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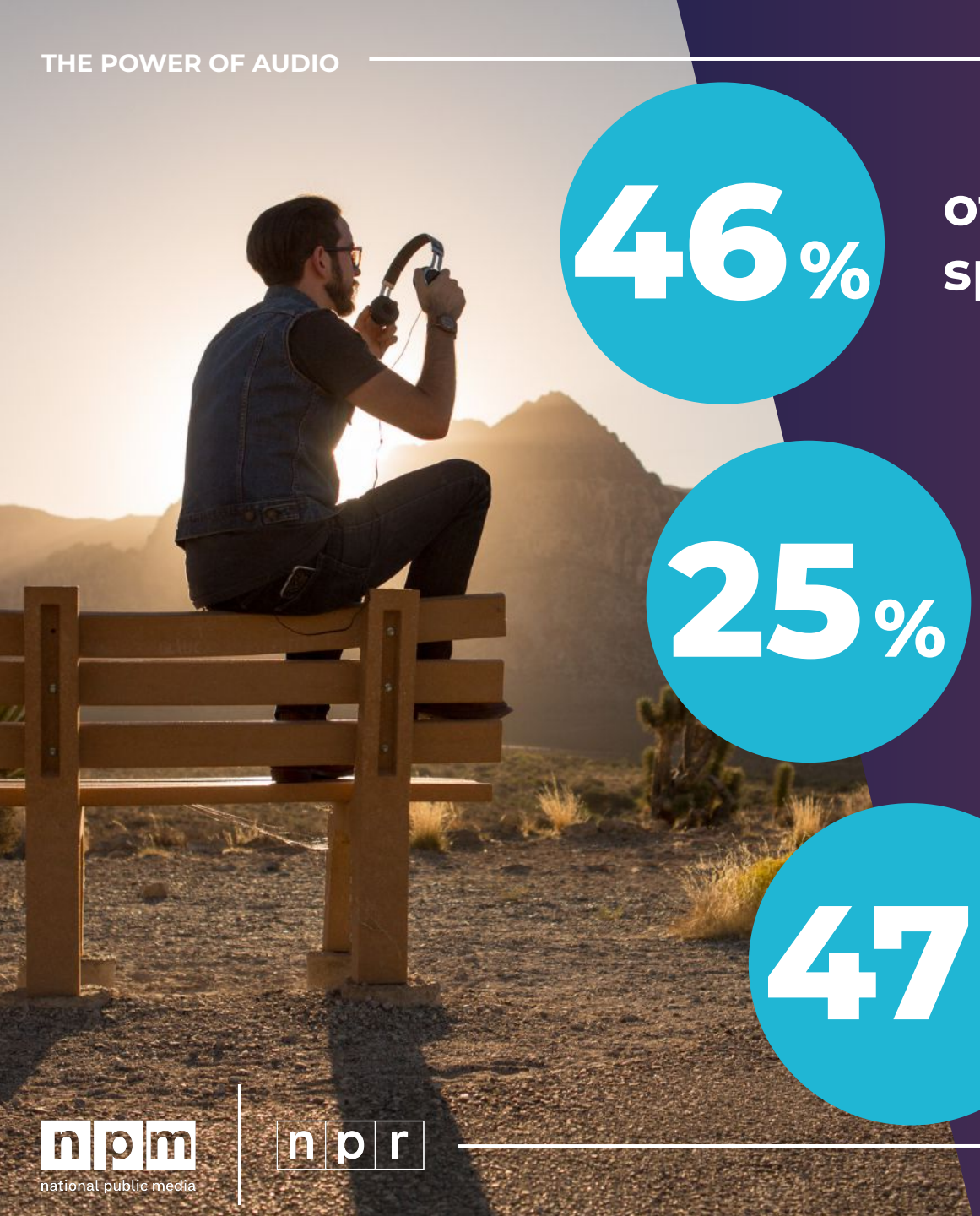
The Power of Audio for Brand Stories

The State of Audio



46% of the population age 13+ listens to spoken word audio daily, **131M people**

25% of daily audio time among those ages 13+ goes to spoken word

47% of spoken word audio listening is done via mobile devices

Source: Edison Research, Share of Ear Q1 2026

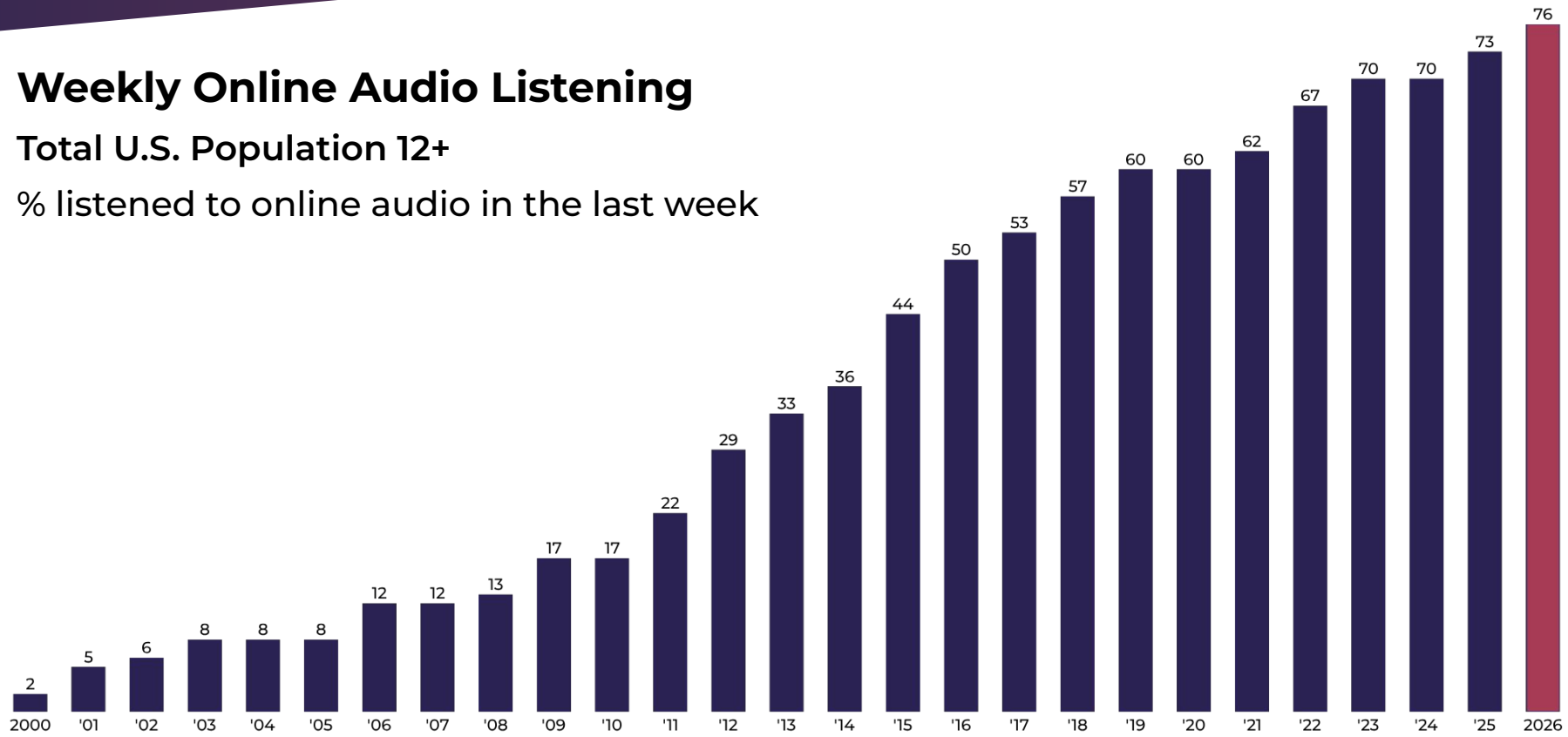
Streaming audio listening is at an all-time high.

Estimated
219 Million

Weekly Online Audio Listening

Total U.S. Population 12+

% listened to online audio in the last week



Source: Edison Research Infinite Dial 2026. Online Audio = Listening to AM/FM radio stations online and/or listening to streamed audio content available only on the internet

Podcasting

Podcasting is achieving record high listenership.

58% of the population age 13+ listens to podcasts monthly, **167M people**

45% of the population age 13+ listens to podcasts weekly, **130M people**

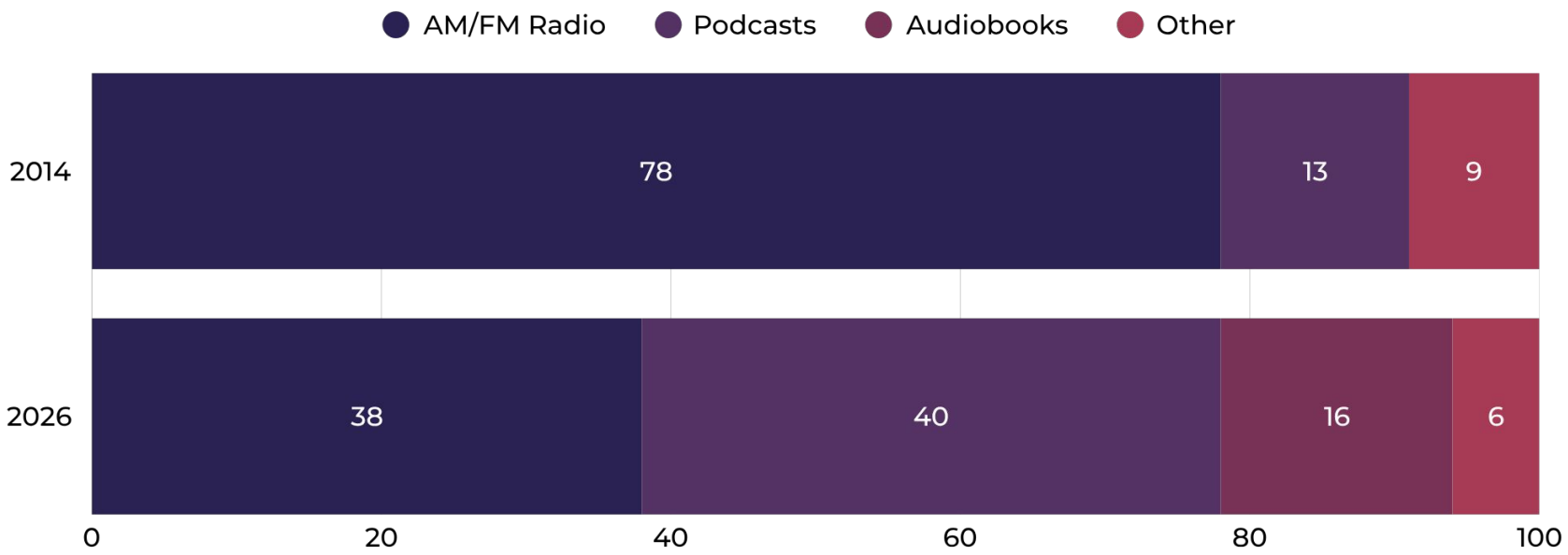
80% of the U.S. 12+ population have consumed a podcast

Source: Edison Research, Infinite Dial 2026; consume = watched or listened to a podcast

Podcasts now command the largest share of spoken word audio time.

Distribution of Spoken Word Audio Listening by Platform

Among Americans 13+



Source: Edison Research Share of Ear ® Q1 2026; "AM/FM Radio" includes over the air and radio streams
"Other" includes streaming audio, satellite radio, audiobooks (in 2014), etc.

21%

of all the time spent listening to podcasts goes to public radio.

Source: Edison Research, Share of Ear Q1 2026

Broadcast Radio

Radio maintains its wide reach & value for sponsors.

#1 in **daily reach** among audio channels[1]

93% of all U.S. adults are reached by radio every month[2]

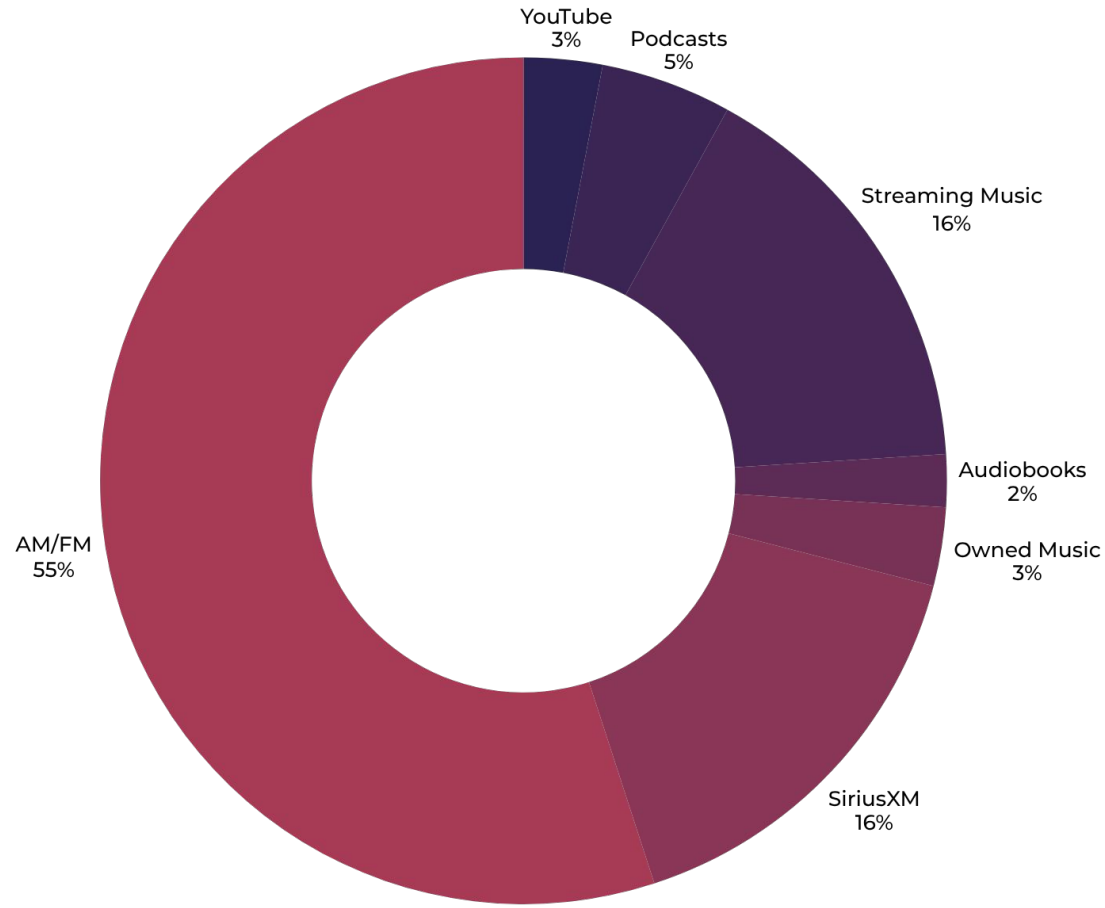
61% of all **daily ad supported audio time** goes to radio[2]

Sources: 1. Edison Research Share of Ear ® Q1 2026; "AM/FM Radio" includes over the air and radio streams;
2. Nielsen Audio today 2026, among US adults 18+.

Radio continues to be the dominant media in the car.

Audio Listening Time in a Car or Truck

Total U.S. Population 13+



Source: Edison Research, Share of Ear, Q1 2026

People turn to radio for news, connection, and fun.

56% feel a connection while listening to radio[1]

61% listen to radio because of specific DJs/hosts/shows[1]

47% agree radio puts me in a good mood[2]

Sources: 1. Jacobs Media Tech Survey 2025; 2. 2025 MRI-Simmons Fall Doublebase

45%

# of all time spent listening to news goes to NPR/public radio

Source: Edison Research, Share of Ear, Q1 2026

The Voice-Activated World

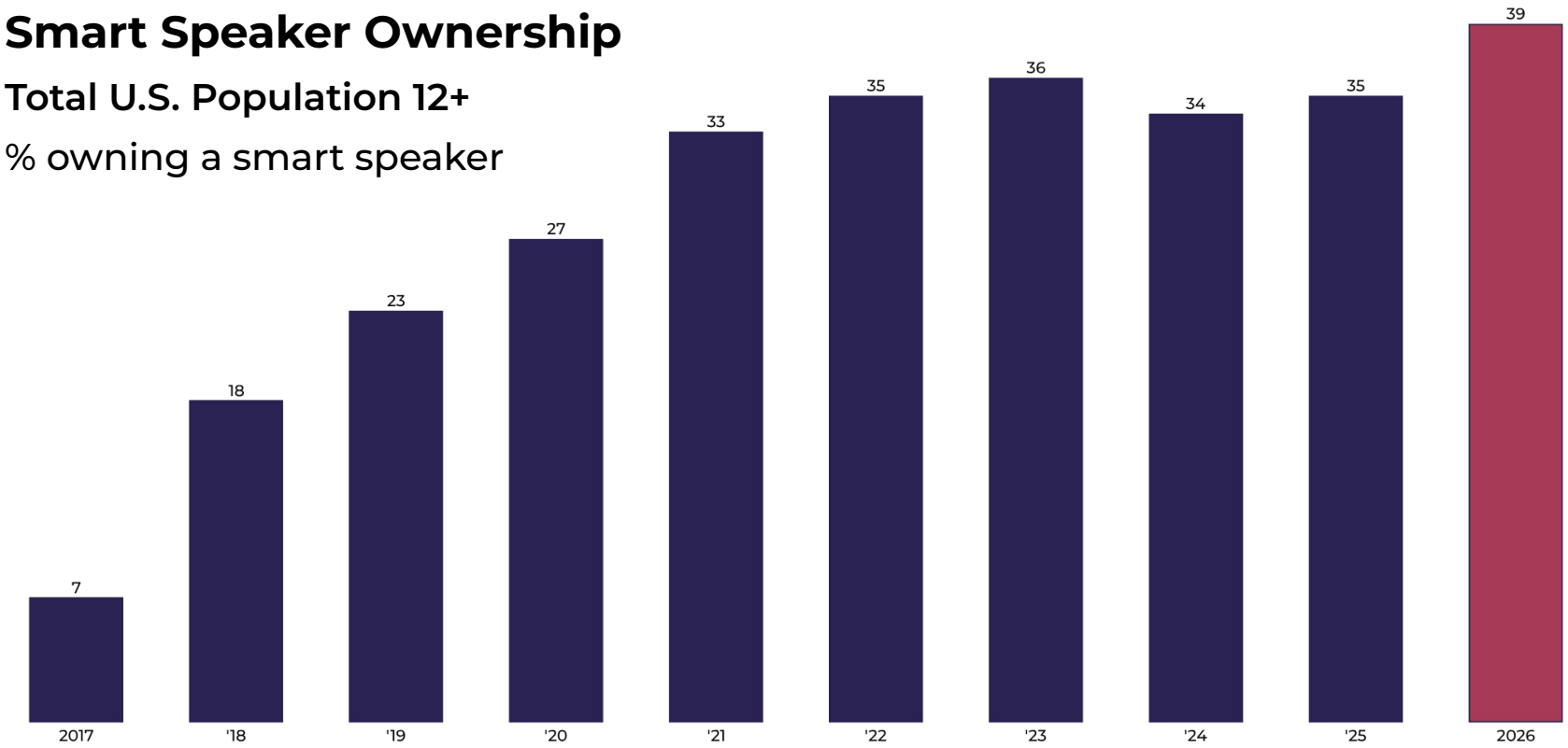
Smart Speaker ownership is growing again.

Estimated
112 Million

Smart Speaker Ownership

Total U.S. Population 12+

% owning a smart speaker



Source: Edison Research, Infinite Dial 2026

81% own a smart TV

91% own a smartphone

39% own a smart speaker

Source: Edison Research Infinite Dial 2026, among U.S. Population 12+

Marketers are underestimating the power of audio.

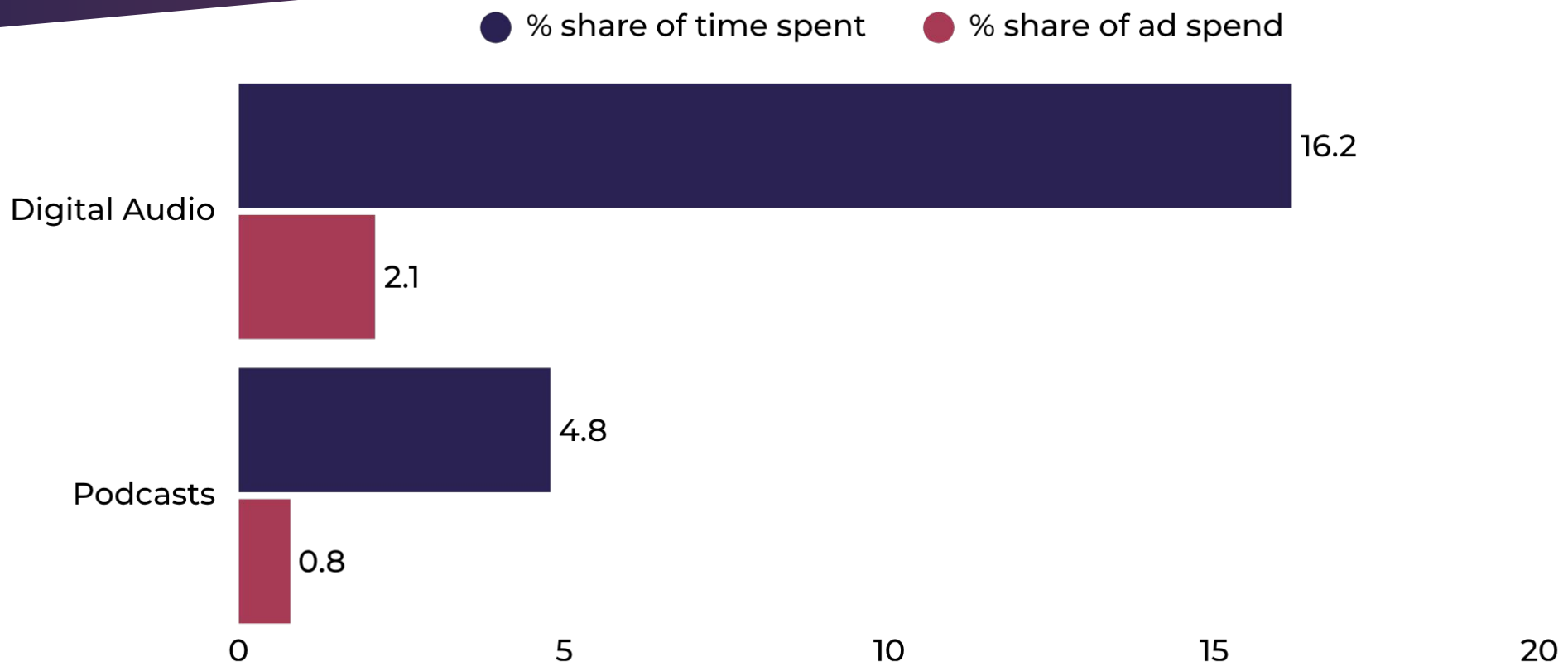
ROI is outpacing perceived efficacy for podcasts & radio.

1.5x **weighted ROI for podcasts**, despite only 54% perceived effectiveness

2x **weighted ROI for radio**, despite only 46% perceived effectiveness

Source: The Advertising Landscape from Sounds Profitable; ranked among 22 media platforms.

Emarketer: Audio is underrepresented in ad spend.



Source: Emarketer: US Digital Audio Forecast Overview 2026

Audio drives higher message recall.

86% of respondents recalled podcast sponsorships, **the #1 media platform for recall**

81% of respondents recalled radio sponsorships, **the #3 media platform for recall**

Source: The Advertising Landscape from Sounds Profitable; ranked among 22 media platforms.

Listeners trust the content on audio platforms.

51% agree the content is generally factual and accurate on podcasts

51% agree the content is generally factual and accurate on radio

Source: The Advertising Landscape from Sounds Profitable

And that trust translates to brands.

45% agree the advertising on podcasts feels authentic and natural

50% agree the advertising on radio feels authentic and natural

Source: The Advertising Landscape from Sounds Profitable

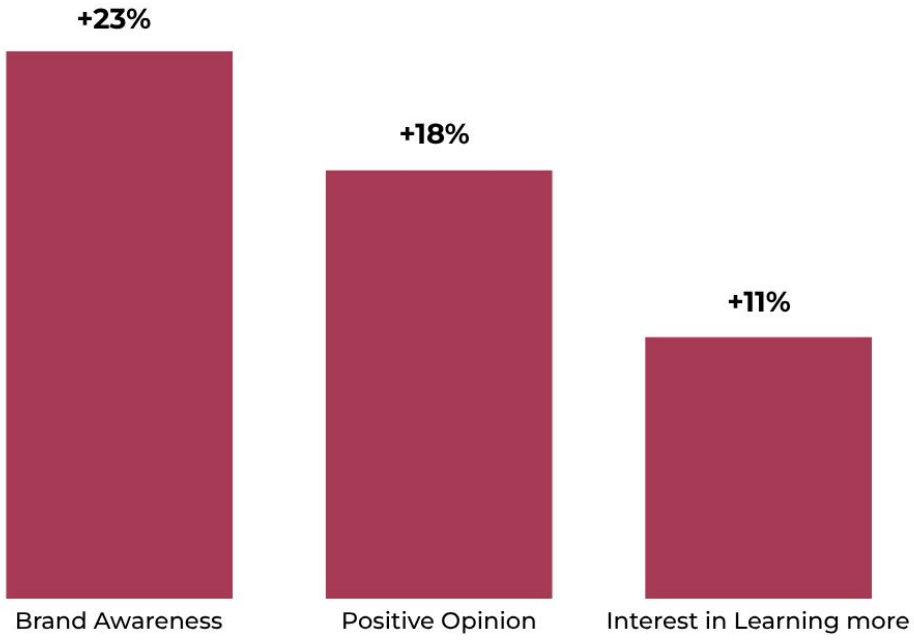
Reaching an affluent & influential audience.

	All Radio	NPR Radio	Podcasts	NPR Podcasts	Smart Speaker Audio
Core Age:	18-49 50%	**35-64** **50%**	18-49 65%	**18-49** **74%**	25-54 56%
% College degree+	33%	**72%**	46%	**52%**	41%
Median HH Income	$88k	**$127K**	$114K	**$128K**	$113K
Business Decision Makers index vs. US average	94	**180**	138	**159**	141

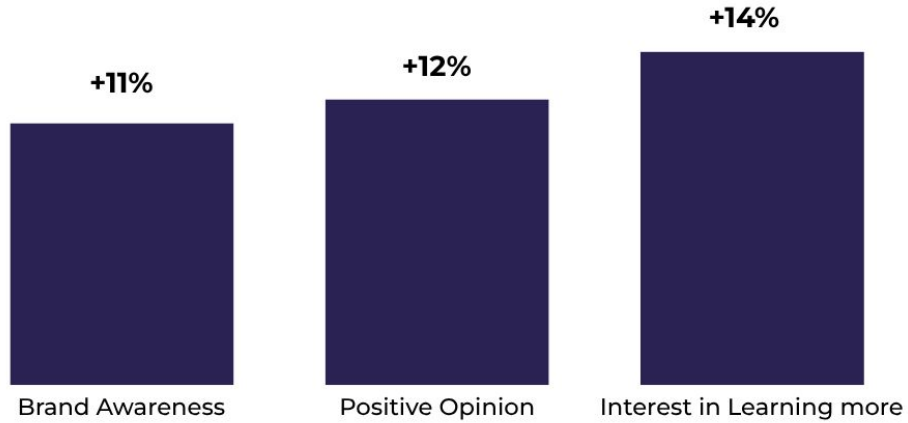
Source: MRI-Simmons Fall 2025 Doublebase and April 2026 Podcast Study

NPR drives consistently strong impact across platforms.

Average Lift from NPR Radio Campaigns



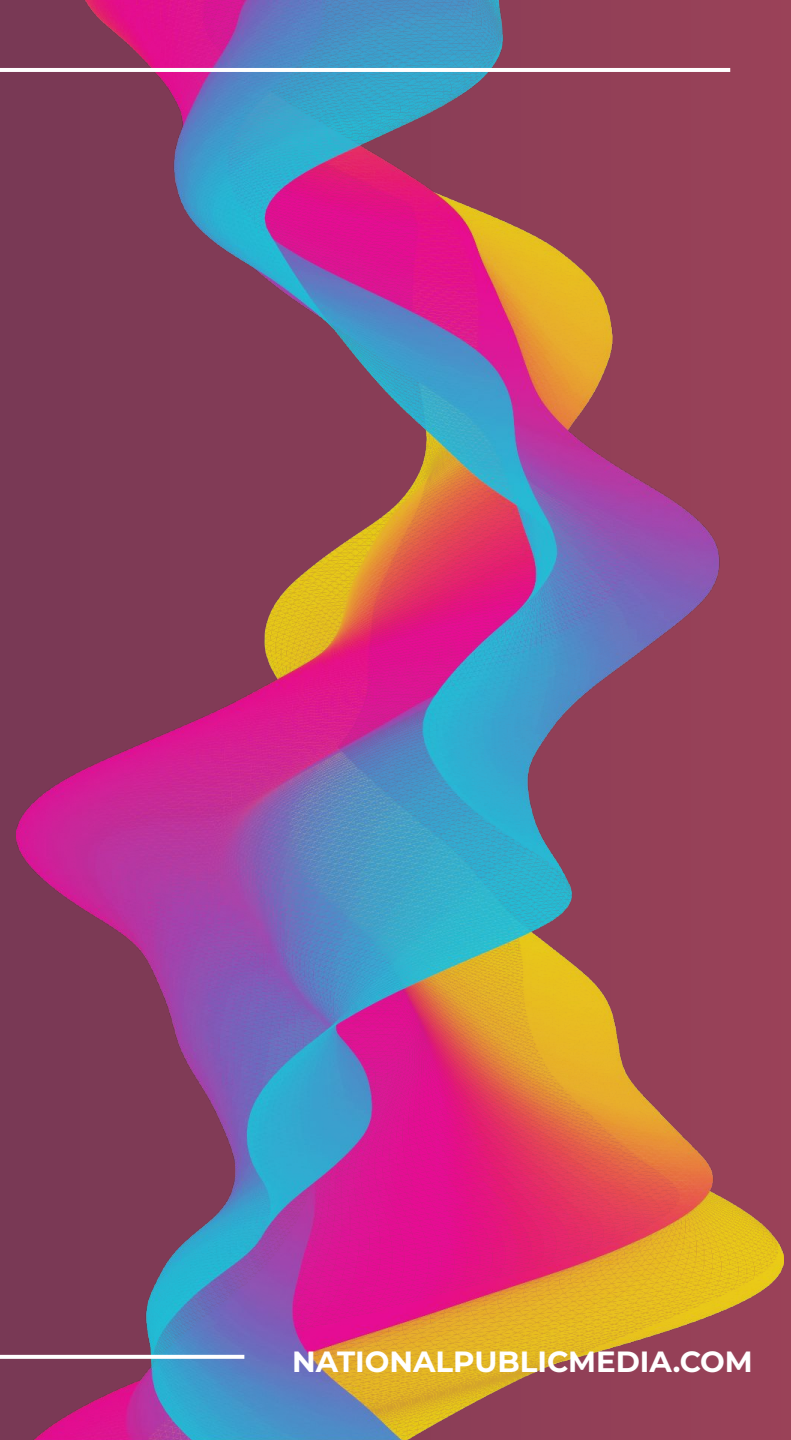
Average Lift from NPR Podcast Campaigns



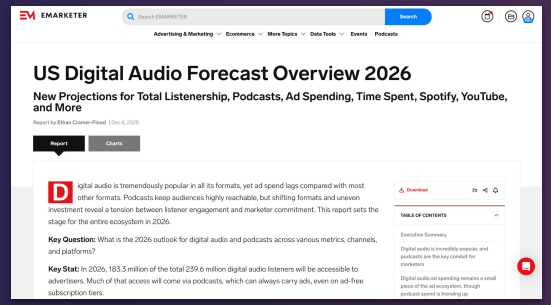
Source: Radio – Kantar NPR Sponsorship Studies 2019-2025. Lift for NPR radio listeners vs nonlisteners.
Podcast – Veritonic, NPR Podcast Brand Lift Studies, 2023-2025. Lift for campaign-exposed listeners vs. unexposed NPR listeners.

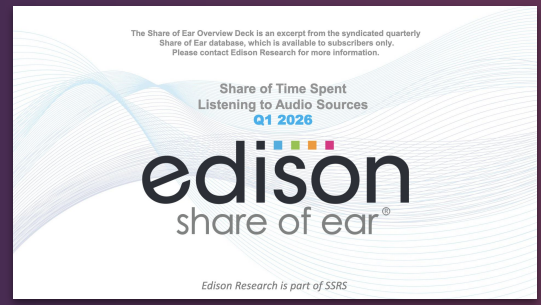
Key Takeaways

- More people than ever before are listening to streaming audio, and spoken word is becoming a daily habit for a wide audience.
- Podcasting is breaking it's own records and is now the #1 platform by share of spoken word listening.
- Radio is maintaining its impressive reach and dominates ad-supported audio listening.
- As smart device ownership continues to grow, audio platforms are becoming increasingly accessible.
- Audio is a largely untapped market for marketers, with ad spend not matching up to podcast & radio's high scores for ROI, recall, and trust.



Resources


EMARKETER
US Digital Audio Forecast Overview 2026
New Projections for Total Listenership, Podcasts, Ad Spending, Time Spent, Spotify, YouTube, and More
Report
Charts


The Share of Ear Overview Deck is an excerpt from the syndicated quarterly Share of Ear database, which is available to subscribers only. Please contact Edison Research for more information.
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Listening to Audio Sources
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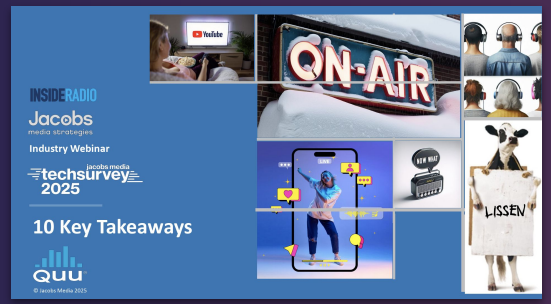
March 2026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MRI | SIMMONS
A snapshot from
MRI-Simmons' 2026 Podcast Study
Annual Report:
The Evolving Podcast Experience
How U.S. Engagement with the Medium is Changing

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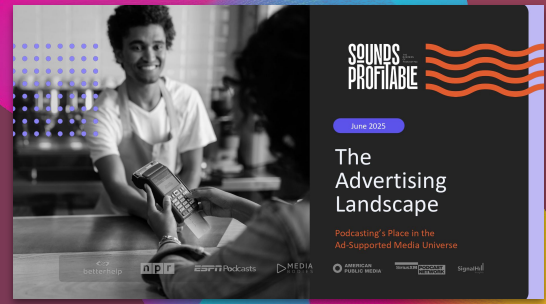
The Ultimate Study of Americans


SOUNDS PROFITABLE
June 2025
The Advertising Landscape
Podcasting's Place in the Ad-Supported Media Universe