

Next year for the first time, less than half of digital audio listeners won't be podcast subscribers

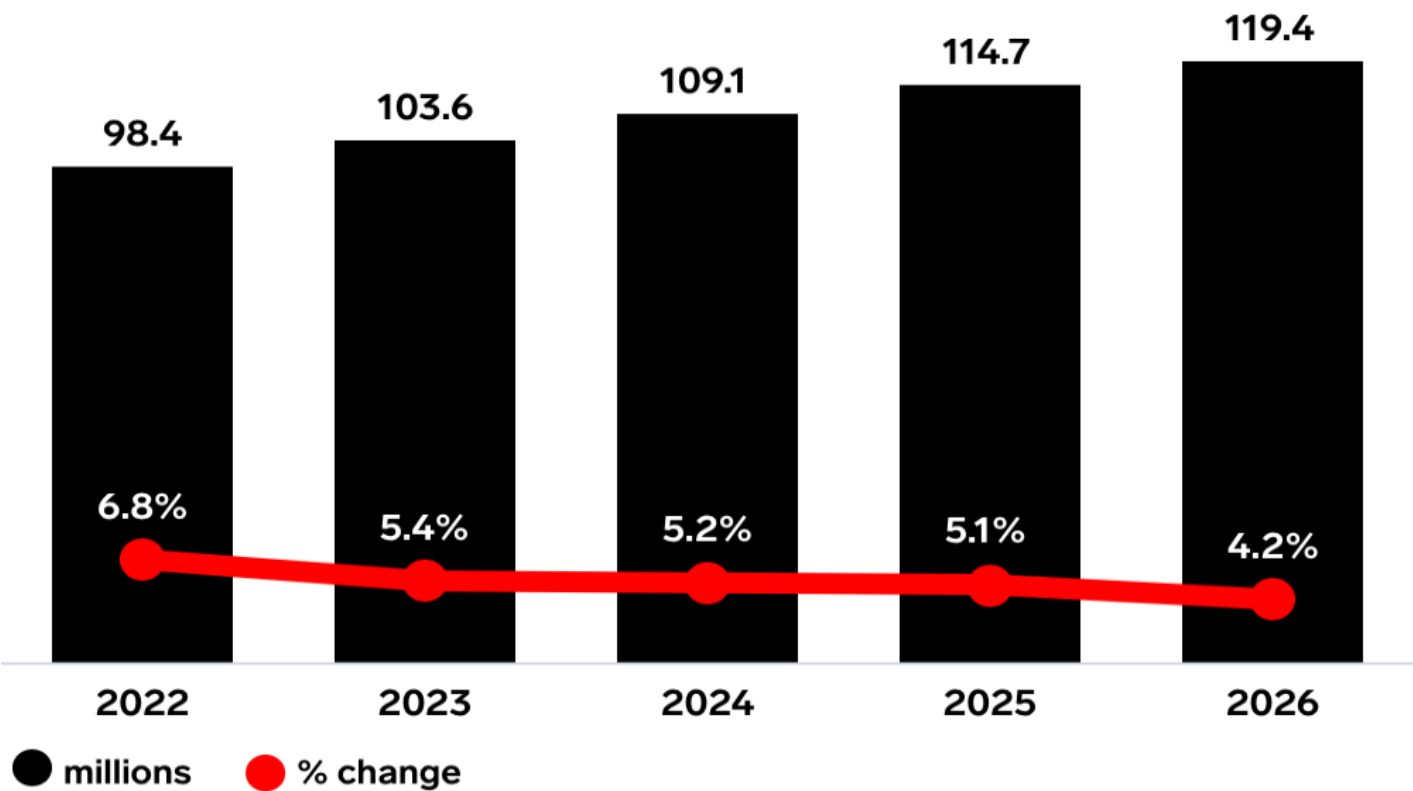
Article

The news: Podcasting, while still an underrated channel for many marketers, is seeing slower growth in the US, according to our newly released forecasts for podcasts and US digital audio listeners.

- Our **projections for weekly podcast listening were lowered** by 1.9 million. We now predict that **podcast listeners will come to 98.4 million this year**, an increase of 6.8% year over year. This growth is below half its 2021 rate.

Weekly Podcast Listeners

US, 2022-2026



Note: internet users of any age who listen to a podcast via digital stream or direct download on any device at least once per week

Source: eMarketer, September 2022

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- We estimate that **124.5 million Americans now listen to podcasts monthly**. These podcast listeners will rise 5.0% in 2022, just half of the growth rate the channel experienced last year.
- We now expect weekly podcast listeners to make up 29.2% of the US population, while monthly podcast listeners will make up 36.9%.

Overall, listening to podcasts continues to represent a significant portion of total digital audio consumption. The percentage of digital audio listeners who do not subscribe to podcasts **will drop below 50% in 2023** for weekly listeners.

Who's winning the podcast wars: In the US, **Spotify** is still adding subscribers, but its growth is decreasing.

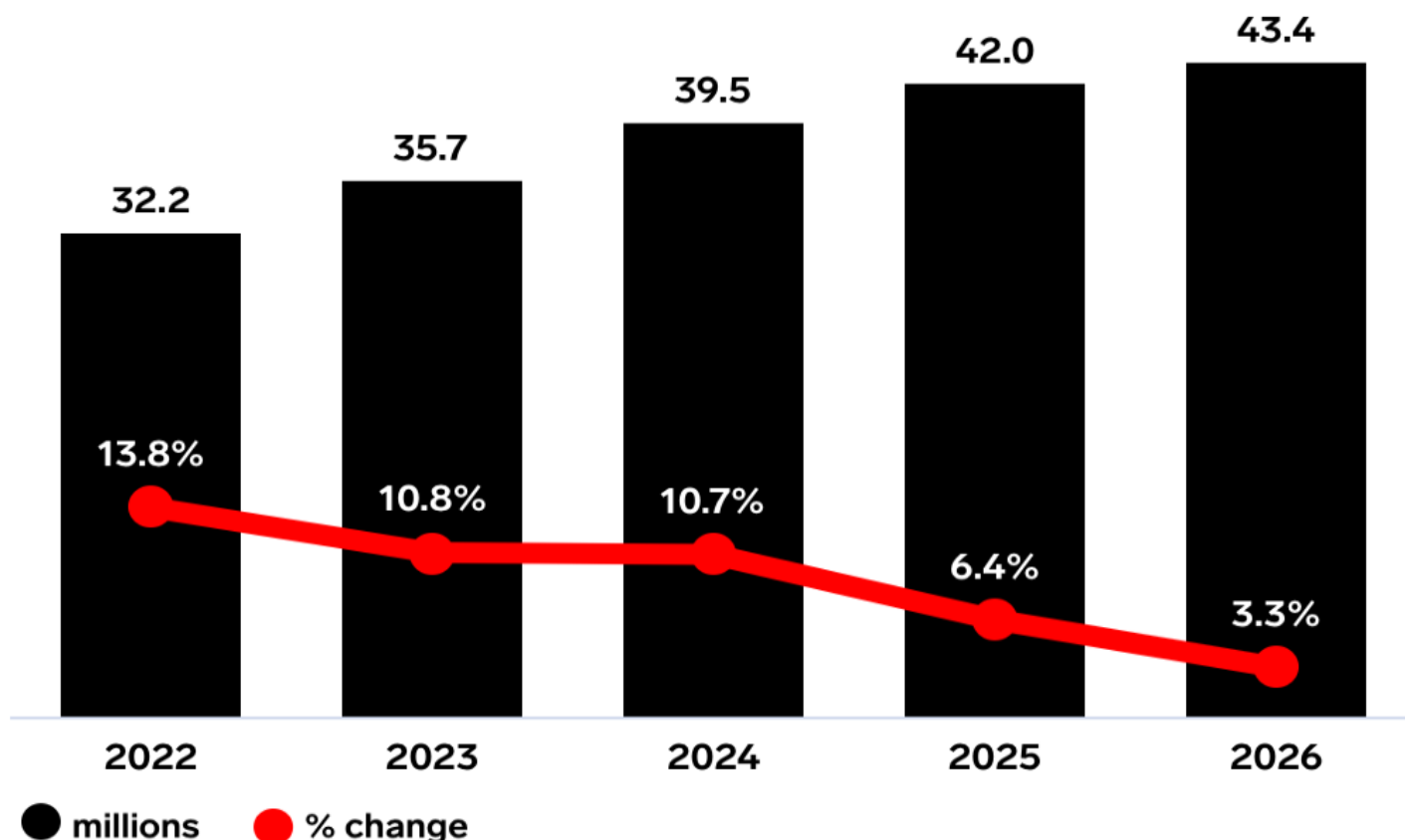
- This year, we anticipate a 5.8% increase in the number of Spotify premium subscribers, up 0.7% over our previous forecast. This rate is approximately **one-third of last year's growth**.
- By the end of the year, we predict that there will be 49.3 million Spotify premium subscribers.
- That anemic growth could be concerning to Spotify since, unlike many popular entertainment services, Spotify did not raise its subscription fees this year—so it's harder to blame slow growth on fee increases.
- The platform is growing slower than expected despite a promotion for three free months of premium service at signup started in 135 countries in August 2022, which was factored into our updated forecasts.

Spotify monthly active users (MAUs) are rising, but a little more slowly than anticipated. Our projection for MAU growth has decreased from 7% to 6.0% for 2022. We now expect 88.4 million people will use Spotify this year.

It's not all bad: While a slower rise in podcast listening this year has affected Spotify, its podcast listeners will increase by 13.8% this year to 32.2 million, outpacing general podcast listener growth (5.0%).

Spotify Podcast Listeners

US, 2022-2026



Note: internet users of any age who listen to podcasts via direct download or live stream on Spotify on any device at least once per month

Source: eMarketer, September 2022

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- Listeners in Spotify's ad-supporter tier are increasing: We now predict that this year, **ad-supported listening will increase by 8.0%** to reach 45.5 million users. This indicates that more than a fifth, or 20.4%, of those who listen to digital audio are ad-supported Spotify users.
- **Spotify will face renewed competition in this space.** YouTube recently [launched a dedicated page for podcasts](#), while Twitter has placed greater emphasis on podcasts [in its Spaces tab](#). Apple has also made recent podcast investments, including a [partnership with NBC](#). But as some players go big, others are going home: **Acast** recently [laid off 15% of its workforce](#).

Why it matters: Podcast growth is slowing in the US, but that's merely a sign of the platform's maturity. It still remains an opportunity with many advertisers who have overlooked the channel.

- **Despite a slight slowdown in podcast audience growth, the medium remains an underutilized advertising channel.** This year, advertisers will spend an average of \$13.70 per podcast listener—**roughly a quarter of the \$52.10 they'll spend per on-air radio listener.** That suggests there's still plenty of runway for podcasting as an ad channel.