate in shaping American culture.

This report is sponsored by YouTube and prepared by Public First with Oxford Economics. It examines how creators are contributing to the American entertainment industry as business owners, employers, cultural voices, and sources of learning and discovery. It also considers the conditions necessary for the creator economy to continue growing in sustainable ways.

The data in this report is taken from research completed by Oxford Economics, unless otherwise stated. The analysis draws on new research from Oxford Economics, including surveys of more than 4,500 YouTube users, 3,200 creators and 600 businesses that use YouTube, alongside economic modelling. For more information, please see Survey Methodology and Economic Modeling Methodology at the end of this report. Throughout the report, we focus on three questions. First, what is the scale of creators' economic contribution in the United States? Second, how are creators affecting viewing habits, and shaping American culture? Third, what barriers still limit the future potential of the creator economy?

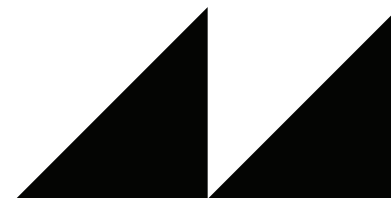
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

America's entertainment industry has entered a new era, one where creators are building businesses, hiring production teams, and reaching global audiences from every corner of the country. Creators are the new stars and increasingly the new studios: training creative talent, creating jobs, shaping culture, and redefining what Americans choose to watch.

YouTube has played a central role in establishing and supporting the creator economy by providing the infrastructure that allows creators to reach audiences, earn revenue, and build successful businesses. The research for this report, commissioned by YouTube and carried out by Public First and Oxford Economics, points to **five broad conclusions** about the economic, social, and cultural impact creators are having across the country.



MORE THAN 500,000 U.S. YOUTUBE CHANNELS HAVE MORE THAN 10,000 SUBSCRIBERS





CREATORS ARE POWERFUL ECONOMIC DRIVERS.

The creator economy is a significant and growing engine of U.S. economic activity – powered by the millions of Americans who create, share, and connect with global audiences.

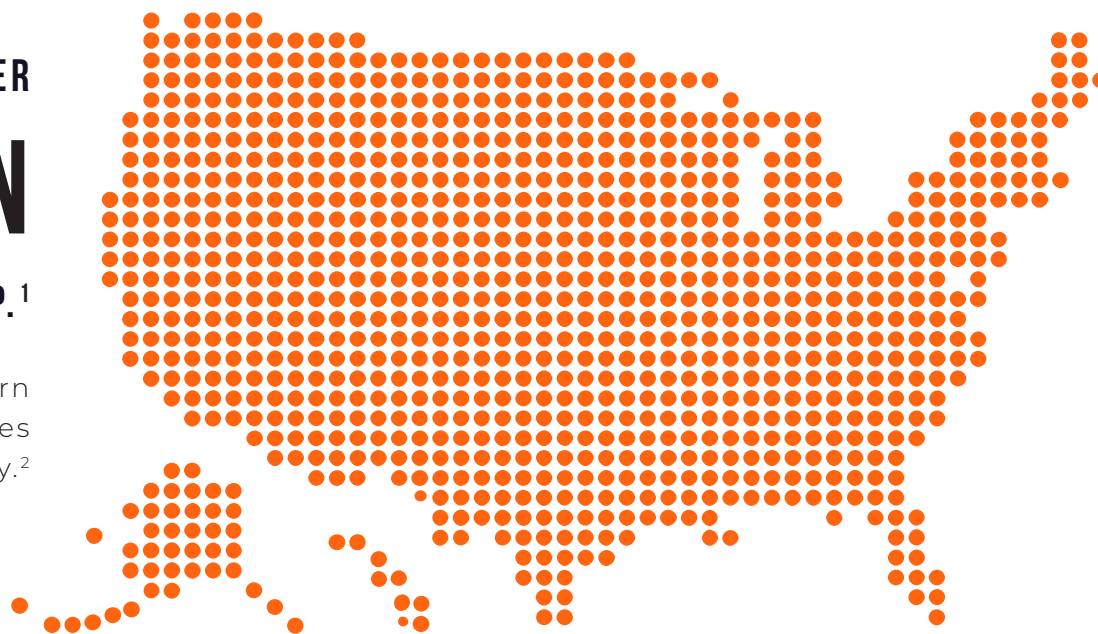
IN 2024, U.S. CREATORS ADDED OVER



\$110BN

TO U.S. GDP.¹

Every **\$1 paid out to creators** who earn money from YouTube directly generates **\$1.20 of GDP** in the wider U.S. economy.²



2

CREATORS ARE CONTRIBUTING FROM EVERY CORNER OF THE COUNTRY.

The creator economy has helped decouple success from geography. YouTube has been a major engine contributing to this change by providing a platform for creators of all sizes to share their voice and find their community from anywhere.



ALL

50 STATES

HAVE AT LEAST

10 YOUTUBE CHANNELS

WITH OVER

1,000,000 MONTHLY VIEWS

3

CREATORS ARE STRENGTHENING THE WIDER ENTERTAINMENT ECOSYSTEM.

Creators are not only producing content – they are building the workforce behind it. Many creators now operate as small studios, employing editors, producers, designers, strategists, and technical specialists.



74%

74% OF U.S. CREATORS WHO SAY THEY HAVE A MEDIA AND ENTERTAINMENT CAREER STARTED THAT CAREER ON YOUTUBE.



77%

77% OF BUSINESSES THAT USE YOUTUBE AGREE THAT YOUTUBE HAS INCREASED THE SUPPLY OF CREATIVE TALENT IN THEIR INDUSTRY.

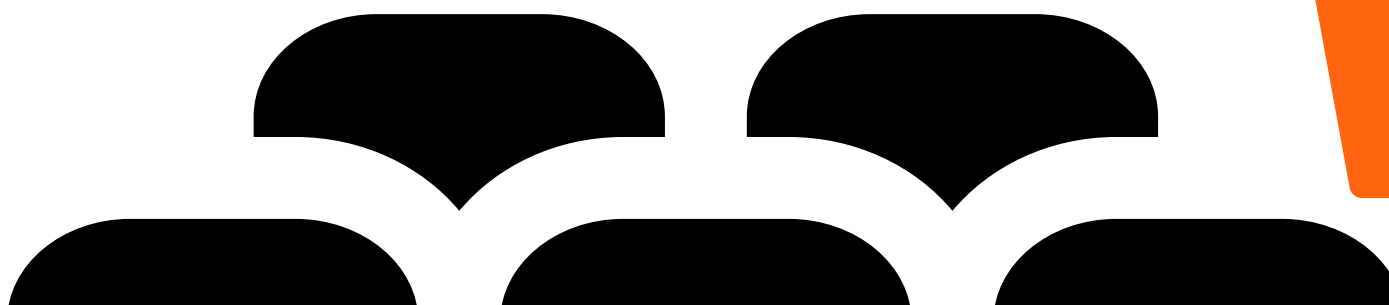
4

CREATORS ARE SHAPING AMERICAN CULTURE.

From live sports and music festivals to podcasts and award shows, YouTube is where America's biggest cultural moments unfold on a global stage. And audiences don't just watch, they participate, react and shape culture right alongside creators.

79%

OF U.S. VIEWERS REPORT WATCHING MUSIC VIDEOS, FESTIVALS, OR AWARDS CEREMONIES ON YOUTUBE IN THE LAST YEAR.³

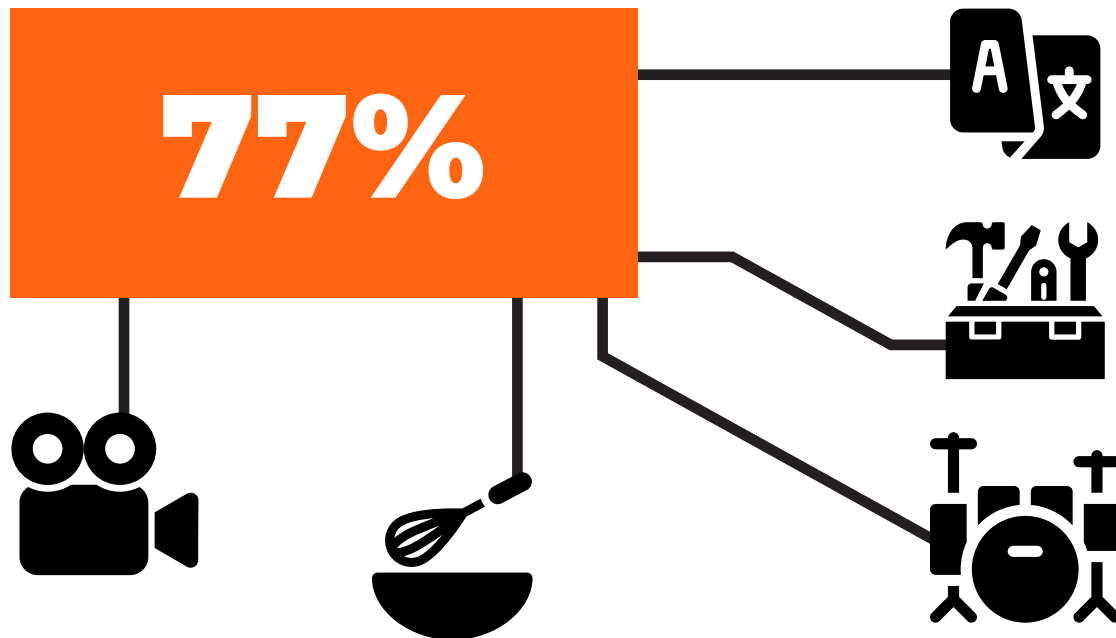


5

CREATORS ARE HELPING AMERICANS DEEPEN THEIR INTERESTS AND DISCOVER NEW PERSPECTIVES.

From how-tos and educational explainers to in-depth and insightful content on almost any topic, YouTube provides a wide range of learning and exploring opportunities.

IN THE U.S., 77% OF VIEWERS AGREE THAT THEY HAVE EXPANDED THEIR KNOWLEDGE ON A PARTICULAR INTEREST THROUGH YOUTUBE.⁴



Overall, this report points to a thriving creator economy that has already reshaped the U.S. entertainment landscape. However, the creator economy has yet to reach its full potential. Public First's research with creators around the world suggests that there are consistent challenges constraining their growth and impact across markets, including formal recognition and access to support, advice and financial infrastructure. If addressed, policymakers can help ensure the full potential of the creator economy is unleashed.

CREATORS AS AN ECONOMIC FORCE

THE ECONOMIC ENGINES OF THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY



CREATORS AS AN ECONOMIC FORCE

The creator economy is no longer a buzzword — it is one of the most dynamic economic forces in American entertainment.

From independent filmmakers and podcasters to large-scale digital studios, U.S. creators are building thriving enterprises that employ staff, attract global audiences, and contribute meaningfully to national growth.

Creators are powerful economic drivers.

Creator earnings don't only benefit creators, they fuel a wider ecosystem of production, services, and spending which generates wider spillovers across the economy. **Every \$1 paid to YouTube creators directly generates \$1.20 of GDP in the wider U.S. economy.**⁵

This economic impact is being driven by thriving creator-led businesses that come in various shapes and forms. Whether they're working independently

or building teams of professionals around them, YouTube creators are proving that success in today's entertainment industry can be achieved through many different routes.

79% of U.S. creators who earn money from YouTube create their content independently⁶ while **21% of creators who earn money from YouTube have a team of at least 1 person** that supports their content creation.⁷

IN 2024, U.S. CREATORS ADDED OVER

 **\$110BN**

TO U.S. GDP.⁸ THIS MAKES CREATORS NOT JUST CULTURAL FIGURES, BUT SERIOUS ECONOMIC ENGINES.

BY THE NUMBERS:

THE SCALE OF YOUTUBE'S CREATOR COMMUNITY

Today, YouTube's creator ecosystem is booming, in the U.S., as of December 2025.⁹

- **500,000+** U.S. channels have more than 10,000 subscribers
- **95,000+** have surpassed 100,000 subscribers
- **11,000+** have reached 1 million subscribers



CASE STUDY:

DHAR MANN STUDIOS

A CREATOR-LED STUDIO AT HOLLYWOOD SCALE

In 2018, without formal industry training or experience, Dhar Mann began creating scripted content in his living room. His relatable underdog stories with uplifting life lessons – rooted in his own search for belonging – quickly found an audience on YouTube, growing to over 26 million subscribers and 18 billion views. What started as a personal creative experiment quickly became something more: proof that a single creator, equipped with a camera and a connection to an audience, could build a scaled entertainment enterprise.

After joining the YouTube Partner Program (which shares 55% of ad and subscription revenue directly with creators), Dhar reinvested his revenue back into production and scaled rapidly. In a few short years, Dhar went from producing his content at home to running a sustainable enterprise that supports a \$30 million annual production budget.

Today, Dhar operates a 125,000 sq ft Hollywood-style studio in Burbank, CA, employs more than 200 full-time staff, 1,500 actors and nine full-time crews, and is continuing to grow his business.



**“DURING A TIME WHERE SO MANY
PEOPLE ARE CUTTING JOBS, YOU
ACTUALLY HAVE YOUTUBERS THAT ARE
HIRING BIG TEAMS.”**

Dhar’s success demonstrates how YouTube allows creators to redefine modern entertainment, bypassing traditional gatekeepers to build studios that rival major networks. His influence now extends to traditional media partnerships, proving that the creator economy is now a central pillar of the American entertainment landscape.

CREATORS AS AN ECONOMIC FORCE

Creators are contributing from every corner of the country.

Success in the media and entertainment industry used to be tied to a zip code. The creator economy is helping to change that. YouTube and other creator platforms have spread opportunity to every region of the country – giving creators of all sizes a platform to find their audiences, share their perspectives and build community from anywhere.



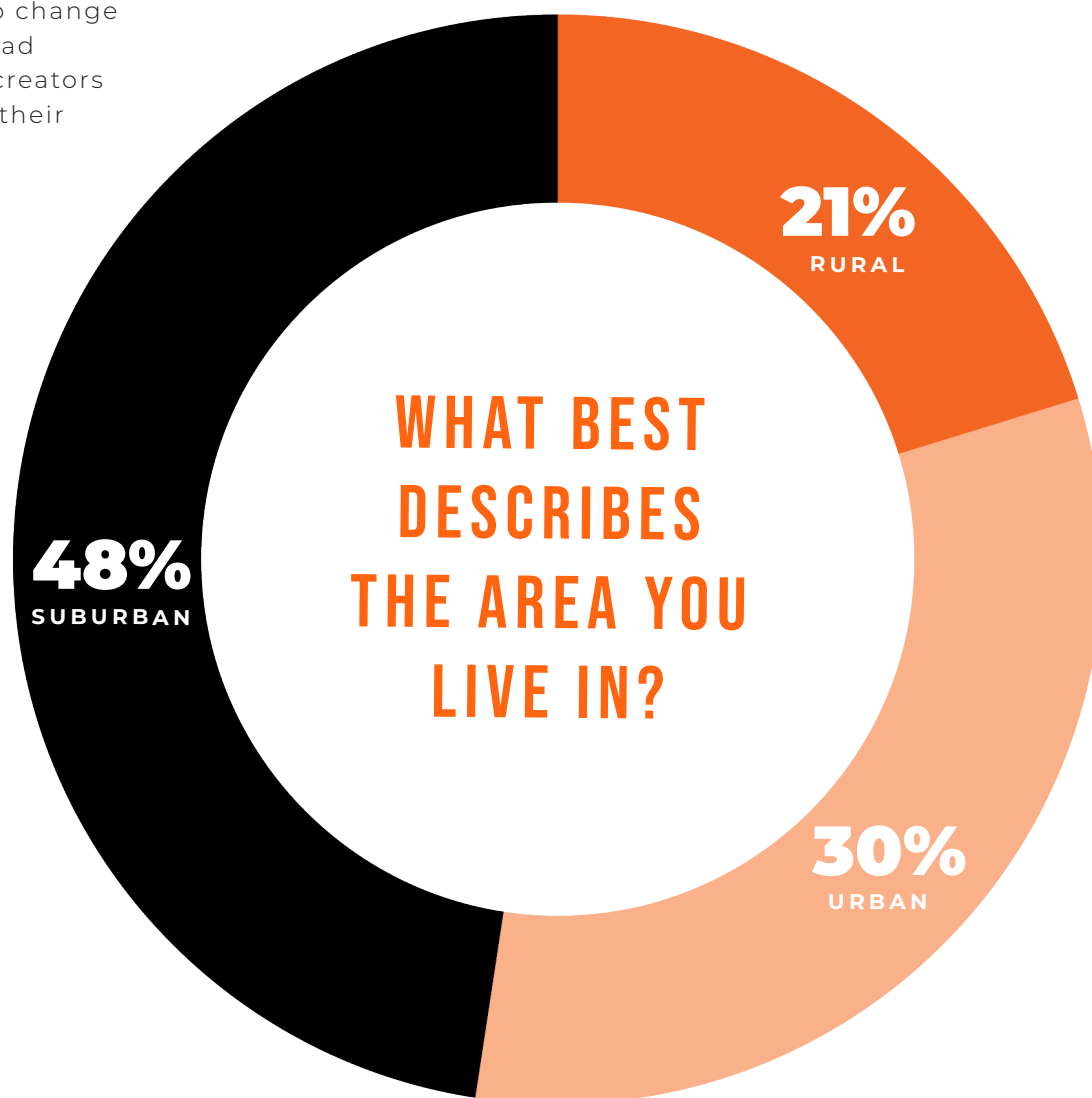
50

ALL 50 STATES IN THE U.S. HAVE AT LEAST 10 CHANNELS WITH OVER 1 MILLION MONTHLY VIEWS.¹⁰



78%

OF U.S. CREATORS AGREE THAT YOUTUBE PROVIDES AN IMPORTANT PLATFORM FOR SHARING THEIR UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE AND STORIES WITH THE WORLD¹¹





CASE STUDY:


REACHING GLOBAL AUDIENCES FROM KENTUCKY

THE SUCCESS OF MAD SCIENTIST BBQ

A passion for grilling and smoking meat sparked creator Jeremy Yoder's YouTube journey. In 2016, he launched his YouTube channel to help viewers master everything from trimming brisket and smoking ribs to deep-cleaning grills. Through long form content, he built a meaningful relationship with his growing audience and by 2020, his channel had turned into a full time career.

The freedom of full time content creation on YouTube allowed Jeremy and his wife to move from LA back home to Kentucky without losing access to his audience.

The revenue Jeremy generated from his channel enabled him to reinvest directly into his business: covering production expenses, upgrading equipment, and ultimately creating his own line of BBQ-related products. Jeremy's leather BBQ aprons and line of Mad Scientist BBQ smokers are made in America, directly supporting American jobs and local economies.



“WE REALIZED WE COULD MOVE BACK HOME TO KENTUCKY. WE COULD FILM FROM THE BACKYARD AND UPLOAD IT TO THE INTERNET AND IT COULD GO ALL OVER THE WORLD.”

CREATORS AS AN ECONOMIC FORCE

Creators are strengthening the wider entertainment ecosystem.

Creators are not only producing content – they are building businesses that underpin the modern entertainment industry. Many now operate as small studios, employing editors, producers, designers, strategists, and technical specialists, and commissioning services across production, marketing, and technology.

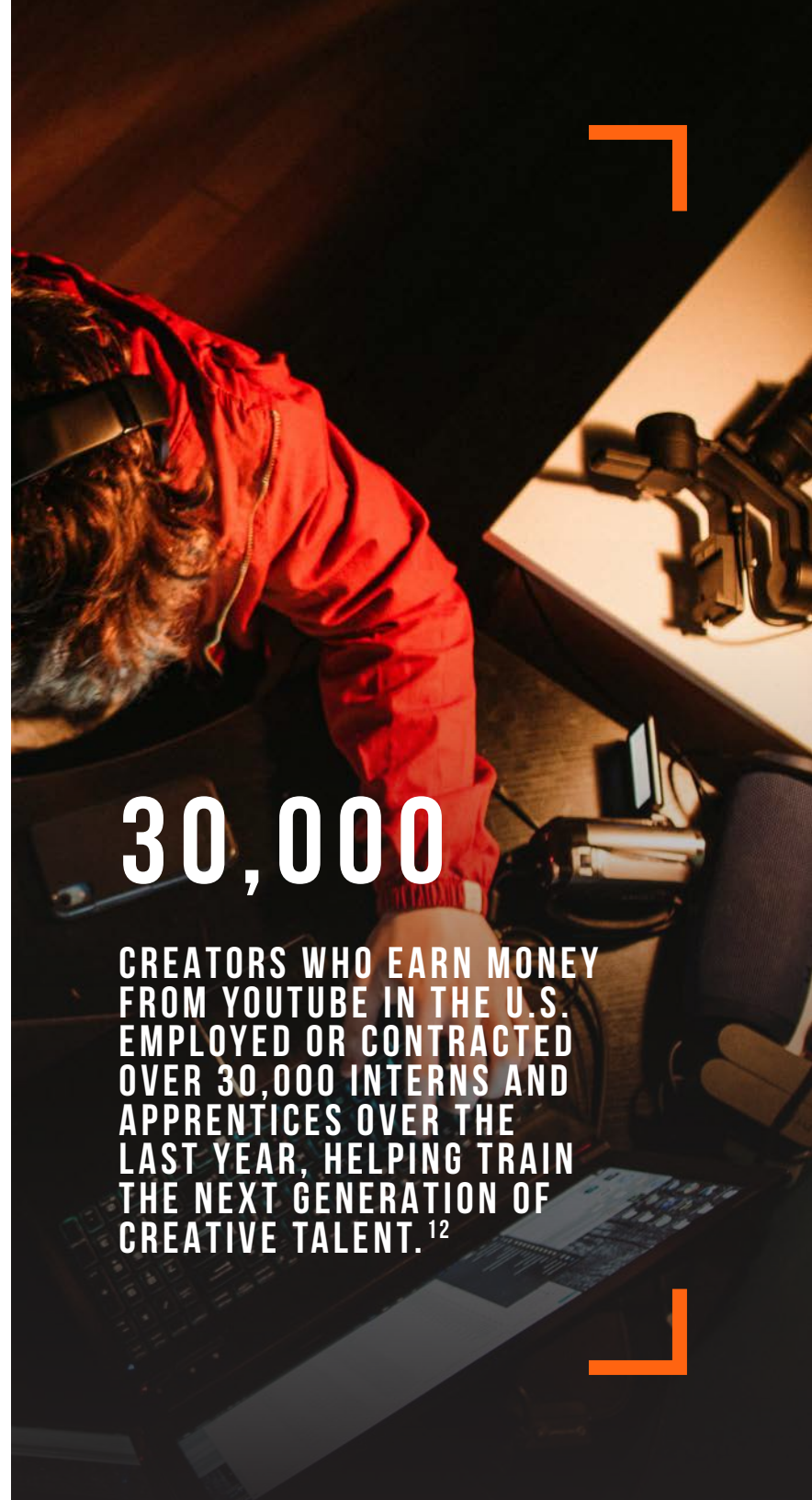
In doing so, they expand industry capacity, create new commercial opportunities, and support a growing network of creative and technical roles across the media and entertainment value chain.



OF U.S. BUSINESSES THAT USE YOUTUBE AGREE THAT YOUTUBE HAS INCREASED THE SUPPLY OF CREATIVE TALENT IN THEIR INDUSTRY.¹³



OF U.S. CREATORS WHO SAY THEY HAVE A MEDIA AND ENTERTAINMENT CAREER STARTED THAT CAREER ON YOUTUBE.¹⁴



30,000

CREATORS WHO EARN MONEY FROM YOUTUBE IN THE U.S. EMPLOYED OR CONTRACTED OVER 30,000 INTERNS AND APPRENTICES OVER THE LAST YEAR, HELPING TRAIN THE NEXT GENERATION OF CREATIVE TALENT.¹²



CREATORS AS A CULTURAL FORCE

CREATORS ARE SHAPING AMERICAN CULTURE

CREATORS AS AN CULTURAL FORCE

Creators are shaping American culture.

YouTube is where Americans go for a front-row seat to major cultural moments – and creators are increasingly shaping how audiences experience them. Creators don't just cover events, they extend them with context, reaction, analysis, and community conversation. YouTube has become an epicenter of American culture because audiences participate alongside creators – not just as viewers but as engaged partners and communities.



79%

OF U.S. VIEWERS REPORT WATCHING MUSIC VIDEOS, FESTIVALS, OR AWARDS CEREMONIES ON YOUTUBE IN THE LAST YEAR.¹⁵

41% OF U.S. VIEWERS REPORT WATCHING CREATOR REACTIONS TO AND COMMENTARY ON MAJOR EVENTS LIKE AWARD SHOWS, POLITICAL DEBATES, OR SPORTS CHAMPIONSHIPS ON YOUTUBE IN THE LAST YEAR.¹⁶

Creator content circulates across households, friend groups, and social feeds – sparking debate, reinforcing shared interests, and introducing new perspectives. Creators themselves have become cultural conveners – hosting conversations, building communities, and inviting audiences to participate.



75%

OF U.S. VIEWERS REPORT WATCHING YOUTUBE VIDEOS TOGETHER WITH A FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER ON A MONTHLY BASIS.¹⁷



75%

OF U.S. VIEWERS REPORT DISCUSSING A YOUTUBE VIDEO TOGETHER WITH A FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER ON A MONTHLY BASIS, RISING TO 83% FOR GEN Z.¹⁸

CREATORS AS AN CULTURAL FORCE

Creators are helping Americans deepen their interests and discover new perspectives.

One of the defining strengths of the creator economy is the sheer breadth of content available, spanning education, journalism, sports analysis, music, culture, podcasts, and niche expertise that rarely fits traditional broadcast formats. Creators meet their audiences' curiosity and build communities around learning as much as they do around entertainment.



700 MILLION

IN OCTOBER 2025, VIEWERS WATCHED OVER **700 MILLION HOURS OF PODCASTS ON LIVING ROOM DEVICES GLOBALLY**, UP FROM 400 MILLION HOURS JUST ONE YEAR PRIOR.¹⁹



77%

In the U.S., 77% of viewers agree that they have expanded their knowledge on a particular interest through YouTube.²⁰



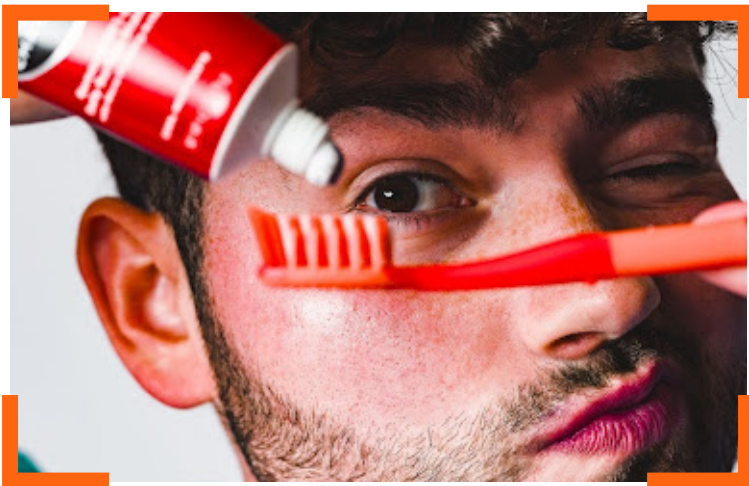
73%

58% of U.S. viewers agree they discover new perspectives on current events through YouTube creators (rising to **73% among ages 35-44**).²¹



65%

of U.S. viewers agree YouTube helps them discover niche or independent voices they wouldn't have found elsewhere.²²



CASE STUDY:

FROM DENTAL STUDENT TO DIGITAL STUDIO FOUNDER

THE RISE OF DENTAL DIGEST

While in dental school in 2020, Chicago-based Dr. Anthony Baroud started his YouTube channel Dental Digest as a creative outlet, posting videos from his one-bedroom apartment designed to help subscribers brush up on their oral hygiene. His lively, humorous content about everything from toothbrush battles to brushing techniques quickly amassed a large and loyal following.

By the time he graduated dental school in 2023, Anthony's channel was no longer just a side gig—he was working on it full-time and building a successful business. Anthony reinvested his earnings from YouTube to expand his filming location to a 5,000-square-foot production studio, build a green screen room, and hire a team of producers, video editors, and channel managers.

Anthony's channel is continuing to grow and reach new audiences. He recently launched a second channel called Dr. Brushy, bringing his upbeat educational content to children.



“YOUTUBE IS MY FULL-TIME JOB. I SPEND MY DAYS CREATING CONTENT FOR MY MAIN CHANNEL, DENTAL DIGEST, AND MY NEW KIDS’ CHANNEL, DR. BRUSHY. MY SUCCESS ON YOUTUBE HAS HAD A HUGE IMPACT ON MY LIFE AND BUSINESS. I STARTED OUT FILMING ALL OF MY VIDEOS IN A TINY ONE-BEDROOM APARTMENT, BUT THANKS TO THE GROWTH OF MY CHANNEL, I WAS ABLE TO UPGRADE TO A 5,000 SQ. FT. PRODUCTION STUDIO.”

From a one-bedroom apartment to a fully staffed professional studio operation, Dental Digest reflects a new reality: creators are building the next generation of production studios and redefining the American entertainment industry. Their success on YouTube enables them to employ teams, reach their audiences, and scale their businesses from every corner of the country.

CONCLUSION



THE
OPPORTUNITY
AHEAD

UNLEASHING THE FULL POTENTIAL OF
THE CREATOR ECONOMY

Creators have transformed how America creates, discovers, and participates in culture.

BILLIONS OF PEOPLE COME TO FIND CONTENT FROM CREATORS THAT INSPIRES, TEACHES, AND ENTERTAINS.

EVERY DAY:



MILLIONS OF VIDEOS ARE UPLOADED ON YOUTUBE BY CREATORS ACROSS THE COUNTRY



INCREASING ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITY



AND CONNECTING AUDIENCES TO THE CULTURAL MOMENTS THAT SHAPE OUR SOCIETY.

Creators are redefining the American media and entertainment industry, building businesses in every state and strengthening local economies. They are as much an economic force as they are a cultural one.

However, creators still remain underrepresented in official statistics, making it difficult to track their contribution to jobs, income, and growth.

FURTHER, PUBLIC FIRST'S RESEARCH WITH CREATORS AROUND THE WORLD SUGGESTS THEY:



LACK SUPPORT IN NAVIGATING BUSINESS COMPLEXITY AND REGULATORY ENVIRONMENTS



AS WELL AS LACK ACCESS TO FINANCIAL RESOURCES TO INVEST, HIRE, AND PLAN FOR THEIR FUTURE GROWTH.

If these challenges are addressed, the creator economy can continue to expand opportunity, strengthen local economies, and reinforce U.S. leadership in creative entrepreneurship for years to come.



METHODOLOGY



SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Oxford Economics surveyed more than 5,000 YouTube Users, 3,300 Creators, and 1,000 Businesses that use YouTube. All surveys were prepared by Oxford Economics and fielded online in September 2025.

The User survey was sent to a representative sample of the U.S. population, by age, gender, and region, with responses weighted to reflect the characteristics of YouTube's user base.

The Creator survey was sent out by YouTube to its U.S. creator community, with Oxford Economics collating and checking responses to ensure a good mix of creators with different sized audiences, as measured by the number of subscribers to their largest channel.

The Business survey sampled different sizes of U.S. firms that use YouTube in different ways: as content producers, as advertisers, and as users of YouTube content for other business purposes.

ECONOMIC MODELING METHODOLOGY

Estimates of the total GDP supported by all creators in the United States and the multiplier effect from YouTube payout to direct GDP were produced by Oxford Economics.

As the source for the size of the creator economy, Oxford relied on Coherent Market Insights's North America Creator Economy Market Analysis. This measured aggregate revenue of companies in the creator economy space, which Oxford then divided among endemic, music, and media creators, as well as between revenues earned on- and off-platform, to align with the modeling framework used in YouTube's impact reports. For each creator type, Oxford estimated ratios of GDP-to-payout from official statistics and the YouTube creator survey. This provided an estimate for the direct GDP generated by all U.S. creators.

Assuming that the GDP multiplier calculated for YouTube creators in the U.S. applies to all creator types, Oxford calculated that U.S. creators added \$112.3 billion to GDP in 2024, accounting for the direct, indirect, and induced channels. The assumption relies on the fact that most creator revenues accrue to various online platform creators—whose work is broadly similar to that of YouTube creators.

To calculate the multiplier effect from YouTube payout to direct GDP, Oxford relied on the split between on- and off-platform revenue from its creator and business survey, and combined these with ratios from official statistics for output-to-GDP.



ENDNOTES



- 1 According to research by Oxford Economics. This estimate assumes that the GDP multiplier calculated for YouTube creators in the U.S. applies to all creator types. Given that most creator revenues accrue to various online platform creators—whose work is broadly similar to that of YouTube creators—we believe this is a reasonable assumption. Additionally, the total GDP contribution figure includes impacts across direct, indirect, and induced channels.
- 2 According to research by Oxford Economics. To calculate the multiplier effect from YouTube payout to direct GDP, Oxford relied on the split between on- and off-platform revenue from its creator and business survey, and combined these with ratios from official statistics for output-to-GDP.
- 3 According to research by Oxford Economics.
- 4 According to research by Oxford Economics.
- 5 According to research by Oxford Economics.
- 6 Independent refers to a survey respondent receiving no support beyond that provided by any co-channel owners they may have
- 7 According to research by Oxford Economics.
- 8 According to research by Oxford Economics. This estimate assumes that the GDP multiplier calculated for YouTube creators in the U.S. applies to all creator types. Given that most creator revenues accrue to various online platform creators—whose work is broadly similar to that of YouTube creators—we believe this is a reasonable assumption. Additionally, the total GDP contribution figure includes impacts across direct, indirect, and induced channels.
- 9 YouTube Internal Data, Dec 2025.
- 10 YouTube Internal Data, June 2025
- 11 According to research by Oxford Economics.
- 12 According to research by Oxford Economics.
- 13 According to research by Oxford Economics.
- 14 According to research by Oxford Economics.
- 15 According to research by Oxford Economics.
- 16 According to research by Oxford Economics.
- 17 According to research by Oxford Economics.
- 18 According to research by Oxford Economics.
- 19 YouTube Internal Data, October 2025
- 20 YouTube Internal Data, October 2025
- 21 According to research by Oxford Economics
- 22 According to research by Oxford Economics

