

# Tracking our Great Escape— Media Consumption

An Ipsos Point of View



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The impact of stressors also plays into the mix—whether these have personal and far-reaching impact such as to people’s worldview or future outlook.

One in three Americans are feeling highly stressed. Considering 2020 has had a global pandemic, lockdown, racial justice protests, deadly wildfires, job loss and economic hardship, all happening in a politically charged climate, stress seems like a given. Findings from a recent wave of the Ipsos TV Dailies longitudinal media tracker reveals only 12% claim not to be stressed. COVID concerns are responsible for causing Americans the most stress.

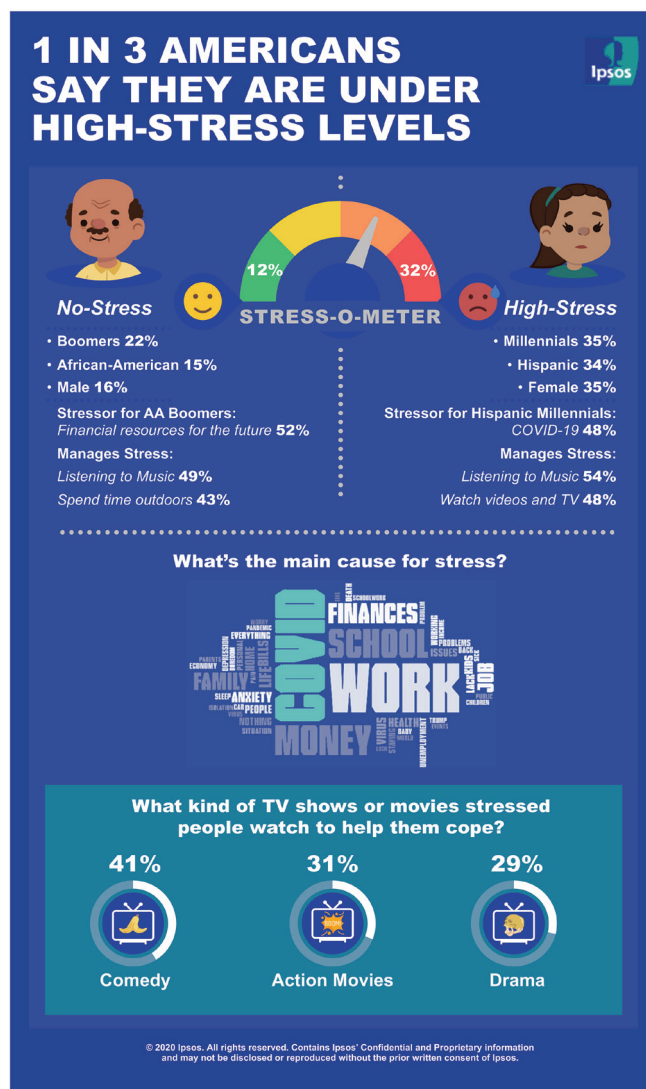
How are we finding peace in such stressful times? Media. Which means media companies are well-positioned to provide for a critical relief valve that people will deeply appreciate. Here’s how:

For most, media functions primarily as an escape from the current reality, with viewers looking to be entertained. This escapism takes the form of TV shows, movies, music and games. However, our stress management is not just limited to what we are taking in, but also with what we are keeping out. Ipsos TV Dailies reveals Americans are limiting their exposure to television news or social media news posts.

Stress levels and how individuals are coping vary from audience to audience.

## Stress Reduction

When finding themselves in a recent stressful situation, 57% said they coped by listening to music. It outperformed the second most popular stress relieving tactic (48%)—watching more videos online or streaming TV. What’s interesting to note is that four of the top five ways people look to help manage their stress are media-related, with using social media and playing video games rounding out the list.



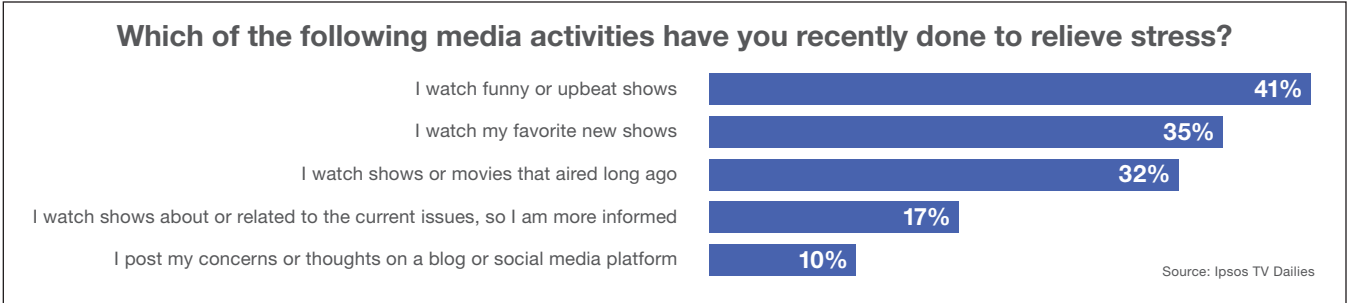
## Which of the following have you recently done to manage stressful situations?



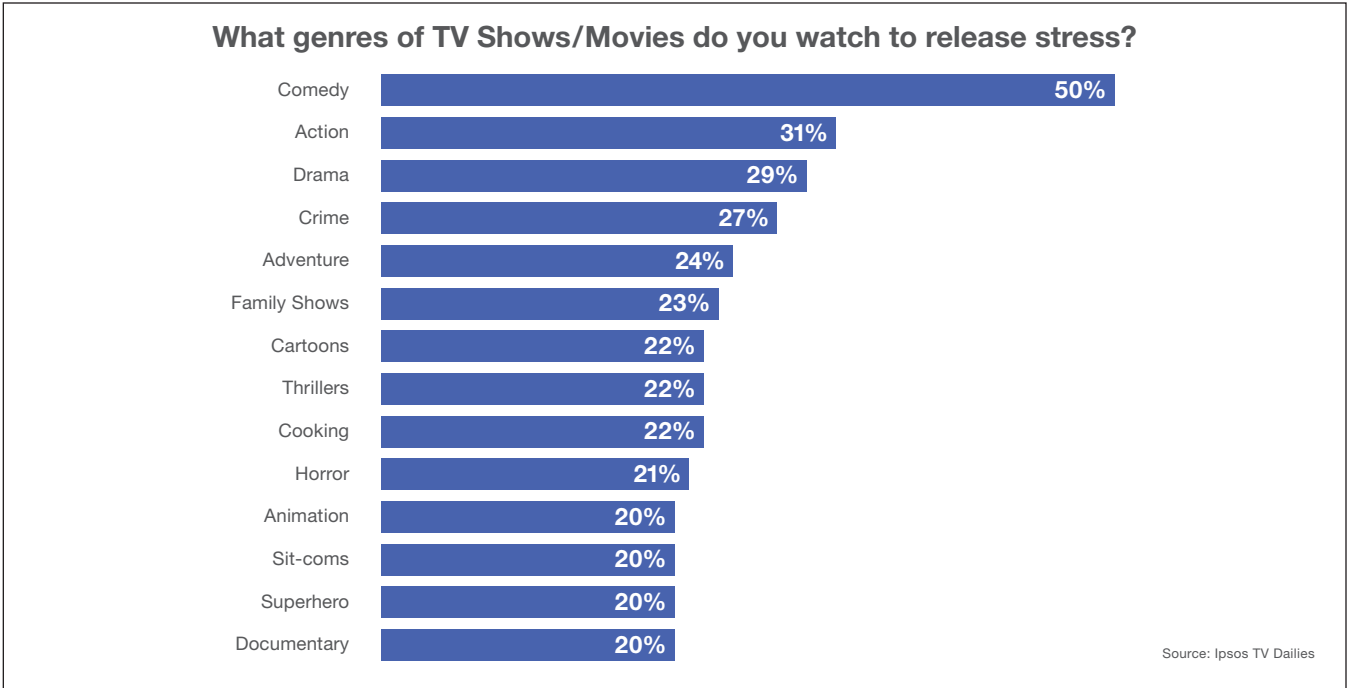
Source: Ipsos TV Dailies



Yet, people are not just watching anything that comes on. They are undertaking a targeted search. To feel better, viewers approach media in two ways. The first is increasing “stress reducers.” This happens by watching funny, upbeat, or nostalgic movies/shows. The second way can be found in minimizing “stress inducers.” We find that manifests in news programs and social media posts. Notably, only a small percentage of viewers (17%) chose to reduce stress by watching shows about or related to current issues. An even a smaller percentage (10%) chose to engage with others by posting their concerns on a blog or social media platform.



As stress reducers, the desire for funny and upbeat entertainment programs dominates, with comedy being, by far the most popular stress relieving genre at 50%, followed by action, drama, crime. Adventure and family shows tied for fifth. A second tier continues with the escapist theme with cartoons, thrillers, cooking, horror, animation sit-coms and superhero genres, all hovering around 20%. Documentaries also came in at 20%.



Stress Induction

Since the list of what we watch to relieve stress in our lives heavily leans on comedy, action and drama genres, we can infer what is a stress inducer by noting what viewers are turning away from. Stress inducers are media options which increase exposure to current events or increase conflict about those events with others. Ipsos TV Dailies finds only 11% watch news as a source of stress relief.

## Creating the Great Escape

Overall, what is clear is that when most people are feeling stressed, they are turning to a source that will never turn them away—media. In fact, only 5% would avoid watching TV as a strategy to reduce stress. The key to being a go-to stress reliever is in the ‘entertaining’ component of the content. The role of the media then is even more significant during times of crisis. It is a way to navigate their context—their stress, their worldview, and personal outlook. By understanding how and why viewers are consuming media, platforms can be developed with these needs in mind. Producing compelling and entertaining content will not only increase brand relevance, it will allow you to create their path to escape.

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GAME CHANGERS

