



State of
Audio:

A photograph of a person with their back to the camera, wearing large white headphones. They are looking out over a lush green landscape with rolling hills and mountains under a clear sky. The image is framed by a white border and set against a background of orange and red vertical stripes.

11 Moments that Matter

Activate **daily rituals**
to drive ad engagement

Rituals We Create

Dig in to discover when listeners are most engaged with Audio and how brands can up their media game to meet them in these moments that matter.



rit·u·al /'riCH(ōō)əl/

Rituals are human-generated frequency. An act or series of acts regularly repeated in a set or precise manner.

Audio rituals take center stage

As humans we are creatures of habit. We build our lives around rituals—our morning coffee, commute, walking the dog, exercising... these fun and meaningful practices center our daily life. They bring structure, consistency, and enjoyment. And there's only one medium that joins us, no matter the ritual—Audio.

Audio takes the spotlight during more daily rituals than any other medium.

of Audio Rituals Throughout the Day

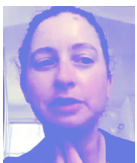
Audio 11

Online/Streaming Video 8

Scrolling Social Media 6

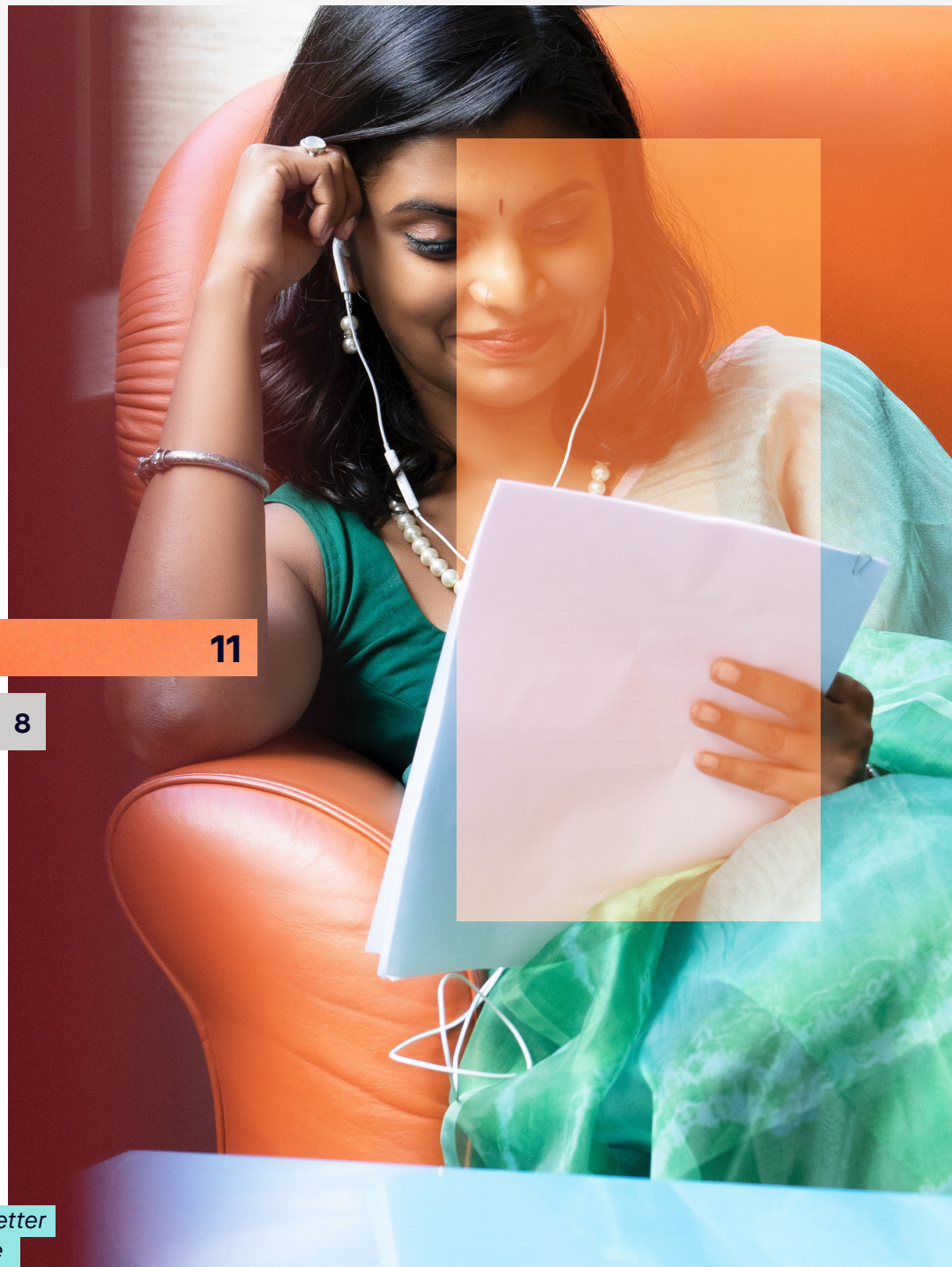
TV 5

We all love TV, but viewers report it makes them feel lazy, unproductive, or even guilty for wasting time. The term “guilty pleasure” was practically coined for reality TV!



“Audio makes me feel better than sitting down on the couch and watching TV.”

YELENA G., 33, LISTENER, DEERFIELD, IL



Audio isn't an add-on. It's at the heart of our daily rituals.

Did you know our favorite Audio content is so important to us that most of us actually schedule time for it? We call these "Audio-first moments." That's right. You know you do it too. Keeping up with your podcasts on the early morning walk. Or getting in the pickup line early just to listen to 'my music' before the kids take over as DJ. The habit is even stronger for younger audiences—**86% of Gen Z set aside time specifically for their favorite Audio content.**

74%

of listeners consume Audio during their daily rituals

87% of podcast listeners

86% of Gen Zers

84% of sports fans



40%

of listeners plan their day and activities around Audio content



"I plan many activities around audio content. I draw and paint to it... I walk and exercise to it, too. Music and podcasts have helped me to stick to my walking goals, as the time flies faster when I have something to listen to and think about."

LUKA B., 30, LISTENER, MINNEAPOLIS, MN

11 Key Listening Moments

There's no doubt about it. As listeners, we are passionate about what we put in our earbuds. After all, Audio has something other media doesn't. It's accessible anywhere you are, anytime you want to connect. It's the only media you can actively engage in, from the moment your feet hit the floor, to your nighttime skincare regimen. Our daily routines are snuggled tightly with Audio.

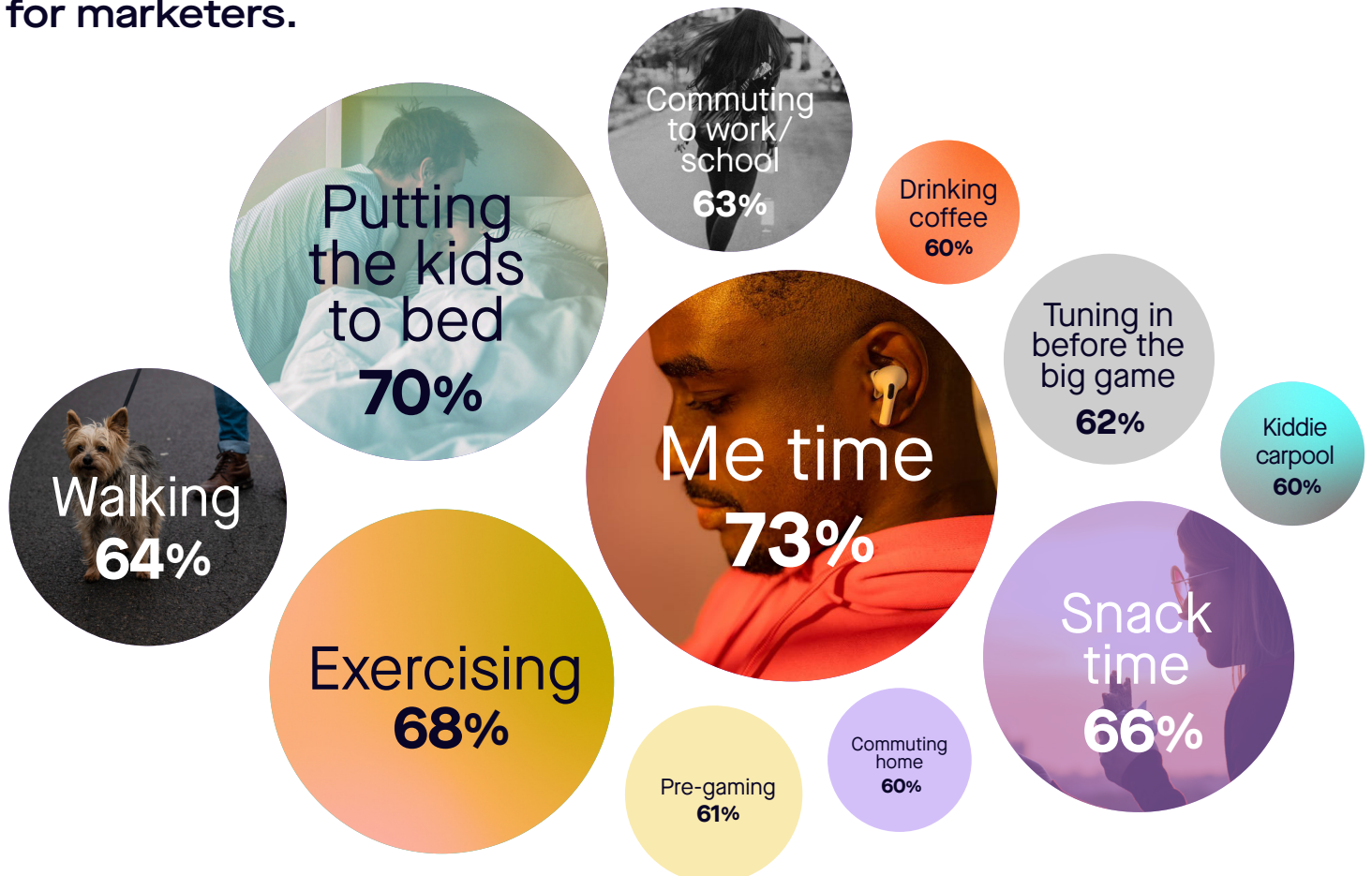
For marketers and brands, these hard-at-work moments are new opportunities to unlock hyper-engaged listener connections. Our hands may be busy during the morning commute or dog walk, but our ears and minds are open, attentive—and most receptive to brand messaging.



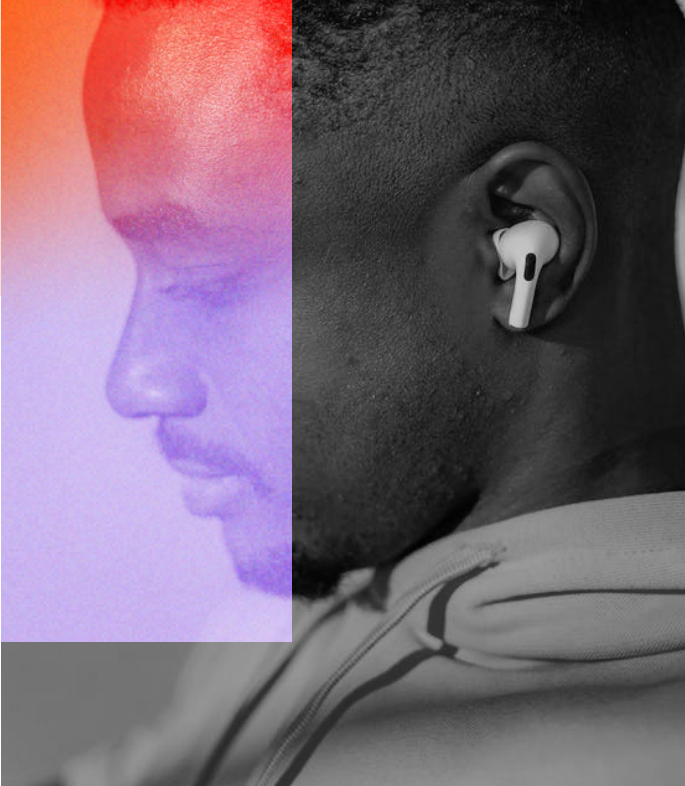
"If I'm on a walk, I have a smile on my face because I'm always listening to something that amuses me."

ALLISON F., 36, LISTENER, FALLS CHURCH, VA

These rituals are the 11 "moments that matter" for marketers.



Let's take a look at these moments that matter most.

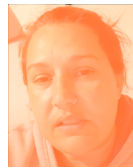


ME-TIME

Chilling, relaxing, or even grabbing your soy chai latte. These are personal moments we take to brighten our minds and our moods.

TIP FOR ADVERTISERS

We're most leaned-in during these chill moments. This is the best time for brands to introduce meaningful, action-driven content that adds value to the moment. Think personalized ads and authentic messages that won't kill the vibe.



"I make sure my earbuds are charged, make sure my phone is charged, and go out for a walk every day. It's kind of me-time. I can step away from being a mom, being a business owner, and just listen."

BRANDY R., 41, LISTENER, PRAIRIE GROVE, AR



COMMUTING

Ah, the in-car oasis. The hectic subway. The brisk walk. Music, pods, news, and sports turn our commute into the personal entertainment zone we crave.

TIP FOR ADVERTISERS

Drive-time listeners build deep connections with hosts, so take advantage with live reads and host endorsements.



"I enjoy listening to the morning shows. I listen to them and it feels like I know them on a more personal level. It also makes my drive feel a lot shorter."

FABIOLA, E., 28, LISTENER, GRAND RAPIDS, MI



EXERCISING

Of course, we put in our earbuds before we go for a run. We are all ears to keep us motivated and moving.

TIP FOR ADVERTISERS

During workout time, fitness fans are looking for brands to keep the tempo high to energize and motivate. Don't slow them down with soft sounds.

"I decide what I'm listening to based on what type of energy I'm feeling. If I'm doing a 30-minute run outside, I'd definitely want something high energy to get me motivated. I'm really engaged in the music and focus less attention on the run and how hard it is."

YELENA G., 33, LISTENER, DEERFIELD, IL

PRE-GAMING

LeBron, Serena, and Neymar wear headphones as they arrive at the arena and warm up, and the rest of us follow their lead. We listen while we get ready to play sports, head out to the big game, or hit the courts with our pre-game rituals.

TIP FOR ADVERTISERS

Your listeners are hyper-focused. Make deep connections with a memorable sound and strong sonic branding for lasting impact.

"I listen to music because it gets me hyped up."

JAQUELINE D., 27, LISTENER, NASHVILLE, TN



SNACK TIME

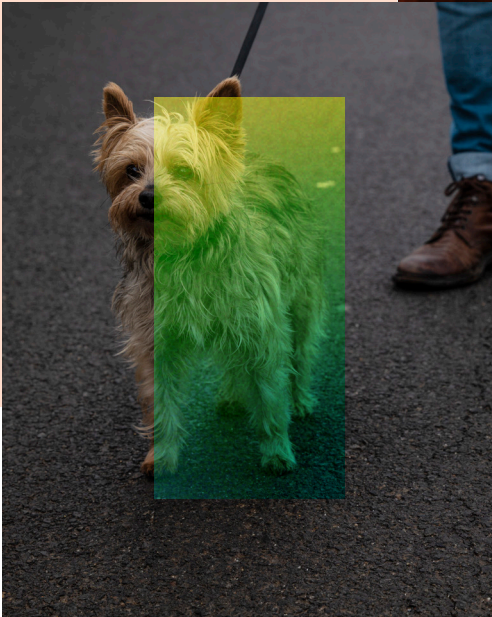
For adults and kids alike—snack time is happy time :) It's more than a chance to grab a bite. It's also a chance to catch up on whatever's happening in the world, or to enjoy an Audio break with our favorite programs or podcasts.

TIP FOR ADVERTISERS

These breaks are treasured times—keep them that way with lighthearted ads that let our mind escape. Snack time listeners especially love to catch up with podcasts during these nosh breaks.

"I am a huge fan of music. I love to laugh and enjoy time with my family. Eating, cooking and baking are my favorites."

CHINA B., 29, LISTENER, COLUMBUS, OH



WALKING

The morning power walk is a real ritual for many of us. For others, it's the evening stroll, or the twice-daily dog walk. Whether you're a casual stroller or a fast-paced step-tracker, you've certainly got Audio by your side as your favorite walking buddy.

TIP FOR ADVERTISERS

During walks, listeners are a captivated audience. And they expect brands to add to the experience with entertaining ads that benefit them directly.

"When I take the dog for a walk, I cannot go without my earpiece for my bluetooth headset."

BRAD F., 44, LISTENER, PARK RIDGE, IL

TUNING IN BEFORE THE BIG GAME

Whether we're at the tailgate or a neighborhood watch party, sports fans are tuning in ahead of the game.

TIP FOR ADVERTISERS

Sports listeners are the definition of loyal listeners. This is the moment to speak to them like the dear old friends they are.

"Tampa Bay has such incredible radio play-by-play announcers for our MLB and NHL teams... They make every game special! I mute the national TV calls and listen to our local radio ones instead."

JERRY G., 36, LISTENER, TAMPA, FL

KIDDIE CARPOOL

The chauffeuring never ends. School pickups, play dates, swimming practice, sleepovers, and all the rest. That's a lot of car time, and Audio entertains us as we run all over town.

TIP FOR ADVERTISERS

Audio is front and center any time we're in the car. This is the time to deliver messaging heavy on the direct benefits.

Always a joy to listen to this podcast. It makes the school drop off and pickup lines a treat!"

DONNA M., 31, LISTENER, SAN FRANCISCO, CA

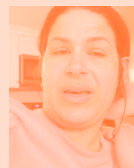


PUTTING THE KIDS TO BED

Ahh... every parent's favorite time of day... bedtime. While settling in our little ones for the night, we're tuning in to ~~our~~ *their* favorite music to help us get ready to wind down.

TIP FOR ADVERTISERS

Parents are hands-full but ears-open, which means less ad skipping. This is your chance to dial up the frequency and switch up your creative to make your message stick.



"My kids, they love listening to music, so we'll often put on some of our favorite songs."

ANDREA D., 37, LISTENER, ANDOVER, MA



DRINKING COFFEE

There's just something about that first cup of coffee that opens not only our eyes, but also our ears. That's why many of us take our coffee with cream, sugar, and Audio. As we brew, sip, and savor our morning joe, we're also drinking in our favorite podcasts.

TIP FOR ADVERTISERS

In between sips is a great time to share compelling stories. Listeners have a moment to take in the aroma—and your brand message. Here's your chance to test out new content.



"I listen to podcasts around business, leadership and communication. It's a good pick me up while I'm drinking my coffee."

MYKEL F., 33, LISTENER, ATLANTA, GA

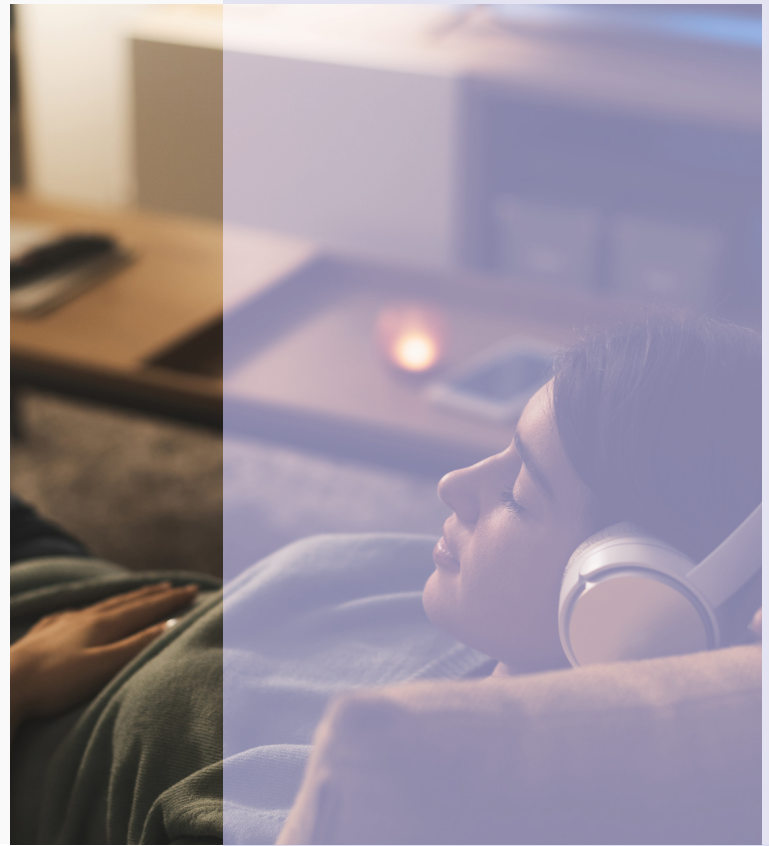


The big reveal:
Audio's stolen
moments are
the **12th ritual**

What do we do when our daily rituals don't give us enough time for our Audio cravings?

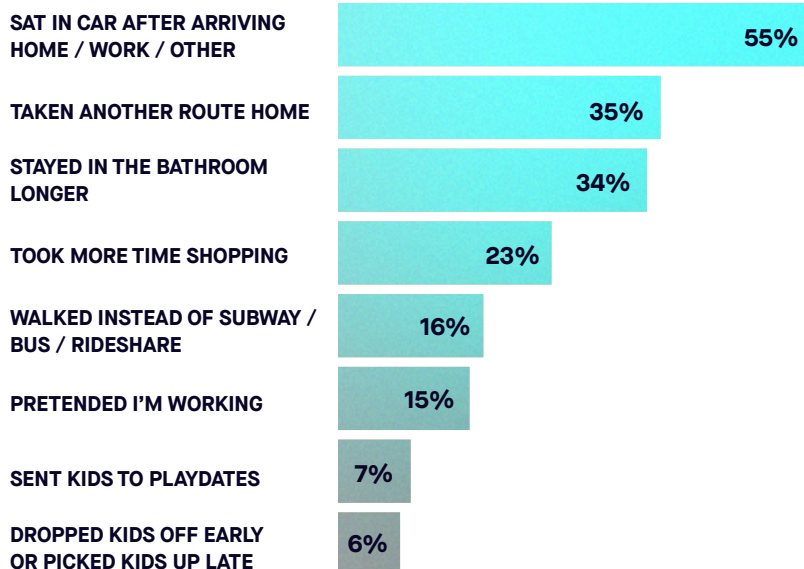
What happens when that dog walk is too short for our 60-minute podcast? Or the kids' school pick-up line moves faster than expected, and you wish you had more time to play YOUR favorite station? We steal moments to satisfy our Audio appetite.

We asked listeners how they made bonus time to spend with their favorite Audio content. If you've ever lingered in the driveway for 15 minutes to hear the rest of that hilarious banter of your morning show, you'll know what we're talking about. (And don't miss the shocking truth about Millennials and their bathroom Audio time!)



60%

of listeners have found a way to grab extra time with their favorite radio station or podcast



DRIVEWAY DIVAS

Women are 12% more likely to sit in the car after arriving at their destination to continue listening.

TARGET RUNNERS

Gen Zers are 48% more likely to take more time shopping as they listen.

IMPOSTERS

Men are 33% more likely to pretend they are working while listening.

BATHROOM BANDITS

Millennials are 34% more likely to stay in the bathroom longer to listen.

PLAYDATE PLAYERS

Men are 80% more likely to send their children on playdates to find time to listen to their favorite Audio.

...AND

Gen Xers are 50% more likely to have done them all!



Who's listening?

Gender, geography, and other traditional demos don't paint the full portrait of the modern Audio listener. To reach deeper, think ritual personas. Think **who + habit**.

Who is most tuned in?

Among all the types of listeners we've uncovered in our research, a few stand out for their consistently strong listening habits. These groups are tuning in more and staying more engaged than any others. So who are they? Let's find out.

PARENTS

Who else has more practice listening? :) Parents are pulled in a thousand directions, but they enjoy Audio-friendly moments every day.

Their key rituals are:

Exercising indoors
Commuting
Having snack or lunch
During work
Putting kids to bed

"It is a podcast that's probably not appropriate for my kids. So I try to listen to as much as I can before they actually get in the car. So at that time I'm alone. I like listening to the characters on the show and listening to all their inside jokes."

ALEX D., 35, LISTENER, WASHINGTON, PA

GROWTH SEEKERS

These listeners turn to Audio—especially podcasts—for personal and professional improvement.

Their key rituals are:

Having me-time
Getting ready
Meditating
Exercising indoors
Online shopping

"It gives me joy. I learn about events on my local radio. I learn about news. I learn about topics that I'm interested in."

MARINA P., LISTENER, BALTIMORE, MD

GEN Z

These Zoomers are sliding into the driver's seat, culturally and economically. They turn "typical" lifestyles and workstyles on their heads with their day-long listening habits.

Their key rituals are:

Using my phone
At the gym
Waking up

"I put this on is because it gets everybody in the groove, it gets everybody up jumping, moving, like releasing all that stress and, you know, emotion from school and just having a great time at home."

GENESIS S., 19, LISTENER, VERO BEACH, FL

FITNESS BUFFS

You see them at the gym, on the track, and even on the beach. Audio and exercise are a perfect fit.

Their key rituals are:

Having me-time
Commuting
Putting my child to bed
Hitting the gym

"I'm exercising, walking, using dumbbells, and listening to music to push me."

ANTHONY G., 58, LISTENER, CALUMET CITY, IL

TECH WIZARDS

These tech early adopters are plugged in to Audio all day long—taking their favorite shows with them on the latest smart speakers, phones, and in-car dashboards.

Their key rituals are:

Commuting
Putting my child to bed
Having me-time

"And I would be listening to those podcasts, or a very specific technical podcast. I like to do some walking. I can just really dive into the podcast, and just listen to it and really enjoy it."

ARTIN B., 33, LISTENER, SEATTLE, WA

FOODIES

Between Michelin star restaurants, gourmet cooking at home, and the city's best slice, foodies are cooking up a delicious mix of music, podcasts, and news.

Their key rituals are:

Cooking
Having me-time
Putting my child to bed

"When I cook, I play my Audio to have motivation and be entertained while cooking."

BRENDA G., 22, LISTENER, WILMINGTON, CA

How rituals unfold: A day in the life of a podcast listener

As listeners, we're very promiscuous. We play the field by platform hopping, station surfing, genre switching, podcast swapping. We're not afraid to switch it up as we take Audio with us everywhere we go throughout the day.

Check out the typical day for a devoted podcast listener. Surprise: it's not all podcasts.



EARLY MORNING

Cooking, Breakfast,
Drinking coffee

News, Rap

WORKOUT TIME

Running, Walking, At the
gym, Walking the dog

R&B, Top 40, Tech Podcasts

COMMUTE TIME

Driving to work

R&B, Tech Podcasts

SELF / HOME TIME

Bath, Dying hair, Home
Improvement, Laundry, Traveling

**Classic Rock, Alt, Business
or finance podcasts**

MID-MORNING AT HOME

Yard work, Cleaning, Baby
napping, Work from home

**R&B, Tech or Parenting
(Kids & Family) podcasts**

AFTERNOON

Cooking lunch/dinner,
Picking kids up from school

**Sports and comedy
podcasts, Classic Hits**

EVENING

Working out, Walking the dog,
Spending time with spouse

Hip Hop, Classic Rock, Alt

NIGHT / WINDING DOWN

Dishes, Going to bed,
Skincare

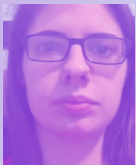
**R&B, Tech or Parenting
(Kids & Family) podcasts**

What listeners are tuned into

Understanding who's tuning in for a few laughs and who's coming to learn something new is key when engaging listeners during their daily rituals. Here are the voices of our listeners sharing their favorite content when tuning in to Audio.

Brands can match our mood with messaging that aligns with the content listeners crave.

Mood Boosters or Relaxation



"I listen to radio and podcasts. I listen to them both because they're my escape, my way to relax and feel good."

GABBY S., 21, LISTENER, NORTHFIELD, NJ

Motivation



"It just motivates me. It makes me feel happy and strong. It's something that's so critical to my exercising."

JESSICA H., 45, LISTENER, GRAND ISLE, VT

Information



"If I'm listening to news, it helps me feel like I'm connected with what's going on in the world."

ROBERT B., 51, LISTENER, DENVER, CO

Entertainment



"Having a podcast or music playing... entertains me and propels me through the things I don't want to do."

RAMAN M., 39, LISTENER, LAGUNA BEACH, CA



The Opportunity for Brands

All those ritual insights probably left us asking about the **how**—
as in, how to use these moments to reach your audience?

We've got you. Here's how you sync your advertising and media
plans to those magical Audio moments when a listener's ears,
mind, and heart are wide open to your message.

Match your message to the audience, ritual, and content.

Any brand steward knows to pitch a sports drink to an athlete, lawn fertilizer to a gardener, or diapers to a new parent. But let's add another dimension to that—context.

As advertisers have long understood, it's not just who you reach, but when you reach them. And Audio advertisers are seeing strong results when they take audience targeting to the next level with contextual advertising.

Your goal is not only to reach the right audience, but to meet your consumers in the moments when they're ready, willing, and happy to listen.



Digital and traditional media strategist, Kara Manatt, is a consultant to top global brands. We sat down with her to talk about ad contextualization.

Audacy: What role does context play in Audio messaging, and how does context improve ad effectiveness?

Kara: We've done a lot of testing on context across different platforms, and it plays a critical role in the effectiveness of ads. It's been fascinating to see the same exact ad performing very differently based on context. Out of context, good ads work. But, in context, the performance of the same exact ad is amplified.

A: What benefits are realized when ad messages are played in context?

DOES YOUR MEDIA HAVE STOPPING POWER? ADS WORK BEST WHEN YOUR AUDIENCE IS PAYING ATTENTION.

If you're reading this State of Audio guide, you're prepared for some serious Audio advertising talk. You're ready for that. You're open to it. It makes sense in this context. But if you're sitting courtside at the NBA Finals and we turn and start chatting you up about Audio rituals, you might call Security.

It's the same with your ad messages. The trick is to get your diaper message to the new mom when she's getting the baby changed for bedtime, not when she's heading into a playoff game.

KM: I consistently see two important benefits. First, just by appearing in context, there's natural targeting built in. Second, the brand message is being received when people are in the right mindset to hear it. In a recent study, we modeled the impact of those two benefits. While they both play a role in ad effectiveness, reaching people when they are in the right mindset is the strongest driver of ad effectiveness.

A: Are there best practices when it comes to contextual advertising and targeting for brands?

KM: I think contextual is very unique to each brand. But, I have seen the benefits of brands getting creative and thinking about contextual in a variety of ways. Not only does it help extend the reach of campaigns, but it's a great way to test and learn.

A: How are ads 'in context' viewed by a listener—do these ads come off as more helpful or relevant rather than intrusive?

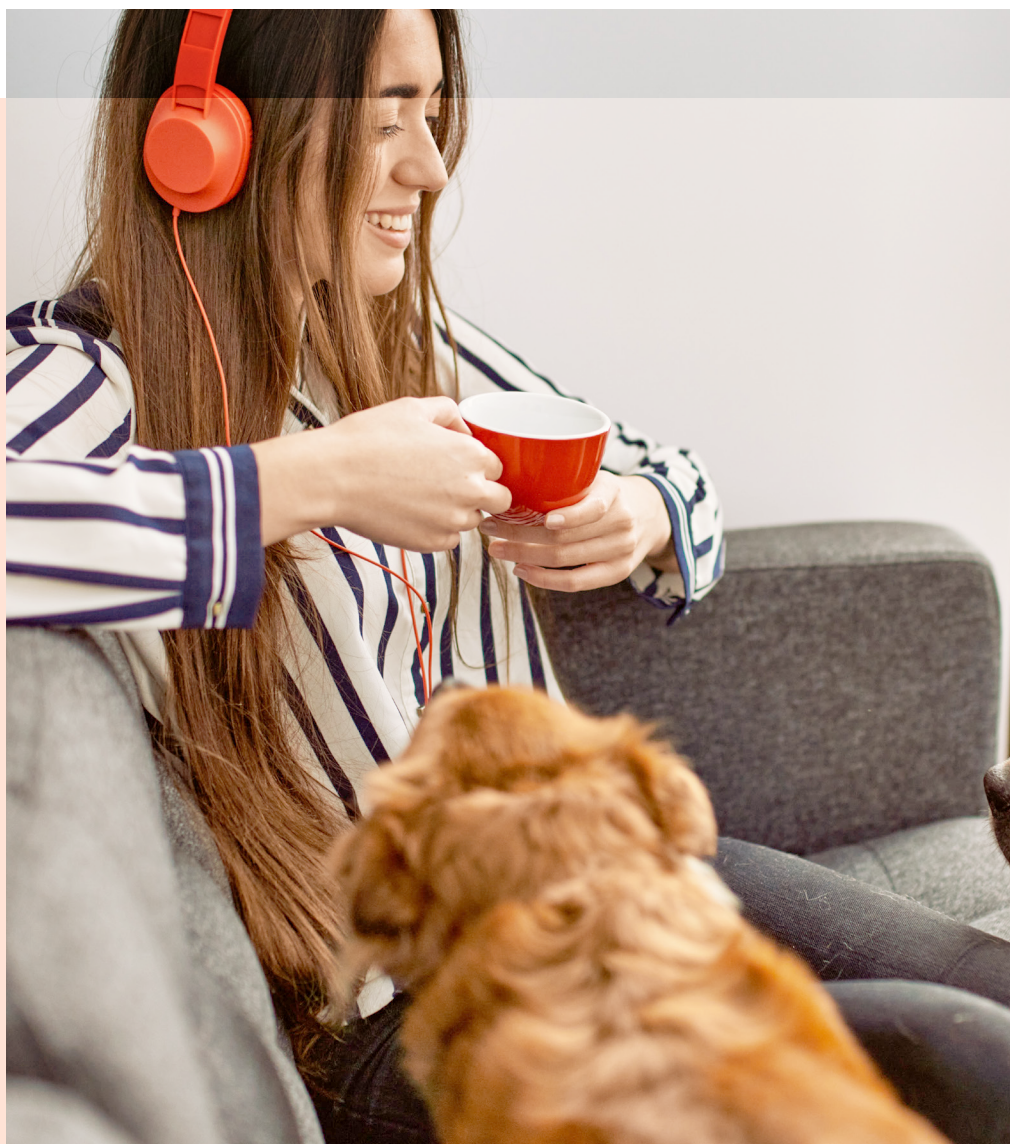
1

Put content in context

KM: I'm so glad you brought this up. We've seen contextual alignment actually improve the ad experience for users. So, yes, less annoying, intrusive, and more relevant. Contextual is a win-win for that reason. Good for brands and good for users at the same time.

A: Where does media planning come in when determining not only the audience to target but the setting to reach them?

KM: Contextual is so interesting because when you target the content you are, in essence, targeting an audience without the use of audience data. You are reaching the audience who is naturally already consuming that content. It's important to not only think about the consumption habits of the audience you want to reach, but also the ideal mindset in which you are reaching them. If you are a sophisticated candy brand with an adult audience, you may want to focus on contexts in which viewers are listening as a personal indulgence, when they are relaxing as opposed to trying to get tasks done.



2 Target the ritual

Brands must go beyond age, gender and socio-economics when targeting. By thinking through a cohort's daily rituals, advertisers can identify the right moments to target with more precision and relevance.

While we're going about our daily routines, getting your messages past the clutter and noise of our over-saturated media landscape can be a big challenge for brands. That's where great creative comes in. What should your Audio ads do?

Grab attention with sonic stimuli.

Set the mood by surprising listeners or evoking an intuitive response through sound. Think steak sizzling on a grill, chirping birds, or the crack of a bat.

Mention your brand early and often.

Orient listeners right up front. This reinforces your brand for listeners who are already familiar with you, and starts the newcomers down the path of brand recognition.

Tout savings and other benefits.

Who doesn't love a good deal or the solution to a problem? People listen closely when you answer their biggest question: "What's in it for me?"

Accentuate the positive.

Keep things upbeat and positive. Our study shows that listener engagement and immersion increases with the use of the word "yes," and phrases like "no limit."

Finish strong!

Seal the deal with a solid closing message. Give folks a clear call to action, like visiting a website, or stopping at a nearby location.

And don't forget the signature! Creating a signature sound, instrumental theme, or mnemonic (a quick sound bite, like a chord, series of tones, or your brand name being sung) is a solid investment. These sonic signatures grow legs over time, fueling recognition and making your brand instantly identifiable for years to come.

3

Develop ads that perk the ears during our ritual moments



"Just the jingle, it's so catchy. That's why I remember it."

NIKHILA D., 57, LISTENER, MIAMI, FL

Partner with deeply loved hosts to establish authentic connections, earn trust, and draft off their equity.

Whether we're listening to a popular drive-time DJ, a fascinating podcaster, or beloved local sports guru, our connection to Audio hosts is as powerful as lightning in a bottle. They make us feel understood, speak our language, and meet our needs every time we tune in. Ad messages and endorsements delivered by these trusted voices can have a big impact.

But (and we bet you've heard this before!), with great influence comes great responsibility. That's why the link between a host and a brand message must be believable and authentic. Successful host endorsements speak from experience and the heart, and they drive strong connections with listeners.



"I am guilty of buying things that are advertised on my podcast... You feel a connection with the hosts of the podcast. Like, 'oh we're so like-minded. Maybe that would work for me, too.'"

JESSICA H., 44, LISTENER, GRANDE ISLE, VT



4

Activate influencers

Methology

These 11 key rituals were revealed through a groundbreaking Audio ethnography study.

Through quantitative surveys, 5-day mobile diaries, and in-depth interviews, researchers uncovered how we listen, the habits that we directly tie to Audio, and most importantly—when we're most engaged with what we're hearing.

	QUANTITATIVE	ETHNOGRAPHIES	QUALITATIVE
METHOD	Nationally representative survey	Mobile diaries (5 days)	45-minute in-depth interviews
WHO ARE THEY?	N=1003 P 18-64 US Adults	N=48 Weekly OTA listeners, streaming OTA listeners, and podcast listeners	N=15 Weekly OTA listeners, streaming OTA listeners, and podcast listeners

