YouTube

Getting Started

Build your channel from the ground up with these best practices and get inspired by the ways fellow Civics Partners are engaging with the platform.

YouTube is the primary, global destination for public online video

2B

LOGGED IN-VIEWERS
VISIT YOUTUBE EVERY MONTH.

1B

HOURS OF YOUTUBE'S
INCREDIBLE CONTENT ARE
WATCHED EVERY SINGLE DAY!

100+
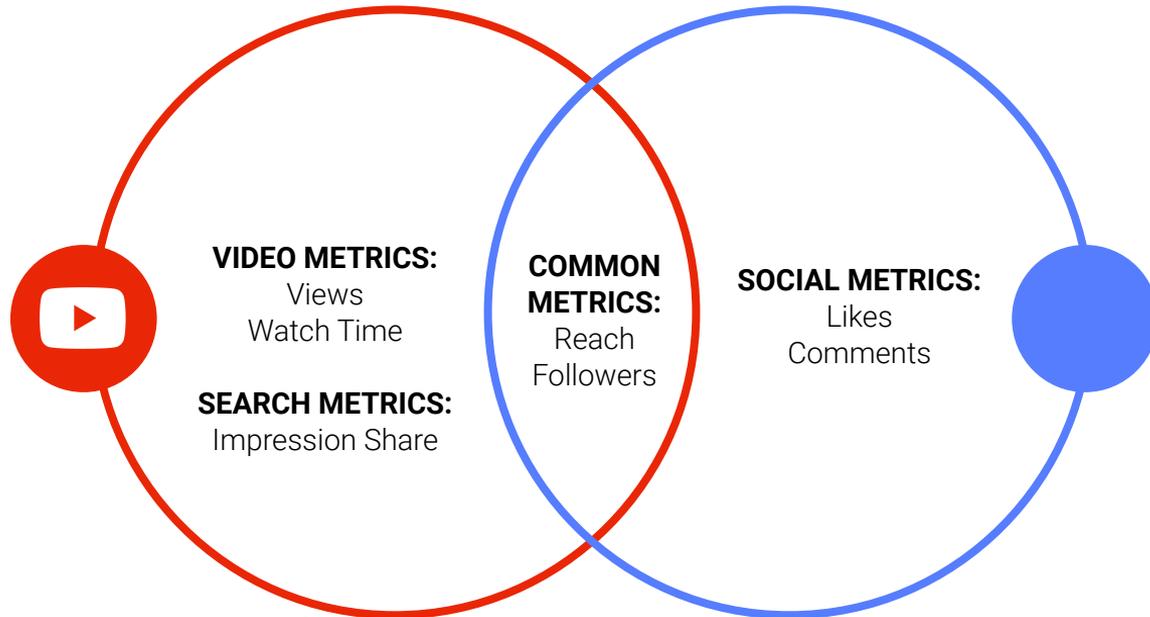
LOCALIZED VERSIONS OF
YOUTUBE ARE NOW LIVE
IN MORE THAN 100 COUNTRIES
ACROSS 80 LANGUAGES.

60+

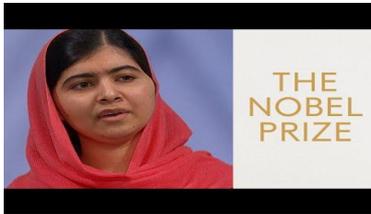MINUTES OF AVERAGE
WATCHTIME ON MOBILE APP
DEVICES EACH DAY.

YouTube is a video and search platform that focuses on different metrics than social

VIDEO METRICS:
Views
Watch Time

SEARCH METRICS:
Impression Share

COMMON METRICS:
Reach
Followers

SOCIAL METRICS:
Likes
Comments

Why do users come to **YouTube**?

To be inspired

Personality led-content that inspires

Malala Yousafzai: Nobel Peace Prize Lecture 2014

152,159 views • Jan 9, 2020

Nobel Prize ✓
200K subscribers

To have access

Content that enables viewers to connect with personality

Siembra de árboles en Palacio Nacional

141,593 views • Premiered Apr 29, 2020

Andrés Manuel López Obrador ✓
1.92M subscribers

To learn

Content that educates the viewer and answers their questions
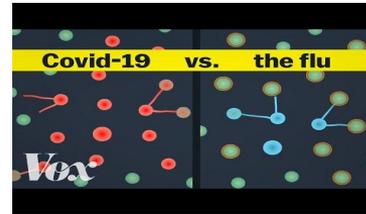
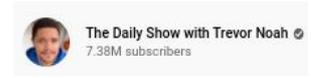Coronavirus is not the flu. It's worse.

7,468,842 views • Apr 1, 2020

Vox ✓
8.08M subscribers

To be entertained

Fun content that is made for YouTube

#DailyShow #TrevorNoah #DulceSloan
Why Should You Fill Out the 2020 Census? | The Daily Social Distancing Show

16,383 views • May 12, 2020

The Daily Show with Trevor Noah ✓
7.38M subscribers

Table of contents

Please note that these best practices are tips to guide based on observations we have gathered from what has worked on the platform, but they are not a guarantee for success.

First Steps

Find your "Why"

Think about your mission on YouTube.

Is it to generate support for a cause, keep constituents informed about current government affairs, or build an online community to spur your next election? To help find your "why," consider:

- Who is your "ideal viewer"? (e.g. age, demographic, political identity)
- What do you want your audience to get from your content? (e.g. general knowledge, entertainment, understanding of current events)
- What value can you or your organization uniquely offer?
- For inspiration, check out this channel trailer that breaks down the "why?" in compelling fashion

U.S. Department of State: Leading our Nation's Foreign Policy

Think about branding

A channel banner can highlight your credentials, preview your content's style and tone, share your social links, and inform viewers of when you'll be posting content.

1

A channel avatar is a signature image or logo that represents your channel and will be visible when leaving comments, community posts, or live chats (among other things).

2

Your channel trailer is a short video displayed on your channel page to unsubscribed viewers. You can use this to give a sense of the style, flow, and feel of the content they will see on your channel.

3

Playlist shelves organize your content, giving viewers a direct source to playlists featuring content organized by theme or format.

4
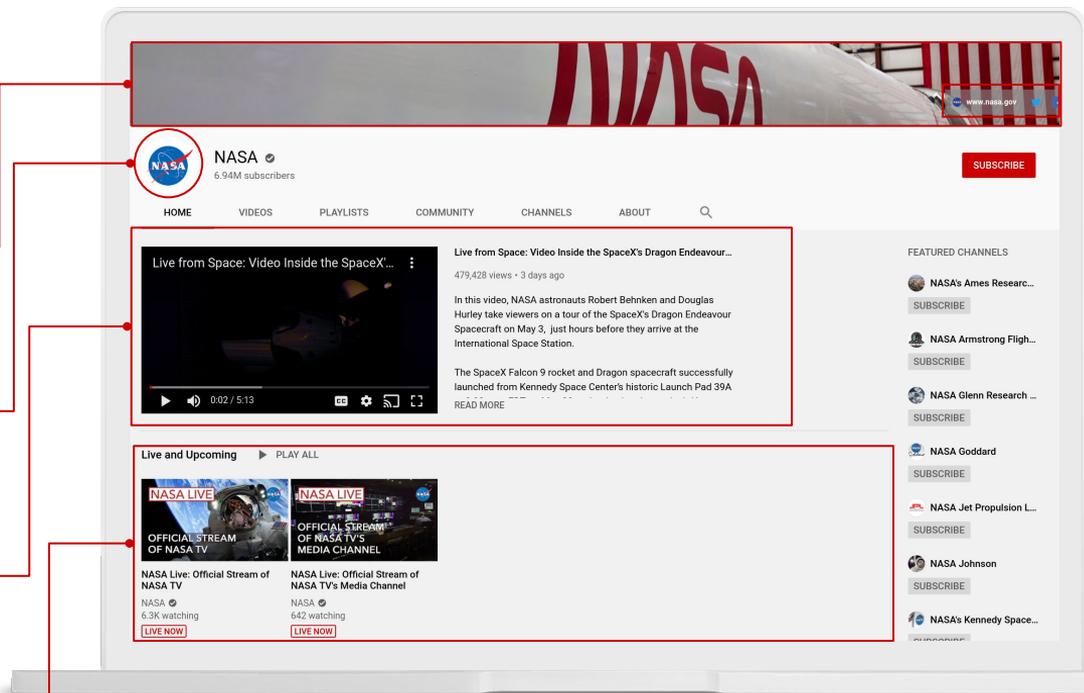
Learn the **format(s)**

Especially early in your YouTube journey, consider leaning into existing formats that online audiences already know. Below are a few of the popular formats that may suit your organization's YouTube mission.
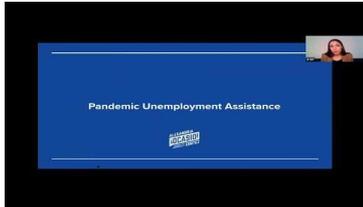

WEEKLY COVERAGE

BEHIND THE SCENES

INTERVIEWS

EXPLAINERS

Q&A

LISTICLES

COLLABORATIONS


LIVE STREAMS

Content Planning

Be consistent

You want to set expectations for your audience, so it's crucial that you reliably express them.

Stick to a consistent release schedule and communicate content breaks in advance.

- Consistency doesn't equal volume. It's far less important that you post frequently than it is that you post on a reliable schedule.

- Keep your content manageable. High production videos are great, but can be very difficult to sustain. Find a balance between content quantity and quality that you can maintain over the long term.
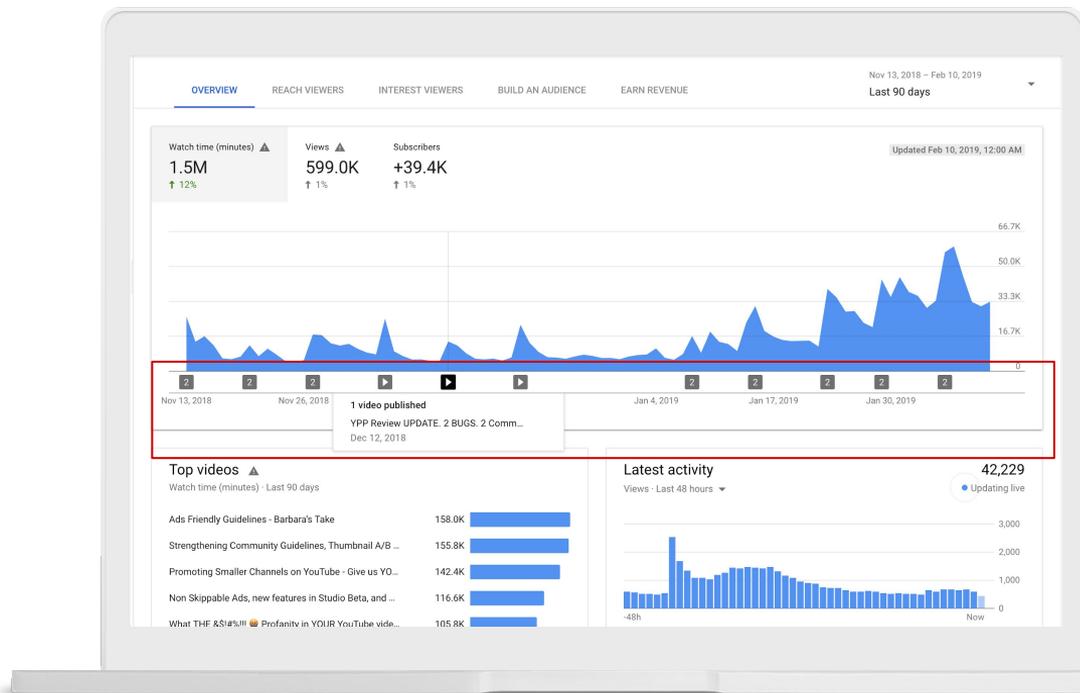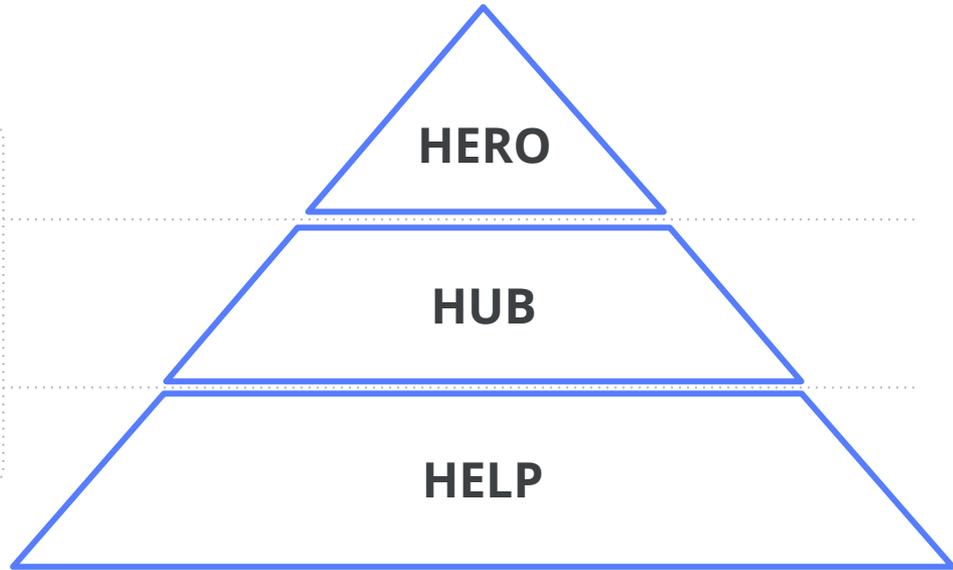
Program **with purpose**

When programming your channel, always think about the intended audience, goals, and scope of each video.

A great place to start this process is bucketing your videos across three content categories:

HERO, HUB, & HELP.

HERO

HUB

HELP

HERO Content

- **Frequency:** Rare. Usually built around a major event, moment, or idea.

- **Content:** Mass appeal topics that lean into increased interest in the general public at a particular time (Ex. Election day, State of the Union address, major legislative vote, etc.).

- **Audience:** Hero Content attempts to cast as wide a net as possible and be accessible to viewers who may be unfamiliar with your organization or content.

- **Goal:** Provide a moment of significant visibility for your content, converting a large amount of casual viewers into long-term subscribers.

EN VIVO | Ceremonia de asunción presidencial.

HERO Collaborate

Stick to a consistent release schedule and communicate content breaks in advance.

- **Choose thoughtfully.** The most popular creator on the platform may not be the best pick. Instead, focus your efforts on Creators who already have the audience you most want to reach. (Ex. Phil DeFranco's news & current events-centric audience or Family channels that can help you reach a broad audience and serve as a "voice of the people")

- **Consider what you uniquely offer to Creators.** Whether it's access to world class experts or major political events, think about how you could supply opportunities Creators otherwise wouldn't have.

- **Create content for your collaborators' channel, too.** To fully capitalize on this powerful promotional opportunity, make sure you work with the Creator to make an amazing video they'll post on their channel.

Ted Cruz | The Ben Shapiro Show Sunday Special Ep. 54

HELP Content

- **Frequency:** More often than Hero, but less than Hub

- **Content:** Evergreen topics targeted towards specific questions or areas (Ex: What is the NHS, How would "The Green New Deal" work, etc.)

- **Audience:** Broad and targeted appeal, typically this type of content can appeal to more casual viewers who do not normally engage with your channel

- **Goal:** Provide evergreen videos that continuously gain viewership and convert subscribers at a steady rate

Follow these simple steps to avoid spreading of
Corona Virus...

HELP Fill the search void

- **Search:** Using tools such as Google Trends, YouTube Analytics search traffic, or checking autocomplete topics in YouTube search can help you understand what users are looking for.

- **Content:** Develop evergreen topics targeted towards answering those questions or filling the search void

- **Audience:** Often, the audience for help content, starts core, but overtime becomes dominantly casual. Be mindful of viewers who may not be familiar with you intimately, use this opportunity to tell them who you are and what content your channel offers.

- **Goal:** Provide videos that fill a core question among your constituents that can stand on its own and maintain relevance over a longer period of time.

Bernie's Damn Bill Pt. 1: What Is Medicare for All?
(Narrated by H. Jon Benjamin)

HUB Content

- **Frequency:** Your regular chosen cadence. Think of Hub Content as your channel's "bread and butter."

- **Content:** Sustainable, targeted content that appeals directly to your subscribers' tastes and expectations. (Lean into your formats!)

- **Audience:** Your existing subscriber base, plus those viewers who've been watching but haven't subscribed.

- **Goal:** Keep your audience coming back with steady, consistent content that appeals to their expectations and desires. Secondarily, provide a bank of content for new viewers to explore after subscribing.

Sen. Josh Hawley Questions Former Deputy AG Rosenstein Over Crossfire Hurricane Investigation

HUB Build a release schedule

- **Be sustainable:** Think of formats that you are capable of doing on an ongoing basis

- **Be consistent:** Find a regular cadence to release content consistently., e.g. expert interviews each Monday or explainers released the first Saturday of each month

- **Audience:** Your existing subscriber base, plus those viewers who've been watching but haven't subscribed.

- **Goal:** To create a consistent habit and clearly communicate with your audience when the content they seek from you will be available.

Weekly reports on Andrés Manuel López Obrador's channel

HUB Lean into current events

- **Be timely.** The news cycles and YouTube ecosystem moves at an incredible rate, so it's important to engage with trends while they're still fresh.

- **Be accurate.** That said, don't take research and fact-checking shortcuts that could impinge your credibility in the long run.

- **Be creative.** Don't be afraid to use your uniqueness when creating content. Not only will your content feel fresh, it will also stand out among the noise. this sustainable over the long term?

Elizabeth Warren Responds to Donald Trump's Press Conferences on Authority and Accountability

Content Creation

Stay accessible

Remember, YouTube is not TV; audiences want to see the real, unfiltered you.

- **Personal content is best.** Distance and mystique are not your friends here. Don't be afraid to grab the camera and talk directly to your audience.

- **Imperfections are your friend.** While it may seem counterintuitive, don't be afraid to keep your videos rough around the edges.

- **Check out this video** for an example of how Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez used YouTube to make herself accessible through a live Q&A session with her community.

Coffee and Conversation | AOC LIVE

Capture great audio

Good sound can significantly impact how viewers experience your video. Audiences are typically more forgiving of camera and lighting mistakes than they are of poor audio. Let's look at how to avoid sound missteps.

- **Keep audio in mind when choosing locations.** Consider how ambient noise or the acoustics in a room (such as an echo) can negatively impact your audio capture.

- **Use external microphones.** While something as simple as a smartphone can film incredible video, you'll want to use external (not in-camera) microphones to record audio of the same quality.

- To help you get started, this Creator Academy video explains the basics of creating a fantastic audio and video experience.

Looking for an overview of making YouTube content? Check out the "Production Skills: From Ideas to Video" playlist, brought to you by YouTube Creator Academy.

Create in bulk

Creating videos takes time and resources, so it's always smart to try to maximize the output of your production days.

- **Batch shoot.** Whenever possible, get multiple videos out of each shoot you do. For instance, if you're interviewing experts within your organization, is it possible to schedule two or more in the same day?

- **Think flexibly with your footage.** Be creative with the extra footage you may capture at different events you go to and consider how that can be packaged to give you more content to share.


Hosted by prolific YouTube Creator Simon Whistler, this Creator Academy video explores the many benefits of batch shooting and "monotasking."

Curate a conversation

As you think about if and how your YouTube presence will interact with viewers, keep the following in mind.

- **Focus the narrative.** Consider turning off Comments when speaking about sensitive topics or live streaming in order to keep the focus on the information in the video.

- **Cultivate community.** Outside of Comments, features like Stories and Community are a great way to maintain consistent, lightweight engagement.
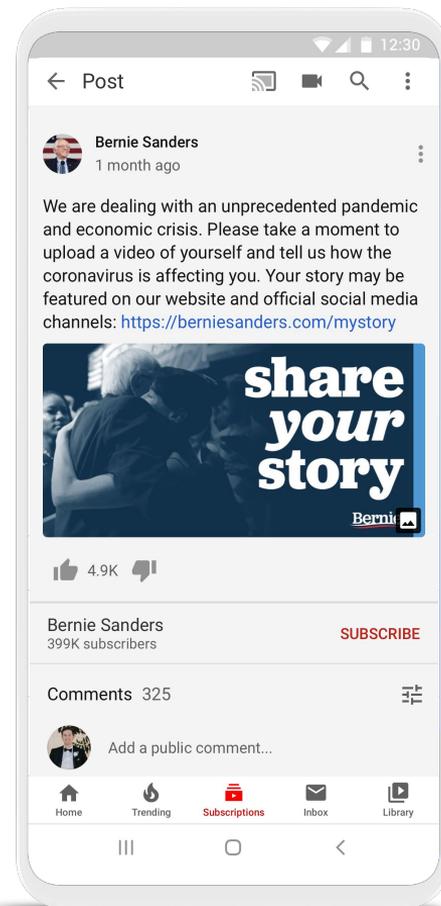
Content Discovery

Create effective titles & thumbnails

Titles and thumbnails can make a big difference in a viewer's decision to watch your video, especially when they work together. Let's take a look at some best practices.

- **Be accurate.** Make sure your title & thumbnail combination is a true representation of the video.

- **Be concise.** Try keeping titles under 70 characters and focusing on the most important words/ideas at the front.

- **Be searchable.** Whenever possible, include search-friendly keywords in your title.

- **Be engaging.** Use the combination of your titles and your thumbnail to create an engaging tease of the content.


UFO footage released by the Pentagon: Raw Video

Give viewers somewhere to go

End screens give you the opportunity to extend watch time on your channel by directing viewers to up to four different elements during the last 20 seconds of your video.

- **Maximize impact.** End screens can be paired with an in-video "end card" that visually houses links and features a call-to-action directing viewers to additional videos and to "like, share, and subscribe."

- **Use YouTube cards.** Cards are notifications that appear in the top right corner of your videos. Try pairing cards with relevant moments in your video.

- **Choose wisely.** End screens are most successful when they give your viewers something relevant to watch. Consider using them to drive traffic between episodes of your formats or series.
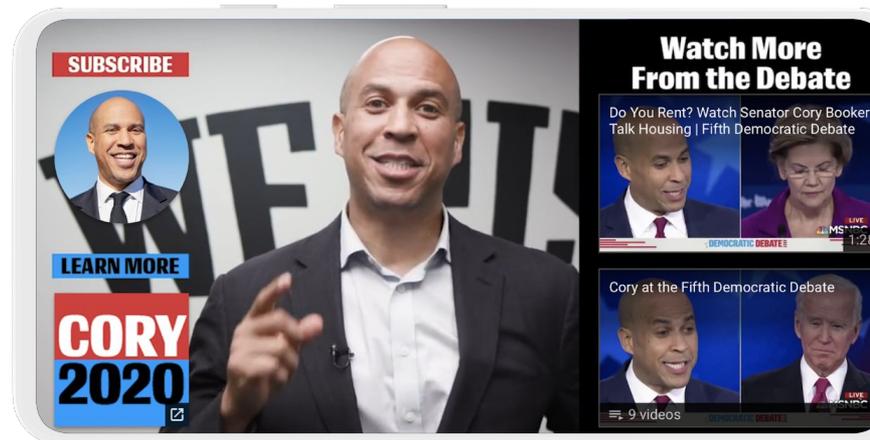
Cory Booker recorded a standard, custom end screen video that his team could append to his uploads and to help direct viewers to take action.

Analytics at a glance

Impressions highlight how many times your video thumbnails are shown on YouTube

1

Click-through-rate shows you what percentage of your impressions on YouTube turned into views.

2

Views - we want to make sure that videos are viewed by actual humans and not computer programs. This is why your public and internal facing view counts can be delayed as our systems verify the legitimacy of the views.

3

Traffic Sources give you a sense of how viewers are discovering your content.

4

Watch time refers to the amount of time that viewers have spent watching your content and gives you a sense of what is actually being watched (as opposed to clicked on and then abandoned).

5
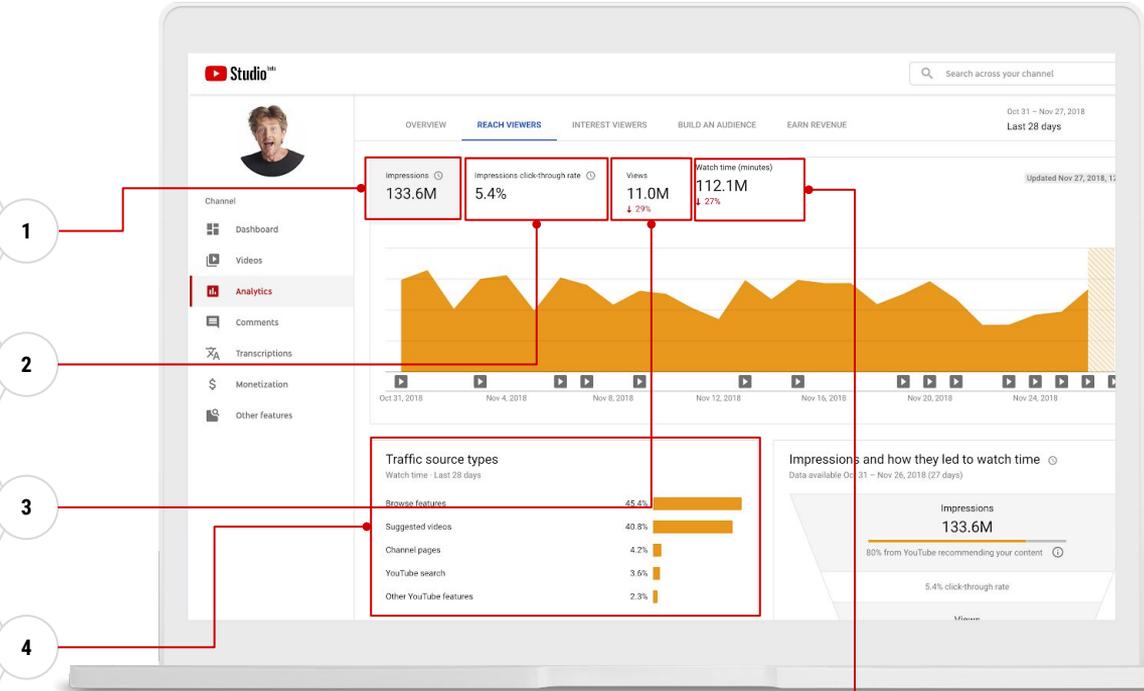
Additional Strategies & Resources

Cross promotion strategies

Consider leveraging your social media handles and different YouTube features as to further promote yourself and new content.

- **Features are your friends:** Lean into promotional features on platforms like Snapchat and Instagram such as"swipe up". Use YouTube Community polls to ask your followers what kind of content they'd most like to see and YouTube Stories to promote your channel or content in a light-touch manner.

- **Go beyond trailers and montages:** Incentivize viewers by linking content across your social platforms.

- **Calls-to-Action are key:** While promotional clips or trailers of your YouTube content can be effective, posting videos where you speak directly to your audience is one of the best ways to motivate them to check out new content.

Lean into audience data

Unsure about what topics to cover in your content? Here are some ways you can use data from your audience, and from Internet users generally, to help guide your decisions.

- **YouTube Analytics.** Within YouTube Studio, take a look at Traffic Sources > YouTube Search. There, you'll find what terms viewers are using to find you.

- **Google Trends.** Google Trends allows you to track the popularity of various search terms by time period and geography, and see related searches. Consider searching for your name, topics related to your policy, or government institutions and then reviewing related searches for additional insight into future video ideas.
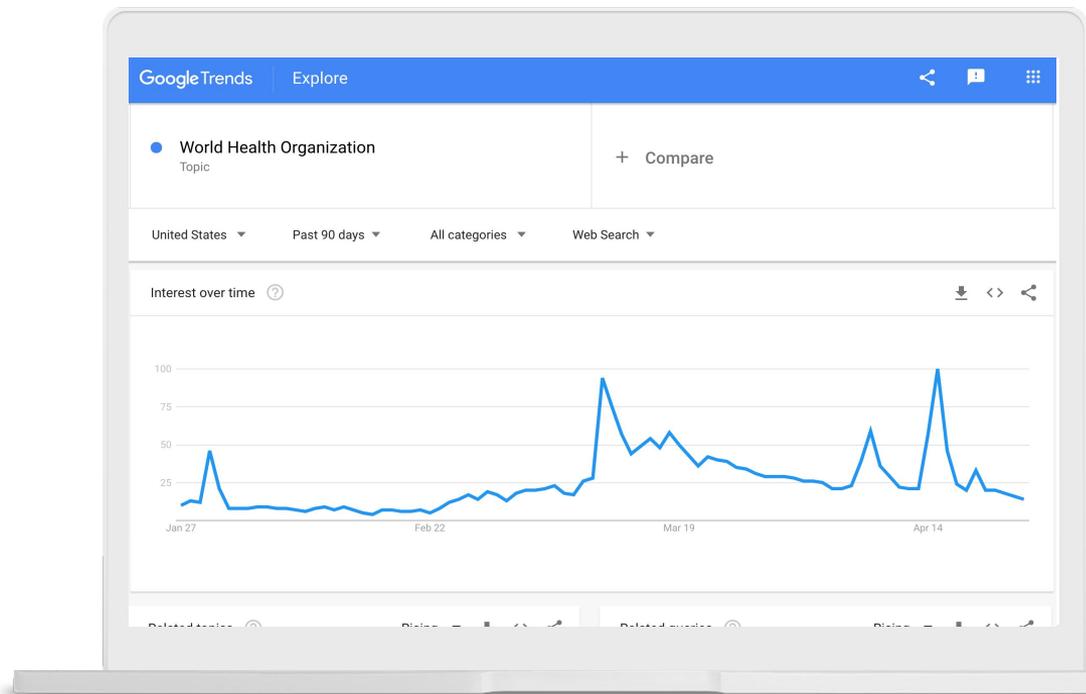
Analytics at a glance:
Traffic sources

The data available in **Traffic Sources** breaks out the individual locations wherein your content is surfaced to viewers. Here are the major ones to know.

- **Suggested videos** are shown to viewers on the right side of the watch page under 'Up next,' below the video on the mobile app, and as the next video in autoplay.

- **Browse features** refers to traffic generated by the home, trending, and subscriptions feeds.

- **YouTube Search** looks at the search queries that directed viewers to your content.

- **Notifications** are alerts sent when a new video is made public. They can be sent via mobile push alerts or emails.
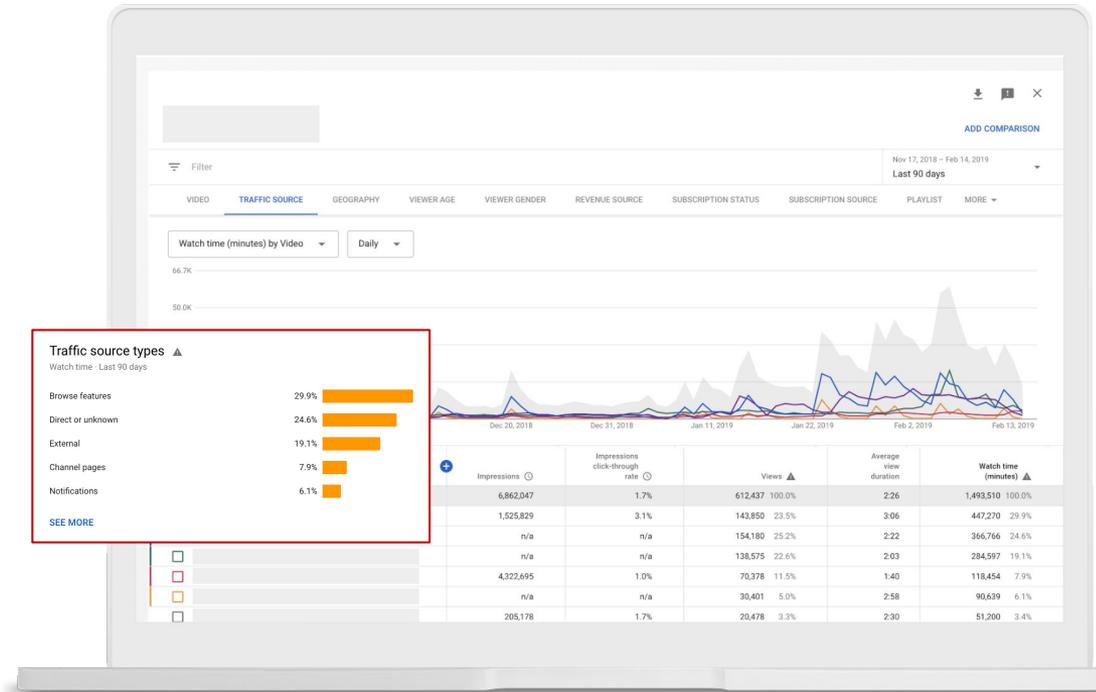
Additional YouTube resources

- **Start a YouTube channel**

- **Manage your channel**

- **Enable & start live streaming**

- **Learn best practices**

- **Troubleshoot features**

- **YouTube Giving Playbook**

- **YouTube Social Impact Playbook**

▶ YouTube

Thank you