At Teachable, we spend every day working to understand and support the varying needs of our creators: their aspirations, roadblocks, strategies for growth, teaching techniques, plus the breadth of business tools they rely on to keep their audiences engaged and happy. No two Teachable creators look exactly the same. From vocal coaches and at-home bakers to personal finance pros and social media mavens, our creators specialize and thrive in just about any area one can imagine. It’s no surprise then that education now represents the largest creator category by revenue within the industry.*

But just as their creative and business goals rapidly change, so too do the preferences and behaviors of the people who matter most to them: their audiences. It takes a highly engaged community—of fans, followers, students, subscribers, you name it—for creators to achieve long-term, sustainable growth. And that growth is the north star for even the biggest and best creators out there.

With this report, we set out to understand the trends shaping the people who are logging on, tuning in, and religiously following creators of all kinds. We hope these new insights help not just our Teachable creators, but creators across the industry who are looking to find new and better ways to deliver content, products, and experiences that make an impact—in the here and now, and for some time to come.

*Source: Stripe

CEO, Teachable

What's inside?

04 Key Insights
06 Where Creators and Fans Stand Today
18 More Than Just a Follow
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38 Glossary
Despite algorithms serving up endless streams of content, a majority of consumers only follow and meaningfully engage with one to five creators.

Many creators are finding new ways to authentically connect and build community. As a result, 70% of consumers say they feel personally connected to the creators they’re most engaged with—and roughly 66% of those consumers say they feel that connection within just a few days to weeks.

Paid content and products can give creators increased flexibility and control—and fans are on board. 40% of consumers say their decision to buy products or content is influenced by a sincere desire to support creators, and this percentage rises to 50% among Gen Z.

Ushering in a new era of content—long-form social content is closing in on short form as Gen Z’s favorite format. Of note, live streams emerged as the third favorite content format across all age groups. Plus, the majority of consumers prefer less-produced content.

Beyond entertainment—95% of consumers say they’ve learned something new from a creator. What’s more, 80% somewhat or strongly agree they’ve made noticeable improvements in their lives thanks to insights or guidance from a creator.
Where creators and fans stand today

Quality over quantity

In a world of 50 million creators,* most people are only true fans of a few.

1-5

A majority (55%) of fans only follow and meaningfully engage with one to five creators.

How many creators do fans meaningfully engage with?

Emerging Trend:

While the majority of consumers still favor following a smaller number of creators more closely, data indicates that Gen Z is bucking that trend. Nearly 20% of Gen Z engage with more than 15 creators compared to only 10% of Millennials.

*Sources: Goldman Sachs
Video leads the way

Nearly 70% of people cite YouTube as a favorite, making it the leader among all creator platforms. It also holds their attention: Consumers report spending the most amount of time on YouTube overall.

Fans’ favorite creator platforms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Platform</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YouTube</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blog or Creator website</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creator website</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LinkedIn</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitch</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course platform</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TikTok</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coursera</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinterest</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"It’s no wonder the term 'YouTube University' is nearing ubiquity. If you have a problem, chances are someone’s made a video with your exact solution. This is thanks to the dedication of creators who want to communicate complex ideas and tell impactful stories. And that’s a mission only long-form video can serve. It’s no wonder consumers spend so much time on YouTube, often developing a deep trust and compassion for the creators who, in turn, have a powerful impact on their lives.

When it comes to online courses, YouTubers have consistently excelled in adapting to the format. As seasoned professionals creating ‘edutainment,’ YouTubers deeply understand the mechanics of compressing knowledge into easily digestible transformations. In many cases, they’re cleverly repurposing years of existing content into new and inventive educational products. YouTube, and moreover the creators who power the platform, have challenged the paradigm of higher education and redefined what modern learning can look like—both in quality and accessibility."

Jonah Cohen
Content Strategist & Producer at Teachable
TikTok and Gen Z: The obvious match

Gen Z reports their favorite creator platform as YouTube, with 70% preferring it, closely followed by TikTok at 63%. However, nearly twice as many Gen Zers (32%) spend the most time on TikTok compared to Younger Millennials (17%).

Emerging Trend:
Women report spending more time on TikTok than men—securing 21% vs. 9% of respondents, respectively.

32%
Gen Z

17%
Younger Millennials

51% of Gen Z cites long-form social content as a favorite format (compared to only 40% of Millennials), making it the second favorite format for the generation after short-form social content.

Emerging Trend:
Notably, live streams are the third favorite format across generations, followed by podcasts.

Top content formats across all ages groups

- Short-form social: 54%
- Long-form social: 43%
- Live streams: 37%
- Podcast: 30%
- Memberships/community: 14%
- Events (virtual or IRL): 13%
- Newsletter: 6%
- Course: 5%
- 1:1 mentorship/coaching: 5%

Long form lives on

While long form is gaining popularity with younger generations, short-form social content still wins across all generations. Time will tell which content format will reign supreme.
“The rise of short-form content came when we were locked up in our houses during COVID. All of our lives were so imbalanced, and the last thing anyone wanted to do was sit for a 20-minute YouTube video. We were all looking for escapes—30 to 60 second escapes.

Short-form content was a great way for viewers to be introduced to tons of creators and information, and the algorithms got better and better at taking you down a rabbit hole. But, in general, now people have a greater sense of stability, they’re starting to invest in the creators they connected to the most. These are the people who’ve consistently uplifted them and given them value.

Short form is a quick hit of dopamine, but at the end of the day, we all crave belonging. In my opinion, you only build a true sense of belonging with long-form content.”

Jo Franco
Creator & Founder of JoClub
Teachable Creator

“Short-form content is a great way to discover creators and be discovered as a creator. It’s a fast way to get to know someone. But then when you find a creator you like, you want to deep dive with them, which is where long-form content comes in. So you really need both. My audience loves a quick tip and hack they can find in my short-form videos, but if they need me to expand on certain topics, that’s where long-form comes in. Short-form content gets their attention, but long-form content gives them value.”

Haley Sacks aka Mrs. Dow Jones
Zillenial Finance Expert & Creator of Finance is Cool
Teachable Creator
Timing it right: Viewing habits and preferences

20% of Gen Z say they spend more than an hour consuming a creator’s content in one sitting.

When it comes to posting, a weekly check-in is not enough.

66% of people say they prefer multiple posts or updates from creators a week.

Emerging Trend:
Across generations, 6-15 minutes is the sweet spot for content length—regardless of specific platform.

Content breakdown: What consumers crave

On the Rise:
It’s not always about the bells and whistles. The majority of people report preferring less-produced content.

- Less produced content: 54%
- Produced content: 46%

Emerging Trend:
The pattern shifts for those who actively follow many creators. 52% of those who engage with 6+ creators prefer more produced content.

- 70% of people who prefer less-produced content say it’s because it feels more authentic.
- 19% say they can relate to less-produced content more.
“I’ve mastered the art of ‘less-produced, high-quality’ videos. That means it’s clear I made the content myself—it’s scrappy, but entertaining, fast, and made with enough relatability that people can see themselves in it.

Consumers want to see the humor, the grit, and the real-life aspects of products and experiences. I’ve always been on team ‘less produced,’ while still dedicating hours and hours to editing and storytelling. The audience relates better to that than the glossy series I’ve hosted.”

Jo Franco
Creator & Founder of JoClub
Teachable Creator

“AI makes it easier to create more content. As a result, the ability to create a lot of content is no longer a scarce, valuable resource. Instead, we’re likely to see a new scarcity introduced: the things that are more inherently human. Think: emotions, video, quality outcomes, and connection.

Because we have an abundance of information, the pendulum will swing back, and we’ll have to decide what we value enough to give our limited attention to. So as the ability to create a lot of content becomes more abundant, I think the ability to create great content becomes more scarce.”

Jay Clouse
Creator & Founder of Creator Science
Teachable Creator

“There’s no need to overly produce your content, which can be frustrating if you’re someone who loves production! But I know that I can get just as much value, if not more, from a DIY video as I do from a video that costs $30,000 to produce.

That said, this ‘less-produced content’ strategy only works with organic and branded content. If you’re putting anything behind a paywall, such as courses or a newsletter, I believe it should be produced to the absolute highest of your ability. The way I think about it is if someone’s going to buy something from me, or let me email them, they better believe I went above and beyond to make it extraordinary.”

Haley Sacks aka Mrs. Dow Jones
Zillenial Finance Expert
& Creator of Finance is Cool
Teachable Creator
More than just a follow

First discovery

How fans discover creators

- Through a friend: 49%
- Through another creator: 9%
- Search for specific content or expertise: 4%
- On my feed/recommended content: 12%
- Through an ad or sponsored content: 2%
- At an event (virtual or IRL): 25%

Still, one quarter find creators by seeking out specific expertise.

~50% of people report first discovering a creator through an algorithmic recommendation.
Content and personality—the top creators have both

50/50

Between the two, consumers are split on what they value most when first following a creator, indicating the value of both a strong personal brand and high-quality content.

“Content and personality—the top creators have both

I believe personality will only increase in importance as consumers make choices. As more time passes, there will be more creators, and there will be more choice within search intent or niches. And so we’re going to choose the people who we enjoy learning from, the people who have the same values and quirks we identify with.

We’ll have to ask ourselves more seriously what we are trying to get from certain creators—which will vary for different people. Are we trying to have a parasocial experience where we feel close to them like a friend, or would we rather prioritize efficient and effective knowledge transfer?”

Jay Clouse
Creator & Founder of Creator Science

“I am Mrs. Dow Jones so my content and personality go hand in hand—I’m just as obsessed with investing, personal finance, and my mission to help people become financially free offline as I am online. My offerings are tried-and-true personal finance methods that I use daily. Seriously, the Money Book is my exact budgeting spreadsheet that I’ve used for years and originally created for myself.”

Haley Sacks aka Mrs. Dow Jones
Zillennial Finance Expert & Creator of Finance is Cool

Teachable Creator
It’s personal—creator and fan connections run deep

Despite what many creators fear, selling or plugging a product is not the top reason trust erodes. Fans say that it’s a larger dealbreaker—and reason to unfollow—when a creator’s views and ideas do not align with their own.

Do fans feel a close connection?

~70% of people say they feel personally connected to the creators they’re most engaged with.

And for roughly 66% of them, it only takes days or weeks to feel that connection.

Despite what many creators fear, selling or plugging a product is not the top reason trust erodes. Fans say that it’s a larger dealbreaker—and reason to unfollow—when a creator’s views and ideas do not align with their own.

“Maintaining a personal connection with your audience is the main thing that builds a lasting relationship. In the age of infinite content and options, viewers want to consume the content of those who they connect with the most. Great ways to deepen this connection are responding to comments, going live, and creating inside jokes that members of your community can use to identify each other.

The best way to maintain a balance between building a strong relationship and other business goals is to make sure the products and/or courses you create and promote solve a real problem for your audience. Selling and meeting business goals shouldn’t negatively impact your audience if what you’re promoting is actually going to improve their life.”

Robert Benjamin
YouTuber

“The creator economy is going to get more competitive. In the past, a lot of advice was about choosing a niche for yourself as a creator to avoid competition, but niches are also competitive now. So, really, a creator’s enduring advantage over time is their lived experience and unique perspective—and applying that to known, real problems. That’s how you build good businesses today.”

Jay Clouse
Creator & Founder of Creator Science

“The creator economy is going to get more competitive. In the past, a lot of advice was about choosing a niche for yourself as a creator to avoid competition, but niches are also competitive now. So, really, a creator’s enduring advantage over time is their lived experience and unique perspective—and applying that to known, real problems. That’s how you build good businesses today.”
Fans are willing to pay
Merch, podcasts, memberships & community, and livestream access are the most purchased creator products made by fans.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What fans have purchased from creators</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical merch</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never purchased anything</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memberships/community</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Podcast</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livestream access</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital download</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private/exclusive social content</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events (virtual or IRL)</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newsletter</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:1 mentorship/coaching</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The rise of community
Everyone’s looking for their people—and communities provide an outlet that’s transformative for both creators and consumers.

When asked what they value about community, fans called out staying up to date on the creator’s latest happenings and learning more about a given topic as the top reasons to join.

Stay up to date: 44%
Learn about a topic: 42%

Emerging Trend:
Right below the top five most purchased products are digital downloads, private and exclusive social content, and events—both in-person and virtual.

65% of people have been part of a free or paid creator community at some point.
When I decide what to charge for versus what to give for free, I look at the topic in depth. For example, I have lots of free calculators, resume templates, and quizzes on my website. I would never charge for these because they work as a jumping off point for people. They are quick fixes. They can learn how much to keep in their emergency fund, get a debt payoff plan, and so on, and get a taste of my teaching style. And if it works for them and they decide they want more in-depth information and to invest in themselves, I direct them to my paid courses. But I give away a ton for free. I just want to be a resource, above all.”

Haley Sacks aka Mrs. Dow Jones
Zillennial Finance Expert & Creator of Finance is Cool
Teachable Creator

“A community can be a kind of salve for feelings of isolation. We feel best in places where we’re understood, where we feel like we fit in with the crowd. Communities are also a vehicle for self development and improvement.

If you want to learn Spanish, for example, it’s going to be easier to do that surrounded by other people who have the same goal. Consumers can identify with an idea, or desire a shared outcome, and join a space of people who feel the same way and who they feel at home with—ultimately helping them achieve the outcome they want.”

Jay Clouse
Creator & Founder of Creator Science
Teachable Creator

Fandom runs deep
It’s clear the desire to be a part of a creator’s success is sincere.

40% of fans say a genuine desire to support creators informs their decision to purchase products or content.
And that number jumps to 50% among Gen Z.

What informs the decision to purchase from a creator?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The price point</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of time I’ve followed</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genuine desire to support creator</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word of mouth/recommendation</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creator’s personality or brand</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testimonials from other purchasers</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creator’s expertise or qualifications</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How long they’ve been a creator</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creator’s reputation</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How big creator’s audience is</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"My audience was supportive of my course launches because they went on the journey with me. I involved my community in creating them, from choosing topics to naming them. The way I see it is—the courses aren't mine, they are ours, and even more so theirs. I'm proud of them though and it's been amazing to have the income stream from them! They've also helped me connect with my community. For example, I have a Facebook page for everyone who has bought one of my courses to share stories and tips and it’s amazing to see everyone interact and offer support."

Haley Sacks aka Mrs. Dow Jones
Zillenial Finance Expert & Creator of Finance is Cool
Teachable Creator

"I think consumers are not only open to paid content or products, but they can even appreciate them. As time has passed, consumers also identify with what it feels like to create—because we're all posting things. So I think they understand what it feels like to be supported financially or even with attention.

When I talk to creators about their revenue model, I have two buckets: direct revenue and indirect revenue. Direct revenue is a transaction between you and your audience directly. There's no middle man or third party. With indirect revenue, there's a third party in some way—sponsorships or affiliates, for example. That's typically indirect revenue because you're redirecting trust and attention from your audience to a third party's services. And so, I think it's more sustainable and more aligned for creators to have paid products and services with their audience directly."

Jay Clouse
Creator & Founder of Creator Science
Teachable Creator

"I was always so self conscious of charging my audience for anything. I lived solely on brand deals from 2016 to 2020, causing a massive amount of anxiety. I was at the mercy of brands—often feeling icky about doing so many deals back to back, but never feeling like I could turn anything down because of the uncertainty of getting another deal in the future.

In 2020, I launched JoClub as a Membership and started seeing new members pour in. I was shocked people were willing to pay for a concept I had created from scratch, and had no overhead other than my time and curation. The value was huge, too. I was offering people a sort of group therapy via journaling sessions, and connecting them to people from all over the world. I didn't feel icky about charging for JoClub because I invested so much time mastering the session flow, and grew the club from one live session a month to 12 live sessions a month in just one year.

It became clear I could create a more financially stable life for myself by having both brand deals and consistent revenue from products and services through JoClub. The hardest part about being a creator is never being able to hire someone to replace you if you operate solely on brand deals, but the minute you sell a product or service, you create something that can hopefully function without you.

Creating JoClub was strategic for me. After being a creator with financial instability in my 20s, I knew I needed to buy myself peace of mind by creating a company that I could scale, without needing to be the one to do everything all the time. Of course, I'll still post, but I can exhale knowing that if I don't, I'm not going to ruin my entire financial situation."

Jo Franco
Creator & Founder of JoClub
Teachable Creator
Creators as experts

The new corners of the internet

It’s true, consumers still turn to creators for moments of fun, escapism, and leisure. From “day in the life” to “get ready with me” to travel vlogs, content for the sheer purpose of entertaining always has a place with fans. But, don’t discredit the desire to learn.

The new corners of the internet

How-to and DIY content is the second most preferred style among consumers, indicating a growing interest to gain knowledge from creators. When it comes to content niches, entertainment, food, lifestyle, and health and wellness continue to resonate most with consumers across the board.

Favorite content styles

How-to and DIY content is the second most preferred style among consumers, indicating a growing interest to gain knowledge from creators. When it comes to content niches, entertainment, food, lifestyle, and health and wellness continue to resonate most with consumers across the board.

Emerging Trend:

Gen Z, more than any other generation, follows creators focused on art—including photography, drawing, poetry, and literature.
“I see creator ‘types’ as a spectrum that I usually visualize as a Venn diagram. You have entertainment-based creators and education-based creators, and the creators in the middle who do both really effectively. Of course, the conclusion people draw from that is, well, I’ll focus on positioning myself in the middle. Sure, but that means you’re doing both things really well.

I typically start with folks who are on the knowledge transfer or education side. And even doing that requires a certain base level of watch-ability, listen-ability, and consume-ability. So while the content doesn’t have to be entertaining, it has to at least be engaging.”

Jay Clouse
Creator & Founder of Creator Science

From likes to learning
Creators are not just entertainers, but experts and knowledge sharers too.

95% of people say they’ve learned something new from a creator.

80% somewhat or strongly agree they’ve made noticeable improvements in their life thanks to insights or guidance from a creator.

73% across all generations—say they’ve learned something on YouTube.

57% of Gen Z say they’ve learned something from a creator on TikTok.

20% of people say they’ve purchased creator content rooted in advice or guidance.
Why learn from creators?

Education-based creators are not an outright replacement for traditional education, but their content and products can be more accessible and offer greater flexibility. Plus, creators can offer expertise not found or taught in everyday classrooms.

Top reasons why people enjoy learning from a creator

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning in a shorter time</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased control</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost effectiveness</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

82% of people say what they’ve learned from creators is not taught in schools.

“Creators are great sources of knowledge because they’re translating information, and nothing is better than having a complicated subject explained by a friend. Also, for informational content to do well, it has to be a really great tip, which is why you’re always learning things from creators—we can’t just talk about anything. It has to wow people to be worth it.”

Jay Clouse
Creator & Founder of Creator Science
About Teachable

Teachable is the platform creators trust to diversify their online businesses and earn more income for the long run. With Teachable, creators can engage their online audiences and get paid—on their own terms and with the most comprehensive set of payments tools in the creator economy. Today, tens of thousands of creators use Teachable to share their knowledge and, to date, Teachable creators have reached more than 47 million students around the world.

47M students reached around the world by Teachable creators

The power of the Teachable platform

Our creators get paid directly by their audience, so they can build a lasting, reliable source of income.

Courses
Create stunning, student-friendly courses. No coding or design skills necessary.

Coaching
Easily manage a virtual coaching business, including private and small group sessions.

Digital downloads
Get in the game with digital downloads—ebooks, audio clips, how-to guides, video series, and more.

Memberships
House any combo of digital content, products, and perks within customizable subscription tiers.

*Now in beta: Community

Methodology

Teachable worked with a third-party company, Dynata, to conduct a survey of 1,000 U.S. consumers across 48 states, between July 19 – July 26, 2023. To be eligible, consumers had to indicate that they meaningfully engage with at least 1–5 creators and/or have made a purchase—of any kind—from a creator in the past. Of the 1,000 respondents, 20.30% were between 18-24-years-old, 29.80% were between 25-34-years-old, 30.30% were between 35-44-years-old, and 19.60% were between 45-50-years-old; 49.50% identified as women, 49.00% identified as men, 1.10% identified as non-binary, 20% selected another option, and .20% preferred not to say.
Glossary

For the purposes of this survey and report:

Gen Z refers to respondents between the ages of 18-24-years-old.

Younger Millennials refers to respondents between the ages of 25-34-years-old.

Elder Millennials refers to respondents between the ages of 35-44-years-old.

Creators refers to content creators such as influencers, bloggers, vloggers, as well as online coaches or entrepreneurs whose businesses involve digital content creation of some kind. A creator does not refer to more conventional celebrity types such as professional Hollywood actors, musicians, athletes, reality television stars, comedians, and models.

Meaningfully engaging with a creator implies watching or engaging with social media videos or posts regularly, subscribing to a newsletter or Patreon, purchasing products or physical merchandise, and so on.

Fans, Followers, and Consumers are used interchangeably to refer to survey respondents.