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Audio measurement

AUDIO TIME

What the RAJAR MIDAS survey
tells us about listening in the digital age

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tells us about listening in the digital age

Contents

Articles:

A decade in radio

In 2015, RAJAR published *Audio Time* a 'state of the nation' for UK audio consumption, drawing on insights from the RAJAR Audio survey which is named 'MIDAS'. Ten years on, the country has had five prime ministers, a new monarch, been impacted by a global pandemic and other seismic global events. RAJAR itself has seen significant change with its move towards more online data collection and the addition of passive data into the core measurement of radio as well as the expansion of its quarterly Audio survey – MIDAS, which is drawn upon to produce this overview of the development of listening within the audio market across those ten momentous years.

Looking back, that first report followed a period of accelerated change in the audio landscape, driven by the opportunities offered by digital connectivity. *Audio Time* gave early insights into navigating this new landscape of choice, how we were integrating new services like subscription streaming, podcasts and catch-up radio into our daily lives.

In 2015, audio streaming services like Spotify were still establishing themselves, and, whilst podcasts had been around for a while, the great podcast explosion had yet to come. Meanwhile, smart speakers had only just hit the market that year with the first Amazon Echo.

98%
listen to some form of audio-only media across an average week

Here in 2025, the pace of development in consumer-facing technology and services has settled down, with much of the recent innovation coming in the specific area of adtech. This last decade has been about how our initial exploration of the 'new and shiny' has consolidated into habitual behaviour, about how established and new forms of audio now complement our daily lives and meet our need states.

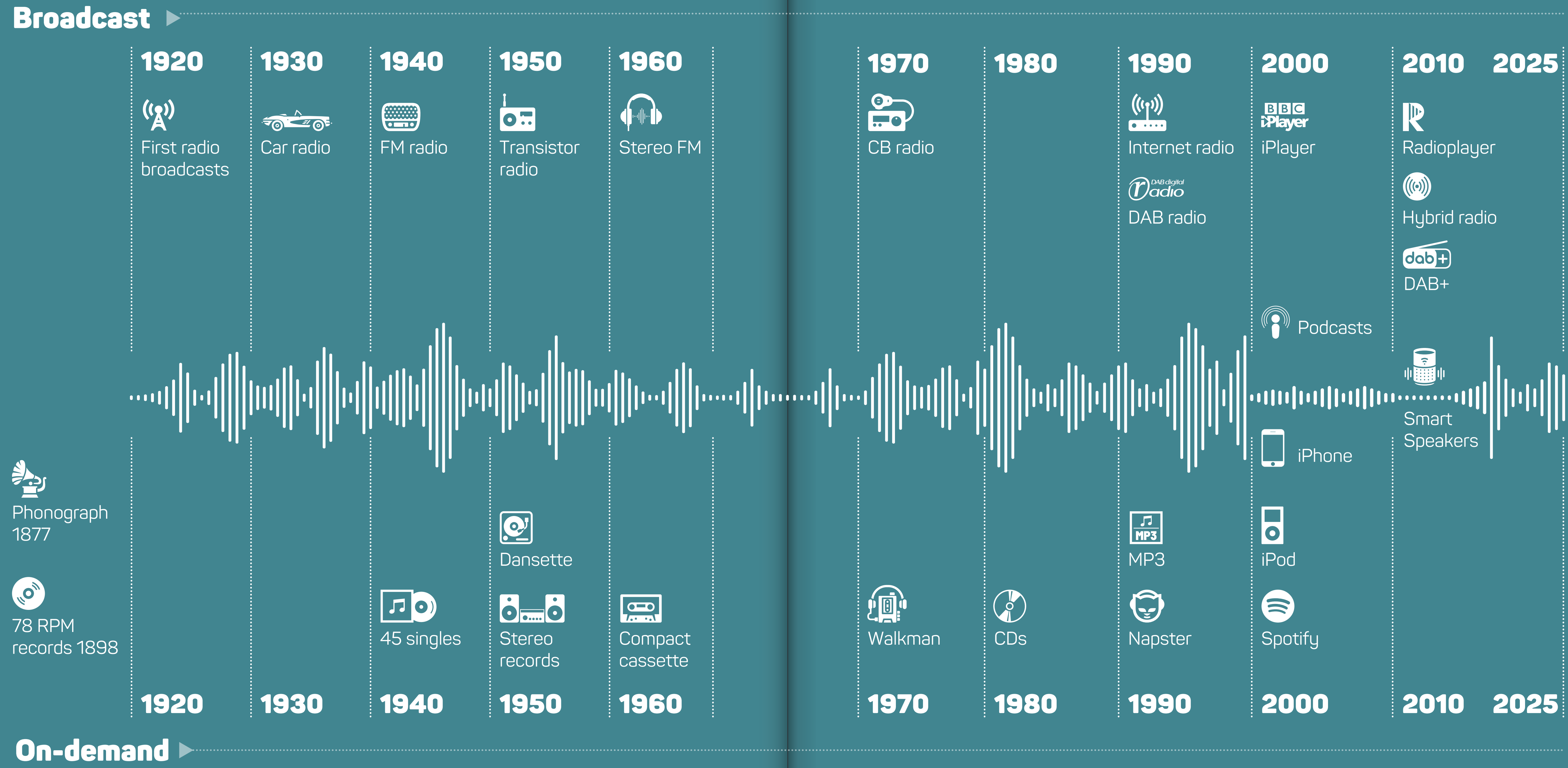
In that context, *Audio Time 2* is a timely and fascinating insight into how consumers have settled into the new audio landscape. It's also a testament to the enduring strength of audio and its enhanced relevance in a connected, always-on world. 98% of us listen to some form of audio-only media across an average week, a figure that's remained constant over the last ten years, whilst the *volume* of audio we hear has actually increased from 25 hours and 24 mins, to 28 hours and 6 minutes each week. That's an 11% increase over the last decade. This reflects the growing popularity of audio as a medium, driven by its ubiquity, flexibility and ease of access across multiple connected devices.

So why is the audio medium so popular in an era seemingly obsessed with video? We'll be looking at some of the key drivers as well as some of the pointers for the future of audio.

Audio Time 2 draws upon the RAJAR MIDAS Survey which measures listening time and behaviour aged 15+ across the spectrum of audio-led content, devices and services. It encompasses:

- Live radio
- Catch-up radio
- On-demand music services (like Spotify and Apple Music)
- Podcasts (spoken and music)
- Audiobooks
- Owned music (vinyl, CDs, cassettes and MP3s)

A Timeline of Audio and Radio Innovation



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Soundbites

We spend nearly **28 hours** and six minutes each week with audio content. That's a 11% increase over the last decade.

Live radio accounts for 65% of all UK audio consumption, over three times the time spent with on-demand streaming services like Spotify and Apple Music. On a weekly basis, live radio reaches 87% of the population – over 51 million adults - compared to 89% (48 million of a smaller population) in 2015.

Podcasts now have a weekly reach of 25% and account for 7% of all audio listening.

Access has replaced ownership when it comes to our own favourite music and audio: only 23% now use any form of owned audio (CDs, Vinyl, MP3s etc) each week.

The volume of **commercially-available listening** (content that carries ads) is growing, driven by the growth of on-demand music services, podcasts and new commercial stations.

Since RAJAR MIDAS started measuring **audiobooks** in 2019, their weekly reach has more than **tripled to 9%**, with listeners consuming over nine hours each week.

Commercial radio's share of audiences available to advertising is 81%, compared to 5% on streaming ad tiers and 13% via podcasts.

DAB is the largest platform for live radio listening, accounting for 48% of hours. FM/AM now makes up just 19%. **Four fifths of live radio listening is digital** in some form and one third is on devices beyond radio sets.

Smart speakers now stream 15% of all live radio listening. **Radio accounts for 74%** of all audio listening on a smart speaker.

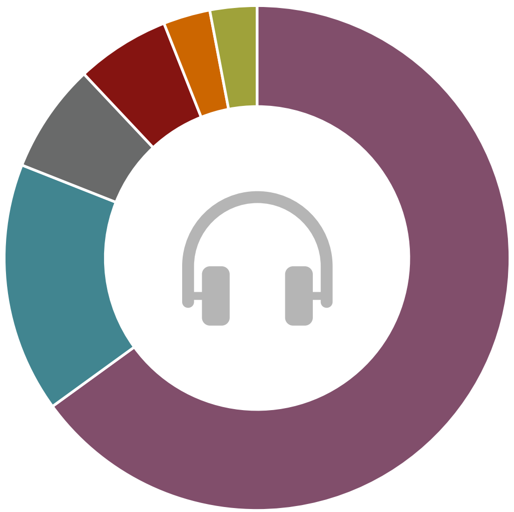
71% of the UK population is reached by some form of **connected audio** each week. 46% of all audio listening is connected (via a device with an internet connection).

60% of us listen to live radio in a car at some point during the week and live radio takes up **76% of all in-car listening**.

Live radio stands out for meeting the need states of providing company, **keeping in the loop and sparking conversations**. This helps to explain why radio continues to thrive primarily as a live medium. Podcasts score highest for widening listeners' horizons and on-demand music services for relaxation and lifting mood.

The big picture: Share of Audio time

Share of Audio time (%)



65% Live radio
16% On-demand music services
7% Podcasts
6% Owned music
3% Audiobooks
3% Catch-up radio

Source: RAJAR MIDAS Spring 2025 | Base: All 15+

98% of us listen to some form of audio-only medium in an average week, totalling 28 hours and 6 minutes across its many forms. So how does that break down? By far the largest amount of our time is devoted to live radio which makes up almost two-thirds of all audio consumption in the UK. That's over three times the amount spent with on-demand streaming services like Spotify and Apple Music.

The enduring strength of live radio can be attributed to that key first word: live. Certainly, catch-up radio services are well established, and those who use them listen for nearly seven hours a week, which is nearly double the volume in 2015. Nonetheless, they account for just 3% of all radio listening

The enduring strength of live radio can be attributed to that key first word: **live**

87%

of the population (50.2m adults) is reached by live radio across the week

Being a live medium is in the core DNA of radio and explains why it's co-existing with, rather than being replaced by, newer forms of audio. Meanwhile, streaming has liberated radio from radio sets to be ubiquitous, easily accessible across multiple connected devices. As a result, live radio reaches 87% of the population across the week, 50.2 million adults.

Without a doubt, the biggest shift in audio usage over the last decade has been in the shift from 'owned' music to streaming.

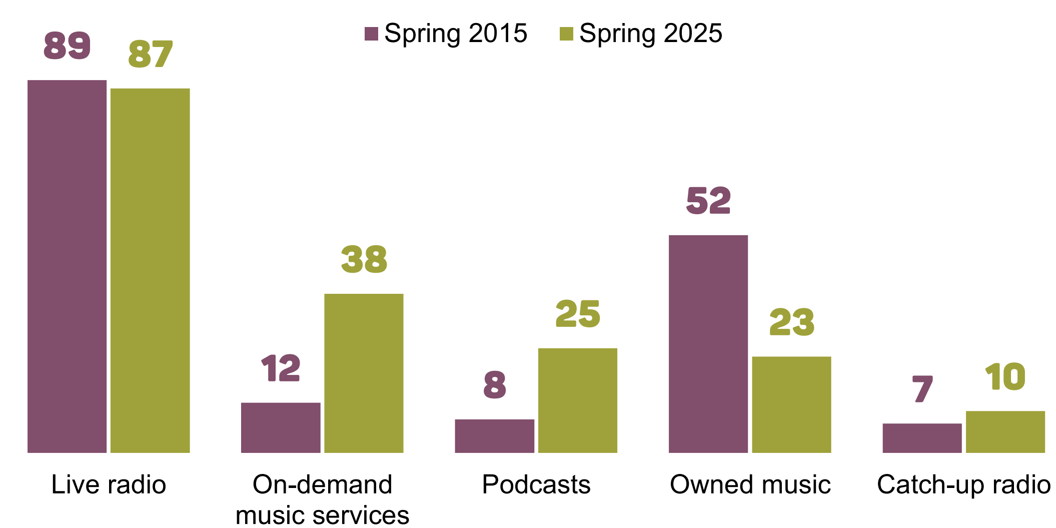
The early impact of the digitisation of audio around the turn of the century was a shift from owning CDs to purchasing MP3s on services like iTunes, but it was still primarily a purchase-to-own model. In 2015 we noted that listening to CDs was still at that point larger than relatively recently launched subscription streaming services. However, we also predicted that 'the tide is turning against physical media' and a decade on the shift from own to access is profound. Listening to any form of owned music in an average week has halved to just 23%, with the reach of on-demand services more than tripling to 38%.

As we highlighted in the 2015 report, this has had profound implications for the structure of the music industry in terms of where revenue is coming from.

Clearly, on-demand services have impacted the volume of listening to radio as there are only 24 hours in the day, but its primary impact has been on owned media. As a result, radio's weekly reach has stayed stable at 87% versus 89% a decade ago.

> The tide is turning against physical media and a decade on the shift from 'own' to 'access' is profound

Audio weekly reach (%)



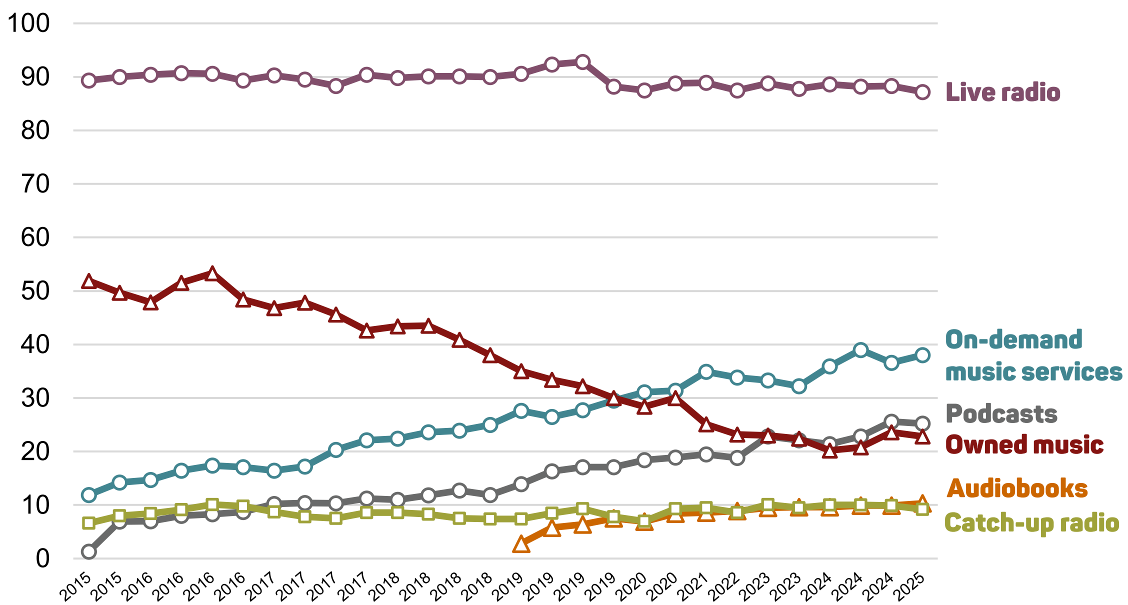
Source: RAJAR MIDAS Spring 2015/Spring 2025 | Base: All 15+

If we look at how weekly reach for different audio types has trended over the last decade, two other developments are clear: the rise of podcasts, which have grown from a 7% niche to 25% of the population each week and audiobooks, which were not significant enough to measure in 2015. We'll return to both of those themes later in this report.

We can also look at the volume of listening amongst those who actually use each service.

20.7 hours
live radio listened to per week

Weekly week trends (%)

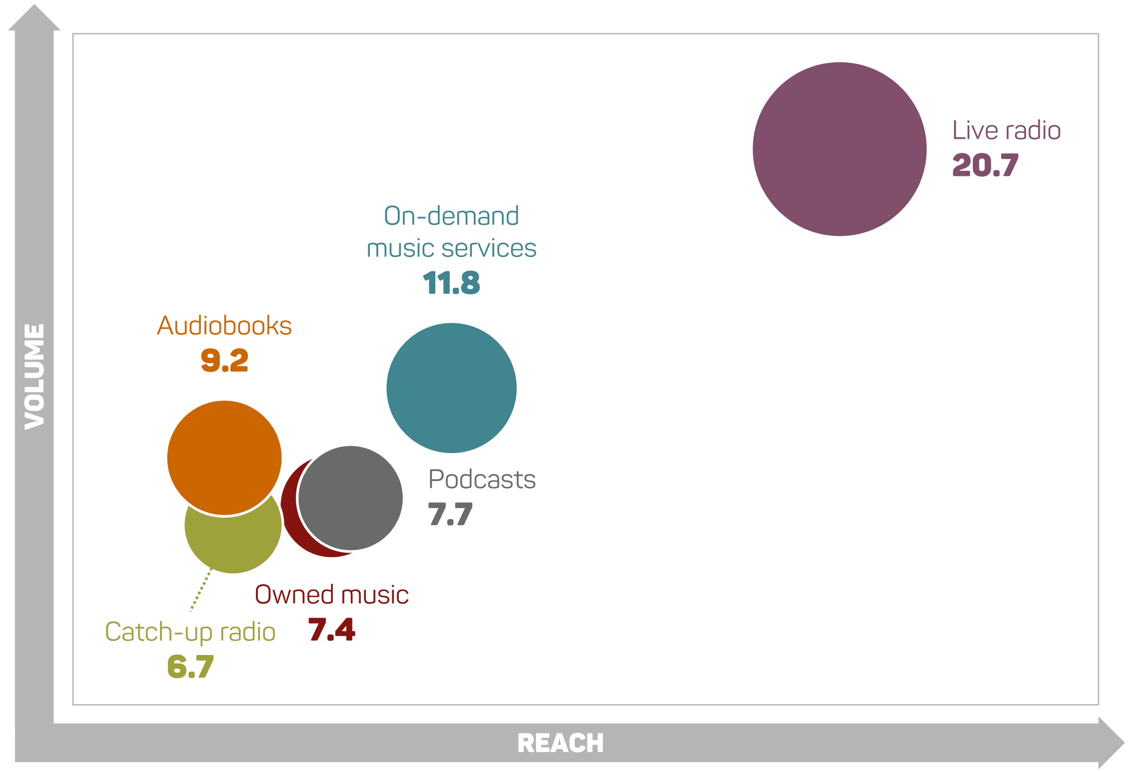


Source: RAJAR MIDAS | Base: All 15+

The graphic below plots weekly reach against the volume of usage amongst those reached. It amplifies the dominant position of live radio, listened to for 20.7 hours a week, compared to 11.8 hours for on-demand service listeners.

Amongst other forms of audio, audiobook listeners have the next highest volume of listening at 9.2 hours. We explore the drivers of audiobook growth in our 'Tell me a story' article.

Weekly hours by those using each service



Source: RAJAR Audio, Spring 2025 | Base: All 15+

Share of audio by device

In 2015, 86% of all live radio listening was still through a radio set itself, with AM/FM the single biggest platform, accounting for 52% of listening. Ten years on, that picture has changed significantly. DAB has now overtaken AM/FM which has reduced to 19% of all listening.

> **74%**
> of all audio on a smart speaker is radio

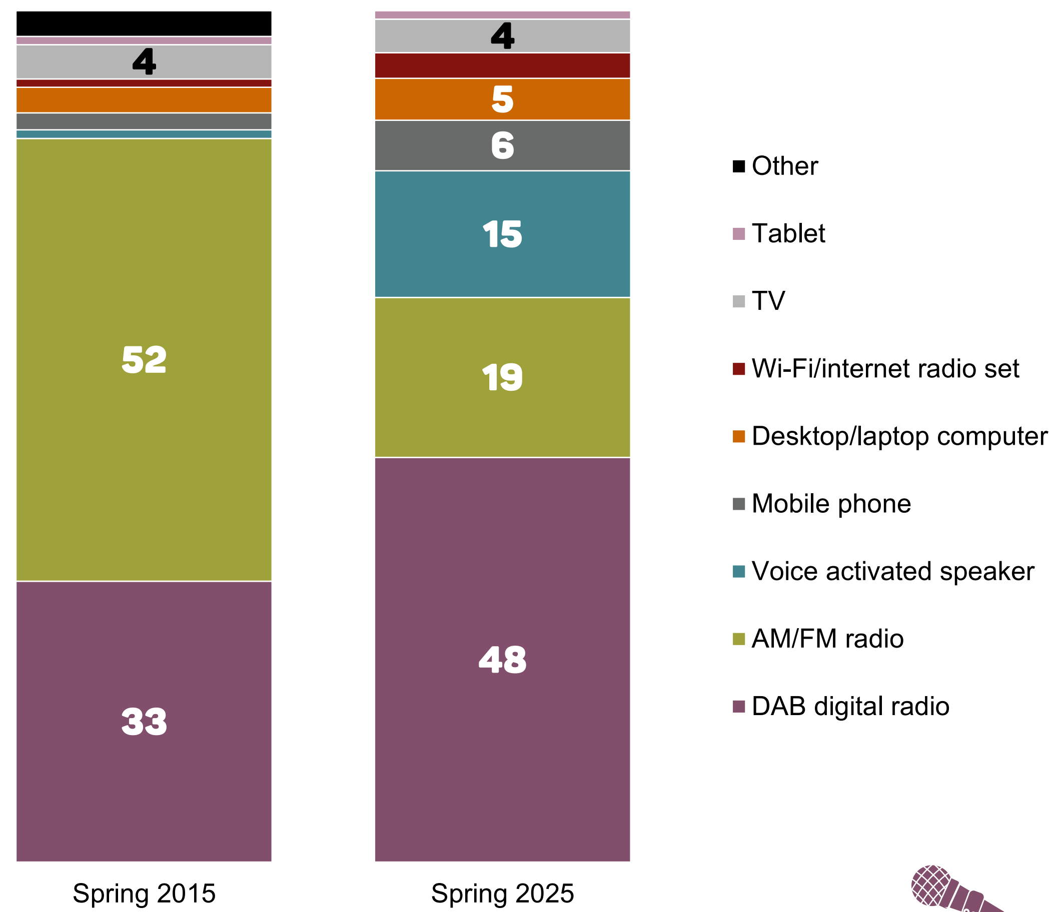
With almost a half of all listening on DAB and a further third on some form of connected device, this means that UK radio is now overwhelmingly a digital medium. The most significant driver of the spread of radio beyond the radio set is the rise of voice activated speakers.

Smart speakers only hit the UK market in 2015 around the time of the first *Audio Time* report but now deliver 15% of all live radio listening and have proven to be a real shot in the arm for audio. Radio accounts for 74% of all audio on a smart speaker.

Rapid growth in adoption has been heavily subsidised by companies like Amazon, who hoped that voice assistant speakers like Amazon Echo would pay for themselves by stimulating retail purchasing and connection to other devices in the home. For a while 'IOT', the Internet Of Things, was very much an ad industry buzzword. This competitive pricing helped boost smart speakers into 49% of UK homes just a decade after launch. Whilst these speakers have proven a major stimulus to audio consumption, research indicates that other use cases (shopping, controlling lights etc) are still minimal.

> **49%**
> of UK homes have a smart speaker – in just a decade after launch

Live radio listening by device (%)



Source: RAJAR MIDAS Spring 2025/Spring 2015 | Base: All 15+

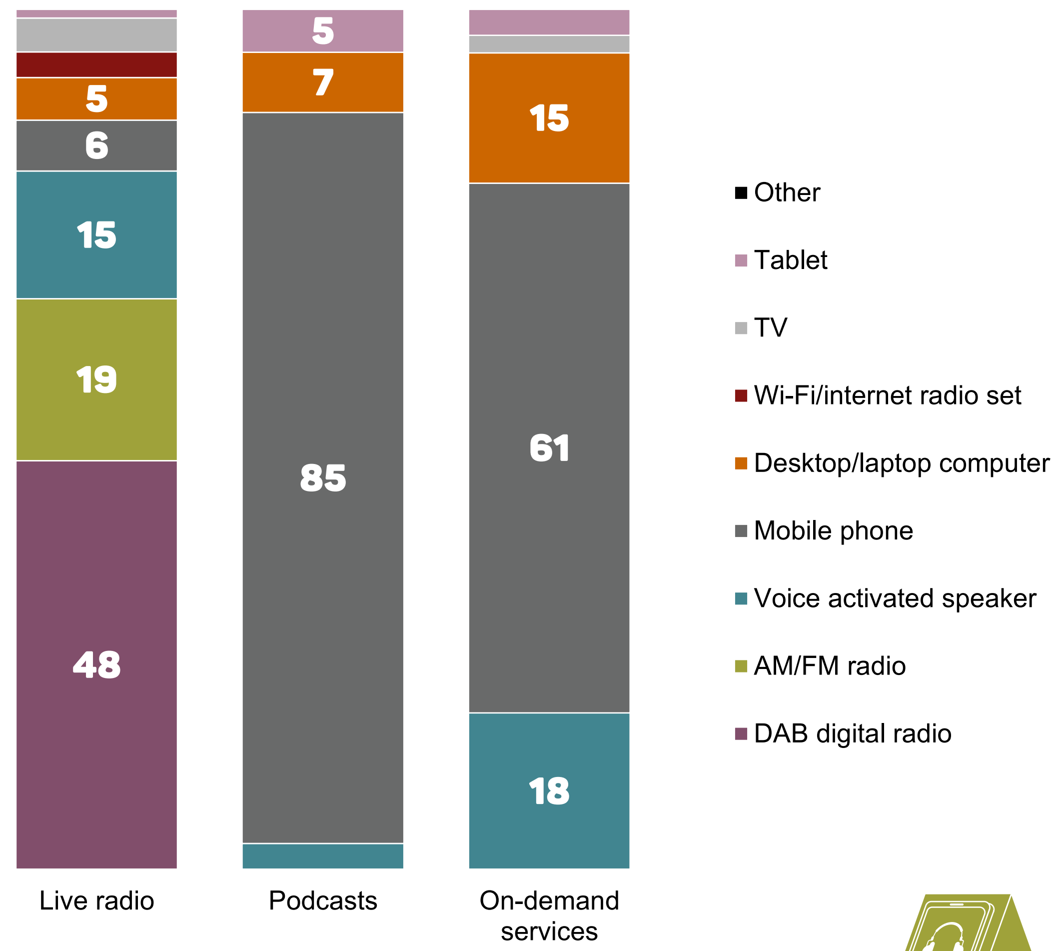
43%

of audio content played on smartphones is via headphones: the majority is streamed to connected speakers or is played via the the speakers in the phone itself... however annoying that may be to fellow travellers on public transport

Back in 2015, we noted that the most common way to listen to music on a phone was still the playback of downloaded digital tracks, even for 15-24s. This reflected connectivity issues and data plans. In the UK, 5G was still five years away from launch. It was a world that, as a result was still more used to the hassle of downloading rather than streaming content. Fast forward to 2025 and we see a very different picture: 61% of all consumption of on-demand music services is on a smartphone, whilst at home the direct use of smart speakers has overtaken using PCs and laptops. Meanwhile, 85% of all podcast listening is via mobile phones.

In an average week, 43% of us will use headphones at some point and this makes up 10% of total audio listening. However, this proportion varies greatly by audio type. Whilst headphones account for 37% of listening to on-demand music services, 49% of podcast usage and 48% of audiobook listening, they make up only 4% of live radio listening. This means that radio content is more likely to be heard by more than one person.

Share of listening by device (%)

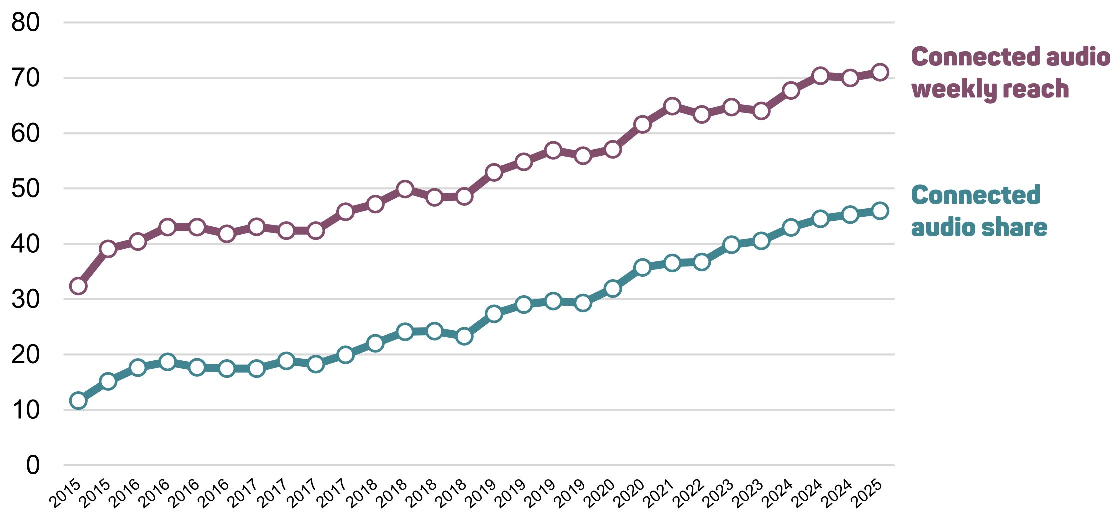


Source: RAJAR MIDAS Spring 2025 | Base: All 15+

An important implication of the rise of streaming audio across the last decade is the growing proportion at all audio listening that's connected, that has some form of internet return path.

Currently 71% of the UK are reached by some form of connected audio each week. As a result, 46% of all audio listening is connected. This presents opportunities both for measurement and for advanced advertising through targeting and bespoke creatives. The digital advertising exchanges run by the three sales houses are designed to empower advertisers to take full advantage of connected audio — offering addressable targeting and dynamic advertising across live streams, on-demand audio, and podcasts.

46% of all audio listening is connected, with 71% reached each week



Source: RAJAR MIDAS Spring 2025 | Base: All 15+

Highlighting the Commercial Audio opportunity

The fact that audio listening continues to grow will come as no surprise to many of us. We now have access to a broader range of audio content than ever before and more opportunities to listen, particularly given the increased use of connected platforms like smartphones and smart speakers. This is great for us as consumers, but also good news for advertisers who can use multi-platform audio to access a growing mass audience and provide targeted and relevant messages to listeners.

RAJAR MIDAS provides a valuable means of quantifying the scale of this opportunity. It enables the industry to examine the total audience reach and volume of listening to audio – across radio, podcasts and music streaming – that is commercially-available for advertisers. The fact that this ad-funded element has a combined reach of 76% of adults with commercial radio accounting for the vast majority, is especially helpful in tackling the preconceptions that sometimes exist in the media world.

Matt Payton, is CEO of the Radiocentre

radiocentre
The voice of commercial radio

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Where and when

Essential to the growth of time spent with audio in the UK is its liquidity. Audio flows through the day, filling and surrounding the shape of our lives. At times it accompanies and facilitates daily tasks, at other times it's something to bathe in and relax. Later we will look at the need states that the different forms of audio meet and how they complement each other. These need states are a key driver of when and where audio is consumed throughout the day.

Across seven days

28.2m

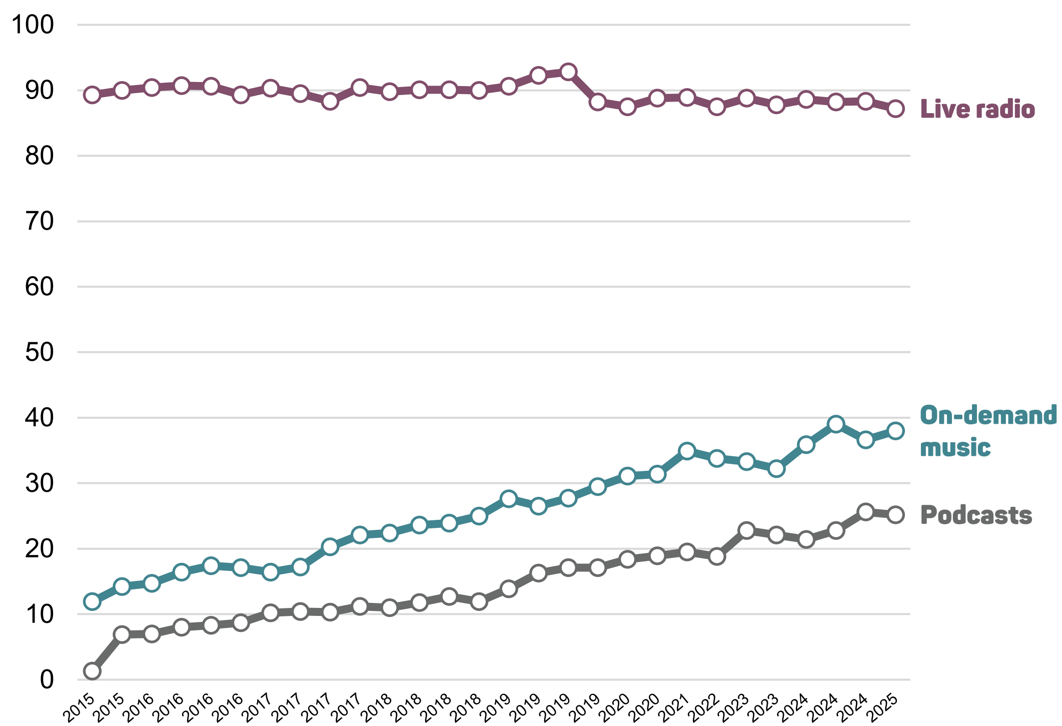
will tune in to live radio between 8-8:30am at some point during the week

In the chart on the right, it shows the Monday-Friday weekly reach for live radio, on-demand music and podcasts.

Whilst the latter have seen significant growth over the last decade, placed in context the dominance of live radio throughout the day is apparent, with live radio peaking at 8-8:30am, reaching an average of just over 15m UK adults each day. Across seven days, 28.2m will tune in to live radio between 8-8:30am at some point during the week.

The traditional breakfast radio peak has persisted over the last decade, despite the impact of the pandemic in changing the shape of the week for many of us. However, what we can see is some degree of redistribution of listening across the day, most likely as a result of the increase in working from home and more flexible working hours.

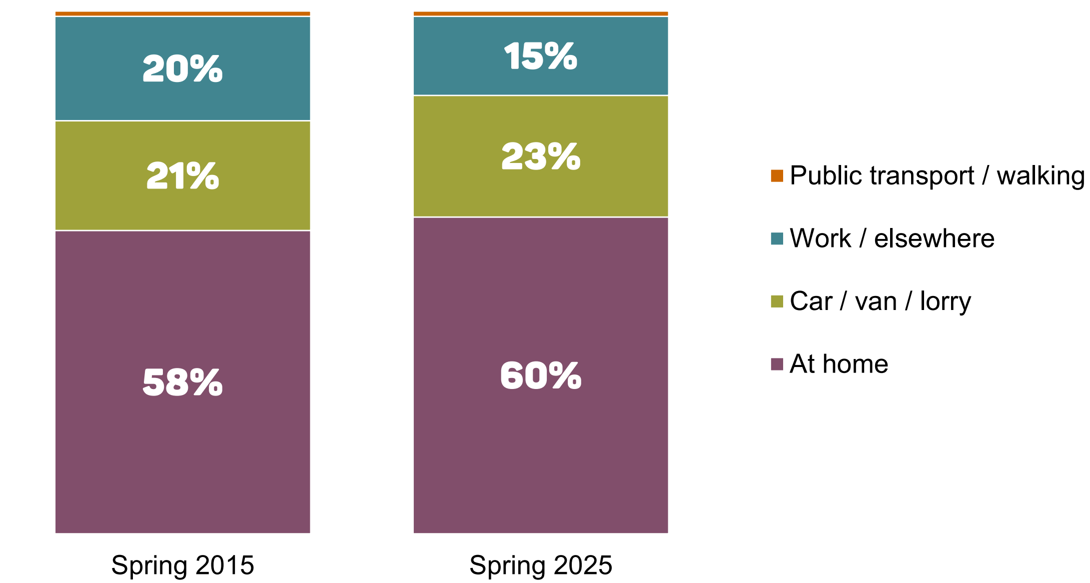
Monday-Friday average reach (%)



Source: RAJAR MIDAS | Base: All 15+

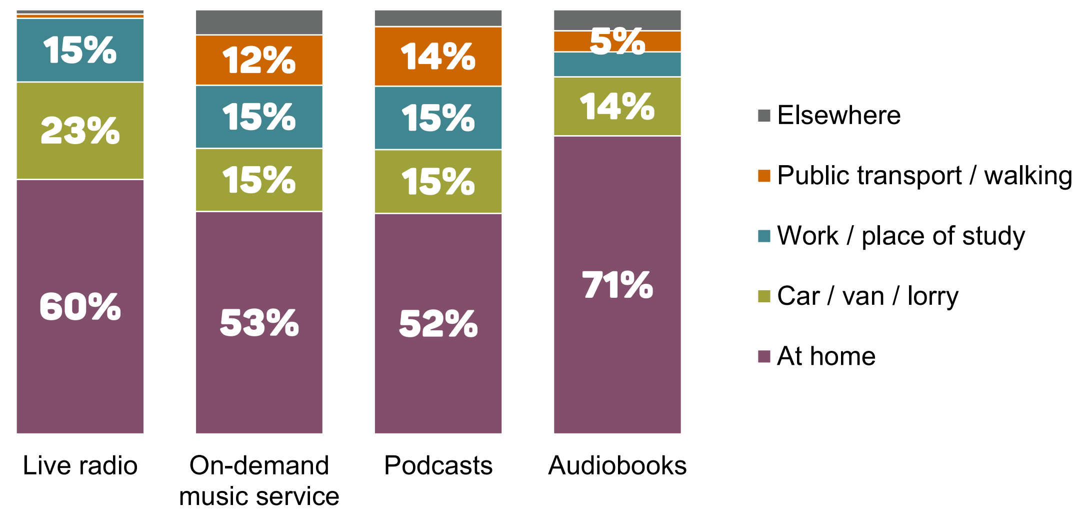
The last decade has seen slight increases in the proportion of live radio consumed at home (60%) and in motor vehicles (23%) with a consequent decline in listening at work and elsewhere. This is clearly a result of the move towards increased levels of working from home. Whilst it might be expected that this might impact car usage for commuting. The Department of Transport statistics have shown car usage levels returning to pre-pandemic levels. It may well be that people are more likely to use their cars locally on 'working from home days' as opposed to longer public transport commutes to a workplace.

Location of live radio listening (%)



Source: RAJAR MIDAS | Base: All 15+

Location of listening (%)



Source: RAJAR MIDAS | Base: All 15+

Overall, 60% of us listen to the radio in a car at some point during the week and it's no surprise therefore that the development in connected in car audio systems has become an important focus for new audio technology (see article on page 19).

Listening at home is the dominant location for each category of audio, but on-demand audio is more likely to be listened to on public transport than radio.

Listening at work takes up a higher share of podcast listening than other settings, though employers may hope those podcasts are at least work-related!

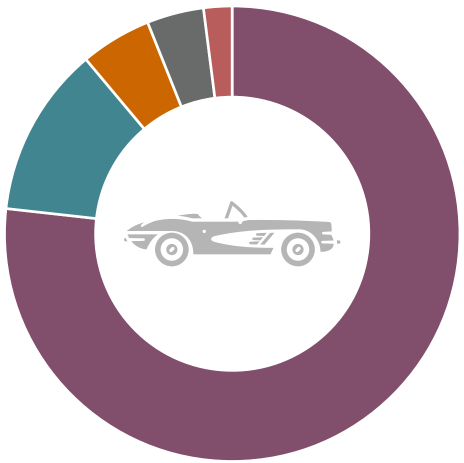
60%
of us listen to the radio in a car at some point during the week

76% of in-car audio listening is devoted to live radio, with on-demand music services taking up 12%. 43% of in-car audio listening is with more than one person in the car.

Reflecting the increased connectivity options in modern cars, live radio now has more competition, but in the last decade the fall of in-car share for live radio is just seven percentage points (84% vs 76%). The primary impact of on-demand streaming has been on owned music (CDs, MP3s etc) which has fallen from 13% share of in-car to just 4%. However, new cars are no longer supplied with CD players, reflecting and reinforcing the move away from physical media. Again, it can be argued that services like Spotify are the natural successor to owned music, as opposed to supplanting radio, particularly in car where there is a heightened need for travel information and news.

Half of all listening to live radio happens when people are on their own, with the majority of accompanied listening being with partners, children and family members. Meanwhile, three quarters of on-demand music service listening is done by people on their own and only around one in ten audiobook or podcast listeners listen with someone else.

Share of in-car listening (%)



76% Live radio

12% On-demand music services

5% Podcasts

4% Owned music

2% Audiobooks

0% Catch-up radio

Source: RAJAR MIDAS Spring 2025 | Base: All 15+

Keeping Listening at the Heart of the Connected Car

Radio and cars are a match made in heaven and always have been. RAJAR (Q1 2025) still shows that 26% of all radio listening happens in the car, growing in the last 10 years (21% in Q1 2015) - because radio give drivers three things no algorithm or playlist can equal: reassuring prominence, live relevance and human connection. But the question many in the industry are now asking is – can we maintain or even grow that engagement?

Radio and audio are fighting for its place within an automotive industry that is changing fast. The emergence of electric vehicles has increased competition and the pace of innovation, with car manufacturers investing huge amounts in developing the “digital cockpit” and entertainment services. The result is that cars are catching up with the home and offering voice, video, gaming and AI. Big tech giants are moving in, most notably with the emergence of Google’s new automotive operating system enabling app environments where digital audio streaming services compete with radio. The space that once belonged almost exclusively to broadcast radio is suddenly crowded, and the fight for drivers and passengers’ attention has begun.

Here’s the good news: every car still rolls off the line with a DAB+ and FM tuner: free, robust, fast. Back in 2017 we partnered with AUDI proving how to link broadcast radio and the internet (what we call hybrid radio) to bring radio to life with visuals and now-playing information. Since then, we’ve put the first radio app inside Google’s Android Automotive OS in the Polestar, and struck deals with among others Porsche, Volkswagen, Renault, Peugeot, Citroën, BMW and now XPENG, one of the rising Chinese EV brands. More car manufacturers are following and hybrid radio done right is every bit as slick as a premium streaming app but still greets drivers with a live “good morning” instead of a login screen. What’s exciting is what comes next.

Laurence Harrison is Chief Partnerships Officer at Radioplayer Worldwide

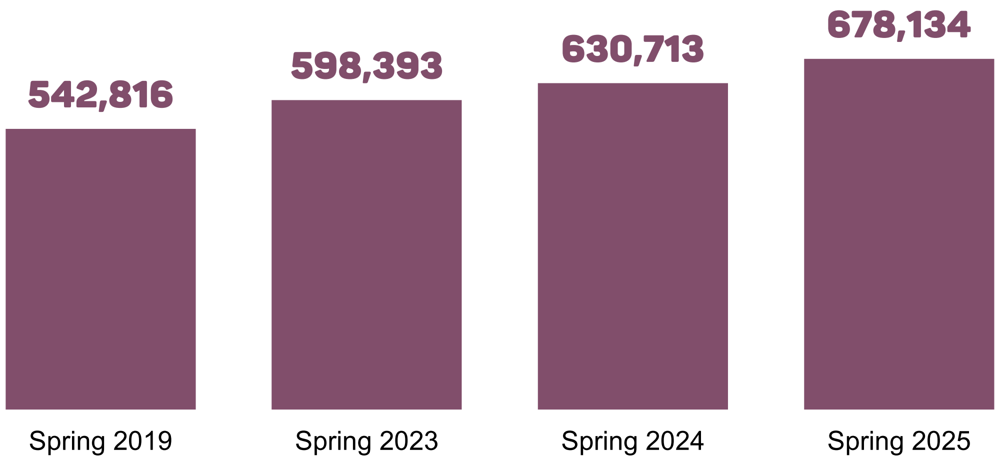
Radioplayer

rajar Audio measurement

Commercial audio

RAJAR MIDAS data provides important insights into our exposure to, and the profile of, commercial audio. For the purposes of this report, commercial audio is defined as live and catch-up radio with advertising, on-demand music service subscribers who have the ad-funded tier and listeners to non-BBC podcasts, which feature advertising or could potentially do so.

Total commercial audio adult listening hours (000s)



Source: RAJAR Audio | Base: Live and catch-up commercial radio, non-BBC podcasts, listeners who's main on-demand streaming service is 'free-with ads'. No comparable data available for Spring 2020-2022 due to restrictions on fieldwork due to Covid and changes to survey question wording.

Combining these forms of audio gives us an insight into the 'commercial-available' audio audience. This total audience has grown consistently and now reaches over three quarters (76%) of UK adults each week.

Two factors have grown the size of the commercial-available audience. The first is the growth in share of the total radio audience for UK commercial radio. Back in Spring 2015 commercial radio had a 44% share of listening, which has increased gradually to 54% over the decade, meaning that a greater proportion of the UK radio audiences can be reached via advertising. This growth in commercial radio share has been helped by investment in brand extensions and new stations to widen choice and embracing new technology such as the ability of connected listeners to create personalised playlists.

In the last decade the share of commercial radio has risen to 54%

Commercial radio accounts for 81% of all commercially available hours

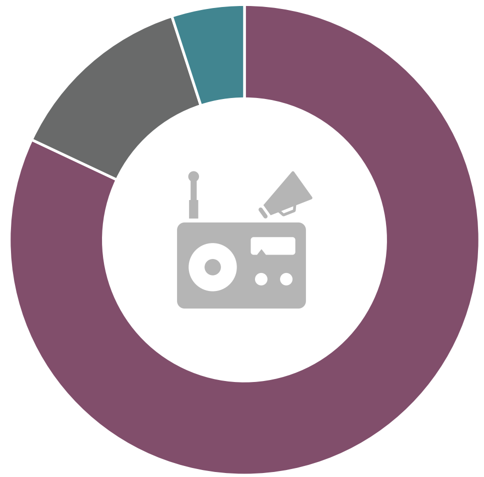
The second driver of the growth is on-demand music streaming services and commercial podcasts.

It's important to note that only 35% of on-demand service listeners are on the ad tiers, compared to 51% in 2015, indicating that the bulk of growth has come from ad-free paying subscribers. Those paying subscribers have a higher volume of listening than commercial-available ones: ad-free subscribers listen for an average of 13 hours per week, compared to eight hours for those using services with advertising. This is a limiting factor on the proportion of available minutes for streaming music services. As a result, 2025 commercial radio accounts for 81% of all commercial-available audio hours.

45% of podcast listeners claim to skip ads all or most of the time and only 5% say that they never skip. As has been the case with television, this does add an additional attraction to advertising on linear broadcasts where the advertising is more of an organic part of the listener experience and is felt to be less intrusive.

For more information on audio advertising check out the Speed Of Sound study from Radiocentre.

Share of commercial-available audio hours (%)



81% Commercial radio (live & catch-up)

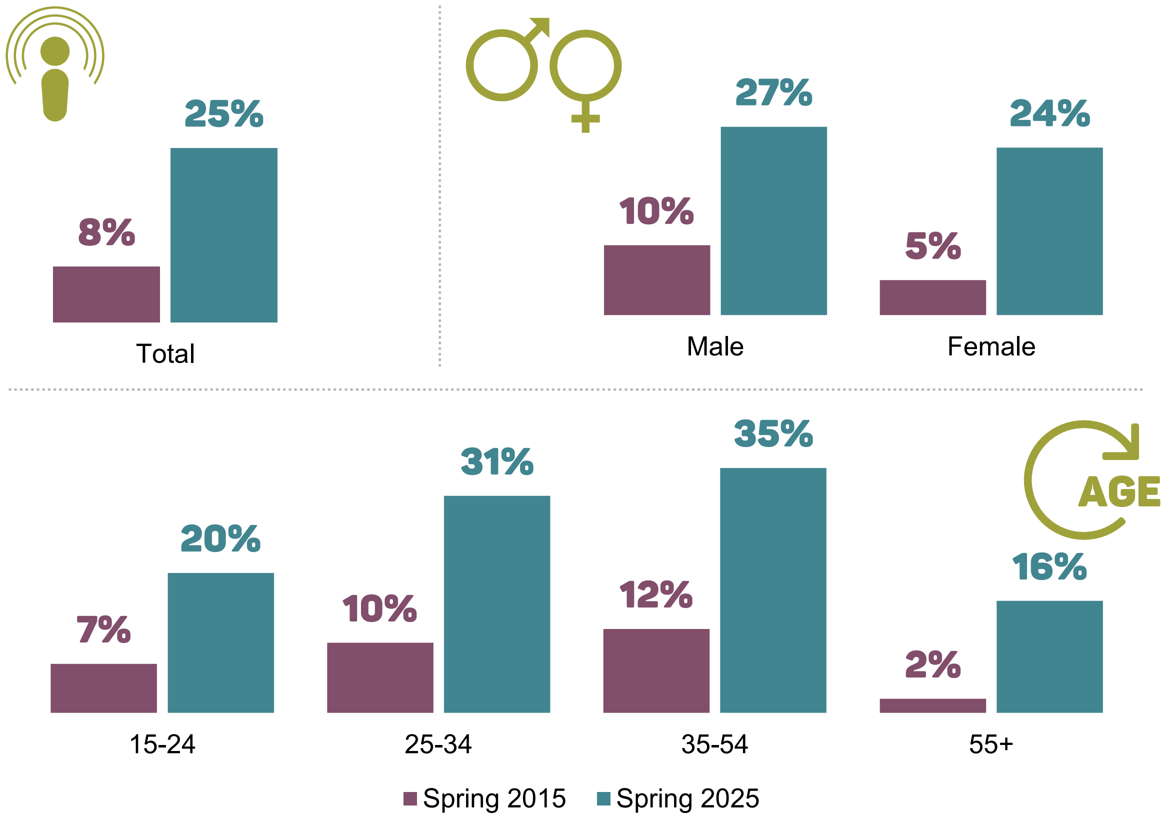
13% Podcast (exc. BBC)

5% On-demand music (free with ads)

Source: RAJAR MIDAS Spring 2025 | Base: All 15+

Podcasts

Podcast weekly reach (%)



Source: RAJAR Audio | Base: All 15+

Without doubt, one of the defining media and cultural trends of the last decade has been the rise of the podcast.

Back in the 2015 Audio Time report we described podcasts as a 'niche', albeit a promising one. This was despite podcasts having already been around for a decade at that point, named after the iPods that carried them.

A decade on, iPods have been consigned largely to history, the final iPod, the 7th generation iPod Touch, was discontinued in 2022. However, podcasts themselves have gone from strength to strength. As we saw earlier, weekly reach has rocketed from just 8% in 2015 to 25% now. Listening remains highest amongst 25-54s but is now common amongst over 55s and more equalised by gender. 7% of all audio time is now spent with podcasts.

Described in 2015 as **'niche'**, albeit a promising one, podcasts have gone from strength to strength

25%

weekly reach for podcasts in 2025 (up from 8% in 2015)

So why have podcasts exploded in this way after an initial decade as a niche activity?

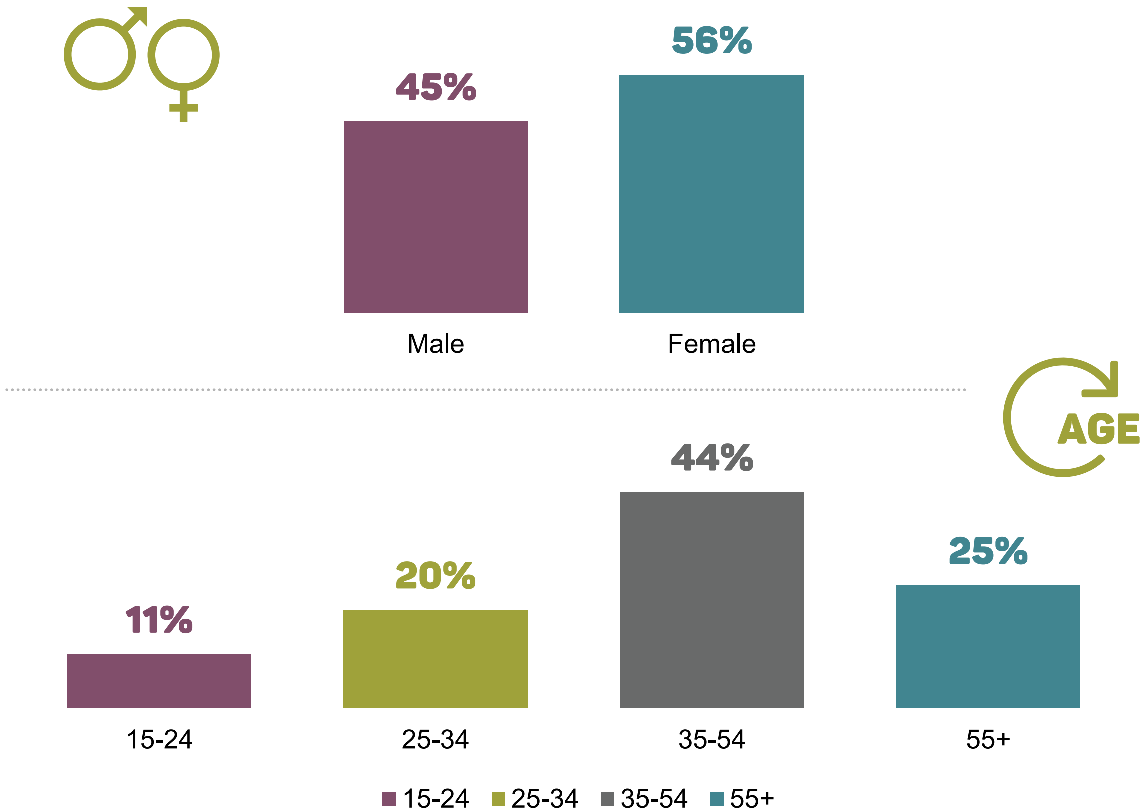
Undoubtedly connectivity and the advent of smartphones has been a key driver. Early podcasts mostly had to be carefully downloaded to computers and then synced across to separate music players via USB cord. Smartphones have made access frictionless, whilst 5G has accelerated download speeds and data fees have tumbled. As a result, smartphones now drive 85% of all podcast listening time.

> Podcast listeners tend to be quite loyal to the podcasts that they stream or download, **three quarters claim to listen to all or most of each episode**

Another driver has been the breadth and depth of available content. In 2015, we reported that there were 60,000 active podcasts on iTunes, the dominant platform back then. In 2025 estimates vary for active podcasts but tend to be in the millions rather than the thousands. Meanwhile, since 2015 we have seen the successful launch of BBC Sounds (see article by Grace Jasper, BBC), Global Player, Rayo and News UK, amongst others, all with on-demand and podcast content in the foreground.

Podcast listeners tend to be quite loyal to the podcasts that they stream or download, three quarters claiming to listen to all or most of each episode. 65% listen to between one and five different podcasts in an average week. In the latest RAJAR Audio survey, 13% claim to watch podcasts at least once a week.

Podcast listener profile (%)



Source: RAJAR MIDAS Spring 2025 | Base: All 15+

"Everyone Has a Podcast These Days"*

In Audio Time in 2015, my BBC colleague, Alison Winter, wrote that it was 'The Year of the Podcast' – little did she know what was to come! It was the decade of the podcast. The increasing number of podcasts available aligns with the (near enough) consistent growth in weekly reach each quarter since 2017. What was once an emerging format has now become a mainstream offer, with many brands, platforms and creators wanting in on the action (and intimacy) that a podcast can provide.

Any indications of growth slowing down pre-Covid has been dispelled by steeper gains since RAJAR returned in 2021. Our home-bound isolation, combined with a desire to learn new skills, improve our wellbeing and escape the news, sped up the maturity of the industry. We looked to our podcast hosts for the companionship we might have been missing elsewhere, and this development in podcasting has grown the market. It has brought audiences to speech audio at a much younger age than we saw them previously come to live speech radio, with listeners enjoying the sheer volume of choice and control that on demand listening brings.

BBC Sounds (formerly iPlayer Radio) launched in 2018 and today on-demand listening represents a larger share of time spent on the platform than ever before. We've seen new podcast brands launch, grow, and evolve to meet audience needs in this time - *Brexitcast* became Newscast, and then came *Americast* and *Ukrainecast*. The format has also offered a way to indulge fans of existing BBC brands – the long-running radio drama The Archers now also has a podcast with Emma Freud, and it is the perfect vehicle for those who can't get enough of the goings-on in Ambridge. This works for some TV content too with *Uncanny Postmortem* and *The Traitors Uncloaked* delivering companion content for audiences who want to get under the skin of what they have just watched.

> Podcasts still have **intimacy** and **authenticity** at their core

Visualisation also offers a value-add for podcasts where facial expressions, reactions and host interaction are key. This tends to often be podcasts in the entertainment, comedy or sports space – offering an entry point for those unfamiliar with the audio format, while keeping up with the changing consumption methods of existing listeners. Our BBC Podcast Tracker in collaboration with commercial radio has seen those who say they are watching podcasts grow significantly since 2022 and, in response, the BBC is thinking strategically in this space with titles where it makes sense for audiences, with the likes of *The Tooney and Russo Show, Miss Me?* and the newly launched *You About*?

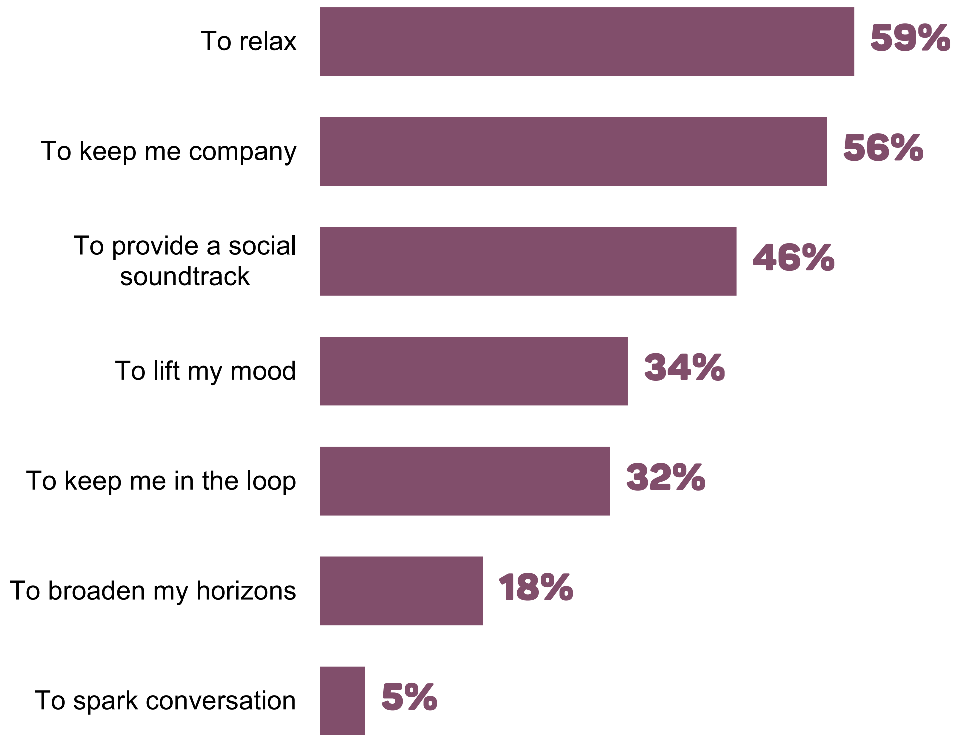
Yet across all of this development and innovation, podcasting has remained true to what made it take-off in the first place; it still has intimacy and authenticity at its core, and builds those parasocial relationships with audiences in a way that audio has always excelled in. With AI bringing new possibilities to production, it becomes ever-more important that this human connection which makes this format so special is not lost.

**not actually everyone, but varying reports quote that there are 4.5-6.5 million podcasts in existence.*

Grace Jasper is Research Manager - BBC Sounds, Radio 4 and 4Extra

Audio need states

Audio need states | all audio weekly reach

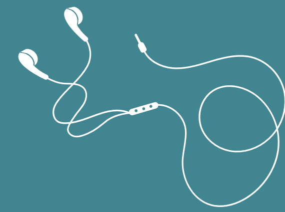


Source: RAJAR MIDAS Spring 2025 | Base: All 15+

A fascinating addition to the RAJAR Audio data since that first Audio Time report in 2015 is the inclusion of information on need states. Listeners are asked why they are listening to audio content, what needs it is meeting. This can be interlocked with the type of audio they are listening to, providing insights into the motivations and mindset of those who are listening. This is important information for those providing audio content and also for advertisers looking to play to the strength of each audio medium.

The most common need state is relaxation. In an average week 59% of us listen to unwind at some point, with companionship being the second most common motivation. On average, people cited two or more different motivations during the week.

So how do different forms of audio meet these needs? We can index the delivery of each medium against the average for all audio.



59%
of us listen to unwind at some point, with companionship being the second most common motivation

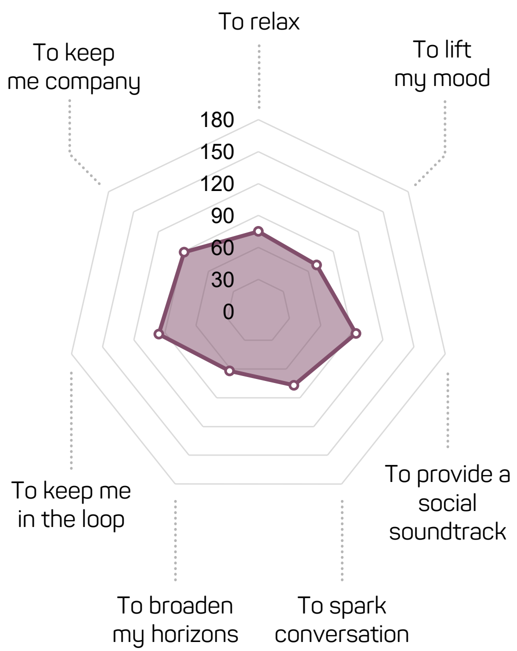
Live radio stands out as the audio medium for providing company, keeping in the loop and sparking conversations, explaining why the ‘live’ element of radio has remained so vital. On-demand music services over index for relaxation and lifting mood, since listeners have direct control over the content. Podcasts clearly play an important educational role, with ‘broadening my horizons’ as their defining characteristic.

Audiobooks meet a similar need, but also overperform relatively for relaxation and mood enhancement.

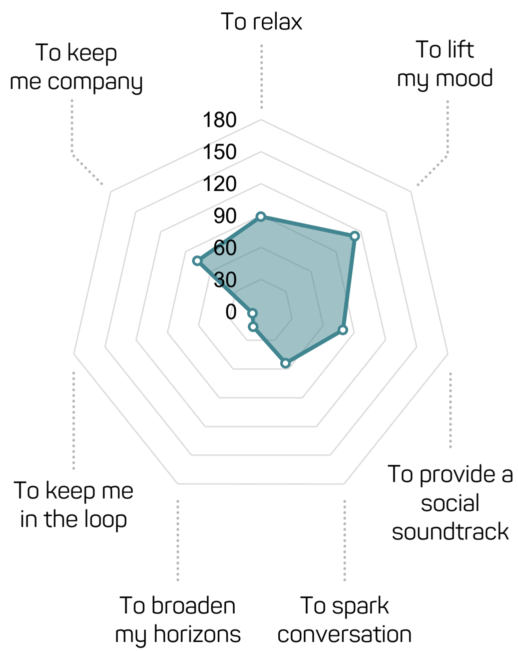
This important information is tracked by RAJAR Audio each wave and can also be broken down by time of day and by demographics.

Audio need states | Index v all audio

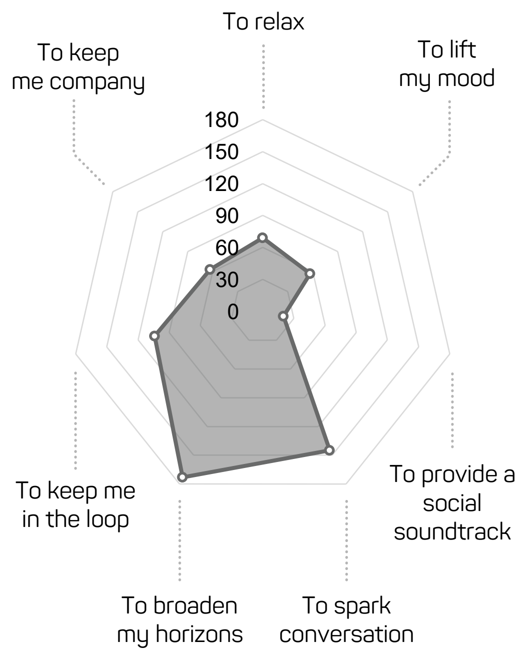
Live radio



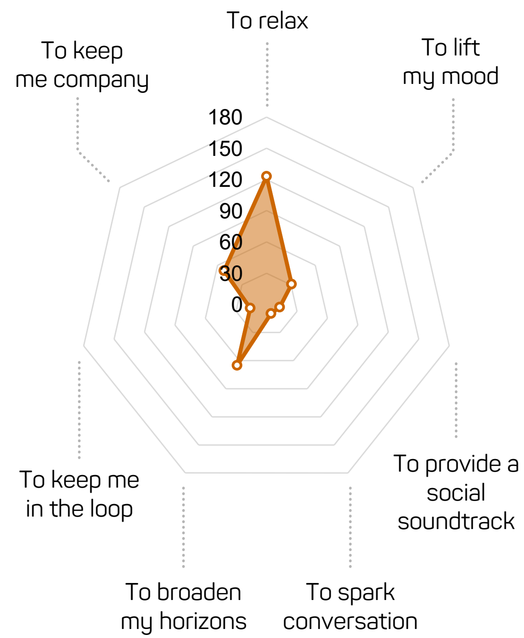
On-demand music services



Podcasts/downloads



Audiobooks



Source: RAJAR MIDAS Spring 2025 | Base: All 15+

Tell Me a Story

As recent RAJAR Audio trend data shows, audiobooks have seen a noticeable growth in popularity in recent years: weekly reach has tripled since 2019, with 9% now listening to an audiobook in an average week. In that time, the total volume of weekly listening has increased from 13.4m hours to 49m hours.

The audiobook is far from being a new concept, but it's a genre that has been super-charged by the opportunities offered by frictionless digital access. In the era of physical media audiobooks they were heavily constrained by the limitations of how much could be stored on CDs and cassettes. With a typical 300-page novel taking 12+ hours to record, this meant either massively expensive multi-disc box sets, or more affordable heavily abridged versions, both typically more expensive than buying the book itself. CD and cassette audiobooks were mainly the province of libraries, superfans and those that are visually impaired.

> Weekly listening has **increased from 13.4m hours to 54.3m hours**

Three key trends have come together to supercharge the audiobook industry: ease of access, affordability and breadth of choice. The move from physical to digital audio overcomes storage issues, with 10 or even 24-hour readings able to be easily streamed by , or saved to, a smartphone or other connected device. Audiobook apps remember where we last stopped, rather than us having to juggle CDs, cassettes and track numbers.

The tech has been revolutionised, but so too has the consumer proposition. The audiobook industry has consolidated around one very dominant service – Audible - with over a million titles. Its subscription plus monthly quota service is heavily promoted by Amazon as an affordable option alongside paper and ebooks: £8.99 for one book token each month. Unsurprisingly, Spotify has also entered the market, offering one audiobook per month to music subscribers and other independent options abound. Audiobooks can also be rented via libraries. Syncing services offer the ability to switch seamlessly between reading and listening to a title.

As a result, the audiobook genre is booming. According to data from the Publishers Association, the number of UK audiobook downloads increased by 17% between 2022 and 2023 to 59 million, with revenue increasing by 24%. Over five years, UK audiobook revenue has more than doubled. In a recent podcast interview, best-selling author Ben Aaronovitch revealed that sales of his Rivers Of London series are now spread evenly, a third each for books, ebooks and audiobooks.

As a recent audiobook convert myself, I'd argue that a further stimulus to their new popularity is the nature of modern life itself. So much of our daily lives are driven by the need to stare at glowing screens. The chance to give the eyes a rest and step back from the hectic always-on nature of daily life is welcome.

There's also something hugely appealing about the idea that technological advancement in this case may have actually taken some of us full circle, back to a distant past that predated the written word and printing presses, a time when people simply told each other stories.

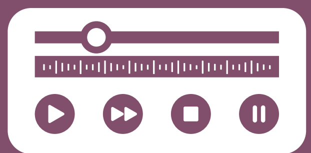
Richard Marks is Director of Research The Media and is currently listening to the audiobook 'Watchers' by Matthew Waterhouse

RESEARCHTHEMEDIA

RAJAR - MIDAS: How we do it

The RAJAR MIDAS survey is conducted quarterly and the most recent data shown here comes from the Spring 2025 survey.

That survey took in a large sample of 1668 UK adults aged 15+. They were a representative sample of adults who had recently taken part in the main RAJAR study and they completed two tasks – they kept an online diary of their audio consumption, for quarter hour periods across a full week. They also completed a questionnaire that provided a wider understanding of the device and service usage that shaped the listening in the diary. The results are weighted to the total UK population, using modelling to project the proportion of the population that does not have broadband access.



About RAJAR

RAJAR is responsible for providing the audience measurement service for the UK's radio industry. It operates two surveys, the RAJAR national listening survey producing the audience figures for over 300 BBC and Commercial radio stations, and also the RAJAR Audio Survey - MIDAS, measuring listening across the wider spectrum of audio led services.

RAJAR is a Joint Industry Currency. The industry created JICs to provide audience numbers and trading metrics for each advertising medium. They are owned and developed by the communications industry. Advertisers, agencies and media owners work in concert to deliver one, credible and objective trading currency for each medium.

As well as creating the standard metrics that serve as the bedrock for evaluating and trading advertising media, the Joint Industry Currencies also provide critical inputs that enable advertisers and their agencies to understand the effectiveness of cross-media marketing campaigns.

How they are built and how they work is open to scrutiny – they are transparent in what they do. The currencies are the most robust and comprehensive datasets available. Each is produced and ordered at cost, delivering unrivalled value for money.

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