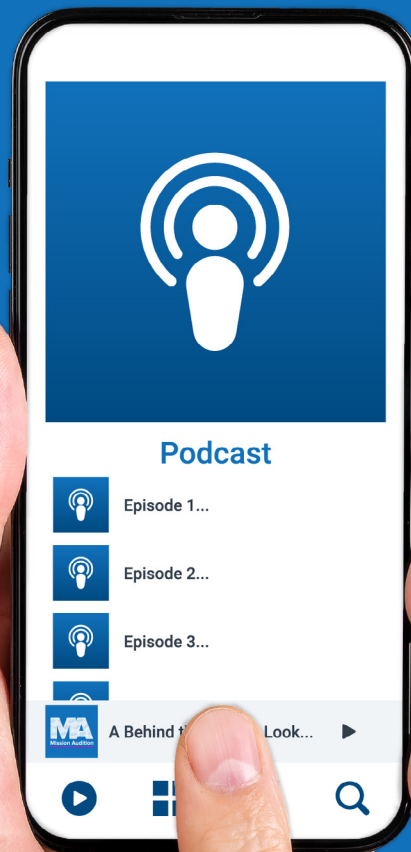


Voices

# The Power of Podcasts

Understanding listener habits  
in the podcast medium



# Intro

Podcasts as a medium have completely exploded in popularity, joining the ranks of television, movies, and music as a medium for entertainment. But with so many podcasts out there to choose from, what makes a podcast stand out, enjoyable to listen to, and what makes listeners continue to tune in?

We surveyed over 1,000 American podcast listeners to understand the who, what, when, where, and why's of podcast consumption and get a sense of what about podcasting makes this style of content unique.

## The results of the survey reveal three main trends:

- Podcasts Have Become a Mainstream Piece of Media and Entertainment. . . . . 3**
- Podcasts are a Driver of Online Communities . . . . . 6**
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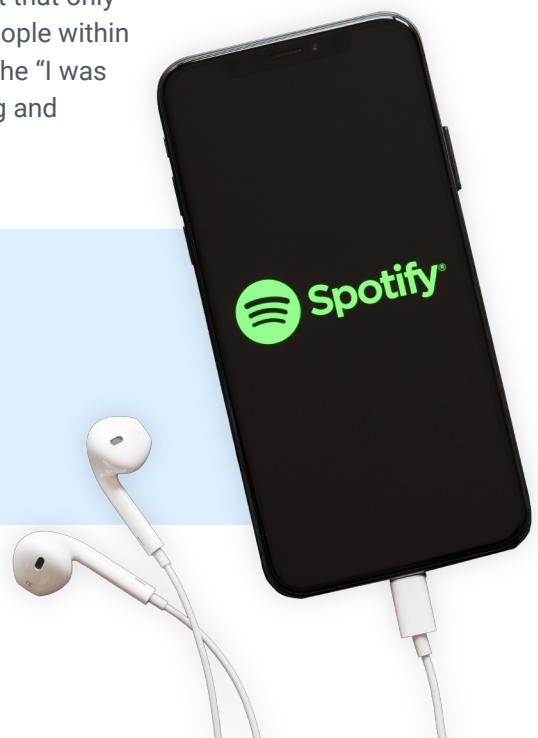


## Podcasts Have Become a Mainstream Piece of Media and Entertainment.

**73% of Americans have listened to a podcast in the last 12 months.**

Remember when podcasts felt like a niche piece of content that only a select few people listened to? There were a handful of people within your inner circle that were avid listeners. They would drop the “I was listening to a podcast...” and it made them seem interesting and ahead of the curve.

**Today, Spotify alone has over 5 million podcast titles. The number of listeners in America is estimated to be 82 million as of 2022, and nowadays you can assume that just about anyone has or continues to listen to podcasts.**



## Fun Listening Stats

Different genders and ages have different content interests. Do any of these surprise you?

- Women are more likely to enjoy True Crime—women make up 66% of True Crime fans.
- Men overwhelmingly enjoy sports podcasts more than women—72% of sports and fitness fans are male.
- Those over 60 are more likely to use podcasts as a means to stay informed on the latest news: news and politics was the most popular genre for this demographic of listeners (44%).



**72%**  
of sports and fitness fans are male

**66%**  
of True Crime fans are female

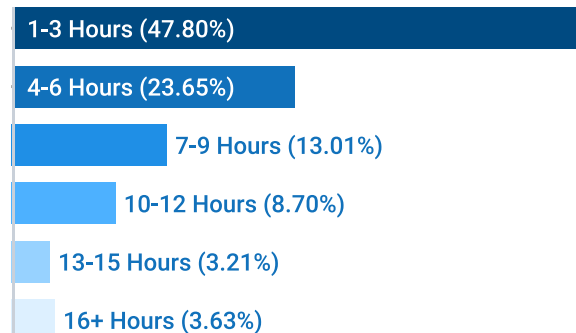
**44%**  
of listeners over 60 enjoy news and political podcasts



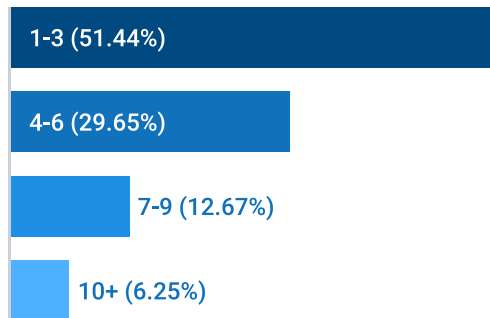
### Podcast listening habits: a closer look at our audio engagement

48% of American podcast fans spend between one and three hours listening to podcasts per week, and just over half (52%) spend at least 4 hours a week listening to podcasts. Some podcast enthusiasts (15%) spend over 10 hours per week listening to podcasts. That's 40 hours or more in one month!

### Hours Per Week Listening to Podcasts



## Number of Different Podcasts Listened to Each Month



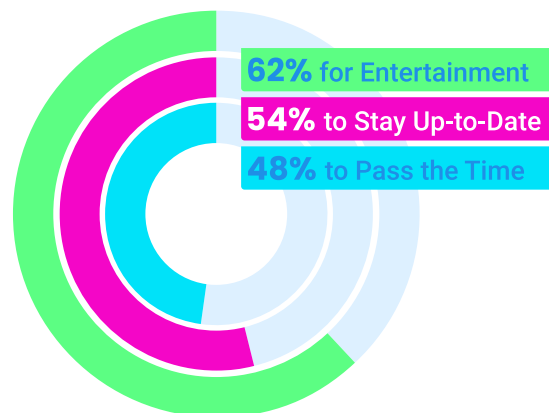
In any given month, just over half (51%) of podcast fans have between one to three different podcasts in their listening rotation. This makes sense considering we know that 48% of listeners spend about one to three hours a week listening to podcasts. But what about those that dedicate a bit more time? 30% of fans listen to four to six different podcasts in a month, and 19% listen to more than seven different podcasts in a month.

You might wonder: if someone listens to over 7 podcasts, how do they keep track of all that they're listening to? We expect that there are two different ways people go about deciding which podcasts to listen to. On one hand, you have the binge-style listener. They have a small number of podcasts they're currently interested in, and when a new episode drops they hit play, just like you would with your favorite tv show.

On the other hand, there are those that decide on what they want to listen after scrolling through a feed. This type of listener subscribes to a number of podcasts, where new releases and suggested shows are recommended. They might not know exactly what they want to listen to at that moment, and much like browsing a TV guide or new releases on Netflix, this listener will decide on what they want to listen to based on shows presented to them at that moment. Someone with this style of decision making might listen to a large number of different shows each month.

## Podcasting perks: what do people come to podcasts for?

We asked respondents why they enjoy this medium, and what they try to gain out of it. The most popular reason people listen to podcasts is for their entertainment. In the same way that we turn to movies, television, and or social media, 62% of listeners said they turn to podcasts to stay entertained. Moreover, people seek out this medium to stay up-to-date on industries and topics they want to keep up with (54%), and they also want to have something in the background to pass the time while they complete other tasks (48%).

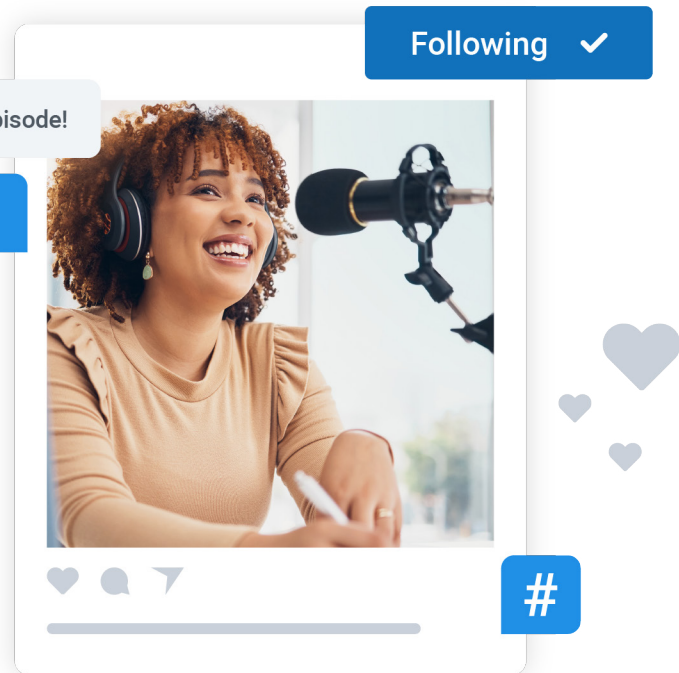


When comparing these findings to the most popular podcast genres, it all lines up. Comedy is the most popular genre, with 42% of fans saying they enjoy comedy podcasts. True Crime and Arts and Entertainment tied for the second most popular genres (34%), and Lifestyle and Health for third (31%). The least popular genres were Personal Finance (16%) and Sports and Fitness (15%) which, given our findings on what listeners gain from podcasts, makes sense.

Podcast fans are most likely to hit play while taking on another task. The most common scenarios to listen to a podcast are while completing household chores (55%), during a commute (50%), or while doing a hobby or leisurely activity (36%).



## Podcasts are a Driver of Online Communities

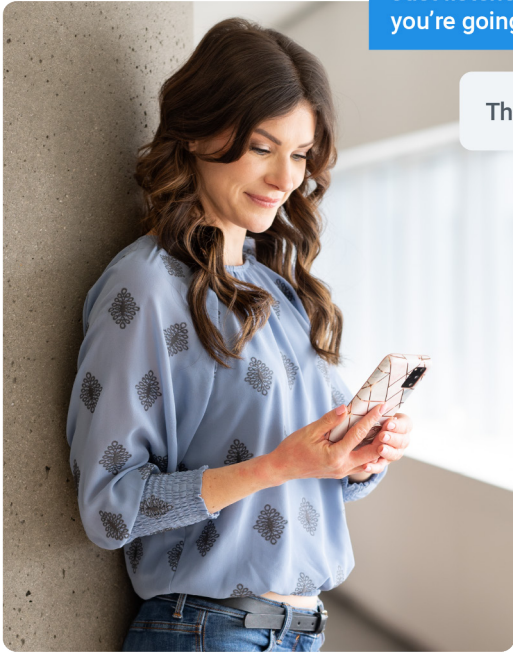


Podcasts are an interesting piece of content. They straddle the line of being a piece of media but also carry community building elements that social media platforms have. They possess a unique charm that sets them apart from other forms of entertainment such as TV shows and movies. With an interesting topic, skilled hosts, and entertaining banter, podcasts are able to establish a special sense of closeness and connection with their listeners.

### Authentic voices and personal connections

The uniqueness of podcasts lies in how the medium forces hosts to present a real, authentic version of themselves online. Unlike other forms of media that heavily rely on a visual component to bear the weight of being engaging, podcasters are forced to hold an audience using their voice, personality, and words. They don't have appearances, mannerisms, lighting, angles, or catchy imagery to support the content. To stand out, podcasters have to really bring their own flair, and when done well, the audience can see that.

Sharing personal stories and anecdotes adds a layer of vulnerability when showing up online, and all audiences love a good story. The combination of storytelling and personality that shines through on podcasts is key to developing a strong relationship and trust with listeners. By showcasing personal traits online, listeners develop a parasocial relationship with the podcaster; the audience experiences a one-sided connection with the podcast host, feeling like they know the host well, even though the host lacks reciprocal knowledge of them. Podcasts excel in fostering these relationships, with approximately 54% of podcast listeners reporting that they genuinely feel well acquainted with the personalities of their favorite podcast hosts.



Just listened to a new podcast you're going to LOVE!

Thanks for sharing :)

### Social network, or media, or both?

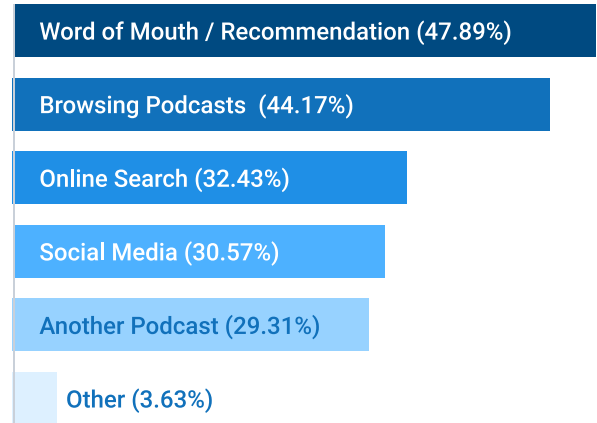
Personal networks, whether that be in-person or digital, play a central role for podcast discovery and promotion. Almost half (48%) of listeners have discovered new podcasts through word of mouth recommendations from friends, family, or colleagues. Media is a big driver of podcast discovery as well. 31% of listeners have discovered podcasts through social media and similarly, 29% have discovered a podcast through listening to other podcasts. Many respondents said they discovered new podcasts through platforms like Reddit, YouTube, and TikTok.

Some podcasts really enjoy engagement from listeners, and lean into incorporating an interactive component to their show. This was done by the extremely popular Joe Rogan Experience podcast, which, in the past, included a live chat function for episodes that were live streamed.

We can see that podcasts foster a sense of community among listeners with similar interests. Online forums, social media groups, and discussions surrounding podcasts enable listeners to engage with each other listeners and creators, further enhancing the overall listening experience. Nearly two-thirds (62%) of listeners said they follow their favorite podcasts or podcast hosts on at least one social media platform. And through repeated themes and stories across the podcast episodes and other forms of media, a community with familiar characters, stories, and jokes forms.

To sum it up, the podcast medium is very efficient at creating opportunities for listeners to connect, interact, and build relationships with hosts and other listeners of shared interests.

### How Listeners Discover New Podcasts



### Did you know...

Podcasts are most enjoyed in a conversation or interview style format: 77% of podcast fans prefer podcasts with two or more participants in the conversation. Only 23% prefer monologue style podcasts with one host.

# High Engagement Creates the Perfect Platform for Building Brand Awareness



## So what does this mean for creators and brands?

We now know that podcast fans are highly engaged with the podcasts they listen to. What does this mean for creators and organizations? It means that podcasting is an effective tool for growing brand awareness.

Podcast advertising is projected to account for **\$3.53 billion of ad spend in 2026**, up from \$2.25 billion this year. The engaged audience that comes with podcasts means that podcasts are a powerful platform for advertising. Advertisers using podcasts for brand placements can benefit from better audience targeting, strong brand recall, higher conversion rates, and more.

1



### Endorsement

When a product is endorsed by a trusted podcast host, listeners will be more inclined to perceive that product or brand favorably.

2



### Recognition

76% of podcast listeners can recall at least one podcast-advertised product, service, or organization off the top of their head.

3



### Purchase

48% of American podcast listeners have purchased a podcast-advertised product in the last year.

When a product is endorsed by a trusted figure with whom the audience feels a connection with (the podcast host), listeners will be more inclined to perceive that product or brand favorably, and even take action based on the recommendation of the host.

Keep in mind that podcast enthusiasts actively search for entertaining content, and exciting genres with engaging hosts tend to be the most favored. Advertisements read by these hosts, especially ones that resonate with us, not only boost brand recall but can also become a source of entertainment themselves.



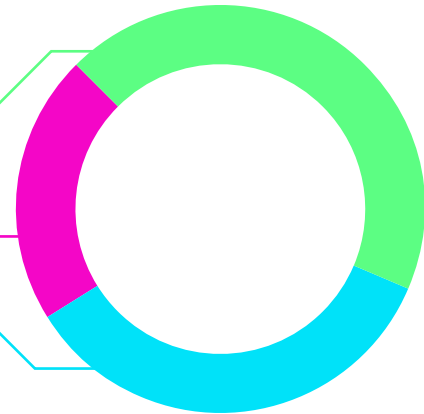
Majority of listeners don't have a preference for who reads the ad in a podcast whether it be a host or a host read ad. Of those that do have a preference, nearly two thirds (62%) would prefer an ad read by the podcast host.

### Listeners' Preferred Podcast Advertisements

No Preference (44%)

Advertiser Produced (21.37%)

Read by Podcast Host (34.63%)



### Considering starting a podcast?

Paid placements and sponsorships aren't the only way to use podcasting to your advantage. Creating a podcast and bringing it into your owned content strategy can bring the same benefits that podcasting does for advertisers, and even more. With an interesting topic and enjoyable host, listeners will be interested in hearing what you have to say. Furthermore, having your own podcast will add a longform content channel to share your perspective. By sharing your point of view and expert insights, you will increase your brand awareness and build your authority.

Did you know that many organizations have their own branded podcast? Some might come as a surprise. Would you expect Trader Joes, the beloved American grocery chain, to have a podcast about the back end of their grocery business? If it piques your interest, check out [Inside Trader Joe's](#). Other major organizations with branded podcasts include [Morgan Stanley](#), [Duolingo](#), and even [Netflix](#).

In 2023, the podcast landscape is booming. If you're [starting a podcast from scratch](#), gaining immediate traction on trending charts will be challenging. Based on the discovery trends above, using your social network and other marketing channels to get the word out on your show will be the strongest asset.

As we've seen, podcast fans are very engaged and feel connected to the hosts of the podcasts they listen to. If you're looking for another way to market your own brand, given how engaged podcast listeners are, your podcast itself could be the ad. They can serve as a way to build the credibility of your company, your spokespeople, and deep dive into topics in a way that will engage your audience longer than other forms of media might.



## Grab the mic: start your own podcast

- **58% of podcast listeners prefer the audio-only podcast format.** If you're starting a podcast and thinking of incorporating video, that's great, but focus on your audio content and quality first.
- **77% of listeners prefer podcasts with two or more participants in the conversation.** Keep this in mind when deciding if you want to do an interview style or monologue style podcast.
- **Invest in your social presence.** 62% of listeners follow their favorite host or shows on social media, and 31% discover new podcasts through social media. This is an area that you'll want to dedicate efforts to.
- **Make it yours!** 37% of podcast listeners continue listening to their favorite podcast because they enjoy the host of the show. Don't be afraid to let loose, add your personal touch, and have fun!

# Methodology

The survey was conducted by Momentive for Voices, from July 12 to July 14, 2023. It consisted of a representative sample of 1183 Americans 18 years of age or older. The survey looked at listening habits and preferences of podcast listeners.

# About Voices

Voices is the world's #1 voice marketplace with over 4 million registered users. Since 2005, the biggest and most beloved brands have entrusted Voices to help them find professionals to bring their projects to life. Voices has worked with major clients including Shopify, Microsoft, The History Channel, The Discovery Channel, Hulu, Cisco, the biggest ad agencies and thousands more small businesses.