

English articles

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*This page will be updated on **Mondays**. The first article is aimed at a B1 and upwards level and the second article is aimed at a B2 and upwards level*

Articles of the week



Why Choosing Something To Watch Feels So Difficult



By Michael Dinich | Wealth of Geeks undefined

Too much of a good thing? Streaming service subscribers report that content overload and hidden fees are leading to frustration and subscription fatigue.

In fact, the new survey of 2,000 American streaming service subscribers revealed that the average

person spends 110 hours per year scrolling through streaming services, struggling to find something worth watching — a stark reminder of the “too much content, too little time” dilemma.

Commissioned by UserTesting and conducted by Talker Research, the study revealed one in five believe it's harder to find something to watch today than it was 10 years ago. According to them, the underlying cause comes from being overwhelmed by too much content.

Many struggled with having larger content libraries (41%) and feeling like there's too much original content being produced (26%).

Watch Recommendations: A Double-Edged Sword

And although 75% appreciate streaming service algorithms serving them accurate recommendations, 51% admitted the quantity of recommended content is also overwhelming, explaining they want to watch everything recommended to them.

Nearly half (48%) do not have traditional cable anymore. And those that choose streaming platforms do so because they like the variety (43%), the shows they want to watch are not on cable (34%), and they find streaming more convenient for on-the-go viewing (29%).

However, people are generally dissatisfied with the current streaming services available. In fact, 51% would rather have more streaming service options — even if those options included ads.

When asked what their “dream” streaming platform would look like, top features included premium channels and networks for no added cost (40%) and an easy-to-navigate interface (39%).

Further, 52% said a platform's user interface plays a massive or significant role in their decision to subscribe.

The average person said all of the above should be available for no more than \$46 per month — although 11% admitted they'd willingly pay over \$100 per month for the service.

“The streaming landscape has evolved from solving the problem of content access to creating a new challenge of content discovery,” said Bobby Meixner, Senior Director of Industry Solutions at UserTesting. “Our research shows that despite advanced recommendation algorithms, viewers are spending nearly five full days each year just trying to decide what to watch—time that could be spent actually enjoying content.”

The study also found a number of frustrations streaming subscribers have experienced.

A substantial 79% expressed frustration with streaming services requiring additional subscription fees for select content.

When encountering those added fees, the majority (59%) are unlikely to pay and would instead look for content on a different platform they subscribe to (73%), give up and watch something else (77%) or consider canceling their subscription altogether (37%). Nearly one in five (19%) would sign up for a free trial of a platform to find a show they want to watch.

Respondents also showed disdain for platforms pulling shows without notice, which directly impacts loyalty.

Over the past year, 69% have opened a streaming service at least once to find the show they were looking for is no longer there.

Forty-four percent said they would likely end their subscription to a streaming service and subscribe to a new one just to continue watching a favorite show, and 56% would cancel that subscription as soon as they finish watching said show.

Challenges in Cancellation

But when canceling, nearly a quarter (23%) have experienced difficulties, claiming it's hard for them to find the cancellation option on the platform's website (39%) or that the cancellation process was overly-complicated with multiple steps (36%).

“We're seeing a fundamental shift in how streaming platforms need to approach user experience,” continued Bobby Meixner. “With 52% of subscribers saying interface design significantly impacts their subscription decisions, and 79% frustrated by hidden fees, streaming services must balance content abundance with accessibility and transparency to maintain subscriber loyalty.”

Survey Methodology:

Talker Research surveyed 2,000 American adults who subscribe to at least one streaming service; the survey was commissioned by UserTesting and administered and conducted online by Talker Research between Nov. 2 and Nov. 7, 2024.

Poland wants the EU focused on security. Its border with Belarus highlights the challenges



By LORNE COOK Associated Press

POLOWCE, Poland (AP) — Poland's six-month presidency of the European Union is firmly focused on security. As Europe's biggest land war in decades rages, fewer places highlight the challenges and contradictions of defending the bloc and its values more starkly than the border with Belarus.

Some 13,000 border guards and soldiers protect around 400 kilometers (250 miles) of border. It's become a buffer zone since Belarus' ally, Russia, invaded neighboring Ukraine three years ago. Similar fortifications farther north line Poland's frontier with the Russian region of Kaliningrad.

Poland is Ukraine's top logistical backer. Most of the Western-supplied arms, ammunition and equipment helping to keep Ukraine's armed forces afloat transit through. Russia, meanwhile, uses Belarus as a staging ground for its invasion.

At the border near the town of Połowce, a 5.5-meter (18-foot) steel barrier strung with razor wire and topped by security cameras separates once-friendly communities that war has turned into wary rivals. Drones, helicopters and armored vehicles keep watch.

The border crossing is closed. Around 40 border guards and troops could be seen on Jan. 16, when the Polish EU presidency invited 60 reporters from international media to witness the security effort.

The road was strewn with layers of concrete obstacles and concertina wire likely to dissuade an advancing army. Border guards peered into Belarus.

It's needed, the government in Warsaw says, because Russia and Belarus are waging a particular kind of hybrid warfare: helping groups of migrants — mostly from Africa or the Middle East — to break through the border to provoke and destabilize Poland and the rest of Europe.

“We have tightened our visa policy, and above all we have decided to suspend the right to asylum wherever we are dealing with mass border crossings organized by Belarus and Russia,” Prime Minister Donald Tusk told reporters on Friday.

When migrants are equated with danger

Almost 30,000 attempted border crossings were spotted last year. Most are young men, often from Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia. Polish authorities say they arrive in Belarus on tourist or student visas and are helped across for a fee ranging from \$8,000 to \$12,000.

Poland says they're assisted by the Belarus security services and other “organizers.” They're mostly Ukrainians, perhaps fallen on hard times since fleeing the war. They can earn \$500 for each person they help, border officials say.

Border guards claim to be routinely attacked. One guard was killed last year and several injured.

They say that migrants shoot slingshots, throw small explosives or rocks, or use pepper spray on guards. More than 400 incidents were recorded last year in this section of the border, with 307 people hospitalized.

The deputy commander of the Podlaski border guard division, Col. Andrzej Stasiulewicz, said the migrants are hard to discourage. “Warning shots don't work, so force is needed,” he said. Reporters were shown video and photos purported to show migrants assailing the border.

Stasiulewicz said their actions are “very unpredictable, and very precise and coordinated.”

Medical aid group Doctors Without Borders paints a different picture. The charity says it's treated more than 400 people since November 2022, “many of them stranded for weeks in uninhabitable forests and exposed to violent practices at the border.”

People suffered from exhaustion, hypothermia, dehydration and mental health issues. Last year, it noted “a sharp increase in people carrying the scars of physical assaults, including bruises and dog bites.”

It's almost impossible to independently verify such reports. The area is off limits. NGOs and media must apply for a permit to enter. EU and international agencies that work with migrants are not invited either, although migrants are provided with their contact details should they want to complain.

“Turnbacks” not “pushbacks,” Poland insists

Stasiulewicz said those who force their way in “are sent back to Belarus, which is in line with our legal framework.”

The Norwegian Refugee Council, a migrant aid charity, has another take. It said that nearly 9,000 “violent pushbacks ” have been reported by NGOs in what it describes as “Europe’s death zone” since 2021.

Pushbacks – depriving someone who may be in fear for their safety of their right to apply for asylum – are illegal under international law.

Polish Undersecretary of State Maciej Duszczczyk rejects the pushback allegations. He prefers “turnbacks.” The rationale is that migrants are obliged to apply for asylum in good faith at open border points, not force their way in.

The nearest place they can do that is in Terespol, about 100 kilometers (60 miles) south of Połowce.

Halting asylum in the name of security

As far as the Polish authorities are concerned, their methods are working. The number of people arriving in Połowce has dropped significantly. Around 670 people applied for asylum there last year, and none to mid-January. The Office for Foreigners was empty when reporters visited.

To keep numbers down, the government intends to suspend asylum applications in times of crisis.

A draft law winding its way through parliament would see the border shut for 60 days if Warsaw suspects that migrants are being “weaponized” — should they approach the border in large groups, try to intimidate Polish officers or damage border infrastructure.

“If anyone uses violence against the border guards, we close the border,” Duszczczyk said.

Doctors Without Borders says this could have “dramatic consequences.” It’s urged Poland “to drastically change course of action” and do all it can to protect migrants and refugees.

But EU leaders signed off on Poland’s actions at a summit last month. Countries on Europe’s eastern flank received a greenlight to suspend the right to protection when they believe that Belarus and Russia are “ weaponizing” migrants.

When security and migration get political

Ultimately, security and migration policies are highly politicized. Tusk has been in power for more than a year but his party’s candidate in a presidential election in May faces a strong challenge from a nationalist opponent.

The EU shifted further right in June after elections to the European Parliament, with nationalists and populists shaking Europe’s foundations, particularly in major powers France and Germany. Tusk believes that tough migration policy can win back voters.

“If we do not want to hand over these matters to radicals, extremists, populists, we must find the right answers so that no one in the world doubts that democratic states are able to effectively defend themselves against illegal migration,” he said on Friday.

He described the “tough protection” of borders as a “sacred duty.” Poland’s borders also make up the 27-nation EU’s external frontier. For Tusk, his country’s security is Europe’s security. It’s a similar

argument made by Hungary's staunchly nationalist prime minister, Viktor Orbán.

Associated Press writers Monika Scislowska and Vanessa Gera in Warsaw contributed to this report.

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