As alternative services gain popularity, radio remains dominant: study

The market penetration of both online radio and traditional receives have held steady over the past few years - but the heaviest consumers aren't exclusive to one platform.

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A new study by the MTM has found that Canadians' love of radio remains consistent and strong, even in a world where digital and broadcast media are changing at a lightning-fast pace.

According to the report, last year 88% of Canadians listened to AM or FM radio content on any platform — with that total holding steady for three years in a row. The number of radio listeners in the country has barely fluctuated over the past 10 years, and hit 92% at its highest level (2006 through 2009). The report studied 4,000 Anglophone Canadians in the fall of 2016.

This stability comes at a time when alternatives to radio are on the rise. An **earlier study** by the MTM showed that as of spring 2016, 51.6% of Canadian Anglophones listen to an online streaming service such as Spotify, Google Play, YouTube or podcast services (but not including AM/FM online streaming). That number has increased gradually since the fall of 2011.

However, the new study by the MTM showed that very few Canadians are abandoning radio. In fact, many are listening to multiple platforms of audio.

A total of 80% of radio listeners still listen to their content through an AM/FM receiver such as a home or car radio. That total has dropped from 91% in 2006. Meanwhile, online radio streaming penetration in Canada has risen to 22% from 16% in 2008 when MTM first started tracking the medium, and has held steady for the last four years (fluctuating between 22 and 23%).

Only 18% of respondents reported subscribing to Sirius XM radio, however that total has gone up significantly since 2006, when only 5% of respondents subscribed (30% of people earning $100,000 or more are subscribers).

While 56% of all Canadians listen through a receiver only — no online or satellite listening — 16% listened to a mix of receiver and online listening, 9% listened to a mix of receiver and satellite mixes, and 4% listened to receiver, online and satellite. Only 3% listened to satellite only and 1% listened to online AM/FM only. Less than 1% listened to online and satellite.

Multiplatform listeners tended to be heavier consumers than receiver-only listeners. The receiver-only group listened to a self-reported average of 10.5 hours per week, while combined receiver and online listeners listened to 16.4 hours per week and receiver, online and satellite listeners reported 9 hours of consumption per week.

When adding in "other" online audio content — YouTube, Spotify, podcasting and other services — receiver-only listeners still tended to listen to less of that content (3.8 hours per week) as users of multiple mediums (5.2 hours for receiver and online, 5.5 for receiver, online and satellite).

Breaking the numbers down, students were least likely to listen to radio on a receiver, with only 60% responding in the affirmative (compared to 80% of all Anglophones). Lower household incomes (less than $35,000 per year) also under-indexed at 68%.

High-income earners ($79,000 or more) and Gen X-ers (age 35-49) were the most likely to stream radio content online, with 29% of both groups self-identifying as streamers. Smartphones (64%) and computers (61%) were the most popular devices to stream content on.