

US Podcast Listeners Will Surpass 100 Million This Year

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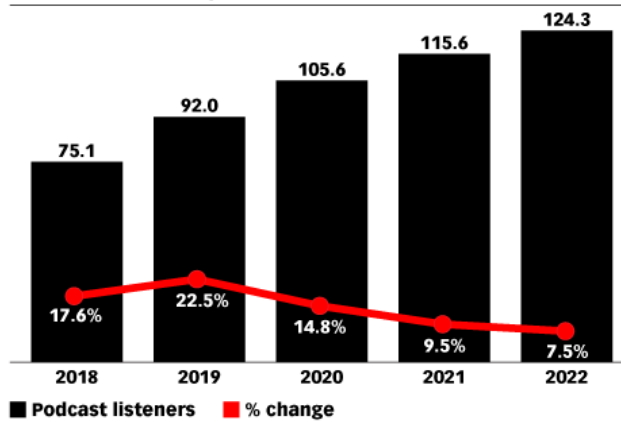
Blake Drosch

The US podcast audience grew tremendously in 2019, as significant investments from major audio streaming services made podcast content more accessible. We now estimate that there were 92 million monthly US podcast listeners in 2019, up more than 15 million from our previous estimate of 76.4 million.

Our forecast was finalized prior to the coronavirus pandemic in the US, where quarantine measures have altered podcast listening habits. Despite the disruption, we still expect the US podcast audience will grow 14.8% this year, reaching 105.6 million listeners.

US Podcast Listeners, 2018-2022

millions and % change



Note: internet users of any age who listen to a podcast via direct download or live stream on any device at least once per month
Source: eMarketer, Feb 2020

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www.eMarketer.com

"Since mid-March, we've seen a decrease in time spent listening to podcasts," said Peter Vahle, eMarketer forecasting analyst at Insider Intelligence. "However, we expect listening habits will return to normal in the second half of the year, so that by the end of 2020, we'll see the strong growth in podcast listeners we were anticipating."

The mainstream success of several podcasts — "Serial" in late 2014, "S-Town" in 2017 and the rise of political podcasts like "The Daily" and "Pod Save America" after the 2016 election — helped introduce the medium to a wider demographic. Today's **popular podcast content** ranges from comedy and sports to news and culture, according to Edison Research.

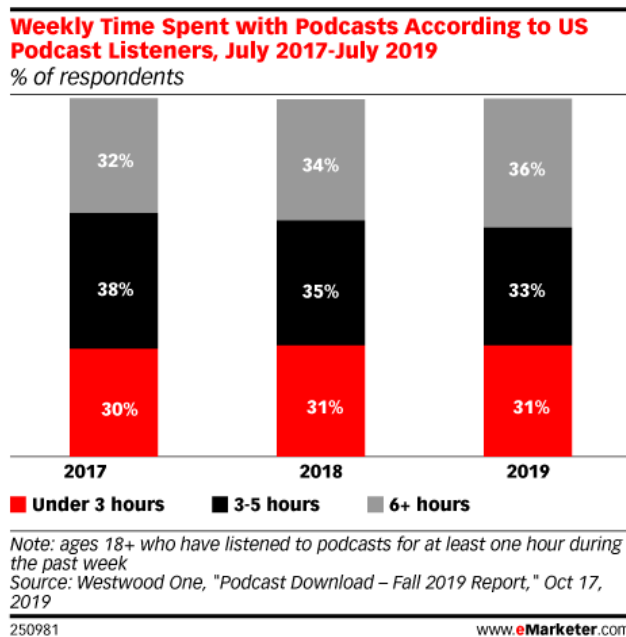
As the medium gained popularity with listeners, consumer adoption of smart speakers and audio streaming services grew as well. In 2019, the number of US smart speaker users grew nearly 22% year over year to more than 73 million, and in the same year, US digital audio listeners surpassed 206 million. Promotions, like Spotify **giving away** Google Home Mini smart speakers to subscribers, aided this growth.

Growth in listener numbers naturally led to expansion in content. Both Spotify and Pandora became hyper-focused on growing their respective podcast offerings last year. Spotify, **the most popular streaming service in the US**, spent \$400 million to acquire three podcast companies in 2019: **Gimlet Media**, **Anchor** and **Parcast**. This year, the company

purchased [The Ringer](#), a podcast-driven digital publisher, as well as [exclusive rights](#) to the massively popular Joe Rogan Experience podcast. SiriusXM [purchased the streaming service](#) Pandora in early 2019, and has since made many of its radio shows available as podcasts to Pandora listeners.

In its [Q1 earnings](#) release this year, Spotify reiterated its belief that investing in podcasts has benefited "usage, engagement and retention" across its ad-supported and subscription products.

Research supports the claim that podcast listeners are a highly engaged audience: According to October 2019 research from Westwood One, 36% of US podcast listeners said they listened to 6 or more hours of podcast content per week, while a third said they listened to between 3 and 5 hours per week.



Separate [research from CivicScience](#) shows that nearly one in three daily podcast listeners said in September 2019 that they have purchased an item after hearing a sponsored ad on a podcast.