



## **MRP One-On-One Key Findings**

### **Public Radio Listeners**

#### **Overview**

This initial look at Millennial public radio listeners was very instructive, and we believe it will better inform the upcoming ethnographic interviews. This group of Gen Y representatives in New York, Detroit/Ann Arbor, St. Louis, and Austin was comprised of bright, mostly optimistic, forward-leaning people. Interviews were conducted during a one month period from late August through late September, and were recruited via each stakeholder station email databases in the aforementioned markets. All interviews were conducted at the local public radio station's facility.

This sample of Millennials was balanced by gender, with a goal of equal distribution of 18-22, 23-28, and 29-34 year-olds. We were more successful finding the latter two demographic cells in the aforementioned public radio databases. We also balanced ethnic representation, and ended up interviewing two African-Americans out of the sixteen participants.

While many analysts and pundits assume this is a monolithic generation, our one-on-one interviews suggest otherwise. There are different types of Millennials, and many take pride in their uniqueness. While most don't resent the label per se, they tend to believe they're a lot less homogenous than marketers often assume, and to do so would be a mistake.

There are many reasons for these differences, beginning with age and stage of life. The older cohort (29-34) tends to be married, often with children. Many of these ageing Millennials are homeowners and successfully moving forward with their careers. They tend to consume less media as a result – for example, parents mention not listening to as much radio at home in the morning or while they are taking their kids to school.

The age gradations become more apparent when the conversation moves to how the economy and other major events over the past decade or so have shaped their lives. Older Millennials generally talk about coming of age during the recession, and the impact it had on their economic standing and their careers. Some report struggling to find a job out of college, and several went back to get a master's because they couldn't find work. There is some bitterness, but also resignation about the events of the past several years.

On the other hand, younger Millennials were virtually unscathed by the economic meltdown. Most are full of optimism and have a much more positive outlook about their lives and the world around them. They tend to be employed in their chosen careers and don't have much to complain about.

They also don't fit the stereotype of being "hi-tech all the time." In fact, listening to the radio is generally part of their media regimen. But it's how they define what "radio" is that creates challenges for public radio. To some, it's what they listen to in the car. But for others, it's podcasts, streams, and almost always, the smartphone.

Most don't consider themselves techies, even though it looks that way to their parents and grandparents. Technology is a big part of their daily lives as color TV and microwave ovens were to Boomers. And they move seamlessly between platforms and devices to access what they want and when they want it.

But these public radio Millennial listeners have one thing in common – conversations with them about their news priorities and public radio preferences sound very similar to Baby Boomer listeners that we have interviewed in other studies that have been fans for decades. The basic core values structure is intact as well. The biggest differences? They mostly revolve around the devices used to listen, and a preference toward programs that emphasize storytelling.

This report is designed to provide a detailed look at the wide array of topics covered. Our initial plan was to provide an executive summary followed by a more detailed report, but given the breadth of information, we determined it was best to produce one larger report. This will be followed by a parallel analysis of the attitudes and opportunities with college-educated Millennials who don't listen to public radio.

## The Respondents



Katelyn 23-28 St. Louis  
Public Employee



Drew 18-22  
St. Louis Auditor



Chris 29-34 St. Louis  
Software Engineer



Chiffontae 29-34 St. Louis  
Education, Non-Profit



David 29-34  
St. Louis Chemist



Jenna 29-34 NYC  
Freelance Writer



Nichole 29-34 NYC  
Communications



Jonah 29-34 NYC  
PhD Student



Benji 29-34 NYC  
Event Producer



Travis 29-34 Phoenix  
Non-Profit Worker



Deniz 23-28 Austin  
Defense Attorney



Jana 29-34 Austin  
Musician



Nick 29-34 Michigan  
Professor



Emily 23-28 Michigan  
Preschool Teacher



John 23-28 Michigan  
Law Student



Julia 29-34 Michigan  
Nurse

## Being A Millennial

Our eighteen respondents represent a wide range of backgrounds and life stages. They are parents, students, business owners, teachers, and employees. They have two common threads – they listen to public radio and they are 18-34 years-old. But despite the range of backgrounds, life stages, and geography, they tend to be outspoken and confident, with no shortage of opinions about their generation and the world in which they live.

- Most respondents have no problem with the “Millennial” label. Many of the older respondents believe they differ greatly from younger people who are also classified as Millennials. They are quick to point out the generational label inadequately groups them together inappropriately with younger people who do not share their sensibilities and experiences.
- Many Millennials take pride in defying the stereotyping of their generation. Most resent the suggestion they have been coddled, spoiled, or entitled. They say they came of age during a time of major economic upheaval, and view their survival and success as measure of their strength and resilience.

**“I graduated from college just as the recession hit. That will probably have a lifelong impact on my earnings. Younger Millennials will be graduating into a much better economy. I also didn’t grow up with the Internet. I am a Millennial, but I guess when people talk about them they usually mean the younger ones.”** Jenna/29-34/New York

- While several have student loans, only a few say they are economically burdened as a result. This may be due to the fact they’re all employed and on a career path that makes them confident about their futures.
- The storyline about Millennials not wanting to own cars appears to be a myth. Outside of the New York City respondents, all but one respondent owns a car. There is some usage of mass transit in areas where it is available.
- While most use ride sharing services like Uber or Lyft, they typically aren’t used in place of their own cars. In fact, the most-mentioned use is to transport them home from bars later in the evening. Once again, the exception is New York City, where some say ride sharing is more common, as are taxis.

## The State Of The Country

Despite being raised during a tumultuous time, combined with coming of age during a major recession, these respondents are generally upbeat about the state of the country, as well as the future. Because these interviews were conducted during the heat of the presidential election, they were asked to share their opinions about the U.S., apart from the political noise. They were asked to identify the issues of greatest concern to them.

- While many express frustration with the political process, division, and the stalemate in Washington, most believe that the country is headed in the right direction. Older respondents tend to have the most perspective, and have a better historical viewpoint. Younger Millennials are more likely to see the country as it is today. Despite their different perspectives, both groups tend to believe the U.S. is on a good path:

**“I think it’s sort of a mixed bag. I think in some ways we’ve made amazing progress in just a really short period of time, but I still think there’s a really long way to go. I think because of technology, because things were exposed that weren’t exposed before, I think it is bringing to light a lot of the problems that have existed for a very long time and now we’re being forced to deal with them and in some ways it seems like things are getting worse. . . . I think if we’re able to admit we have problems, address them, and find comprehensive ways to address them and move forward, then we can actually continue to make progress.”** Julia/29-34/Ann Arbor

**“I would say the mood overall from where I sit is very well. In my sphere, there is not a significant amount of trauma or turmoil. My children are fed. I have a roof on top of my head. All of my immediate family members that I am close to regularly are in spaces where the same applies. Everything from my bubble is well, thus my perspective of the country is that’s kind of my sample size of, is well.”** Travis/23-28/Phoenix

- Many assess the country through a broad lens, commenting that despite the political turmoil, the U.S. isn’t actively engaged in war, they are able to start and raise a family in peace, their careers are just starting but are on track, and there is an inherent belief the government and the way it is structured with checks and balances will carry us through and is a source of our strength and success.
- Respondents care about a wide range of issues. At the top of the list is climate change and the environment, followed by racism and equal rights issues. Other topics of concern include poverty, education, labor, trade, and health/medical issues.
- While the issues above are national in scope, many refer to them from the local perspective, as local issues are of concern to many.

**“I’m a mom. I have kids. I’m concerned about education. I’m concerned about the environment. I’m concerned about water. Clearly, water has been a huge topic that we’ve all been thinking about because of what happened in Flint, and it really made us think about our own infrastructure and our own vulnerabilities. . . I’m concerned about the basic human rights that are being called into question here and around the world. I’m worried about the way in which we feel comfortable talking about people, the way in which we have seemed to very easily demonize and other-ize people.”** Julia/29-34/Ann Arbor

- Despite some distaste and regret, almost all are following the election, in many cases, quite closely. However, their sources of information run the gamut. None watch network television, and cable viewing is limited to a few of the news channels on a sporadic basis. Printed newspapers barely exist, except for one respondent.
- Not surprisingly (given the listening requirement to participate in the study), most, but not all of them point to public radio as a key source for information about the election. Consuming public radio via an actual radio is primarily limited to the car, with digital sources filling in the rest of their time following the election. Many do not have a radio in their homes or in their workplaces.
- Beyond radio, the way that they access information about the election is highly fragmented, and represents the challenge broadcasters face in trying to amass a consistently large listening audience. Among those who rely on public radio to follow the election, this often takes many forms – a mobile app, podcasts, online streaming, a station’s Facebook feed, and articles posted on station websites.
- Other sources used to keep track of the election include Vox, NYTimes.com, Twitter, the candidates’ social media pages, Gawker, *Washington Post*, *Vice*, Young Turks, local newspaper websites, Huffington Post, and Politico.

**“I listen to Michigan Radio every day, just on my commute, so it’s not a super long time. I read articles posted online, and I generally follow the same websites – anything posted on NPR or the Huffington Post or Politico, those types of things.”** Emily/23-28/Ann Arbor

## **Trust In Institutions**

During their lives, Millennials have witnessed the breakdown of institutions, corporations, and even governments. They have seen the banking system fail, leading to the housing crisis and the Great Recession. They have witnessed constant gridlock in government as well as government shutdowns. They’ve seen an election decided by the Supreme Court. And they are seeing the social compact broken through income inequality, police/community challenges, Black Lives Matter, and more. So, it’s not surprising that when asked which institutions they trust, responses cover a wide range. Notably, some say they don’t trust any, be it government, religion, or business.

While they may be generally positive about the state of the union, several have a jaundiced view of government and big corporations. This tends to be especially true among the older Millennials.

**“Most of us have a healthy skepticism just from the things we’ve seen in our lives. It’s hard to trust anything. Like education – most of us were told to go to college and you’ll get a good job and you’re set. But then you’re saddled with student debt. So, it’s hard to trust any institutions right now.”**  
David/23-28/St. Louis

A glaring omission is religious institutions, not mentioned a single time during these interviews. Some say the faith community has failed its followers.

- The common thread among trusted institutions is that most are non-profit. There are positive mentions of universities and cultural institutions like libraries and The Met.
- The government is mentioned by several respondents, both positively and negatively. For those with some degree of trust, there's an expectation it won't let the country fail and is generally run by people who truly care. On the other hand, failures like the banking crisis and gridlock are the key drivers among those who indicate little faith in government.
- Some have a belief that the only institutions that can be trusted are those that face peer reviews, such as the CDC and the American Medical Association.

### **Trust In Media**

Keeping in mind these respondents were recruited because they are public radio listeners, it shouldn't be surprising that when asked about the media outlet they trust the most, NPR and their local public radio station are frequently mentioned. Other news outlets mentioned include the *New York Times*, Vox, the BBC, Democracy Now, 538, Bloomberg News, and Politico.

Reasons given for trusting NPR and the local public radio station include a wide range of positives. Overall, many feel public radio:

- Covers topics not usually heard in the mainstream media.
- Features storytelling (this is a common theme throughout this project and will be covered in greater detail in another section of this report).
- Is non-commercial, which connotes a high level of transparency.
- Covers news from multiple points-of-view.
- Provides in-depth/longer coverage of a topic or story.
- Tries to be non-partisan and objective.

There is also a strong sense of loyalty to NPR and public radio stations, similar to what we see in other research studies. This is rooted in the perception that public radio is objective and fact-based, core values shared by multi generations of listeners.

### **Skimming Vs. The Deep Dive**

The Internet and access to news and information on social media, combined with their constant access via mobile, has altered the way many respondents discover and interface with news. Almost all admit that they begin their news gathering via skimming.

- For many, the degree they story graze is determined by their location. Taking the subway or eating a meal is often the right environment for skimming. If they find a

story that interests them, they'll take a deep dive at a later time when convenient. Additionally, skimming tends to be more prevalent during the busy work week than on weekends. Saturdays and Sundays typically provide more time to spend with a story.

- The various media outlets and platforms are used for different purposes – public radio is generally not used for skimming, but tends to be used to seek out more information when they've discovered a story during the skimming process. Conversely, all social media is perfect for grazing, and is often the launch pad for discovering trusted sources where they can dive deeper.

**“Like with radio, I can use KMOX to skim the information, then use NPR to go more in-depth. I do actually pull up the online schedules for NPR to find what types of things they’re going to talk about and that will dictate whether I click over to it during my commute, or at home when I listen to the radio. Online you get more of a basic skim because there’s too much, and there’s too much falsified information.”** David/23-28/St. Louis

### A Media Day In The Life Of A Millennial

Just as most believe the “Millennial” label is a convenient stereotype, media usage among these Gen Y respondents tends to be fragmented and highly individualized. For example, while listening to the radio in the car is a common activity for those who don't use public transportation, media usage deviates greatly among respondents in other environments. Many factors come into play. Those with children don't tend to consume much media in the morning, while those in an office setting often rely on podcasts for entertainment.

The one constant is the primacy of the mobile phone. For most, the smartphone is the epicenter of their media access, whether it's audio, video, web surfing, social media, news consumption, and overall communication. They wake up with their phones, use them to consume audio and video sources, as well as to interact on social media and messaging applications.

Below are examples of how some respondents access media during a typical weekday:

Demo	Wake Up	Morning Routine	Morning Commute	Work	Heading Home/Evening
F 23-28	Facebook and Instagram on phone	Public radio on mobile app	Public radio in car	Facebook/HuffPo/KWMU on phone. Articles on Next City.	
M 18-22			Public radio and music radio in car	Podcasts at lunch on phone	
M 29-34	Public radio on a radio		Public radio, music podcasts, Sirius/XM, music from phone in car	Music and storytelling podcasts from laptop	Public radio on way home
F 29-34		Podcasts on phone via	Public radio on radio	Podcasts (“Freakonomics”)	Public radio on way home, Netflix at



		Bluetooth speaker			night
F 23-28	Public radio on radio		Commercial radio, Public radio, sports radio in car	Google News, phone alerts from KMOX and CBS Local	Music and sports radio on way home
M 29-34	Radio on the radio	Public radio on computer stream	Podcasts on the train ("Marketplace")	Public radio on computer stream	
M 29-34		While working out, listen to boom box radio while eating		Take walk and listen to time shifted Brian Lehrer show	Take walk and listen to time shifted Brian Lehrer, Leonard Lopate, "Fresh Air"
F 23-28		Work out in garage to videos, listen to Public radio on iTunes on laptop while eating	Public radio in the car		Public radio in the car and at home, news web sites (CNN)
F 29-34	Scroll headlines on phone (Gawker)	Facebook on phone	Public radio and music radio in the car	Facebook and Twitter on laptop	
F 23-28	Public radio on radio	Public radio on mobile app, including NPR One	Public radio in car after dropping kids at school	Podcasts	Public radio in car until picks up kids
F 23-28		Public radio in car		Public radio in car	Watch TV
A 23-28	Wake up to music on radio	Read blogs online (Politico, The Hill, Mother Jones)	No media on bus	No media while in class	Stream Public radio while working
F 29-34		After kids go to school, use Facebook and Twitter on phone	Public radio in car		Watch cable news (MSNBC) and social media on phones
M 29-34		Commercial radio, TV	Commercial radio in car	Stream Public radio at work or station app	Public radio in car

**"I wake up, check my phone and check Facebook and Instagram. I do get some news from Facebook. I'll get up and listen to NPR on my phone and their app. I don't have a radio. I'll listen on the phone while making breakfast. When I drive to work, I'll listen to NPR or other morning shows if NPR is too much. At work, I'll check Facebook a few times a day. During the day if I need a break I'll go to Huffington Post or the St. Louis website just to see the summary. I like the local information."** Katelyn/23-28/St. Louis

**"I wake up at 7:15am with an alarm clock. I go running with a radio I clip on to my shorts. It's a crappy little device I use with earbuds. On alternate days, I go to the gym and listen to the radio while I eat breakfast before clipping on the radio and listening while I work out. That radio is a boom**

**box with a terrestrial radio (that's) in my kitchen. Those are the only two radios in my place. I listen to all of 'Morning Edition' on most days.**

**Around 9:30 I'll start work and reading for four hours. Then around 2pm, I'll go for a walk for an hour and I listen to Brian Lehrer that I downloaded from earlier that day. Then later when I get home and eat something I may listen to something. Around 6:30pm, I will go for another walk and listen to whatever I downloaded. It will generally be segments from Brian Lehrer or Leonard Lopate or 'Fresh Air.' Then I listen to the radio when I make dinner as well." Jonah/29-34/NYC**

**"On weekdays, I turn on St. Louis Public Radio on the radio and have it in the background (a Marantz radio from the 1970s). I listen on the way to work in the car, but also music on KTHX, and music podcasts and my own music from my phone. I also listen to satellite radio, which I've had for three weeks. At work, half of the day I listen to non-news. Music or podcasts that are more storytelling on my laptop. On the way home I'll listen to 'All Things Considered.'" Chris/29-34/St. Louis**

## **When News Breaks**

Despite the fact they are all public radio listeners, their first reaction to a breaking news story is to go to a digital source. For many, Twitter or a Google search is their initial move, as they gather initial information and then follow-up with links or stories that emerge on websites or people they trust based on past experience. Very few go to electronic media like broadcast TV or radio because of the lack of speed, preferring instead to seek out cable news channels or stay with the web.

**"I hear about breaking news on Twitter and will click on relevant links. No journalism around it (the story) until later on. And I will usually start with a printed publication (online) instead of radio. Radio is more passive." Chris/29-34/St. Louis**

**"I usually Google something. If it's not popping on Facebook, then I'll Google the topic that I'm looking for and look for a news source that I trust that has posted something about it." Emily/23-28/Ann Arbor**

**"I would probably Google something and see what came up. I don't have one particular outlet that I always go to. I do look a lot at either MSNBC or CNN for the breaking news kind of things. Sometimes I just Google things and I try to see if this is a credible news source, because sometimes you have to see if this actually happened or not. That's sort of the first wave of things, and once the story has been out for a while and someone wants to**

**dig deeper, then I will usually look at other media outlets.”** Julia/29-34/Ann Arbor

Social media (primarily Facebook and secondarily Twitter) is a primary news discovery source. Three factors drive usage – speed, breadth, and convenience. Respondents appreciate the ability to instantly find out about a news event, and then will gravitate away from social media to learn more by either clicking on a link (once determining if it’s a credible source), by using Google to search more on the topic and then clicking on links from credible sources, or by going to sources they know and trust.

While social media is used by every respondent, there appears to be an evolution in its role in news discovery. Some have backed away from leaning on social media for conversations (especially Facebook) and now use it more as another discovery platform. There is a sense that the “conversations” on social media have devolved into shallow encounters at best or screaming matches at worst, and aren’t worth the time and effort.

**“It’s all about feelings, it’s all about personal beliefs, it’s very self-indulgent. It’s not a great medium for discussions. It’s not even a good medium for discussions (but) that’s one of the good things that come from social media is you’re able to share information quickly with a broad range, and so we have to talk about it now, and that’s a good thing. But sharing actual data, sharing actual facts, sharing actual news, it’s not a great tool.”**

Julia/29-34/Ann Arbor

While Facebook dominates their social space, Twitter has emerged as a source of breaking news as well. It is a vital, yet somewhat limited tool that enables them to find information quickly, and from sources they trust.

**“(Twitter) is usually how I find out about stories. I don’t tend to talk much about stories on social media. Perhaps a little bit with friends but not with strangers online. It’s mostly a tool for finding stories rather than reacting to them. Someone once said that Twitter is a great place to be when news breaks but a horrible place to be five minutes after news breaks, because you can’t find any of the actual news any more. You just find 80,000 people having feelings about the news. They’re totally right. There’s only so many ways you can react to breaking news.”** Jenna/29-34/New York

## **News Interest**

There is no clear pattern that defines their specific news interest. Respondents were asked to select between local, state, national, and international news. For some, state and local news are important because of the proximity of the information and its potential impact on their lives. Several are more driven by the election and the need to

understand what is happening across the country. And still others appreciate learning about world affairs and their impact at home.

**“That’s one thing I think I appreciate the most about public radio, in general, they cover a little bit of everything. When you’re listening to KJZZ, they’ll do some local stuff, some international stuff, bring it back and forth. That is what I try to make more of my day out of, so I try to listen to enough stuff that is more global and country related, because I can turn on anything else to get the state stuff, and that’s when I go to the *Arizona Republic* to pick up some local stuff.”** Travis/23-28/Phoenix

**“Honestly, I like the diversity. I used to plow snow at night and NPR likes to play BBC. I love listening from a different perspective. I would say that maybe I like national slightly more than local, but I do like the fact that Michigan Radio has made a concerted effort to get more local news.”** Nick/29-34/Ann Arbor

Interest in pop culture and entertainment news tends to be relatively low. Very few respondents express interest in trivial topics, but there is interest in lighter information, especially if it intersects with broader trends in society. Programs like “Fresh Air” and podcasts like “WTF” are good sources for this information.

**“When we sit around and talk politics, which is often, we don’t separate those things from the conversation because it all feels political. The Olympics aren’t as heavy as Syria, but the national conversation around privilege and Ryan Lochte’s behavior, I don’t necessarily separate those things. Beyonce just dropped an amazing album that’s extremely introspective and forced a lot of us to be introspective and collectively feel as humans, so I don’t see it as separated.”** Chiffontae/29-34/St. Louis

## **A Culture Of Time-Shifting**

In order to truly understand how Millennials consume media on their own terms, the conversation started with television viewing habits, as studies like PRTS8 show a correlation between the consumption of on-demand video and podcasting.

Virtually every respondent across all these markets does not subscribe to cable or satellite TV. In fact, several say they’ve “cut the cord.” Instead, most subscribe to services like Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hulu, or other sources to access on-demand programs. There is very little consumption of television in real time, another reason why few consume cable television news channels with any regularity. When there is a live event on, some will go to a friend’s house that subscribes to cable:

**“I have Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime. I have local channels, too. Five percent of my watching is real time, except for things like the Olympics. I have a Roku, and I used to have a PS4.”** Katelyn/23-28/St. Louis

**“I have Netflix and Hulu and I probably with intent watch an hour a day of something...but I don’t have cable. I don’t think I have ever paid for cable since getting out of my parent’s house. It’s a whole other expense I try to avoid. Netflix and Hulu are pretty good at putting things out on a daily basis. When the Grammys are on I’ve invited myself over to friends’ houses that have cable and we’ll have a Grammy party, which is a great example of one thing I will seek out and try to watch in real time.”** Jana/29-34/Austin

Millennials understand they don’t have to adjust their time around a network’s schedule. They watch what they want, when they want, and where they want. But many admit there are times when they miss out:

**“I subscribe to Hulu, Netflix, Amazon, I have access to HBO Go. (I haven’t subscribed to cable) since I moved to New York. Now all of my television viewing is on demand, which makes me sad when award shows are on.”** Nichole/29-34/New York

## **Millennials And Radio**

Their experience with radio is both similar and different from the ways that Baby Boomers think about the medium. These Millennials have come of age during an audio renaissance, and have enjoyed a wealth of content, ranging from music services (Pandora, Spotify), to podcasts, and of course, broadcast radio.

Radio is not dead among these respondents, despite the conventional wisdom. However, radio is defined much differently by Millennials than by past generations. It is no longer about an appliance like a boom box or clock radio. “Radio” is viewed as a source of audio entertainment and information that can be accessed anywhere, and anytime thanks mostly to mobile streaming, as well as on traditional broadcast radios.

**“Radio is evolving into podcasts, a trend I hope continues. I think the ‘Radiotopia’ trend is great. People without backgrounds but with the passion and access is huge. That type of content on the weekend on public radio is great, but I also listen to it on demand. I use Spotify quite a bit (but it’s not radio. Radio has to have the element of human curation.”** Chris/29-34/St. Louis

**“I would say that (radio) counts as anything that’s delivered in an auditory way, without visuals. It doesn’t matter where it’s delivered from.”** Emily/23-28/Ann Arbor

Only a few respondents have an actual radio at home. The primary location for broadcast radio is the car, where a significant amount of listening takes place. For those who drive, traditional AM/FM is their primary content source, while just a few have the ability to pair their phones to access their music library, podcasts or other content. In the New York City interviews, however, few own a car so traditional radios both at home and at work are scarce.

In fact, there appears to be a significant consumption challenge for traditional AM/FM listening at home and in the workplace. Similar to the ways in which they consume television, many respondents have learned they don't have to be reliant on a station's or network's program schedule. Many listen to podcasts at work, along with using mobile apps and online streaming. This shift in the way Millennials access content has implications on traditional strategies common to radio stations and organizations.

**“All (my) radio listening is done through podcasts and the app. Sometimes on my computer, but mostly on my phone.”** Jenna/29-34/New York

The smartphone has become the primary enabler of control over content. They liberally use these devices to access an array of mobile applications, and consume content via docking stations, ear buds, and speakers at work. And many listen to live streams and numerous podcasts.

Mobile apps are the primary method of accessing content on smartphones. Frequently mentioned apps include both Pandora and Spotify for music, along with individual station apps (each participating station in the survey had at least one respondent that had downloaded their app), the NPR app, and various podcast apps. One respondent uses the NextRadio app. In general, radio listening on mobile apps makes up significant portions of their audio consumption.

Not surprisingly, New York City respondents report more app usage for streaming as well as downloading podcasts for later use than in other test markets. This may be due to the strong reliance on public transportation in the area, compared to other markets where cars are the dominant means of getting to and from work.

Along with listening to the stream on public radio station apps, some respondents also use the station app as a source for written news stories.

**“I listen to Pandora and Spotify more for work, and also use the WNYC app and the podcast app. I use the WNYC app pretty much only for the live stream. I used to like that you could read the articles. I like the alarm clock also.”** Benji/29-34/NYC

**“I do have apps for Michigan Radio and NPR and WBUR for my phone, but I mostly used those for reading news stories, not listening.”** John/23-28/Ann Arbor

Not a single respondent had downloaded the NPR One app. Many, however, are aware of the app, mostly from hearing promos on their local public radio station. There is considerable confusion about what the app actually provides and its benefits. While some describe it as “Pandora for NPR shows” and others are intrigued by the concept, few are motivated to download it.

A few respondents provided additional insight about the reluctance to download the NPR One app. Among those with a reasonably good idea of what the app is about, NPR One gets credit for being an interesting concept. But the app is viewed as “pushing” out content, and a handful of respondents say they prefer to be in full control over their audio. This is analogous to the differences in the ways that music has been consumed between Pandora (push) and Spotify (pull).

**“NPR One is a great evolution, but it doesn’t fit my method of consumption. I think my personality is such that I prefer podcasts or other certain types of content.”** Chris/29-34/St. Louis

**“Yes, it’s sort of like Pandora for NPR where you set up some preferences and it gets you a channel that it thinks that you like. (I haven’t downloaded it) because I like choosing essentially.”** John/23-28/Ann Arbor

## Discovering Public Radio

Despite their ages, many of these respondents have listened to public radio for more than a decade. In many cases, they discovered public radio because they grew up with it. Several were exposed by their parents, and when they went off on their own, continued to listen or re-discovered it.

**“My dad always listened growing up. In 2009, I probably started listening heavily. I went from being a partying twentysomething in New York to founding a company and having responsibilities.”** Benji/29-34/New York

**“Well, my mom listens to NPR, so growing up it was always on in the background or in the car, so I’ve probably been listening my whole life. Probably in the last couple of years in high school I got into politics and policy. Having a knowledge of what’s going on is critical (for my) type of career, so I personally probably got into it around then.”** Deniz/23-28/Austin

## What Is Public Radio?

Respondents were asked to describe public radio to a friend or family member that doesn’t currently listen. Their understanding of public radio’s essence and core values is in-sync with public radio fans who have listened for decades.

**Non-commercial** – Several respondents value the journalistic independence of public radio, often comparing it to commercial news media that has “entertainment and revenue as a motive to present content.” As a result, public radio is viewed as a higher quality product, and is considered to be more reliable and trustworthy.

**“Public radio is media as we want it to be. It’s the place where the ideal of how media can better our society finds a home without having to live under the aegis of the profit motive.”** John/23-28/Ann Arbor

**“It doesn’t have commercials. It’s a really great news source. It’s unbiased. They dig deeper into other issues. It’s not free because I pledge ten dollars a month, but it’s not a sensationalist entertainment source.”** Katelyn/23-28/St. Louis

**Balanced perspectives** – There is an appreciation for the variety of viewpoints exposed on public radio. The medium is viewed as the antitheses of both commercial talk radio and the Internet, because it allows for conflicting opinions without yelling or uniformed callers sharing their opinions.

**“(I like that they) approach things from all sides. They have shows where it’s, ‘Let’s talk to this guy who thinks this and then let’s talk to her that thinks this.’ I think that’s such a pro to hear angles of things while you’re listening as opposed to hearing people calling in with their opinions, which the Internet is full of so we don’t really need that anymore.”** Jana/29-34/Austin

**Lifelong learning** – Some talk about how public radio serves as a source of continuing education, enabling them to learn about topics in a deep and substantial way in an easy to consume format.

**“It’s kind of my only form of education. I’d love to go back and take interesting classes that I didn’t take advantage of, but who has the time? ‘RadioLab’ is my science class. I’m kind of exaggerating but it’s the closest I get to a science education these days. ‘On The Media’ is the closest I get to a critical journalism class that I’ve had since my second year of college.”** Benji/29-34/New York

**Storytelling** – One of the most valued aspects of public radio is the way information is presented in the form of storytelling. For many respondents, this is an approach they appreciate. Some enjoy the ability to access news stories through storytelling techniques, making the content more relatable and easier to digest and understand.

**“It gives me news that is covered in a lot of ways that mainstream media skips because they’re concerned with money and numbers. (Public radio)**



**keeps me interested with news and the storytelling, like on ‘This American Life.’ They’ve got me on both ends – the news and the fun.”** Drew/18-22/St. Louis

**“With storytelling it’s always different within the theme. It almost helps you learn what a theme is by hearing how different things can tie together. The same with the news, too.”** Travis/23-28/Phoenix

**Topic variety** – Many say that a large array of subjects is a key benefit of listening to public radio. Most respondents don’t tune in to hear one type of information or a single program. They listen because they realize that they cannot get the breadth of information, perspectives, and stories anywhere else.

**“Public radio is everything. The fact that it has such varying topics that it covers is invaluable. To be able to hear so many different things in not that long amount of time. I mean, ‘Morning Edition’ is only a couple of hours. I feel like I get caught up on everything that’s been happening and their follow-ups on things they covered weeks or months ago. It’s everything.”** Deniz/23-28/Austin

**Non-sensational** – Many appreciate the style and manner in which content is presented on public radio. Despite the stereotype that Millennials enjoy their content loud and short, most value the way information is presented on public radio, especially when compared to commercial radio or cable television.

**“The way that I would characterize it is that it gives me all the things I’m interested in without sensationalism. Despite the domination the election takes for the news, both NPR and WNYC do an excellent job of not sensationalizing it and devoting time to other stories in the world.”** Jonah/29-34/New York

**“I just enjoy the difference between an AM station talk show host who is yelling and trying to make you upset and angry and scared versus NPR while (there’s a) stereotypical tone of voice. ‘Saturday Night Live’ makes fun of it, but it’s true, and it’s good, and I like that.”** Jana/29-34/Austin

## **Sharing & The Public Radio Style**

While public radio is not only a way to learn about the world, it is also something to be shared with friends, family, and colleagues. Several talk about how they bring up topics they’ve heard on public radio in social settings. They like to talk about the different programs, and when appropriate, will try to introduce friends to public radio (not always successfully, however).

**“I always tell anyone if you want to sound smart at a cocktail party and you want no one to argue with you, just start every sentence with, ‘I heard it on NPR this morning’ and then you can say anything.”** Benji/29-34/New York

When asked to compare public radio to other media, respondents point to the depth of information and the lack of bias. There’s a sense public radio is willing to tackle hard issues not heard in the mainstream news media. Oftentimes, they view commercial news organizations as feeding off of each other, beating the same stories into the ground.

Public radio is applauded for its courage to venture into difficult stories that are hard to explain and understand, but need to be told. This is best described by an African-American respondent in St. Louis, who applauds KWMU for making the effort to cover the racial discord in the city.

**“They don’t seem to have shied away from the issues when they came about. I do remember feeling when everything first happened in 2014 that St. Louis was being a good white ally, which means I see them as white. But I felt like they were at least trying to be that good white ally, waiting to see what needed to be said and that felt good. And then I started listening to ‘We Live Here.’”** (Chiffontae/29-34/St. Louis)

The information presented by public radio hosts is also appreciated. While many can’t remember many host’s names, there is a sense that public radio isn’t speculative – it’s been vetted. And public radio hosts are perceived as professionals that can be trusted.

**“Diane Rehm, a spectacular reputation, as least as far as I know. Terry Gross - impeccable. These are hosts, they’ve put their time in, they’re pillars of the NPR community, they’re all highly respected in their field so if you have the respect of your colleagues, you’re doing something right.”**  
Nick/29-34/Ann Arbor

While some express a layer of cynicism about public radio, most have a high level of trust about the information being disseminated. Most feel that unlike commercial media, public radio has a sense of mission, driven by a focus on journalistic excellence rather than profit.

There are several suggestions about how public radio could improve its programming to appeal to their friends or co-workers. Some want an acceleration of the elimination of legacy programs like “A Prairie Home Companion” and “Car Talk.” A few express disappointments that during election coverage, there has been limited exposure to third party candidates Gary Johnson and Jill Stein.

Another suggestion for improvement has to do with public radio’s journalistic approach. Some feel it’s too passive, lacking tough follow-up inquiries, rather than simply moving

on to the next question. There's a belief that in its effort to be genteel and fair, public radio interviewers can let a politician off the hook. While it's possible this opinion is elevated due to the heat of this election season, this is an issue to be watched as this project unfolds.

**“As far as style...they tend to have soft-spoken journalists. This can be a good quality when you are doing the interviews because it will make people feel comfortable, but on the radio, you want them to be – not more brash – but more assertive with their questions. You want them to go forth and get more info. It doesn't necessarily feel like they are trying hard enough to get everything you want out of the story.”** David/23-28/St. Louis

### **Public Radio's Target Evolution**

There's a sense that over the past few years, public radio strategists have begun to skew its programming, topics, treatment, and assets more toward appealing to Millennials. Programs like “Ask Me Another,” “Code Switch,” “Latino USA,” “RadioLab,” and “The TED Radio Hour” are examples of new programs that tend to be congruent with their tastes, and showcase more diverse voices.

**“They might have started to skew younger with (more diversity)... And I've heard some hipper shows, like ‘Code Switch’ or ‘Freakonomics Radio Hour,’ because in some people's minds, still even in my generation that don't listen to NPR, if you mention (NPR), they'll think of ‘A Prairie Home Companion,’ just like really old and really white, which I don't think is the case, but maybe there's more work to be done in letting people know that.”**  
Jana/29-34/Austin

Another area of perceived change is in the topics covered across many public radio programs. Several feel producers and journalists are covering topics that are more relevant to them. These includes stories about student loans and housing, as well as an increase of partnerships with independent media organizations that focus on Millennials. These types of alliances often communicate that public radio content is changing for the better.

**“(I hear) more race issues. More transgender issues, because they're more prevalent in the news now.”** Drew/18-22/St. Louis

There's also a belief that public radio's move into podcasting is symbolic of its outreach to Millennials. The breadth of topics has expanded due to podcasting. A few hear a connection between on-air content and promotional announcements to hear the full story in podcasts (especially on WNYC/New York).

**“In the last year or two, more of the programming is devoted to things that will be podcasts. I know WNYC produces these podcasts and edits them**

**into 10-minute segments. That's the main change. Usually I like hearing the 10-minute segment, but that's not entirely true because I have had occasions when I want to listen to the full version."** Jonah/29-34/New York

A handful of the Millennials surveyed express concern about the direction of public radio. While these perceptions are far from universal, some recognize an increase in the number of underwriting credits or that copy language may be crossing the line, sounding too commercial in style:

**"They're reading commercials. So be it. They're not reading a lot of them and it's not often, but it definitely has jumped the shark. Yeah, I mean I still listen. They kind of have the monopoly on the market so it's not like I have another choice. I've never once listened to an ad and worried something was influenced by it. But it isn't as void of corporate content as it used to be."** Benji/29-34/New York

## **Diversity**

In our recruiting, we experienced challenges identifying Millennial public radio listeners who fall into the African-American, Hispanic-American, or Asian American categories. In the recruiting process, two of these respondents turned out to be no-shows, leaving us with two African-Americans among the public radio listener group.

We had more success finding minority respondents among the non-listener phase (included in a separate report). We interviewed four Hispanic-Americans in this group.

Still, the conversation about diversity was wide ranging and informative. Diversity is an extremely complex issue, and respondents are very sensitive to it. In general, non-ethnic respondents perceive public radio has made and continues to make efforts to include different voices on the air. Several reach this conclusion by comparing content on public radio to what they hear on other media outlets. Others bring up examples of the diversity of the topics heard in programming that focuses on issues like immigrant populations, poverty, and a general increase in storytelling to expose audiences to a more diverse world.

Some lament the cancellation of Michel Martin's "Tell Me More" program. This came up often in St. Louis, where Martin had a significant presence after the problems in Ferguson, but in other locales as well.

**"A couple of years ago NPR cancelled one of my favorite shows, the only national program hosted by a black woman. I don't know if they did enough to support it. I think, unfortunately, radio on the national level can still be a white male medium...WNYC does a better job than most..."** Jenna/29-34/New York

For one African-American respondent, public radio has become a less welcoming media environment for her and her friends. She describes listening to public radio as occasionally “going to a board meeting of all white people and trying to figure out what they’re talking about.” She continues:

**“It’s not a very odd thing to exist in white spaces and make yourself comfortable. You just have to do it. It’s not an odd thing to do. Public radio is just one of those things that you know eventually something good is going to come up for you and a lot of times something good comes up for you, but you just have to make yourself comfortable that you’re the only one being around the table. But I do like the shows, especially as for local. I know a lot of the guests and the things going on, but nationally they are covering things I care deeply about.”** Chiffontae/29-34/St. Louis

She also believes that overt efforts to target specific groups is a misplaced strategy because Millennials are a diverse generation and don’t tend to see the world as a collection of separate tribes or groups:

**“I think that sometimes it feels condescending to treat programming that can serve my generation or community in a very special episode...To me, the trick would be to put them in the programming that now exists. They are very dynamic. They can speak to everyone but everyone has to listen . . . Putting dynamic diverse hosts into what public radio is already doing, I think, could be great because they’re going to ask different questions and they come from different backgrounds.”** Chiffontae/29-34/St. Louis

Another African-American female respondent disagrees and recognizes public radio has made progress in the area of diversity:

**“I think there’s racial diversity in their stories. Diversity is one of those things where there is always room for improvement. But (public radio) does better than the mainstream. I do think that has increased. They have the new show called ‘So Many White Guys’ which is probably the concrete thing to point to.”** Nichole/29-34/New York

### **Public Radio Program Hosts**

Respondents were asked to name a favorite public radio host or newsperson. Interestingly, there were as many mentions for local hosts as there were for the more traditional, national names.

“Fresh Air’s” Terry Gross stands out as the most frequently mentioned, and the program itself is often cited as a favorite.

**“I’ll put her (Terry Gross) up there because when I have the opportunity to listen to her program, she just asks really profound and interesting questions, and just digs really deep. It almost hurts. There was an interview she was doing with a comedian, and he was talking about a lot of problems he had with his mom and wanting to commit suicide at a time in his life, and it doesn’t faze the way she asks questions. She keeps a very calm tone of voice and it’s almost comforting but still serious enough. It’s just good. It’s just really good.”** Travis/23-28/Phoenix

David Greene, Kai Ryssdal, and Diane Rehm are also cited. Rehm is applauded for not letting guests stick to their talking points while respectfully probing with follow-up questions.

**“(Rehm) doesn’t get confrontational, but she holds people to account and she’s willing to talk about a lot of topics that are hard to talk about.”**  
Julia/29-34/Ann Arbor

## **The Power Of Podcasting**

Podcasts are changing the game and redefining “radio.” The ways in which most of these Millennials consume radio is significantly different from previous generations.

Listening to podcasts and time-shifted on-air content appears to represent an expansion of their audio consumption. Many say they’re able to access programs they’d otherwise miss. In the process, they’re discovering a wider array of audio – including programs and podcasts:

**“Right now, I listen to a lot (of podcasts). I go to campus and download podcasts and listen later without WiFi so there’s no data. I listen to ‘WTF,’ ‘Comedy Bang Bang,’ ‘538,’ ‘This American Life,’ ‘RadioLab,’ ‘Snap Judgement,’ ‘WWDTM,’ and other public radio programs time shifted.”**  
Drew/18-22/St. Louis

**“(Podcasting) is achieving the same goals any radio station is, which is to reach viewers, to share whatever it is they feel most valuable to share. So any podcast is accomplishing that but it’s doing it on the user’s time as opposed to (on the) radio, much like it was before there was anything that you could TiVo or record. If you missed a show, you missed a show. And with radio, if you miss it being broadcast on the radio and it doesn’t get rebroadcast, you missed it. With a podcast, it’s the TiVo of radio.”**  
Travis/23-28/Phoenix

For most of these Millennial respondents, a sizable share of their public radio consumption is either time-shifted content or podcasts. Most say this activity has

accelerated over the past year. As listening shifts to audio on-demand, measurement will be challenged to keep up with this pace of change:

**“Some of my favorite podcasts only come on NPR (on the radio) on the weekends. And I’m working on the weekends, so I don’t get to listen to any of them. I really enjoy being able to pull them up when I can listen to them, put them away, come back to them. It’s like having a CD or mp3 player, being able to pause, play, rewind, so that’s really beneficial.”** Travis/23-28/Phoenix

The ability to access programs outside of the traditional boundaries of AM/FM radio has not only expanded public radio listening, but also other podcasts, programs, and personalities. Below is a sampling of the podcasts mentioned by these one-on-one Millennial respondents

WTF	Comedy Bang Bang	538
This American Life	RadioLab	Snap Judgement
WWDTM	Reply All	Start Up
Sportful	The Splendid Table	On The Media
The Moth	Hidden Brain	Myths & Legends
TED Radio Hour	Science Friday	Ask Me Another
Another Round	We Live Here	The Read
Death, Sex & Money	The Business	The Treatment
The Spinoff	Pop Culture Happy Hour	More Perfect
Serial	Savage Nation	

Several respondents program road trips and commutes by downloading podcasts, often timed to match time spent travelling. Others program their lunch hour.

**“I can only listen to real time radio in the morning, while I listen to podcasts on the subway because they don’t have Internet on it.”** Nichole/29-34/New York

**“I listen on road trips, if I’m cooking, or on my iPod Shuffle on a bike ride.”** Chris/29-34/St. Louis

**“Podcasts have expanded my listening by a significant amount. The most time I am listening to an actual radio is in my car, and when I’m at work or biking, I’m on my phone listening to podcasts the entire time.”** Travis/23-28/Phoenix

For many, podcasts are a discovery mechanism for content about niche topics they can’t find on traditional media outlets or public radio.

**“(I listen to) the ones that make me feel good as a black girl. ‘Another Round,’ ‘We Live Here,’ which is on break right now. I also listen to ‘PostBourgie’ and ‘The Read.’ If there is anyone young and black, they are going to crack up looking at this. It’s a current event cultural critique podcast hosted by two women and they discuss politics and history and all of the above in context to black life.”** Chiffontae/29-34/St. Louis

## Membership

Since respondents were recruited from station databases, and most are currently members of their local public radio station. Despite the fact several are just out of college and just getting their careers started, they have made a conscious decision to support public radio. Several do so out of a sense of responsibility. They recognize the importance of public radio as an independent journalistic source and want to make a contribution.

**“I listen all of the time and feel like I should be giving all the time. I like that public radio is public. It’s more of a public service and less of a business. It feels like it’s a good thing to do to help keep it on the air. I like it more because it feels like it’s a good thing to do and I feel like I owe them something.”** Drew/18-22/St. Louis

Some draw a parallel between donating to public radio and giving to their church because both serve the public good. These respondents perceive a higher benefit than guilt or obligation. Instead, they view donating to public media as contributing to their local community or to the country.

**“When you believe in somebody’s mission, it’s educating the public, it’s something you should be willing to help financially in the same way I go to church and give money to them. I believe in what they are doing. So, I give them money to help support their goals and mission. I feel the same way about NPR.”** David/23-28/St. Louis

**“I’m very supportive of Michigan Radio. It’s important. We need to have a news outlet dedicated to journalism that covers local topics that I’m interested in and is willing to talk about topics and people who are a lot of times left out.”** Julia/29-34/Ann Arbor

Nearly all of these members are sustainers rather than going the annual donation route. The key motivations are a small, monthly donation fits their budget, they live in a Netflix/Spotify culture of Netflix where monthly payment for content they value has become comfortable, and also because of convenience:

**“For someone like me, my income is low. Framing it as the once a month is less intimidating. They started incorporating the monthly sustaining**



**(program) for pledge gifts, so I got a nice set of pint glasses, too. The monthly sustaining (plan) is more in keeping with my other expenses. So, I'm paying a monthly subscribers fee for public radio as I am for Netflix, for Internet, for a lot of things. It's more like this is my media consumption budget and they all show up on the same card."** John/23-28/Ann Arbor

Attitudes about pledge drive, not surprisingly, range from ambivalent to negative. The word most used to describe them is "annoying." Despite recognizing they are necessary evils, many report turning to another radio station, turning the radio off altogether, or shifting to podcasts during pledge drives.

**"Yes, I am annoyed by pledge drives. I know they're very necessary and if it weren't for the pledge drive I wouldn't have become a sustaining member. But to hear the same thing over and over and not get any news, I switch to a difference channel if they're talking about giving, and then I'll check back to see if they're talking about news."** Deniz/23-28/Austin

**"I'm pretty much on podcasts the whole time. It's a pledge drive. You gotta do what you've got to do. But yes, I find myself shying away from it, which is probably why I wait until the end (to donate). I would be super-annoyed if I paid on day one and had to wait six more days (for it to end)."** Benji/29-34/New York

There are several appeals for public radio to become more transparent about pledge drives, why they're necessary, and where the money goes. Most are fairly media savvy, and some feel that there is a structure to their fund raising, but they don't completely trust they are being dealt with in a straightforward manner.

**"The on-air hosts always do this 'we have to reach this goal by this time period and we only have this much left and there's only five minutes left in the hour' but the pledge happens every year. You know there's some system to this but you don't know what it is."** John/23-28/Ann Arbor

**"I kind of wish they would be up front about them. 'This is the amount we have in matching funds, this is our target, this is our budget.' I wish they would say, 'If we raise \$250,000 by the end of today, the pledge drive is over, and we have three donors who are going to do a 50% match for the next two hours, have at it.' Sometimes I think about pledge and every hour there is something added on or taken away. I think 'How can I maximize the value of my donation?' Tell me up front. 'Give this during this hour and it will be doubled and you'll get the *New Yorker*.' That's all I want."** Jenna/29-34/New York

## Areas For Improvement

What could public radio change, add, or improve in order to motivate them to listen more often? The most common response centers around an increased focus on the local community. Several believe while there is a great deal content devoted to national and international news, their hometown station could do a better job not only covering local news, but also increasing engagement with the community, and empowering the audience to take action. This includes doing more than covering local news and hosting station events, but getting out into the community for discussions about issues.

**“I feel connected to KUT because of what comes out of my radio, but in terms of my community, they have Texas Standard which is a good show and it’s kind of local stuff, and I know the music side of KUT does a lot with the community. But also just in terms of being reached out to via email or on social media, I don’t feel like they connect on that level a lot...I know I’m on some sort of email list because I’m on their sustaining member newsletter, but it’s usually about re-upping, and not a ton of interaction or asking what’s going on in your community or what’s pressing for Austin... Sometimes I feel frustrated because they have these amazing stories of this is doing good in the world or this needs fixing, but I don’t know what to do, what’s the next step?”** Jana/29-34/Austin

**“It needs to be accessible. I am intrigued by the NPR One app, but also, engagement. If it’s public radio, it’s not necessarily the job to be in the community, but I think it is. That’s not just through the Beer On Tap events with the Young Friends, but I think that actual community engagement is important...More engagement instead of spectating is great.”** Chiffontae/29-34/St. Louis

Respondents were also asked how public radio could more effectively appeal to friends who don’t currently listen. Despite numerous attempts, several have tried to engage friends about stories they’ve heard on public radio. Many non-listeners, however, believe public radio is for older people or they simply lack interest in events outside their local sphere.

Some suggest public radio needs to work harder to reach out to non-listeners. There are suggestions to increase marketing and to be more visible in the community. Others believe the best place to reach their contemporaries is by promoting public radio to people who work at other non-profits or at universities, because they tend to be community-minded and better educated.

When asked to name possible public radio program hosts, a wide range of names emerges. Several are currently heard on podcasts (which might be a source for future talent). Several mention voices not regularly heard in the media. There’s a hunger for new thinking, new ideas, and new perspectives.

**“Josh and Chuck from ‘Stuff You Should Know.’ I think they do a great job and fit the public radio audience really well. I also like the fact that there’s public and private companies doing this so I wouldn’t necessarily encourage public radio to do poaching. I don’t want to listen to a podcast because it’s Alec Baldwin. I did, and I like him. I want to hear people that no one’s listening to not because of who they are, but because of the content.”** Benji/29-34/New York

**“Lin-Manuel Miranda, the songwriter and previous star of ‘Hamilton.’ He commented a lot on his songs about the history of hip-hop and Latin music that went into ‘Hamilton’ that I was completely unaware of...or somebody like Ta-Nehisi Coates is a very good writer and I think he would do well.”** John/29-34/Ann Arbor

**“There’s a writer, Ashley C. Ford, who’s been a guest on podcasts. I listen to who has a great voice but also has great wisdom. Lena Dunham had a miniseries podcast which was one of the best ones I listened to.”** Nichole/29-34/New York

## Observations

Here are some observations culled from this first stage of the Millennial Research Project. These are not findings, but rather areas we believe are noteworthy and will be tracked as the ethnographic portion of the MRP progresses:

1. The “Public Radio” DNA of these Millennials is very similar to how older partisans talk about the system’s values and programming. The major difference is the way this group accesses public radio’s content. Distribution is a key area that will be investigated heavily in the ethnographic interviews.
2. Public radio is valued for its independence, freedom from corporate control, non-commercial programming, and its unique approach to journalism. Trust in traditional news sources tends to be low – in fact, outside of public radio there is very little use of traditional news media by these respondents. The storytelling nature of particular public radio programming is especially appreciated.
3. Lumping Millennials into a homogenous group is a mistake – something that became increasingly evident as these interviews unfolded. There are multiple cohorts, driven by age, life stage, and unique experiences. While this Millennial sample is generally upbeat about the future and the current state of the country, older respondents came of age during the recession and were impacted by the economic slowdown. Younger participants tend to be much more optimistic possibly because they are too young to have been scarred by the cratering economic fortunes from several years ago.
4. Social media is a significant point of discovery for news and information. Respondents are apt to follow trusted news sources on Facebook and Twitter,

- creating a possibly gateway for public radio to more effectively reach them, especially for breaking news and stories of immediate import.
5. Millennials value storytelling and aren't nearly as reliant on the physical radio to access content.
  6. Many perceive public radio as a learning medium where they are exposed to stories, topics, and ideas that may range outside their typical areas of focus. Several also note they talk about stories and concepts they've heard on public radio with friends, family, and co-workers.
  7. Outside of New York City, most own a car, although several like the idea of autonomous cars and shared mobility. The car represents the most reliable and frequent location where they consume broadcast stations, as AM/FM radios become more scarce at home and in workplaces.
  8. The presidential election has these respondents engaged, but not always in a positive way. They tend to be following the proceedings carefully, despite mixed reactions to the process and the way the campaigns have played out.
  9. The environment and climate change are the most top-of-mind topics of concern and interest. It is mentioned without prompting by most of these MRP participants.
  10. Some prefer public radio programs and reporters to be more aggressive with follow-up questions when conducting interviews. Diane Rehm is noted for this approach.
  11. Very few MRP respondents came off as "techies." Instead, technology has seamlessly woven itself into their lives. The smartphone is the device of choice, impacting the ways in which they primarily communicate, discover, share, and consume media. Any strategy to reach them must have the smartphone as a primary component.
  12. They tend to be device agnostic – outside of the car, listening to public radio programs on an AM/FM radio is relatively infrequent, while they seamlessly access audio content via multiple platforms and devices. As a result, the way public radio defines itself, creates content, and distributes it will need to adjust in order to serve the needs of this generation.
  13. Growing up in an era where they have numerous news sources and the ability to access them, this group understands that they are in control of what they listen to, when and where they consume it. They are almost all "cord cutters," or never have been cable TV subscribers. To a person, they all subscribe to Netflix (or have access to it and similar services), making video on-demand their default means of "watching TV." Not surprisingly, podcasting is having a significant – and growing – impact on their audio choices as well.
  14. Podcasting may be expanding the amount of time they listen to public radio programs, and it appears to be a way of introducing them to programs that air on the radio. That said, podcasting also opens the door to new competition from non-public radio sources.
  15. Diversity is an ongoing challenge. While many Caucasian MRP respondents believe public radio has made efforts to diversify its sound and appeal, it's unclear how effective these efforts have been among people of color.
  16. Outreach to their Millennial friends and family members who don't listen to public radio appears to have limited success. As some have discovered, non-listeners

simply may not be conducive to public radio, or may have preconceived notions that it's too dry, slow, or tedious for their tastes.

17. It's all about sustaining membership for these Millennials. Through their subscriptions with services like Netflix and Spotify, most are used to small monthly payments being deducted from their credit cards. Add to that, many say they don't typically have available funds to write an annual check. Thus, monthly increments fit their lifestyle, and is also especially simple and convenient. Many feel a sense of obligation or even guilt about supporting public radio, but it is noteworthy how many opt for membership despite economic circumstances that may be less than ideal.
18. Language used for membership needs to be adjusted to fit the hot buttons of this group. "Continuing education" and "non-commercial" are strong themes to be communicated.