



THE POWER OF COMMUNITY

WHY PODCASTS MATTER

A new national study of loneliness, connection, and podcasting

COLEMAN INSIGHTS

In partnership with Sounds Profitable, Locked On Podcast Network,
Sound Off Podcast Network, and BetterHelp

COLEMAN
INSIGHTS



SOUNDSPROFITABLE

ABOUT THE STUDY

N=2,000

Americans age 16 and older

ONLINE

Fielded July 21 to August 10,
2026

QUOTAS

Age/gender/ethnicity/U.S.
Census regions

AMERICANS ARE GETTING LONELIER

3%

In 1990, 3% of Americans said they had no close friends



12%

By 2021, it was 12%



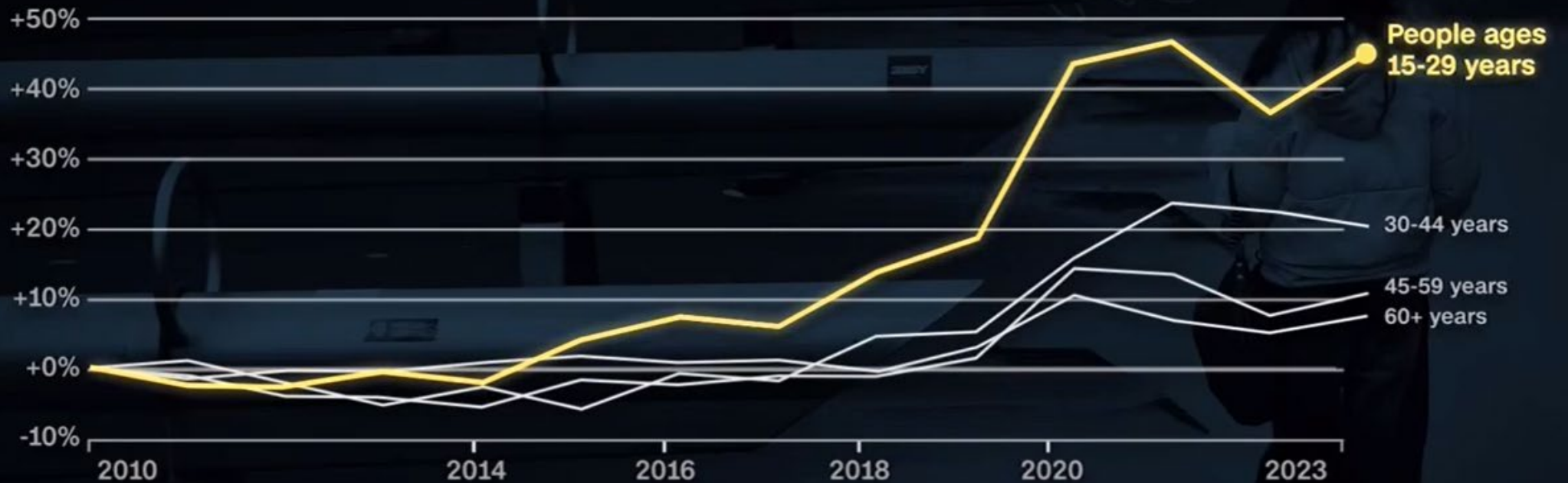
17%

In 2024, 17% of Americans reported having no close friends



AMERICANS' TIME SPENT ALONE

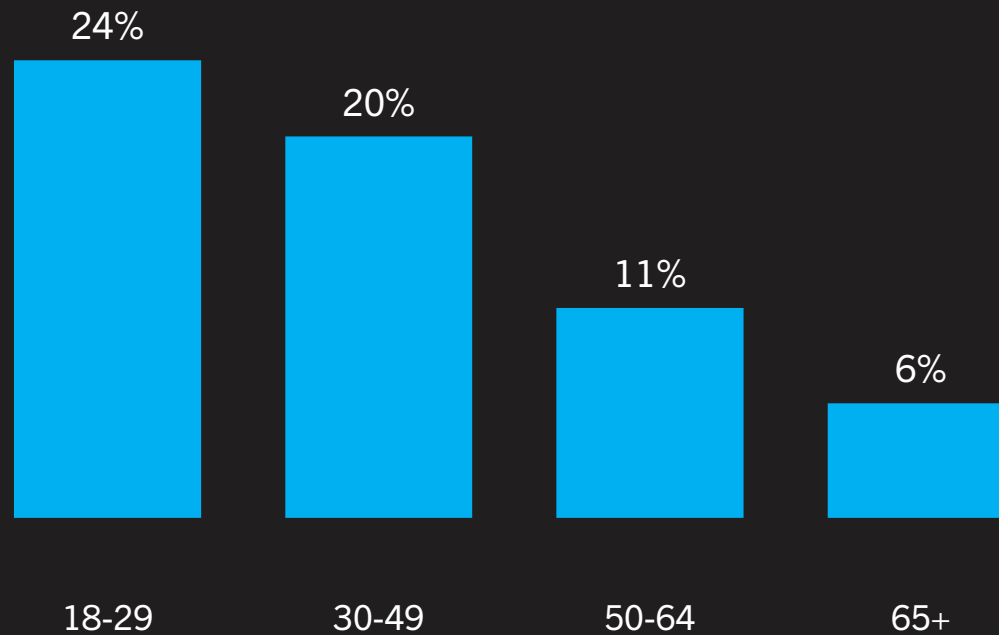
RELATIVE CHANGE COMPARED TO 2010



SOURCE: US BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS

LONELINESS PEAKS YOUNG

Felt isolated from others “all” or “most of the time”



**PODCASTING BUILDS
COMPANIONSHIP**

MORE THAN HALF LISTEN FOR CONNECTION

Agree or strongly agree, among podcast consumers

52%

"Podcasts keep me company when I don't have people around"

52%

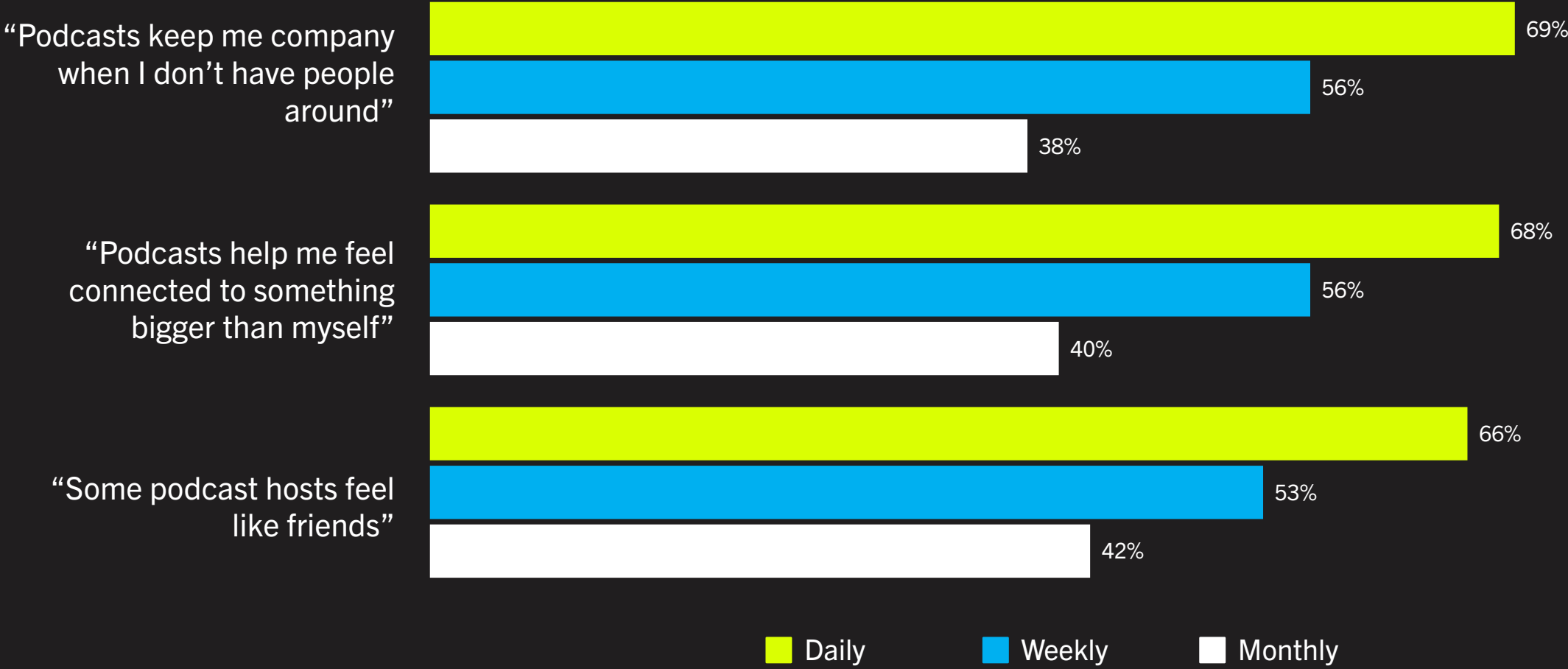
"Podcasts help me feel connected to something bigger than myself"

51%

"Some podcast hosts feel like friends"

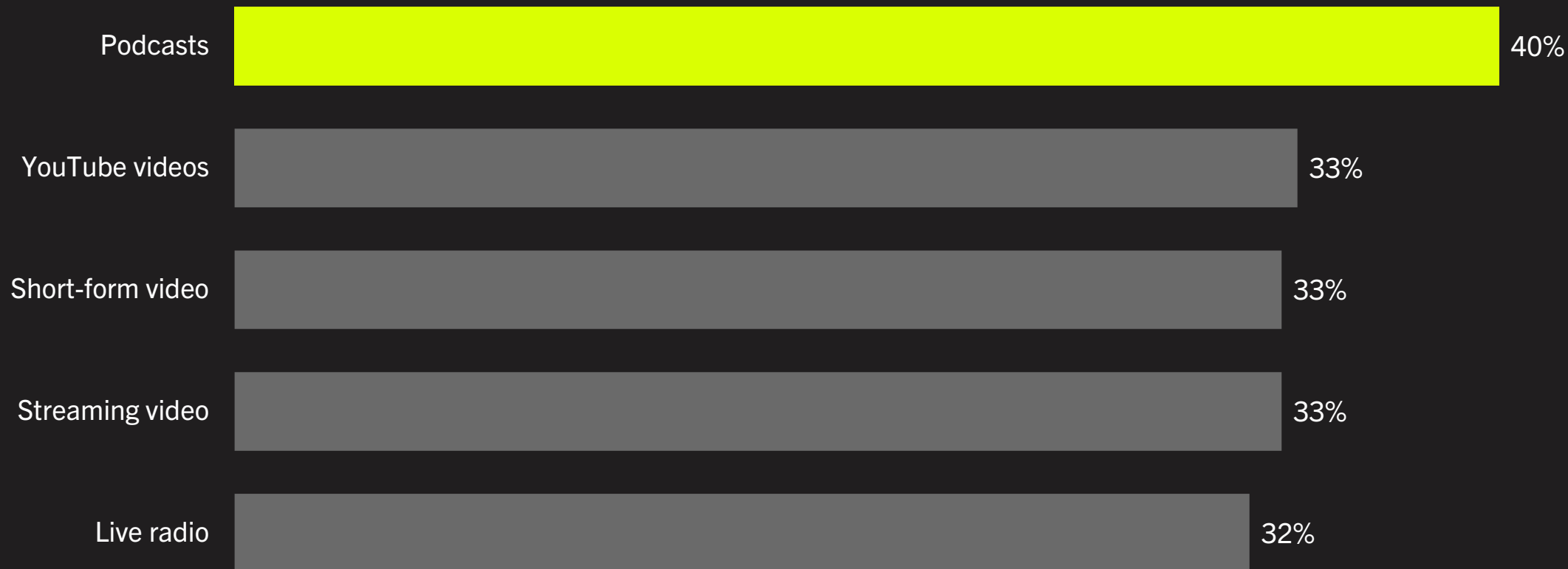
HABIT AND CONNECTION MOVE TOGETHER

Agree or strongly agree, among podcast consumers, by listening frequency



THE MOST HUMAN ONE-WAY MEDIUM

Percent who agree: “When I’m consuming [medium], it feels like spending time with people I know.” Among users of each medium.



Interactive media involving people you actually know (social media, online communities) score higher.

AUDIO BUILDS INTIMACY

36%



“

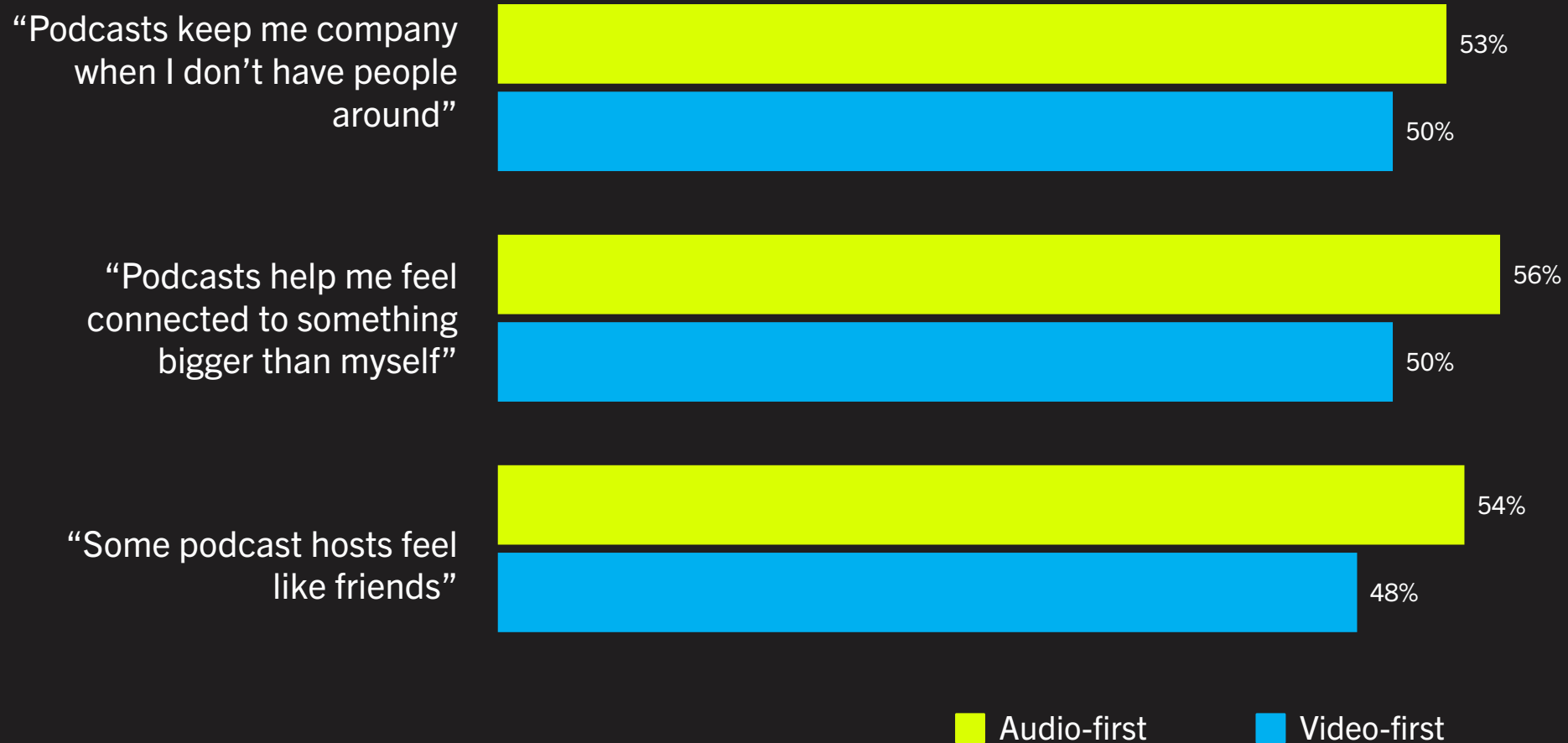
I feel a lot more connected with the hosts when I listen to a podcast than when I watch a podcast”

”

53% of daily consumers agree. The deeper the habit, the deeper the intimacy.

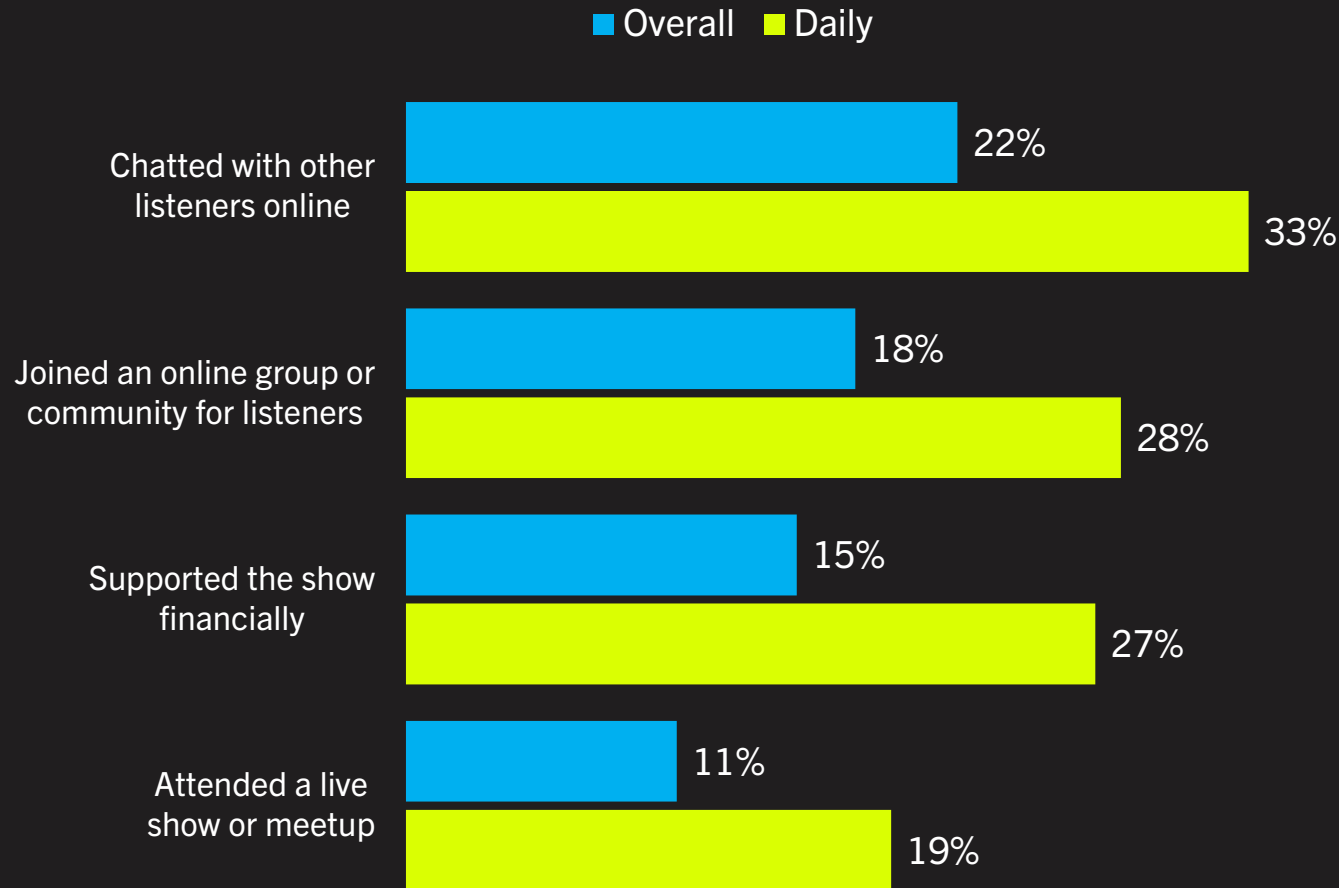
AUDIO-FIRST LEADS ON EVERY STATEMENT

Agree or strongly agree, among podcast consumers, by preferred format



**PODCAST USAGE CONVERTS
INTO
REAL COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT**

BECAUSE OF A PODCAST, LISTENERS HAVE...



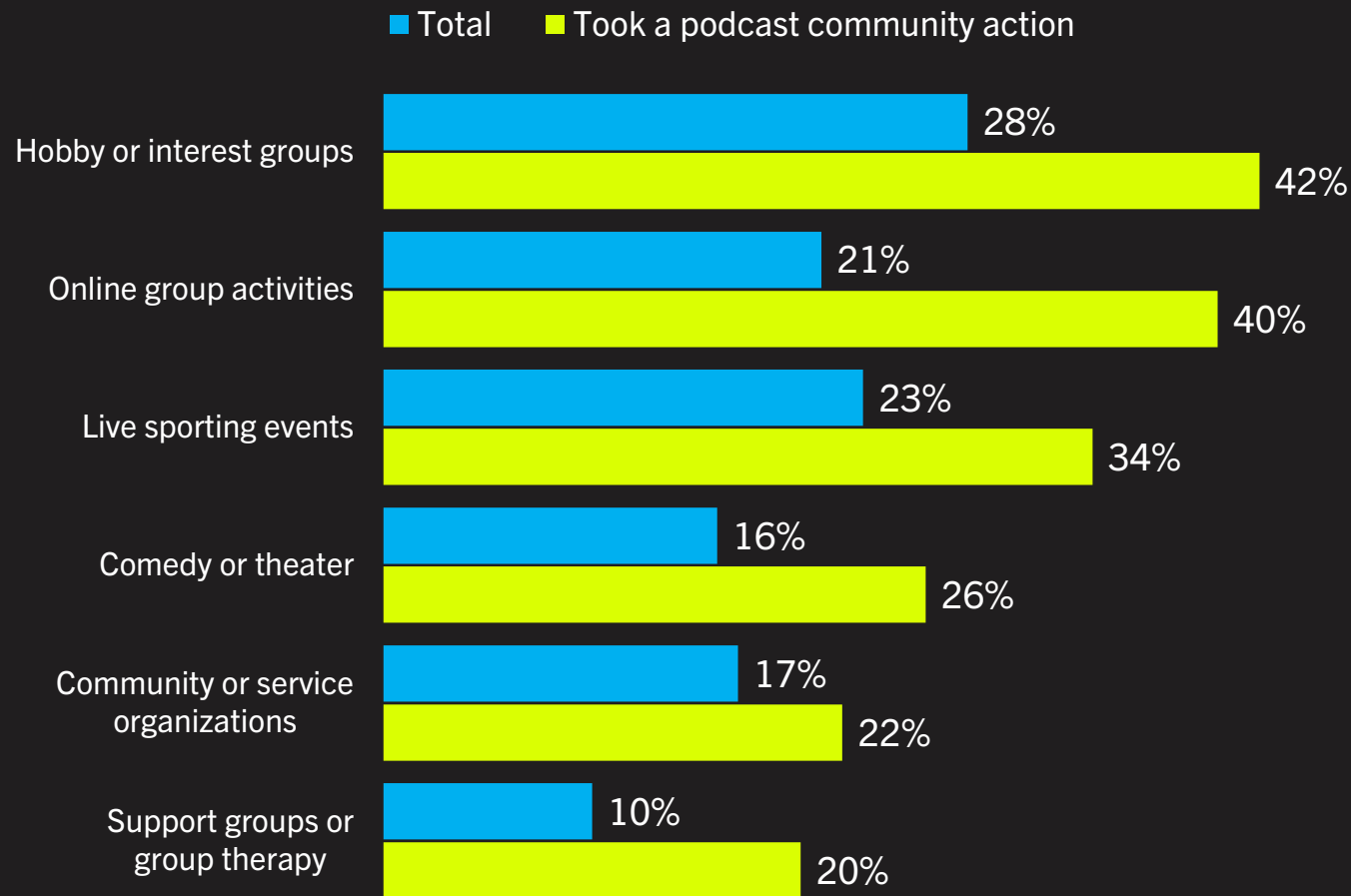
43%

of podcast consumers have taken at least one community action

62%

of daily consumers have done so

PODCAST ACTION TAKERS ARE MORE CONNECTED



2x

as likely to take part in support groups
or group therapy

1.9x

as likely to take part in online group
activities

SPORTS PODCASTS AMPLIFY THE EFFECT

Among Sports podcast consumers

79%

Say feeling connected to other fans
matters, 41% very important

**WHAT CAN
WE DO?**



FOR CREATORS...

CREATE TANGIBLE MEANS OF LISTENER-TO-SHOW PARTICIPATION

- Answer polls/submit questions
- Send a voice memo
- Recognition: mentioned or featured in an episode
- Actively engage on social media
- Join a chat, live stream, or discussion group
- Attend a meetup or live show
- Buy merch

Start slow. Find one way to show their participation matters.

CREATE TANGIBLE MEANS OF LISTENER-TO-LISTENER PARTICIPATION

- Feature listener stories that help others recognize themselves in others
- Hold a live conversation or virtual meetup
- Let listeners respond to each other, not just the host

Community begins when the host is not the only connection holding the show together.

USE COMMUNITY LANGUAGE

“We”, “Us”, “Together”

“Whether this is your first or 100th show, you’re welcome here”

“We heard from many listeners on this”

“Let’s learn from one another”

**FOR ADVERTISERS AND
BRANDS...**

NOT JUST REACH. EMOTION.

~~“Our target audience listens to podcasts.”~~

“

Our audience consumes podcasts when they want to feel companionship, entertained, understood, and connected.

”

GO BEYOND THE HOST-READ AD

Roughly half of listeners say some hosts feel like friends. Leverage that relationship. Instead of just advertising on a podcast:

- Fund listener meetups
- Sponsor live events
- Create fan experiences
- Facilitate listener communities
- Support causes the show and its audience care about

Not “we bought an ad.” “We helped create something people belong to.”

MEASURE CONNECTION, NOT JUST LIFT

Brands and networks can research the deeper bond audiences form with podcasts:

“Is for people like me”

“Feels like part of a community”

“Supports things I care about”

Connection metrics like these predict the loyalty, advocacy, and community behavior this study documents. Coleman Insights can help you measure them.



THANK YOU

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