



THE SPOKEN WORD AUDIO REPORT



#SpokenWordAudio

The Spoken Word Audio Report 2021

Share of Ear[®]

- 4054 respondents
- National sample ages 13 and older
- Online and offline
 - Tracked since 2014
- Offered in English and Spanish

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)

Spoken Word Audio Listener Interviews

Key Findings

1. Spoken Word's share of audio listening has increased by 40% over the last seven years; 8% this year
2. Spoken word audio's growth is driven by large increases in young and multicultural audiences
3. While most listeners cite the ability to multitask one of the main motivations for spoken word audio listening, young and multicultural audiences are more likely to cite other reasons such as connection, education, new perspectives, self-improvement



Spoken Word Audio's Overall Growth

Music
News
Sports
Talk/Personalities
Audiobooks



Spoken Word Audio



In the past month,

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

Source: The Spoken Word Audio Report 2021 from NPR and Edison Research; U.S. online population 18+



In 2021,

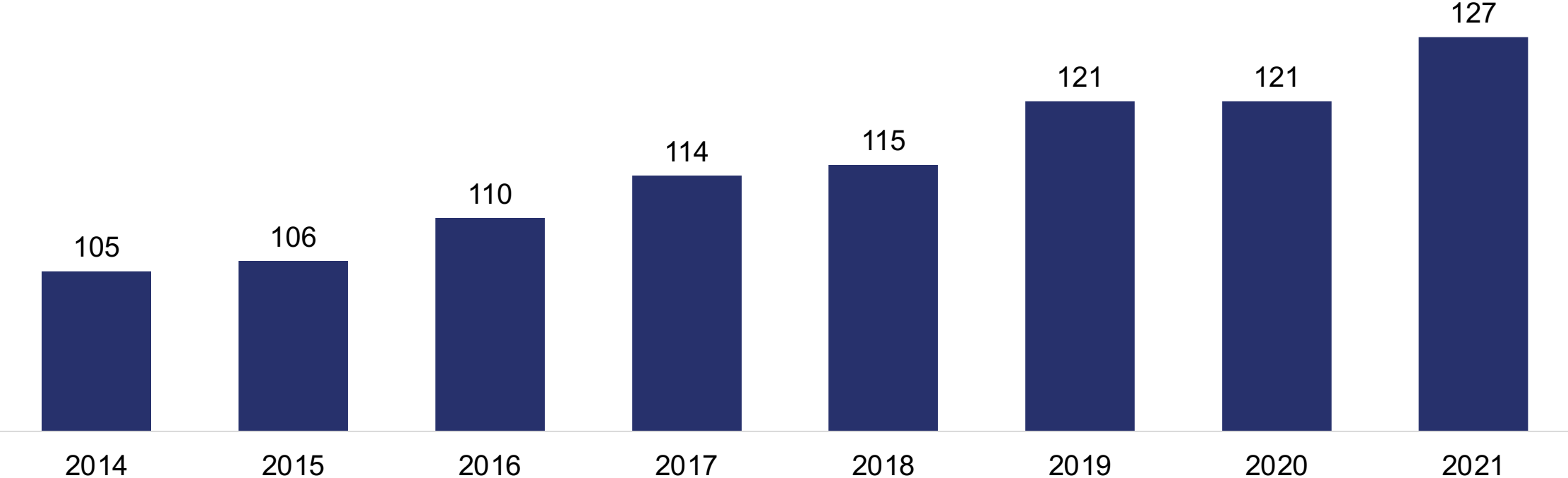
45% of the U.S. population listen to Spoken Word Audio daily

(Up from 43% in 2020)

Source: Edison Research Share of Ear © 2021; U.S. population 13+

Today, 22 Million More People Are Listening to Spoken Word Audio than Seven Years Ago

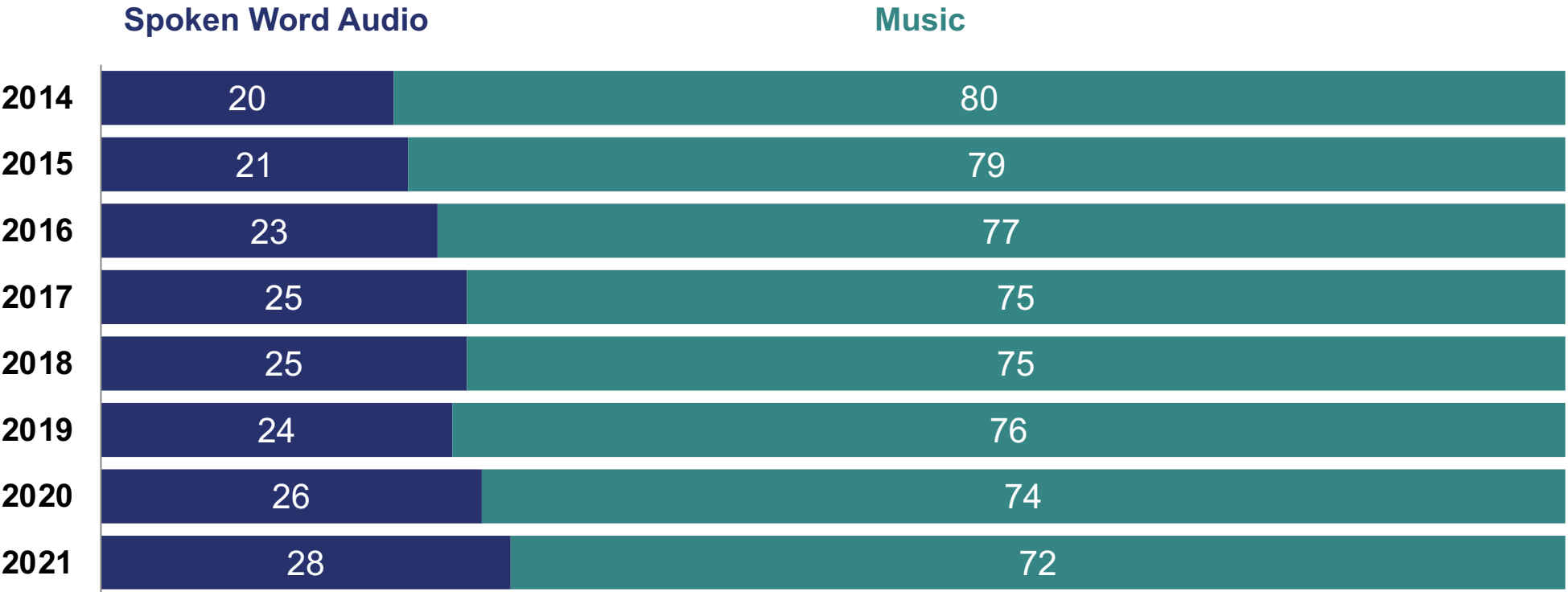
Listening to Spoken Word Audio Each Day (in millions)



Source: Edison Research Share of Ear © 2021; U.S. population 13+

Share of Listening by Content Type

U.S. Population 13+



Source: Edison Research Share of Ear ® 2021

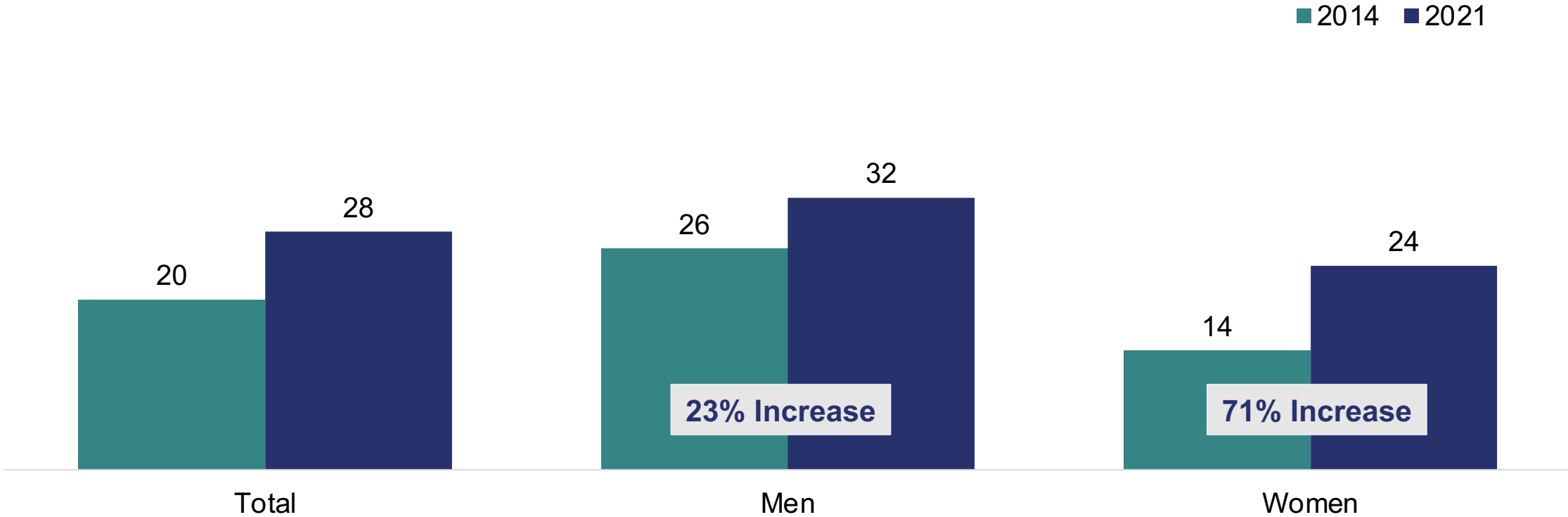


Spoken Word's share of audio listening has increased by 40% over the last seven years; 8% in the last year

Source: Edison Research Share of Ear ® 2021; U.S. population 13+

Share of Time Spent Listening to Spoken Word Audio

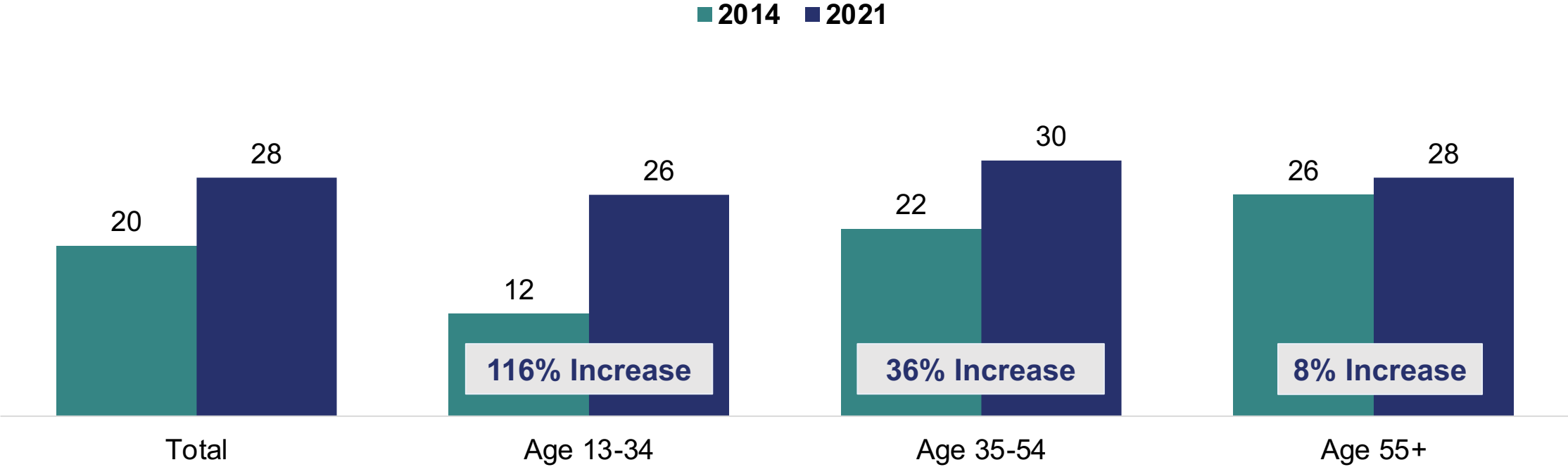
U.S. Population 13+



Source: Edison Research Share of Ear © 2021

Share of Time Spent Listening to Spoken Word Audio

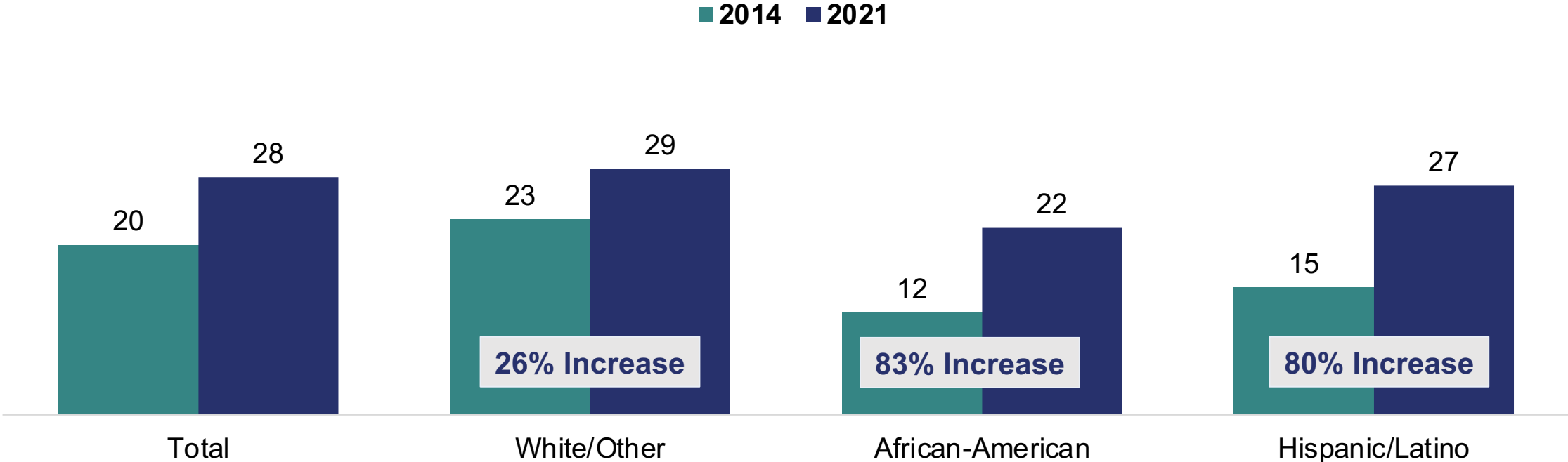
U.S. Population 13+



Source: Edison Research Share of Ear © 2021

Share of Time Spent Listening to Spoken Word Audio

U.S. Population 13+



Source: Edison Research Share of Ear © 2021

Spoken Word Audio's Overall Growth

Spoken word's share of audio listening has increased by...

- 40% over the last seven years
- 8% over the last year
- 22 million people over the last seven years!



Spoken word audio's share of audio listening is consistently growing

Spoken word's share of audio listening has increased by...

- 116% over the last seven years among 13-34 year olds
- 18% over the past year among 13-34 year olds
- 71% over the past seven years among women



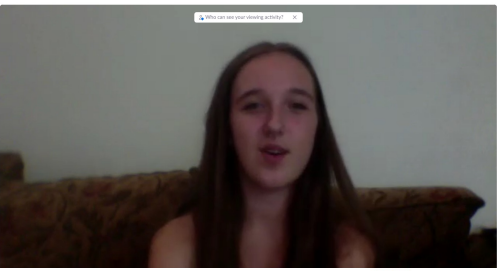
Young listeners are a major factor in the growth in spoken word audio

Spoken word's share of audio listening has increased by...

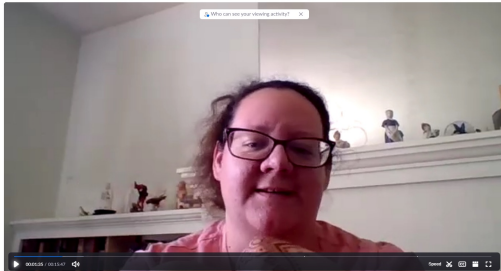
- 83% over the last seven years among Black listeners
- 80% over the last seven years among Latino listeners



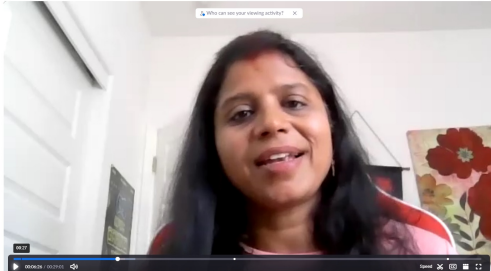
Multicultural listeners are a major factor in growth in spoken word audio



Online Interview - Brian D



Online Interview - Monica



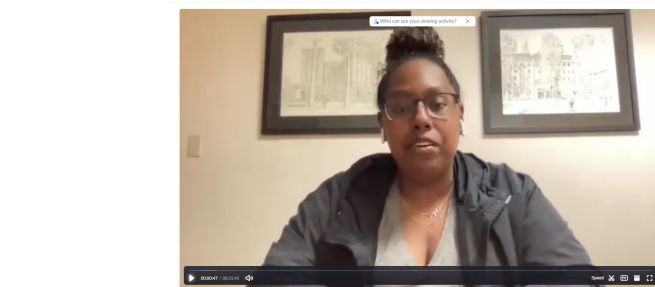
Online Interview - Fah D



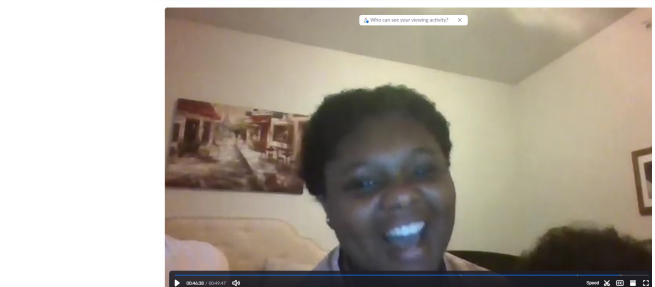
Online Interview - Michael C



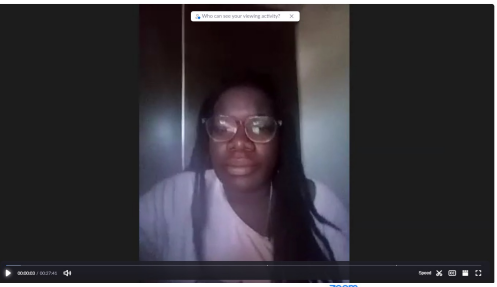
Online Interview - Hince



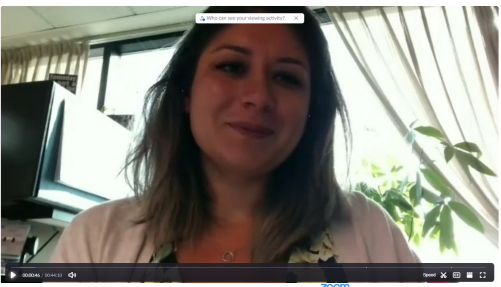
Online Interview - Carla C



Online Interview - Ray



Online Interview - Melvin H



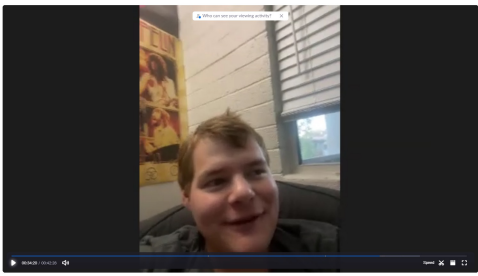
Online Interview - Rita C



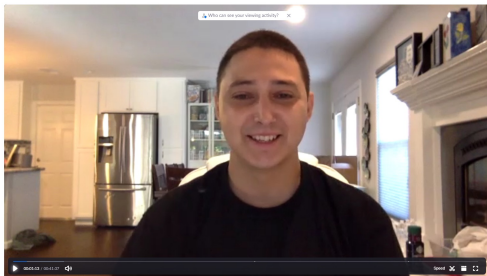
Online Interview - Subrat



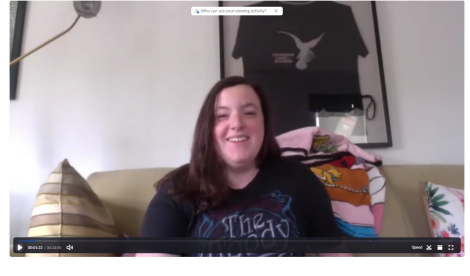
Online Interview - John



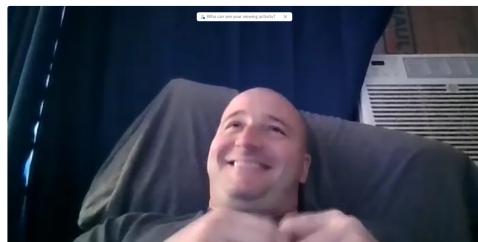
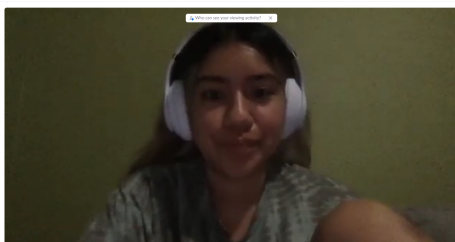
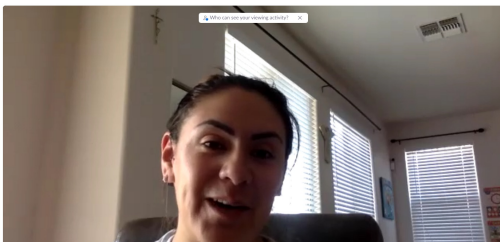
Online Interview - Steven L



Online Interview - Aadi



Online Interview - Victoria





Listeners turn to spoken word audio for **new perspectives**

Perspectives

Curious listeners are seeking a new point of view

Carla: When I'm listening to someone talk, I'm hearing someone's stories, I'm hearing how their stories interact with my stories. I'm hearing sort of an opinion or a narrative that's different. **And I really like the idea of seeing things from different sort of perspectives.**

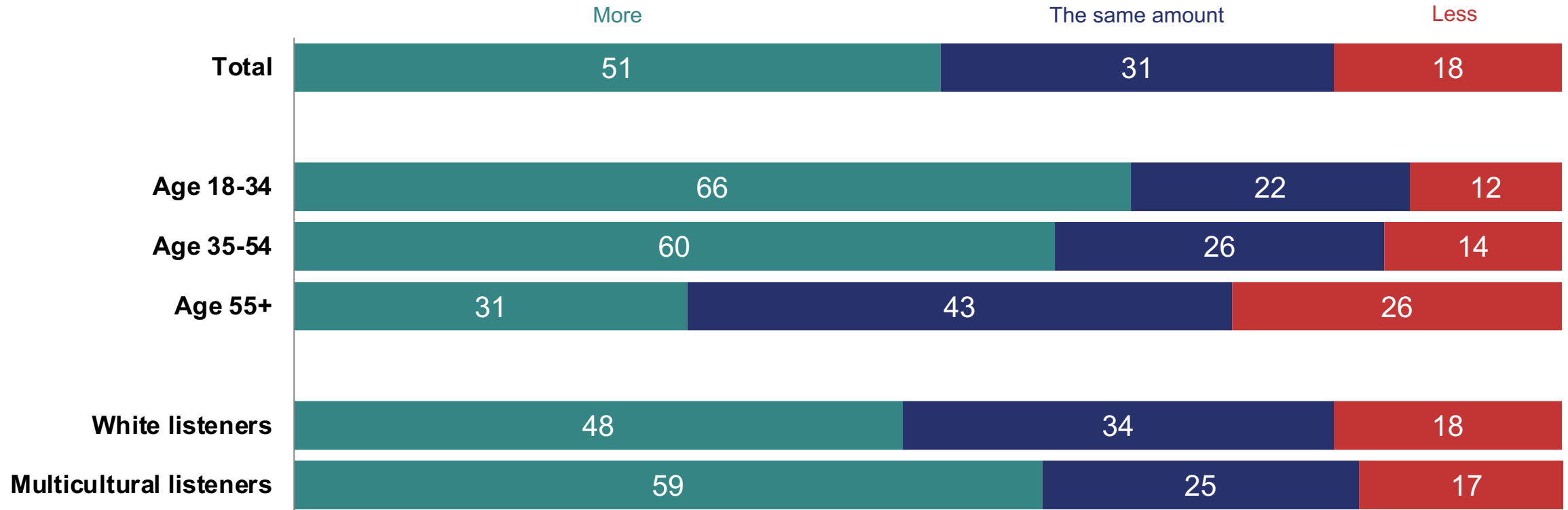
Viviana: I do think it provides different perspectives on stuff that we don't see in the media every day.

Sabharish: It definitely provides different perspectives than you would otherwise hear in social media or mainstream news channels, which can be definitely a lot more biased. I don't know. That's how I feel. And I mean, **there's a lot of negativity also in social media and just things portrayed differently.**

Rick: I really like to be open-minded, so I like to know more about what... **Not just what's my bubble,** me being Mexican American, living in California. **I want to know about different parts of the world, country, different things like that.** So it provides a perspective that I wouldn't have found anywhere else.

“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

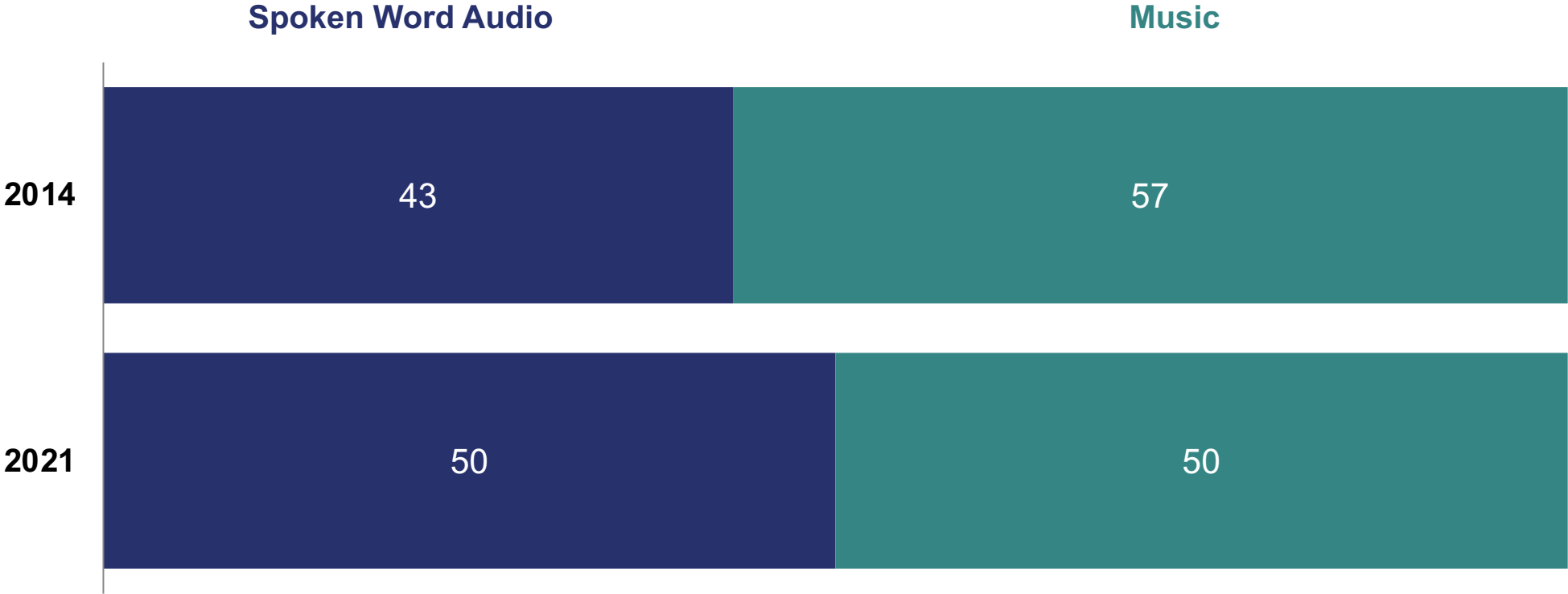
In 2021,

**Spoken Word Audio daily listeners
average *2 hours and 6 minutes* per
day listening to Spoken Word Audio**

Source: Edison Research Share of Ear © 2021; U.S. population 13+

Share of Listening by Content Type

Base: Daily spoken word audio listeners



Source: Edison Research Share of Ear ® 2021



Spoken word audio provides the listener
an inward view

Self-improvement

Spoken word audio provides the listener an inward view

Michael: For motivation and encouragement, it kind of helps me understand more about how to be more successful and try to be more financially well-off. So some of the contents that I listen to are more based upon that. So it kind of gives me a sense of not giving up.

Melvin: So I went through a lot of mental trauma growing up, so being able to use that, what I learned from a podcast, and use it against my own trauma is super helpful and advantageous for myself.

John: You hear other people call in and someone who has a similar problem gives you an idea to try that you can apply to your situation or whatever.

Sabharish: You have to seek out what's out there, right? For you to take advantage of, you can't just live in a bubble and expect that the problem will just kind of go away. So I think it allows me to acknowledge the problems that I have and know that there is one or more solutions for it. And I just have to seek out and get out of my comfort zone and try to learn from that and implement that to better myself. And yeah, that's kind of how it helps me navigate the problems.

Anahi: You always want to improve yourself and better yourself, or being able to know how to handle situations as a mom, with your kids.

Monica: I can take things from each podcast that can help me become a better mom or be a better girlfriend or, eventually, be a good wife. So that's why I like to listen... Or, that's what I get from listening to those podcasts.

Viviana: I try to give off good energy just because energy is really important to me, especially within yourself. And if your energy is not good, or if it's bad, and you're kind of spreading that to others. So I do my best to keep my energy and my aura good that way when I do encounter other people that spreads good off to them. So that's one reason why I really like to listen to spoken word audio just so I can improve my positivity within myself that way and it'll spread to others.



Spoken Word Audio's Digital Growth



Podcast listening hits an all-time high in 2021

57% of the U.S. population has listened to a podcast

Source: The Infinite Dial[®] from Edison Research and Triton Digital; U.S. population 12+



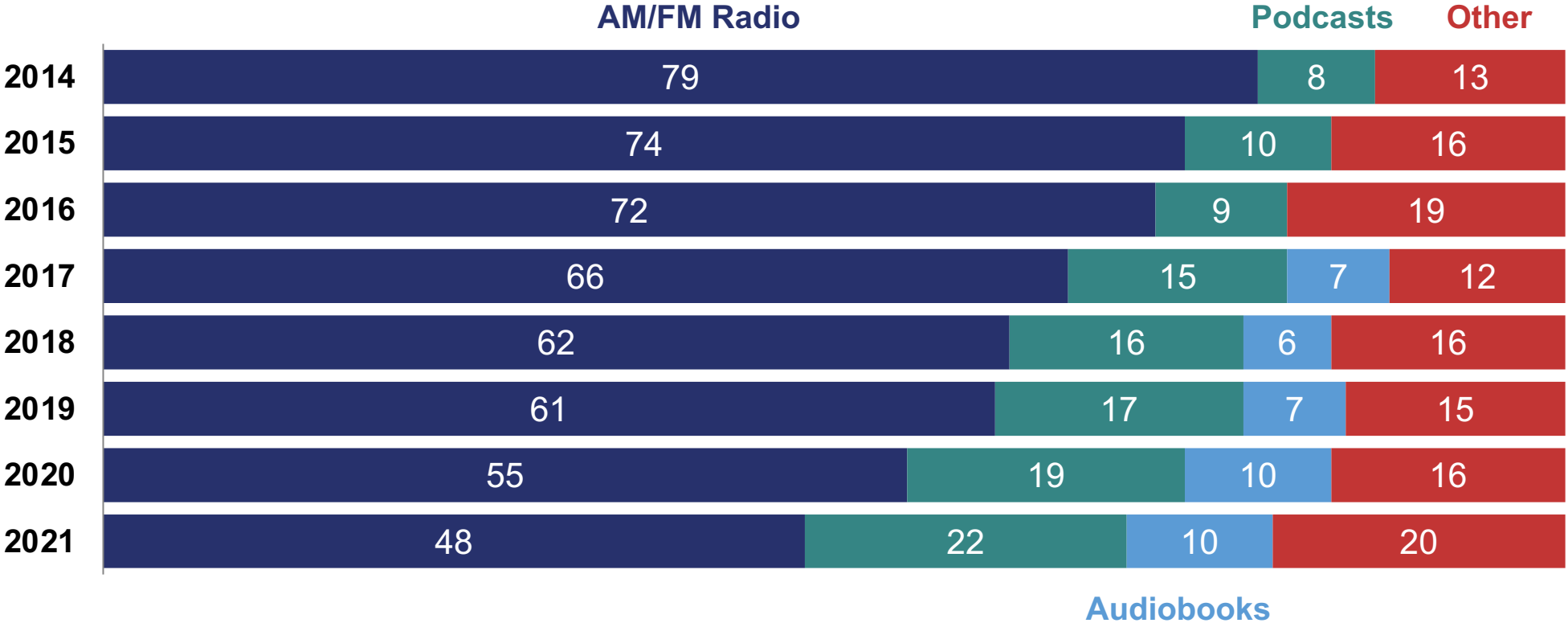
In 2021,

28% of the time spent listening to podcasts was with NPR/Public Radio

Source: Edison Research Share of Ear ® 2021; U.S. population 13+

Distribution of Spoken Word Audio Listening by Platform

U.S. Population 13+



Source: Edison Research Share of Ear® 2021
 "AM/FM Radio" includes over the air and radio streams
 "Other" includes streaming audio, satellite radio, audiobooks (in 2014-2016), etc.



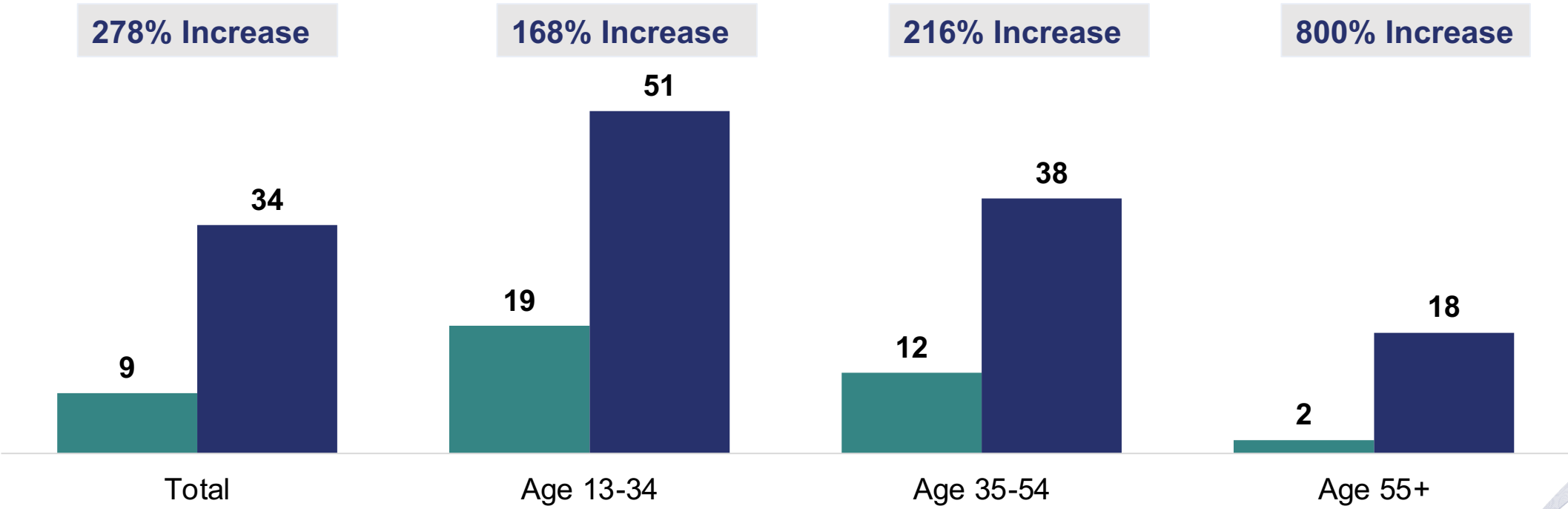
**Podcast's share of time with spoken
word audio has increased by 176%
over the last seven years;
16% in the last year**

Source: Edison Research Share of Ear © 2021; U.S. population 13+

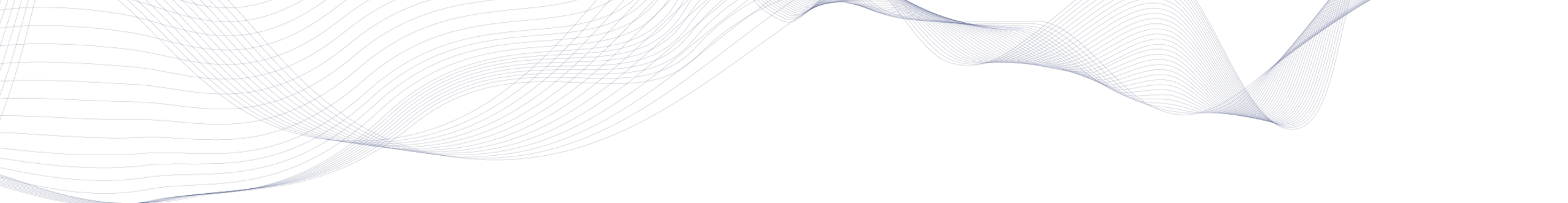
Share of Time Spent Listening to Spoken Word Audio on a Mobile Device

U.S. Population 13+

■ 2014 ■ 2021



Source: Edison Research Share of Ear ® 2021

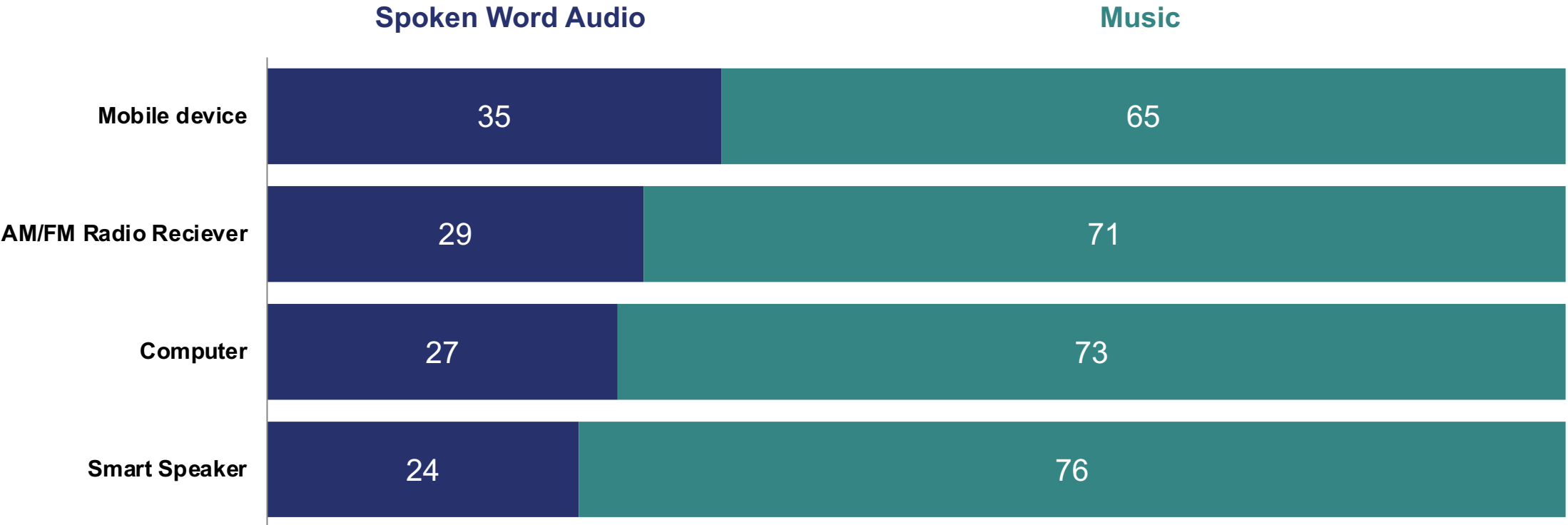


The share of time listening to spoken word audio on a mobile device has **increased by 278%** over the last seven years

Source: Edison Research Share of Ear © 2021; U.S. population 13+

Share of Listening by Content Type on [device]

U.S. Population 13+



Source: Edison Research Share of Ear ® 2021

Spoken Word Audio's Digital Growth

Podcasts' share of time with spoken word audio has increased by...
176% over the past seven years and 16% in just one year

Those who prefer to listen to spoken word most often via podcasts has increased by 27%

The share of time listening to spoken word audio on a mobile device increased by...
278% over the past seven years and 10% in the past year

Of all the time listening to audio on a mobile device, the time spent with spoken word audio has increased by...
218% over the past seven years and 17% in just one year

Podcast listening is a major factor in spoken word audio's growth

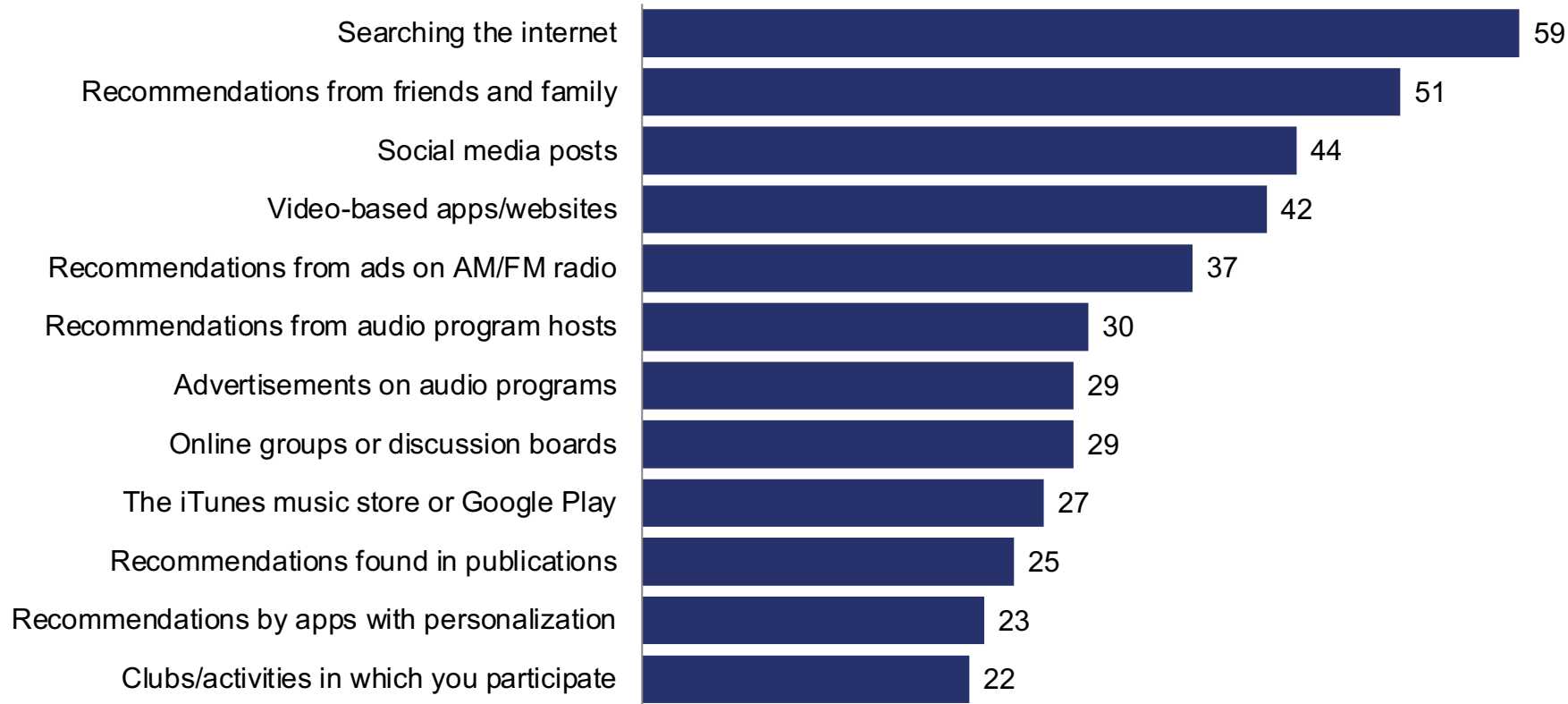
Mobile listening is a major factor in spoken word audio's growth



Spoken Word Audio Discovery and Engagement

How Listeners Discover New Spoken Word Audio

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



Average # of sources:

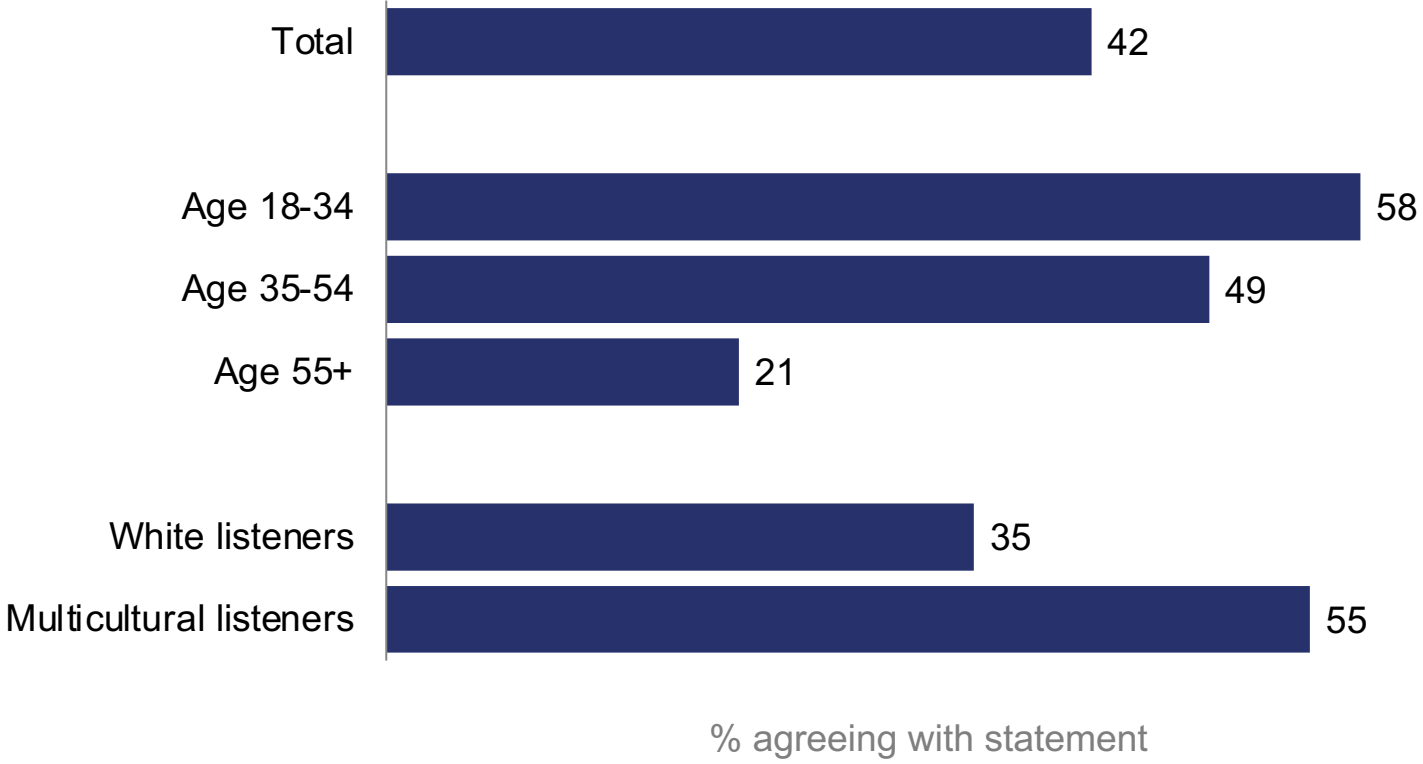
Total	4
Age 18-34	6
Age 35-54	5
Age 55+	2
White	4
Multicultural	5

% saying "yes"

Source: The Spoken Word Audio Report from NPR and Edison Research

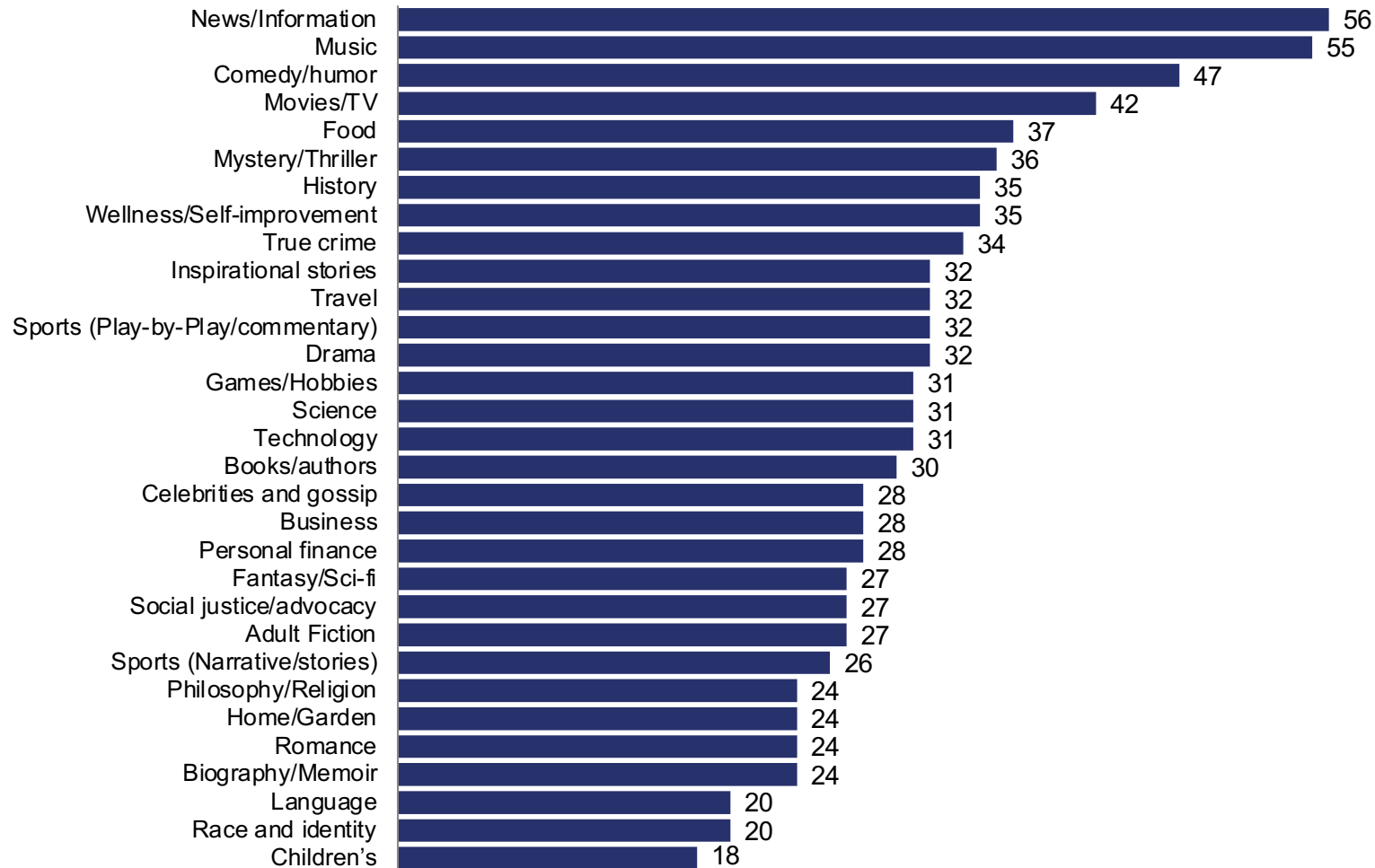
% who use Video-based apps or websites such as YouTube or Twitch to find out about new Spoken Word Audio:

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



% Who Listen to Spoken Word Audio Topics

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



Average # of genres:

Total	10
Age 18-34	13
Age 35-54	11
Age 55+	5
White	9
Multicultural	12

Source: The Spoken Word Audio Report from NPR and Edison Research

% Who Listen to Spoken Word Audio Topics

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

% decreased since 2019

Travel: 22%

History: 13%

Biography/Memoir: 17%

% increased since 2019

Romance: 61%

Games/Hobbies: 24%

Celebrities/Gossip: 22%

Children's: 20%

Fantasy/Sci-fi: 13%

True Crime: 10%

Drama: 10%

Every topic that has increased since 2019 over indexes among age 18-34 and multicultural listeners!

% agreeing:

“Spoken Word Audio engages your mind in a more positive way than other media”

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

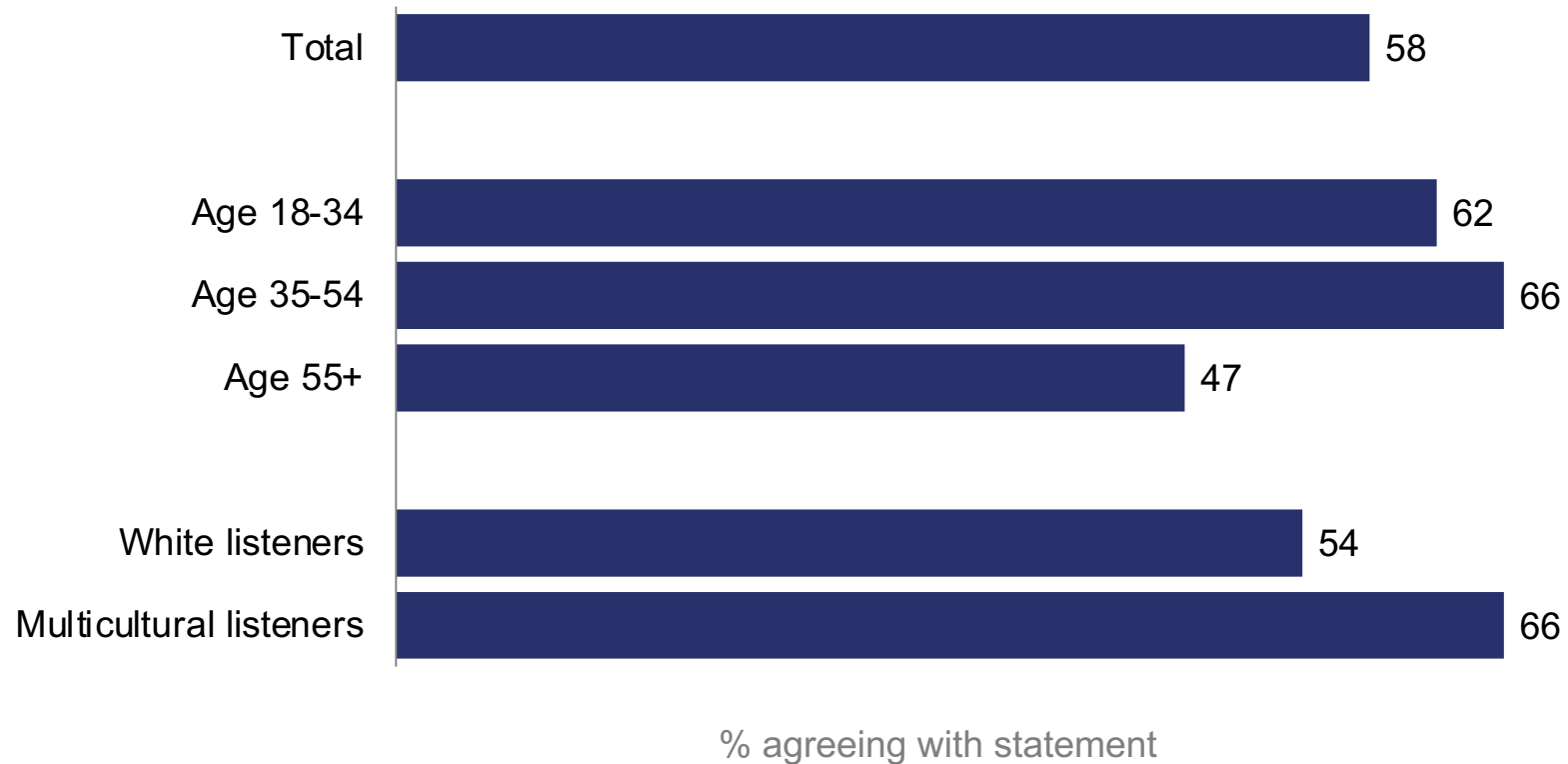


Source: The Spoken Word Audio Report from NPR and Edison Research

% agreeing:

“Spoken Word Audio is made for people like you”

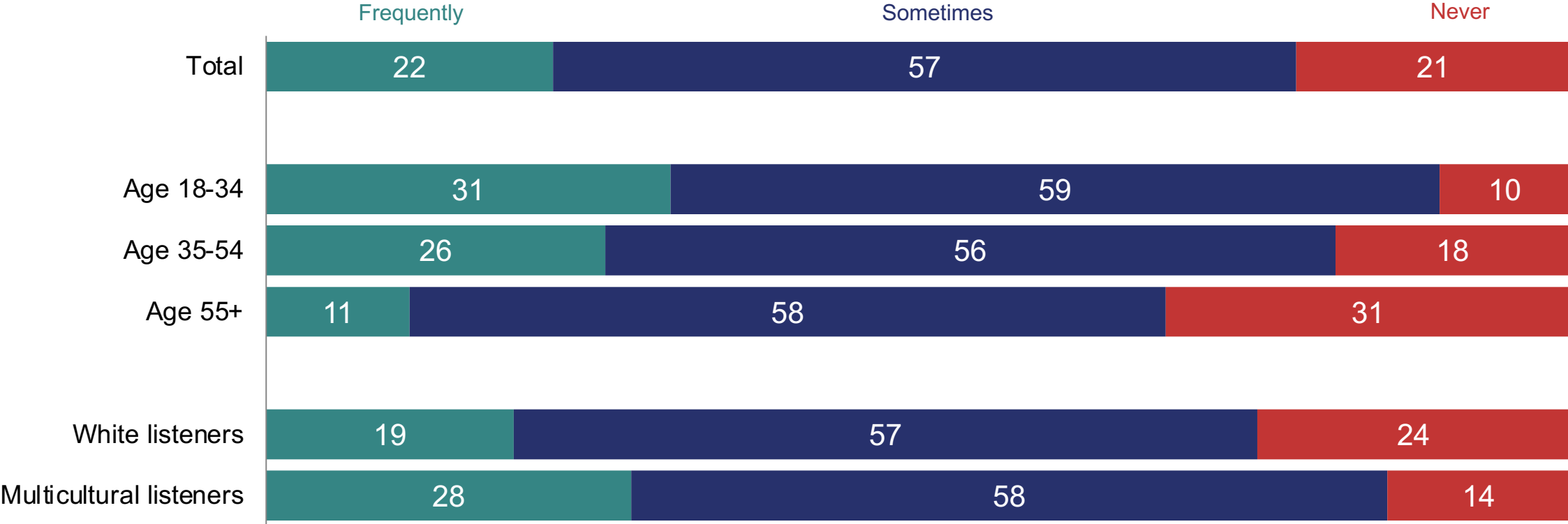
Base: U.S. Online Population 18+ Monthly Spoken Word Audio Listeners



Source: The Spoken Word Audio Report from NPR and Edison Research

“How often do you notice ads or sponsorships while listening to spoken word audio?”

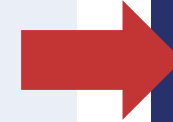
Base: U.S. Online Population 18+ Monthly Spoken Word Audio Listeners



Source: The Spoken Word Audio Report from NPR and Edison Research

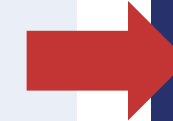
Spoken Word Audio: Discovery & Engagement

Young and multicultural spoken word listeners use **more discovery methods than other listeners** – they are actively looking for content



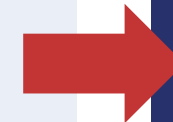
These are not passive listeners, they are actively engaged in finding content that speaks to them

The spoken word audio topics that have increased listening over the past year are also topics that over index in growing segments of listeners



The new listeners are changing the listening landscape

Young and multicultural spoken word listeners **are more likely to notice ads and sponsorships** on spoken word audio



The more engaged audiences are more tuned in to ads

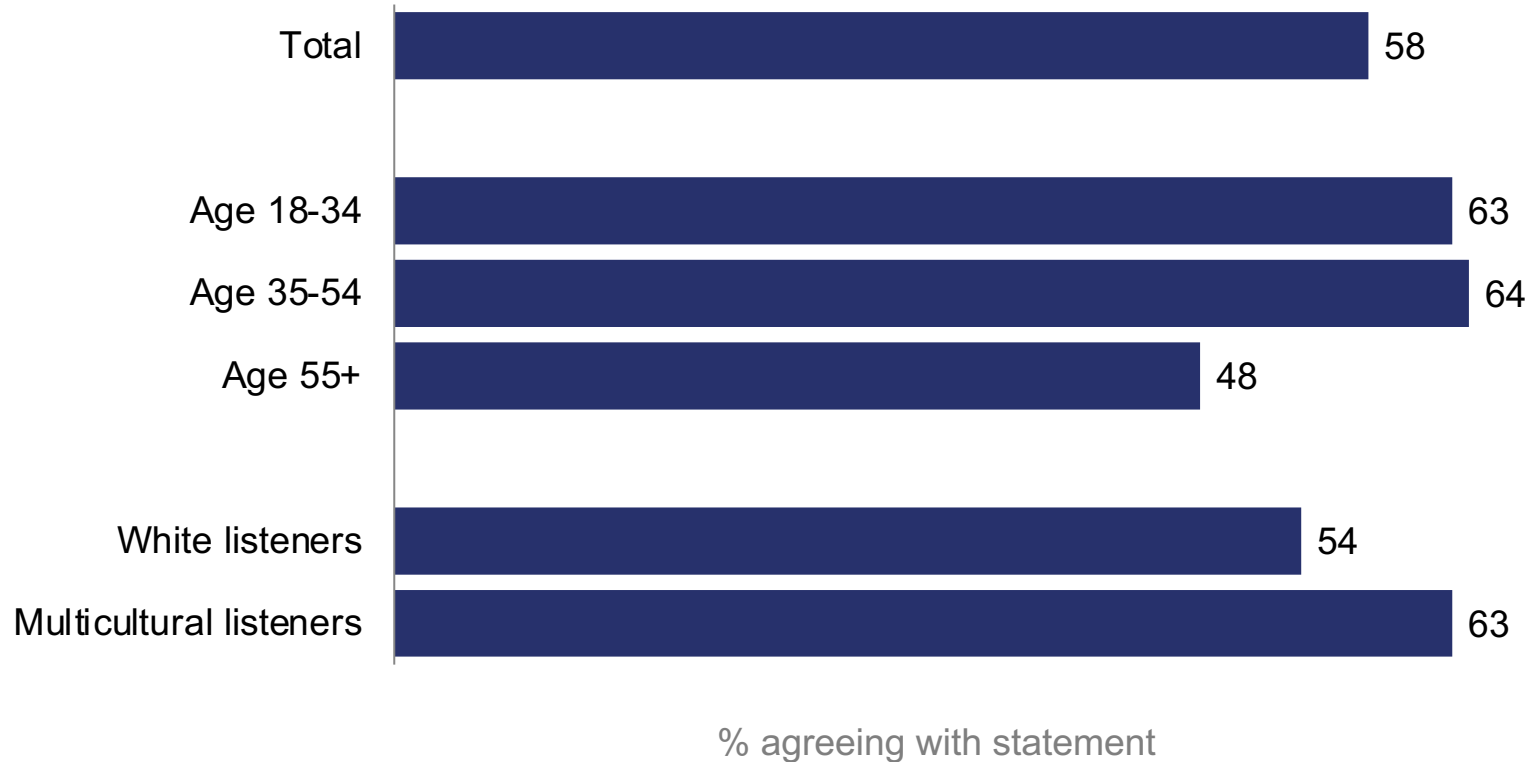


Motivations for listening to Spoken Word Audio

% agreeing:

“Spoken Word Audio is a productive use of your time”

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



Source: The Spoken Word Audio Report from NPR and Edison Research

Multi-tasking

The fact that spoken word audio can provide on top of a busy life, makes it even more valuable to the listener

Rick: So I do everything while listening. Working out, working, cleaning. I have a pool in the backyard that I maintain, so doing backyard maintenance I'll pop on headphones and listen to the backyard. And it takes my mind off of what I'm doing at the moment.

Sabharish: Definitely a lot of the kitchen work, meal prepping or cooking breakfast, whatever. Some cleaning around the house, I do while cooking. Oh, sorry. I do while listening to spoken work audio.

Melvin: I work, I'll swim, really anything.

Katy: Working, driving.

Anahi: Cooking, I'm washing dishes, I'm mopping, I'm sweeping, I'm doing laundry. You name it, cleaning my pool. I was cleaning my pool earlier. I'm going to go cut the grass after this. So probably putting my AirPods in.

Michael: So any time that I am not having a work meeting, I have some kind of audio going in the background. Either a podcast or some kind of station or on my app. I'm listening to any episodes that are available to listen to. So it's just something to keep me busy in the background. Cause I don't really like to work in silence.

Helyce: For me, I always been an anxious person, so I always need something running in the back of like, you know, to keep my mind focused on something.

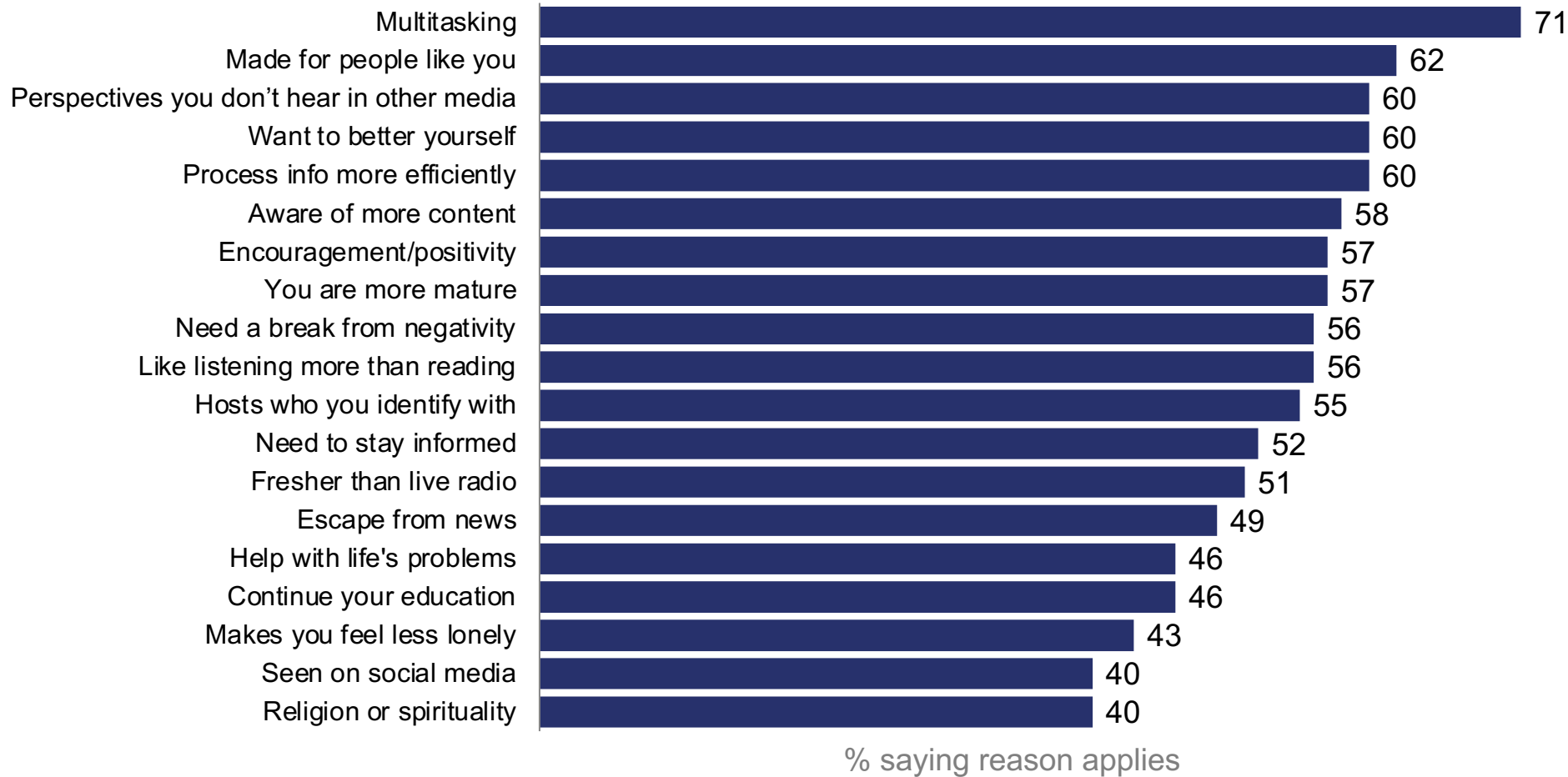
Carla: That's actually my biggest reason for ever getting into audio or spoken word stuff to begin with. It was because I wanted to do more reading, but I didn't want to waste time for reading. And so when I started to listen to things, I was able to drive and do things. I was able to walk and do things. I was able to, you know, like when I was training for my first marathon I listened to this Swedish crime novel series, because they were so long and I could just run for hours and listen to the books and be distracted by the story and not the pain in my knee or whatever.

Faith: I really started picking it up when my life became more hectic and I just didn't have time to just sit down and relax and just watch something like I used to. Binge a series on Netflix, for example. I needed to become a better multitasker, essentially. Part of that I didn't want to lose my joy of my hobbies or listening to things or watching things. I didn't want to lose that, but it was hard to just sit down and have the time to, you know, like me time essentially. And sometimes I don't want my me time to be just watching something. I feel like it makes me feel like I'm wasting time. Especially as a mom, I'm just like, I have to be doing something.

Anahi: And I used to have more time to read actual books page by page and have more time to watch TV, documentaries and all that stuff. But with kids, I feel like I have to squeeze it into my life one way or the other. That's why I have my AirPods on and I'm doing things or I'm playing, I'm doing arts and crafts with them or eating and I'm trying to be present while I'm listening to it. They don't really notice that I'm listening to it, but I'm still giving them attention and still trying to get my me time.

Reasons Why People Listen Spoken Word Audio

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



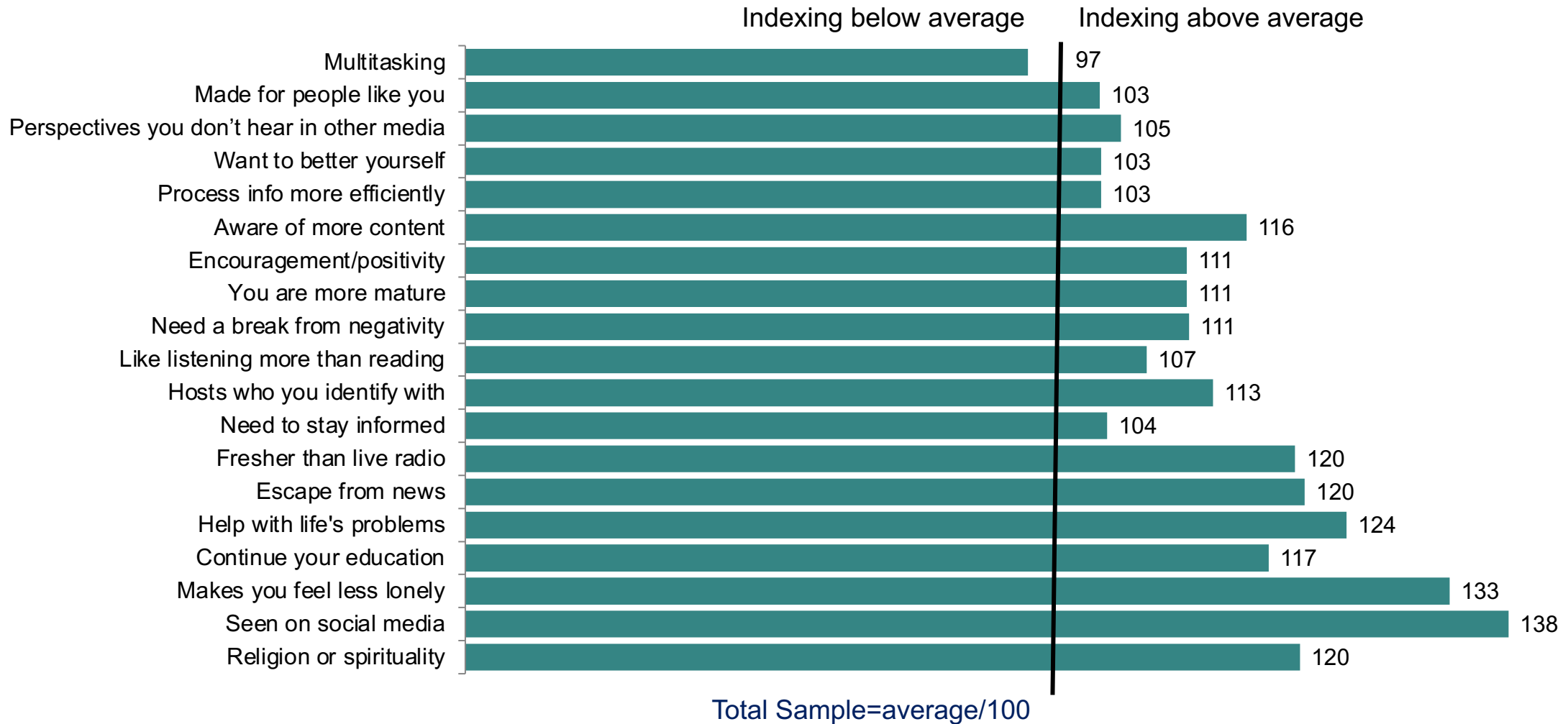
Average # of reasons:

Total	10
Age 18-34	11
Age 35-54	11
Age 55+	8
White	9
Multicultural	12

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

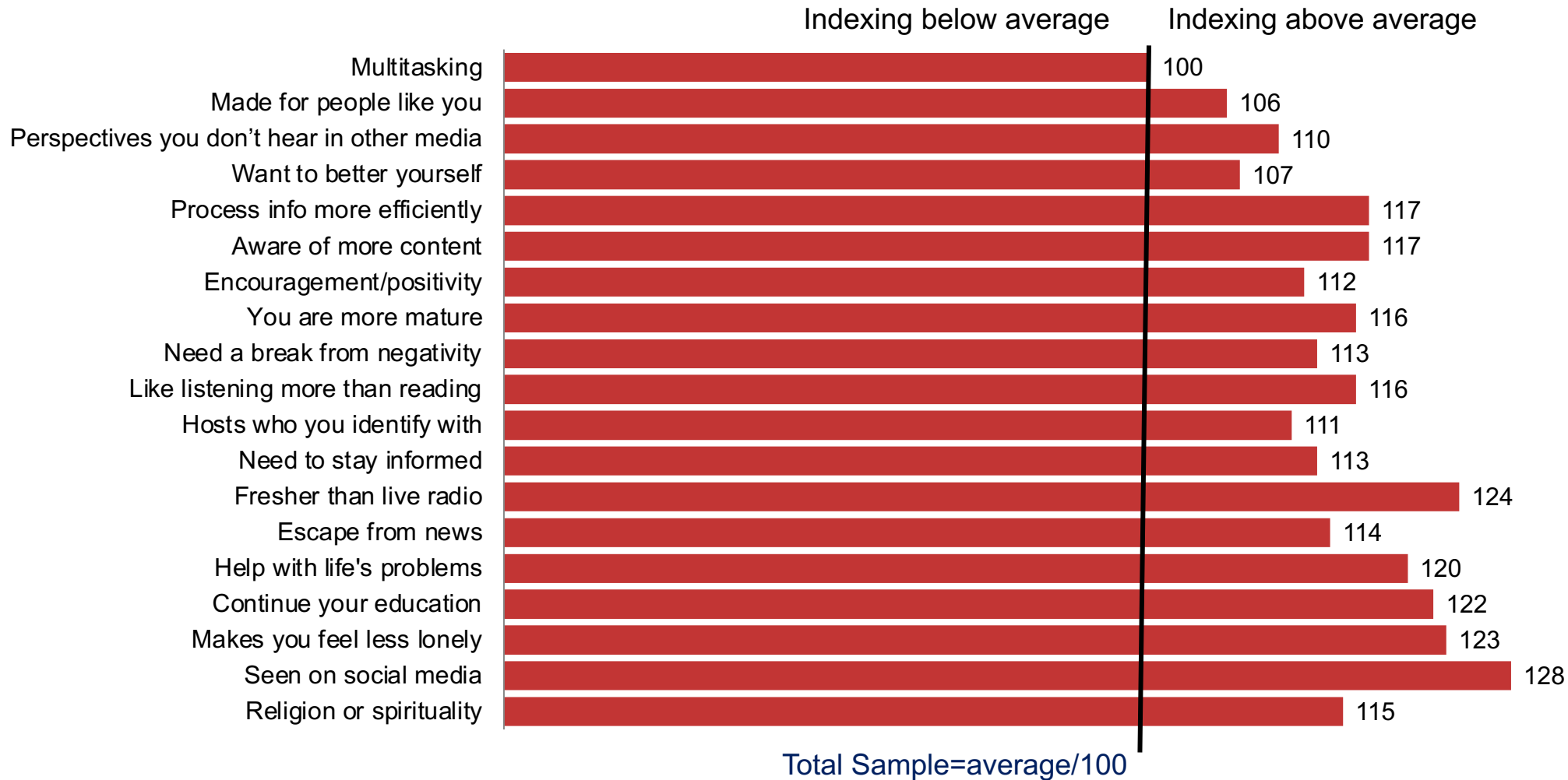
Reasons Why People Listen Spoken Word Audio

INDEX: Age 18-34 Monthly Spoken Word Audio Listeners



Reasons Why People Listen Spoken Word Audio

INDEX: Multicultural (non-white) Monthly Spoken Word Audio Listeners



Source: The Spoken Word Audio Report from NPR and Edison Research



Spoken word audio provides meaningful conversation in a
“surface-level” digital world

Connection

Spoken word audio can provide meaningful conversation in a “surface-level” digital world

Brian: I guess I used to only listen to music, but now I think I listen to people talk more. Because **I think it's probably a side effect of pandemic, you just want that more human connection**, I guess.

Faith: I'm a little isolated because I don't go out too much outside of work and stuff. So it's a **way to keep me connected to the outside world** and know what's going on without knowing... Going myself out there.

Michael: It makes it **sound like there's people around you**. As if you're sitting at a restaurant or you're sitting at some kind of local establishment. And just having a meal, or you might be doing something, there's people around that are talking, so you just listen in on what's being discussed.

Rick: So I get a haircut every other week, so **it's like being at the barbershop**, where you're just relaxing with the guys and everyone in the shop, and just talking about whatever.

Rey: I drive by myself a lot, and I'm in my room alone a lot, so I'm... I just hate just hearing the AC, so now I'll just throw on a podcast.

Seema: When I start listening to a podcast I feel like, okay, **people like me are talking about, and I can be also part of it**.

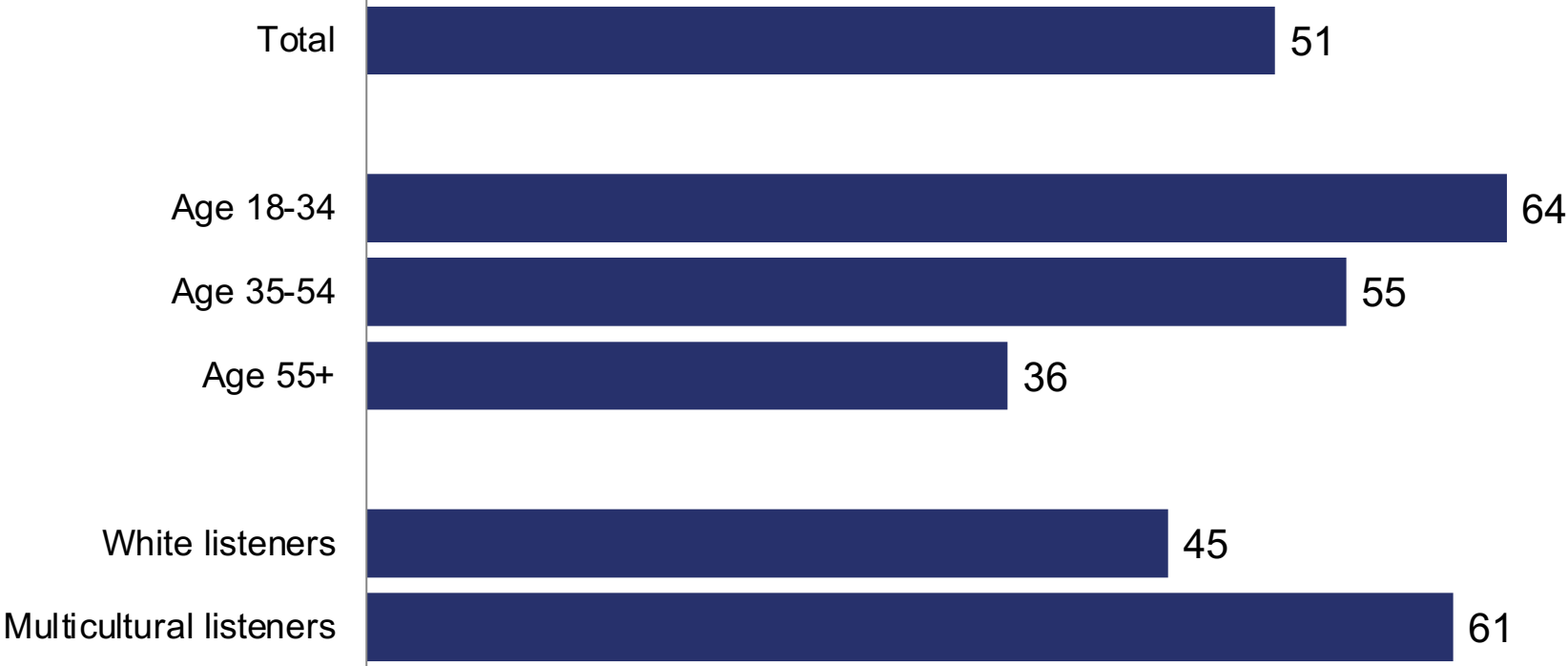
Monica: They kind of reiterate you're not the only one. And they encourage moms out there, like, "It's okay, we go through it, too." So I think just that **reassurance that there's actually other people out there that are going through the same thing as me**.

Carla: A lot of the times, it feels like your friend is talking to you, and at a **deeper level than most people talk to their friends**. It's weird, **we live in this really weird surface society**. You don't want to pry, because you don't want to be that person that's prying, but also you don't want to have dumb conversations about nothing, about things that don't matter. I'm in that place right now, where I'm like, I don't... Talking to my friends and just giving me a run down of what you're doing isn't what I'm looking for.

Helyce: I can't stand watching TV or movies, especially new movies and TV shows. Because I feel like **it's so on the surface and mass-produced**, and it's trying to get to so many audiences that it's not fine-tuned to any real subject or meaningful... It's not very meaningful. So **that's why I just listen to people talk, personally**. Because it's more interesting to me.

% who ever listen to Spoken Word Audio with other people

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

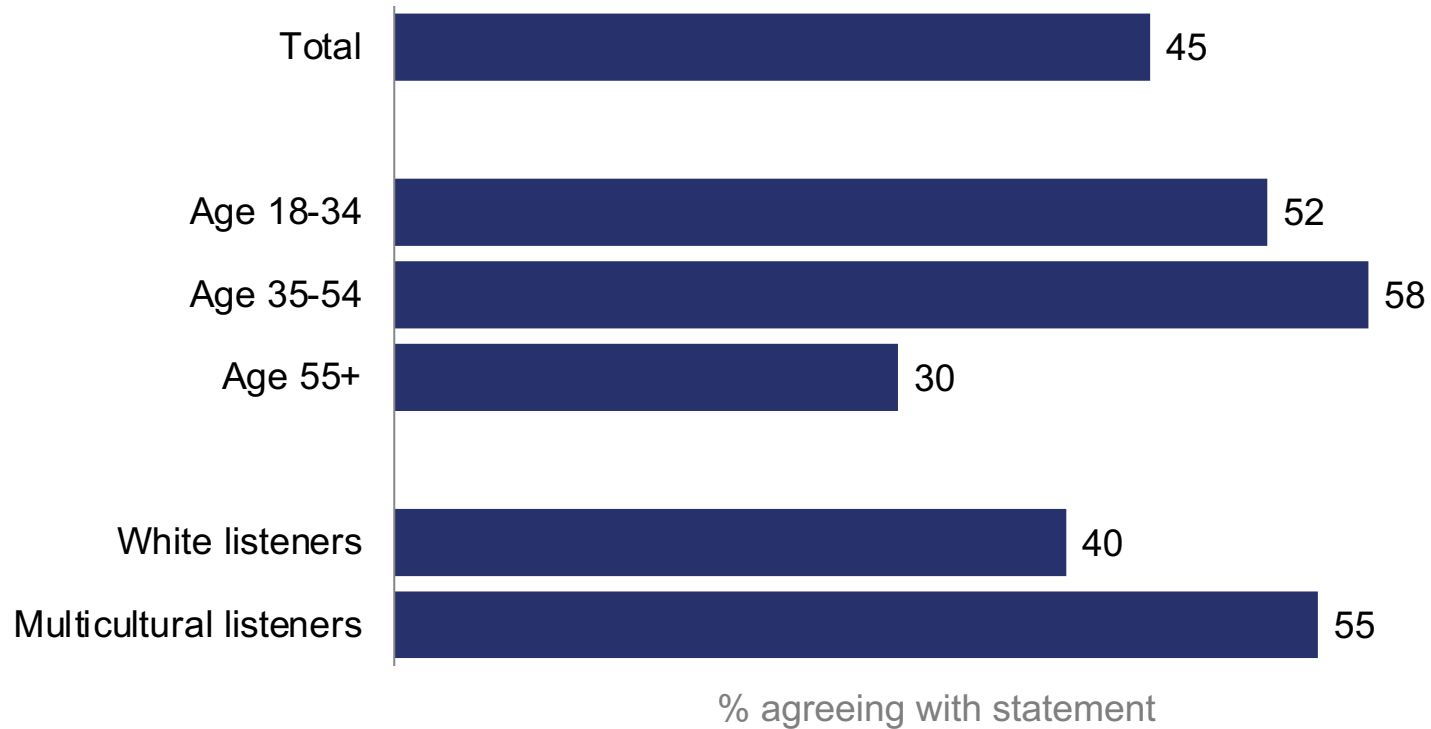


Source: The Spoken Word Audio Report from NPR and Edison Research

% agreeing:

“Spoken Word Audio is becoming a more important part of your life”

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



Source: The Spoken Word Audio Report from NPR and Edison Research

Key Findings

1. Spoken Word's share of audio listening has increased by 40% over the last seven years; 8% this year
2. Spoken word audio's growth is driven by large increases in young and multicultural audiences
3. While most listeners cite the ability to multitask one of the main motivations for spoken word audio listening, young and multicultural audiences are more likely to cite other reasons such as connection, education, new perspectives, self-improvement



THE SPOKEN WORD AUDIO REPORT

Learn more at
npr.org/spokenwordaudio



#SpokenWordAudio