The State of Podcasting

2021

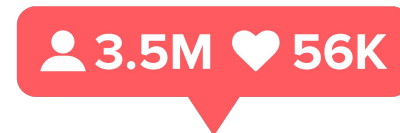How podcasters spend their time, develop content and work with PR

In this report, we seek to answer:

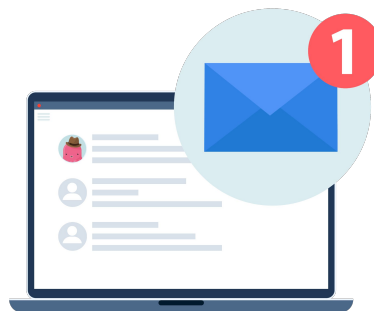**1** Where do podcasters focus their time and efforts?

2 How do podcasters develop content and book guests?

3 How do podcasters measure success?

4 What are their platforms and social channels of choice?

5 How do podcasters prefer to be pitched?

ON AIR

3.5M ♥ 56K

MUCK RACK

About this survey

We surveyed **594** professional podcasters from **August 30th** to **October 4th, 2021**

Industries covered:

On average, each respondent selected 3 industries that they cover in their podcast. These include:

- 31% society and culture
- 30% business/finance
- 22% education
- 22% arts
- 19% health, wellness and fitness
- 19% technology
- 19% government/politics
- 17% history
- 17% science
- 17% news commentary
- 15% music/entertainment
- 15% other

- 13% TV and film
- 13% energy and environment
- 13% sports
- 11% kids and family
- 10% comedy
- 10% religion and spirituality
- 8% fiction/drama
- 8% food and dining
- 7% true crime
- 7% leisure (games/hobbies/home and garden)
- 3% travel

Location:

- 70% US
- 12% UK
- 5% Australia
- 4% Canada
- 9% Other

Experience:

- 3-5 years: 36%
- 6-10 years: 22%
- 1-2 years: 19%
- 10-20 years 15%
- Under 1 year: 6%

Organization type:

- Independent: 62%
- Backed by a media company: 26%
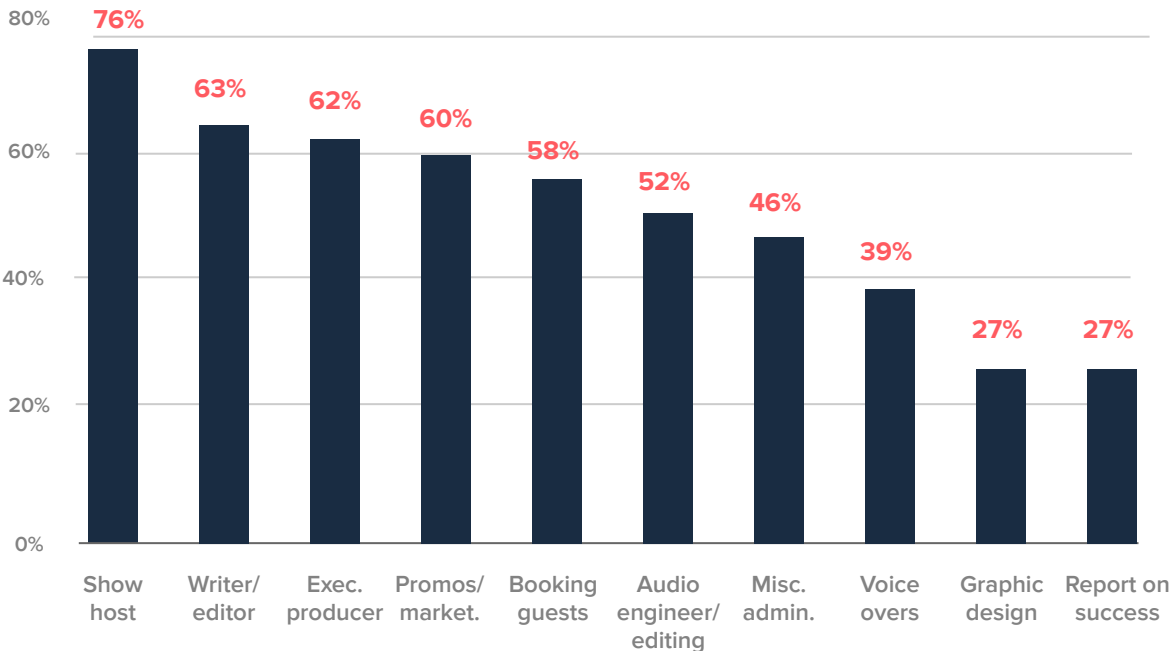- Backed by an organization that isn't a media company: 17%
- Other: 3%

Profile of a podcaster: where they focus their time and effort

1

Podcasters wear multiple hats

On average, respondents cover **5** different roles at once. These include hosting (**76%**), writing/editing (**63%**), producing (**62%**), promotions/marketing (**60%**) and booking guests (**58%**).

What are your responsibilities for the podcast(s) you work on? (Select all that apply)

Role	Percentage
Show host	76%
Writer/editor	63%
Exec. producer	62%
Promos/market.	60%
Booking guests	58%
Audio engineer/editing	52%
Misc. admin.	46%
Voice overs	39%
Graphic design	27%
Report on success	27%

52% work on two or more podcasts

Just over half of respondents are working on multiple podcasts at the time of this survey, with **30%** working on three or more podcasts at once.
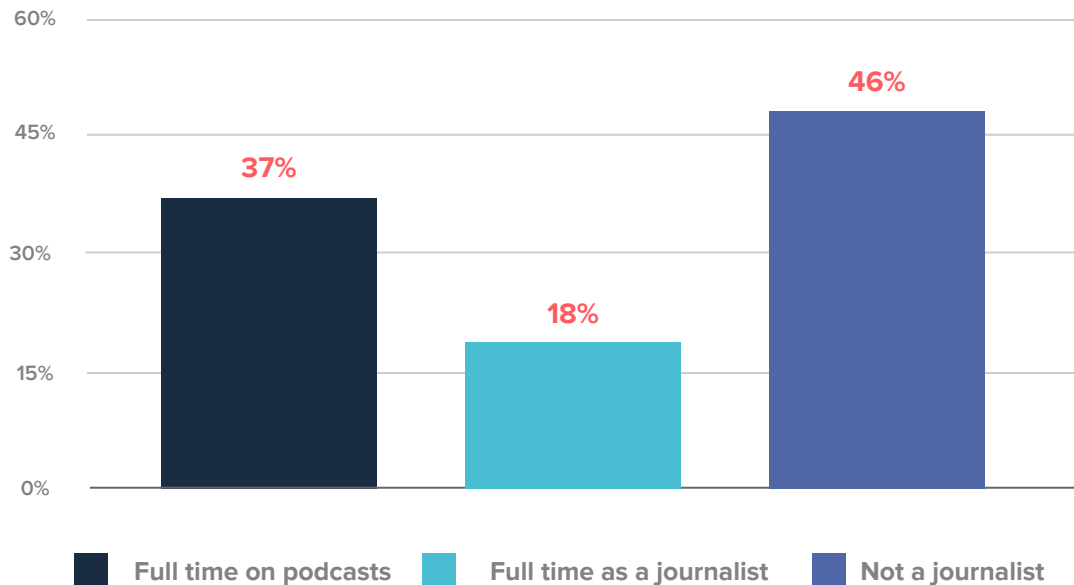
How many podcasts do you work on currently?

48%
22%
30%

- One
- Two
- Three or more

64% are part-time podcasters
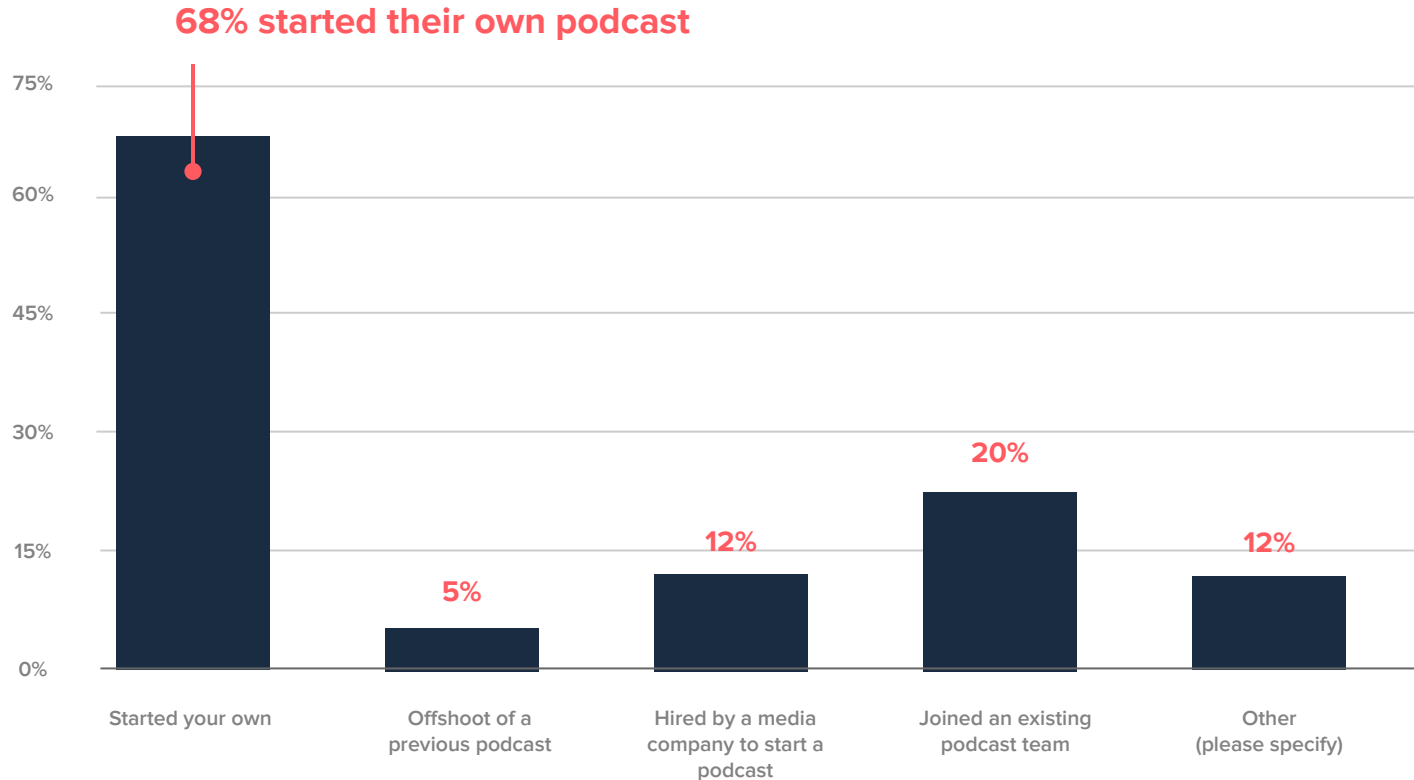
37% of respondents are working full-time on podcasts. Of the remaining **64%** that are part-time podcast workers, **18%** are full-time journalists.

Which of the following best describes you?

Full time on podcasts — 37%
Full time as a journalist — 18%
Not a journalist — 46%

How did you get into podcasting? (Select all that apply)

68% started their own podcast

MUCK RACK

Most respondents have less than 10K listeners

Over half of respondents have less than 10,000 listeners. Just **8%** of respondents have 1 million or more listeners.

Approximately how many listeners do you have?

Listeners	Percentage
10K or fewer	51%
10K-50K	21%
50K-100K	9%
100K-300K	6%
300K-1M	4%
1M+	8%

2 Creating content and booking guests

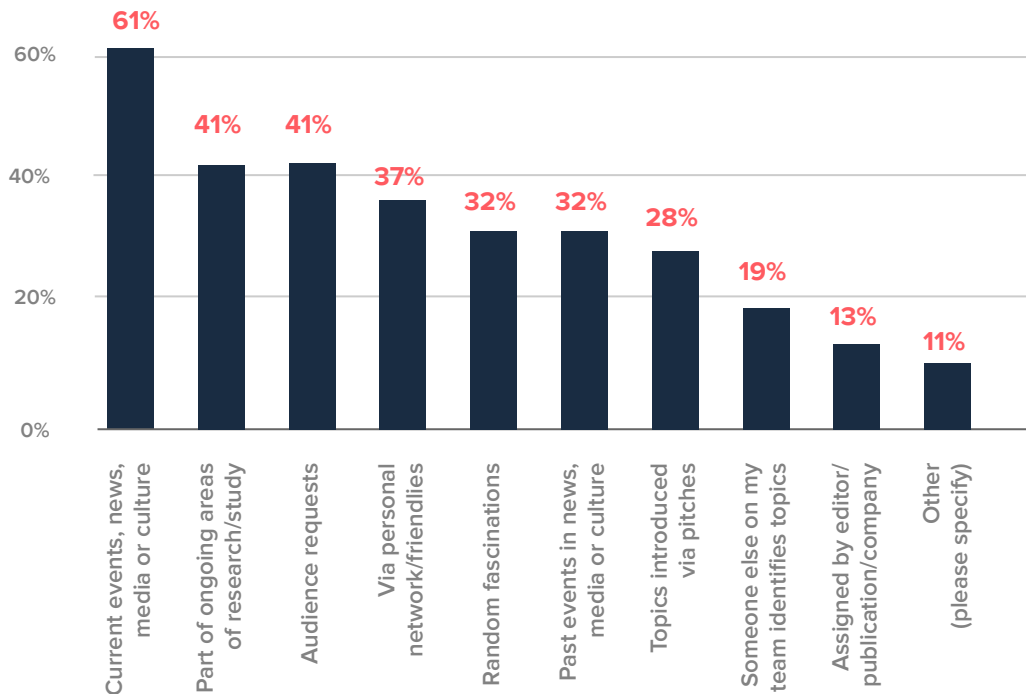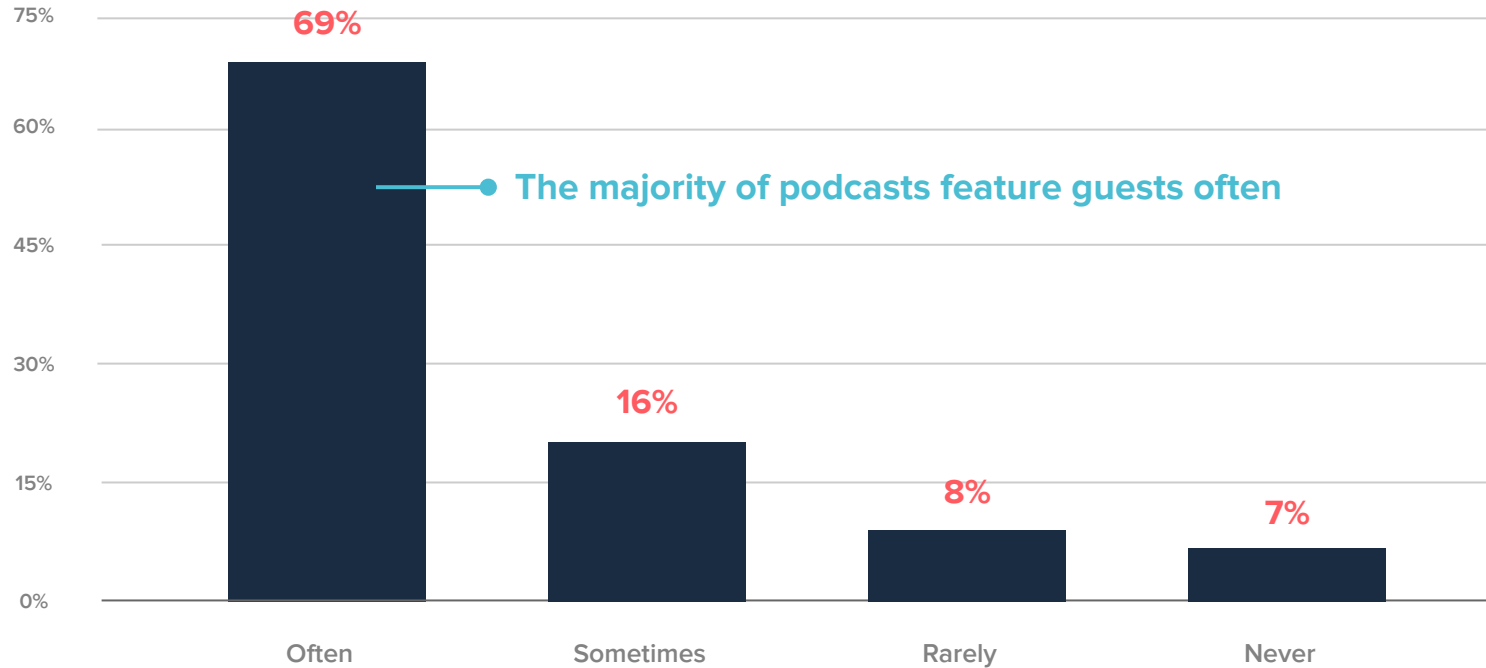# Over 80% are responsible for sourcing original content

Over **80%** of respondents are responsible for sourcing their own ideas for new episodes. Current events in news, media and culture (**61%**) are the leading source of inspiration, followed by ongoing areas of research/study (**41%**). About **28%** rely on the topics introduced to them through pitches.

Where do you look for your next episode ideas? (Select all that apply)

Source	Percentage
Current events, news, media or culture	61%
Part of ongoing areas of research/study	41%
Audience requests	41%
Via personal network/friendlies	37%
Random fascinations	32%
Past events in news, media or culture	32%
Topics introduced via pitches	28%
Someone else on my team identifies topics	19%
Assigned by editor/publication/company	13%
Other (please specify)	11%

MUCK RACK

How often does your podcast feature guests?

69%

The majority of podcasts feature guests often

16%

8%

7%

Often   Sometimes   Rarely   Never

75%
60%
45%
30%
15%
0%

How do you book guests? (Select all that apply)

80% of respondents are responsible for booking their own guests

80%
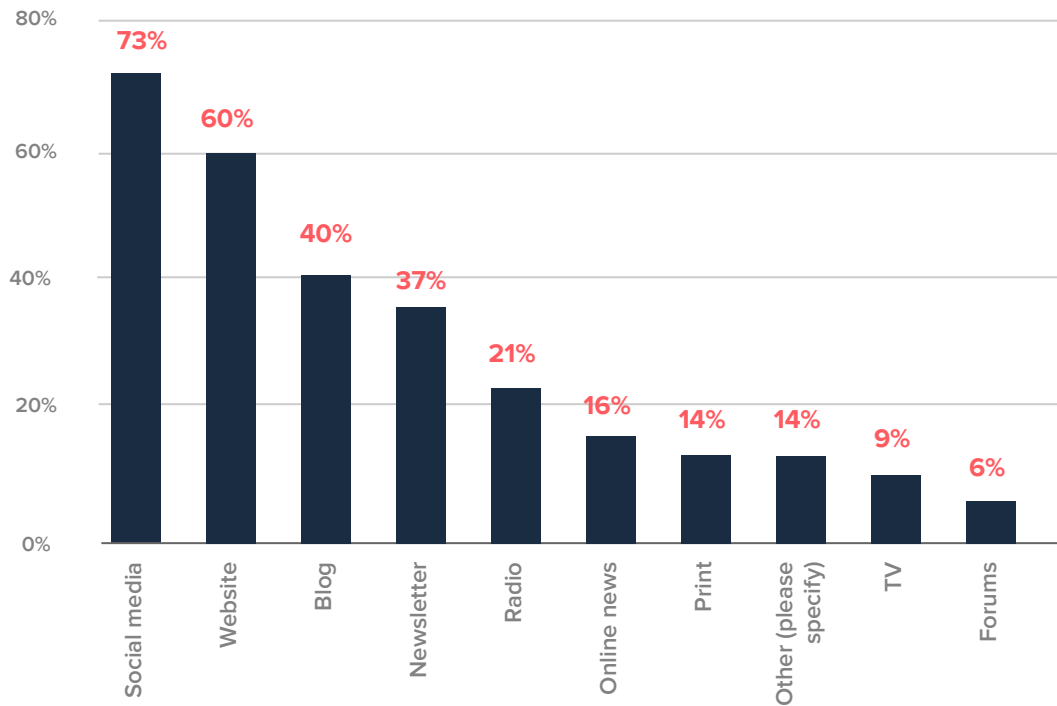I book guests

39%
Someone on my team books guests

2%
An external agency books guests

MUCK RACK 13

Most create social media content to accompany their podcast

In addition to podcasting, the most popular channels where respondents create content are social media (**73%**) and websites (**60%**). Many respondents are using multiple channels to accompany their podcast. YouTube was a popular channel in the 'Other' category.

Other than podcasting, on what other channels do you produce content?

Channel	Percentage
Social media	73%
Website	60%
Blog	40%
Newsletter	37%
Radio	21%
Online news	16%
Print	14%
Other (please specify)	14%
TV	9%
Forums	6%

66% do not currently offer paid content

66% of respondents are not offering paid content. Of the **34%** that are, exclusive or bonus episodes are the most popular. In the 'Other' category, a few said they offer product discounts, listener shoutouts, exclusive merchandise and/or ad-free content to paid subscribers.

What types of premium content do you provide paid subscribers?

Bar chart data:
- N/A (we don't offer premium content): 66%
- Exclusive/bonus episodes: 22%
- Behind the scenes content: 14%
- Q&As, AMAs or private events: 13%
- Early release of new episodes: 10%
- Other (specify): 8%

48% publish new episodes weekly

Most podcasters are posting new episodes once a week (**48%**). Of the remaining respondents, **24%** are posting more than once a week, and **25%** are publishing less.

How often do you publish new episodes?

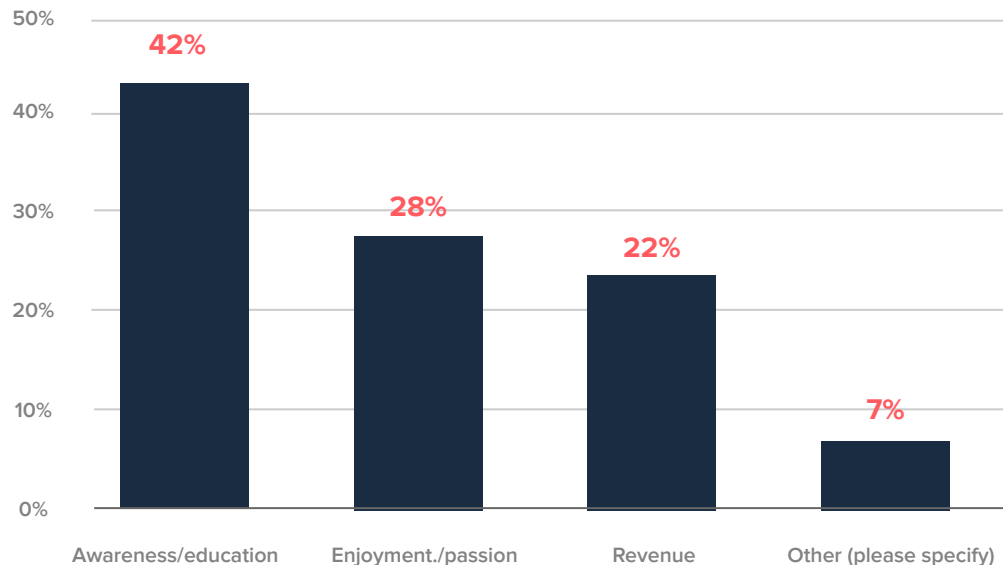|	
Once a week	48%
Every other week	16%
Every day	13%
Twice a week	11%
Monthly	6%

👤 3.5M ❤ 56K

3

Measurement and monetization

Driving awareness and pursuing a passion are top reasons for podcasting

Creating revenue is a lower priority in terms of goals for survey respondents, with most podcasters focusing on awareness and education (**42%**), or enjoyment and passion (**28%**).
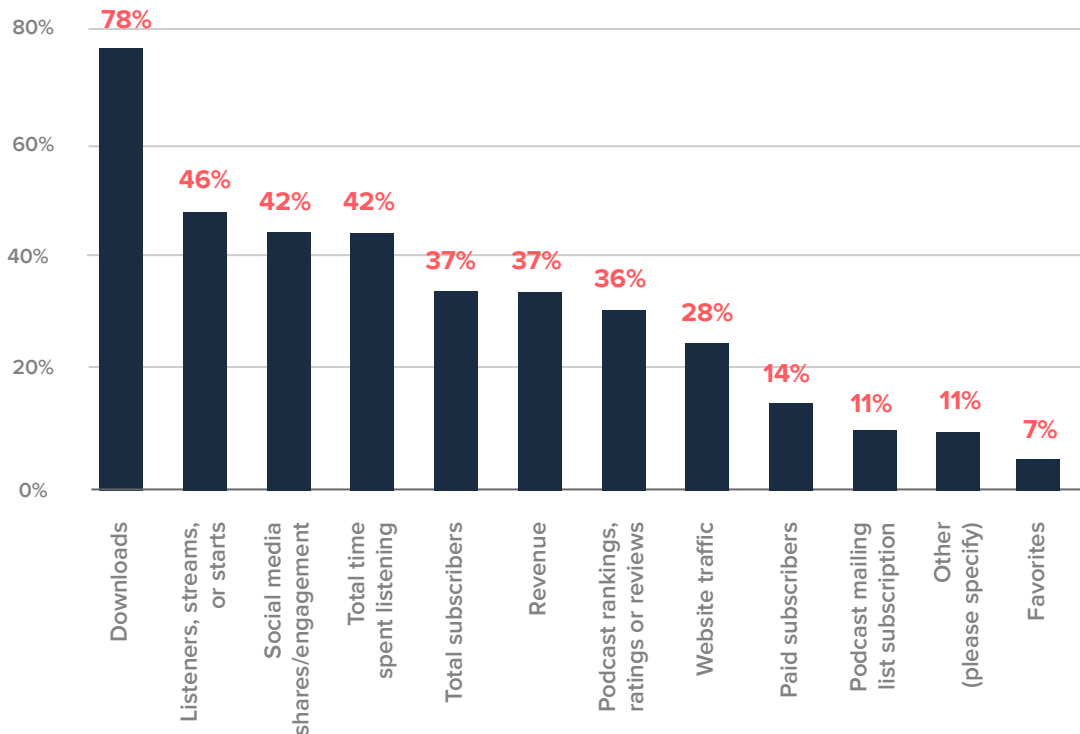
What is your top goal for podcasting?

Category	Percentage
Awareness/education	42%
Enjoyment./passion	28%
Revenue	22%
Other (please specify)	7%

MUCK RACK **18**

78% use downloads to measure success

Downloads are the leading metric among podcasters (**78%**), following by listeners, streams, or starts (**46%**). While revenue was previously stated as low priority in terms of goals (**22%**), it is commonly used as a benchmark for success by respondents (**37%**). Paid subscribers, podcast mailing list subscriptions and favorites were the least cited measurements of podcast success.
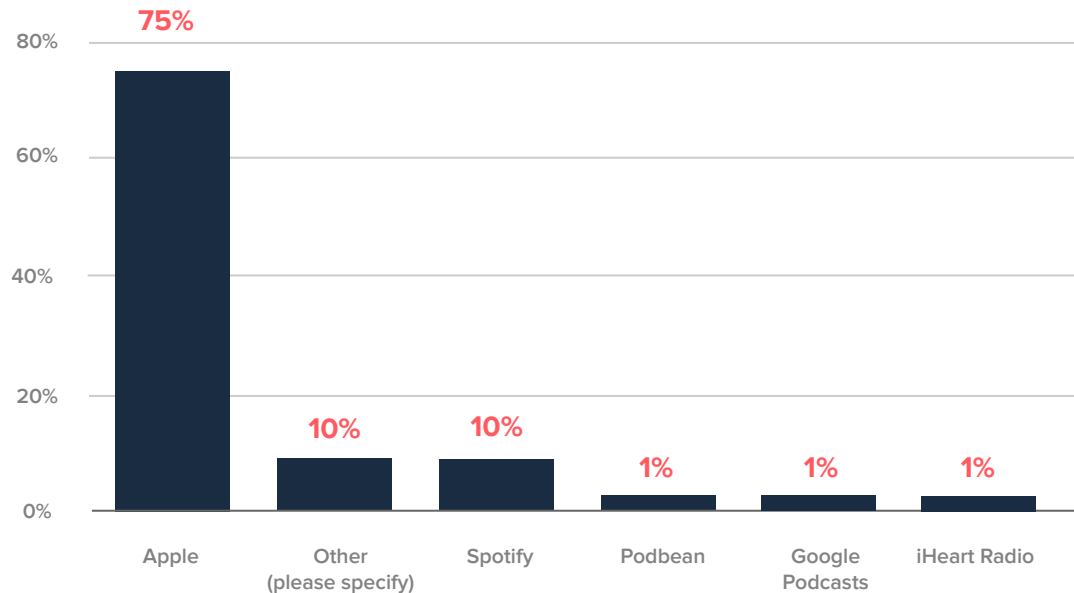
How do you measure success when it comes to podcasting? (Select all that apply)

Category	Percentage
Downloads	78%
Listeners, streams, or starts	46%
Social media shares/engagement	42%
Total time spent listening	42%
Total subscribers	37%
Revenue	37%
Podcast rankings, ratings or reviews	36%
Website traffic	28%
Paid subscribers	14%
Podcast mailing list subscription	11%
Other (please specify)	11%
Favorites	7%

MUCK RACK

19

75% say Apple accounts for most of their streams

Apple is the clear leader for audience streams (**75%**), with Spotify as the next popular platform (**10%**). Interestingly, a number of respondents who selected 'Other' (**10%**) said they did not know which platform accounted for most of their streams.
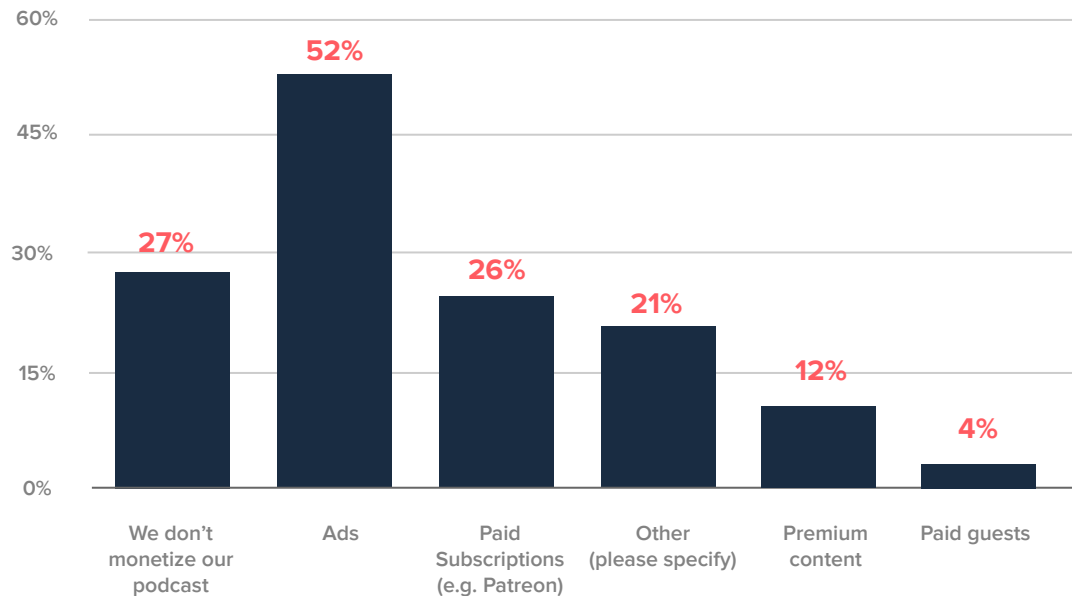
Which of the following platforms accounts for most of your streams?

Platform	Percentage
Apple	75%
Other (please specify)	10%
Spotify	10%
Podbean	1%
Google Podcasts	1%
iHeart Radio	1%

Ads are the most popular method of monetization

73% of respondents are monetizing their podcasts. Ads are the most popular method to do this, with **52%** using ads. Paid subscriptions (e.g. Patreon) was the next most popular method. Sponsorships, donations and merchandise were popular under 'Other.'

In what other ways do you monetize your podcast? (select all that apply)

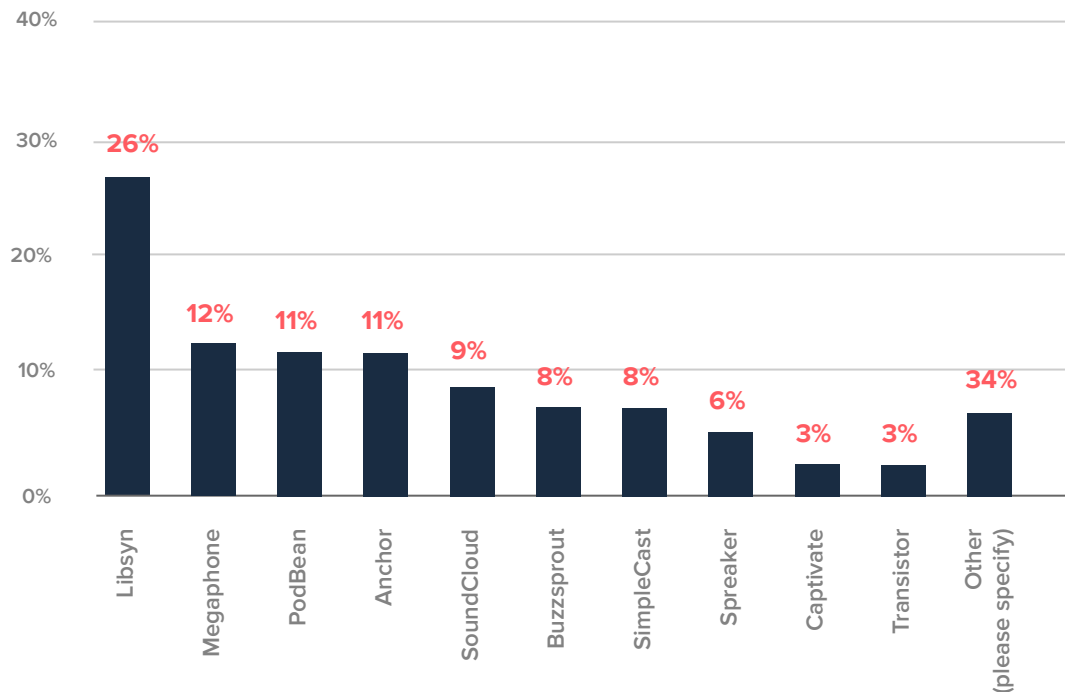| Category	Percentage
We don't monetize our podcast	27%
Ads	52%
Paid Subscriptions (e.g. Patreon)	26%
Other (please specify)	21%
Premium content	12%
Paid guests	4%

4

Publishing platforms and social channels

There is a lot of variation between preferred publishing platforms

While Libsyn leads for most popular publishing platform (**26%**) in our survey, results were widely distributed among platforms. Among the **34%** who selected 'Other,' Acast, Omny and Blubrry were popular choices.
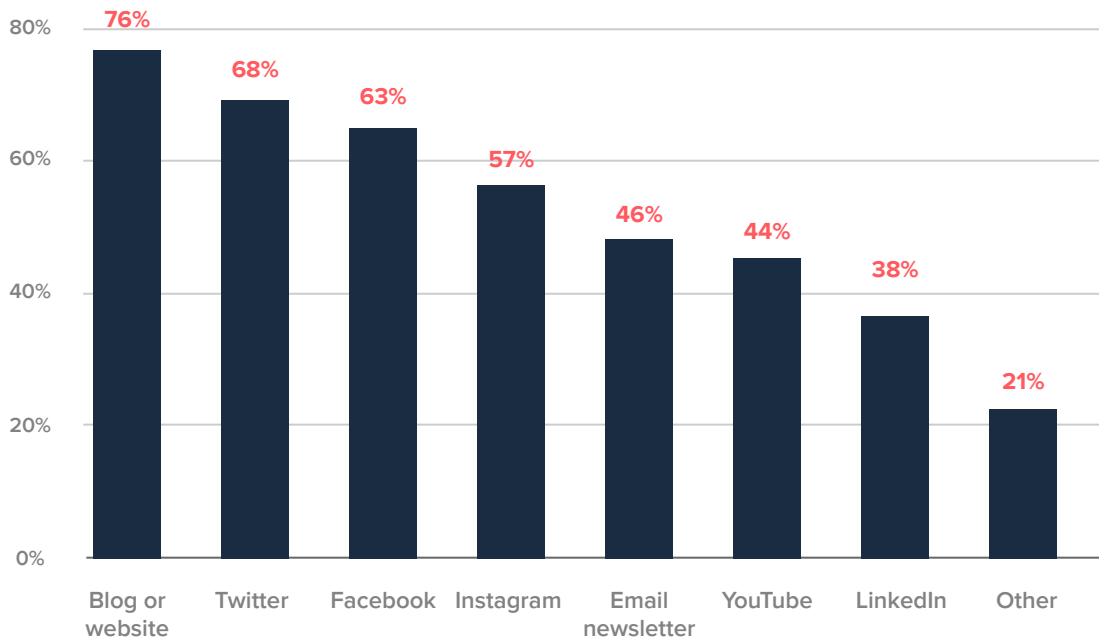
Which podcast publishing platform(s) do you use? (Select all that apply)

Platform	Percentage
Libsyn	26%
Megaphone	12%
PodBean	11%
Anchor	11%
SoundCloud	9%
Buzzsprout	8%
SimpleCast	8%
Spreaker	6%
Captivate	3%
Transistor	3%
Other (please specify)	34%

Blog/website, followed by social are the most common channels for cross-promotion

Respondents use a variety of channels to promote their podcasts to their audiences. Blogs or websites remain the most popular option (**76%**), with over three quarters choosing this option. Social media channels such as Twitter (**68%**), Facebook (**63%**) and Instagram (**57%**) are the next most popular channels.
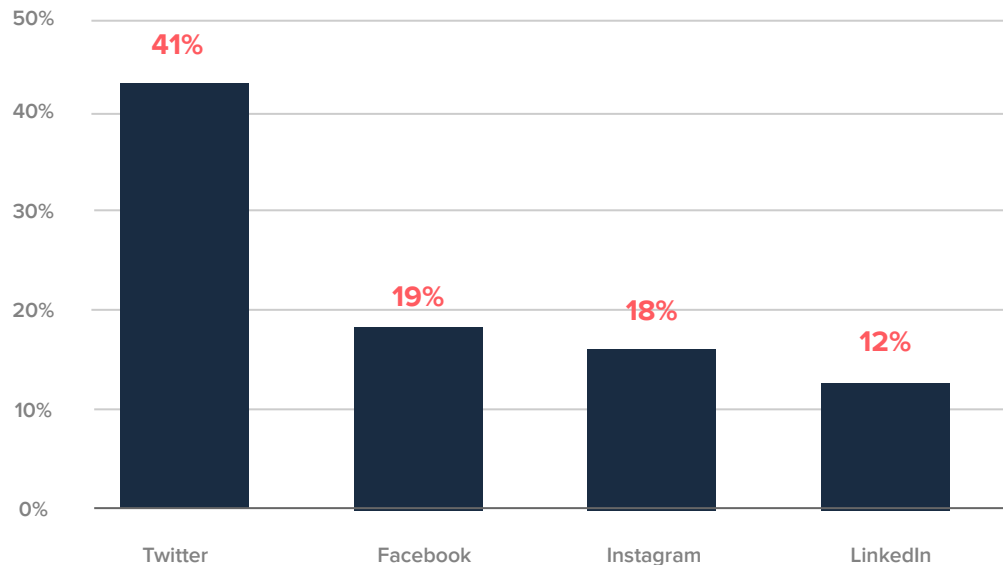
Where do you cross-post your podcast episodes or clips?

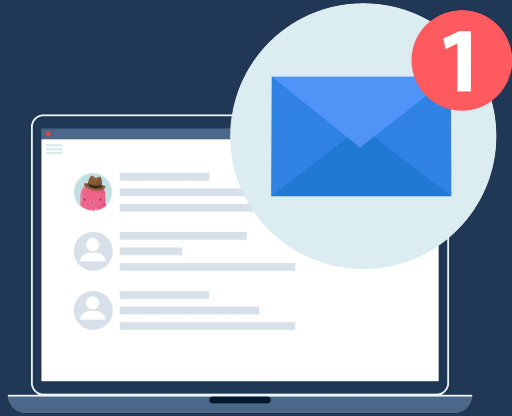| Channel	Percentage
Blog or website	76%
Twitter	68%
Facebook	63%
Instagram	57%
Email newsletter	46%
YouTube	44%
LinkedIn	38%
Other	21%

MUCK RACK

Podcast hosts reach the most followers on Twitter

Twitter is the leading channel where podcast hosts reach their followers (**41%**). Facebook (**19%**), Instagram (**18%**) and LinkedIn (**12%**) were the next most popular.

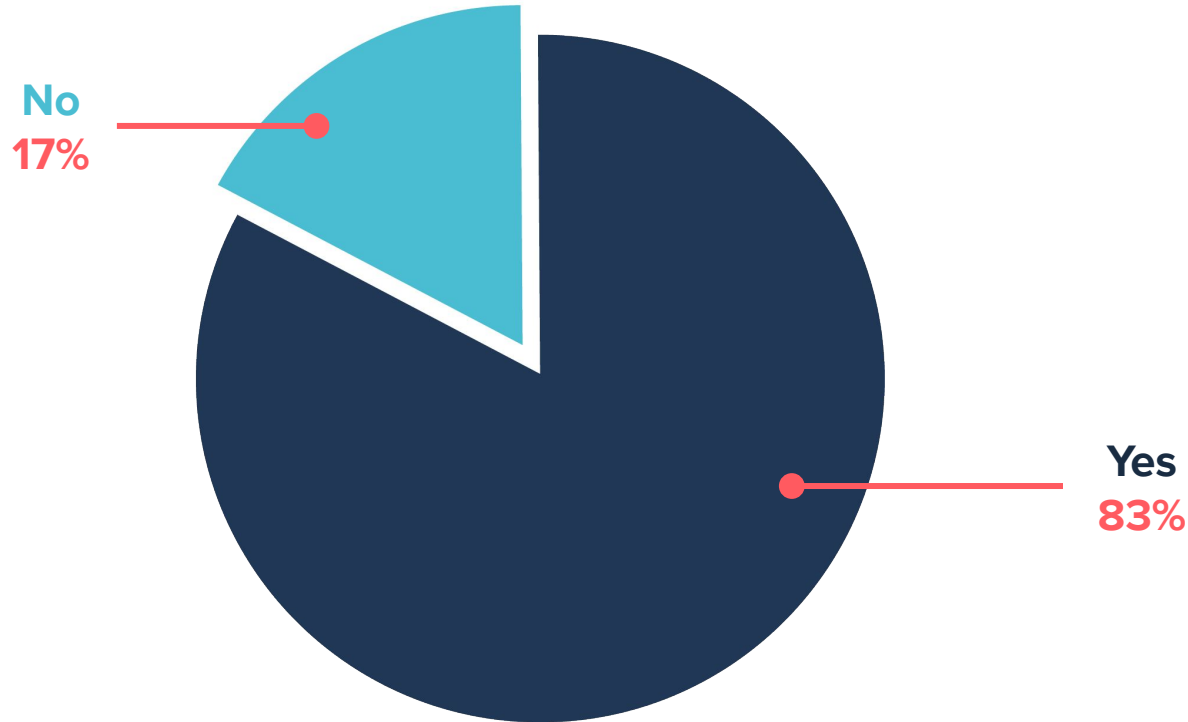## Which platform (if any) does your host or hosts have the biggest following?

MUCK RACK 25

5 Pitching preferences

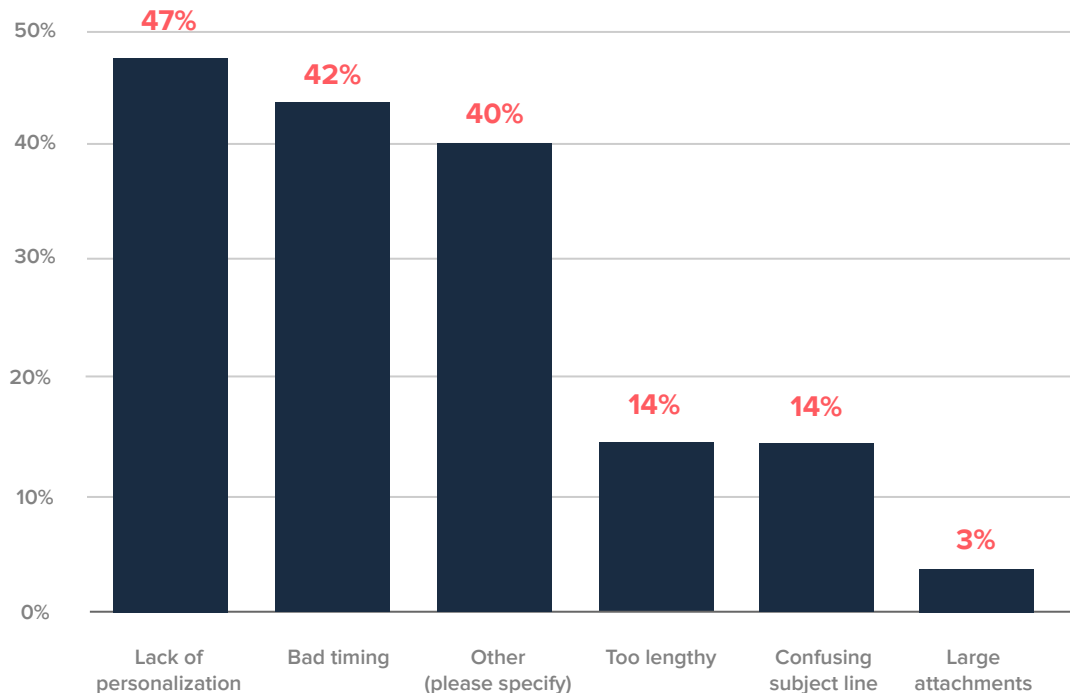# 83% receive pitches for people to be on their show

Do you receive pitches for people to be on your show(s)?

No
17%

Yes
83%

Personalization, timing and relevance matter—a lot

The most common reasons why podcasters reject pitches are a lack of personalization (**47%**) or bad timing (**42%**). In the 'Other' category (**40%**), a number of respondents said lack of relevant pitches is indeed an issue. Others listed repetitive content, lack of value to the listener and inauthenticity as additional reasons why they would reject a pitch.
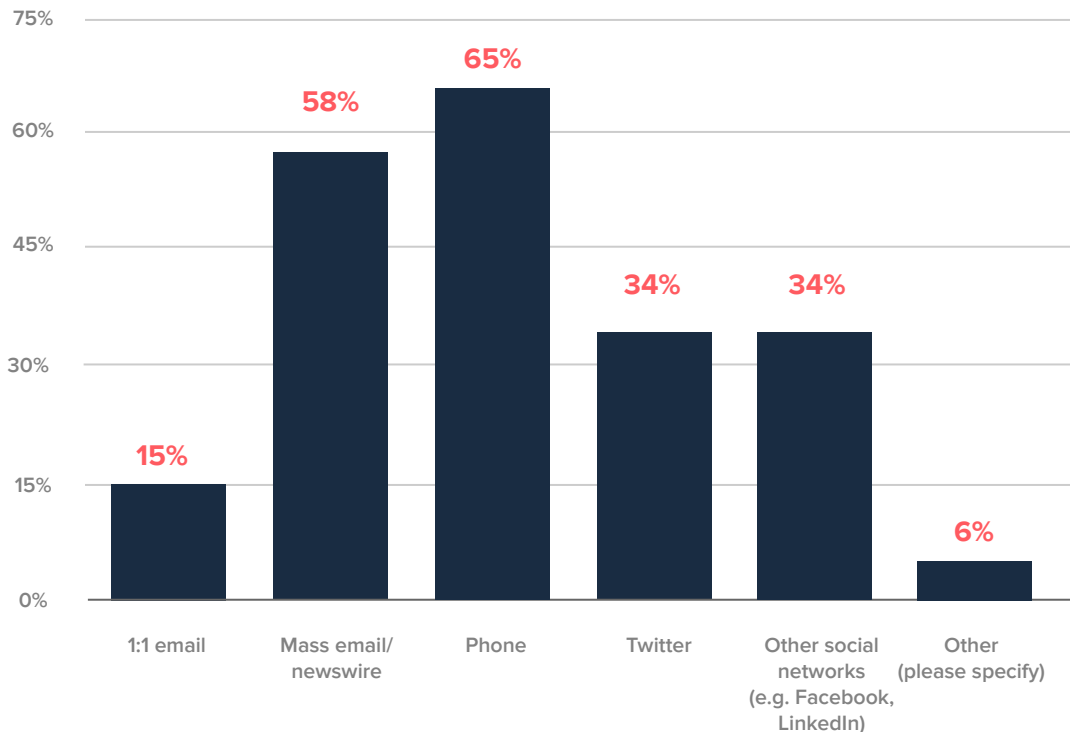
Why do you immediately reject otherwise relevant pitches?

Category	Percentage
Lack of personalization	47%
Bad timing	42%
Other (please specify)	40%
Too lengthy	14%
Confusing subject line	14%
Large attachments	3%

MUCK RACK

For most podcasters, steer clear of phone and mass email pitches

Most podcasters prefer not to be pitched via phone (**65%**) or mass email (**58%**). Twitter or other social networks were also channels respondents preferred not to be pitched on, with around 1/3 selecting these options.
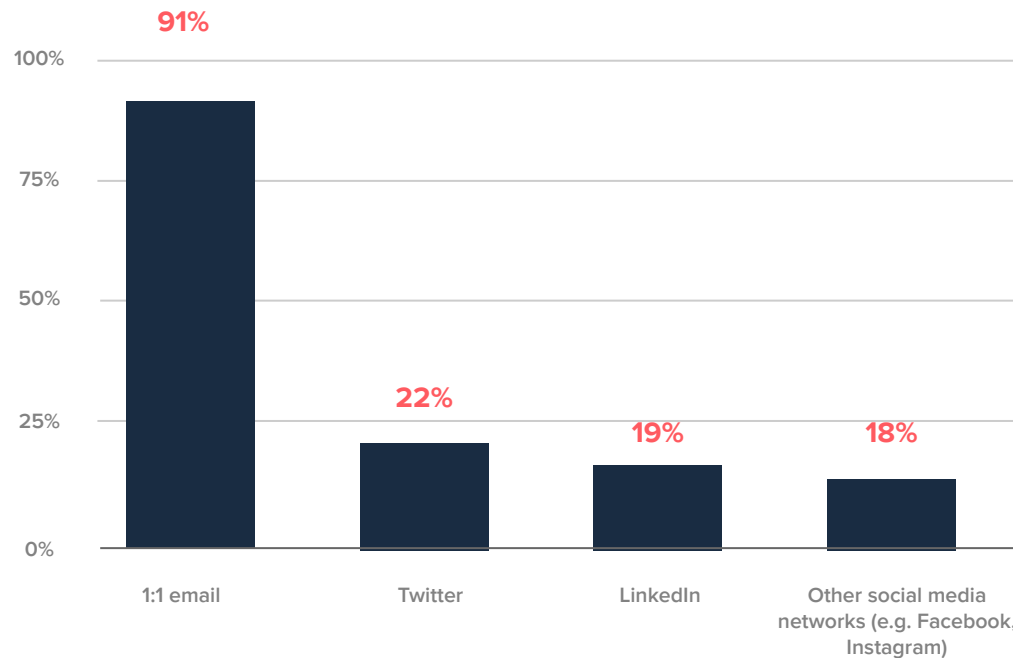
On which channels do you not like to be pitched? (Select all that apply)

Channel	Percentage
1:1 email	15%
Mass email/newswire	58%
Phone	65%
Twitter	34%
Other social networks (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn)	34%
Other (please specify)	6%

1:1 email is preferred for pitching

The majority of podcasters prefer to be pitched in a direct, personal email (**91%**). Some indicated that social media channels were also acceptable for pitching.
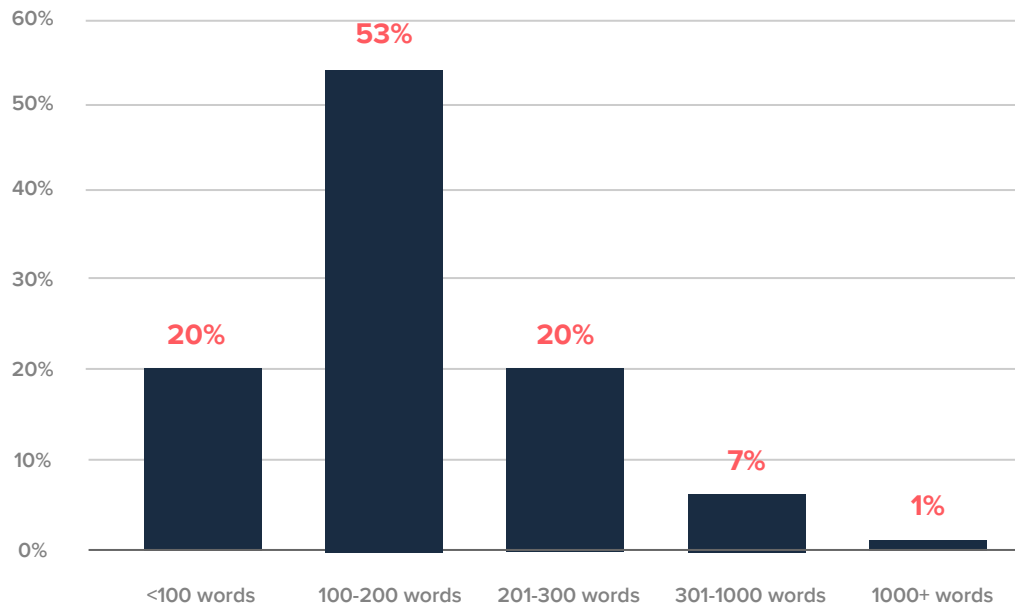
How do you prefer to be pitched?

- 1:1 email — 91%
- Twitter — 22%
- LinkedIn — 19%
- Other social media networks (e.g. Facebook, Instagram) — 18%

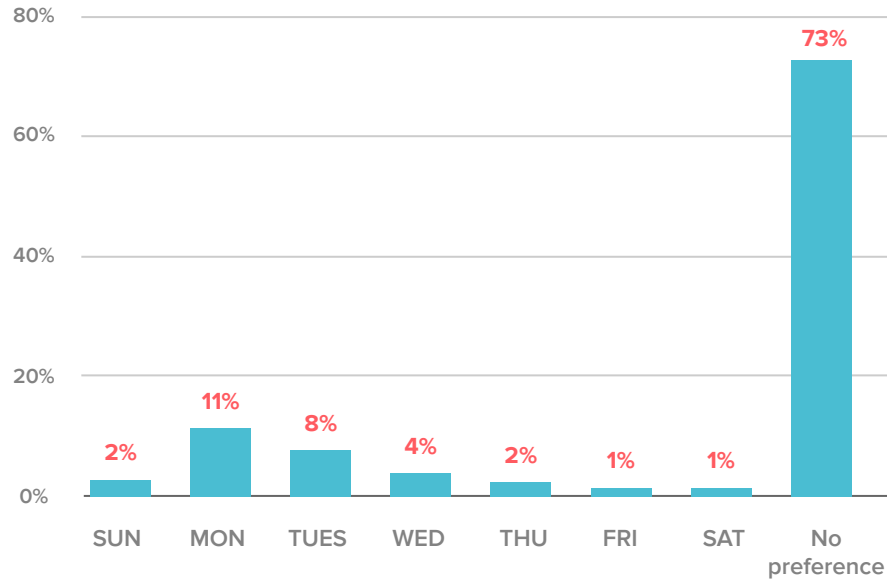## Short and sweet is the preferred email pitch length

Around 100-200 words is the most popular email length when receiving a pitch, with over **50%** of podcasters preferring this length. About **20%** prefer their pitches even shorter at less than 100 words, and another **20%** prefer the length of 201-300 words. Longer emails over 300 words were unpopular.

What email length do you prefer when receiving a pitch?

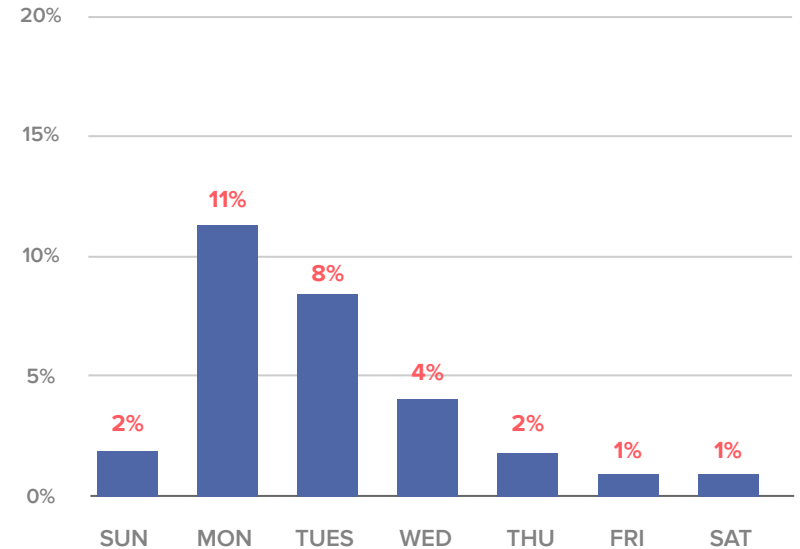|	<100 words	100-200 words	201-300 words	301-1000 words	1000+ words
	20%	53%	20%	7%	1%

73% had no preference on the best day of the week to be pitched—but out of those who did, early in the week was better

On what day of the week do you prefer to receive pitches?

Day	Value
SUN	2%
MON	11%
TUES	8%
WED	4%
THU	2%
FRI	1%
SAT	1%
No preference	73%

On what day of the week do you prefer to receive pitches?

Day	Value
SUN	2%
MON	11%
TUES	8%
WED	4%
THU	2%
FRI	1%
SAT	1%

MUCK RACK

More than 90% want PR pros to be familiar with their show before pitching

Podcasters strongly prefer that PR pros research their brand and content before getting in touch with them—over **90%** of respondents indicated this. Listening to multiple episodes of the podcast was the most common advice (**46%** suggested this).

What research should someone do before pitching you?

Category	Percentage
Listen to one episode	26%
Listen to multiple episodes	46%
Review social media presence	3%
Review your website/content from your other channels	15%
I don't expect people to research me	2%
Other (please specify)	7%

4 tips to build strong relationships with podcasters

1. **Reach them with 1:1 email.** Be direct, succinct and personalized in your outreach—podcasters are busy!
2. **Get familiar with the podcast before you pitch.** Podcasters are passionate about their content, and they expect PR pros to do their homework.
3. **Timing is everything.** In addition to relevant pitches, podcasters look for timeliness as many source content from current events.
4. **Show your value**. Why should a podcaster consider your pitch? Make your value clear to stand out from the rest.