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# Respected Researcher Brad Adgate: 'Radio Listening Is On The Upswing.'

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James Leynse

Research from multiple sources shows car travel has reverted back to pre-pandemic levels as employees return to workplaces and resume activities put on hold by the coronavirus. As **Inside Radio** has been reporting, that's caused radio listening to rise to its highest level since the start of the outbreak. Now the story is gaining wider attention.

Brad Adgate, the respected researcher best known for more than 17 years as Senior VP of Research at Horizon Media, has penned a piece for Forbes, titled "As The Country Opens Up, Radio Listening Is Returning To Pre-Pandemic Levels."

For the past few years Adgate has been using his research experience to consult media companies while covering media trends for Forbes as a contributor. While many of the datapoints in his latest piece may not be news to those working in the radio industry, Adgate's analysis may help spread the word to the advertising and investment communities.

He starts by referencing an **Inside Radio** account of Edison Research Share of Ear data showing how in-car radio listening dropped in second quarter 2020, only to rebound when restrictions were lifted in the third quarter. And he points to the Census Bureau's annual "Journey to Work" survey from 2019 showing cars, trucks and vans, whether driving alone or carpooling, "remain, by far and away, the most popular mode of getting to work, accounting for 85% of all commuters." From there he cites Edison data from first quarter 2021 which says broadcast radio accounted for 87% of all ad-supported in-car listening, followed by SiriusXM (6%), podcasts (5%), ad-supported Pandora (2%) and ad-supported Spotify (1%).

Adgate's radio drill-down includes a breakout of listening by location – 45% occurs in cars, 32% at home and 23% at work – and by daypart – about 40% occurs in drive-times yet middays is the most-listened-to daypart (27%).

For evidence of how the U.S. economy is opening back up, Adgate's Forbes article draws on Geopath and Apple Maps data compiled in a recent blog post from Westwood One. It shows miles traveled have matched 2019 levels and driving search traffic has surpassed pre-COVID levels. "As a result, radio listening (with traffic reports) has been reverting back to pre-pandemic levels," Adgate writes. He also uses Federal Reserve data to demonstrate how workers have headed back to the office.

"With the country reopening and travel and commuting to work on the rise, radio listening has also been on the upswing," Adgate observes. He turns to Nielsen for the proof. In its April PPM survey, radio's weekly reach rose for a third consecutive month hitting its highest level since March 2020 when COVID-19's impact first began to upend normal media consumption patterns.

Finally, Adgate predicts that advertisers will follow the ears. "With radio listening returning and many businesses and retailers fully opened, ad dollars are expected to return," he writes citing a forecast from BIA Advisory Services calling for radio to generate \$12.6 billion in ad dollars, a 9.7% increase from 2020. Says Adgate: "BIA notes that local radio still maintains sizable audiences that many local and national advertisers want to reach."