



# THE SPOKEN WORD AUDIO REPORT



#SpokenWordAudio

**Spoken Word's share of audio listening has increased by 30% over the last six years; 8% in the last year**

# The Spoken Word Audio Report 2020

## Share of Ear<sup>®</sup>

- 4,318 respondents
- National sample ages 13 and older
- Online and offline
  - Tracked since 2014
- Offered in English and Spanish

## Spoken Word Audio Listener Interviews

## Spoken Word Audio Survey

- 1000 online interviews
- National survey of adults ages 18 and older
- In order to qualify, all respondents consume spoken word audio monthly (75% of US online population)

# Key Findings

1. Spoken Word's share of audio listening has increased by 30% over the last six years; 8% this year
2. Spoken word audio's growth is driven by large increases among women, younger listeners, African-Americans and Latinos
3. Three-quarters of all Americans listen to spoken word audio each month; 43% daily
4. In addition to the convenience and multitasking benefits long recognized for spoken word listening, other strong motivators for increased listening are personal growth, better content, and spoken word's ability to improve mental health



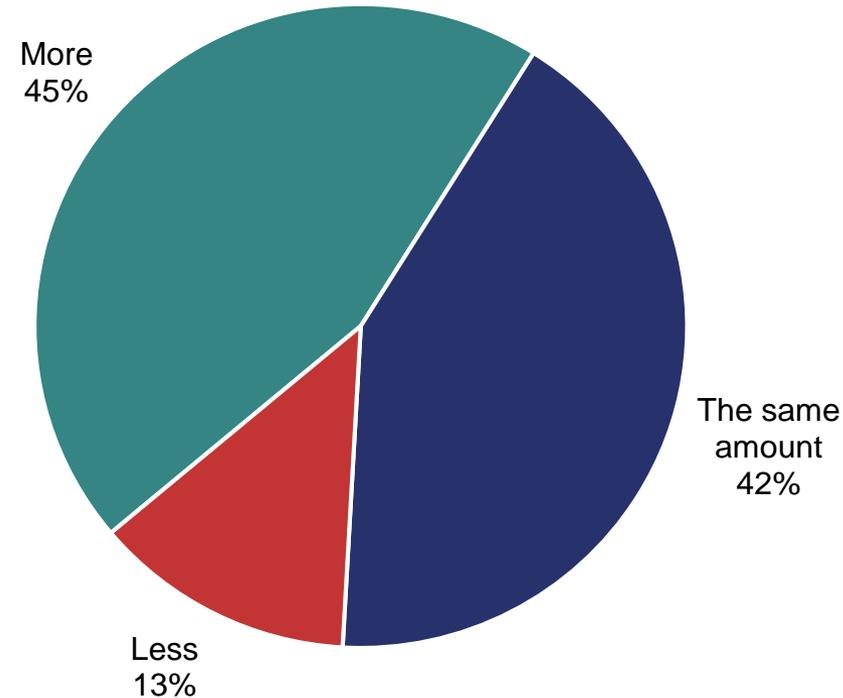
In the past month,

# 75% of the U.S. population listened to Spoken Word Audio

Source: The Spoken Word Audio Report from NPR and Edison Research; U.S. online population 18+

# “Compared to five years ago, are you listening to spoken word audio...”

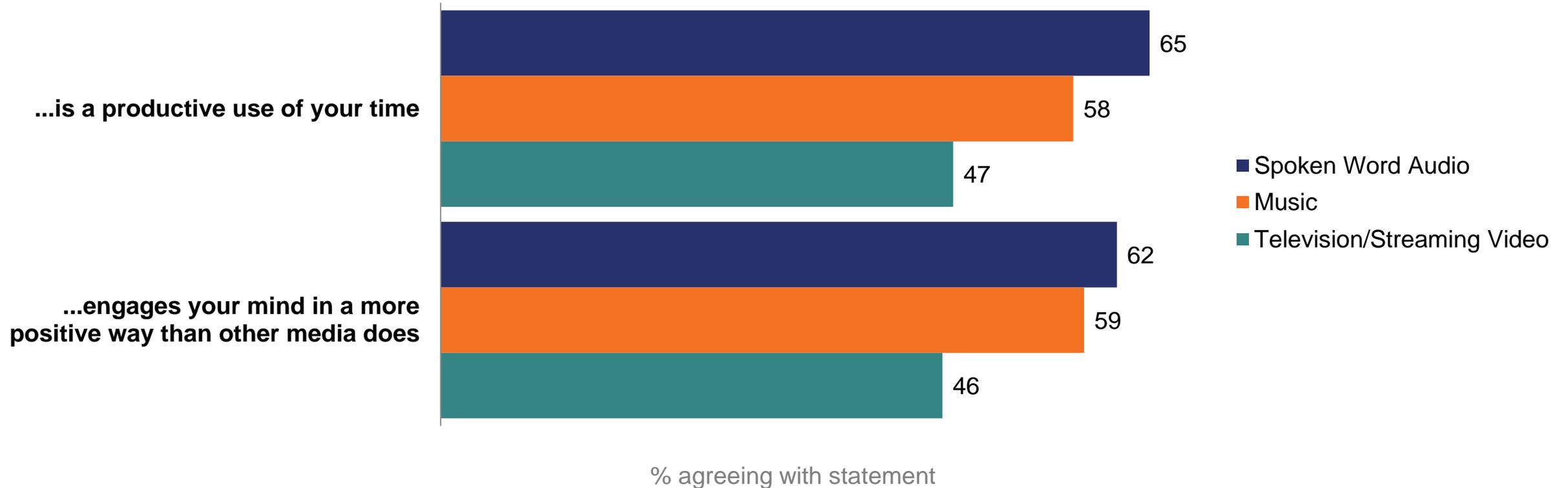
Base: U.S. Online Population 18+ Monthly Spoken Word Audio Listeners



Source: The Spoken Word Audio Report from NPR and Edison Research; U.S. online population 18+

# % agreeing with statements about Spoken Word Audio/Music/Television:

Base: Monthly Spoken Word Listeners who are Listening to Spoken Word Audio More



Source: The Spoken Word Audio Report from NPR and Edison Research; U.S. online population 18+

# Share of Ear<sup>®</sup>

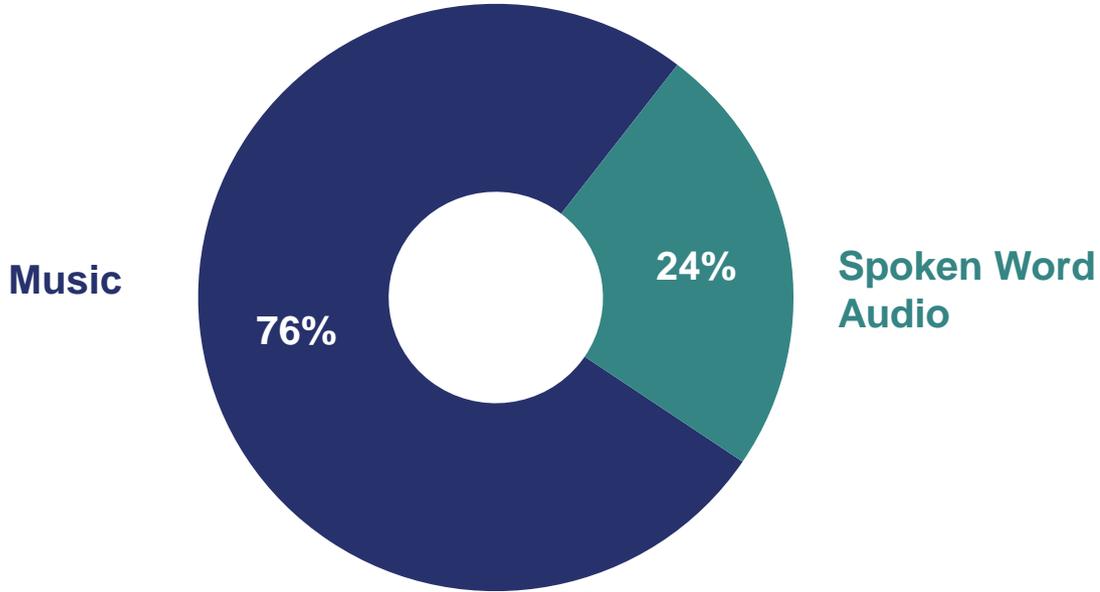
Music  
News  
Sports  
Talk/Personalities  
Audiobooks

Spoken Word Audio

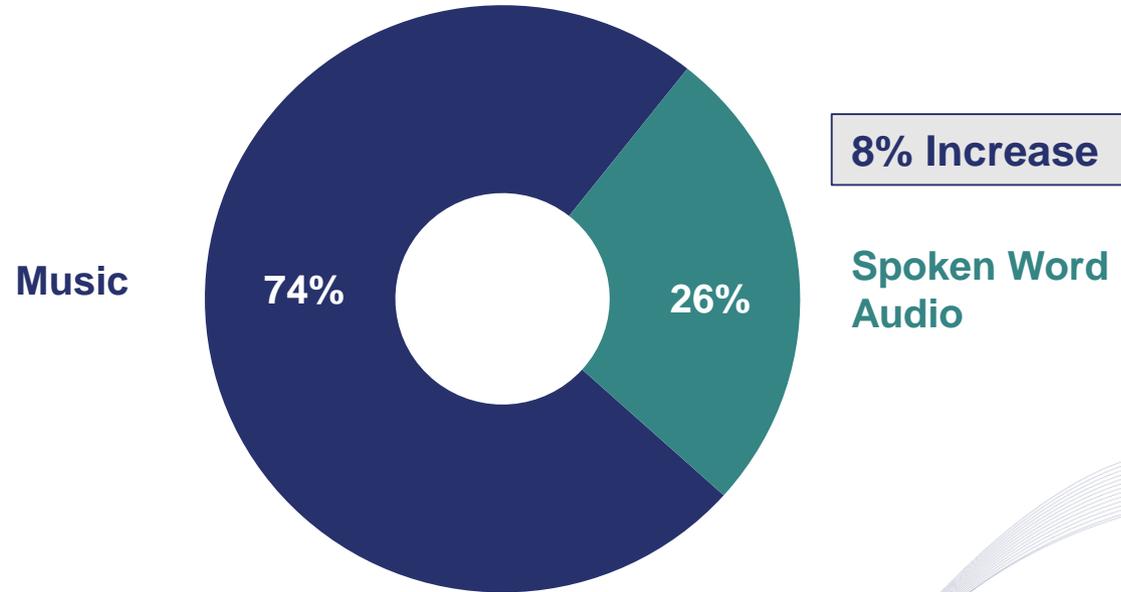
# Share of Listening by Content Type

U.S. Population 13+

2019



2020



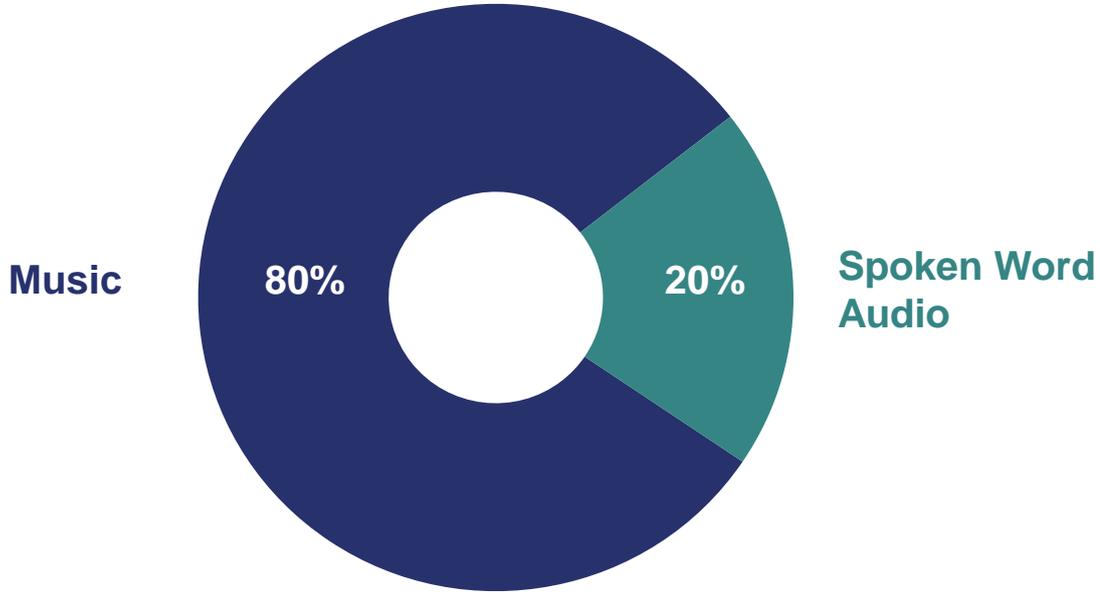
8% Increase

Source: Edison Research Share of Ear © 2020

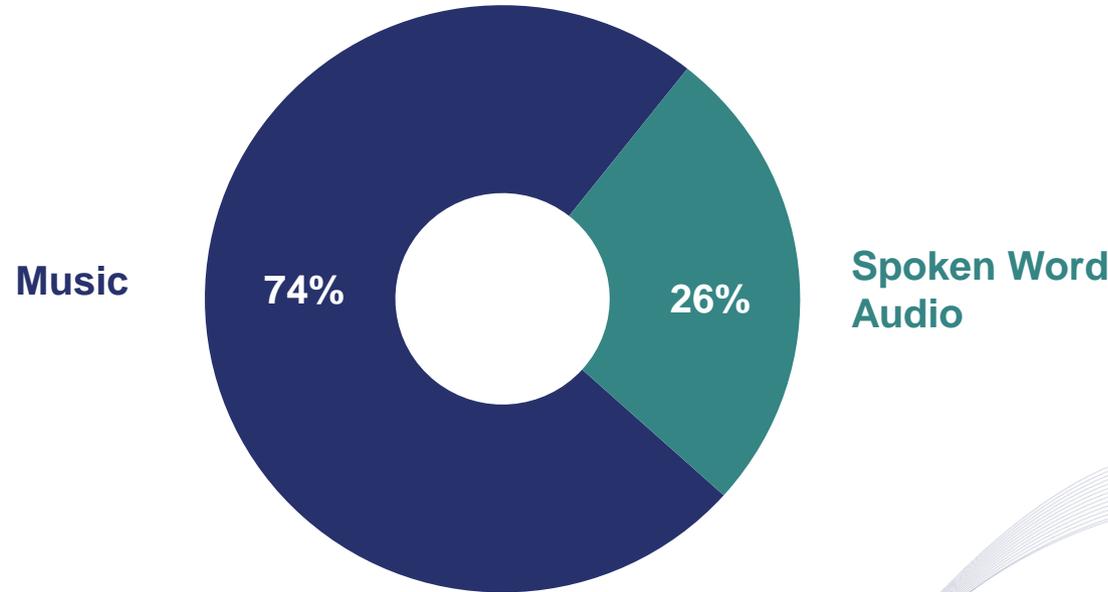
# Share of Listening by Content Type

U.S. Population 13+

2014



2020

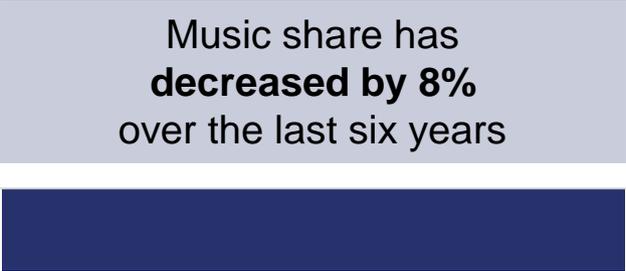


Source: Edison Research Share of Ear ® 2020

# Share of Time Spent Listening to Audio Content Type Daily

% Change 2014-2020

## Music



**-8%**

## Spoken Word

**+30%**

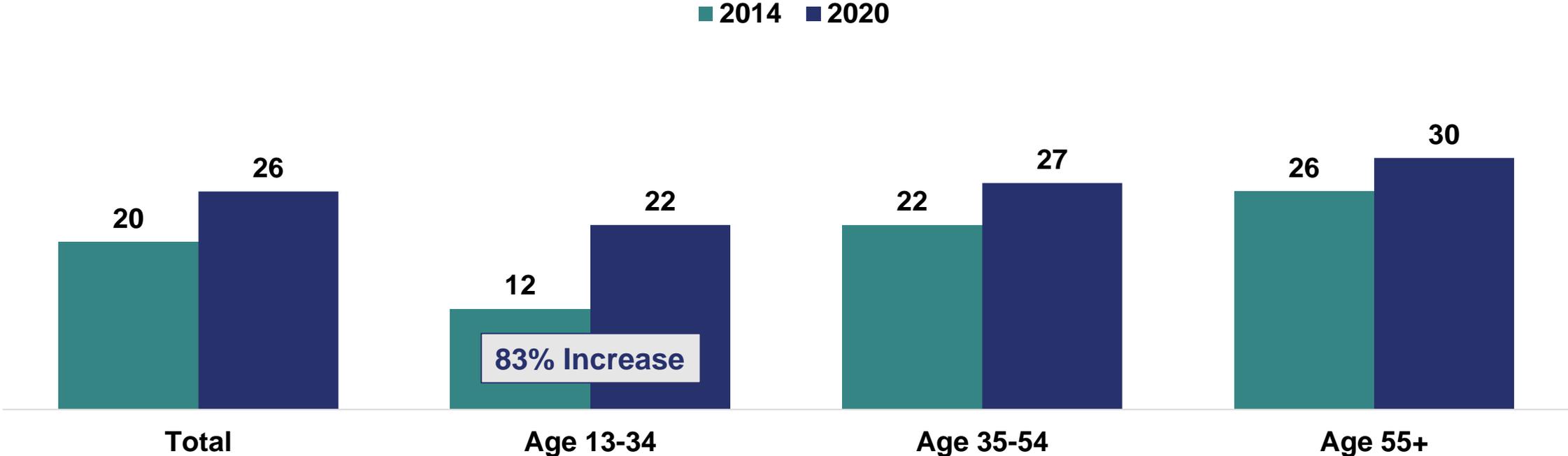


Spoken Word share has **increased by 30%** over the last six years

Source: Edison Research Share of Ear © 2020; U.S Population 13+

# Share of Time Spent Listening to Spoken Word Audio

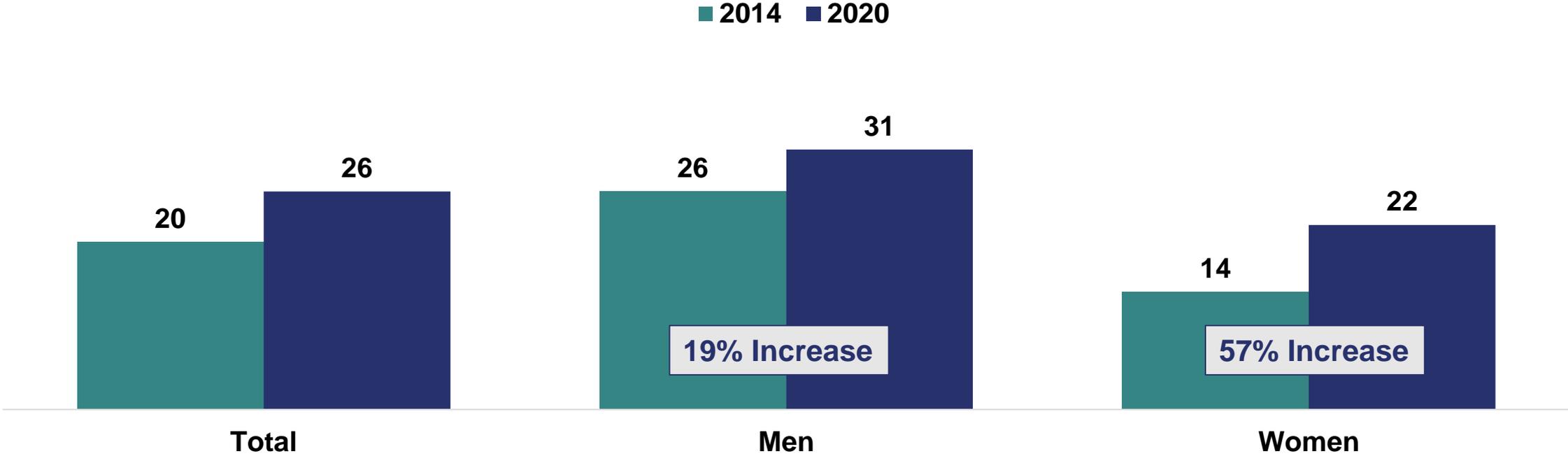
U.S. Population 13+



Source: Edison Research Share of Ear © 2020

# Share of Time Spent Listening to Spoken Word Audio

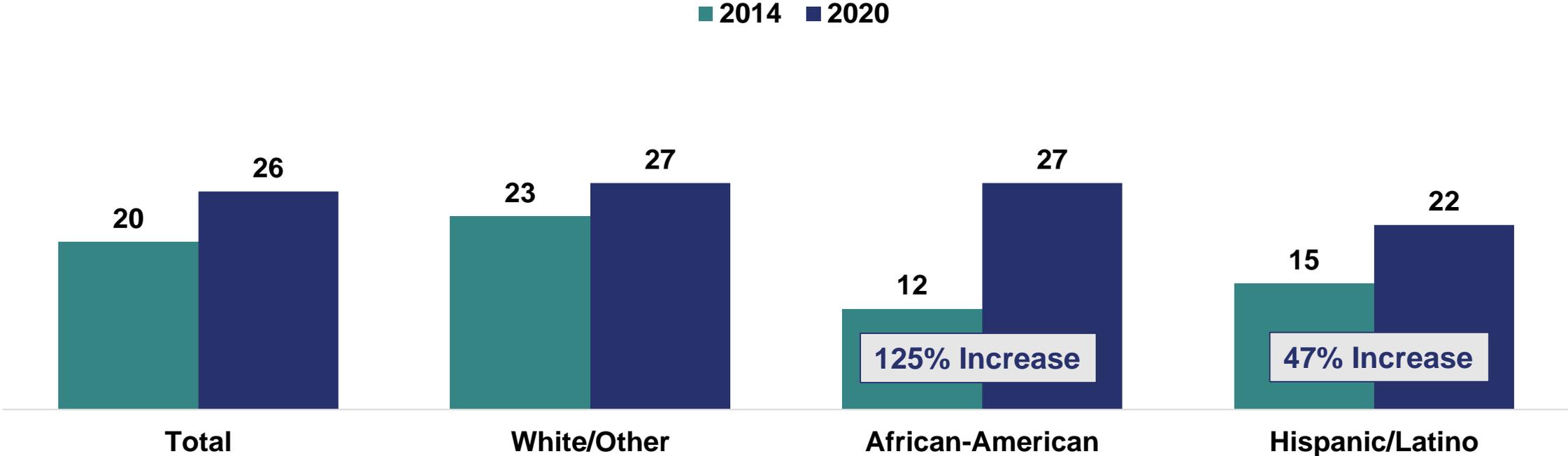
U.S. Population 13+



Source: Edison Research Share of Ear © 2020

# Share of Time Spent Listening to Spoken Word Audio

U.S. Population 13+



Source: Edison Research Share of Ear © 2020



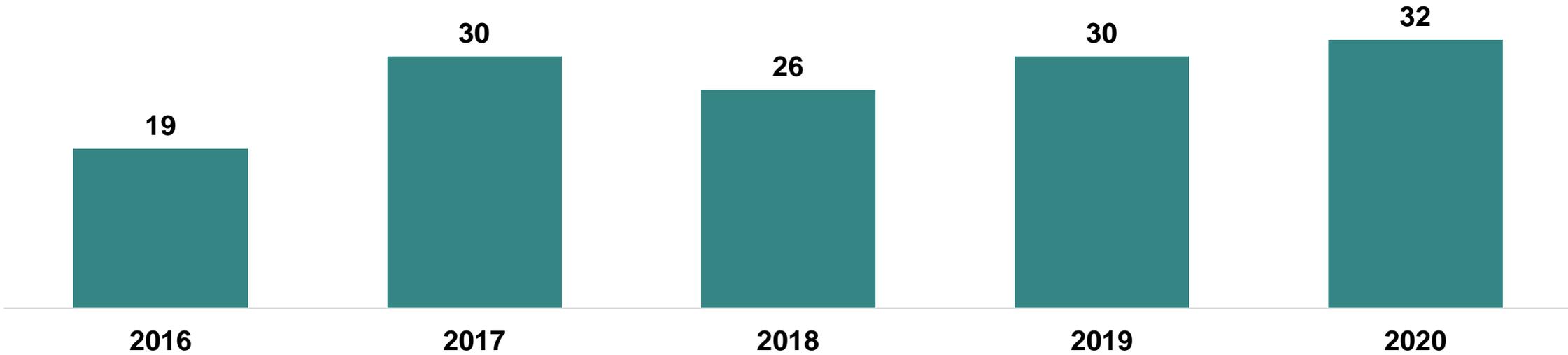
Podcast listening hits an all-time high in 2020

# 55% of the U.S. population has listened to a podcast

Source: The Infinite Dial<sup>®</sup> from Edison Research and Triton Digital; U.S. population 12+

# Share of Time Spent Listening to Podcasts That Goes to NPR/Public Radio

U.S. Population 13+



Source: Edison Research Share of Ear ® 2020

PODCAST INDUSTRY RANKING HIGHLIGHTS  
TOP PODCAST PUBLISHERS  
US AUDIENCE: **SEPTEMBER 2020**

RANK	PODCAST PUBLISHER		US UNIQUE MONTHLY AUDIENCE	GLOBAL DOWNLOADS & STREAMS	ACTIVE SHOWS	SALES CONTACT
1	NPR	✓	26,054,000	219,091,000	50	National Public Media
2	iHeartRadio	✓	25,972,000	251,919,000	538	iHeartRadio
3	New York Times		11,657,000	144,639,000	15	
4	ESPN/ABC	✓	9,280,000	72,583,000	102	ESPN Audio Sales
5	PRX		9,206,000	88,536,000	88	
6	Wondery	✓	9,198,000	60,378,000	101	Wondery Brand Partnerships
7	Barstool Sports	✓	8,783,000	61,282,000	46	
8	NBC News		6,691,000	45,197,000	26	Wondery Brand Partnerships

Source: Podtrac, [analytics.podtrac.com/podcast-publisher-rankings](https://analytics.podtrac.com/podcast-publisher-rankings)



Audiobook listening hits an all-time high in 2020

**54% of the U.S. population has listened to an audiobook**

Source: The Infinite Dial<sup>®</sup> from Edison Research and Triton Digital; U.S. population 12+



In 2020,

# 43% of the U.S. population listen to Spoken Word Audio daily

Source: Edison Research Share of Ear © 2020; U.S. population 13+

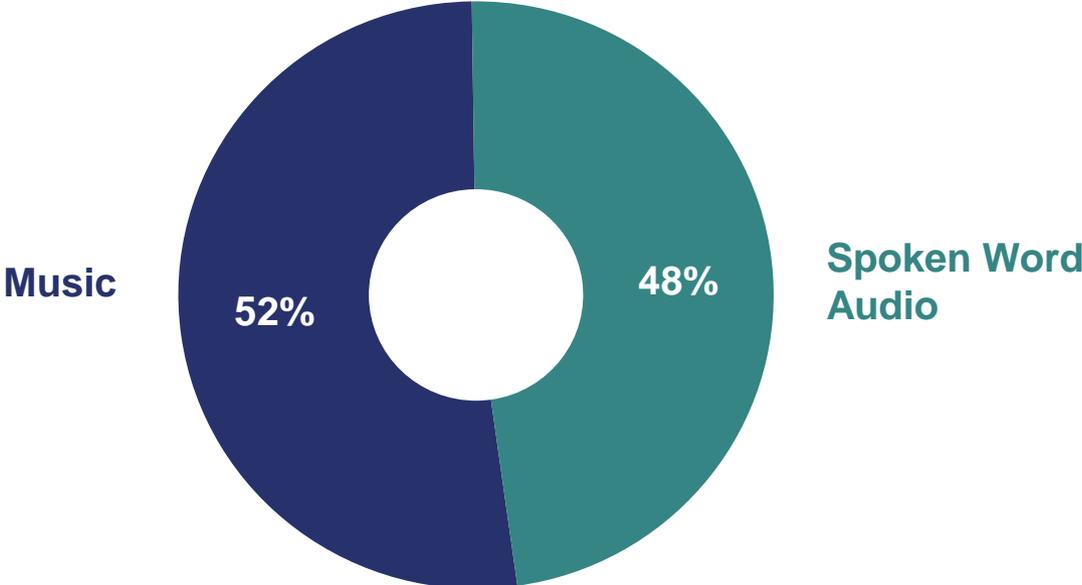
In 2020,

# Spoken Word Audio daily listeners average *two hours* per day listening to Spoken Word Audio

Source: Edison Research Share of Ear © 2020; U.S. population 13+

# Audio Listening by Content Type

## Daily Spoken Word Audio Listeners



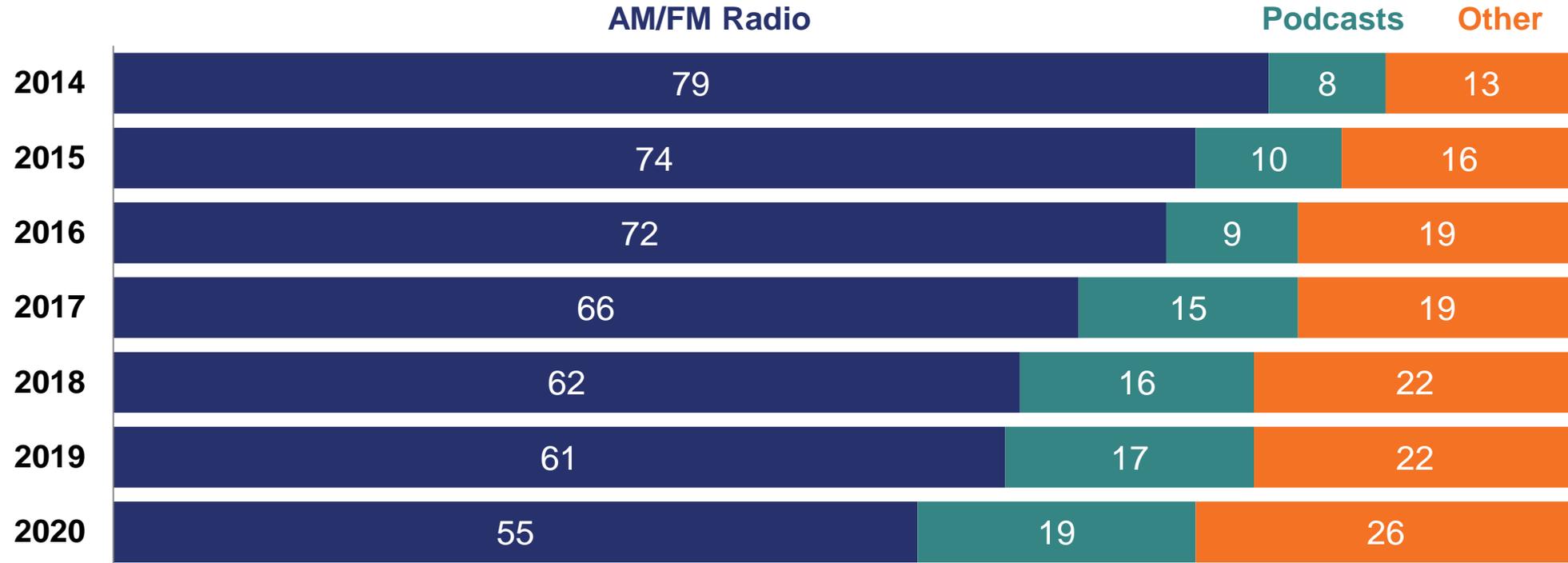
Source: Edison Research Share of Ear ® 2020



# How Do People Listen to Spoken Word Audio?

# Distribution of Spoken Word Audio Listening by Platform

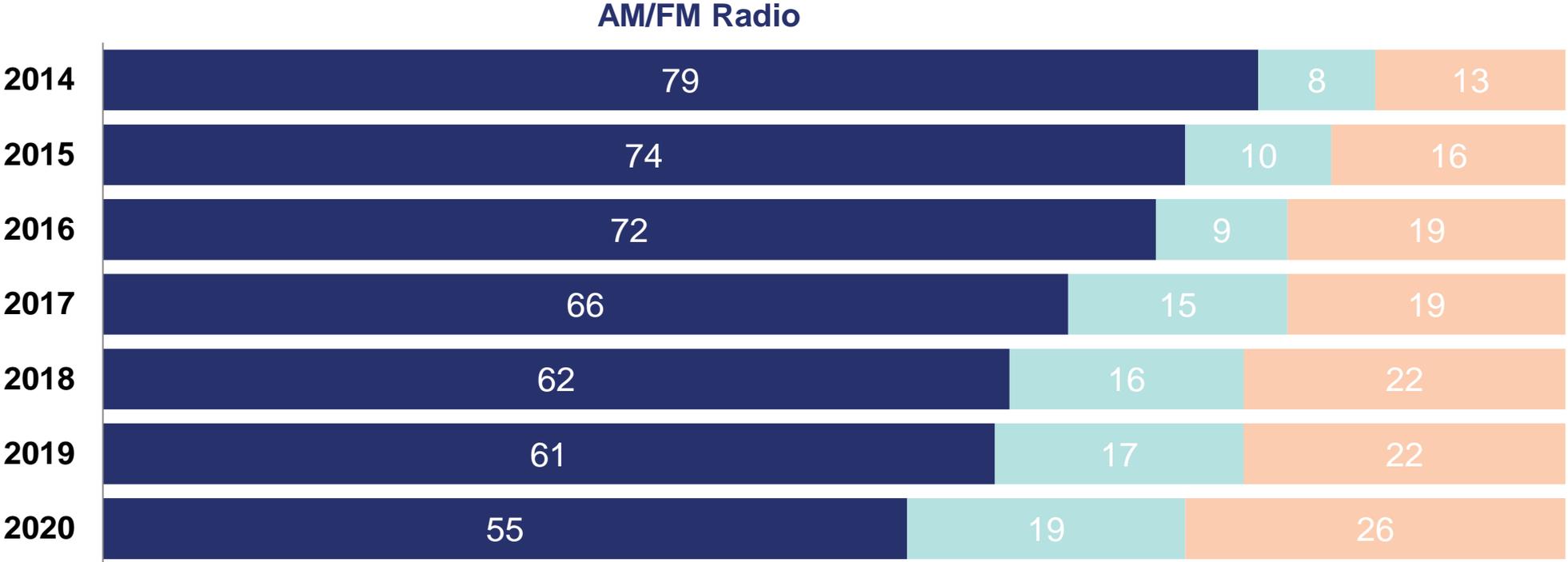
U.S. Population 13+



Source: Edison Research Share of Ear® 2020  
“AM/FM Radio” includes over the air and radio streams  
“Other” includes streaming audio, satellite radio, audiobooks, etc.

# Distribution of Spoken Word Audio Listening by Platform

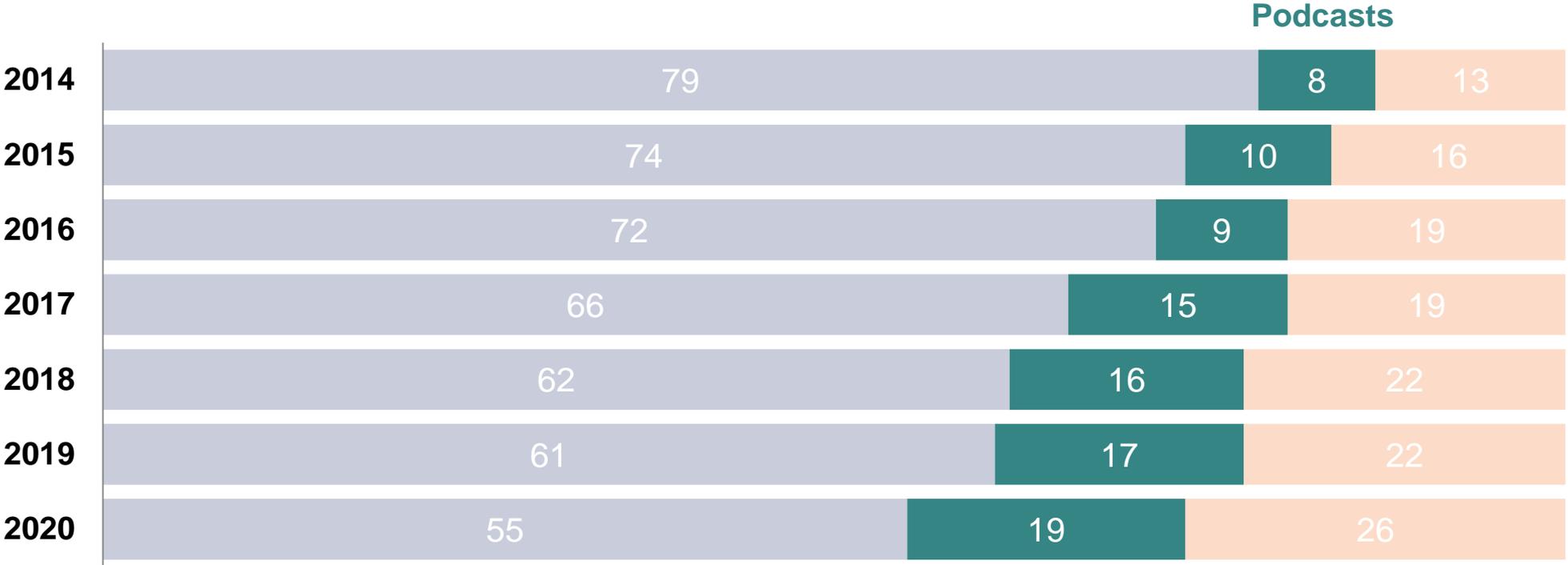
U.S. Population 13+



Source: Edison Research Share of Ear® 2020  
“AM/FM Radio” includes over the air and radio streams  
“Other” includes streaming audio, satellite radio, audiobooks, etc.

# Distribution of Spoken Word Audio Listening by Platform

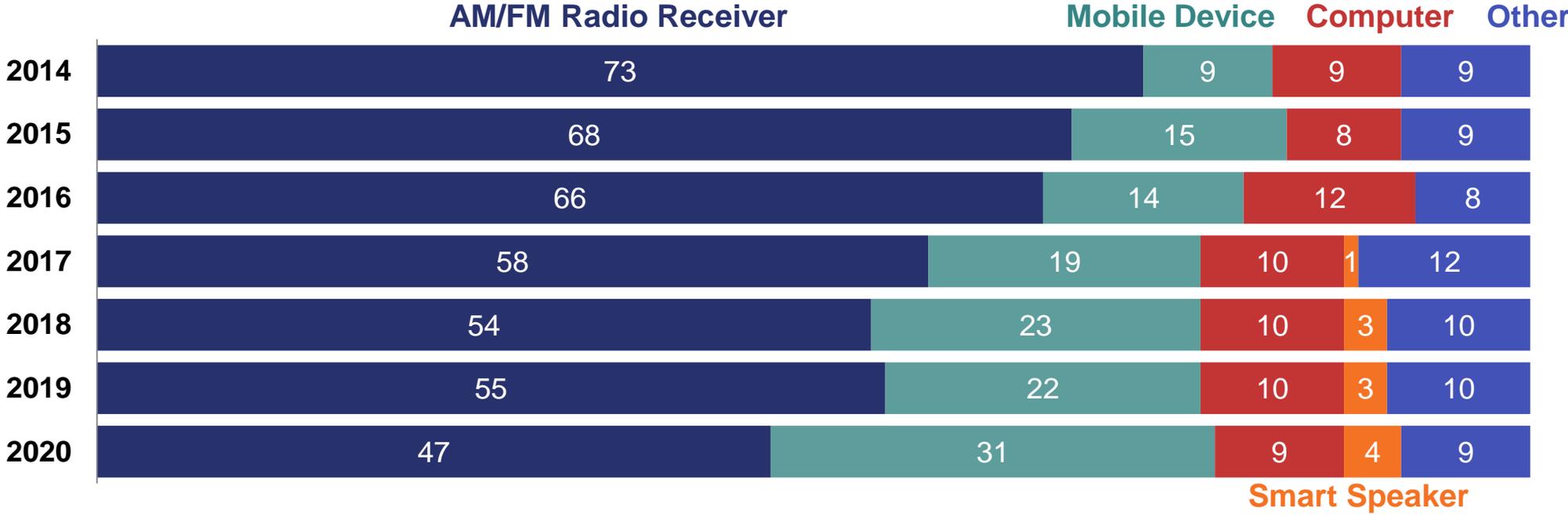
U.S. Population 13+



Source: Edison Research Share of Ear® 2020  
“AM/FM Radio” includes over the air and radio streams  
“Other” includes streaming audio, satellite radio, audiobooks, etc.

# Spoken Word Audio Listening by Device

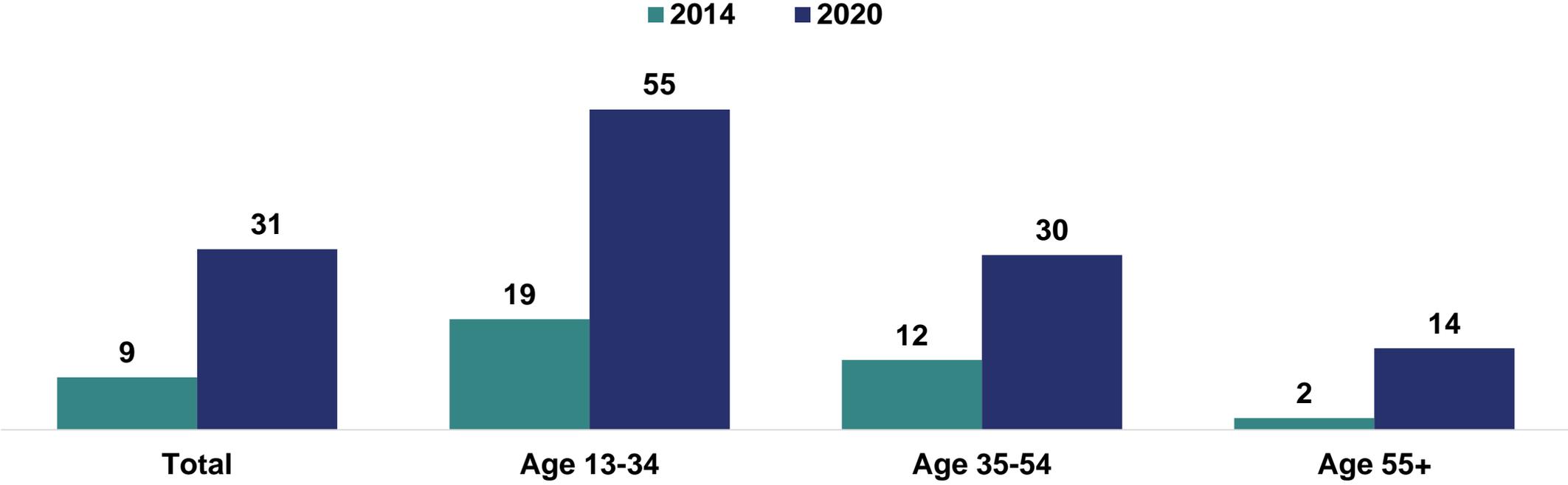
U.S. Population 13+



Source: Edison Research Share of Ear © 2020  
 Note: "Other" includes: satellite radio receiver, CD player, internet connected TV  
 Smart Speaker added to the survey 2017

# Share of Time Spent Listening to Spoken Word Audio on a Mobile Device

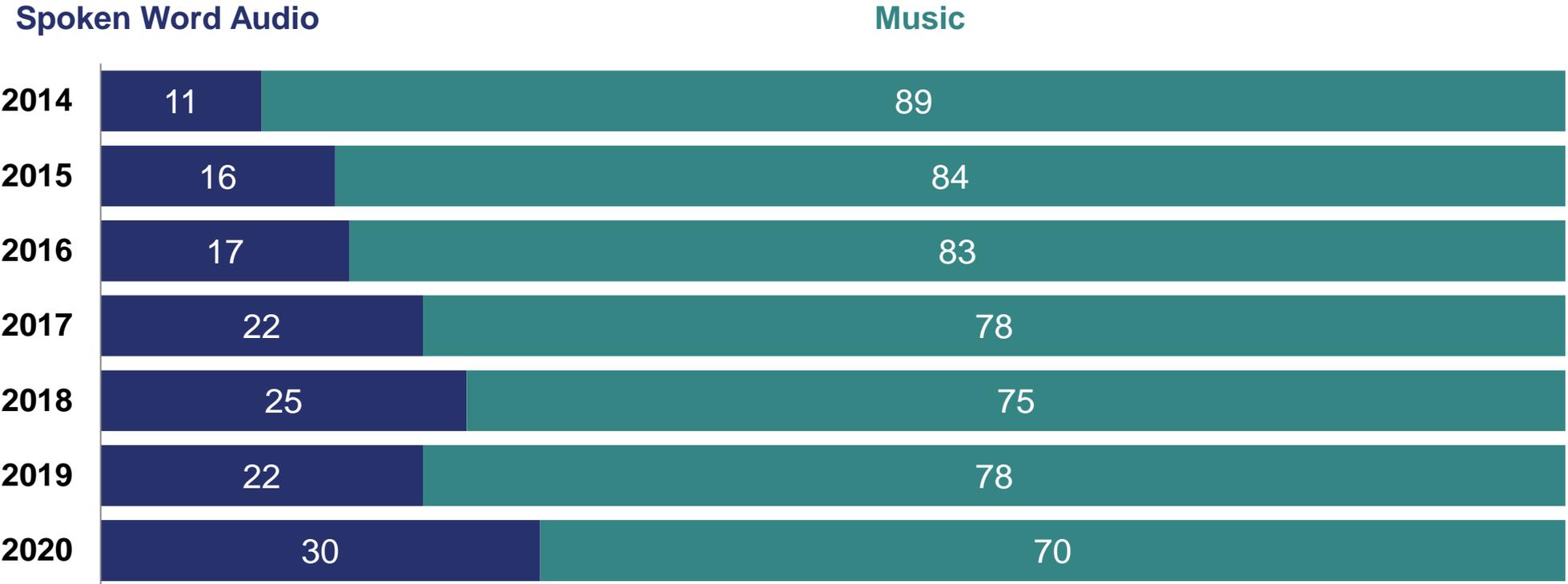
U.S. Population 13+



Source: Edison Research Share of Ear ® 2020

# Share of Smartphone Listening by Content

U.S. Population 13+



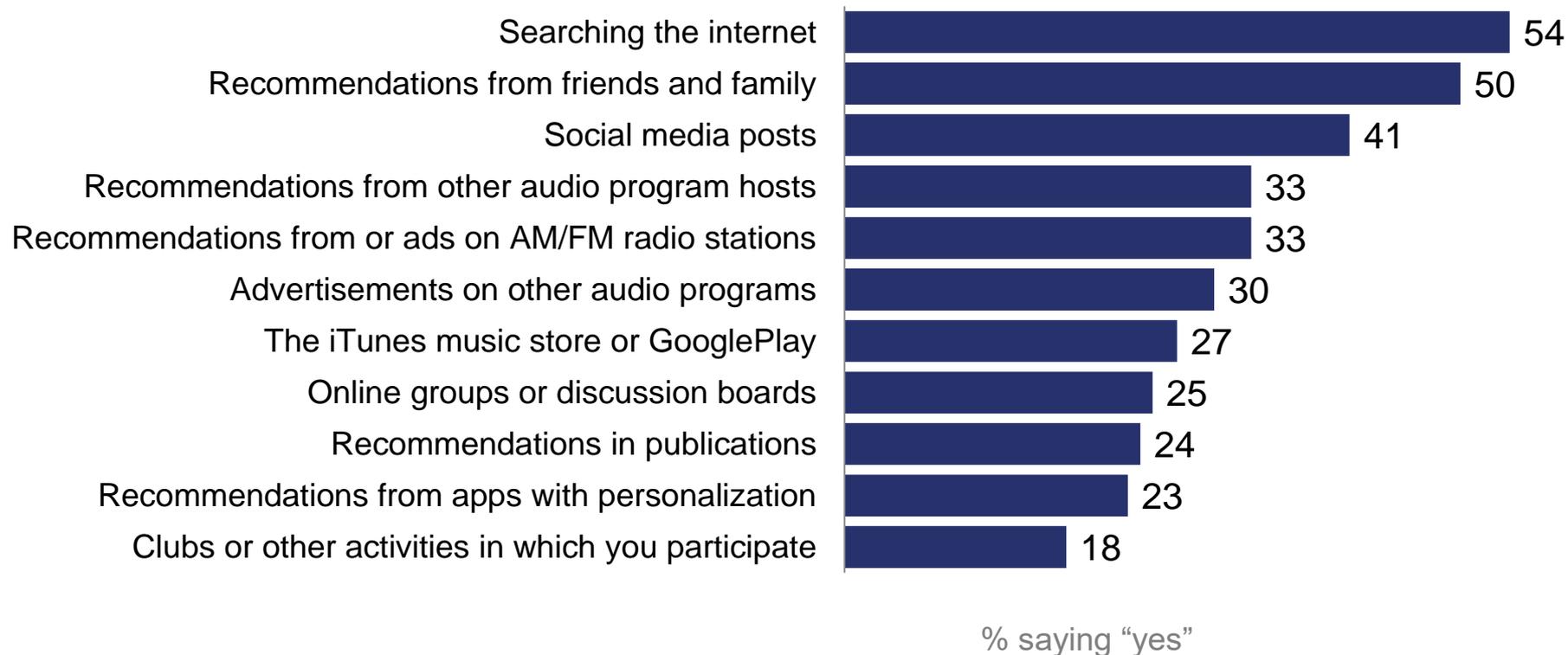
Source: Edison Research Share of Ear ® 2020



# How Do People Learn About Spoken Word Audio?

# How Listeners Discover New Spoken Word Audio

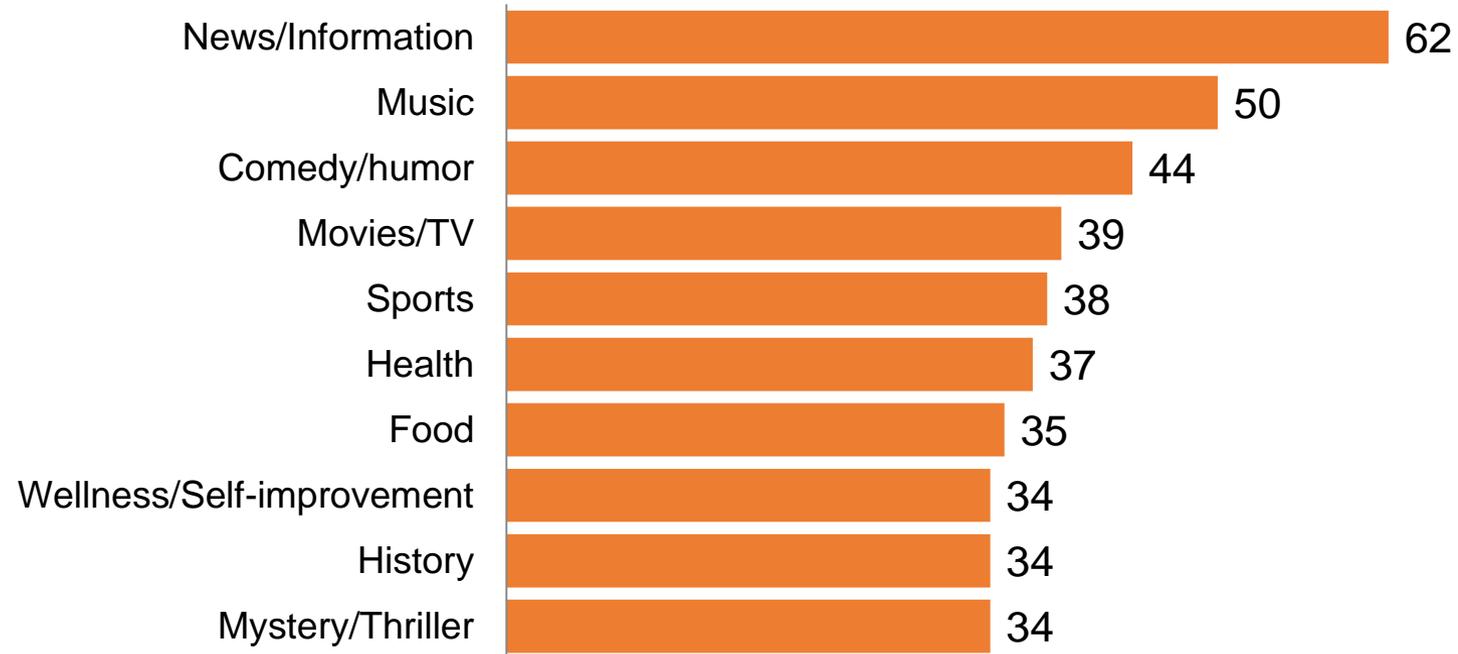
Base: U.S. Online Population 18+ Monthly Spoken Word Audio Listeners



Source: The Spoken Word Audio Report from NPR and Edison Research; U.S. online population 18+

# Top Ten Spoken Word Audio Topics

Base: U.S. Online Population 18+ Monthly Spoken Word Audio Listeners

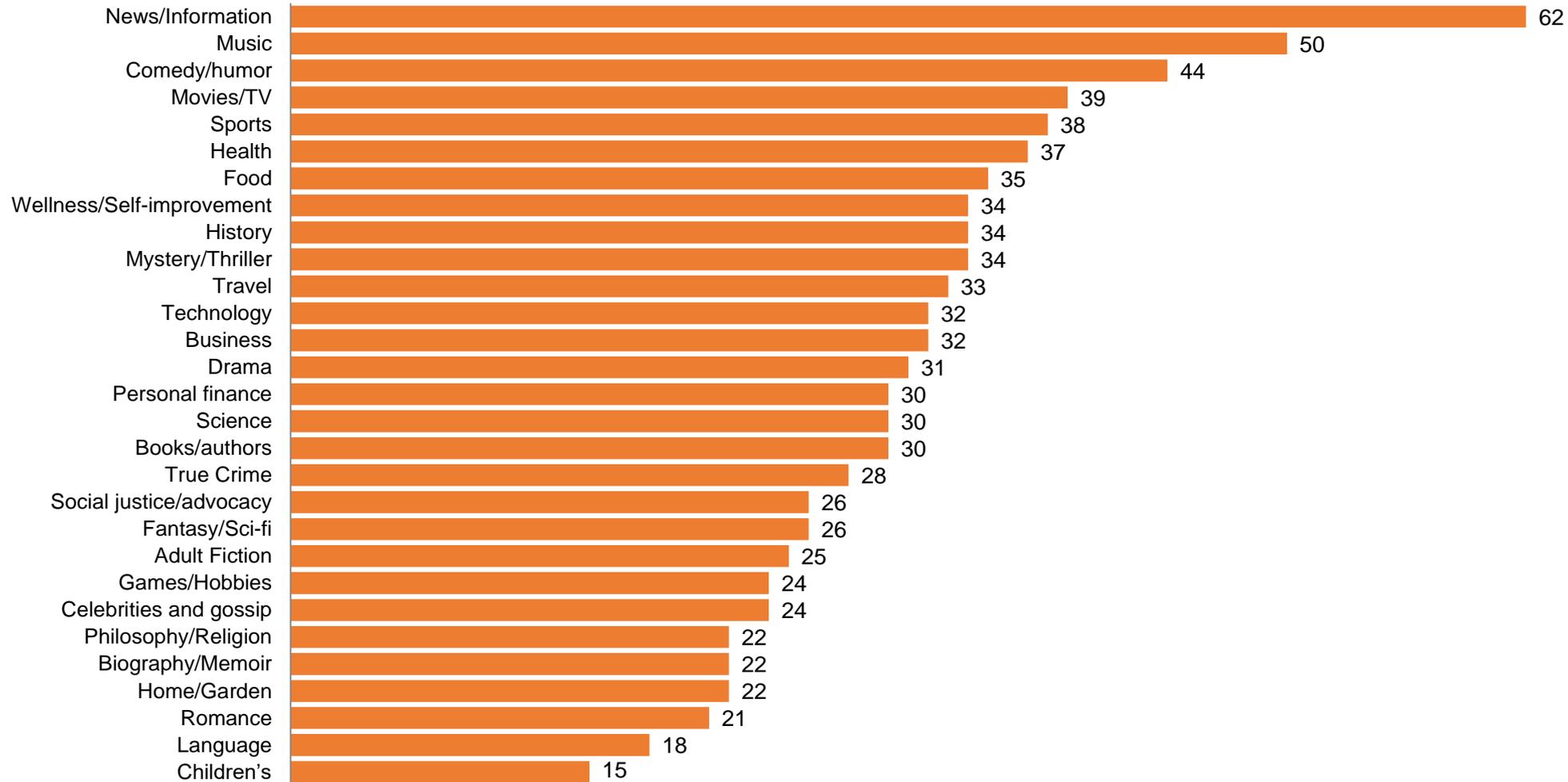


% who ever listen to spoken word audio topic

Source: The Spoken Word Audio Report from NPR and Edison Research; U.S. online population 18+

# % Who Listen to Spoken Word Audio Topics

Base: U.S. Online Population 18+ Monthly Spoken Word Audio Listeners



Source: The Spoken Word Audio Report from NPR and Edison Research; U.S. online population 18+

#SpokenWordAudio

# Top Indexing Spoken Word Audio Topics For Those Who Listen More

Base: U.S. Online Population 18+ Monthly Spoken Word Audio Listeners

Listening to spoken word audio more	Index
Games/Hobbies	157
Language	157
Social Justice/Advocacy	155

Source: The Spoken Word Audio Report from NPR and Edison Research; U.S. online population 18+



# Why are you listening to more Spoken Word Audio?

**The pandemic** gave you the desire or opportunity to change your typical listening habits

On demand audio feels **newer and fresher** than what you hear on live radio

**Perspectives** that you don't hear or see in other media

**More aware** of more types of spoken word audio content

**Easier to find content** made for people like you

You want a **break from negativity**

Seeing spoken word audio shared or advertised on **social media**

It helps **navigate problems** and hardships of life

You **process information** more efficiently when you listen to it

Host who are like you and who you **identify with**

**No new music** you like

You have **more time** to listen

Easier to **listen whenever** you want

You like listening to content **more than reading**

Feel a responsibility to listen to **stay informed** due to current events and news

It makes you feel **less lonely**

Helps you continue your **education**

You want to **escape** from news & **current events**

You can **do other things** while also listening to spoken word audio

You feel like you should listen more because your **friends & family** have been talking about it

As you get **older & more mature**, you're getting more interested in spoken word content

Helps you stay connected to your **religion or spirituality**

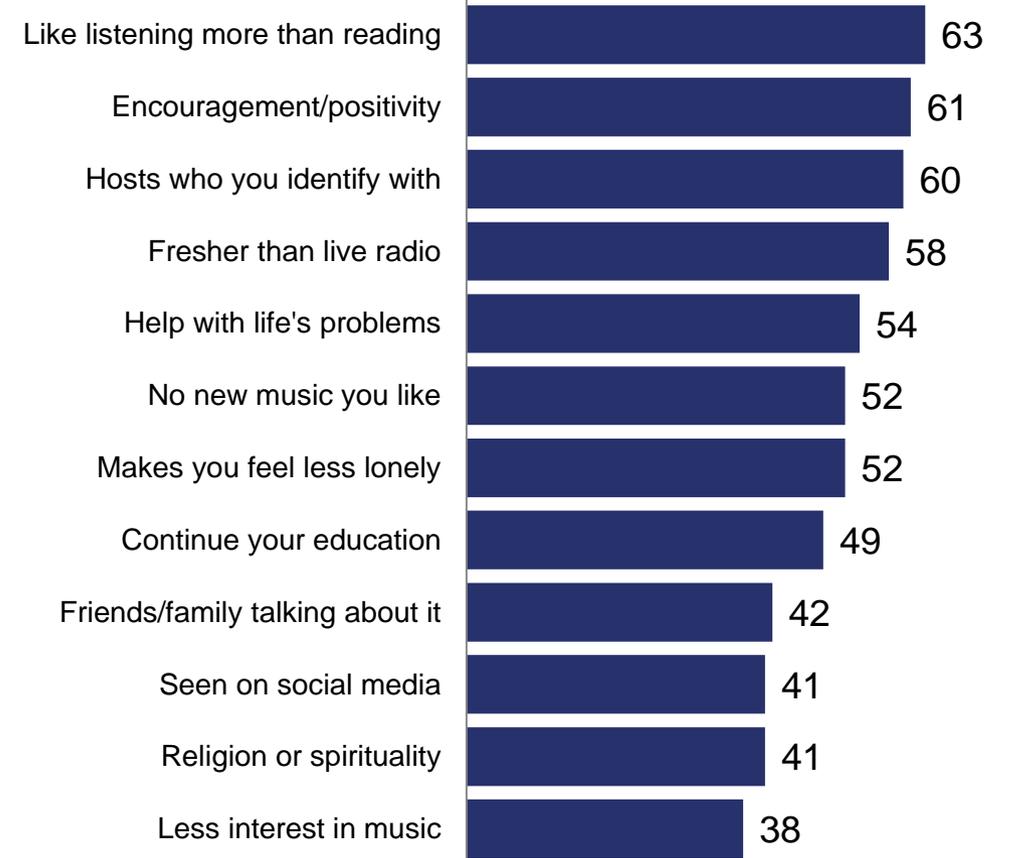
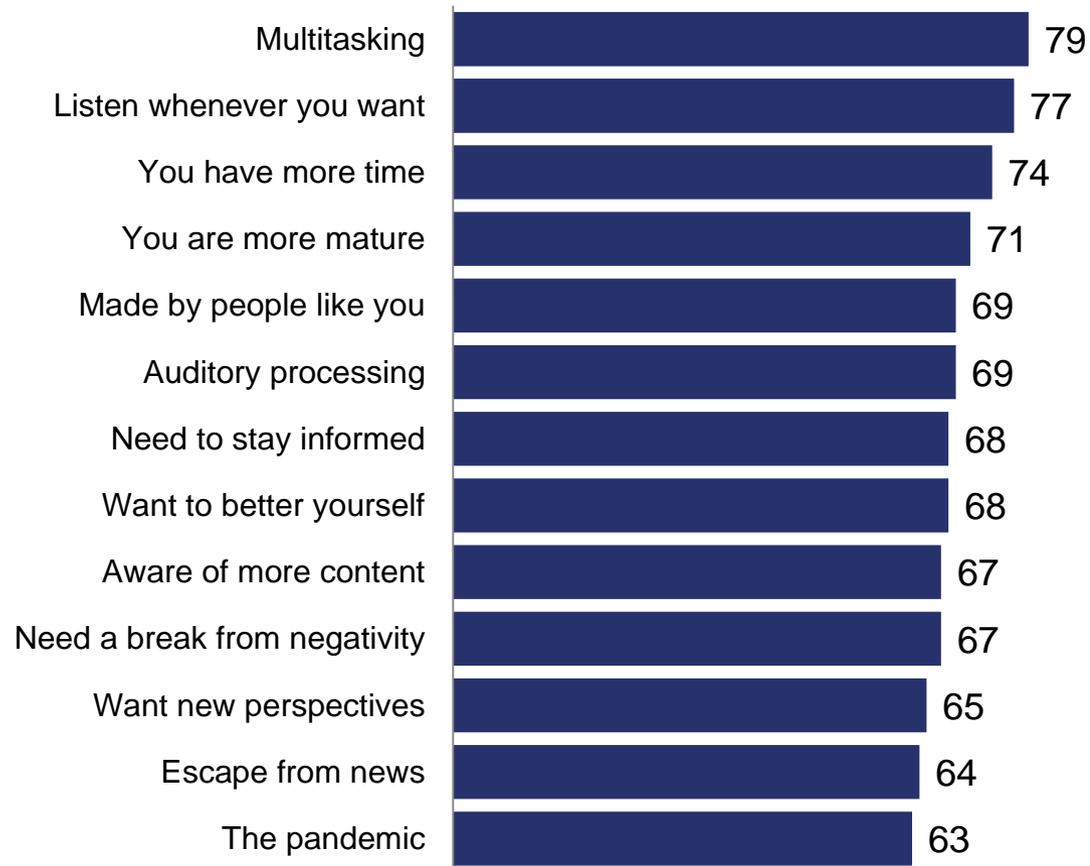
**Less interest in music**

Want to improve or **better yourself**

You want, **positivity, motivation** or **encouragement**

# Reasons Why People Listen to More Spoken Word Audio

Base: Listening to Spoken Word Audio More



% saying reason applies

Source: The Spoken Word Audio Report from NPR and Edison Research; U.S. online population 18+

#SpokenWordAudio

# Reasons Why People Listen to More Spoken Word Audio

Base: Listening to Spoken Word Audio More

Convenience  
& Multitasking

Personal  
Growth

More Time &  
Opportunity

Better  
Content

Mental Health

Education

Identity &  
Religion

Awareness &  
Influence

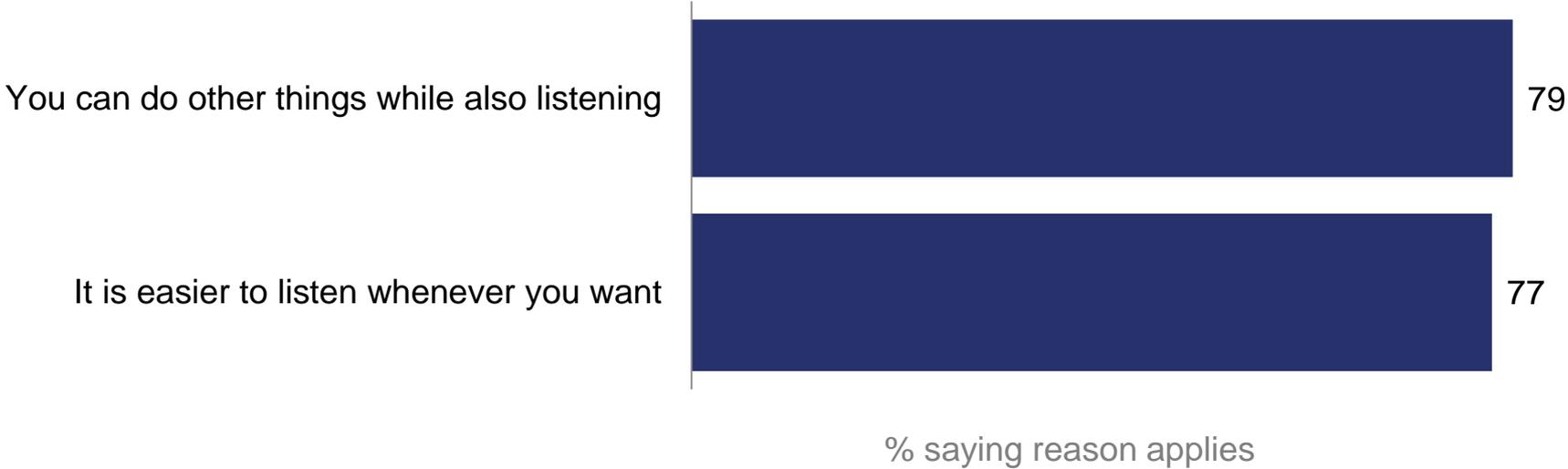
Less Interest  
in Music

Source: The Spoken Word Audio Report from NPR and Edison Research; U.S. online population 18+

# Reasons Why People Listen to More Spoken Word Audio

Base: Listening to Spoken Word Audio More

## Convenience & Multitasking



**Indexing high in this category:**

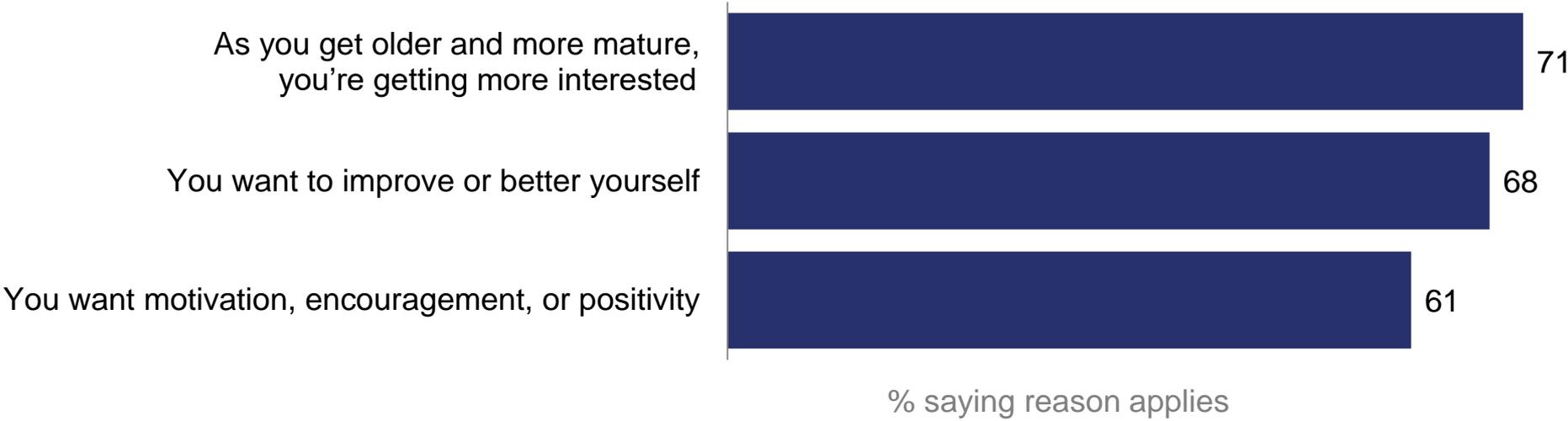
- Women
- Age 55+

Source: The Spoken Word Audio Report from NPR and Edison Research; U.S. online population 18+

# Reasons Why People Listen to More Spoken Word Audio

Base: Listening to Spoken Word Audio More

## Personal Growth



**Indexing high in this category:**

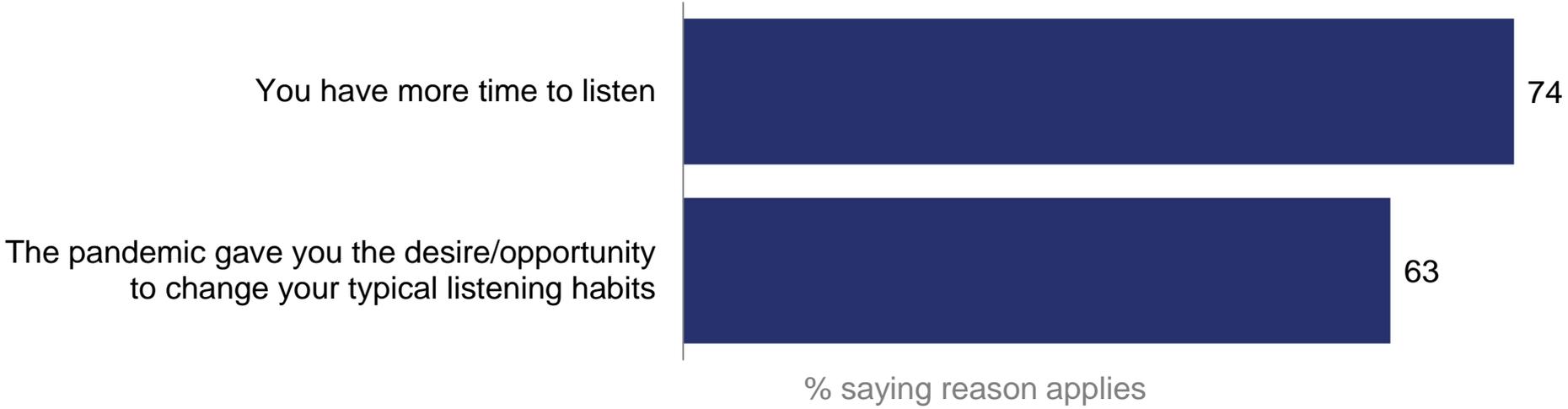
- Women
- Age 55+

Source: The Spoken Word Audio Report from NPR and Edison Research; U.S. online population 18+

# Reasons Why People Listen to More Spoken Word Audio

Base: Listening to Spoken Word Audio More

## More Time and Opportunity



**Indexing high in this category:**

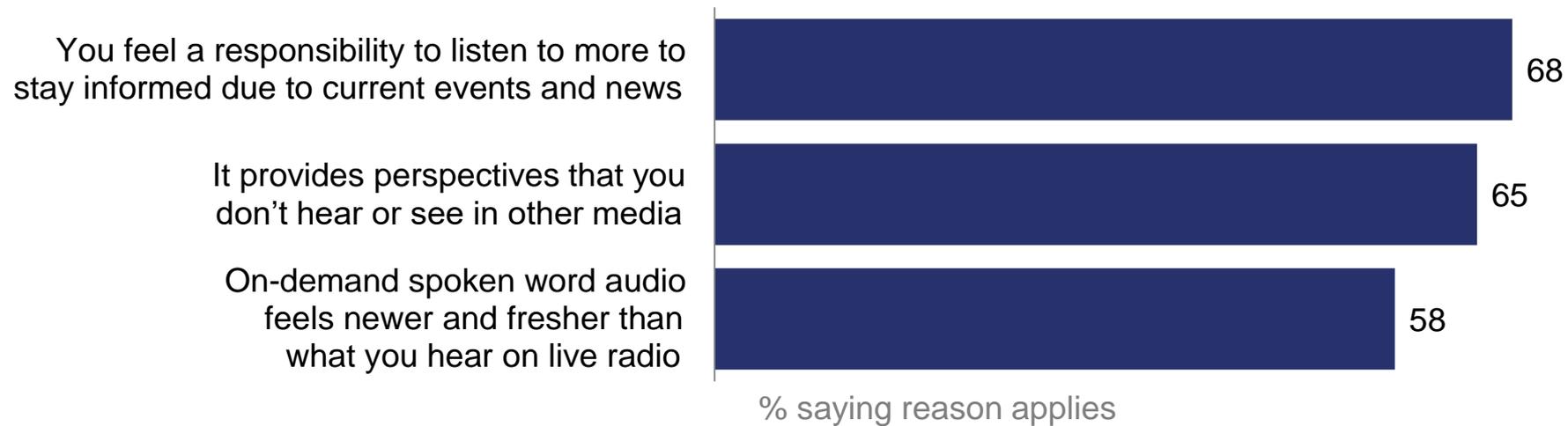
- Women
- White/Other
- Those listening more due to COVID-19

Source: The Spoken Word Audio Report from NPR and Edison Research; U.S. online population 18+

# Reasons Why People Listen to More Spoken Word Audio

Base: Listening to Spoken Word Audio More

## Better Content



Indexing high in this category:

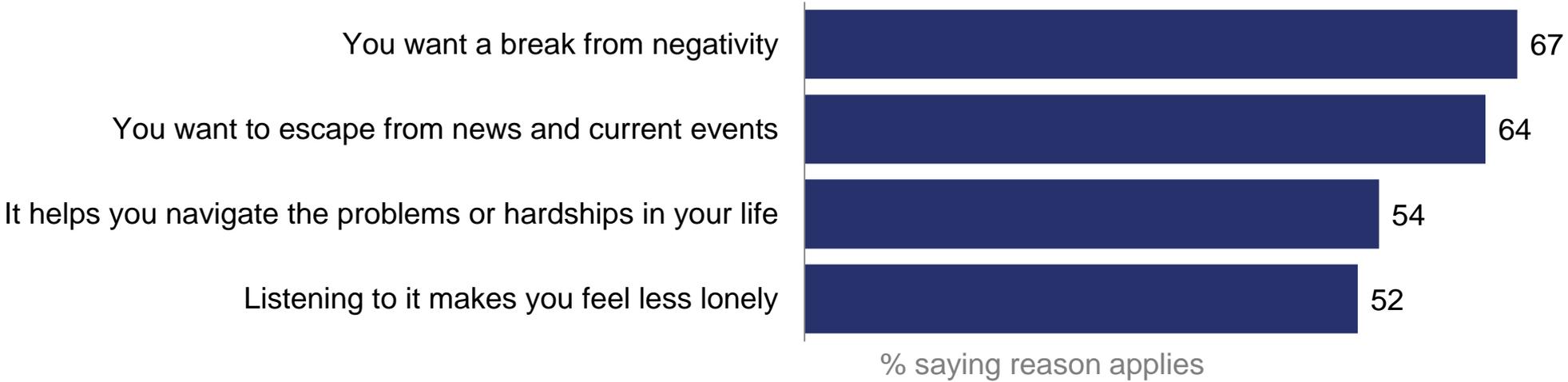
- White/Other
- Age 55+

Source: The Spoken Word Audio Report from NPR and Edison Research; U.S. online population 18+

# Reasons Why People Listen to More Spoken Word Audio

Base: Listening to Spoken Word Audio More

## Mental Health



**Indexing high in this category:**

- Men
- Age 18-34

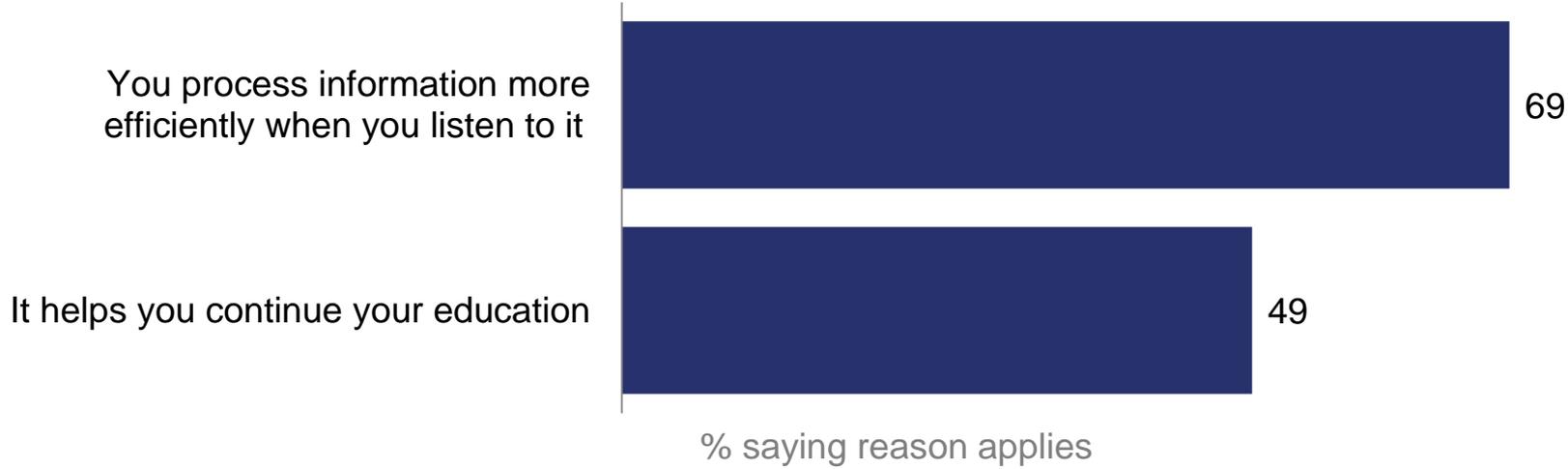
**Top 3 reasons for:**

- Hispanic/Latino
- African American

# Reasons Why People Listen to More Spoken Word Audio

Base: Listening to Spoken Word Audio More

## Education



**Indexing high in this category:**

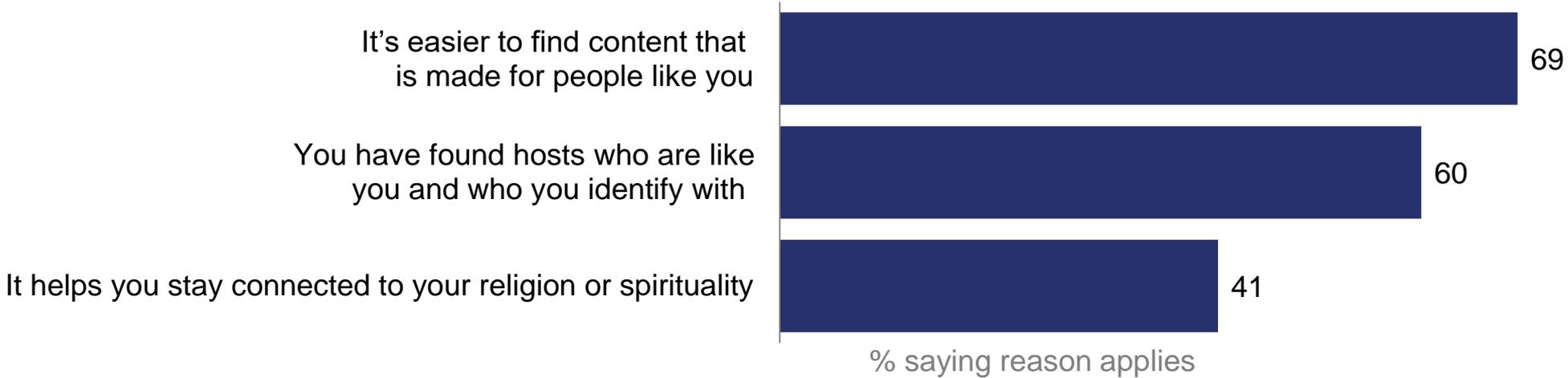
- Men
- Age 35-54

Source: The Spoken Word Audio Report from NPR and Edison Research; U.S. online population 18+

# Reasons Why People Listen to More Spoken Word Audio

Base: Listening to Spoken Word Audio More

## Identity & Religion



**Indexing high in this category:**

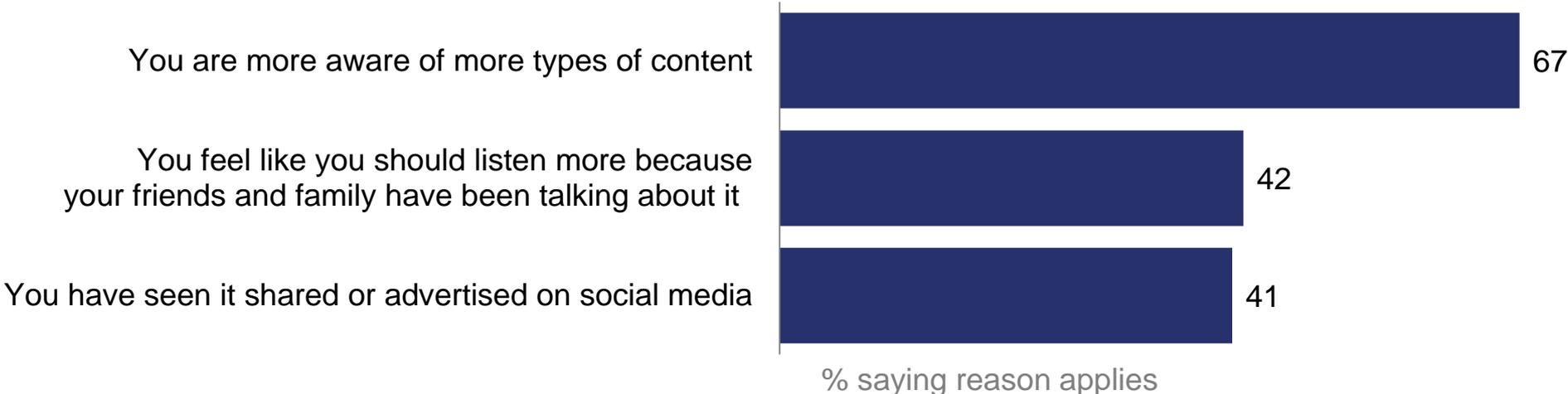
- Hispanic/Latino
- African American
- Age 18-34

Source: The Spoken Word Audio Report from NPR and Edison Research; U.S. online population 18+

# Reasons Why People Listen to More Spoken Word Audio

Base: Listening to Spoken Word Audio More

## Awareness & Influence



**Indexing high in this category:**

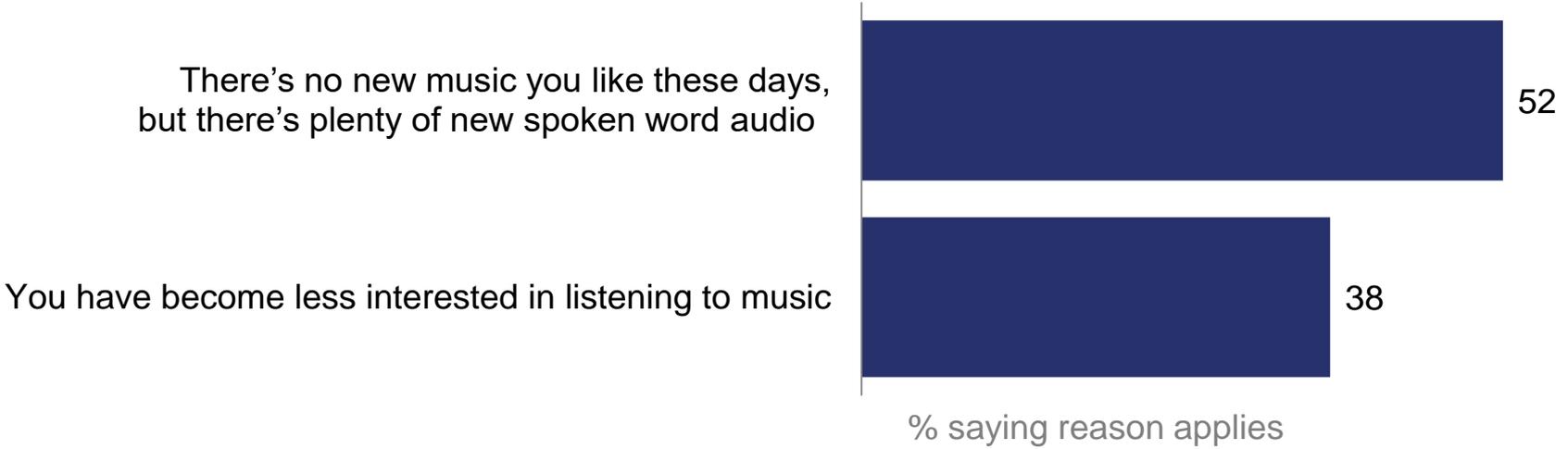
- Hispanic/Latino
- Age 18-34
- Age 35-54
- White/Other

Source: The Spoken Word Audio Report from NPR and Edison Research; U.S. online population 18+

# Reasons Why People Listen to More Spoken Word Audio

Base: Listening to Spoken Word Audio More

## Less Interest In Music



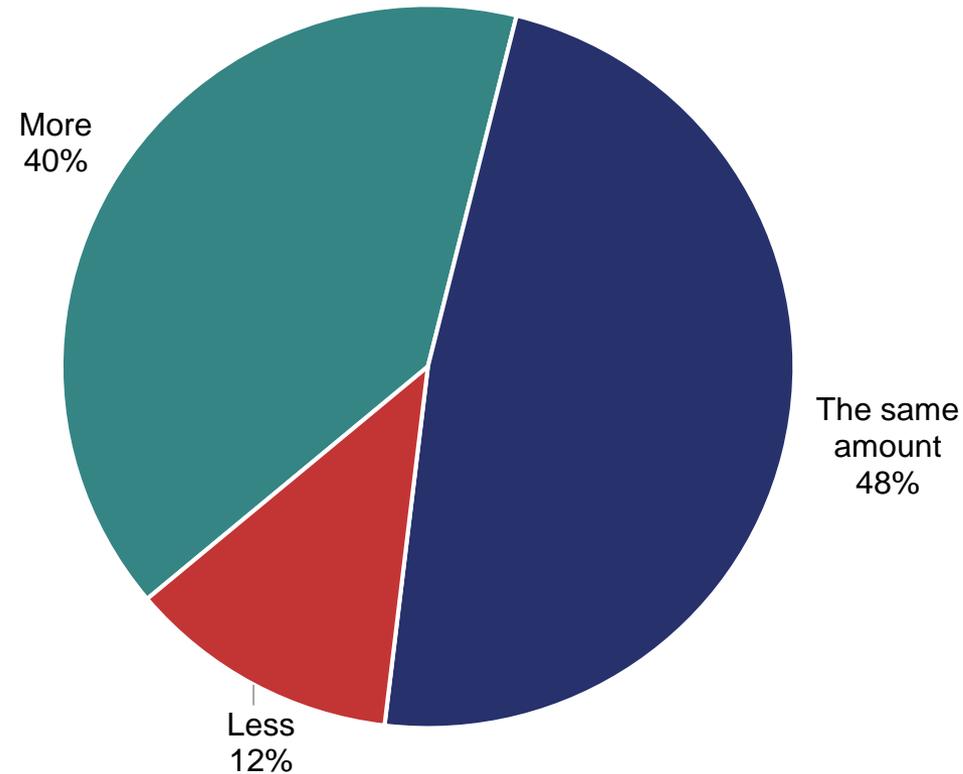
**Indexing high in this category:**

- Men
- African American

Source: The Spoken Word Audio Report from NPR and Edison Research; U.S. online population 18+

# “As a result of COVID-19, are you listening to spoken word audio...?”

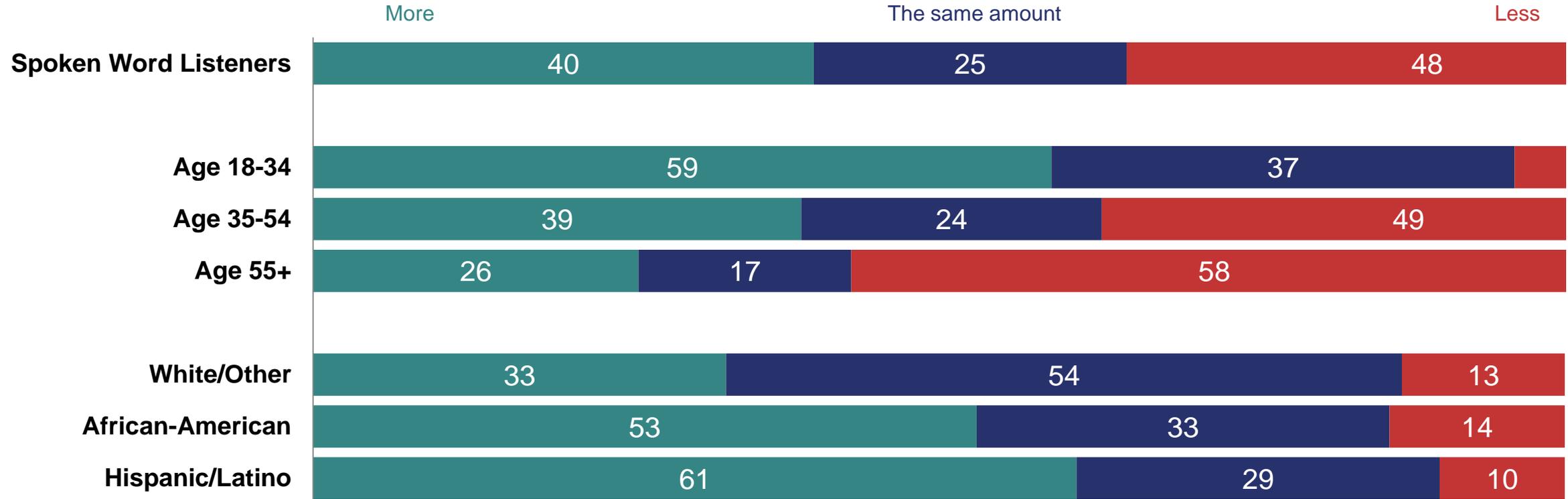
Base: U.S. Online Population 18+ Monthly Spoken Word Audio Listeners



Source: The Spoken Word Audio Report from NPR and Edison Research; U.S. online population 18+

# “As a result of COVID-19, are you listening to spoken word audio...?”

Base: U.S. Online Population 18+ Monthly Spoken Word Audio Listeners

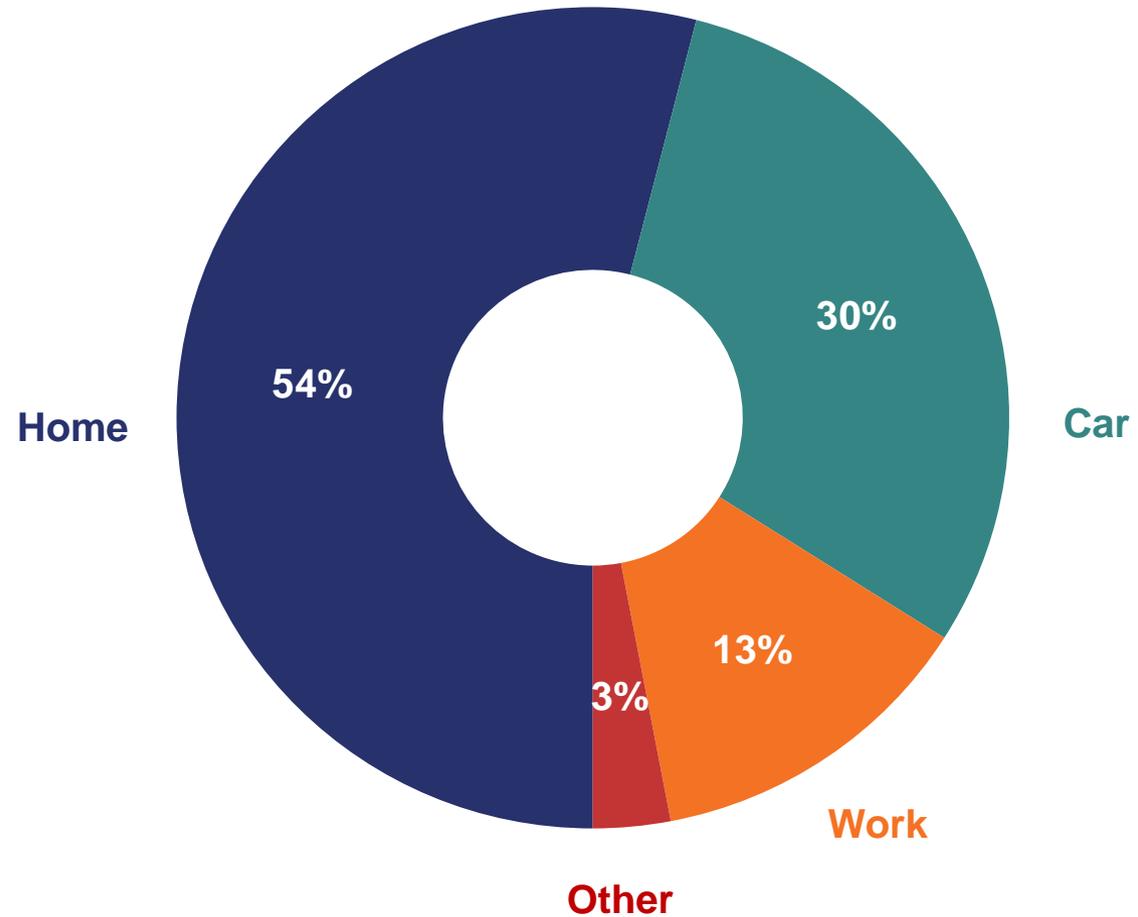


Source: The Spoken Word Audio Report from NPR and Edison Research; U.S. online population 18+

Q2 2020

# Distribution of Spoken Word Audio Listening by Location

U.S. Population 13+

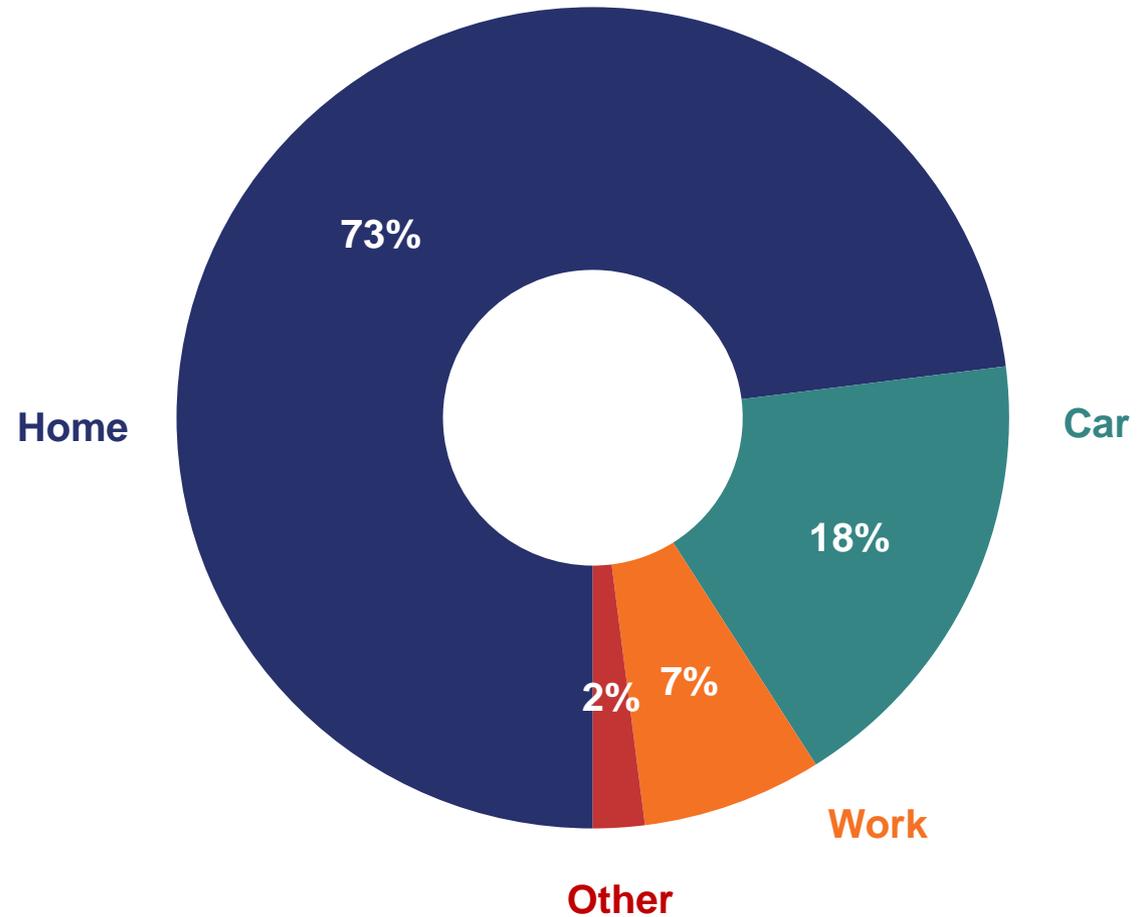


Source: Edison Research Share of Ear © 2020

Q2 2020 UNIQUE

# Distribution of Spoken Word Audio Listening by Location

U.S. Population 13+



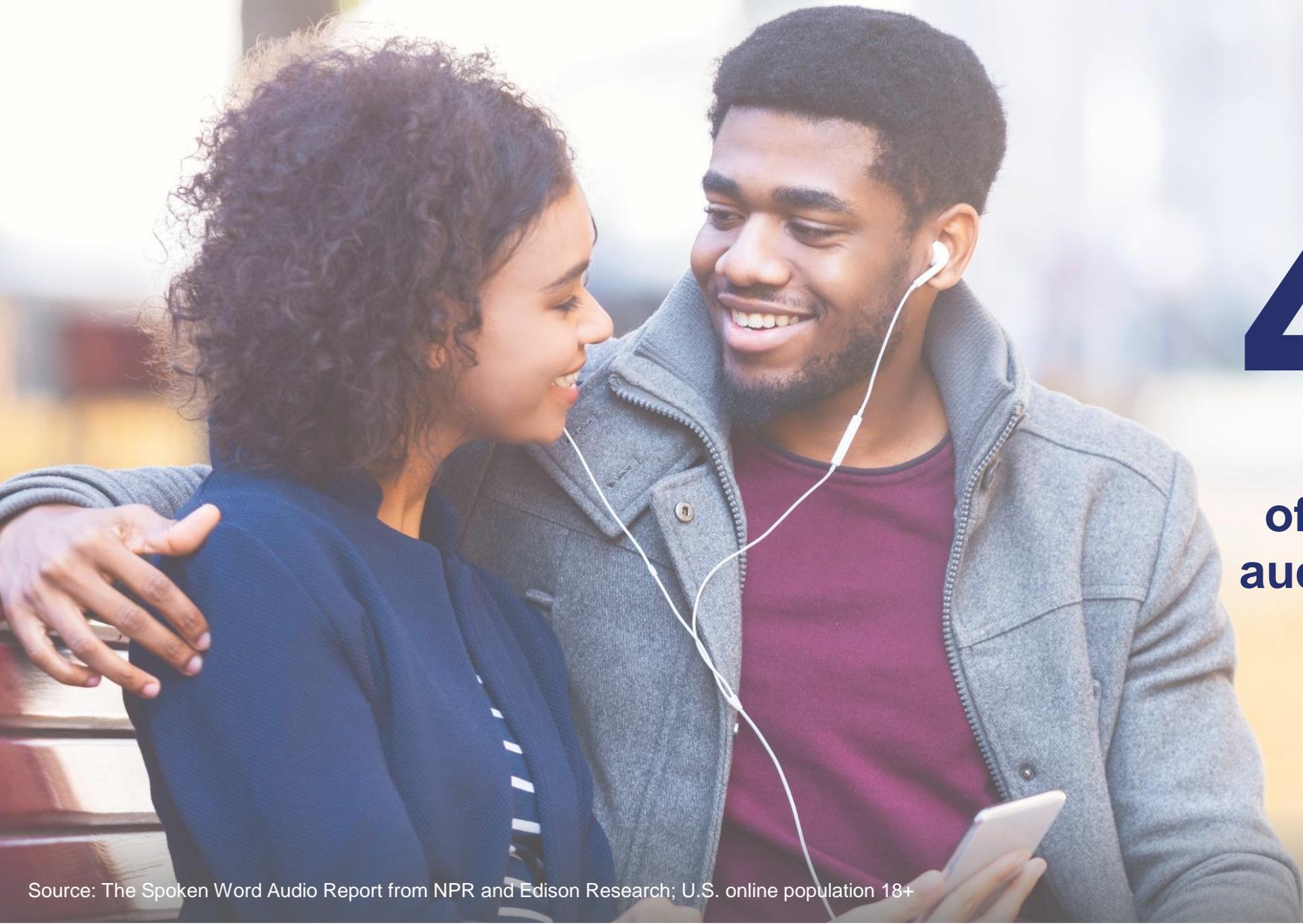
Source: Edison Research Share of Ear © 2020



# 52%

**of monthly spoken word audio listeners  
said they exclusively listen alone**

Source: The Spoken Word Audio Report from NPR and Edison Research; U.S. online population 18+



# 48%

**of monthly spoken word  
audio listeners spend time  
listening with others**

Source: The Spoken Word Audio Report from NPR and Edison Research; U.S. online population 18+

# Key Findings

1. Spoken Word's share of audio listening has increased by 30% over the last six years; 8% this year
2. Spoken word audio's growth is driven by large increases among women, younger listeners, African-Americans and Latinos
3. Three-quarters of all Americans listen to spoken word audio each month; 43% daily
4. In addition to the convenience and multitasking benefits long recognized for spoken word listening, other strong motivators for increased listening are personal growth, better content, and spoken word's ability to improve mental health



# THE SPOKEN WORD AUDIO REPORT

Learn more at  
[npr.org/spokenwordaudio](https://npr.org/spokenwordaudio)



#SpokenWordAudio