

For Radio Listeners During COVID, 2020 Was the Year of the Stream.

May 10, 2021

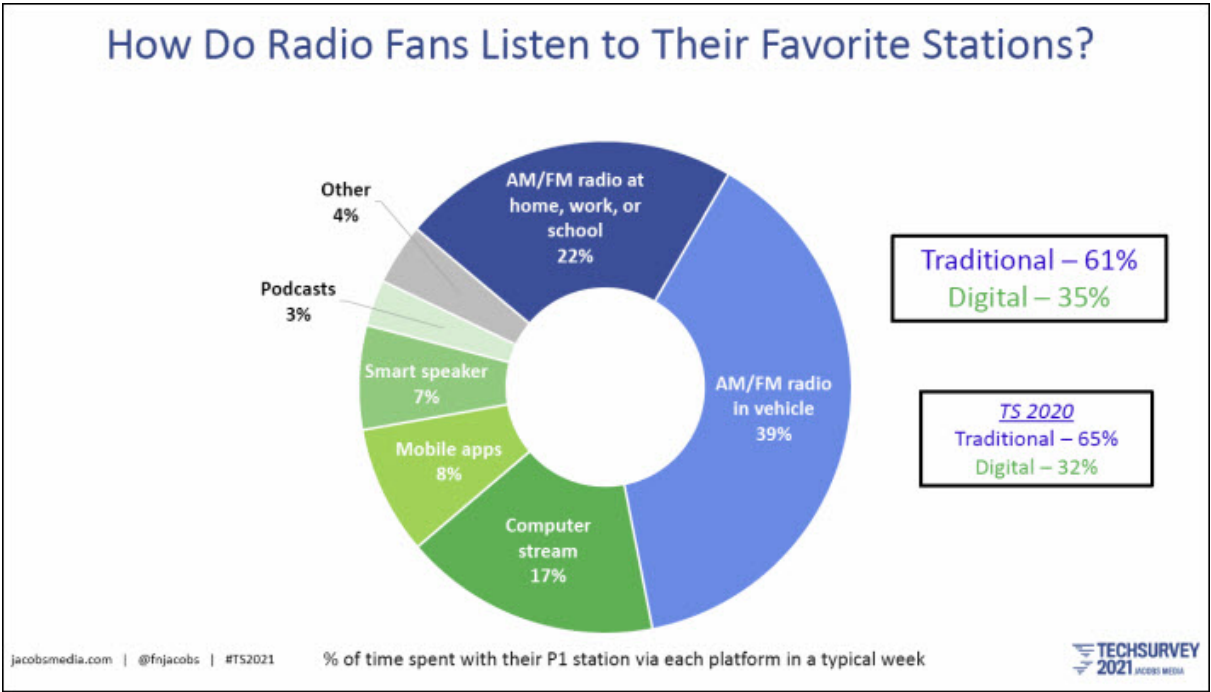


Digital listening platforms continue to gain ground with radio listeners, with streaming claiming 35% of time spent with a favorite station in a typical week, up from 14% back in 2013 and 32% a year ago, pre-pandemic, according to Jacobs Media's Techsurvey 2021, "Radio in the Year of COVID." Time spent using traditional means of listening, such as on an AM/FM radio at home, office or in a car, have declined from 85% in 2013, and 65% a year ago, to 61% in this latest survey.

“It was the year of the stream,” Jacobs Media President Fred Jacobs said during a webinar. “People spent more time at home, and not everybody has a working radio at home.”

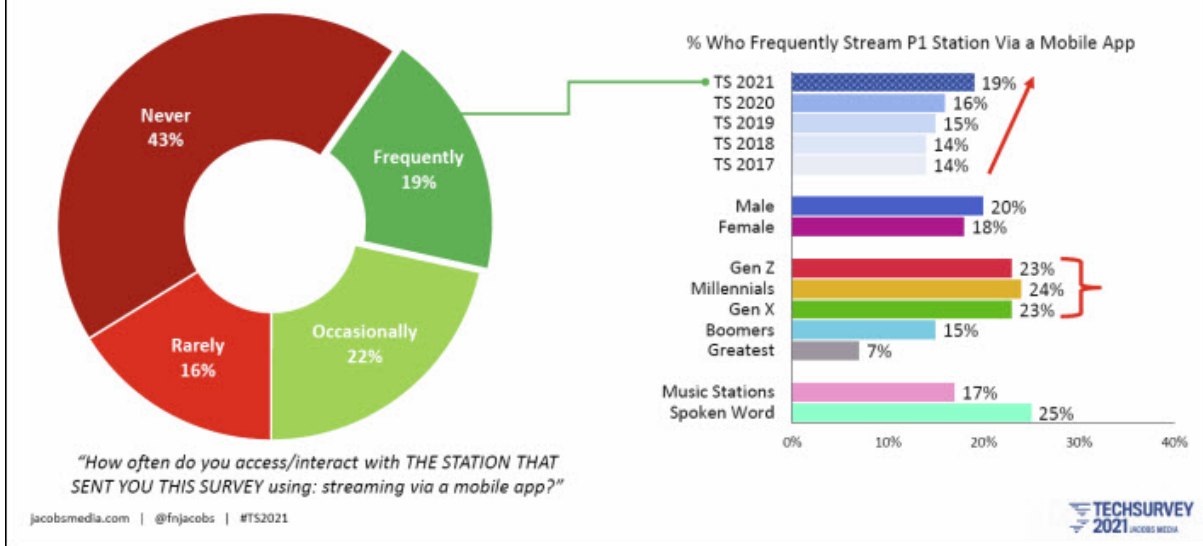
The results are based on Jacobs' annual online survey of more than 42,000 core radio users from 470 participating stations, conducted Jan. 5-Feb. 7, 2021, notable as the prior Techsurvey was from the same period in 2020, prior to the COVID lockdown. While the results are non-projectable to the entire U.S. as most respondents are members of participating radio stations’ databases, they do provide an important barometer of media usage trends among some of radio’s most loyal listeners.

While traditional AM/FM listening still leads by a wide margin among the survey's core listeners – with 39% of typical week listening to a favorite station in-car and 22% at home, work or school – the digital platform breakdown shows 17% of time spent with a computer stream, 8% streaming the station on a mobile app, 7% via smart speaker and 3% listening to a station podcast. Streaming shares are more pronounced among Millennials, where digital passes the 40% mark for the first time in 2021, up from 36% in 2020's Techsurvey, while traditional's share moves from 60% to 53%. “You get a preview of coming attractions when you look at Millennials,” Jacobs says. “Those lines [between digital and traditional] are going to cross a whole lot sooner.”



During the pandemic, listeners became more comfortable with streaming from their favorite station's mobile app, with six in 10 aware of it (62%) and more than one in three (37%) having downloaded it. For the first time, almost one in five (19%) listen frequently via the station's app, up from 16% a year ago and 14% in 2018. Significantly more likely to listen to their favorite station via app are Millennials (24%), Gen Z and Gen X (23% for each).

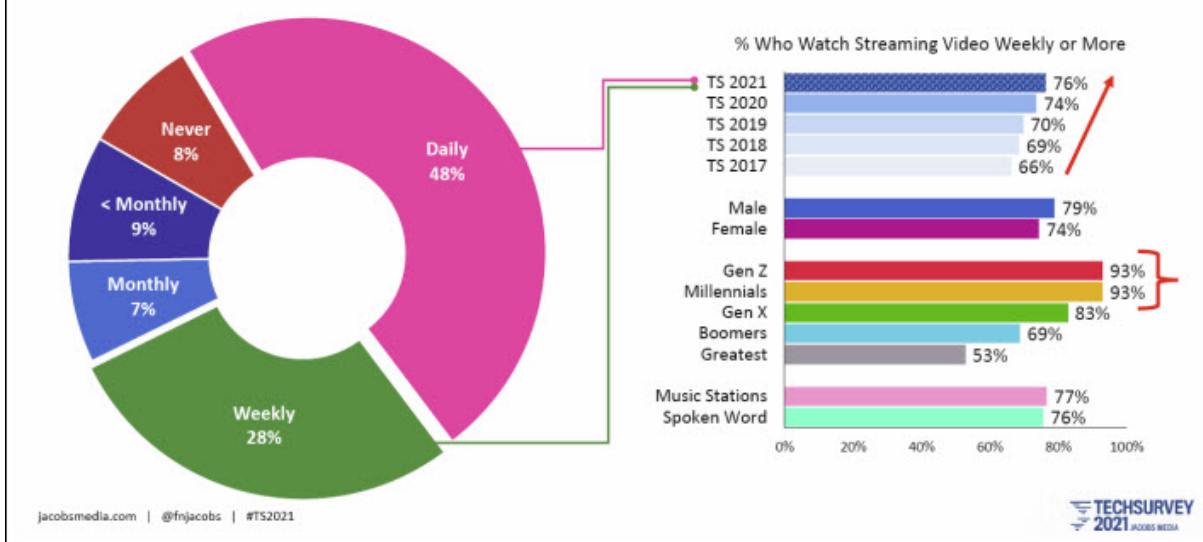
Almost One in Five Frequently Listens to Their Favorite Station Via a Mobile App, Especially Younger Generations



Almost one in three core radio listeners who own at least one smart speaker (31%) use it frequently to listen to an AM/FM station, putting it second to listening to a streaming music service such as Pandora or Spotify (37%). "As radios are disappearing from people's homes, smart speakers are to a great degree appearing in their place," Jacobs says, encouraging stations to "market your apps and your smart speakers. They absolutely matter more than ever before."

The survey findings show both audio and video streaming increasing during COVID. Nearly 7 in 10 respondents (68%) report streaming audio daily or weekly, compared to 58% in 2017 and 65% in 2020 just before the pandemic. A significantly higher percentage of Millennials (77%), Gen Z (75%) and Gen X (74%) stream audio daily or weekly, while radio formats with a greater likelihood of this level of audio streaming include sports and rhythmic urban (78% for each), alternative (75%), AAA (74%), urban AC and CHR (72% for each), rock and hot AC (71% for each).

Almost Half Watch Streaming Video Daily; Weekly Usage Grows to More Than Three in Four



More than three in four core listeners (76%) stream video daily or weekly, vs. 2017's 66% and last year's 74%. As in audio, those numbers are higher for Millennials and Gen Z (93% for each) and Gen X (83%). "Given the increasing value of video and video streaming, even though we are radio, theater of the mind, every station needs a visual video strategy," Jacobs says.