



The Black influence

How Black culture & identity drive the market



2026 Diverse Intelligence Series
15th Anniversary Edition

Introduction

Black audiences are the vanguard of cultural influence and market trends in the U.S. and beyond. Now in its 15th year, the Nielsen Black Diverse Intelligence Series has been centering African Americans and the diaspora through data that shows our audience and economic impact has only gotten stronger. Today, Black consumers continue to send a clear signal that if businesses want to leverage our buying power, influence, and brand loyalty, they need to demonstrate a true understanding and commitment to embracing Black identity.

Whether it is content or campaigns, 67% of Black consumers agree they pay more attention to brands that reflect their culture compared to 46% overall.¹ So, if brands want Black consumers to take action, authentic cultural representation is the starting point to win attention.

Going beyond the surface of representation is an opportunity to explore our untold stories and unmet needs of Black consumers. The latest Nielsen research shows it's often an effective growth strategy, delving into the nuanced experiences and subcultures, shattering the one-size-fits-all approach to Black America. From anime fans to "Rich Aunties," our identities across Black America are diverse, shaping consumer behavior and redefining market strategies.

Authenticity remains a priority for Black audiences who are the most likely to seek out content that provides perspectives they feel often go ignored.² But it's not just about the content that resonates with us as viewers and listeners. Black consumers are looking for brand alignment before taking action.

 **For marketers focused on driving consumers down the funnel**, inclusive brand practices and approaches matter. In times of economic uncertainty, a brand's transactional focus makes it easier for Black consumers to just be transactional too. In fact, seven out of 10 Black consumers report they'll stop buying from brands perceived as devaluing their community, **up from 66% of Black Americans in 2023.³** Revenue growth is always top of mind for advertisers, but many are also focused on customer retention and acquisition.⁴ Inclusion is key to it all—winning Black consumer attention, driving Black audience engagement and retaining Black consumer support.

 **For brands, platforms, and content creators**—the data in this report outline a compelling message that superficial inclusion is no longer enough. This isn't about tokens or ticking boxes—it's about forging meaningful connections that drive engagement and foster brand allegiance. Black cultural depth, authenticity and inclusion are treasured in our community and a required recipe for a strategy that breaks through and wins the attention of **America's most avid audience**. Black consumer demand for inclusion isn't retreating, and brands shouldn't either.



Charlene Polite Corley
VP, Inclusive Insights

¹ Nielsen Attitudes on Representation Study, 2025

² Nielsen Advanced Audience Attitudes Study, 2025

³ Nielsen Attitudes on Representation Study, 2025; Nielsen Black Diverse Intelligence Series, 2024

⁴ Nielsen Annual Marketing Report, 2025

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Commitment
to representation
matters most
to Black consumers





Winning attention from Black audiences takes more than token gestures

Black identity is undeniably intertwined with some of the biggest recent cultural and media moments. At Super Bowl LIX, Kendrick Lamar delivered the most-watched Super Bowl Halftime Show steeped in African American symbolism.¹ Ryan Coogler's critically-acclaimed film, *Sinners*, broke box office records—and expectations—then made its streaming debut with over half a billion minutes viewed.² With Black viewers delivering four out of five viewing minutes, *Reasonable Doubt* kept the internet talking.³ And beyond the WNBA All-Star game's 2.2 million viewers, the "Stud Budz" livestreamed the weekend into the cultural zeitgeist.⁴

Want to win the 'war for attention?' Black audiences are more than twice as likely to rank authentic and accurate representation of their race or ethnicity as the strongest motivation to engage with new content compared to respondents overall.⁵

Recent cases of inclusion, attention and purchase working together show the potential for growth. Gap's campaign with Katseye is just one example, from the iconic Millennial soundtrack, to the multicultural talent and choreography. The brand had already been favoring partnerships informed by culture, like its years-long *Dapper Dan* collaboration. Following investments like this, Black women are 21% more likely than the average consumer to have recently bought from Gap.⁶ But the viral "Better in Denim" campaign drove a 6% net sales increase for the brand.⁷

¹ Nielsen Audience Measurement, 2/9/2025

² Nielsen Streaming Content Ratings, 6/30/2025-7/6/2025

³ Nielsen Streaming Content Ratings, 9/18/2025-11/15/2025

⁴ Nielsen Big Data + Panel, 7/19/2025, Live, P2+

⁵ Nielsen Advanced Audience Attitudes Study, 2025

⁶ Nielsen Scarborough USA+ 2025 R1

⁷ GAP, Inc. Q3 2025 Earnings

The affinity for inclusion extends across segments—66% of Black respondents agree it's important that their favorite media features a range of different identities compared to 48% overall.⁸ It's no surprise then, that last year's streaming trends among Black viewers featured a variety of content, including over 5.5 billion minutes viewed for western *Gunsmoke*, another 1.9 billion for *K-Pop Demon Hunters* and a variety of genres in between.⁹

And if you're looking for loyalty, the audience of today and tomorrow expects inclusion as standard practice. Recent studies found over half of Gen Z and Millennial U.S. consumers were more trusting of brands when Black consumers were accounted for.¹⁰ And more than half of parents in the U.S. plan to incorporate other cultures into their parenting through media with diverse characters.¹¹ Nielsen data underscores the fact that authentic representation in both content and campaigns acts as a beacon for Black attention, engagement, and purchase.

⁸ Nielsen Advanced Audience Attitudes Study, 2025

⁹ Nielsen Streaming Content Ratings, Jan-Oct 2025

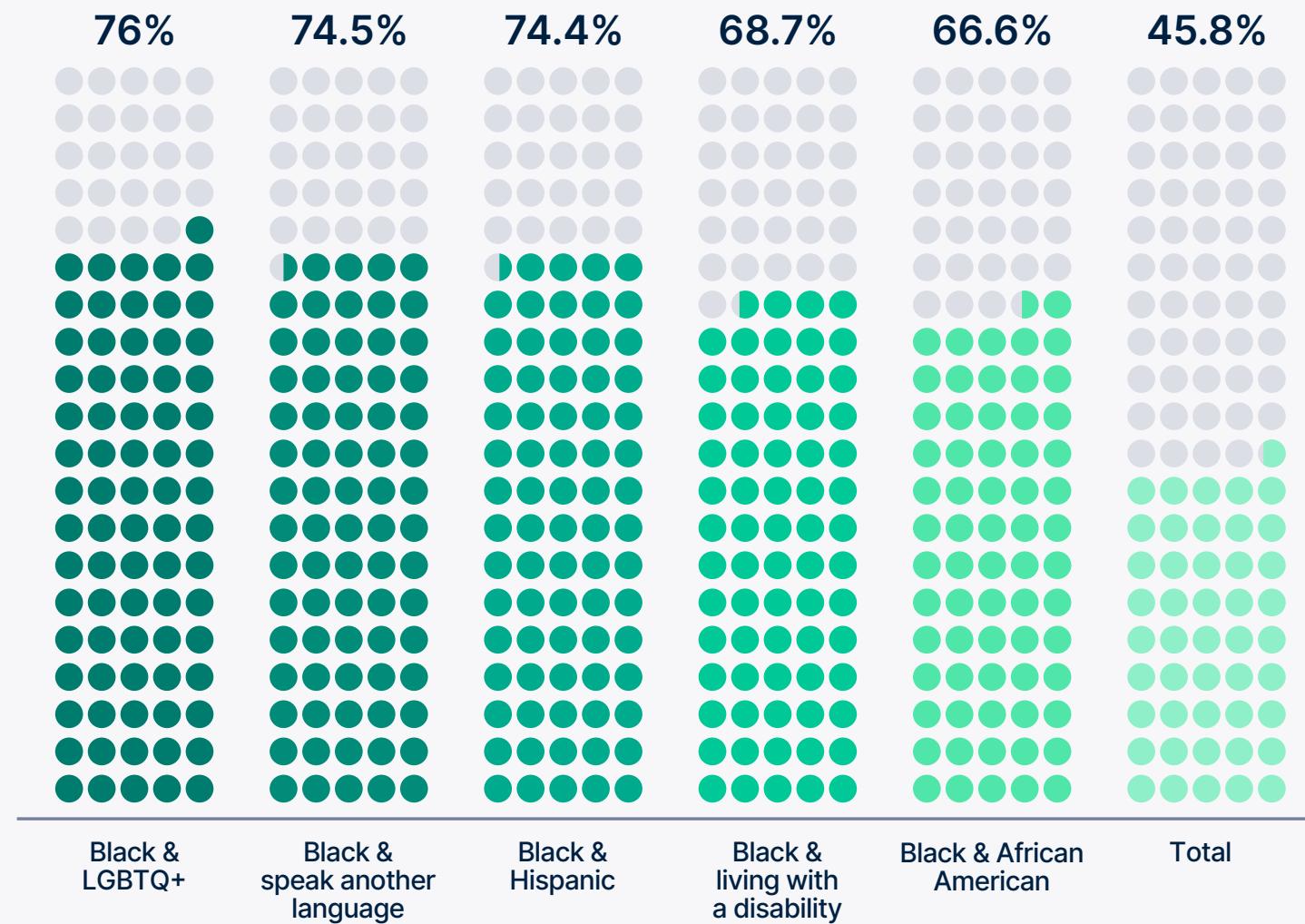
¹⁰ UrbanOne Cultural ROI Study

¹¹ The Future of Parenting Study - The Bump

Figure 1.1

Black consumers pay more attention to ads in media that reflect their culture and ethnicity

"I pay more attention to ads in media that reflect my culture/ethnicity."



Question: "I pay more attention to ads in media that reflect my culture/ethnicity."

Read as: 74% of Black respondents that also identify as Hispanic agreed they pay more attention to ads in media that reflect their culture.

Source: Nielsen Attitudes on Representation Study, 2025

Brand alignment is a must to drive ROI

Black consumers are often looking for brand alignment before taking action, and the sentiment is increasing rapidly.

- 70% will stop buying from brands perceived as devaluing their community, up from 66% in 2023.¹²
- 63% expect brands to support causes they care about, up from 59% in 2023.¹³
- 55% of Black consumers agree they will no longer use a brand if the company mistreats employees.¹⁴
- Over half of Black consumers agreed a brand's stance on social issues is a major factor in their purchasing decisions.¹⁵
- 56% of Black consumers prefer to buy based on ads that show up in culturally relevant content compared to 35% overall.¹⁶

¹² Nielsen Attitudes on Representation Study, 2025

¹³ Nielsen Attitudes on Representation Study, 2025

¹⁴ Nielsen Scarborough USA+ 2025 R1

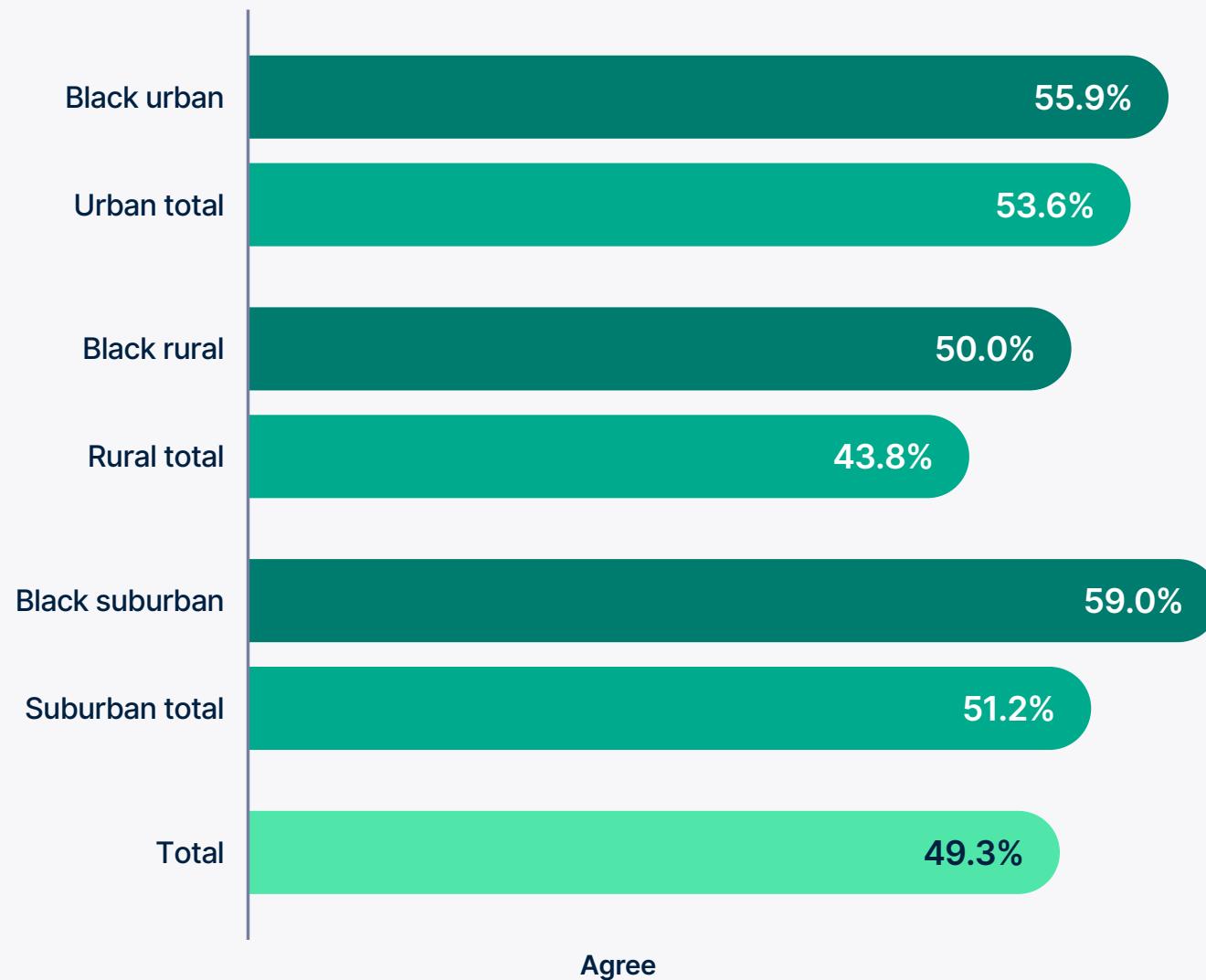
¹⁵ Nielsen Advanced Audience Attitudes Study, 2025

¹⁶ Nielsen Attitudes on Representation Study, 2025

Figure 1.2

Black consumers are more likely to agree that a brand's stance on social issues is a major factor in purchasing decisions

Respondent community type



Source: Nielsen Advanced Audience Attitudes, 2025

Representation and retail

Black consumers are the most likely to expect the retailers they buy from to support the causes they care about with nearly 1 in 4 saying they *strongly agree* vs 17% overall.¹⁷ For example, consumers have shifted spending directly to the Black-owned businesses they support, bypassing retailers they feel are out of step. Black-owned beauty brand, The Lip Bar reported a 40% uptick in sales last year despite in-store sales being down double digits.¹⁸ On the other hand, Costco affirmed their commitment to “do the right thing” in 2025 and the operating principles that help them do just that.¹⁹ In addition to increased foot traffic in stores, Nielsen Media Impact showed a 31% increase in the Costco app’s reach among Black consumers.²⁰ The company also reported a 14% year-over-year increase in member fee income, driven by new sign-ups and member upgrades.²¹

¹⁷ Nielsen Advanced Audience Attitudes Study, 2025

¹⁸ “The Strategies Behind The Lip Bar’s 40% Growth Despite 30% Drop In Target Sales,” *Beauty Independent*, October 2025

¹⁹ “Costco doubles down on DEI — and benefits,” *Marketplace*, May 2025

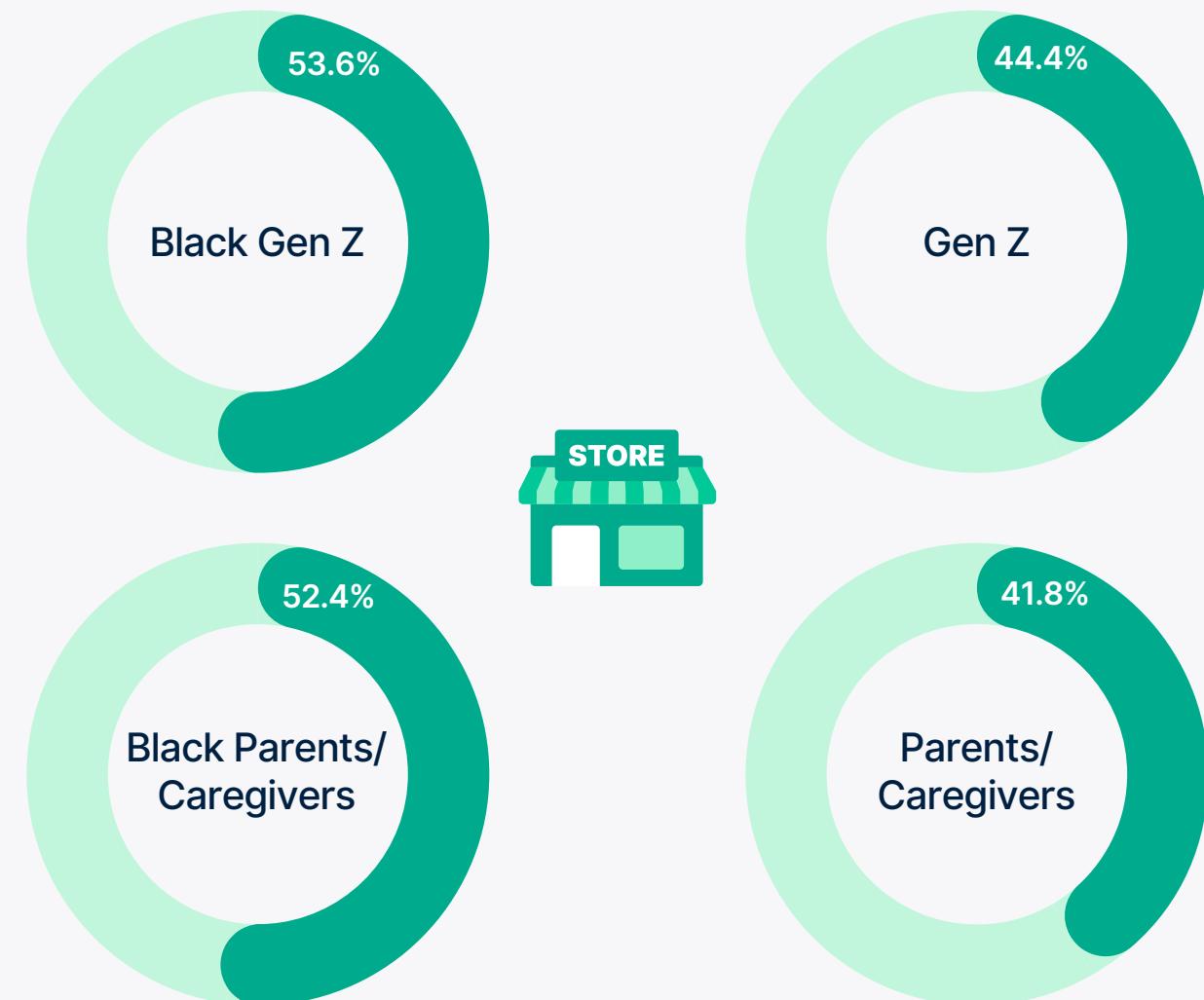
²⁰ Nielsen Media Impact, February 2024, February 2025

²¹ “Costco’s Membership Fees Rise 14%: Sustainable Growth or Peak?,” *Yahoo! Finance*, October 2025

Figure 1.3

“I expect the retailers I buy from to support the causes I care about.”

● %Agree



Source: Nielsen Advanced Audience Attitudes Study, 2025

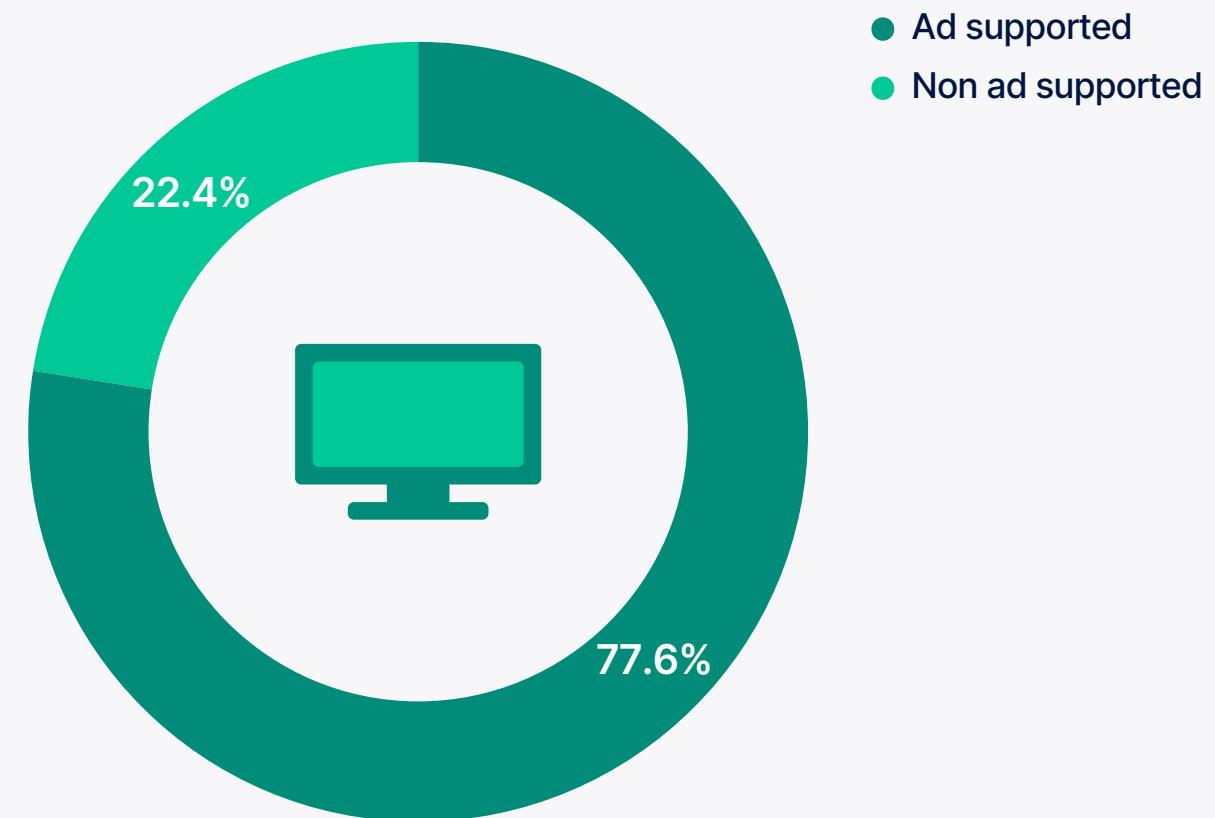
Getting it right on advertising channels

Cultural competency is a strength when 61% of Black consumers agree they often feel misrepresented specifically in advertising compared to just 44% of overall consumers.²² If campaigns aren't informed about who is in their audience and the identities they want represented, brands don't have critical inputs to be successful. These gaps or biases have the potential to be scaled and accelerated with the proliferation of AI tools without guardrails. More than two out of five Black consumers felt AI-created content and ads could not accurately reflect their culture and values in a recent [Nielsen study](#).²³

For advertisers taking an uninformed or surface-level approach, this is a risk. Black viewers are among TV's most-addressable audiences with nearly four out of five minutes they view being ad-supported.

Figure 1.4

Black audience share of ad-supported TV viewing



²² Nielsen Attitudes on Representation Study, 2025

²³ Nielsen Attitudes on Representation Study, 2024

Source: Nielsen National TV Panel & Nielsen Streaming Platform Ratings, P2+, 1H2025

On digital channels, the story is similar. Nielsen measurement shows Black audiences outpace the total U.S. in digital engagement averaging **two hours more a week**. At over 80%, retail marketers agree they are more likely to turn to digital channels compared to marketers in other industries.²⁴ Nielsen Ad AdIntel data shows half of retailers' investment went to digital, with social placements making up 29% of all retail ad spend.

However, Black consumers say there is room for improvement with representation that could make messaging across channels more impactful. Black audiences are wanting more representation from brands; 64% agree they want to see more representation in ads on social media and 61% on websites, compared to 42% and 41% of the total population surveyed respectively.²⁵

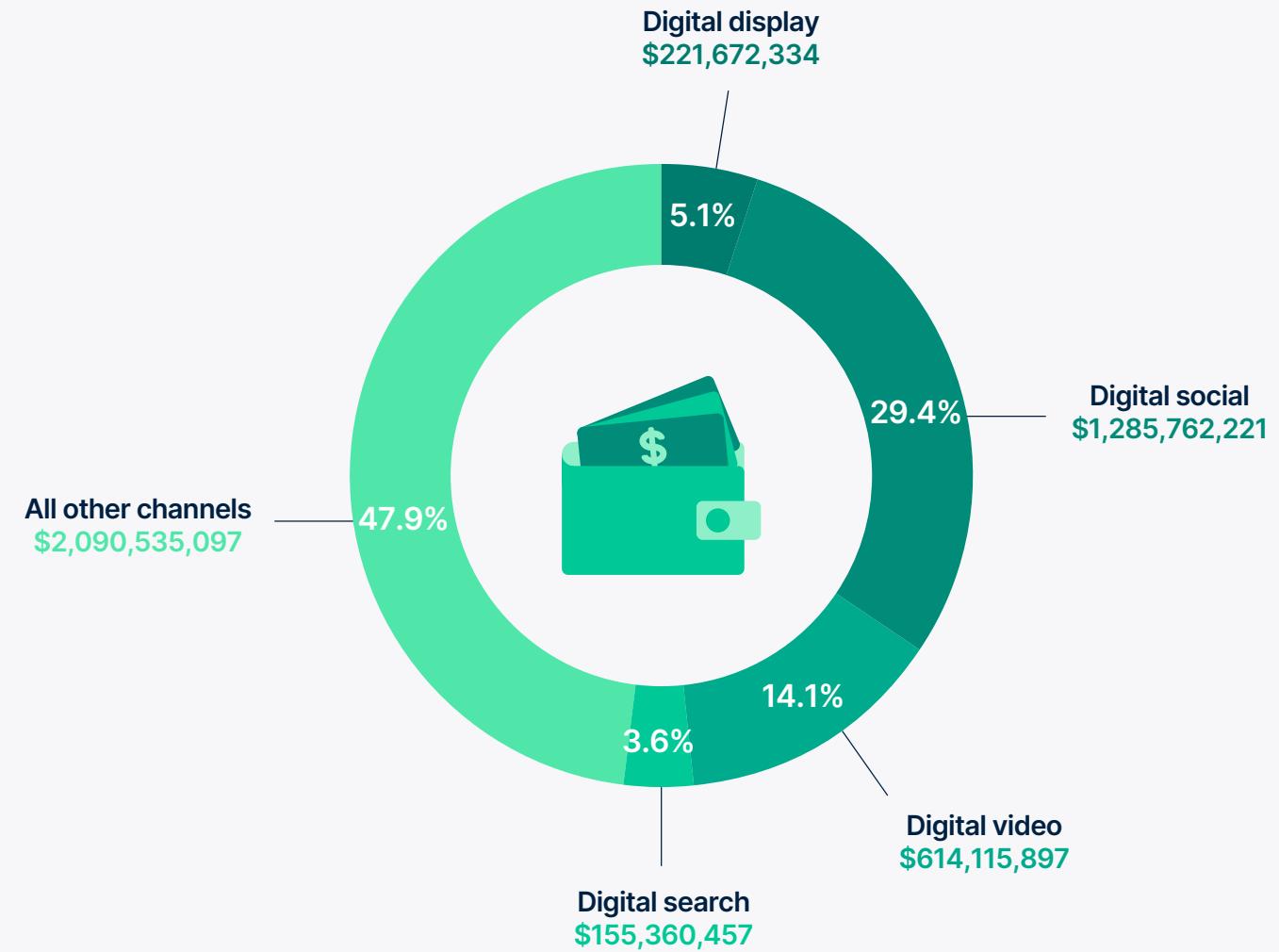
²⁴ Nielsen Annual Marketing Report, 2025

²⁵ Nielsen Attitudes on Representation Study, 2025



Figure 1.5

U.S. retail category total market digital ad spend, 1H2025



Source: Nielsen Ad Intel, 1H2025

Where Black audiences are tuned in

*and how attention
is shifting*



Where is Black audience viewership going today?

For Black America, content often means community and a chance for cultural connection that drives live viewing and real-time engagement. In a recent Nielsen study, Black viewers were the most likely to want to watch events live as they air or become available on streaming services.¹ In fact, Nielsen measurement shows Black audiences average nearly five hours more a week with Live TV than U.S. viewers overall. This segment also remains the most likely to engage social media while a program airs live, with 14% averaging five hours or more on social media compared to 9% overall.²

Overall, where and how Black audiences are tuning in has shifted rapidly in recent years.

Since 2022, broadcast share of viewership with Black audiences has declined—but at half the rate of viewers overall. Black audiences spend a quarter of their broadcast viewing with general dramas, more than any other segment. Daytime soaps or primetime sagas, some of the biggest draws on broadcast for Black viewers are also led by Black talent. Black leads in recurring broadcast roles command 22.6% **share of screen time**.⁴

Cable receives nearly one of every five minutes of Black audience viewing.⁵ Moments, like the BET Awards or the NBA Finals deliver significant shares of Black audience attention, spelling opportunities for brands to reach Black consumers through identity, fandom and culture. Behind sports content, feature films received the highest share of Black audience cable viewing last season.⁶ An impactful pairing for **Black movie buffs** who are almost twice as likely to respond to ads on cable versus audiences overall.⁷ This preference is further notable as Black audiences were the only segment to have a genre other than news as their most-viewed genre on cable.⁸

¹ Nielsen Advanced Audiences Insights Study, 2025

² Nielsen Scarborough USA+

³ Nielsen National TV Panel, 24-25 Season, P2+, Live+7

⁴ Gracenote Inclusion Analytics, Q3 2025

⁵ Nielsen National TV Panel, September 2025

⁶ Nielsen National TV Panel, 24-25 Season, P2+, Live+7

⁷ Nielsen Advanced Audience Attitudes Study, 2025

⁸ Nielsen National TV Panel, 24-25 Season, P2+, Live+7

Figure 2.1



Source: Nielsen National TV Panel, Q2 2025

Figure 2.2

Connection and community drive live engagement

I watch...	Black	AANHPI	Hispanic	Native American	White	Total
Live, and that's my main focus.	37.1%	26.1%	32.3%	28.0%	30.4%	31.9%
Live, but actively follow/ engage social media at the same time.	25.1%	19.9%	22.9%	22.5%	18.3%	20.5%

Source: Nielsen Advanced Audience Attitudes Study, 2025

Understanding the nuance of Black viewer segments

Streaming has seen an 11 point increase in share of time for Black audiences from September 2022 to September 2025. Black 18-49 year olds average nearly seven and a half hours more per week with Connected TV than their counterparts of the same age group.⁹ However, discovering content audiences love can be a challenge in streaming's crowded field. 66% of streaming viewers want a service to tell them where to find a specific program, including sports—even if it's on a different service.¹⁰

Across streaming platforms, Black audiences have found a selection of inclusive stories and characters to draw their attention and the impact is often evidenced in the [Nielsen Streaming Top 10](#).

⁹ Nielsen National TV Panel, Q2 2025

¹⁰ Gracenote State of Play Report, 2025

Figure 2.3

Black audience share of time spent with TV trend 2022 vs 2025

	Black		Total US	
	Sep 2022	Sep 2025	Sep 2022	Sep 2025
Broadcast	26.6%	23.5%	24.3%	22.3%
Streaming	38.7%	49.8%	35.9%	45.2%
Cable	31.9%	17.7%	33.9%	22.3%
Other	2.8%	9.0%	5.9%	10.2%

Source: Nielsen National TV Panel + Streaming Content Ratings

But, consumers are embracing the blurred lines across media platforms. Black listeners are the most likely to watch their podcasts, naming YouTube as the platform they use most often to tune in as well as discover new podcasts.¹¹ Black Millennial and Black Gen X viewers are more likely to report a preference to binge-watch multiple episodes or an entire season of content at once, compared to 36.1% of respondents overall.¹² This preference isn't just for streaming. *Bluey*, for example, may not dominate the streaming charts for Black viewers, but Black audiences represent 20% of the viewing delivered to the program on cable, including a majority of video-on-demand viewing.¹³ A nuanced approach by segment and platform can uncover opportunities for inclusive messaging.

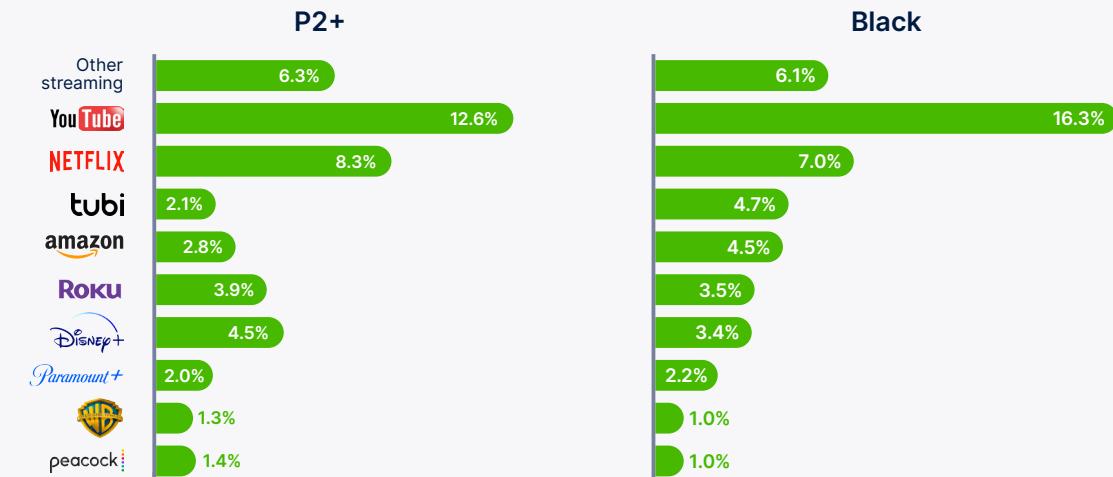
¹¹ Nielsen Scarborough Podcast Recontact Study, 2025

¹² Nielsen Advanced Audience Attitudes Study, 2025

¹³ Nielsen Streaming Content Ratings, Nielsen National TV Panel, P2+, 1H2025

Figure 2.4

Share of streaming by platform



Source: Nielsen National TV Panel plus Nielsen Streaming Platform Ratings, P2+, Sep 2025

*Disney includes viewing on Disney+, ESPN+ and Hulu

** Paramount includes viewing on Paramount and Pluto

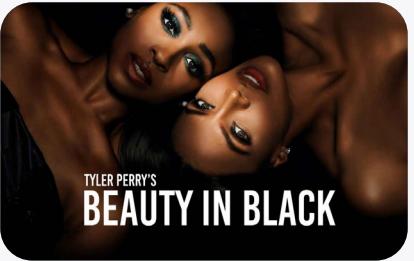
*** Warner/Discovery includes viewing on Discovery+ and HBO Max

Figure 2.5

Highlights from the Nielsen Top 10: Breaking through with Black inclusion



Forever debuted with 456 million minutes of viewing, ranking sixth among original series for its premiere week. Black viewers delivered 67% of viewing minutes during the premiere. From neurodivergence to class and gender, the Mara Brock Akil-led program explored diverse Black identities and experiences.



Tyler Perry's *Beauty In Black* totalled over 1 billion minutes viewed on Netflix following the show's Season two premiere week entering at the top spot of the streaming charts.



The second season's finale of *Severance* put the show into the overall streaming top 10 for the first time and marked a historic Emmy win for Tramell Tillman, the first Black man to win **best supporting actor** in a drama series.



Cross premiered on the top of Nielsen's streaming list with 1.3 Billion minutes viewed in just four days with Black audiences delivering 40% of the engagement.

Source: Nielsen Streaming Content Ratings

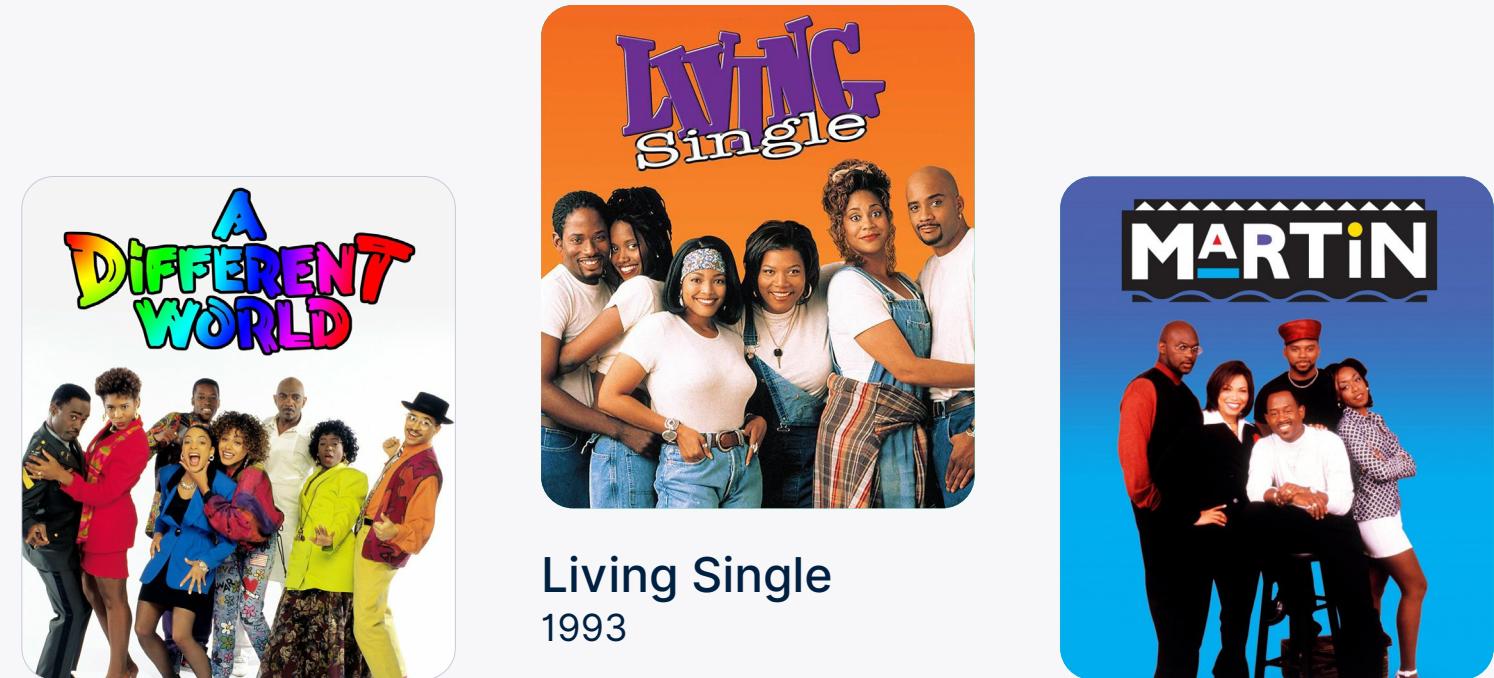


Spotlight: Classics are new to the next generation

Inclusive content isn't just entertainment, it's an expression of Black identities—and one of the best environments for brands to show up for Black consumers. But it's not always about what's new on television. Access to Black culture classics like *Martin*, *A Different World* and *Living Single* are mainstays across targeted network lineups and streaming libraries alike. On streaming, these programs' unique staying power is being driven in part by a new generation of Black viewers under the age of 35.

Figure 2.6

Black viewers under age 35 Audience Share %



Source: Nielsen Streaming Content Ratings, 1H2025, Black P2-34

Streaming access is changing how Black viewers tune in

Recent estimates show the average monthly cost to access streaming is up 22% in one year and traditional TV subscriptions rose nearly 14%.¹⁴ As the cost of content rises, consumer behaviors and **satisfaction** are shifting once again. At 52%, Black viewers are the most likely to prefer streaming services that are free to access and supported by ads vs 47% overall.

¹⁴ The State of Consumer Media Spending 2025: How Much Are Americans Paying to Stay Connected?

Figure 2.7

Preference for easy-access streaming services

"I prefer to use streaming services that are free to access and supported by ads."



Source: Nielsen Attitudes on Representation Study, 2025

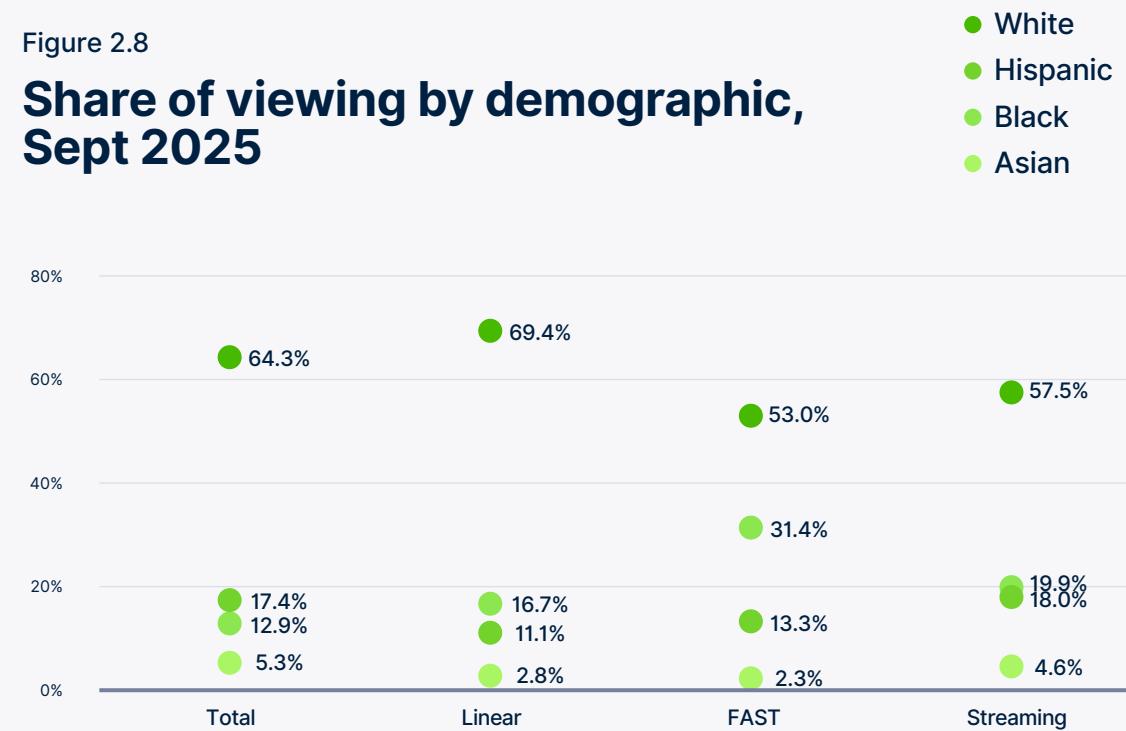
Nielsen's The Gauge™ illustrates this trend further, as Black audiences consistently outpace the average viewer for engagement with **free ad-supported streaming television (FAST)**. In fact, the number of FAST channels increased 21% in 2025.¹⁵ As a standalone category, FAST viewership is 6.8% of all TV viewing. Black audiences drive nearly a third of total FAST engagement despite being just 13% of the TV population.¹⁶

¹⁵ Gracenote State of Play Report, 2025

¹⁶ Nielsen National Television Panel augmented with Streaming Platform Ratings, September 2025, P2+

Figure 2.8

Share of viewing by demographic, Sept 2025



Source: Nielsen Streaming Platform Ratings, September 2025, Average Audience Projections, FAST is the aggregation of viewing from LG Channels, Pluto TV, The Roku Channel, Samsung TV+, Tubi TV, Vizio Watchfree+, and Xumo Play

Black creator and influencer content continues to shift the axis of the media industry

Beyond traditional programming, creator-led content is shaking up how Black audiences and influencers are being approached, like Disney putting Black creator resonance into practice through “The Power of Joy” cohort. And the collaborations don’t stop at brand partnerships. Programmers and creators are increasingly blending the best of both worlds as Black audiences indicate creators’ cross-over appeal in the content they consume. 57% of Black viewers are interested in watching a show or movie adapted from one of their favorite podcasts or YouTube shows compared to 49% overall.¹⁷

Of course, YouTube is a mainstay for influencers, audiences and advertisers. Black Americans average over 16% of total streaming time with the platform via the TV screen, outpacing the 13% average.¹⁸ And this engagement isn’t unique to African Americans. In Brazil, a third of Brazilians of African descent, or Preto viewers said their YouTube usage has increased in the last 6 months—notable since one in four Preto Brazilians already reports spending 10 hours or more a week with the platform. Preto audiences were also 22% more likely to favor influencer content.¹⁹

¹⁷ Nielsen Advanced Audience Attitudes Study, 2025

¹⁸ Nielsen The Gauge™, Sep 2025

¹⁹ Nielsen Brazil Digital Consumer Survey, 2024

²⁰ Nielsen Advanced Audience Attitudes Study, 2025

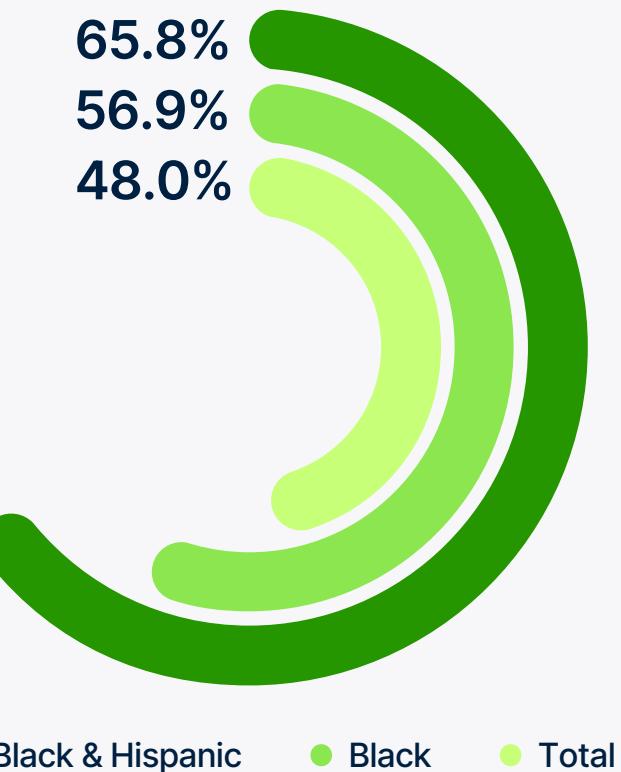
²¹ “Spotify Studios and The Ringer Video Podcasts Are Coming to Netflix,” Spotify, Oct 2025

²² Nielsen Media Impact, January 2025, June 2025

Figure 2.9

Identity shapes creator loyalty for Black audiences

“I make a conscious effort to support media from creators who reflect my identity.” (Strongly/Somewhat Agree)



Source: Nielsen Advanced Audience Attitudes Study, 2025

Back in the U.S., 60% of Black respondents agree they are more likely to watch a show or movie just because one of their favorite content creators is involved versus 53% overall.²⁰ Taking note, platforms like Spotify, iHeartMedia and Netflix are teaming up on video podcasts.²¹ Tubi and Revolt launched a slate of programming featuring creators like **KevOnStage** and **Lynae Venee**. This sentiment is also holding true as creators themselves expand to different platforms. For example, time spent on Substack more than doubled among Black audiences in the first half 2025.²²

Podcast creators are central to these inclusive trends. In the last 5 years, the number of Black adults who listen to a podcast every day has nearly doubled, including a +135% increase in Black heavy listeners who average over eight hours a week.²³

Black American listeners are 32% more likely to listen to podcasts hosted by a radio personality.²⁴ An indicator of radio's massive 92% reach among the Black population, driven by **urban radio's popularity**. Not only do podcasts have the power to sway everyday opinions, Nielsen data shows they're effective platforms to prompt Black consumers to take action—Black listeners are twice as likely to visit a retail location based on a podcast ad.²⁵

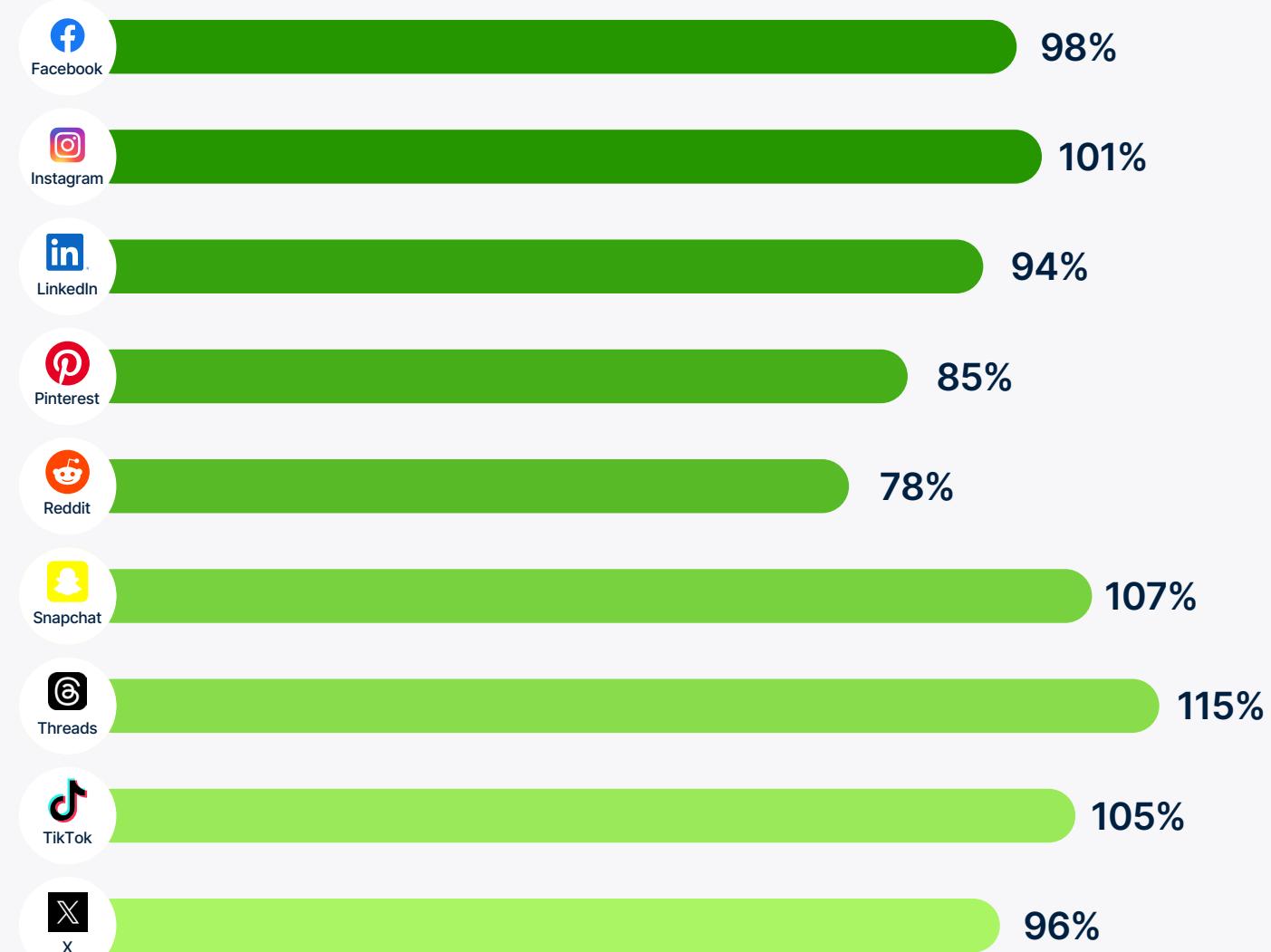
²³ Nielsen Scarborough Podcast Recontact Study 2020, 2025

²⁴ Nielsen Scarborough Podcast Recontact Study 2024 R2

²⁵ Nielsen Scarborough USA+ 2025 R1

Figure 2.10

Black audience engagement across social media | Platform Reach Index



Read as: Black adults are 5% more likely to be reached on TikTok's app, compared to U.S. adults overall.

Source: Nielsen Media Impact, September 2025

Global growth opportunities

And the podcast opportunity with Black consumers is **global**, reaching listeners across "The Continent" and the diaspora.

- Half of Black America's foreign-born population is from Africa, up 5% since 2019.²⁶
- Black listeners in Brazil are 42% more likely to have recently increased their podcast engagement.²⁷
- Kenya is projected to be the fastest-growing internet advertising market globally.²⁸
- 61% of Black dedicated podcast listeners in the U.S. agree they actively seek out content that provides perspectives they feel are being ignored or censored by mainstream media.²⁹

With so much diversity to consider across the Black experience, the right strategy and platform for advertisers may be different than expected. This was underscored by a recent **Nielsen attention outcomes** case study for a financial services provider that revealed, Black audiences weren't hooked as strongly by the brand's creator-led campaign. In this campaign analysis, the brand's message was carried by popular creators in the personal finance and investing sector, including two strong-performing Black creators that drew attention for Black audiences and the overall sample. But, the influencer campaign did not hold Black consumers' attention as strongly compared to different demographics in the analysis. However, once the brand did break through and grab attention, Black audiences showed stronger lift and conversion metrics for nearly every key performance indicator down the funnel.³⁰

Nuance looks different with the right data in play. Black rural consumers were most likely to rank TikTok as their top source of recommendations or advertising used to make a purchase, higher than Black urban and Black suburban respondents.³¹ No matter the approach, brand values matter to Black creators when it comes to consideration of partnerships. More than half of self-identified, Black content creators have actively started or stopped buying from a brand because of its values or actions according to Nielsen.³²

²⁶ American Community Survey 2019, 2024 ²⁷ Nielsen Brazil Digital Consumer Survey, 2024

²⁸ PwC - Africa's E&M shift: Fast, focused and future-ready. Perspectives from the Africa Entertainment and Media Outlook 2025–2029

²⁹ Nielsen Advanced Audience Attitudes Study, 2025

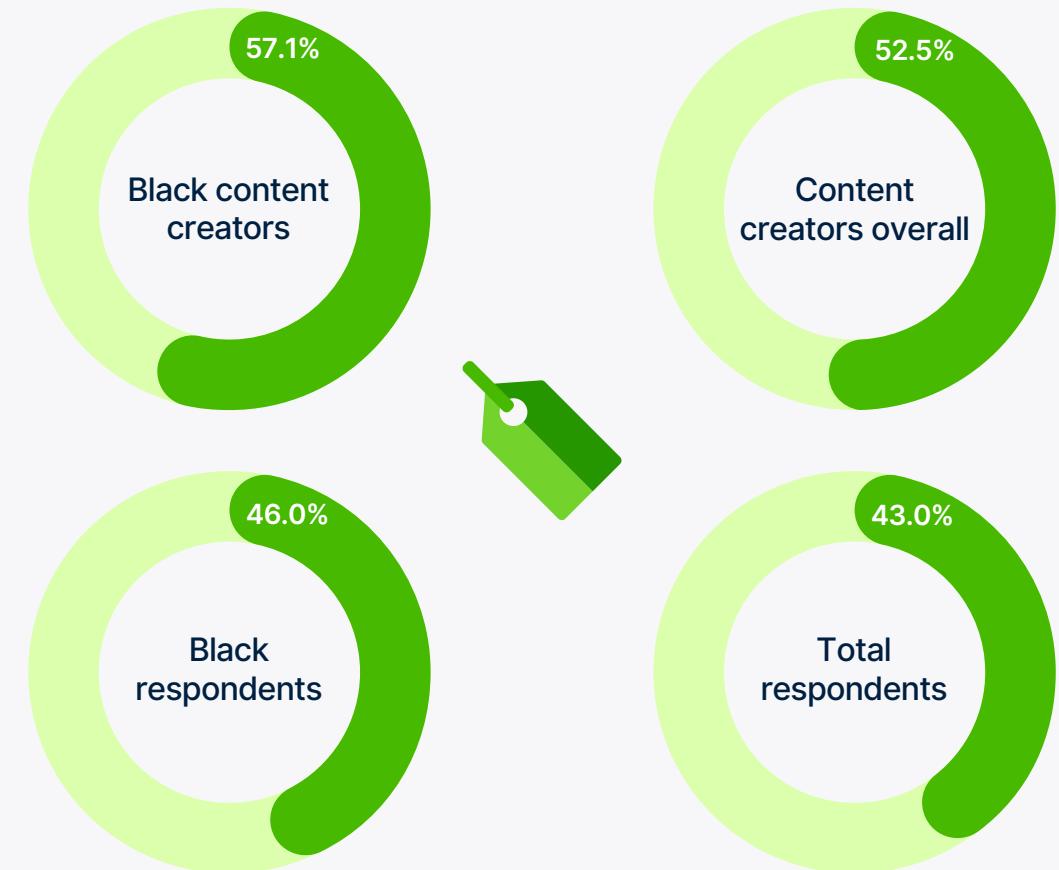
³⁰ Nielsen Attention Metrics Custom Analysis, Financial Services, 2025

³¹ Nielsen Advanced Audience Attitudes Study, 2025

³² Nielsen Advanced Audience Attitudes Study, 2025

Figure 2.11

Recently changed buying behavior because of a brand's values or actions



Source: Nielsen Advanced Audience Attitudes Study, 2025

Black fans are a driving force for sports engagement



Inclusion and representation in sports provide a gateway to passionate fan communities that are central to “appointment TV.” Black women shining in the U.S. Open, history-making quarterbacks in the NFL or cheering on the “MVP” to another championship—**Black culture and talent** are often at the center of sport.

Sports account for an **increasing share of viewership** and Nielsen Scarborough data reveals Black audiences are the most likely to be very interested in five sports or more. However, even among globally-established sports events there is room to grow with Black American audiences—if your data-driven strategy includes an intersectional approach.

For **half of the global population**, interest in women’s sports has taken off. As viewership and sponsorships climb, brands’ approach to new fan opportunities should lean into their values. 67% of Black fans of women’s sports have switched up buying a brand because of its values or actions in the last year compared to 43% of respondents overall. Brands like Sephora are leading by example as the official beauty partner of leagues Unrivaled and AUSL, as well as a founding partner for WNBA’s Golden State Valkyries. And there’s room for more. For example, while the female fanbase of “The W” continues to rise, 59% of the league’s fans today are men—potentially an **untapped opportunity** for savvy sponsors to message to the longtime fanbase of men.

¹ Nielsen Scarborough USA+ 2025 R1

² Nielsen Advanced Audience Attitudes Study, 2025

³ “Sephora Strategies: Inside Sephora’s big bets on women’s sports,” *Glossy*, July 2025

⁴ Nielsen Global Sports Report, 2025



Leveraging interest in global sports events

With the 2026 Winter Olympics, brands have an opportunity to tap into the power of Black fanship. Black audiences are 18% more likely to self-identify as Olympics fans, representing an influential and highly attentive audience. Black Olympics fans are serious about supporting brand sponsors as well. But to benefit, brands need to be intentional and purposeful in how they activate.⁵

- Prioritize watching live - 82% of Black Olympics fans prioritize watching live when it comes to major events, nearly 30 points higher than total respondents who say the same.
- Broadcast TV drives purchase - At 39% Black Olympics fans are more likely to buy based on broadcast TV ads than the overall Black audience or total respondents at 32% and 34% respectively.
- Social media is essential - This segment is engaging beyond the TV as well—23% of Black Olympics fans actively follow events on social media while they watch and two thirds rated social media buzz as an important factor in making content feel like a 'must-watch'.
- Fan-focused partnerships impact purchase likelihood - Black Olympics fans are 67% more likely to buy from established brands that partner with creators, personalities, or organizations connected to their fandom and interest, compared to 52% of overall Black audiences.⁶



Ahead of the FIFA World Cup 26™, [Nielsen Fan Insights](#) show opportunities to both engage and grow Black fanbases.

Figure 3.1

Opportunities with soccer and Black consumers

Responses to "very interested in soccer"



Source: Nielsen Fan Insights, 1H 2025; Nielsen Scarborough USA+ 2-05 R1

⁵ Nielsen Advanced Audience Attitudes Study, 2025

⁶ Nielsen Advanced Audience Attitudes Study, 2025

Sports spotlight: Growing engagement avenues through baseball and softball

Major League Baseball continues celebrating the **Black history and future** of “America’s favorite pastime.” Through initiatives like integrating Negro Leagues record-holders, the Hank Aaron Invitational and more are re-engaging African American communities with the sport. The inclusive efforts are driving results with fan interest as well. One in three Black sports fans are interested in baseball—up 9% in the last two years.⁷

Combined with breakout talent like World Series-winner **Mookie Betts** and Premiere Play of the Year recipient, **Denzel Clarke**, baseball is drawing in audiences of all kinds. Nearly half of audiences agree that representation of different identities in media is important.⁸ For example, Black viewers made up 18% of viewers to the league’s HBCU Swingman Classic with four out of five viewers from different races or ethnicities.⁹

Growing the game means even more ways to engage. The Savannah Bananas used their expansion to revive the Negro Leagues team, **Indianapolis Clowns**—a deft use of their momentum to pay homage to baseball’s roots while building on the **inclusive brand** of “Banana Ball.” And the Women’s Professional Baseball League (WPBL) is making way for even more talent to take the field at the professional level, like first round draft pick, **Mo’ne Davis**.

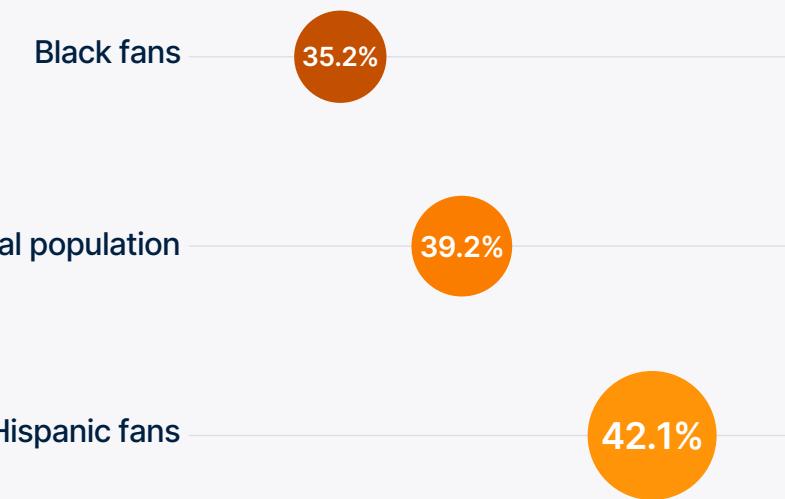
Softball is another sector where attention and representation are growing. Athletes Unlimited’s professional softball league, AUSL, secured a multi-year distribution rights deal with ESPN following significant audience growth.¹⁰ In the talent pipeline, Nielsen measurement revealed the Women’s College World Series broke viewership records in 2025.¹¹ The series featured Texas Tech’s star pitcher NiJaree Canady, **“college softball’s first million dollar player”** and Black viewership to the final game on ESPN increased 48% year over year.¹² Overall, Nielsen Fan Insights show 21% of Black fans are very interested in NCAA Softball compared to 17% of the general population.



Figure 3.2

Growth in interest and audiences for baseball

Responses to “Very interested in baseball”



⁷ Nielsen Fan Insights, 1H 2023, 1H2025 ⁸ Nielsen Advanced Audience Attitudes Study, 2025

⁹ Nielsen Big Data + Panel, Live+Same Day, P2+, 7/1/2025 ¹⁰ “AUSL, ESPN announce multiyear distribution deal,” **MLB**, October 2025

¹¹ “ESPN Delivers Most-Watched NCAA Division I Women’s College World Series on Record,” **ESPN**, June 2025

¹² Nielsen Big Data+Panel, Women’s College World Series, 2024, 2025

Source: Nielsen Fan Insights, Very Interested in baseball, 1H2025

Winning Black audience attention *by engaging multidimensional identities*



Content-driven identities, fandoms and enthusiasts fuel subcultures of their own. Understanding corners of **underserved identity and culture** provide essential context to target and win attention. In fact, 52% of Black audiences agree that when an established brand partners with creators, personalities, or organizations connected to their fandoms and interests, it increases their likelihood to purchase from that brand compared to 45% overall.¹

There is still consumer demand to level up inclusive strategies with 71% of Black audiences feeling misrepresented in media, compared to 50% overall according to Nielsen's recent study. This was a major increase from the 63% of Black audiences who felt misrepresented in 2023.²

When sources miss the mark, Black audiences take their engagement elsewhere. Seven out of 10 Black respondents agreed discovering representative content and a welcoming community were significant reasons they joined a particular fandom compared to 62% overall.³

Legacy, identity and inclusion can be a recipe for success with Black consumers. At 79%, Black LGBTQ+ audiences are the most likely to want more representation of their identity group when they engage with content.⁴ Centering Black queer identity and talent at the 2025 Met Gala helped to meet this unmet demand.

With a theme celebrating the iconic Black Dandy, the event delivered a red carpet steeped in history and style—perfect for the one in four Black respondents that consider themselves Fashion, Style & Beauty Enthusiasts compared to 17% overall. This cohort is also much more likely to watch an event live while actively engaging on social media.⁵ The event's digital coverage included active social media streams driving engagement with creator-correspondents like Blakely Thornton and Scott Evans. Overall, Black audiences made up 24% of viewers to the gala's red carpet coverage on cable, up from an 18% share in 2024.⁶

¹ Nielsen Advanced Audience Attitudes Study, 2025

² Nielsen Attitudes on Representation Study, 2025

³ Nielsen Advanced Audience Attitudes Study, 2025

⁴ Nielsen Attitudes on Representation Study, 2025

⁵ Nielsen Advanced Audience Attitudes Study, 2025

⁶ Nielsen Big Data + Panel, P2+, Sep 2024, Sep 2025

Figure 4.1

Diverse Black identities outpace inclusive content discovery compared to overall fans

"Discovering representative content and a welcoming community were significant reasons I decided to join this fandom."



Source: Nielsen Advanced Audience Attitudes Study, 2025

Figure 4.2

Live engagement across screens

I watch the event live, but I'm also actively following and engaging on social media at the same time.

Black	25.1%
Total	20.5%
Black LGBTQ+	26.6%
Total LGBTQ+	22.6%
Black fashion, style & beauty enthusiasts	31.5%
Total fashion, style & beauty enthusiasts	28.2%

Source: Nielsen Advanced Audience Attitudes Study, 2025

Where to find Black fans and growth segments

Gamers

27% of Black respondents identified as gamers in Nielsen's Advanced Audience Attitudes Study. Gaming culture continues to drive an ecosystem of live engagement and the influence of content creators is uniquely powerful among Black gamers. While 62% of all gamers are more likely to watch a show due to a favorite creator's involvement, that number jumps to 70% for Black gamers, both of which significantly outpace the general population at 53%.⁷

Whether it's Kai Cenat's Streamer University or RDCWorld's DreamCon, streamers are an essential piece of gaming and the broader attention economy, especially for younger audiences. **Nielsen Streaming Platform Ratings** reveal Twitch is often on the TV screen and young Black men are nearly five times more likely to report recently using the platform compared to adults overall.⁸

And the intersectionality of this segment is powerful. Companies like Cxmmunity Media have been nurturing the crossover between Black gaming and anime fans for years, and larger brands are partnering to access the valuable fandoms they've cultivated.⁹

- 66% of Black anime fans also identified as gamers
- 71% of Black gamers prioritize the need for a fandom to reflect personal identity; higher than both Black audiences overall and total gamers at 63% and 68%.¹⁰

Figure 4.3

Recent Twitch users

Index vs Adults 18+



Source: Nielsen Scarborough USA+, Video streaming services used in last 7 days



Anime fans

43% of Black Gen Z respondents identified as anime fans compared to 39% overall. Of note, 8% of Black audiences identified anime as their primary fan identity, making them 52% more likely to prioritize this identity than audiences overall.

At 68%, brand partnerships with fandom-specific creators, personalities, and organizations drive a higher purchase likelihood among Black anime fans than they do for all anime fans (61%), the general Black audience (52%), or the total audience (45%). And for 75% of Black anime fans, discovering representative content and a welcoming community were significant reasons for joining their primary fandom.

⁷ Nielsen Advanced Audience Attitudes Study, 2025 ⁸ Nielsen Scarborough USA+ 2025 R1 ⁹ "Live Nation Urban Makes Six-Figure Investment in Black Entertainment and Events Company Cxmmunity Media," **Variety**, September 2025 ¹⁰ Nielsen Advanced Audience Attitudes Study, 2025

Foodies

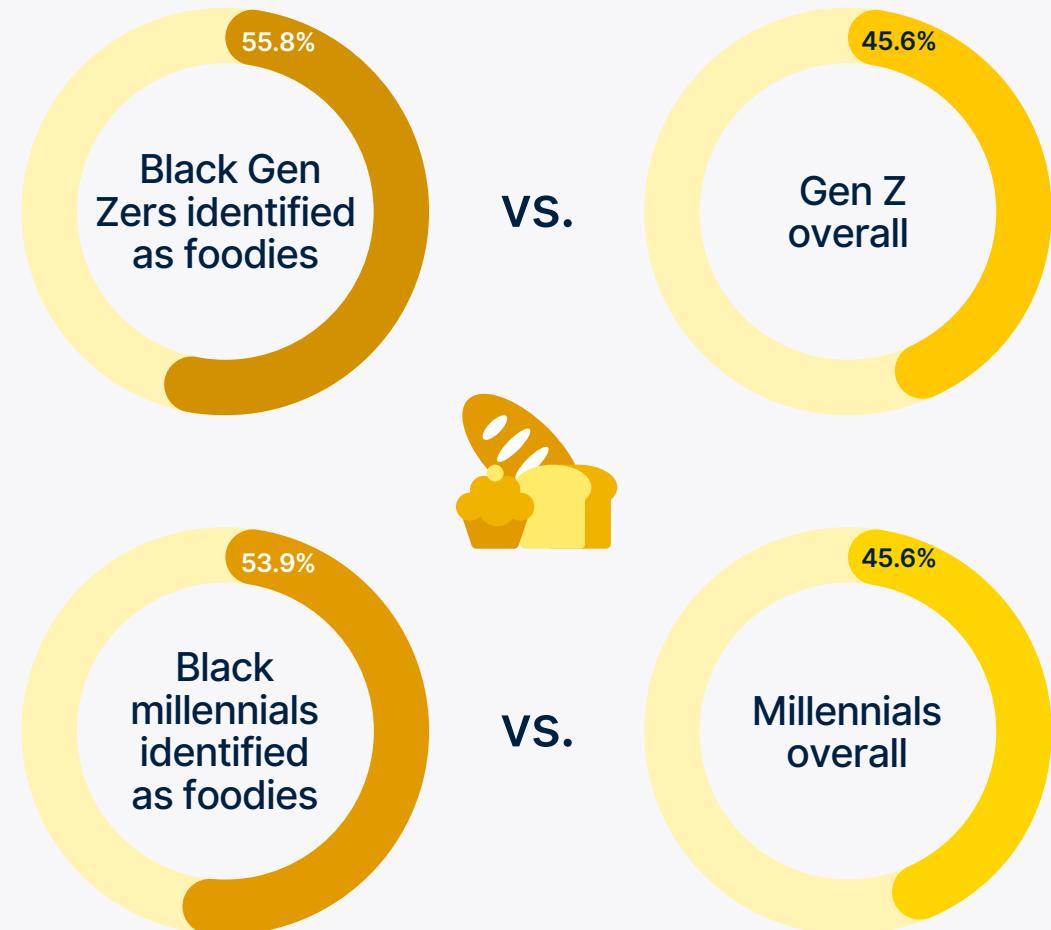
Overall, Black consumers are 52% more likely to use grocery and restaurant delivery services compared to adults overall.¹² These convenience habits may be feeding the Foodie identity with young Black consumers.

But this segment is also searching for inclusive content along with their next great bite.

- 63% make an effort to support media from creators who reflect their identity.
- 57% say social media buzz is important in making a show 'must-watch,' significantly higher than the total audience at 43%.
- The identity factors that motivate Black foodies to engage with new content are Age/Lifestage at 67% agreed and Race/Ethnicity at 59%.¹³



Figure 4.4
Young, Black foodies



Source: Nielsen Advanced Audience Attitudes Study, 2025

¹¹ Nielsen Advanced Audience Attitudes Study, 2025

¹² Nielsen Scarborough USA+ 2025 R1

¹³ Nielsen Advanced Audience Attitudes Study, 2025

Travel enthusiasts

60% of Black travel enthusiasts consume must-watch content live as it airs or within 24 hours, compared to 46% of the general population. 24% of Black respondents identified as Travel Enthusiasts but that number jumps to 27% when you zoom in on Black Gen Xers.¹⁴ The Roku Channel catered to this experience with Tracee Ellis Ross starring in its *Solo Traveling* series last July.¹⁵

That same month, Roku had the largest overall monthly usage increase among streaming platforms with a 7.5% lift compared to June. Black audiences were 65% more likely to view Roku than viewers overall during the same month.¹⁶ 70% of Black travel enthusiasts also identified as foodies in Nielsen's recent study.¹⁷



Reality TV fans

Last year, *Love Island USA* ranked among the **most streamed programs of 1H 2025**, despite not debuting its latest season until June. The program landed in the top five most streamed originals for Black audiences last year after delivering a 17% share of viewing during premiere week.¹⁸

Since the show wrapped its stars have been seen at events and promotions across social media. 63% of Black Reality TV fans are more likely to purchase from a brand partnering with creators or personalities connected to their fandoms compared to 57% of Reality TV fans overall, or 45% of total respondents.¹⁹

Booklovers

The desire for media to feature broad representation—including people of different races, ethnicities, abilities and more—is a high priority for 74% of Black booklovers, significantly outpacing the 54% of total booklovers who share this view. This sentiment may be a driving factor for the 41% of Black avid readers who enjoy the fantasy genre.

In addition to representation, a brand's stance on social issues is a major purchase driver for 62% of Black booklovers compared to 49% respondents overall. They prove it with their wallets: 53% of Black booklovers have actively changed their purchasing habits based on a brand's values in the last year, much higher than the total audience at 43%. Importantly, 54% expect the retailers they buy from to support causes they care about versus 44% of booklovers overall.²⁰



¹⁴ Nielsen Advanced Audience Attitudes Study, 2025

¹⁵ "Roku's big break: Tracee Ellis Ross on why 'Solo Traveling' became a hit—and what that reveals about humanity," *Fast Company*, September 2025

¹⁶ Nielsen The Gauge™, July 2025 ¹⁷ Nielsen Advanced Audience Attitudes Study, 2025

¹⁸ Nielsen Streaming Content Ratings, 1H2025, Jan-Oct 2025 ¹⁹ Nielsen Advanced Audience Attitudes Study, 2025

²⁰ Nielsen Advanced Audience Attitudes Study, 2025

Key takeaways



Brands respecting cultural nuance isn't just good marketing, it's driving bottom line impact

Teams and solutions that can uncover not only where audiences are en masse today, but the foresight of where their focus is headed next - and why - can help content developers and brands meet the evolving expectations of Black audiences.



Representation must be deeply informed and multidimensional to be considered authentic to Black audiences

No matter the platform or messenger, Black consumers are prioritizing their dollars and their attention where they feel seen, heard and valued. Not just valued for their consumption, but for their influence, loyalty and culture.



Black audiences are signaling their demand for more thoughtful representation

While artificial intelligence may be taking the advertising industry by storm, many consumers still expect a more humanizing approach. An important reminder that brand messages are filtered through the acute realities facing Black America, where issues from news deserts to food deserts fundamentally shape consumer context. But informed, inclusive strategies can turn disproportionate obstacles into openings for real impact that can transform Black communities and drive long-term brand value.



Move beyond superficial engagement toward informed, nuanced strategies and the payoff is profound

When brands deliver great stories and powerful messaging, they create an emotional experience that Black audiences embrace, share, and passionately carry forward, cementing not just a transaction, but a lasting cultural connection that drives deep, enduring loyalty.

How Nielsen can help

Real people. Real data.

Nielsen [audience measurement](#) provides accurate, real-time insights into who's watching, listening, and engaging with content across platforms.

Go beyond age and gender to and reach audiences that matter most to you. Seamlessly plan and measure campaigns based on [Nielsen Advanced Audiences](#).

Understand your consumers—what they think, how they spend their time, shopping patterns and more—with [Nielsen Scarborough](#).

Consumer attention is fragmented across multiple platforms and making informed advertising decisions is more critical—and complex—than ever. Gain deep insights into the competitive media advertising landscape and discover how to differentiate your brand from competitors with [Nielsen Ad Intel](#).



Methodology

Nielsen Big Data + Panel

In National methodology, Nielsen Big Data + Panel brings together our panel methodology with 45 million big data households and 75 million devices from Comcast, Dish, DIRECTV, Roku and Vizio, combined with and validated by our gold-standard National TV Panel.

Nielsen National TV Panel

Television data is derived from Nielsen's National TV Panel that is based on a sample of more than 42,000 homes and over 100,000 real people that are selected based on area probability sampling.

Nielsen Ad Intel

Nielsen Attention Measurement captures and analyzes both attention patterns and mental engagement while exposed to media content via facial coding and other analysis. By understanding exactly what captures and holds audience attention and comprehension, clients can refine their content, identify impactful influencers, and tailor content to align seamlessly with specific media platforms and target audiences, boosting brand perceptions.

Nielsen Fan Insights

Nielsen Fan Insights provides a comprehensive view into sports fans' interests, media behavior, brand attitudes and purchasing habits—all in a single platform.

Nielsen Media Impact

For national planning, Nielsen Media Impact uses respondent level data from Nielsen's Total Media Fusion, which includes TV, VOD, SVOD, digital, digital-place based, print, radio and cinema. The digital video data in NMI is sourced from Nielsen's Digital Content Ratings (DCR) data set. This analysis includes video content on web/app through a computer via the Digital (DCR) panel and measures video reach on a mobile device on content with a syndicated DCR/tag.

Nielsen Brazil Digital Consumer Survey

The Digital Consumer Survey is a Nielsen study of Brazilian internet users designed to understand their habits and consumption preferences for both online and offline media and platforms. The survey collected 1,000 interviews from individuals on a nationwide online panel.

Nielsen Scarborough USA +

Nielsen Scarborough measures the unique shopping patterns, product usage, demographics, lifestyles and cross-media behaviors of the American consumer at a local, regional or national level, giving the ability to profile over 2,000 measured categories and brands.

Nielsen Scarborough Podcast Recontact Study

Nielsen Scarborough's recontact methodology follows up with individuals identified as podcast listeners in the main Nielsen Scarborough service, gathering in-depth data on their behaviors and attitudes.

Nielsen Advanced Audience Attitudes Study, 2025

The Nielsen Advanced Audience Attitudes Study from 2025 is a survey of over 9,000 computer and mobile users fielded by Nielsen Participant Panel weighted for age, gender, and ethnicity.

Nielsen Attitudes on Representation Study, 2025

The Nielsen Attitudes on Representation Study from 2025 is a survey of over 7,000 computer and mobile users fielded by Nielsen Participant Panel weighted for age, gender, race, and ethnicity.

Nielsen Streaming Platform Ratings

Nielsen Streaming Content Ratings offers a macro view of how consumers engage with streaming platforms. The service allows an understanding of the content that is streamed, the amount of time consumers are viewing, the device used to stream (smart TVs, connected devices, video game consoles), and the streaming source.

Nielsen Streaming Content Ratings

Streaming Content Ratings provides measurement of programs and episodes viewed through the top streaming platforms. The service allows for a comprehensive view of audience profiles based on program and episode viewership for linear and CTV devices.

Gracenote Inclusion Analytics

Designed to accelerate diversity and equity in media, Gracenote Inclusion Analytics illuminates representation of on-screen talent compared with audience diversity. The solution empowers content owners, distributors and brands to make better informed decisions around inclusive content investments.

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About Nielsen

Nielsen shapes the world's media and content as a global leader in audience measurement, data and analytics. Through our understanding of people and their behaviors across all channels and platforms, we empower our clients with independent and actionable intelligence so they can connect and engage with their audiences—now and into the future.

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