Watching television can be a great relaxer, white background noise, or even a way to pass the time. Reality TV shows have built up popularity over time, showing more of the public’s personal life rather than an actor reading off of a script.

But it seems that now there are reality shows for every subject possible ranging from talent shows, to surviving in the wilderness, to arguing about whose life is the hardest. These shows are becoming more popular as more are being produced. My question is this: Are reality TV shows taking over?

The International Movie Database (IMDb) has a list of all 115,201 TV shows that have aired from 1905 up to the ones that will air in 2026. In the list, seven reality TV shows lie in the top .5 percent as the most popular TV shows, with “Dancing with the Stars” being the 318th, and “Keeping Up With The Kardashians” being the 378th. These statistics are based off people rating the shows on IMDb’s website.

Hulu, a website to watch newly streamed TV shows, also has a list of their most popular shows based off of people’s ratings. A viewer does not have to scroll too far down before seeing shows like “Hell’s Kitchen,” “The Voice,” “Desperate Housewives,” “Top Model,” etc., confirming that reality TV is very popular to the public today.

About two years ago, a group of marketers conducted a study called Customer loyalty in entertainment venues: The reality TV genre. The group, which includes Lewin, Rajamma, and Paswan, studied why the television industry made about $71.8 billion in 2012; a number way over the theater, DVD, video game, and sporting profits. The group broke the numbers down even more to find that three of the top 10 TV shows of 2012 were reality TV shows.

After researching, the trio found that people mainly watch reality TV for three reasons: Self-show connection (the audience feels a connection between themselves and the people on the show); fulfillment (the audience uses the show to fulfill certain personal fantasies); and co-production (the
audience helps support their favorite participant, such as the audience voting for their favorite singer on “American Idol”).

Debate.org posted a survey that asked “Should reality TV be banned? Yes or No?” Currently, the results say that 65 percent want reality TV to be banned and 35 percent do not.

One person said, “There is no need for reality TV. What does it actually teach you? People become addicted to it very often. If it’s called reality TV, then why isn’t it about average people’s lives? Excessive partying is not “reality.” Ordinary people do other ordinary things in real life, so failure to include them does not count as reality.”

Another student said, “It should not be banned. Reality TV is part of our culture it is our entertainment. Even though it is not scripted it our entertainment and is a part of our life style now. People think its stupid and its a waste of time but, if you don’t like watching it then don’t watch it. You don’t have to be forced to watch it so just turn off your tv.”

In my opinion, I like watching reality TV because I can laugh at what crazy things people can come up with. For example, the show “Family Feud” is funny because the competing sides would say something completely raunchy, the host would roll his eyes and hide his face from embarrassment, and the crowd could laugh whether the answer was right or wrong. Reality TV shows can be funny. Maybe they are getting more and more popular because of their humor and how they easy they are to relate to, but it is not going to be an overpowering genre anytime soon.