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The Record: Q1 U.S. audio listening trends

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Understanding today's complex media landscape means advertisers need granular data to stay informed and reach the right audiences through the right channels. [The Record](#) is a quarterly report card on how U.S. consumers spend their listening day, fueled by Nielsen and Edison Research. While advertisers are constantly tracking shifts in consumer behavior to improve the impact of their cross-channel marketing, *The Record* helps cut through with a unique representation of the time spent with ad supported audio.

The Q1 Audio Overview

U.S. consumers spend nearly four hours daily with audio. Across most key demographic groups, radio's share of daily time spent has seen an overall lift from [quarter to quarter](#), highlighting the resilient power of radio in an increasingly fragmented media landscape.

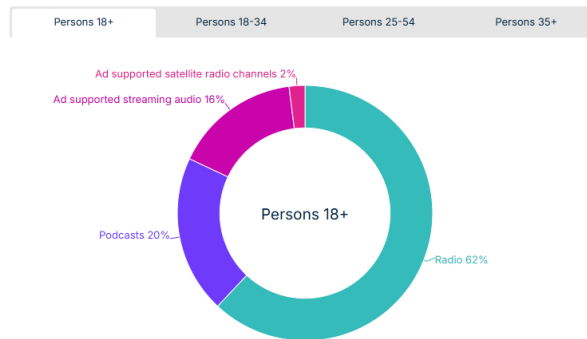
When zeroing in on the ad supported audio universe, AM/FM radio (spanning both over-the-air and digital streaming) and podcasts remain the most impactful outlets for advertisers looking to secure audio real estate. **82% of all daily ad supported audio time goes to radio and podcasts, while only 16% is spent with streaming music services.**

The sustained growth of podcasting paired with radio's stable foundational reach reinforces a clear truth for media planners: if you are not building audio campaigns around a combined radio and podcast strategy, you are missing the vast majority of the daily ad supported audio audience.

A quarterly snapshot: Edison Research Share of Ear®

This chart shows how U.S. audiences spent their time with ad supported audio in Q1 2026.

Share of daily time spent with ad supported audio among U.S. audiences



Analysis does not include listening to music/music videos on YouTube.
Source: Edison Research at SSR5, "Share of Ear®" Q1 2026

Tracking radio listening by format

While overall ad supported audio usage picked up across the general population, the first quarter brought a variety of seasonal shifts and growth stories across the top 15 largest-reaching AM/FM radio formats.

1. News capitalizes on current events

- **News/Talk** maintained its position at the front of the pack, securing a **10.9%** share of total radio listening (among P18+), a slight uptick from the 10.8% captured in Q4 2025. The format remains a primary driver for both total over-the-air listening and high digital streaming allocations.
- **All News** listening also increased, climbing from **2.7%** to **2.9%**. These movements directly

correlate with heightened interest in pressing international and domestic news events during Q1 2026.

2. Adult Contemporary Settles After the Holidays

- As expected, the biggest format shift occurred in **Adult Contemporary (AC)**. After dominating the airwaves in Q4 with a **8.4%** share due to annual holiday music programming, AC settled back down to a **7.1%** share in Q1 2026; bringing it closer to its historical average.

3. Pop, Country, and Rock Show Stability & Growth

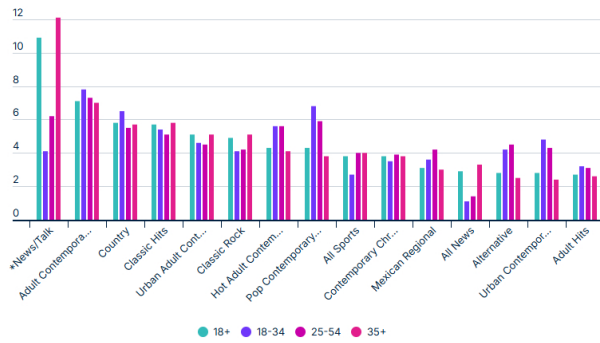
- Music formats across the board were resilient, holding onto their core audiences despite the post-holiday format shuffles. This tracks with the busy awards season in first quarter – with The Grammys and American Music Awards both taking place – and impactful album releases from a number of **hugely popular artists**:
 - Country** held steady at a **5.8%** share.
 - Classic Hits** grew its 18-34 share from **5.1%** to **5.4%**.
 - Pop Contemporary Hit Radio (CHR)** stayed consistent at **4.3%**.
 - Hot Adult Contemporary (Hot AC)** grew its 18-34 share from **4.9%** to **5.6%**.
 - Alternative** also saw growth among 18-34 year-olds moving from **3.8%** to **4.2%**.

4. Black and Hispanic Focused Formats

- Urban Adult Contemporary | R&B** held steady at a **5.1%** share while **Urban Contemporary | Hip-Hop/R&B** grew from **2.7%** to **2.8%** among 18+ and **4.6%** to **4.8%** among 18-34. With Black Music Month happening in June, these formats may grow even further in Q2.
- Mexican Regional** stations posted a **3.1%** share (up from 3.0% in Q4) and grew 18-34 listening from **3.4%** to **3.6%**.

The following tables detail how the share of radio audience varies by format, age, demographic and platform for the top 15 largest-reaching AM/FM radio formats. These differentiate between the share of all radio listening and the share of streaming listening specifically, which are those listening to the digital streams of AM/FM radio stations.

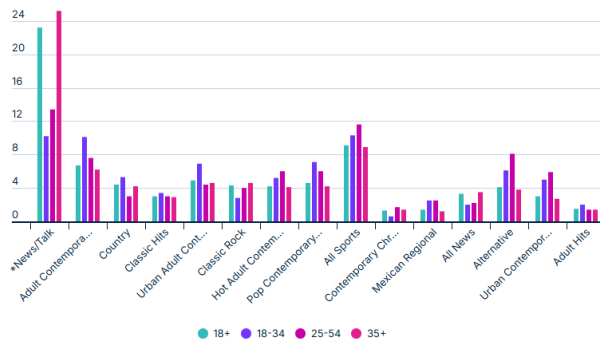
Q1 2026 Radio formats Share of total audience (OTA + streaming)



*Includes commercial and non-commercial stations
Nielsen PPM Cross-Market AQH Share, Q1 2026, Mon-Sun 6a-Mid.
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Q1 2026 Radio formats Share of total AM/FM station streaming



*Includes both commercial and non-commercial stations
Source: Nielsen PPM Cross-Market AQH Share, Q1 2026, Mon-Sun 6a-Mid.
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As the Q1 2026 data continues to demonstrate, radio commands the dominant share of U.S. consumers' ad-supported audio listening time, anchored by a widening reach across key consumer segments.

The Record provides a quarterly analysis of audio listening behaviors across the total radio universe. The data reflects average daily usage and share of listening for U.S. audiences.

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