

# What Radio Can Learn From The Podcast Study

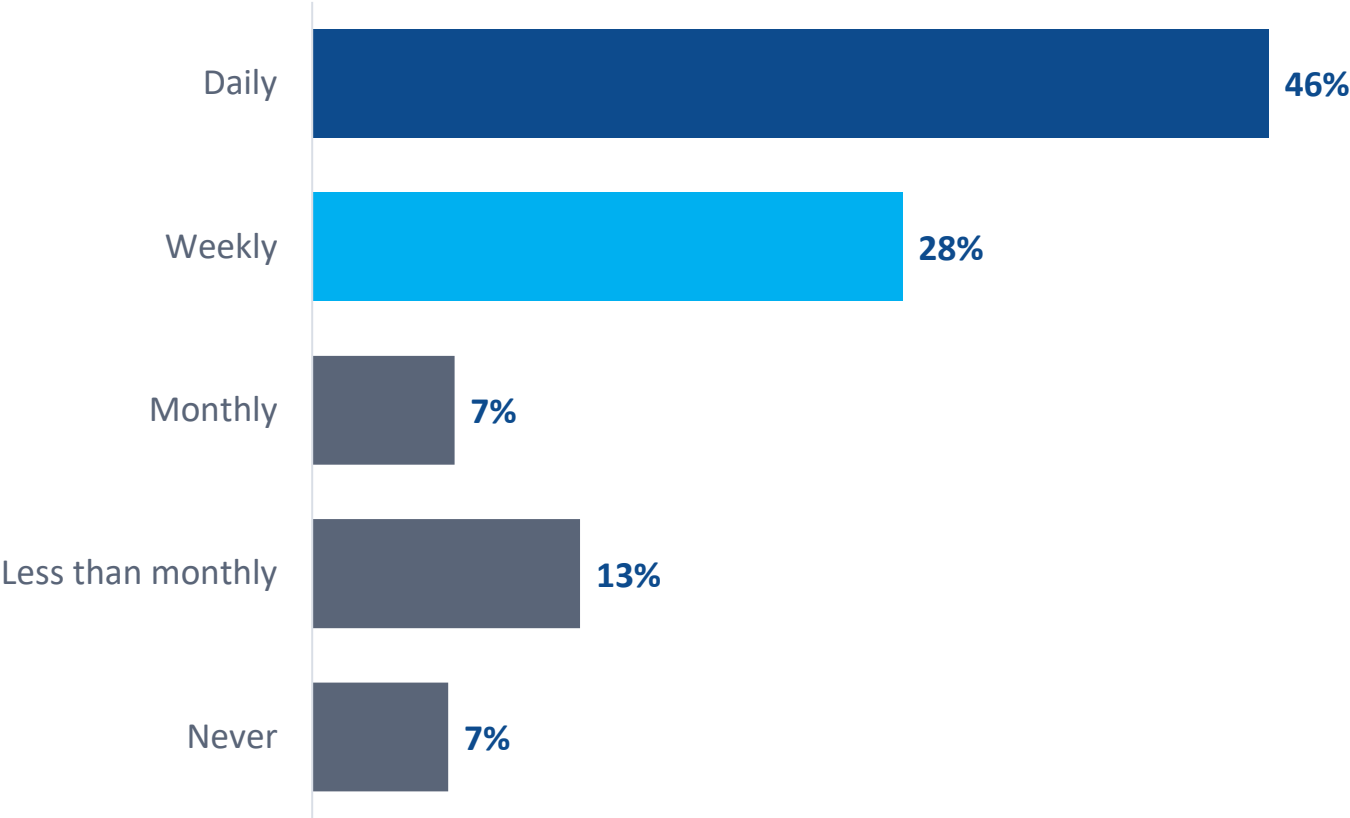
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# Three out of four podcast consumers are also weekly radio listeners

LOCAL RADIO LISTENING FREQUENCY, % OF PODCAST CONSUMERS



**74%**

Of podcast consumers listen to local radio weekly or more.

**46%**

Listen to local radio every day. These are radio's core listeners, and they are in this study.

Source: The Podcast Study 2026, n=1,205 podcast consumers 18-54, unweighted. Q8. Radio listeners (weekly+) n=891; Daily radio listeners n=551; less-than-weekly/non-listeners n=314.

# What we'll cover

1

## **The power of the host**

How much the person behind the mic matters, and what listeners want from them.

2

## **Host reads and ad load**

Which ads listeners trust, and where their patience runs out.

3

## **Content execution errors are the leak in the boat**

Despite the surge in podcast usage, there is audience leakage that gives a lesson to radio.

4

## **Discovery and the Superfan funnel**

How listeners find a new show, and a profile of Superfans and Prime Prospects.

5

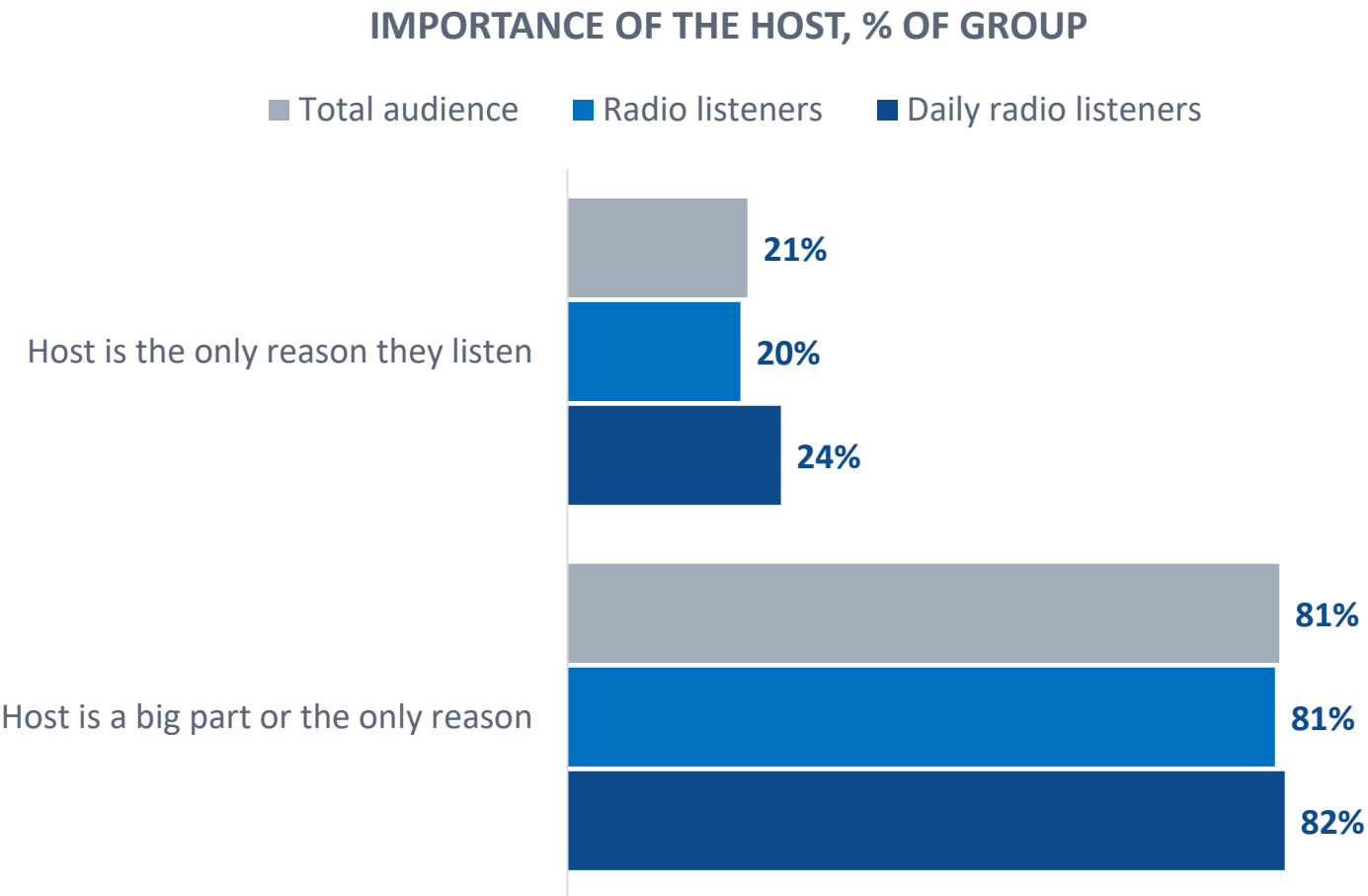
## **What radio can do next**

A playbook for enjoying the most value from your hosts.

# The Power of the Host



# Four in five say the host is a big part of why they listen



81%

Say the host is a big part of, or the only reason for, their listening.

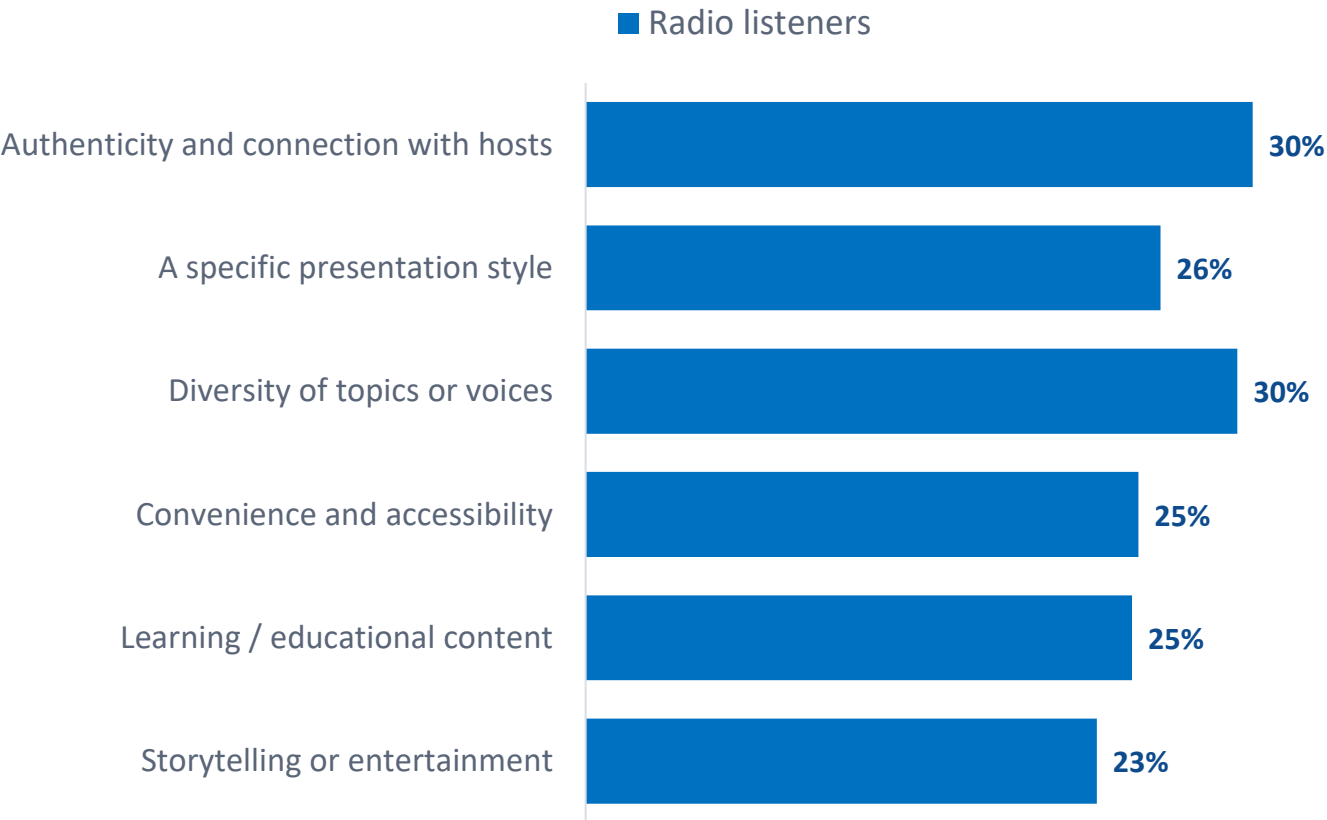
24%

Of Daily radio listeners say the host is the only reason.

Source: The Podcast Study 2026, unweighted. Base: has a favorite podcast (Total n=1,104; Radio listeners n=821; Daily radio listeners n=514). Radio listeners = local radio weekly or more. Q47.

# What they love most: authenticity and a real connection with the host

## WHAT THEY VALUE MOST ABOUT PODCASTS, % OF GROUP



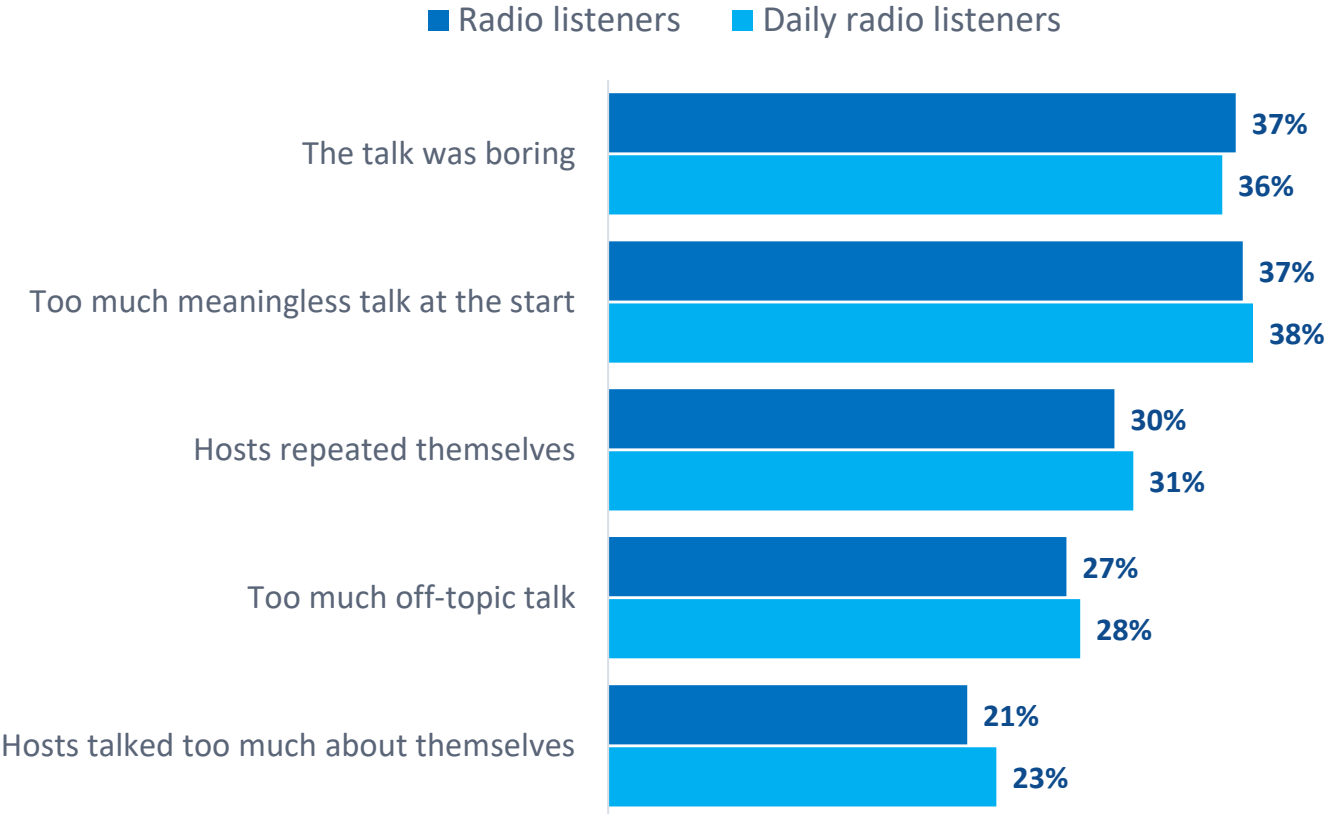
30%

Authenticity and connection with hosts: the #1 theme in the in-depth interviews.

Source: The Podcast Study 2026, unweighted; coded in-depth-interview themes (Total n=1,201; Radio listeners n=888; Daily n=549). Multi-label: an interview can carry several themes, so bars total more than 100%. Top 6 of 11 themes shown.

# Content execution errors are the leaks in the bucket

## REASONS FOR GIVING UP ON A FIRST TRY, %



55%

Give a new podcast five minutes or less before deciding.

60%

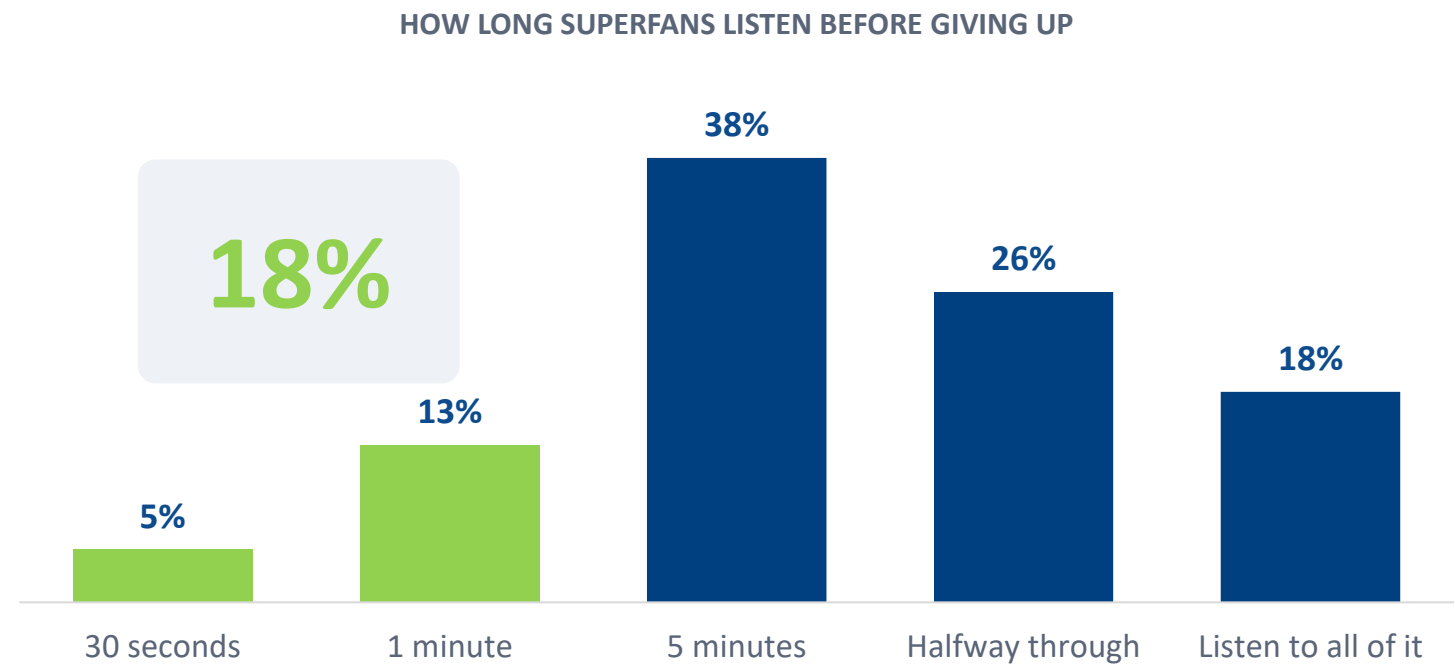
Of Daily radio listeners decide within five minutes.

**Radio lesson:** Your talent coaching is a competitive edge. Get to the point.

Source: The Podcast Study 2026, n=1,205 podcast consumers 18-54, unweighted. Radio listeners = listen to local radio weekly or more (n=891); Daily radio listeners (n=551). Q80, select all; Q81.

# The first minute is critical for audience retainment

How long Superfans give a new podcast before giving up (Q81)

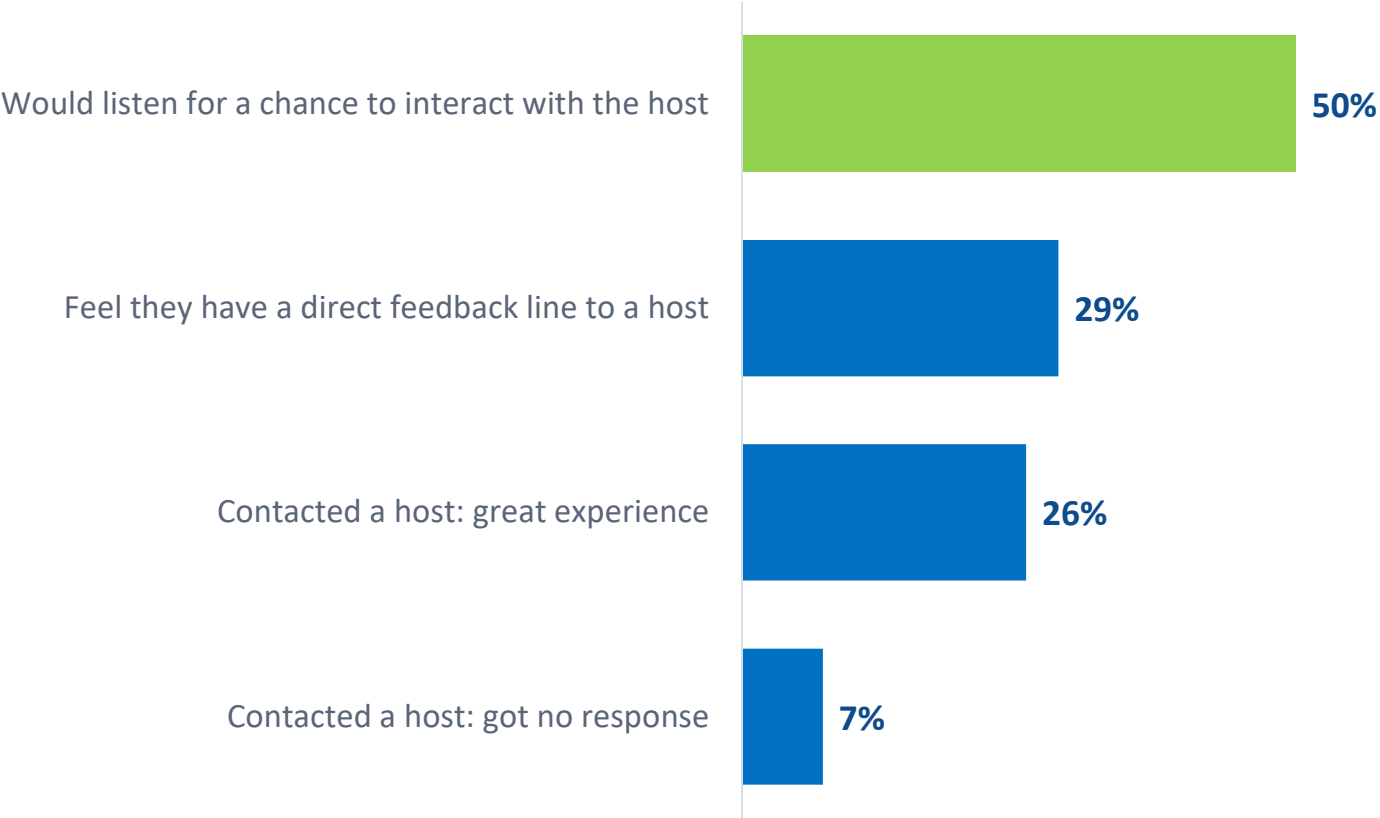


**Win the first 60 seconds.** The majority will give you five minutes, but if you don't execute well in the first minute, you're at risk of losing 18% of Superfans. Plus...if the first sampling is disappointing, one out of three will not give the podcast a second chance.

Source: The Podcast Study 2026, Q81. Superfans n=201. Unweighted.

# Listeners want access to the host, and radio's core wants it most

ACCESS TO THE HOST, % OF GROUP



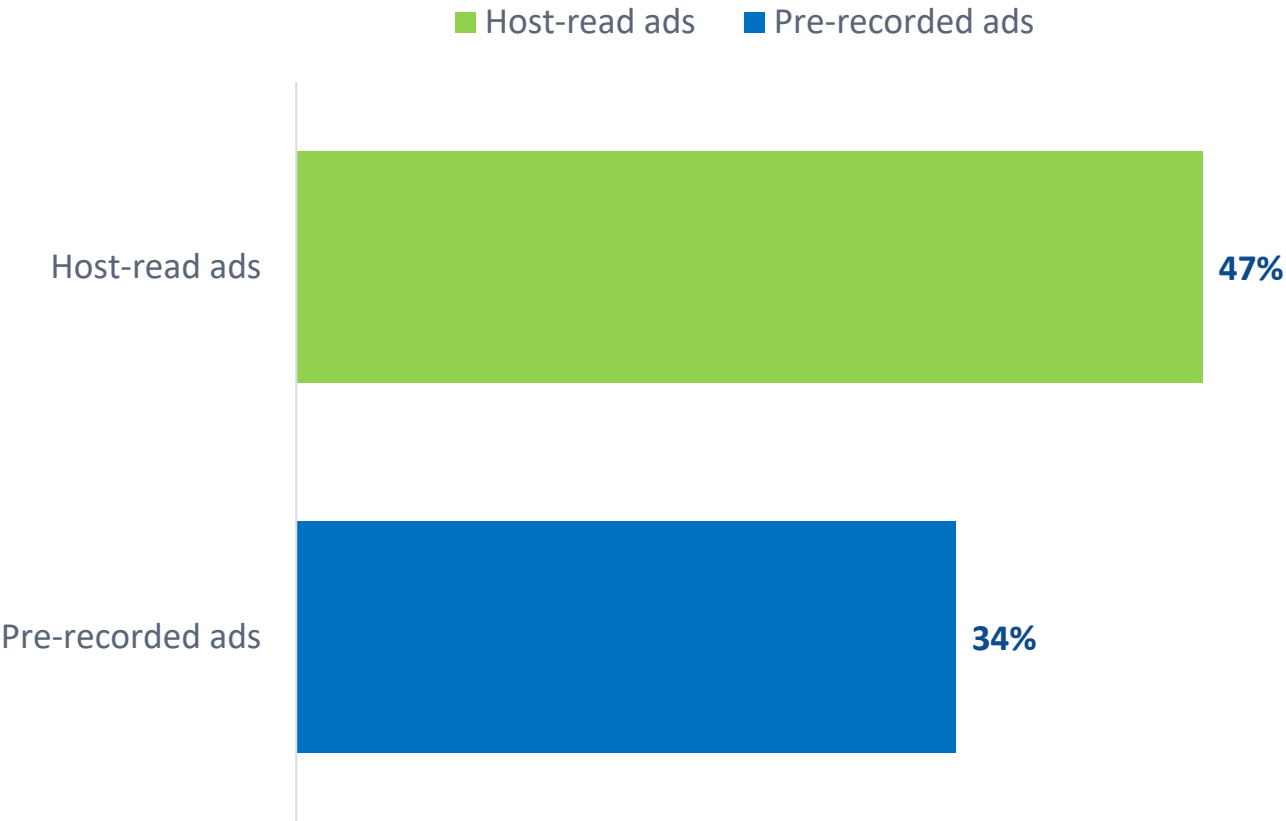
52%

Of Daily radio listeners are likely to tune in for a chance to interact with the host.

Source: The Podcast Study 2026, n=1,205 podcast consumers 18-54, unweighted. Radio listeners = listen to local radio weekly or more (n=891)

# Host-read ads outperform pre-recorded spots, driven by daily cumers

STRONG INFLUENCE ON TRYING OR BUYING, % TOP-2-BOX



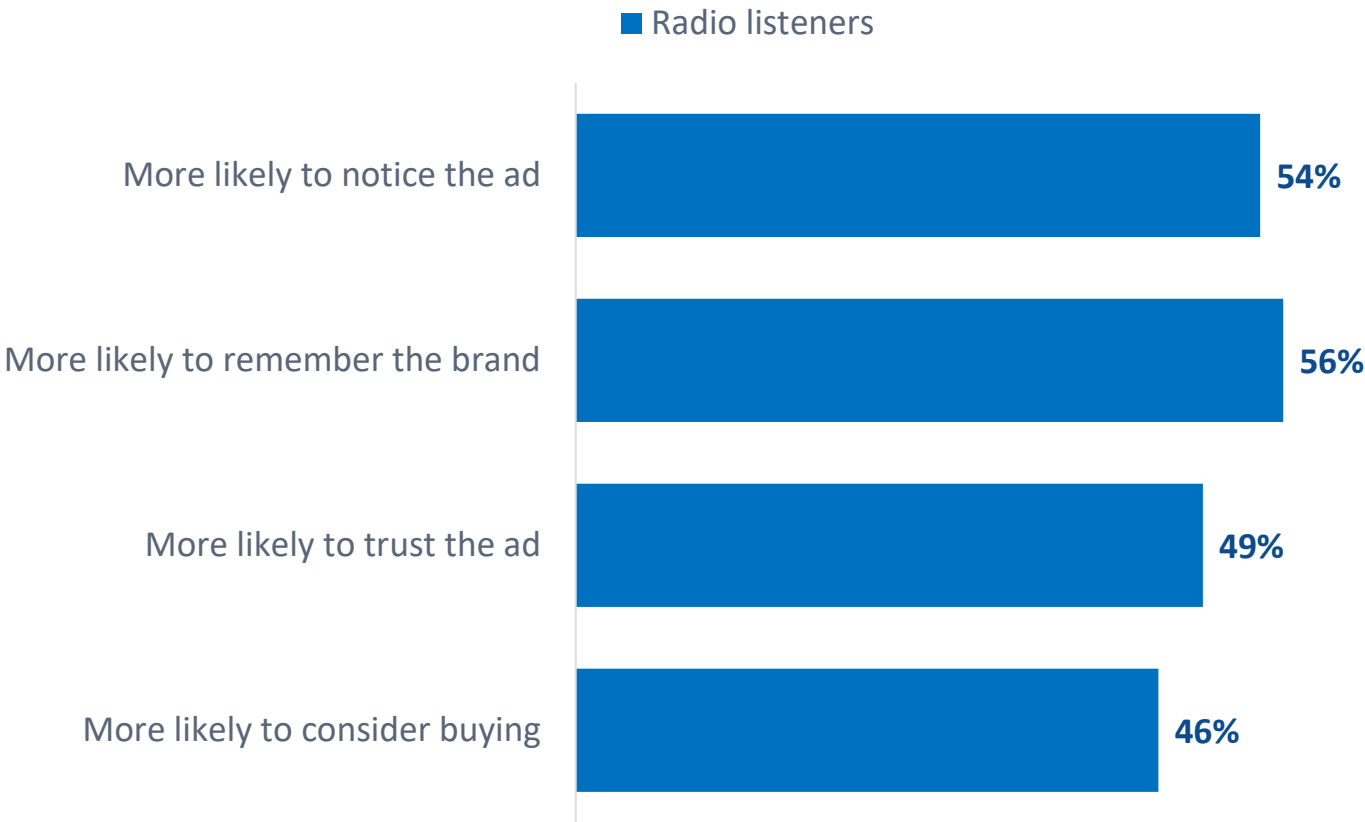
47%

Of Daily radio listeners are strongly influenced by host-read ads.

Source: The Podcast Study 2026, n=1,205 podcast consumers 18-54, unweighted. Radio listeners = listen to local radio weekly or more (n=891); Daily radio listeners (n=551). Q61-62.

# A host endorsement lifts notice, recall, trust and purchase intent

EFFECT OF A HOST ENDORSEMENT, % TOP-2-BOX



54%

Of radio listeners are more likely to notice an ad after a host endorsement.

**Around half the radio audience is more likely to:**

Remember the ad

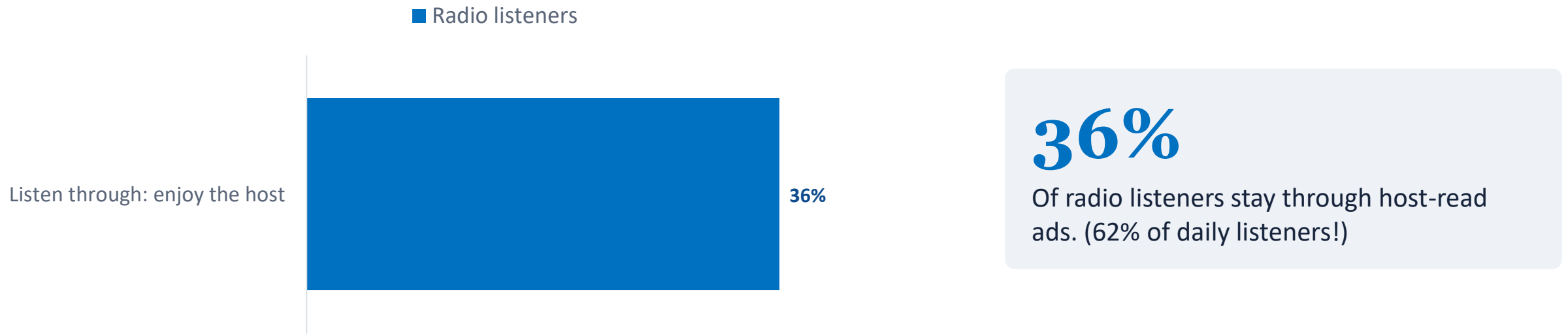
Trust the ad

Consider buying

Source: The Podcast Study 2026, n=1,205 podcast consumers 18-54, unweighted. Radio listeners = listen to local radio weekly or more (n=891); Daily radio listeners (n=551). Non-radio = less than weekly (n=314). Q63-66.

# Host reads hold the audience through the break

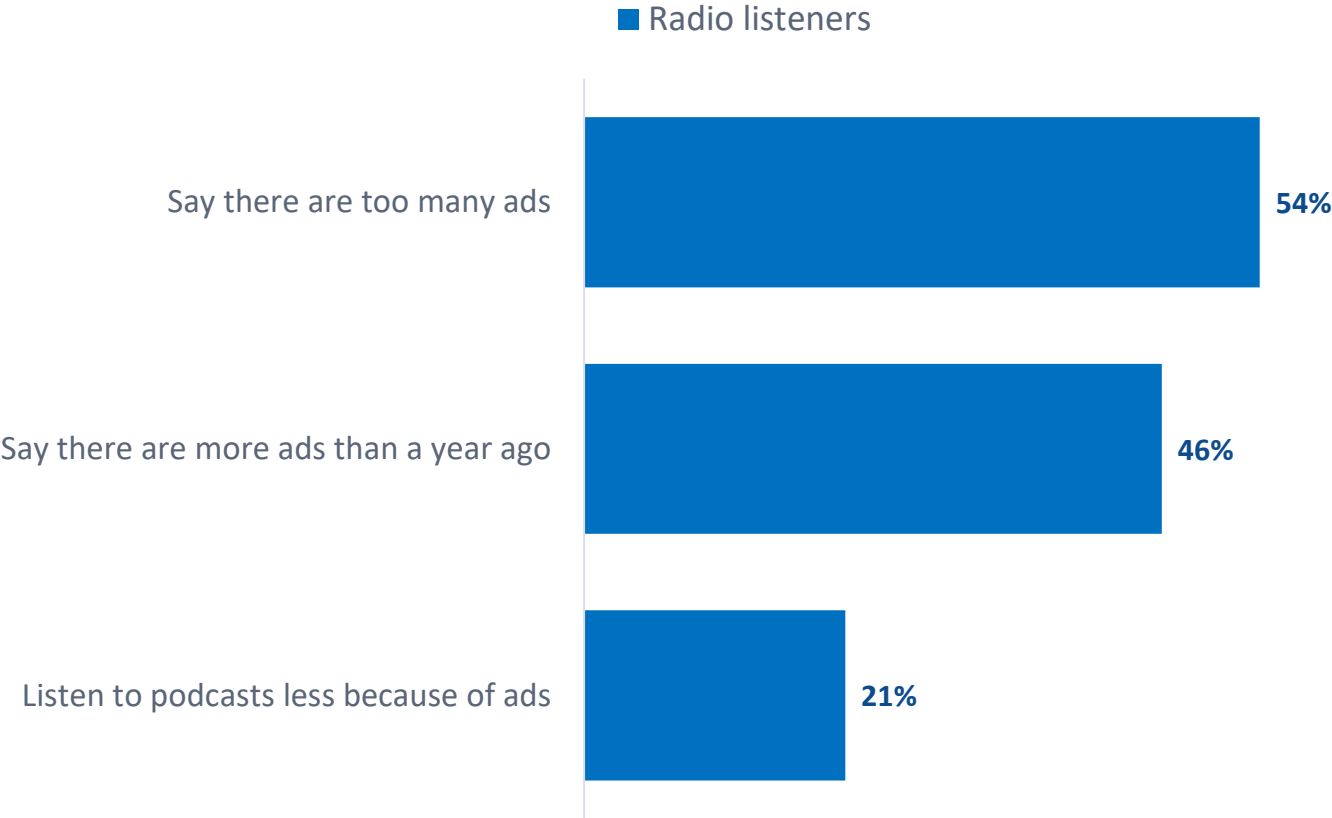
## RESPONSE TO HOST-READ ADS, % OF GROUP



Source: The Podcast Study 2026, n=1,205 podcast consumers 18-54, unweighted. Radio listeners = listen to local radio weekly or more (n=891); Q53.

# Podcast ad fatigue is a flashing yellow light

## AD LOAD PERCEPTIONS AND BEHAVIOR, % OF GROUP



**54%**

Of radio listeners say podcasts have too many ads.

Nearly half say there are more ads than a year ago.

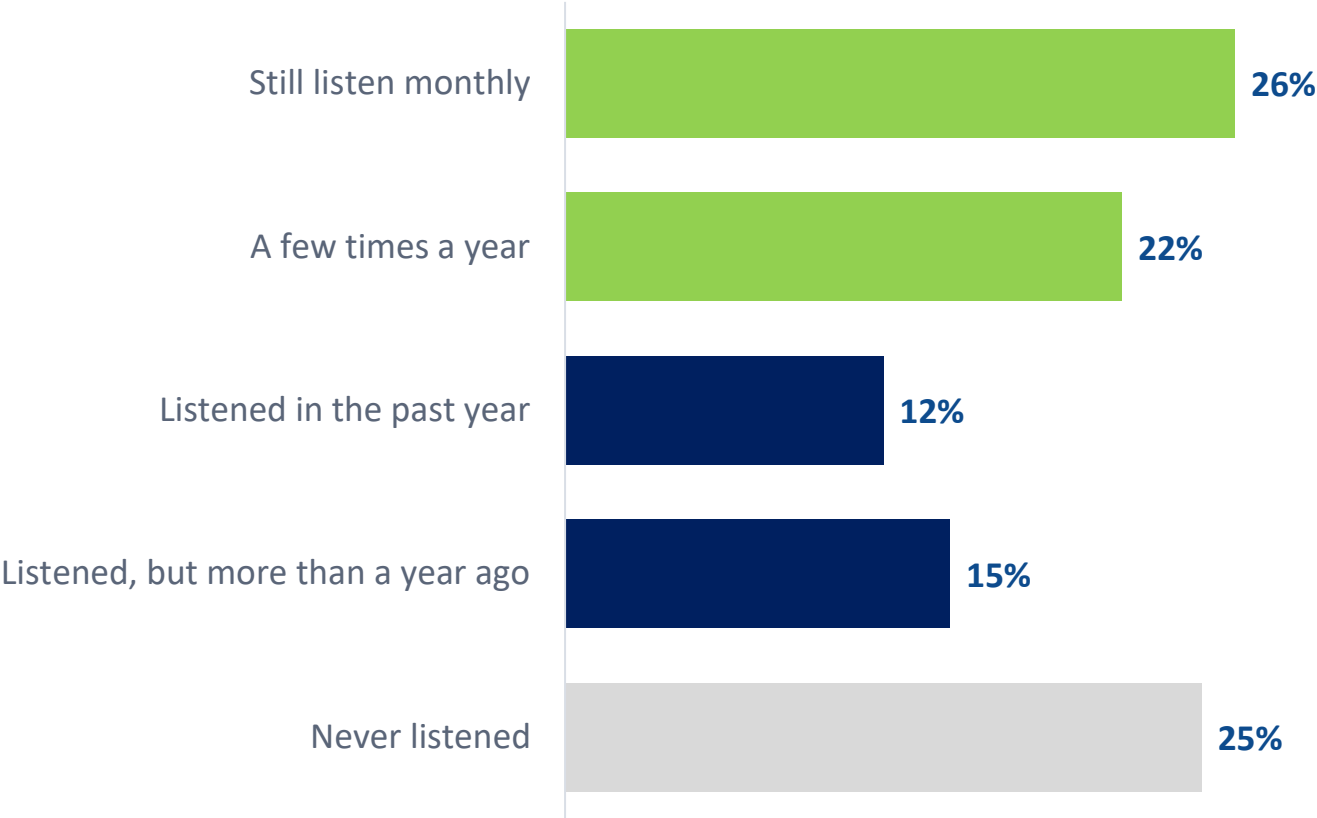
Source: The Podcast Study 2026, n=1,205 podcast consumers 18-54, unweighted. Radio listeners = listen to local radio weekly or more (n=891); Q50-52.

# The Lapsed Radio Listener



# Most of the 26% are lapsed radio listeners, not abandoners

LOCAL RADIO LISTENING, % OF NOT REGULAR RADIO LISTENERS



75%

Have listened to local radio before. The majority have in the past year. They are lapsed, not lost.

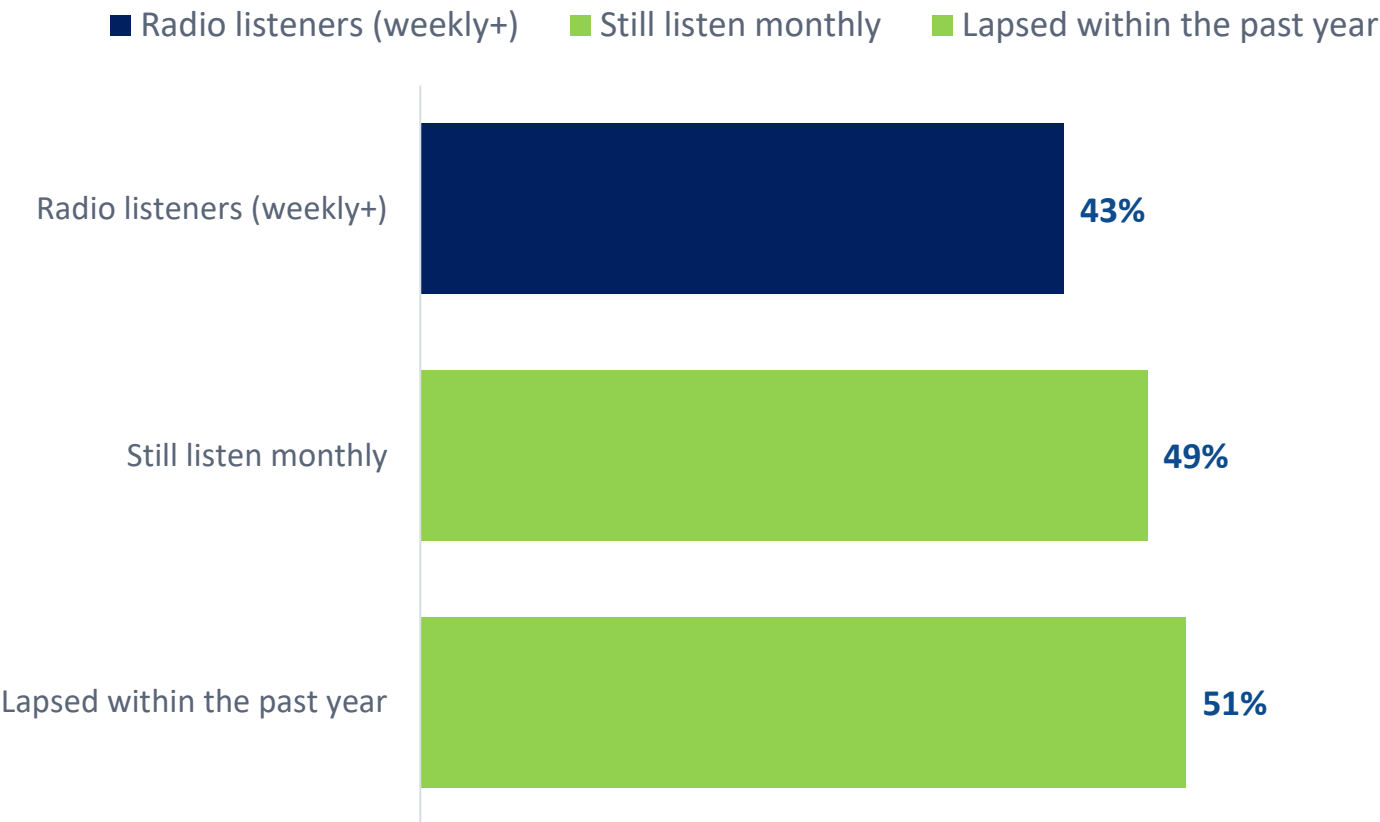
48%

Listen at least every few months.

Source: The Podcast Study 2026, unweighted. Base: podcast consumers who listen to local radio less than weekly (n=314), 26% of the sample. Q8.

# The longer they've been gone, the more a host pulls them

BY RADIO RECENCY, % OF GROUP



Source: The Podcast Study 2026, unweighted, Q8 by Q91 and Q72

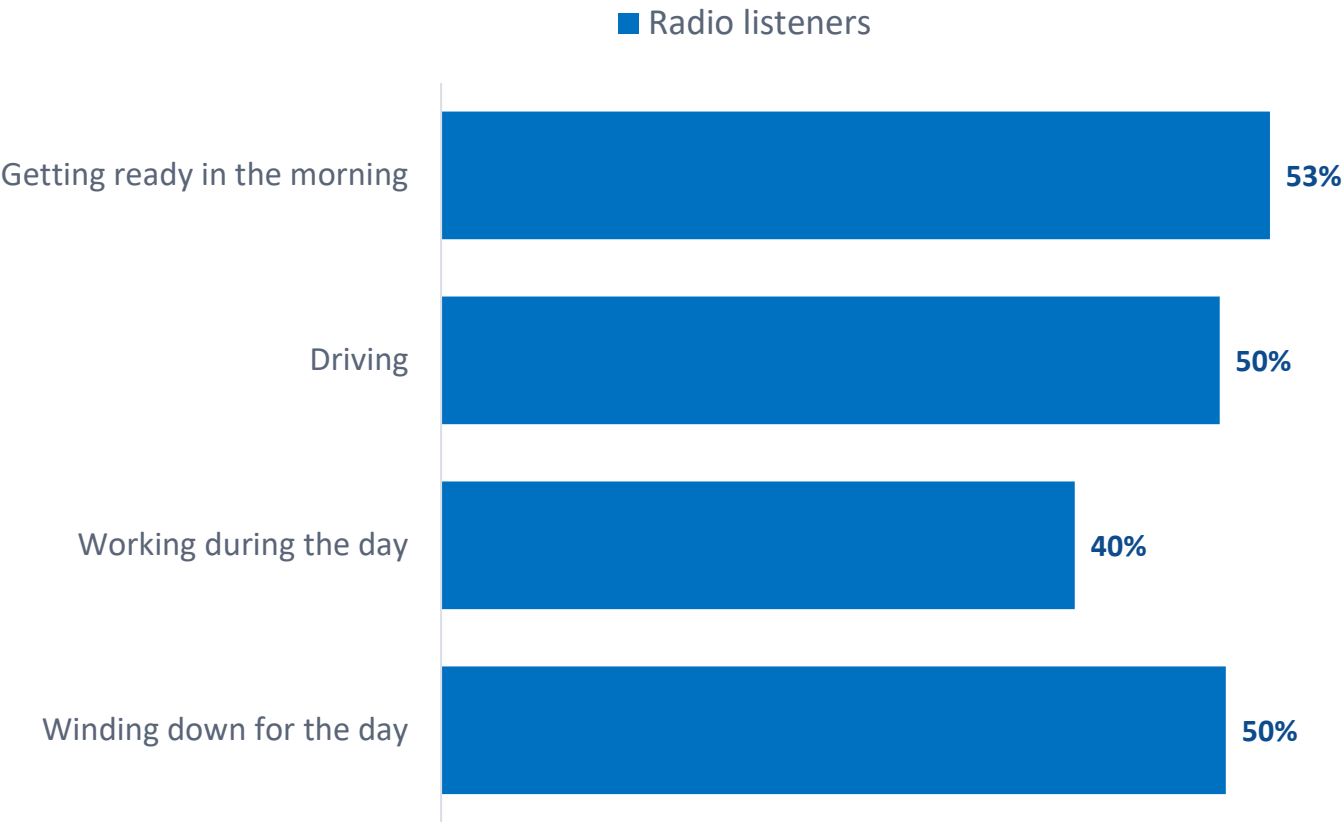
## Half

Of light radio users (monthly or less) say they try new podcasts because of the host.

The right talent behind the mic is one way Radio can pull lapsed listeners back.

# Radio listeners consume podcasts through the day

## WHEN AND HOW THEY CONSUME PODCASTS, %



**53%**

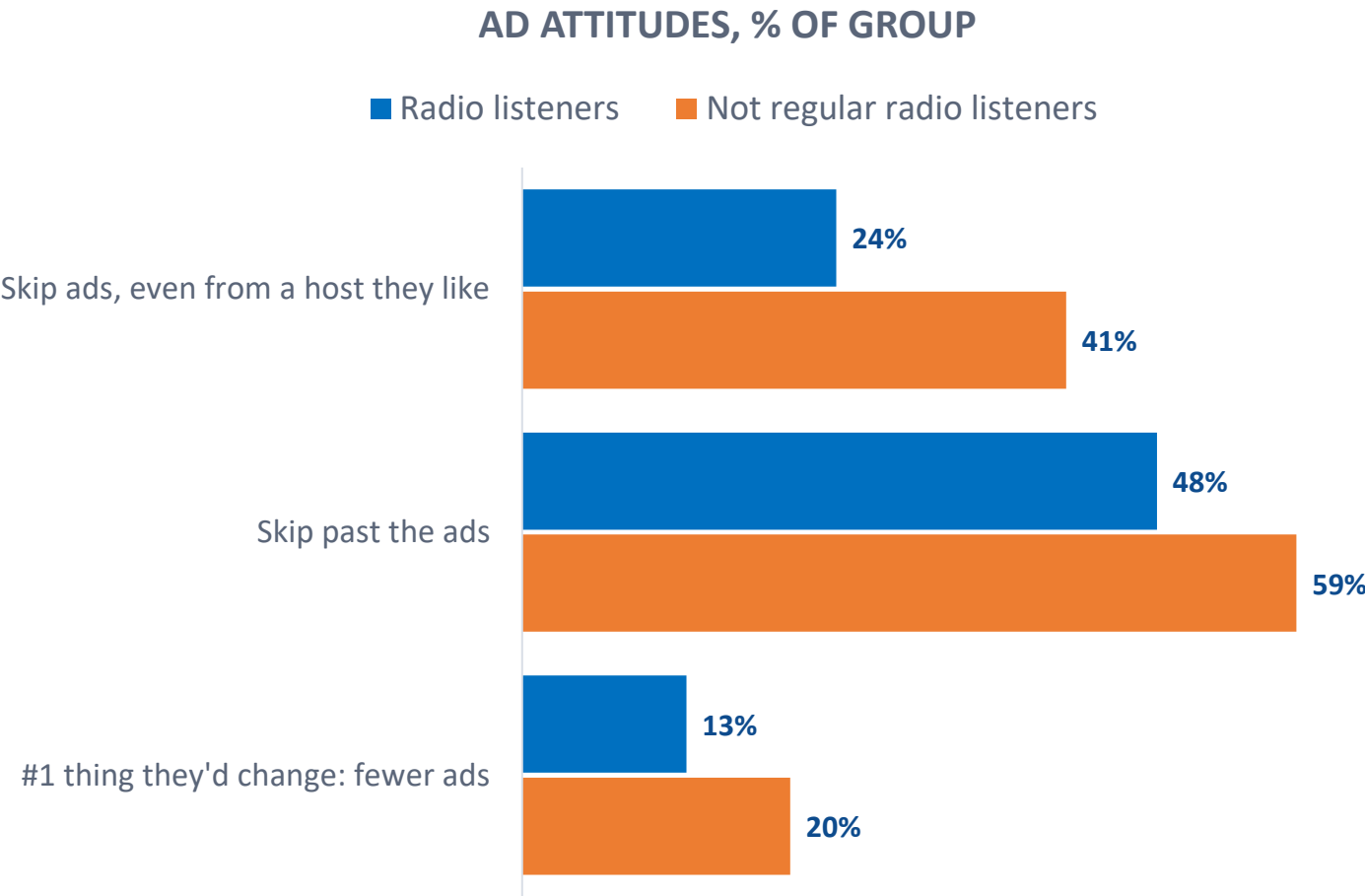
Consume podcasts while getting ready in the morning.

**50%**

Consume podcasts while driving

Source: The Podcast Study 2026, unweighted. Radio listeners = local radio weekly or more (n=891); Not regular radio listeners = less than weekly, incl. never (n=314). Q25, Q33, Q77.

# Lapsed radio users are more sensitive to ad load



**22%**

Lapsed radio listeners are 22% more likely to skip past the ads than radio cumers

**41%**

Skip ads even from a host they like.

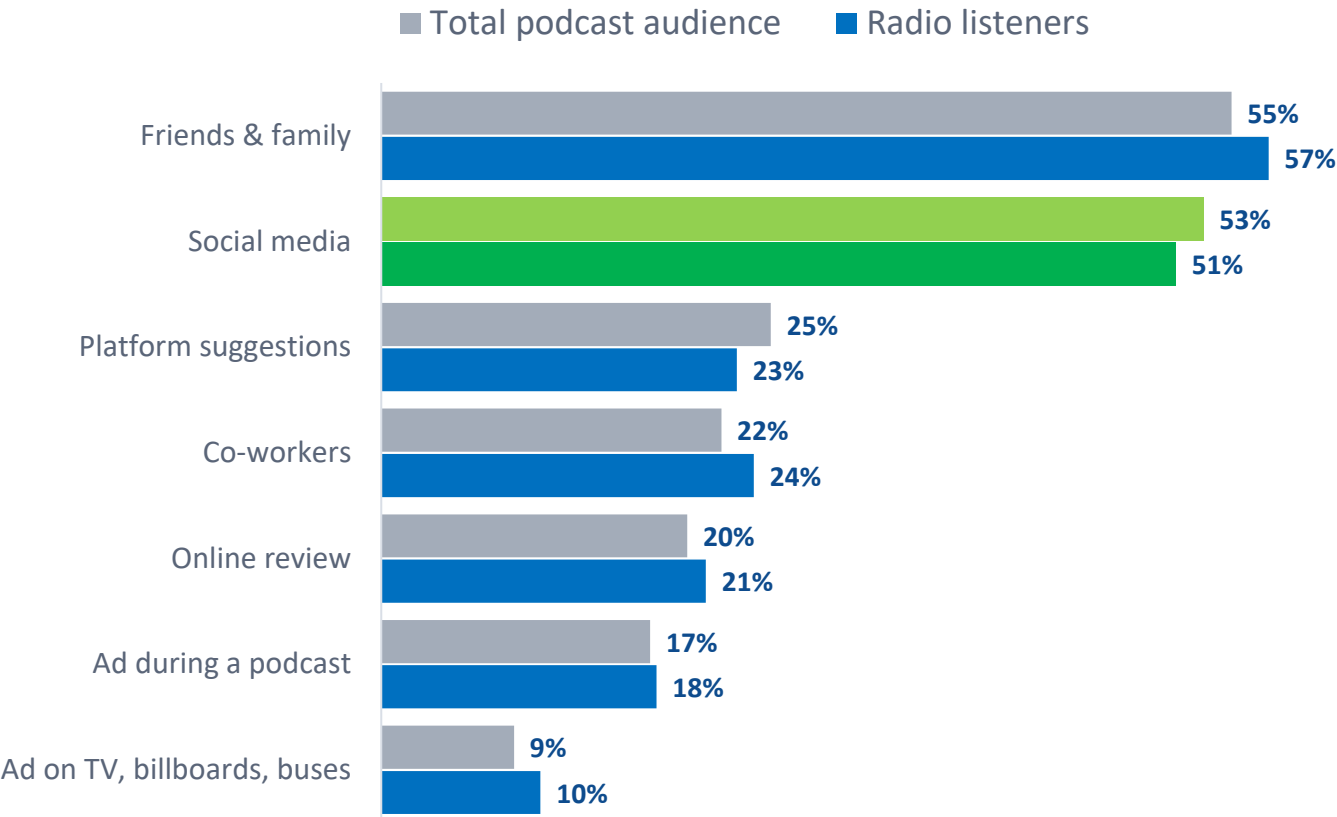
Source: The Podcast Study 2026, unweighted. Radio listeners = local radio weekly or more (n=891); Not regular radio listeners = less than weekly, incl. never (n=314). Q20, Q52-53, Q60-62.

# Discovery & the Superfan Funnel



# Social media and word of mouth drive discovery

## HOW THEY DISCOVER NEW PODCASTS (UP TO 3), %



**Social = 3x**

Social media is three times more effective than an ad in another podcast and double the effectiveness of any other method.

Source: The Podcast Study 2026, n=1,205 podcast consumers 18-54, unweighted. Radio listeners = listen to local radio weekly or more (n=891); Daily radio listeners (n=551). Q69, up to three.

# Clips and a familiar host are what get someone to try a show

## WHAT GETS THEM TO TRY A NEW PODCAST (up to 3)



65%

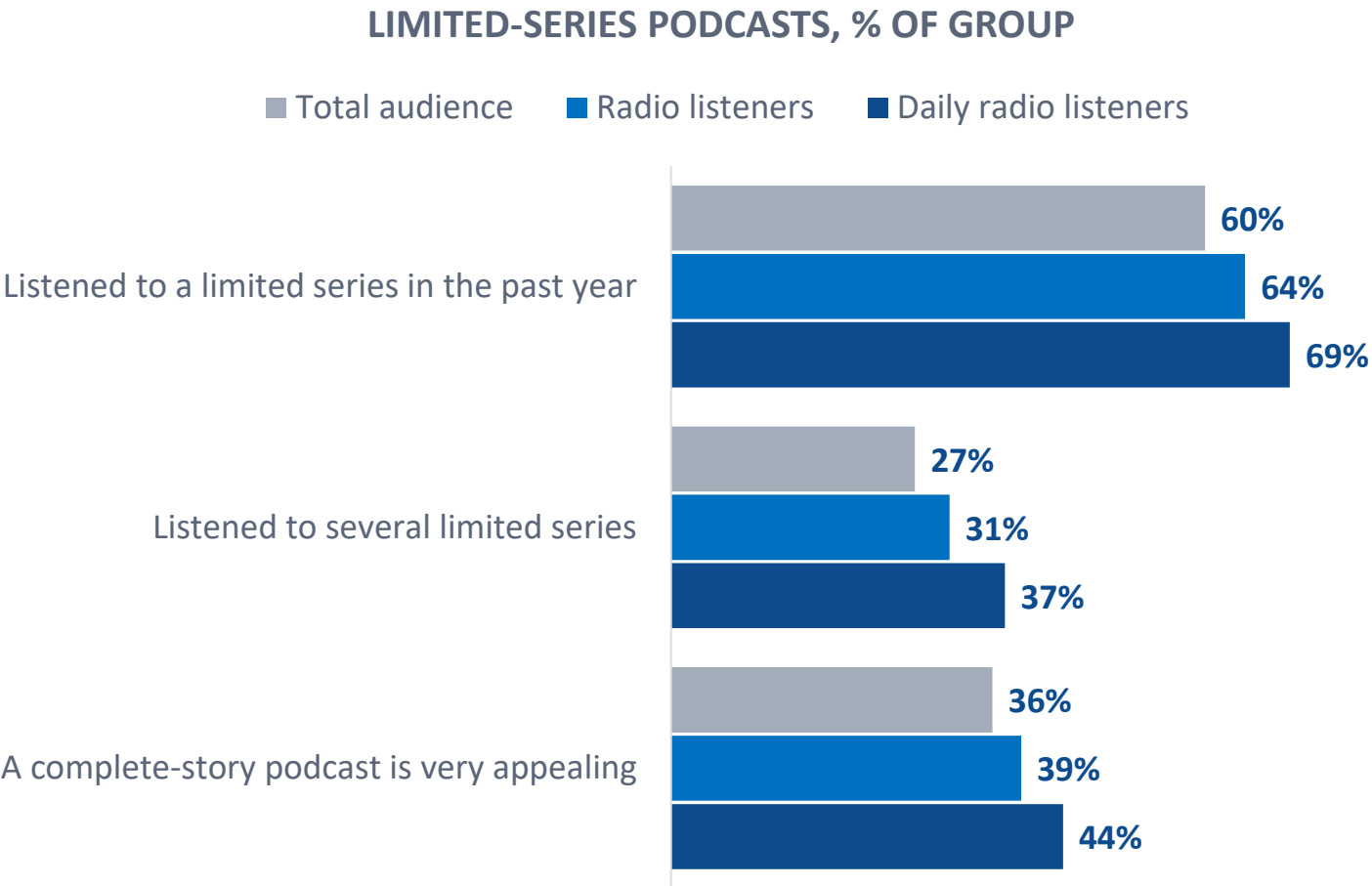
Typically see two or more clips before trying a new podcast.

43%

Of Daily radio listeners are moved by one can't-miss clip

Source: The Podcast Study 2026, n=1,205 podcast consumers 18-54, unweighted. Radio listeners = listen to local radio weekly or more (n=891); Daily radio listeners (n=551). Q72, up to three; Q75.

# Radio's audience is primed for limited-series podcasts



**69%**

Of Daily radio listeners have listened to a limited-series podcast in the past year.

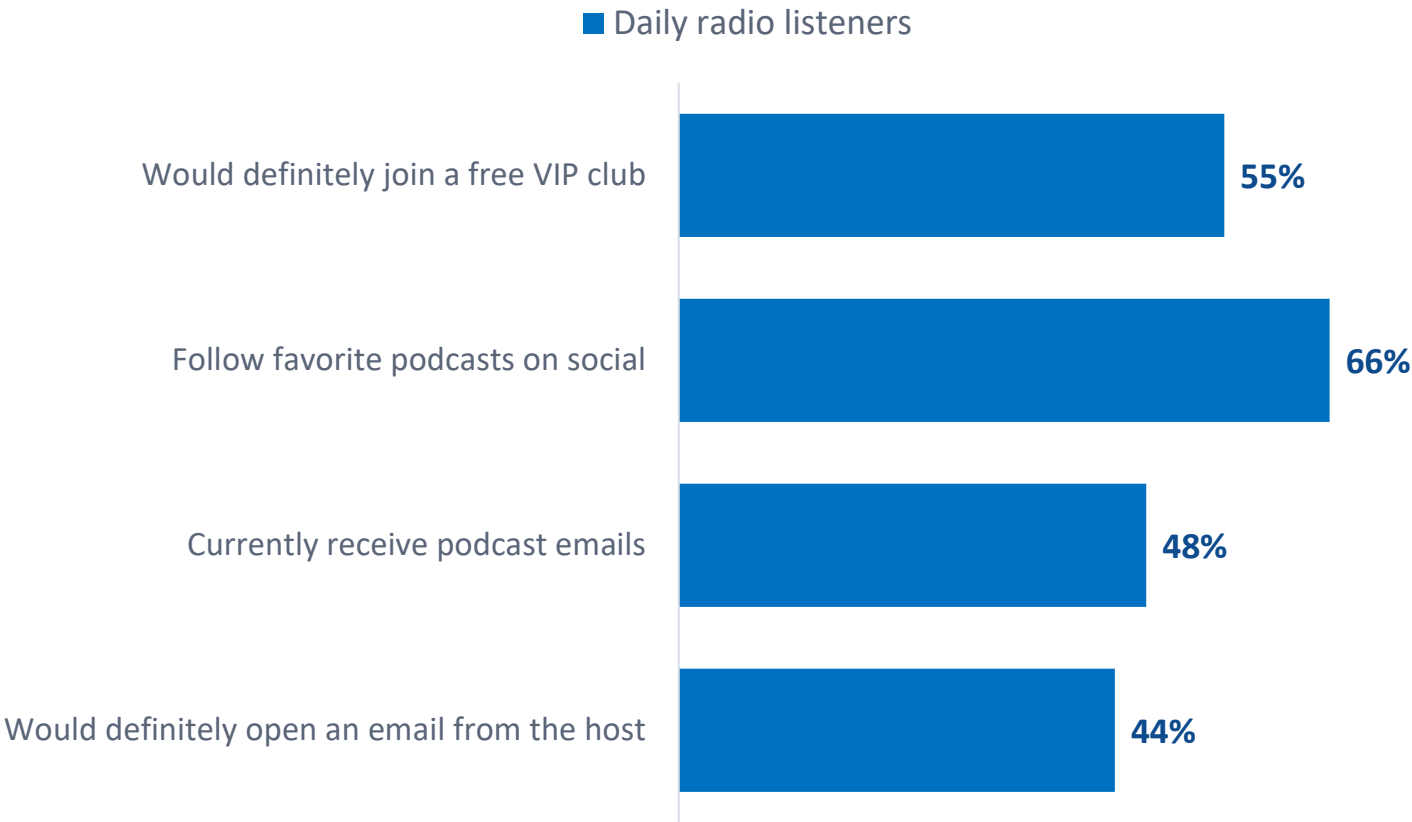
**44%**

Find a complete-story podcast very appealing.

Source: The Podcast Study 2026, n=1,205 podcast consumers 18-54, unweighted. Radio listeners = listen to local radio weekly or more (n=891); Daily radio listeners (n=551). Q26, Q29.

# A free VIP club and host email: the easiest first ask

## ENGAGEMENT FUNNEL ENTRY POINTS, % OF GROUP



**55%**

Of Daily radio listeners would definitely join a free VIP club.

**44%**

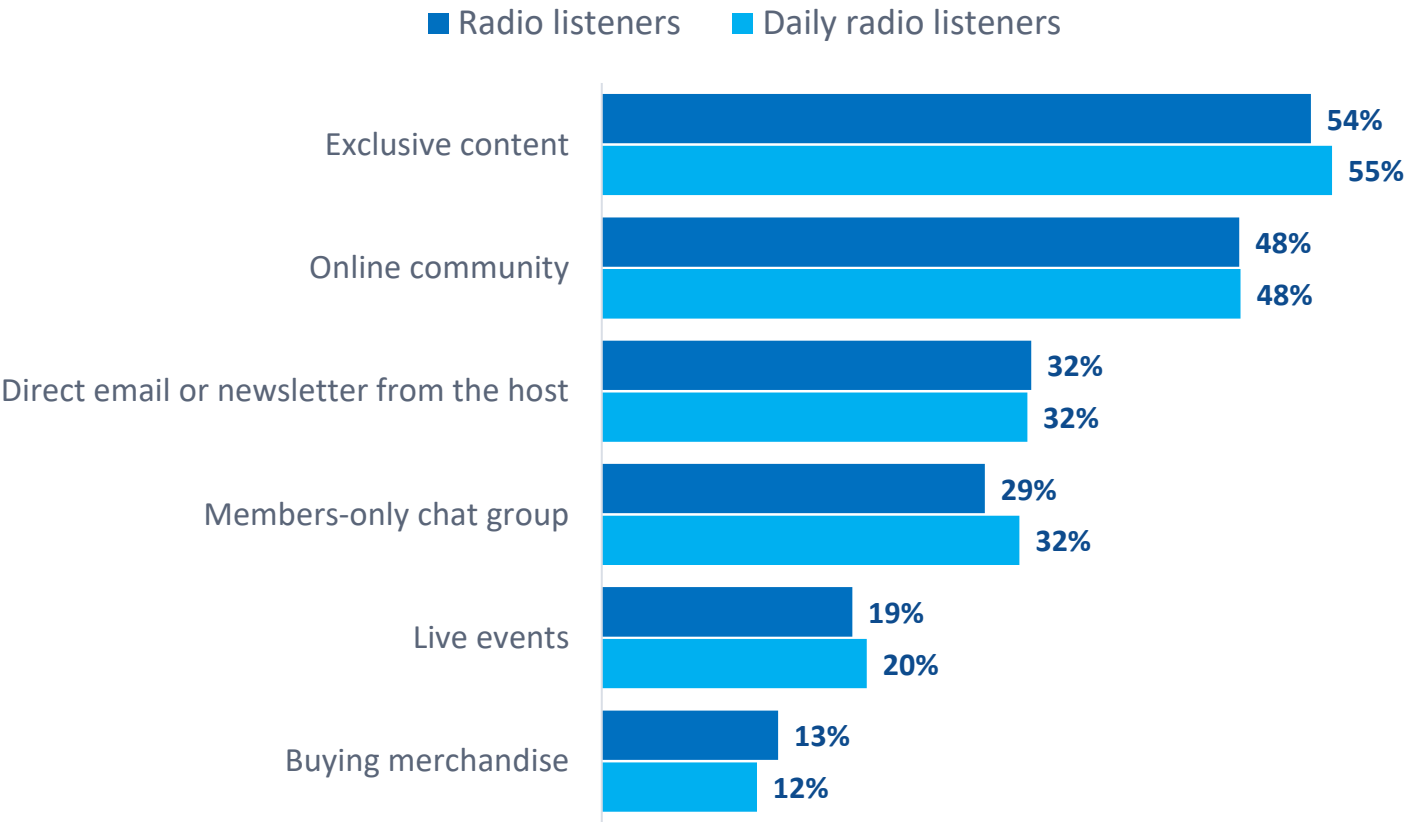
Would definitely open an email directly from the host.

**Radio lesson:** Rebuild your loyalty club around your hosts.

Source: The Podcast Study 2026, n=1,205 podcast consumers 18-54, unweighted. Radio listeners = listen to local radio weekly or more (n=891); Q87, Q90-92.

# What deepens the bond: hosts and community

WHAT WOULD CONNECT THEM TO A FAVORITE PODCAST (UP TO 3), %



## Half

Would feel more connected with exclusive content and a feeling of community.

## 55%

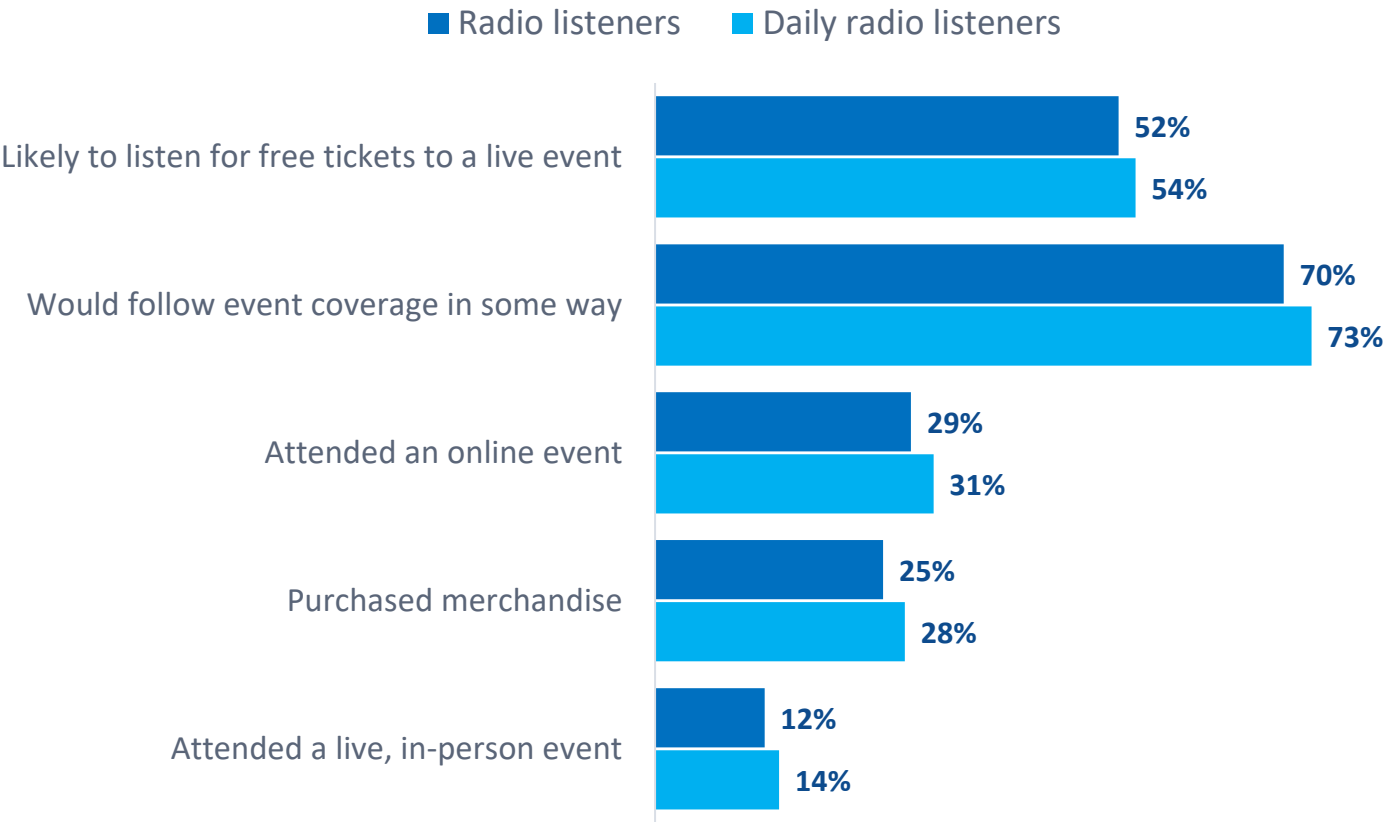
Of Daily radio listeners want exclusive content not in the regular feed.

**Bottom line:** Build community, ideally around your host, and give your VIPs something special.

Source: The Podcast Study 2026, unweighted. Base: has a favorite podcast (Total n=1,104; Radio listeners n=821; Daily radio listeners n=514). Q46, up to three.

# Events and prizes extend the bond well beyond the event itself

## EVENTS, PRIZES AND FAN COMMERCE, % OF GROUP



**73%**

Of Daily radio listeners would follow event coverage, even if they don't attend.

**54%**

Of daily listeners tune in for a chance at free tickets.

Source: The Podcast Study 2026, n=1,205 podcast consumers 18-54, unweighted. Radio listeners = listen to local radio weekly or more (n=891); Daily radio listeners (n=551). Q84, Q86, Q102 (top-2-box).

# Meet the Superfans and Prime Prospects

## Superfans

Meets all four tests

1

### Heavy daily listener

Full episodes every day, 5+ hours a week

2

### Host-driven, and takes action

Host is a big reason they listen; supports via Patreon, merch, events or email

## Prime Prospects

Not a Superfan, and meets all three tests

1

### Host-loyal and listening more

Host is a big reason they listen; listening is rising

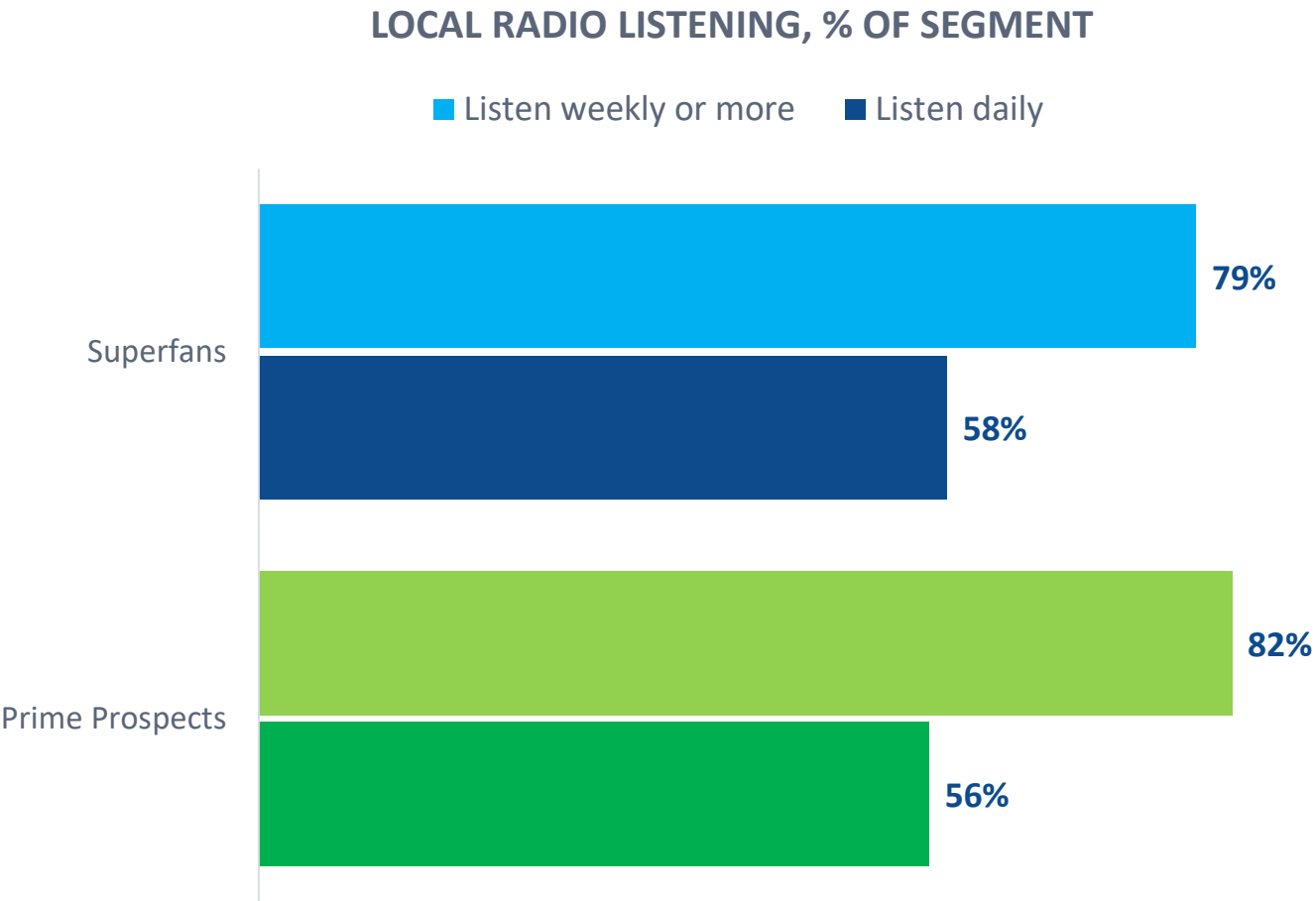
2

### Ready to pay or participate

Likely to pay, contacted a host, or attended an event

Source: The Podcast Study 2026, n=1,205, unweighted. Superfans n=201 (17%); Prime Prospects n=217 (18%).

# Four in five Superfans are weekly radio listeners; nearly six in ten daily



79%

Of Superfans listen to local radio weekly or more.

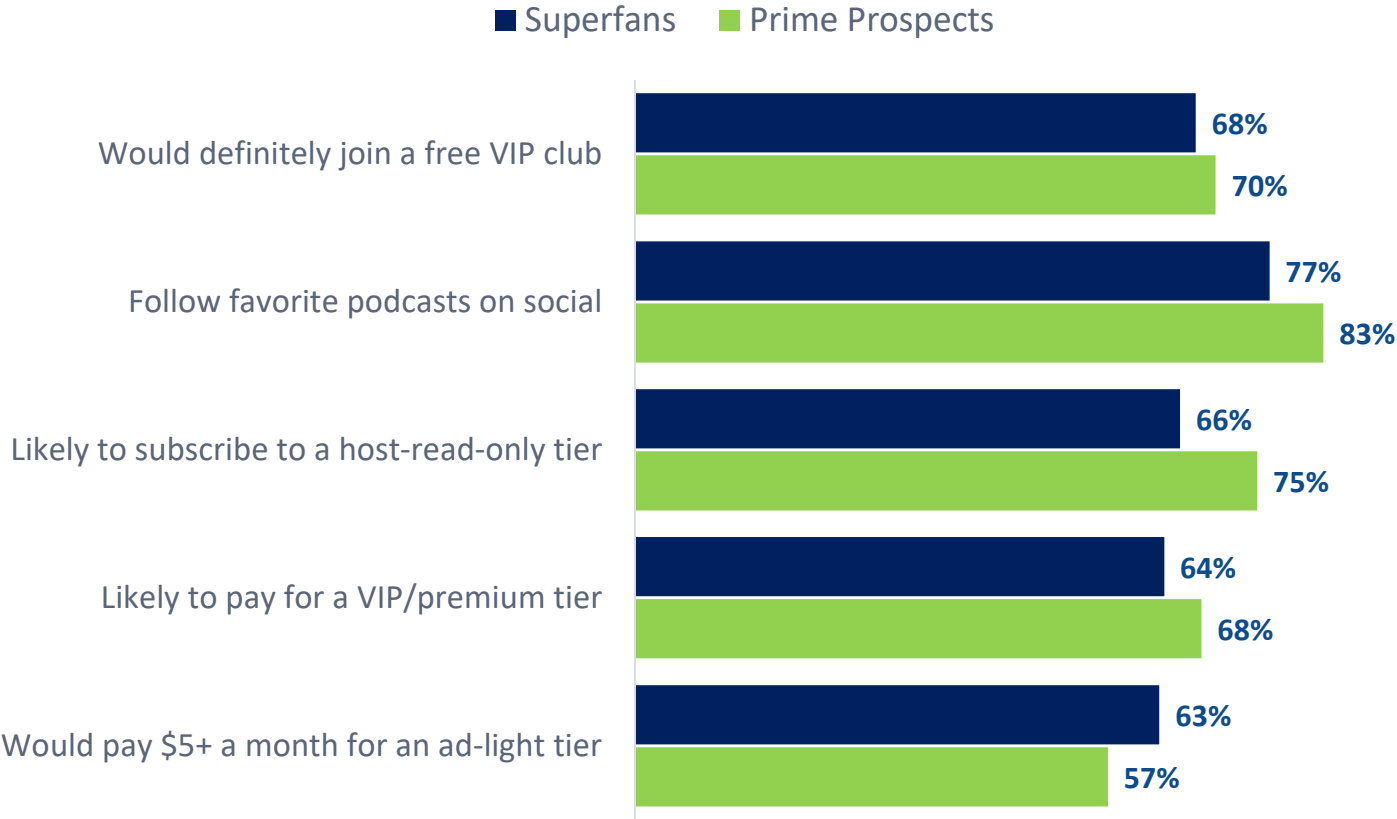
58%

Of Podcast Superfans listen to local radio every day

Source: The Podcast Study 2026, unweighted; respondent-level segments x Q8. Superfans n=201; Prime Prospects n=217; all others n=787; total n=1,205.

# Radio's Superfans and Prime Prospects are ready to join, follow and pay

AMONG RADIO LISTENERS, % OF GROUP



68%

Of radio-listening Superfans would definitely join a free VIP club.

75%

Of radio-listening Prime Prospects are likely to subscribe to a host-read-only tier.

Source: The Podcast Study 2026, unweighted. Base: radio listeners (local radio weekly+, n=891); Superfans n=158; Prime Prospects n=177. Q55-56 top-2-box; Q68 up to \$5 or \$8; Q90; Q91.

# Summary of findings

1

## **The host is the brand**

81% say the host is a big reason they listen; 52% of Daily radio listeners would tune in to interact with one.

2

## **The radio and podcast audiences have tremendous overlap**

74% of podcast consumers listen to radio weekly.

3

## **Content execution errors are causing hidden audience loss in podcasting**

Amidst the surge in podcast usage, content execution problems cause audience loss.

4

## **Host reads win, clutter loses**

47% of Daily radio listeners are strongly influenced by host reads; 54% of radio listeners say podcasts carry too many ads.

5

## **Clips and social drive trial**

65% see 2+ clips before trying a show; social is 3x as effective as an ad in another podcast.

6

## **Radio's core is ready for the funnel**

43% of Daily radio listeners are a Superfan or Prime Prospect; 55% would definitely join a free VIP club.

# Action plan playbook for radio

- 1** Treat talent as the brand: invest in and promote your hosts, and give listeners direct access to them
- 2** Win back lapsed listeners: put your hosts on-demand, in social feeds and podcast apps
- 3** Sell host endorsements as an ultra-premium product, and use host reads to hold listeners through the break
- 4** Coach production teams to be obsessive about content execution. Plug the leaks (esp in the first minute)
- 5** Clip your hosts daily on social, the top path to trial for a new show
- 6** Build the funnel for Superfans and Prime Prospects: a free VIP club, host email, exclusive content, events and limited series

# THANK YOU

Questions & discussion

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