

As podcast listener growth slows around the world, bright spots can still be found

Article

The era of explosive growth for podcast listenership is coming to an end for much of the world. Until this year, most of the countries in our forecast were seeing 20% or greater annual

increases in podcast listening. However, most listener bases will grow by single digits in 2022, and more sluggishness is on the horizon.

This deceleration reflects a maturation process for the medium and an end to certain pandemic-related distortions. Before this year, only a few countries had reached a point where podcasts were so ubiquitous that growth was inevitably set to decline. Now, many other countries and regions have made strides in podcast penetration and will see similar slowdowns.

A return to relative behavioral normalcy is also constraining podcast adoption. Pandemic-related lifestyle restrictions played a larger role in the 2020–2021 podcast boom than we previously thought. As workers returned to offices and commutes, it became apparent that podcast listening flourished more as a home activity. Many podcasts are too long for car rides and require too much attention for at-work listening. The pandemic created a lot of extra “couch time” for podcasts worldwide, but that phenomenon is receding.

Nonetheless, several national markets are still amid their initial podcast adoption phase, and solid growth can be found. Podcasts first took off in primarily English- and Spanish-speaking markets, but standout growth is now manifesting in places like France and Germany. China, meanwhile, is still in the early phases of discovering podcasting and is in line for substantial growth.

Podcast Listener Growth in Select Countries, 2022-2024

% change

	2022	2023	2024
China	15.9%	15.8%	15.8%
France	13.4%	9.0%	5.3%
Argentina	11.6%	11.2%	10.3%
Germany	11.5%	9.5%	4.4%
Australia	9.8%	4.2%	3.1%
South Korea	9.7%	8.8%	5.9%
Japan	9.5%	8.7%	5.9%
Canada	9.3%	6.1%	3.2%
Mexico	8.6%	7.6%	7.8%
Italy	9.5%	6.2%	4.0%
Brazil	8.2%	7.2%	7.3%
Spain	7.5%	7.2%	5.2%
US	5.0%	4.8%	4.6%
UK	4.7%	4.8%	4.5%
Western Europe	9.3%	7.4%	4.7%
Latin America	8.3%	7.7%	7.8%
North America	5.4%	4.9%	4.4%

Note: Internet users of any age who listen to a podcast via digital stream or direct download on any device at least once per month
Source: eMarketer, Aug 2022

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Key points

- **North America remains the core of global podcast listenership, but Latin America and Western Europe aren't far behind.** Over 40% of internet users in North America will be podcast listeners this year, a rate no other region can match. But several countries in Latin America and Western Europe have embraced the medium as well—just not to that extent.
- **Podcast listener growth will come mainly from France, Germany, and China this year.** English-speaking and Spanish-speaking countries and regions were the bigger stories in podcasting in recent years, but as those markets mature, growth will increasingly come from new linguistic cohorts. Highly penetrated markets like the US, UK, and Spain will have the lowest growth this year.
- **Language is the main driver of podcast adoption.** The most reliable predictor of a country's enthusiasm for podcasts is the extent to which its population can make use of the vast global archive of English- and Spanish-language podcast content. Countries with limited numbers of English and Spanish speakers tend to rank lower in podcast adoption.

Report by Ethan Cramer-Flood Nov 08, 2022

Global Podcast Listener Forecast 2022–2026

