



Families Need Not Subscribe

An Analysis of the Scarcity of Family Content on Streaming Platforms



*Because Our Children
Are Watching*

October 2023

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The shift to digital on-demand programming should have opened-up vast opportunities for entertainment companies -- no longer constrained by timeslot, preemptions, carriage disputes, or scheduling challenges – to offer abundant original programming for every audience segment. And although streamers were quick to deliver niche content (true crime documentaries on Peacock; Star Trek spin-offs on Paramount+), every major streaming platform has substantially failed to deliver content for families – the one audience segment that would most guarantee their success.

Surveys indicate families want to watch TV together, yet less than 20% report watching TV with children under the age of 18. Could it be because legacy media has failed to offer suitable and abundant family programming? That is the question the PTC sought to answer with this analysis.

The PTC set out to evaluate which streaming services offer the best opportunities for family viewing. The PTC analyzed the most popular SVOD services (Apple TV+, Hulu, Max, Netflix, Paramount+, Peacock and Prime Video) to quantify the availability of family-appropriate original content (programs rated TV-G or TV-PG).

We found that across the major streaming services, there are 541 MA-rated original series; but only 87 TV-PG-rated, and even fewer, 60 TV-G-rated. There's at least 268% more adult-only entertainment on streaming platforms than there is content that's suitable for families.

Additional Findings:

- **Prime Video is the worst for family programming. Less than 3% of original content is rated TV-G or TV-PG** (Amazon has an additional "All" age rating, which was applied to one program. Combined, there were only six Prime Video originals rated "All," TV-G, or TV-PG).
- **AppleTV+ is the best for family programming and offers the largest number of TV-G-rated original programs.** Twenty-six out of 139 programs were rated for general audiences, or 19%. Only 6% were rated PG. Half (50%) of all original content on AppleTV+ is rated TV-MA.
- **Peacock comes in just behind AppleTV+ for offering the highest percentage of family-suitable content. 20% of original content on Peacock is rated PG and 8% is rated TV-G.** Thirty-seven percent of original series on Peacock are rated TV-MA.
- **On Hulu, 69% of original programs were rated TV-MA. Only 6% were rated TV-PG and only 1 was rated TV-G, meaning that for every 1 family-suitable program on Hulu, there are more than ten that are for adult audiences only.**
- **On MAX, 62% of original programs are rated TV-MA. Only 14% are rated TV-PG, and 1% are rated TV-G.** Seven out of 20 of the PG-rated original programs on MAX were reality competitions.

- **62% of Netflix originals are rated TV-MA, 6% are TV-PG, and less than 1% are rated TV-G, meaning again that adult-only programs outnumber family-suitable programs 10:1.**
- **On Paramount+, 53% of original series are rated TV-MA; 9% are rated TV-PG; and 1% are rated TV-G.**

Programming for families isn't just a smart move; it's a strategic imperative for streaming services. It helps them tap into a broader market, build brand loyalty, and align with societal values while ensuring a sustainable and profitable future in the ever-competitive streaming industry.

Unless or until streaming services start doing more to program for families; families are encouraged to seek out niche, family-oriented streaming services rather than giving their money to legacy media companies that have repeatedly demonstrated their disinterest in programming for families.

We also renew our call for Congress to update the Family Movie Act of 2005 to include streaming media platforms. In 2005, the home entertainment platform of choice was the DVD player. Against the wishes of Hollywood, a bipartisan Congress passed the Family Movie Act authorizing technology providers to engineer and bring to market DVD players that could be set to “skip past” explicit content contained in mainstream motion pictures. Families were given a tool to protect their children from age-inappropriate content; and the major studios reaped a financial windfall by selling films to a family marketplace that would not otherwise purchase their products. Unfortunately, a Hollywood-friendly 9th Circuit Court ruled that the 2005 Act does not apply to streaming video programming. Congress must update the measure to provide parents greater control over the explicit content that might reach their children on streaming media, just as it did nearly 16 years ago for explicit content on DVDs.

In addition, we call on the Federal Communications Commission to revisit and renew the promises Congress made to parents when it passed the Child Safe Viewing Act. Much in the entertainment media world has changed since Congress passed that law in 2008, and in fact most of the major streaming media platforms did not even exist. The FCC, which was instructed to review and recommend blocking technologies and parental controls, must revisit both the spirit and the letter of the Child Safe Viewing Act.

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INTRODUCTION

The entertainment industry is undergoing a once-in-a-lifetime upheaval, leaving legacy media giants scrambling to chart a path forward in a world where the landscape changes daily.

According to Nielsen Media Research, broadcast and cable TV viewing accounted for less than half of all U.S. viewing time this past July for the first time since Nielsen started tracking.¹ For most consumers, there are tremendous benefits to switching from traditional broadcast or cable to streaming. Aside from the lower entry cost (In 2020, the average household cable package was \$217.42 per month. A basic Netflix subscription costs less than half that for the entire year.), streaming video offers tremendous flexibility and seemingly endless options.

While it is evident that streaming media is the future, it is also increasingly apparent that the legacy media doesn't have a clear roadmap for success with this new medium.

HBO rebranded and relaunched its streaming platform in the early summer of 2023 and in the same quarter, lost 1.8 million subscribers.²

Disney, to take another example, launched its Disney+ streaming service in 2019—welcome news to families. Now, just four years later, the company is facing a lawsuit from investors, alleging that they were misled about the true costs of operating Disney+. The Walt Disney Company reported its streaming operation lost \$512 million in the most-recent quarter, bringing total streaming losses since 2019 to more than \$11 billion. Once the breakout star among streaming services, Disney+ has lost 146.1 million subscribers.³

These losses, however, were not inevitable.

In its early days, Disney+ was called a “clear favorite” in the streaming wars, poised to outperform its competitors, exceeding analysts’ revenue forecasts and racking up 73 million global subscribers in the first 12 months after its launch.⁴ Disney’s fortunes changed shortly after the streamer started adding R and MA-rated titles to its platform, breaking the promise the company made early-on to keep adult content off the platform.⁵

¹ [Television Accounts for Less Than Half of U.S. Viewing Time for the First Time - WSJ](#)

² [Max Subscribers Fall at Warner Bros Discovery - Variety](#)

³ [For Disney, Streaming Losses and TV's Decline Are a One-Two Punch - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#)

⁴ [Disney revenues stay high, but company lost \\$700 million this summer - The Washington Post](#)

⁵ “But unlike Netflix, Disney+ limits how far its programming will go to attract older viewers. To keep it family friendly, the service will not have any R-rated movies or TV shows designated TV-MA for mature audiences. Programming considered too adult for Disney+ may stream on Hulu, which Disney also owns. That will include FX series such as ‘American Horror Story’ and ‘ Fargo’ and possibly movies starring Deadpool, a Marvel character known for foul-mouthed humor, when rights become available.

The shift to digital on-demand programming should have opened-up vast opportunities for entertainment companies -- no longer constrained by timeslot, preemptions, carriage disputes, or scheduling challenges – to offer abundant original programming for every audience segment. And although streamers were quick to deliver niche content (true crime documentaries on Peacock; Star Trek spin-offs on Paramount+), every major streaming platform has substantially failed to deliver content for families – the one audience segment that would most guarantee their success.⁶

Families represent a more stable subscriber base than millennials or Gen Z, who are more likely to “churn” their streaming services (Picking up and dropping services, then picking them up again later).⁷

Moreover, surveys indicate families want to watch TV together. According to one survey, 62% of respondents said that watching TV together as a family helped them bond,⁸ yet less than 20% report watching TV with children under the age of 18.⁹ Not spending time together as a family can have devastating consequences for children who are still reeling from the COVID lockdowns. Studies show that not spending enough time with family can lead to a weakened family bond, communication issues, and trouble with spouses. It can also lead to childhood aggression and increased levels of anger in teens.¹⁰

The lack of family-appropriate viewing options leads to more fragmented media consumption within the home which feeds into feelings of isolation and loneliness for children at a time when children are already dealing with unprecedented mental health struggles.

METHODOLOGY

This is the PTC’s third analysis of popular Streaming on Demand Video Services (SVOD). The first, [Over-the-Top or a Race to the Bottom: A Parent’s Guide to Streaming Video](#), released in 2018 evaluated the effectiveness of the parental controls on both popular streaming services and OTT streaming devices and found that at the time of the study’s release, there was no consistency in the application or visibility of aged-based content ratings across the top SVOD services, and that the parental and that many of those services either lacked the ability to create a separate profile for child users or lacked adequate parental controls to limit the possibility of a child being exposed to adult content.

The second, [Dollars and Sense](#), compared the different streaming services to determine which provided the best value for families from an economic standpoint. The report showed that although families can realize (sometimes significant) cost-savings by switching to streaming services, there are associated

“There are boundaries to what we’ll put on Disney+,” Mayer said. “‘Deadpool’ is definitely not for Disney+.”

[In streaming wars, Disney reaches beyond kids and families | Reuters](#)

⁶Subscription services see a higher churn rate among Millennials and Gen Z. [Gen Z and Millennials Drive Higher Churn Rates for Streamers \(adweek.com\)](#)

⁷ [Why HBO, Netflix and Amazon want your kids \(thestar.com\)](#)

⁸ [Families are Watching More TV Than Ever - and it's Bringing Them Together | CenturyLinkQuote](#)

⁹ [Television, capturing America's attention at prime time and beyond : Beyond the Numbers: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics \(bls.gov\)](#)

¹⁰ [Eight Negative Effects of Not Spending Time with Family \(theconfidencemag.com\)](#)

risks. Streaming content can be far more explicit than what most families are used to from broadcast and cable. And given the push from media conglomerates to rebundle content, these cost savings may not last long, leaving many families worse-off financially than they were before.

With this latest analysis, the PTC set out to evaluate which streaming services offer the best opportunities for family viewing. The PTC analyzed the most popular SVOD services (Apple TV+, Hulu, Max, Netflix, Paramount+, Peacock and Prime Video) to quantify the availability of family-appropriate original content (programs rated TV-G or TV-PG).

We did not, for this report, attempt to assess the accuracy of the ratings, only how frequently programs with less restrictive (but not specifically for young children) age ratings appeared. The more targeted and niche streaming services (including Disney+) were not included in this analysis. Because the menu of available programming on these services is constantly in flux, and because of the enormous volume of content available, we chose to narrow our focus to exclusive and original content to assess how much child- and family-appropriate programming is made available; and because Netflix has such a vast library of original content, this analysis focuses only on content offered by Netflix in 2023, to-date. For all other services, which came later to streaming original content and therefore have a much smaller library, we included all available original programming.

Ratings information was not always available, especially on documentary or foreign-language programs. Programs where no ratings information was available were excluded from this analysis.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Across the major streaming services, there are 541 MA-rated original series; but only 87 TV-PG-rated, and even fewer, 60 TV-G-rated. There's at least 268% more adult-only entertainment on streaming platforms than there is content that's suitable for families.**
- **Prime Video is the worst for family programming. Less than 3% of original content is rated TV-G or TV-PG** (Amazon has an additional "All" age rating, which was applied to one program. Combined, there were only six Prime Video originals rated "All," TV-G, or TV-PG). Prime Video does not consistently follow industry standards for age-based ratings, so rather than using the typical categories of TV-14 and TV-MA, Prime Video occasionally uses designations of 13+, 16+ and 18+. Going by these age ratings, fully 72% of Amazon's original content is unsuitable for children under the age of 16, with an additional 13% suitable for Mature audiences only.
- **AppleTV+ is the best for family programming and offers the largest number of TV-G-rated original programs.** Twenty-six out of 139 programs were rated for general audiences, or 19%. Many of these, however, were one-time specials, including five one-time "Snoopy Presents" specials of 38 minutes each. Only 6% were rated PG, and all of the PG programming on AppleTV+ falls in the category of documentary or reality. Half (50%) of all original content on AppleTV+ is rated TV-MA.
- **Peacock comes in just behind AppleTV+ for offering the highest percentage of family-suitable content. 20% of original content on Peacock is rated PG and 8% is rated TV-G.** However, this apparently large volume of PG-content is mostly because of sports documentaries (largely tied to NBC-Universal's exclusive Olympics broadcast rights) and reality shows. Only five of those

titles were actual scripted comedies or dramas. Thirty-seven percent of original series on Peacock are rated TV-MA.

- **On Hulu, 69% of original programs were rated TV-MA. Only 6% were rated TV-PG and only 1 was rated TV-G, meaning that for every 1 family-suitable program on Hulu, there are more than ten that are for adult audiences only.**
- **On MAX, 62% of original programs are rated TV-MA. Only 14% are rated TV-PG, and 1% are rated TV-G. Seven out of 20 of the PG-rated original programs on MAX were reality competitions.**
- **62% of Netflix originals are rated TV-MA, 6% are TV-PG, and less than 1% are rated TV-G, meaning again that adult-only programs outnumber family-suitable programs 10:1. Five out of the nine PG-rated programs on Netflix were reality or documentary programs.**
- **On Paramount+, 53% of original series are rated TV-MA; 9% are rated TV-PG; and 1% are rated TV-G. Only three of the nine PG-rated programs on Paramount+ are scripted entertainment, and one of the nine is a reality dating program.**

When you compare the ratings distribution on streaming platforms against the distribution of broadcast TV when it was still the dominant medium, another pattern begins to emerge, and that is the tendency of content creators to move toward ever-more graphic content, pushing up against the boundaries of what is normative and acceptable for the medium.

For purposes of comparison, the PTC conducted an analysis comparing broadcast TV content from the 2007-2008 television season and content from the 2017-2018 season. During the 2007-08 television season, PG-rated content slightly outnumbered TV-14 content on the broadcast networks (110 episodes of TV-PG content versus 101 episodes of TV-14 content during the May 2008 sweeps).

By the 2017-18 season, those numbers had flipped. There were 114 episodes of TV-PG rated content during the May 2018 sweeps and 142 episodes of TV-14 content. Today on streaming media, content skews aggressively in favor of MA-rated content over G, PG, and even TV-14.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We know that viewing patterns are different for Gen. Z – those born roughly between 1995 and 2015 -- than for the generations that preceded it. For those 35 and older, 43% of screen time is spent watching TV. For viewers aged 13-24, online videos (21%), social media (15%), and gaming (22%) dominate their screen time; only 17% of screen time is spent watching TV.¹¹

Given these generational shifts in media consumption, it is fair to ask why it matters that there is so little family programming available on streaming platforms. If children and teens would rather spend their time elsewhere, why bother to program for them? But whether streamers aren't programming for the family because families have stopped watching, or whether younger viewers have given up on watching TV because there isn't much content available for them to watch; increasingly fragmented families and

¹¹ [Will Gen-Z viewing habits change to embrace TV content? nScreenMedia](#)

mental health concerns in youth should argue in favor of producing content that would encourage families to spend time together and to watch together as a family.

And there are several reasons why it is in the streaming industry's best interest to program for families, rather than solely catering to adults.

Wider Audience Reach: Family-oriented content broadens a streaming service's audience reach. Programming for families ensures that everyone in the household can find something to enjoy. This inclusivity can lead to a larger subscriber base and increased user engagement.

Customer Retention: Families are more likely to remain loyal subscribers because they often value a diverse content library that can entertain every member of the household. By providing content suitable for all ages, streaming platforms can reduce subscriber churn and maintain a stable customer base, and subscriber data and analytics bears this out

Longer Viewing Hours: Family programming encourages more extended viewing hours. Families tend to watch together, and when streaming services offer content that caters to family preferences, they promote a shared viewing experience. This not only increases the time spent on the platform but also enhances the platform's social aspect.

Brand Reputation and Trust: Being known for family-friendly content can enhance a streaming service's brand reputation and trustworthiness. Parents are more likely to choose platforms they perceive as safe and suitable for their children, and positive word-of-mouth from satisfied families can lead to more subscribers.

Advertiser Appeal: Advertisers often seek family-friendly platforms for advertising their products and services. Streaming services that program for families can attract more advertising revenue, further bolstering their financial viability, especially at a time when more streaming services are offering ad-supported tiers to bolster their revenues.

Programming for families isn't just a smart move; it's a strategic imperative for streaming services. It helps them tap into a broader market, build brand loyalty, and align with societal values while ensuring a sustainable and profitable future in the ever-competitive streaming industry.

But the example of Disney+ shows that programming decisions made by legacy media don't always align with consumer demand or even their own best interests.

There are ample examples of TV-MA-rated content across all of the services noted here that could easily be edited to bring the content in line with a PG rating. "Ted Lasso" was a feel-good breakout hit during the COVID lockdowns, and was rated TV-MA. The series could easily have become a family viewing experience, but for the frequent F-words. "The Crown" on Netflix could likewise have broadened its appeal with a few edits – but as it is, many parents will wait until the children go to bed before watching.

Unless or until streaming services start doing more to program for families; families are encouraged to seek out niche, family-oriented streaming services rather than giving their money to legacy media companies that have repeatedly demonstrated their disinterest in programming for families.

We also renew our call for Congress to update the Family Movie Act of 2005 to include streaming media platforms. In 2005, the home entertainment platform of choice was the DVD player. Against the wishes

of Hollywood, a bipartisan Congress passed the Family Movie Act authorizing technology providers to engineer and bring to market DVD players that could be set to “skip past” explicit content contained in mainstream motion pictures. Families were given a tool to protect their children from age-inappropriate content; and the major studios reaped a financial windfall by selling films to a family marketplace that would not otherwise purchase their products. Unfortunately, a Hollywood-friendly 9th Circuit Court ruled that the 2005 Act does not apply to streaming video programming. Congress must update the measure to provide parents greater control over the explicit content that might reach their children on streaming media, just as it did nearly 16 years ago for explicit content on DVDs.

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DATA AND TABLES

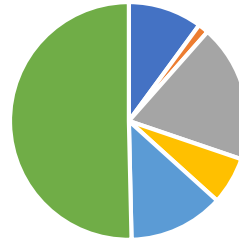
What the Ratings Mean

Rating	Target Audience <i>(From tvguidelines.org)</i>
TV Y	All Children: This program is designed to be appropriate for all children. Whether animated or live action, the themes and elements in this program are specifically designed for a very young audience, including children from ages 2-6. This program is not expected to frighten younger children.
TV Y7	Directed to Older Children: This program is designed for children age 7 and above. It may be more appropriate for children who have acquired the developmental skills needed to distinguish between make-believe and reality. Themes and elements in this program may include mild fantasy or comedic violence, or may frighten children under the age of 7. Therefore, parents may wish to consider the suitability of this program for their very young children.
TV Y7 FV	Directed to Older Children: Fantasy Violence: For those programs where fantasy violence may be more intense or more combative than other programs in the TV-Y7 category, such programs will be designated TV-Y7-FV.
TV G	General Audience: Most parents would find this program appropriate for all ages. Although this rating does not signify a program designed specifically for children, most parents may let younger children watch this program unattended. It contains little or no violence, no strong language and little or no sexual dialogue or situations.
TV PG	Parental Guidance Suggested: This program contains material that parents may find unsuitable for younger children. Many parents may want to watch it with their younger children. The theme itself may call for parental guidance and/or the program contains one or more of the following: moderate violence (V), some sexual situations (S), infrequent coarse language (L), or some suggestive dialogue (D).
TV 14	Parents Strongly Cautioned: This program contains some material that parents would find unsuitable for children under 14 years of age. Parents are strongly urged to exercise greater care in monitoring this program and are cautioned against letting children under the age of 14 watch unattended. This program contains one or more of the following: intense violence (V), intense sexual situations (S), strong coarse language (L), or intensely suggestive dialogue (D).
TV MA	Mature Audience Only: This program is specifically designed to be viewed by adults and therefore may be unsuitable for children under 17. This program contains one or more of the following: graphic violence (V), explicit sexual activity (S), or crude indecent language (L).

APPLE TV+

TV-Y	14	10%
TV-Y7	2	1%
TV-G	26	19%
TV-PG	9	6%
TV-14	18	13%
TV-MA	70	50%

Apple TV+

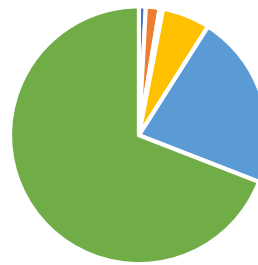


■ TV-Y ■ TV-Y7 ■ TV-G ■ TV-PG ■ TV-14 ■ TV-MA

HULU

TV-Y	2	1%
TV-Y7	4	2%
TV-G	1	1%
TV-PG	14	6%
TV-14	51	22%
TV-MA	161	69%

Hulu

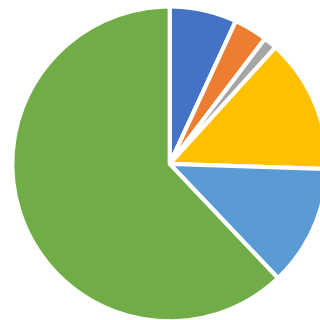


■ TV-Y ■ TV-Y7 ■ TV-G ■ TV-PG ■ TV-14 ■ TV-MA

MAX

TV-Y	10	7%
TV-Y7	5	3%
TV-G	2	1%
TV-PG	20	14%
TV-14	18	12%
TV-MA	90	62%

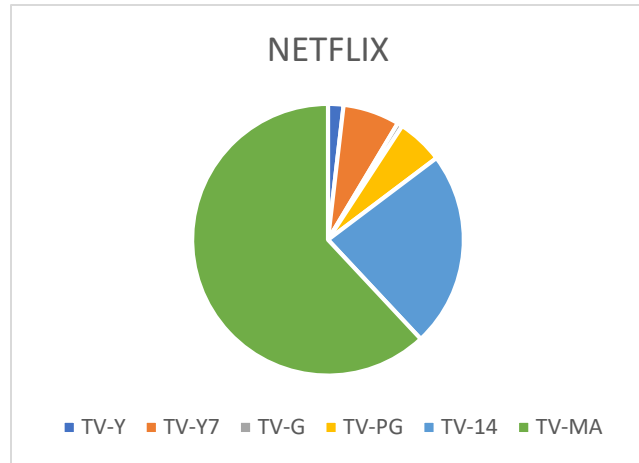
MAX



■ TV-Y ■ TV-Y7 ■ TV-G ■ TV-PG ■ TV-14 ■ TV-MA

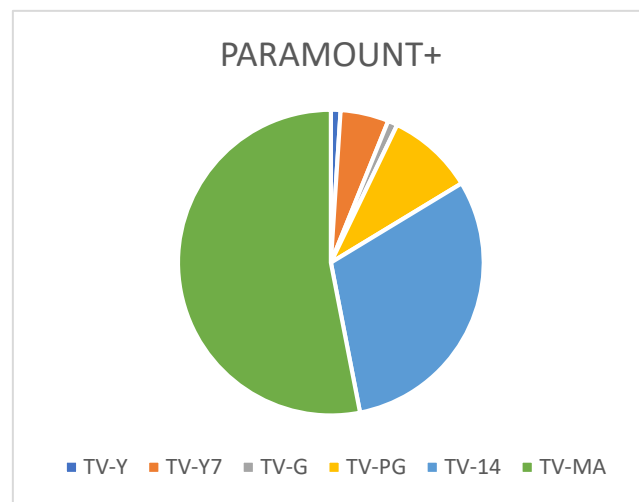
NETFLIX

TV-Y	3	2%
TV-Y7	11	7%
TV-G	1	1%
TV-PG	9	6%
TV-14	38	23%
TV-MA	101	62%



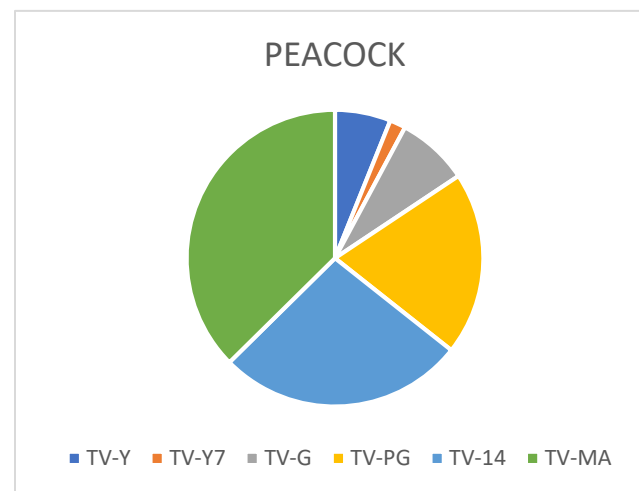
PARAMOUNT+

TV-Y	1	1%
TV-Y7	5	5%
TV-G	1	1%
TV-PG	9	9%
TV-14	30	30%
TV-MA	52	53%



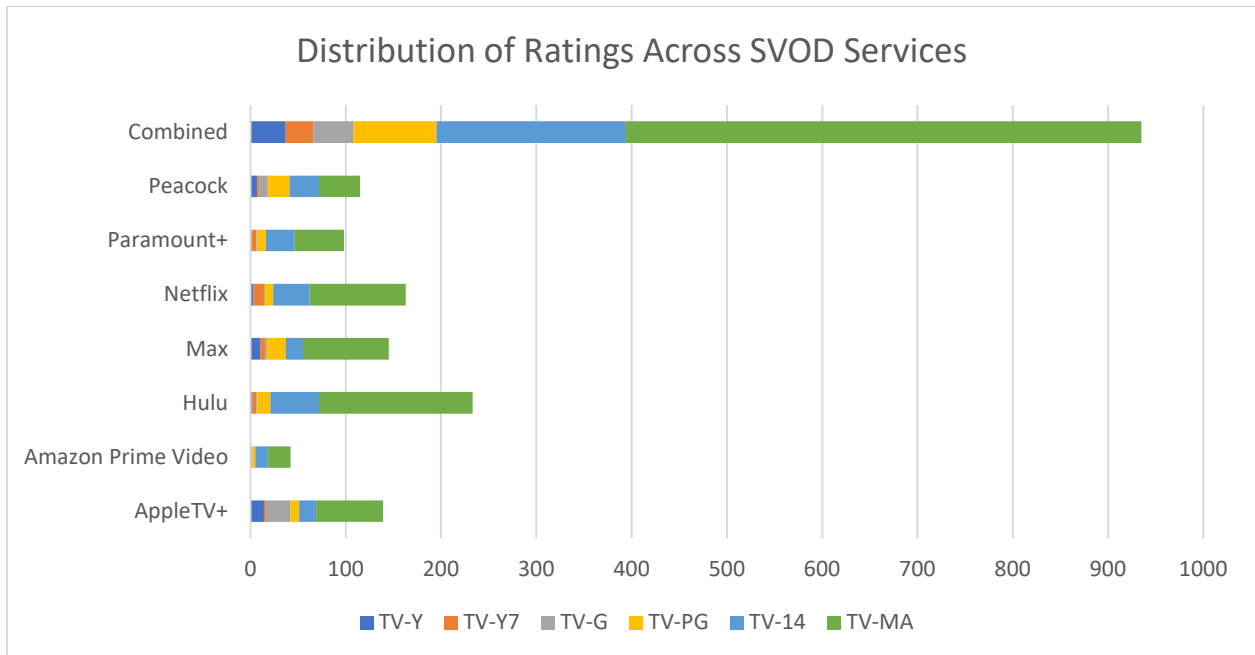
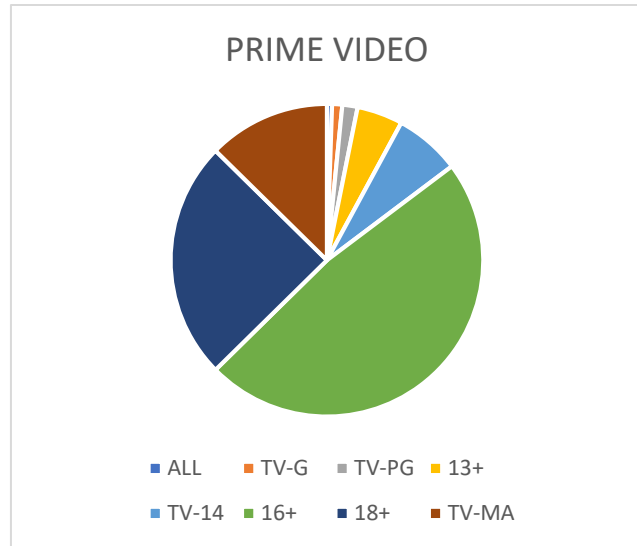
PEACOCK

TV-Y	7	6%
TV-Y7	2	2%
TV-G	9	8%
TV-PG	23	20%
TV-14	31	27%
TV-MA	43	37%

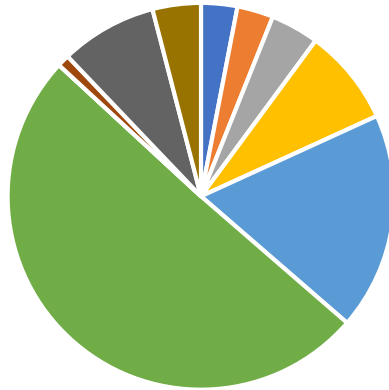


AMAZON PRIME VIDEO

ALL	1	1%
TV-G	2	1%
TV-PG	3	1%
13+	9	5%
TV-14	13	7%
16+	91	48%
18+	47	25%
TV-MA	24	13%



Content By Age Rating Across SVOD Services



■ TV-Y ■ TV-Y7 ■ TV-G ■ TV-PG ■ TV-14 ■ TV-MA ■ ALL ■ 13+ ■ 16+ ■ 18+