

**90.9** wbur

# Let's Talk Survey

**Opportunity  
Report**

June 2017

**Public Radio  
BizLab**

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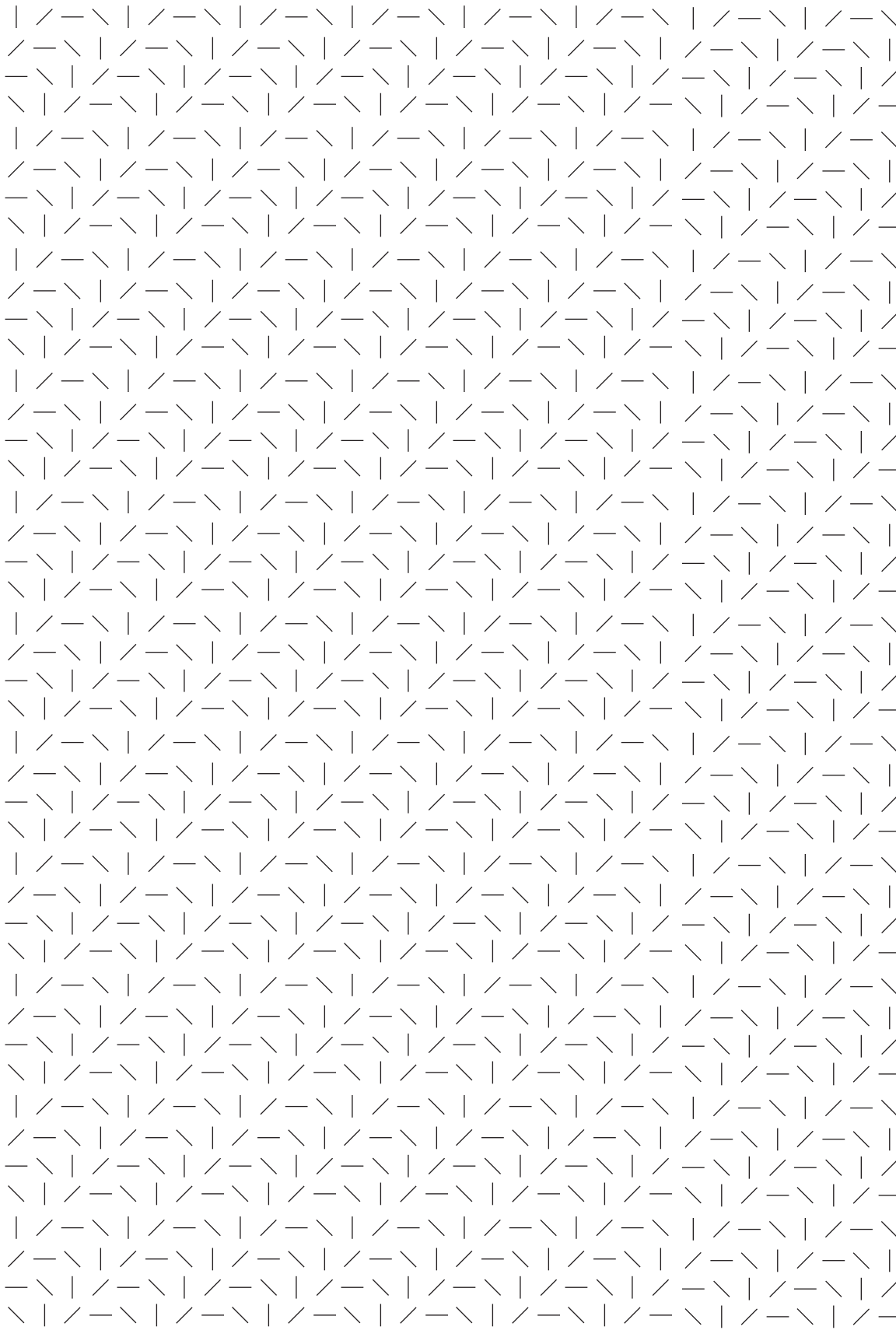
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## **With Thanks**

To William J. Poorvu  
for his encouragement and support  
to engage our audience in order to better  
understand and serve them in the future.





## **Author's List**

The team at WBUR who made it possible to create a refreshed perspective on our audience.

### **General Manager**

Charles Kravetz

### **Principal Investigator**

Dr. Johanna Brewer

### **Executive Director, BizLab**

Meg Siegal

### **Executive News Director**

Tom Melville

### **Sub-Section Authors**

Martha Bebinger

Alison Bruzek

Abby Conway

Shannon Dooling

Zeninor Enwemeka

Elizabeth Gillis

Amy Gorel

Lynn Jolicoeur

Louise Kennedy

Erika Lantz

Max Larkin

Lisa Mullins

Shira Springer

### **Research Participants**

Tiffany Campbell

Richard Chacón

John Davidow

Mark Degon

Sam Fleming

Bruce Gellerman

Dan Mauzy

Tonya Mosley

Bob Oakes

Kassandra Sundt

Ben Swasey

Fred Thys

### **Survey Distributors**

Kathleen Cronin Moura

Leah Davis

Kristin Holgerson

Alexis Hyder

Peter Lydotes

Candice Springer

Mike Steffon

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# Introduction

WBUR reaches half a million people in the Boston area and millions more across the nation and around the world. We are responsible for truthfully telling the public's stories and over the course of 67 years we've become very skilled behind the mic. Today, we find ourselves facing a new sort of challenge. The proliferation of internet-connected technologies is fundamentally altering the way in which people expect to engage with media organizations. At the same time, this shifting landscape has afforded stations like ours an unprecedented opportunity to interact with their audiences.

We currently have a large following, but in order to maintain our leadership status we must evolve to meet these changing expectations or risk becoming obsolete in the future. We cannot be complacent in our success, but we cannot predict what lies ahead. And so we must help shape the future by joining

the conversation about how it might unfold. For a public radio station, the best way to enter into that dialogue is to begin by switching off our broadcast mode for a bit and to focus on listening.

By inviting our audience to talk to us, to tell us about their identities, their needs and their opinions, we can draw inspiration for how we might better serve them. Rather than trying to dictate the terms of our relationship, we can open ourselves to hearing how listeners and readers conceive of our role in their lives and build upon that foundation. This book presents the results of the first station-wide effort to instill this Human-Centered approach in the very heart of the organization: the newsroom.

## **Background: WBUR's BizLab**

In partnership with the Knight Foundation, WBUR launched



# BizLab tackles every challenge by executing a three phase approach:

- 1/ **Explore** unmet needs by speaking directly with our audience.
- 2/ **Experiment** with new forms of product, services, content or means of distribution.
- 3/ **Evaluate** experimental results.

the Public Radio BizLab in early 2015, believing it is critical that we invest in innovation to develop new and sustainable business models to support journalism, especially while WBUR is financially sound. The mission of BizLab is simple but challenging: to spend five years developing and testing ideas that change the way we think about funding and innovation for public radio in order to provide all public media organizations with new and creative business models that sustain their excellent journalism.

In its first year, BizLab started by introducing this pioneering Human-Centered Participatory Research & Design methodology to the station. In partnership with IDEO, BizLab conducted an introductory study examining listener needs and behaviors. In parallel, the BizLab team also undertook an extensive study of the operational procedures of WBUR itself in order to inform the creation of a Dynamic Growth Dashboard. During BizLab's second year these two initiatives were united with a small test project called The Magic Pill, an interactive email-based podcast experience,

designed following Human-Centered principles and measured with the Dashboard prototype. BizLab proved the success of its methodology by creating a new product that achieved an incredibly high rate of engagement: while the standard media industry open rate for emails is 19% we achieved an average of 90% with The Magic Pill. The significant results of this small project were enough to win WBUR a 2017 regional Edward R. Murrow award for Excellence in Innovation.

## **Study Origins: Newsroom + BizLab**

After two years of successful innovation at the vanguard of the organization, BizLab earned enough trust across WBUR to be invited into the heart of the station: the newsroom itself. WBUR's GM tasked the BizLab team with finding a way not to merely communicate the results of small-scale Human-Centered Research & Design efforts to the newsroom, but to leverage the expertise of the journalists themselves by facilitating their

direct participation in the work. Our ambitious goal, then, is to empower the newsroom by teaching its members the basic skill set used to support innovation in cutting-edge companies like Apple, Disney, Google, Intel and Sony. To accomplish that our initial plan was to test this hands-on approach with the local news team. However, interest in this project was incredibly high and we quickly decided to encourage participation from any member of the newsroom.

Accordingly, we began this Participatory Research project in December 2016 with an open invitation to WBUR's journalists asking them to join the kick-off session in which we would brainstorm, as a team, a research question about our audience that we would like to answer. From its inception, this Participatory Research project has been defined and conducted by the members of the WBUR newsroom themselves, with BizLab's Principal Investigator guiding the team to ensure the quality of the findings without prescribing the outcome. To

our knowledge, a research project such as this is without parallel in public media, and as such serves as an exemplar of innovation in the industry.

## Research Methodology

The findings presented in this book represent the collective effort of 36 different individuals working in WBUR's newsroom. Design, implementation and analysis for this research study took place over the course of six months from December 2016 to May 2017. To coordinate our large group, we held 15 open-attendance team sessions as well as 25 individual analysis sessions guided by the Principal Investigator.

Within minutes of kicking off our first group session, the research question on everyone's mind was surprisingly clear. Though objections were raised that it seemed too obvious, that we should already know, WBUR's journalists took the bold, brave step to ask, and make the commitment to answer: what does our audience actually look like?"

To answer that question, we began by elaborating what it would take for us to feel we had an accurate mental picture of our audience. Recognizing that we could not even state with certainty whether our audience could be described as a cohesive community, or if it was a fractured set of subgroups, we decided to focus on building a detailed understanding of our audience's identities as individuals. Collectively we agreed upon 40 specific data points that would constitute a detailed portrait of a person. We also challenged ourselves to attempt reach out to as many people as possible, especially those at the fringes of our community that we may have never heard from before. To accomplish these goals and answer our research question, we chose to conduct an open-ended survey.

## Survey Response

We created a responsive web questionnaire using SurveyMonkey. There were 35 short-answer questions presented as text fields, radio

buttons and multiple-selection checkboxes, as well as 5 long-answer questions presented as multi-line text areas intended to elicit essay-like responses. All of the questions were optional and the survey typically required 5-10 minutes to complete (the full text of the survey can be found in the appendix on page 162). The narrative arc of the questions, and their specific wording, was carefully chosen in order to draw out richly detailed, and sometimes very personal, information about our audience’s identities and opinions without imposing our worldview on them. Likewise,

we crafted an equally strategic messaging and distribution plan in order to be as inclusive and expansive as possible. We named the survey “Let’s Talk” precisely because we wanted to demonstrate our willingness to truly listen.

WBUR’s Let’s Talk Audience Survey launched on January 27, 2017 and closed on February 27, 2017. In one month we received 3,662 responses representing 0.7% of our audience. This is an excellent representative sample and in statistical terms for a confidence level of 99% we only have a 2% margin of error. What

## Let’s Talk Audience Survey

**Study Duration**

January 27 - February 27, 2017

**Total Responses**

3,662 individuals, an estimated 0.7% of WBUR’s audience

**Statistical Significance**

2% margin of error at a 99% confidence level

that means is if we repeated the Let's Talk Audience Survey 100 times, 99 of those times the responses we gather would only be at most 2% different than what you will see in the coming pages. Nielsen Scarborough data relies on only 356 people for its demographic reports. Quantitatively speaking, this research study has reached ten times that number of respondents, and qualitatively speaking, it has done so at a level of detail far richer than the basic standardized data typically gathered. Our respondents generated over 500 pages of free text in their long-answer responses.

The overwhelming volume, in both quantity and quality, of the response from our audience made it clear that we had demonstrated our intent to hear their point of view. Our team then spent April and May of 2017 analyzing all of the data we collected during our group and individual sessions. Under the guidance of the Principal Investigator, the newsroom team learned how to interpret statistical

data and employ fundamental ethnographic techniques to analyze the free text responses. As a team, we reviewed the open, axial and selective codes that we identified in order to develop the grounded theory which structures the findings presented in this book. As individuals, several members of the research team identified specific areas of the data they wanted to dive into more deeply. These detailed ethnographic analyses can be found in the Audience Deep Dive. Where no specific byline is listed the findings presented are the results of our collaborative analysis.

## **Outline & Overview**

This book presents the results of WBUR's Let's Talk Audience Survey. The findings are presented in five main sections: Audience Overview; Engagement with WBUR; Audience Deep Dive; Standards & Values; Opportunities for Reaction.

The Audience Overview synthesizes the short-answer

responses of the survey to paint a detailed picture of the demographic makeup of our audience. This section visualizes the Personal Identities, Domestic & Home Lives and Public & Work Lives of our audience through a variety of charts, figures and graphs.

Engagement with WBUR presents the relationship audience members have with the station by examining their journeys through the engagement funnel. This section unpacks the ways in which our audience members become Aware of the station, begin to Consume regularly, are compelled to reach out to Talk, and finally give their Support to WBUR. Additionally, we highlight the main triggers that cause our audience members to Exit a given level of the engagement funnel.

The Audience Deep Dive explores 13 different subgroups of our audience through the eyes of an individual researcher from our newsroom. We spotlight both Communities of Practice, groups that share a common behavior or expression of their identity,

as well as Topics of Interest, coverage areas we often think of as beats or verticals.

The brief Standards & Values section stands alone to emphasize its significance. It is comprised of ten key principles, united by a single overarching mandate, that the audience universally clamors for us to uphold, an emergent code of ethics for the station.

The Opportunities for Reaction section presents a series of promising avenues for further action we might take based on the results of our study. These recommendations demonstrate concrete examples of how we can use this research to ground our future decisions. By tracing the lines from observable facts about our audience to potential paths for innovation, we discuss opportunities for action at all levels of the engagement funnel.

## **How To Read & Use This Book**

If you've just picked up this book and opened to this section, the best way to read it is to go back to the beginning

of this introduction to orient yourself. If you've already done that, then we recommend first-timers carry on and just read through to the end. This book was designed to grapple with the question: what does our audience actually look like? The answer, like our audience, is multifaceted and so this book has been structured to be as digestible and approachable as possible. Reading it cover to cover, at whatever pace suits you, is the best way to absorb all the knowledge it contains.

For those readers who are already familiar with the findings contained herein, we hope that this book becomes a well-worn reference guide. When you find yourself in a debate about what course of action you should take, especially in matters that directly impact our audience, you can use this book to ground your decisions.

We began this research project because we had the temerity to admit we weren't all-knowing when it came to our audience, that we might not understand them as well as we thought. Accepting that we didn't know

something freed us to seek out the answer. The practice of remaining in that questioning state, of staying defamiliarized, is an essential technique of not only social science research but of design and innovation as well. This book reminds us of how much we didn't know and how important it is to constantly check our assumptions and dispel our biases.

As a common frame of reference, we can build upon the findings presented herein while remembering that we always have more to learn. This book is a stepping stone towards the next unknown. As of publication in June 2017, our station has an accurate, shared picture of what our audience actually looks like. This snapshot resolves one big question, but opens the door on so many others. We hope that this book will be a reminder of how it is within our collective power to mount a research study to find the answers.

# Audience Overview

Developing a clear picture of what our audience actually looks like begins with a robust understanding of the demographics we serve. WBUR's Let's Talk Survey featured over 25 short-answer questions about our audience's identities, many of which were completely open-ended. For example, rather than presenting respondents with the typical five fixed options to define their race, we asked our audience to describe their racial, ethnic or cultural identity in their own words. Utilizing this highly qualitative survey methodology allowed our research team to analyze the responses and draw out the emergent demographic categorizations that our audience members use to describe themselves. This inductive approach allows and encourages us to speak about our audience using their preferred terminology.

This section uses a variety of charts, graphs and other figures to visualize the Personal Identities, Domestic & Home Lives and Public & Work Lives of our audience. Many of the visualizations include detailed

statistical information that is often represented as a percentage. These statistics are based upon the 3,662 responses we received to the survey. Because all questions were optional, many of the figures indicate the percentage of respondents who chose not to answer, that is to skip, the related question.

Every percentage shown in the coming pages represents the number of survey respondents who voluntarily expressed a certain aspect of their identity. Because we implemented a breadth-focused distribution plan, and given the fact that we reached 10x more our audience than any other survey conducted on behalf of WBUR in the past decade, we can confidently say that these results accurately reflect our overall audience population. While the statistics are based upon the responses we received, the scientific rigor with which we conducted our research gives us solid ground on which to base the claim that what you see in the coming pages is indeed what our audience actually looks like.



### *Stay Defamiliarized*

---

When your knee-jerk reaction is to doubt a fact you see in this book, ask yourself why five times. Either you will be convinced to let go of an unhelpful assumption you were hanging on to, or you'll be compelled to go out and gather the data to prove your instinct!

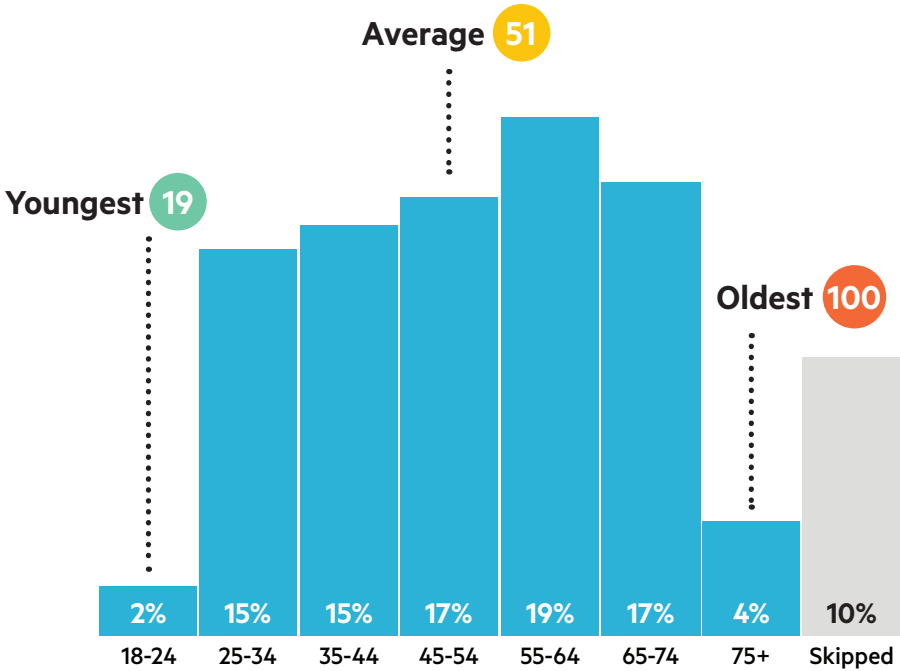
# Personal Identity

Our overview begins with an examination of the building blocks that form the core of our audience’s identities. By exploring when and where they were born, the races, genders

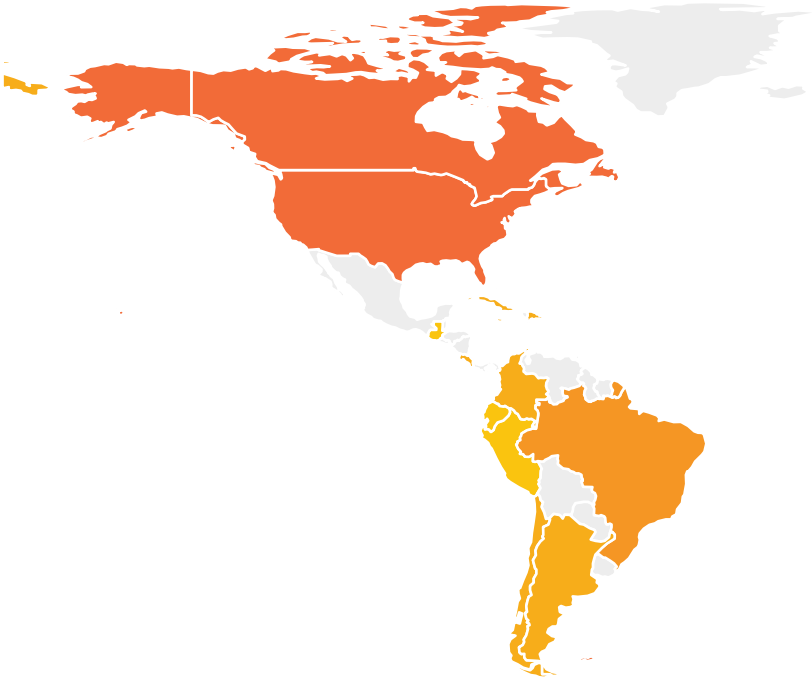
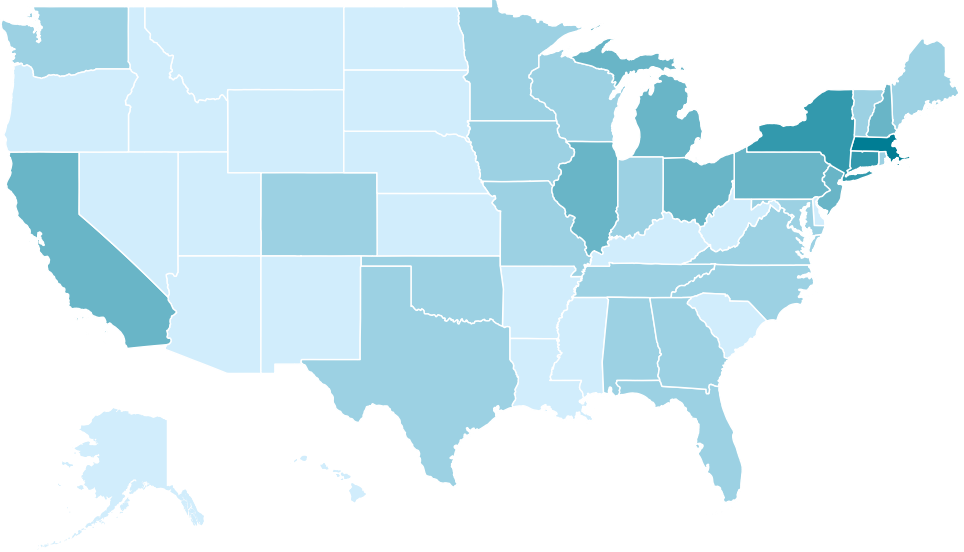
and orientations they identify with, their disabilities, political leanings and religious beliefs, we gain a rich understanding of how our audience members picture themselves.

• • •	<i>p. 19</i>	<b>Age</b>	• • •
• • •	<i>p. 20</i>	<b>Birthplace</b>	• • •
• • •	<i>p. 22</i>	<b>Nationality</b>	• • •
• • •	<i>p. 23</i>	<b>Race</b>	• • •
• • •	<i>p. 24</i>	<b>Gender</b>	• • •
• • •	<i>p. 25</i>	<b>Orientation</b>	• • •
• • •	<i>p. 26</i>	<b>Religiosity &amp; Activity</b>	• • •
• • •	<i>p. 27</i>	<b>Religious Affiliation</b>	• • •
• • •	<i>p. 28</i>	<b>Political Leaning</b>	• • •
• • •	<i>p. 29</i>	<b>Political Activity</b>	• • •
• • •	<i>p. 30</i>	<b>Disability</b>	• • •

# Age



# Birthplace



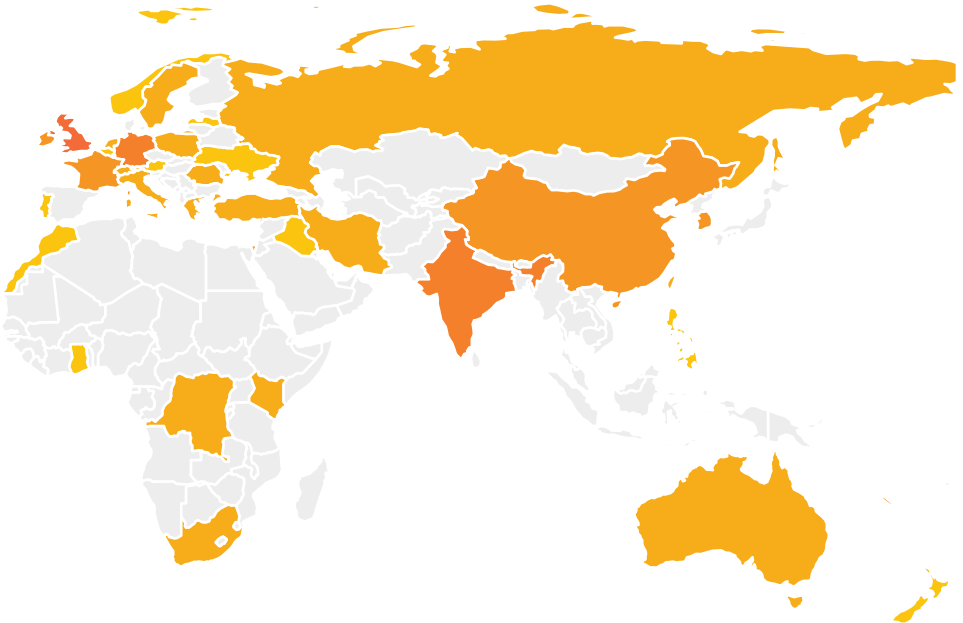
## Total Respondents

### By State

- 1-10
- 11-50
- 51-150
- 151-500
- 501+

### By Country

- None
- 1
- 2-4
- 5-9
- 10-24
- 25+



# Nationality



88% US Citizens



2% Non-US Citizens



4% Dual Citizens



10% Skipped



1% Canadian



1% British



1% Irish



0.4% French



0.3% German



0.3% Israeli



Argentina



Australia



Austria



Belgium



Brazil



Bulgaria



Columbia



D.R. Congo



Costa Rica



Denmark



Dominican Republic



Ecuador



Finland



Ghana



Greece



India`



Iran



Italy



Jamaica



Libya



Mexico



Netherland



New Zealand



Nigeria



Norway



Peru



Poland



Romania



Russia



South Africa



Sweden

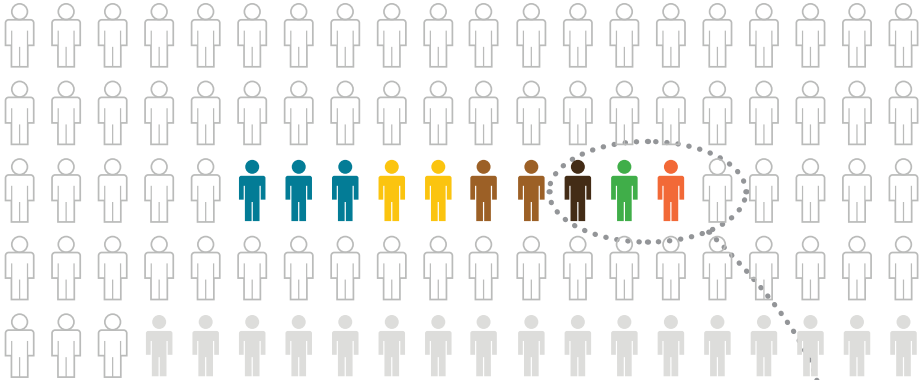


Taiwan



Turkey

# Race



## 75% White

Anglo-Saxon	English	Lithuanian	Sicilian
British	European	Polish	Swedish
Bulgarian	French	Portuguese	Ukrainian
Caucasian	German	Protestant	WASP
Celtic	Hungarian	Russian	White
Catholic	Irish	Scandinavian	Yankee
Dutch	Italian	Scottish	

## 3% Jewish

Ashkenazi  
Jewish

## 2% Asian

Asian  
Asian American  
Asian Indian  
Cantonese  
Chinese  
Filipino American  
Japanese American  
Indian American  
Korean  
Singaporean  
South Asian  
Southwest Asian  
Taiwanese  
Vietnamese

## 1% Black

African American  
Black

## 2% Latinx

Brazilian  
Cuban  
Dominican  
Latina  
Latino  
Latin American  
Haitian  
Hispanic  
Mexican  
Mexican American  
Nicaraguan  
Puerto Rican

## 4% Multiracial\*

Respondents who indicated more than one race or simply said mixed.

## 17% Skipped

## 1% Middle Eastern

Arab American  
Arabic  
Armenian  
Iranian  
Lebanese  
MENA  
Middle Eastern  
North African  
Turkish

## 0.3% Native

American Indian  
Cherokee  
Native  
Native American  
Pacific Islander  
Polynesian

# Gender



**63% Female**



**27% Male**



**0.4% Non-Binary**



**10% Skipped**

## **3% Trans-aware**

Respondents who described their gender using words like cis and trans or expressed appreciation for the open-ended question format.



# Orientation



## 72% Straight

- Breeder
- Hetero
- Heterosexual
- Regular
- Mostly straight
- Normal
- Straight
- Straight-ish
- Straight but not narrow



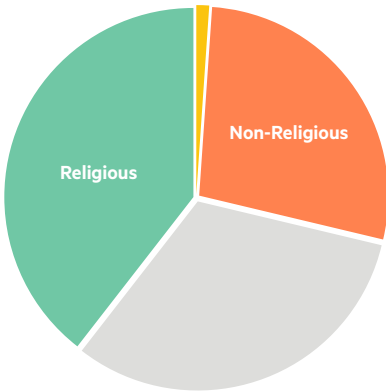
## 9% LGBTQIA\*

- Asexual
- Bi
- Bisexual
- Celibate
- Demisexual
- Dyke
- Flexible
- Gay
- Goddess
- Heteroflexible
- Homosexual
- Lesbian
- Open
- Pansexual
- Queer
- Same
- Sapiosexual
- Skoliosexual

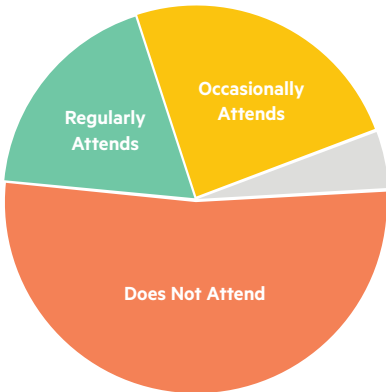


## 18% Skipped

# Religiosity & Activity

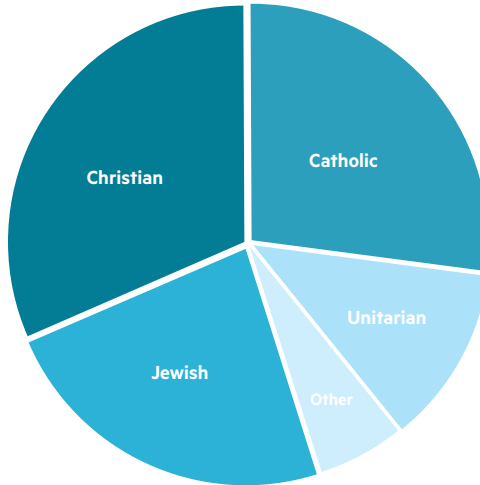


- 39% Religious
- 29% Not Religious
- 1% Spiritual/Humanist
- 32% Skipped



- 53% Does Not Attend
- 24% Occasionally Attends
- 19% Regularly Attends
- 5% Skipped

# Religious Affiliation



- **13% Christian**
- **11% Catholic**
- **9% Jewish**
- **5% Unitarian**
- **2% Other**

Asatru	Pantheist
Buddhist	Pastafarian
Christian Scientist	Quaker
Hindu	Self-Realization Fellowship
Jainist	Taoist
Mormon	Wiccan
Muslim	Zen
Pagan	Zoroastrian

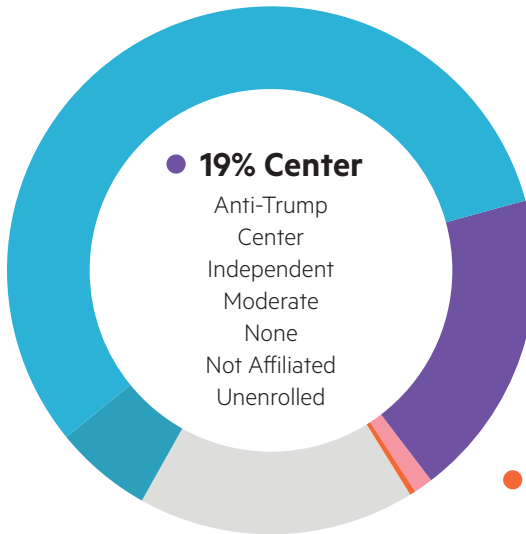
# Political Leaning

● **57% Left**

- Blue
- Bleeding Heart
- Democrat
- Labor
- Left Leaning
- Liberal

● **1% Right**

- Conservative
- GOP
- Republican
- RINO



● **19% Center**

- Anti-Trump
- Center
- Independent
- Moderate
- None
- Not Affiliated
- Unenrolled

● **6% Far Left**

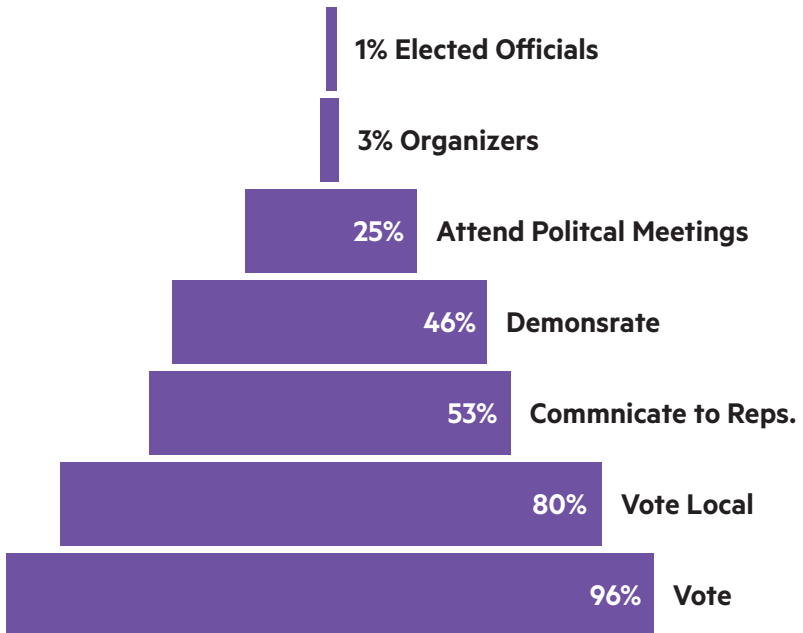
- Bernie Sanders
- Communist
- Green
- Pirate
- Progressive
- Radical
- Socialist
- Social Democrat
- Social/Civil Libertarian

● **0.4% Far Right**

- Libertarian

● **17% Skipped**

# Political Activity



# Disability

8% of our audience is disabled



## 3% Ailment

- Autoimmune Disease
- Brain Injury
- Cancer
- Chronic Illness/Pain
- COPD
- Diabetes
- Epilepsy/Seizures
- Heart Disease/Stroke
- Leukemia
- Lupus
- Lyme Disease
- Multiple Sclerosis
- Muscular Dystrophy
- Parkinson's
- Post Polio
- Spinal Stenosis`

## 2% Mental

- Alcoholism
- Anxiety
- Bipolar
- Depression
- Mental Illness
- PTSD

## 2% Mobility

- Arthritis
- Back Pain
- Limited Mobility
- Physical Disability

## 1% Auditory

- Hearing Impairment/Loss
- Deafness
- Tinnitus

## 1% Learning

- ADD
- ADHD
- Asperger's
- Autism Spectrum
- Dyslexia
- Speech

## 1% Visual

- Blindness
- Myopia
- Visual Impairment/Loss



# Domestic & Private Life

Our exploration continues with the information our audience shared about their domestic lives. By examining their status as partners and parents, the location and ownership of their

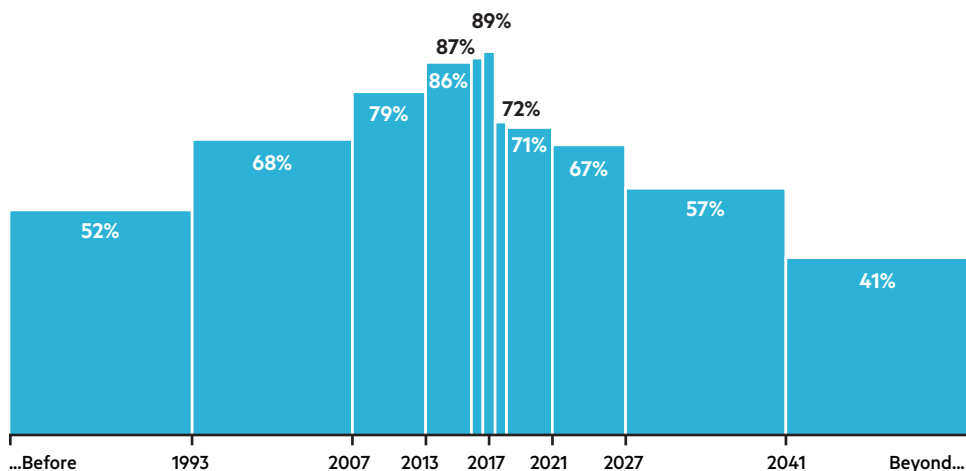
homes, how long they've been living in the area and if they plan to stay, we get to know more about one of the main places they spend their time.

p. 33	<b>Time Living in Boston Area</b>
p. 34	<b>Home Location</b>
p. 38	<b>Relationship &amp; Parental Status</b>
p. 39	<b>Living Situation</b>



# Time Living in Boston Area

Slightly more than half our audience has been living in Boston for 25+ years, and 41% of them plan to stay for another quarter century.



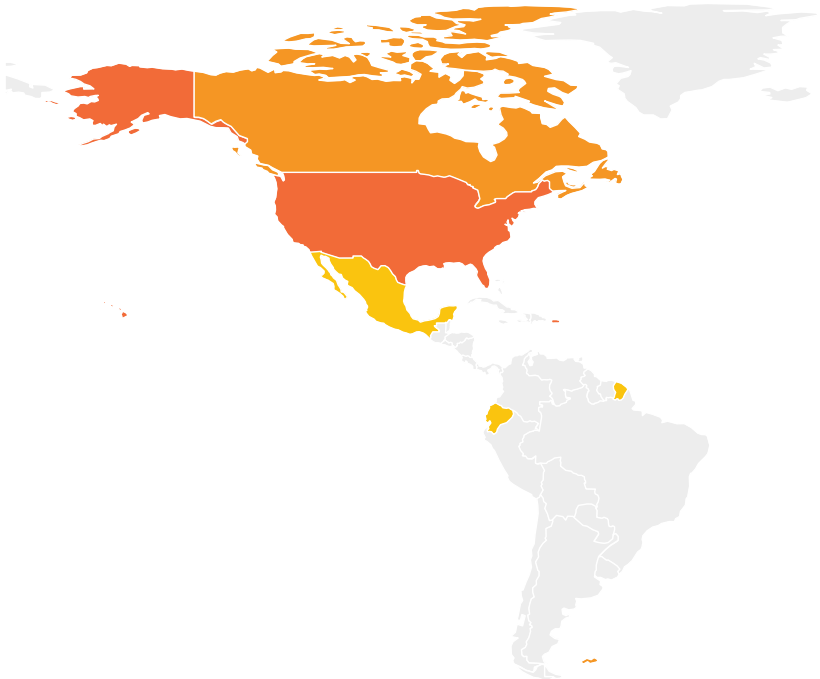
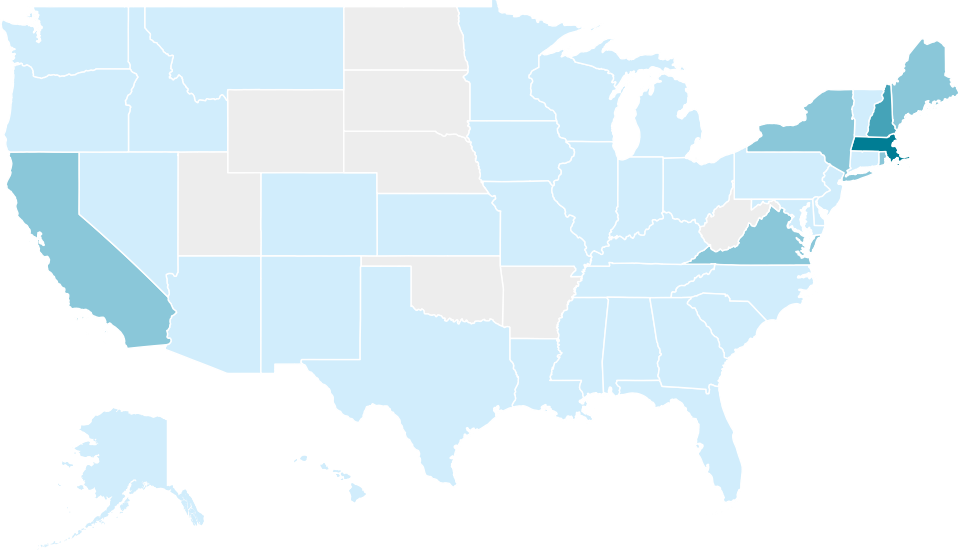
9%

Not Living in Boston Area

6%

Never Lived in Boston Area

# Home Location



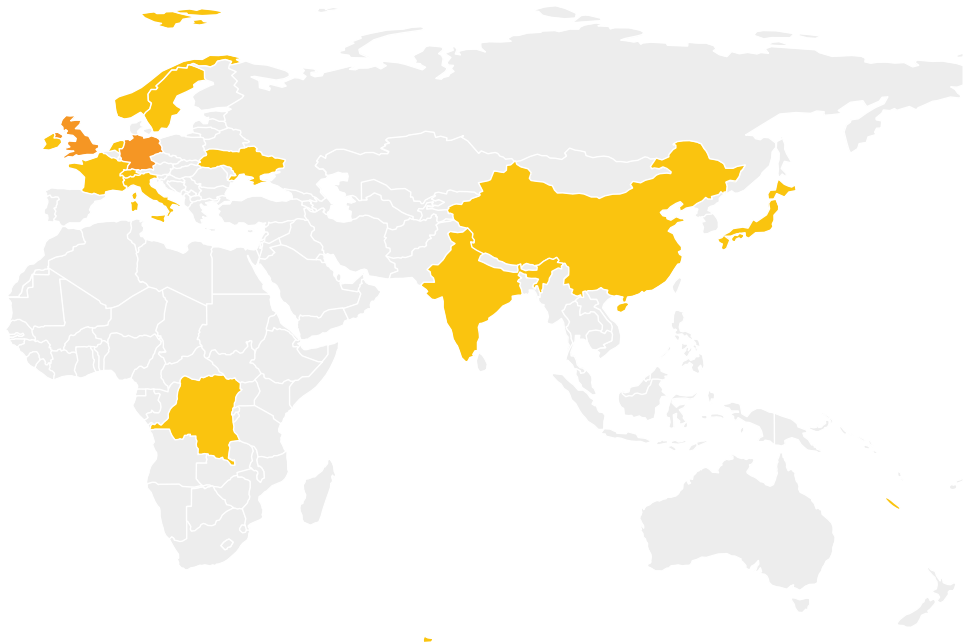
## Total Respondents

### By State

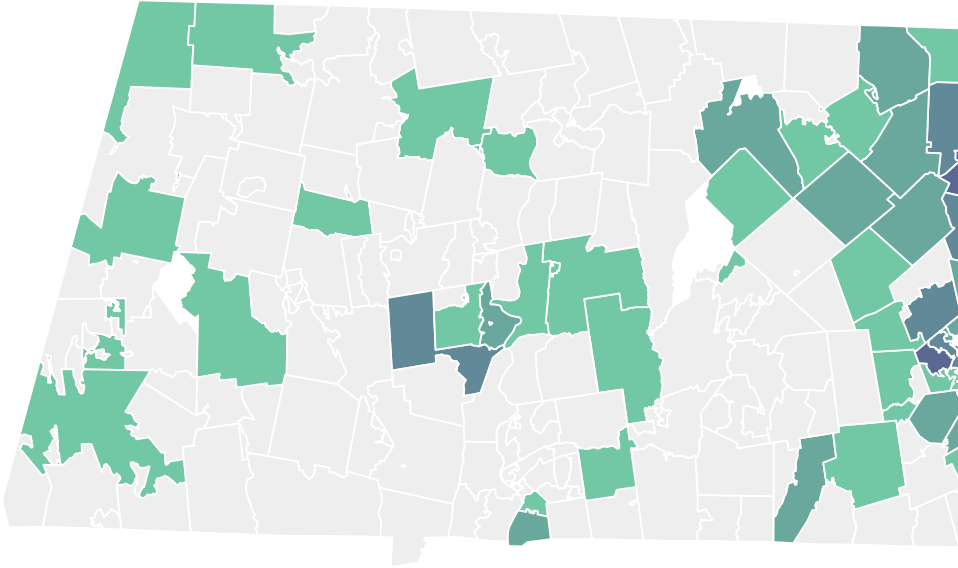
- None
- 1-10
- 11-50
- 51-500
- 501+

### By Country

- None
- 1
- 2-24
- 25+



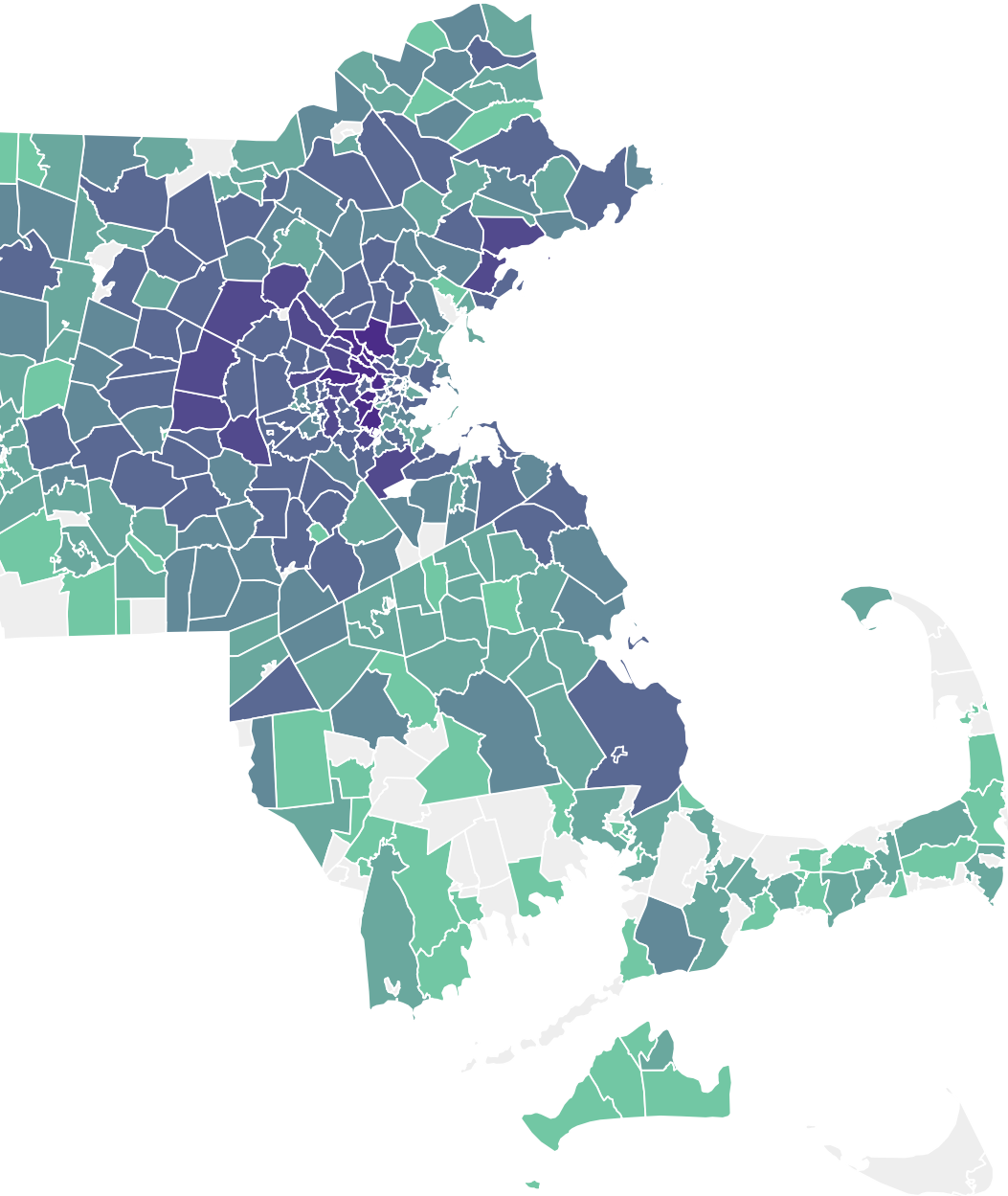
# Home Location



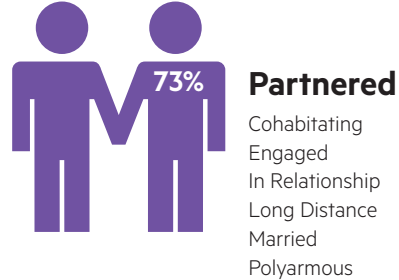
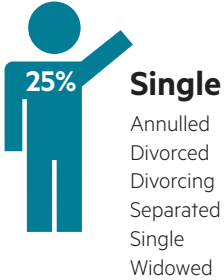
## Total Respondents

### By ZIP Code

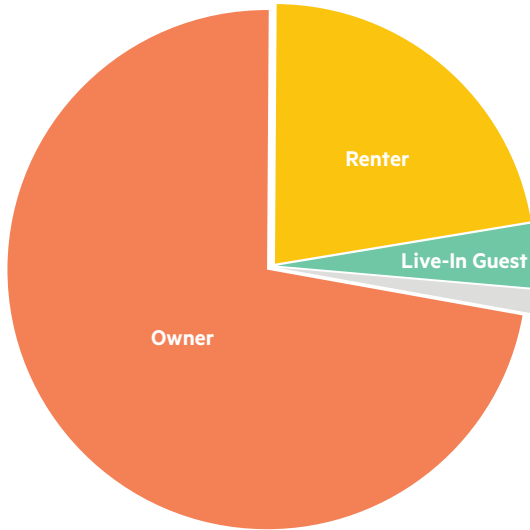
- None
- 1
- 2-4
- 5-9
- 10-24
- 25-49
- 50+



# Relationship & Parental Status



# Living Situation



● **72% Owner**

● **4% Live-In Guest**

● **22% Renter**

● **1% Skipped**

## Notable Other Statuses

Co-owning/co-renting with non-partner (friend/family member)

Living with partner

Living in company housing

Living in dormitory housing

Living in retirement community

Living in shelter

Live-in caretaker

Homeless

Owning in one location and renting in another

# Work & Public Life

Our overview concludes with a look at the varying foundations upon which our audience members build their public lives. By exploring the educational history of our respondents and their families, what assistance they've received, and their current statuses as

members of the workforce, we learn about their role in society. Finally, by examining their responsibility, income levels and workplace locations, we discover more about the destinations of our audience member's morning commutes.

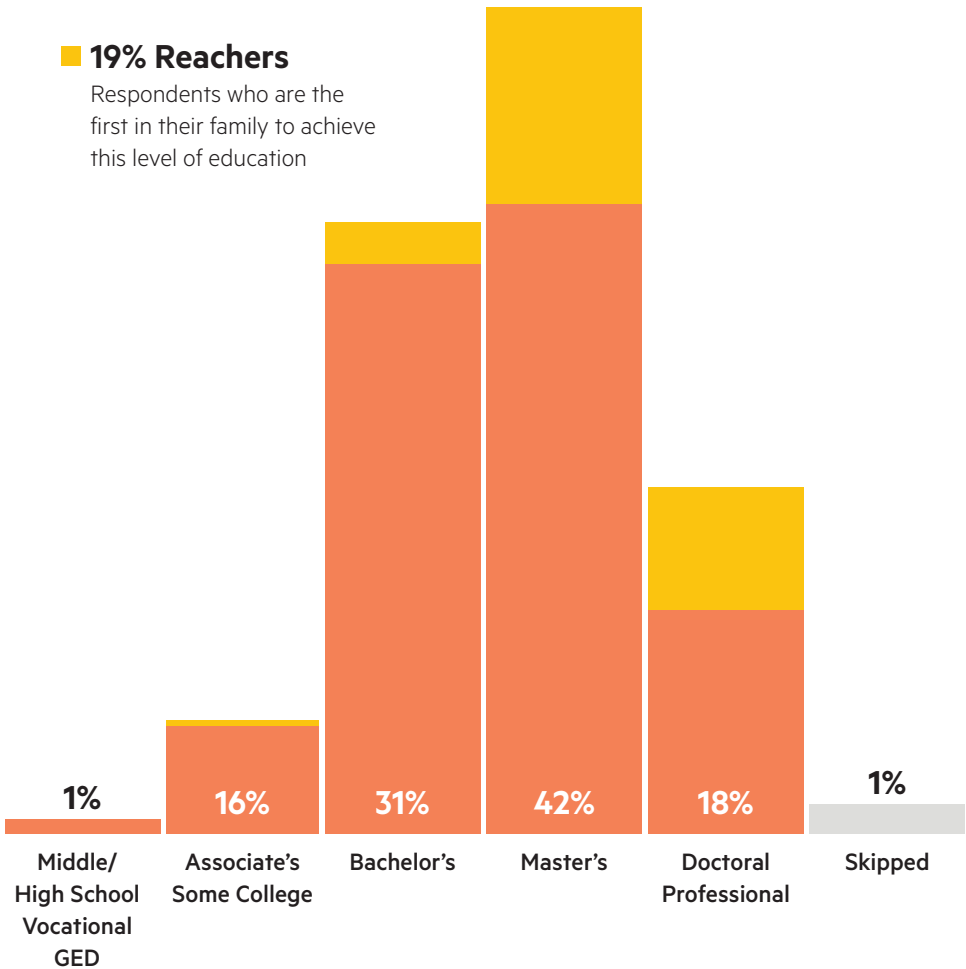
<i>p. 41</i>	<b>Education</b>
<i>p. 42</i>	<b>Inheritance &amp; Assistance</b>
<i>p. 43</i>	<b>Household Income</b>
<i>p. 44</i>	<b>Societal Role &amp; Work Responsibility</b>
<i>p. 45</i>	<b>Work Sector</b>
<i>p. 46</i>	<b>Work Location</b>



# Education

## ■ 19% Reachers

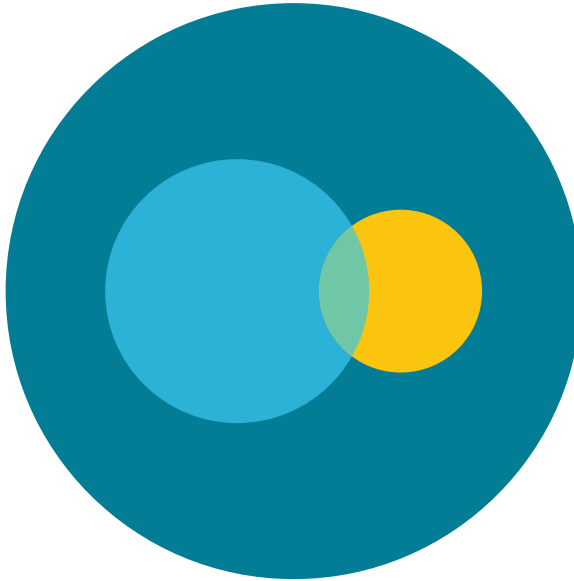
Respondents who are the first in their family to achieve this level of education



# Inheritance & Assistance

● 21% Inherited  
Wealth

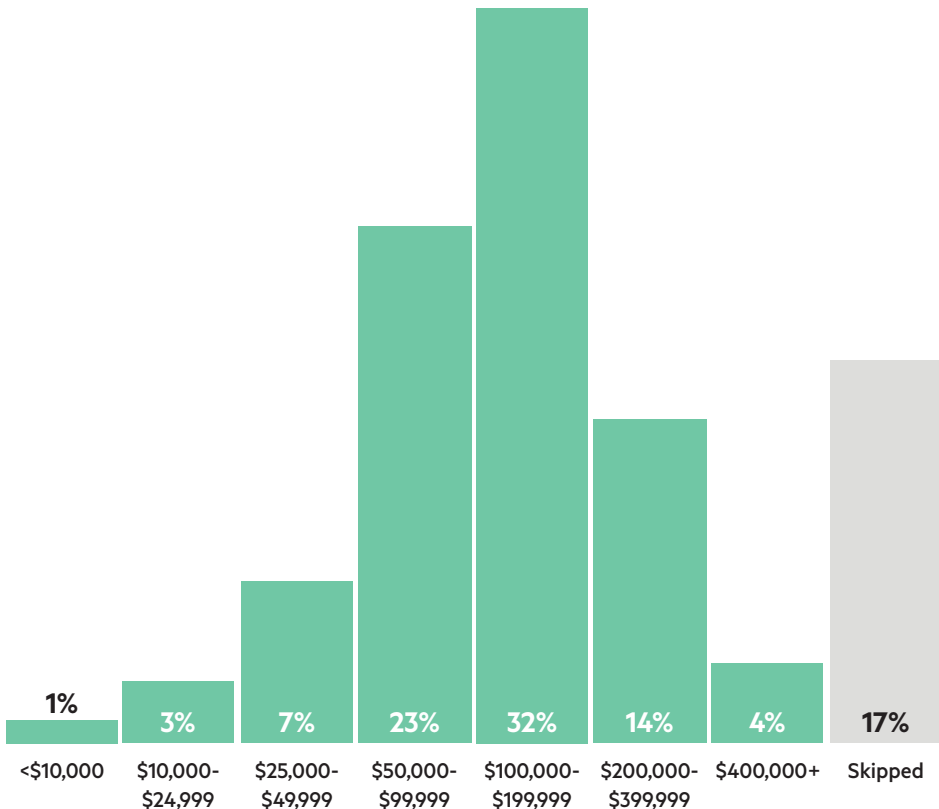
● 8% Received  
Public Assistance



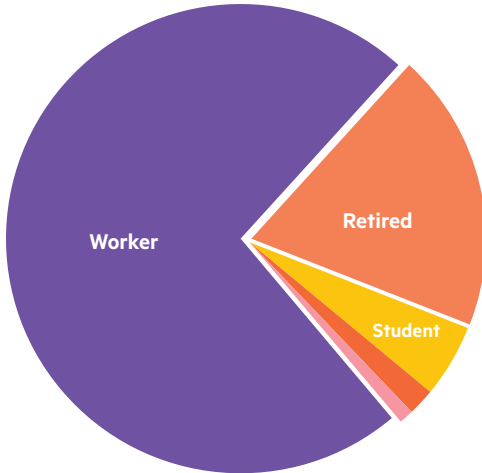
● 2% Inherited Wealth &  
Received Public Assistance

# Household Income

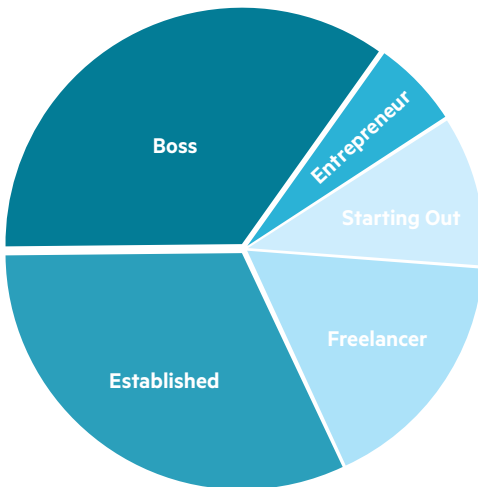
The wealthiest 4% of our audience makes 40 times the household income of our lowest 4%. To get a sense of that gap... imagine making four times as much money next year as you make now, then imagine earning only 1/10th of your current salary.



# Societal Role & Work Responsibility

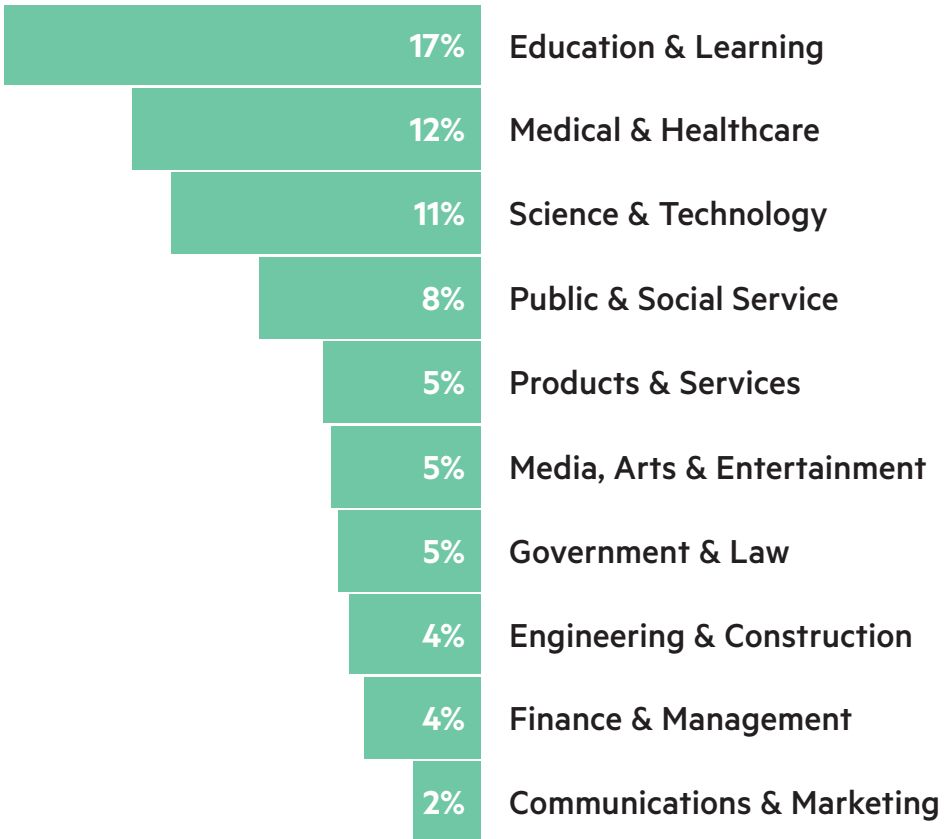


- **73% Worker**
- **19% Retired**
- **5% Student**
- **2% Unemployed**
- **1% Domestic Worker**

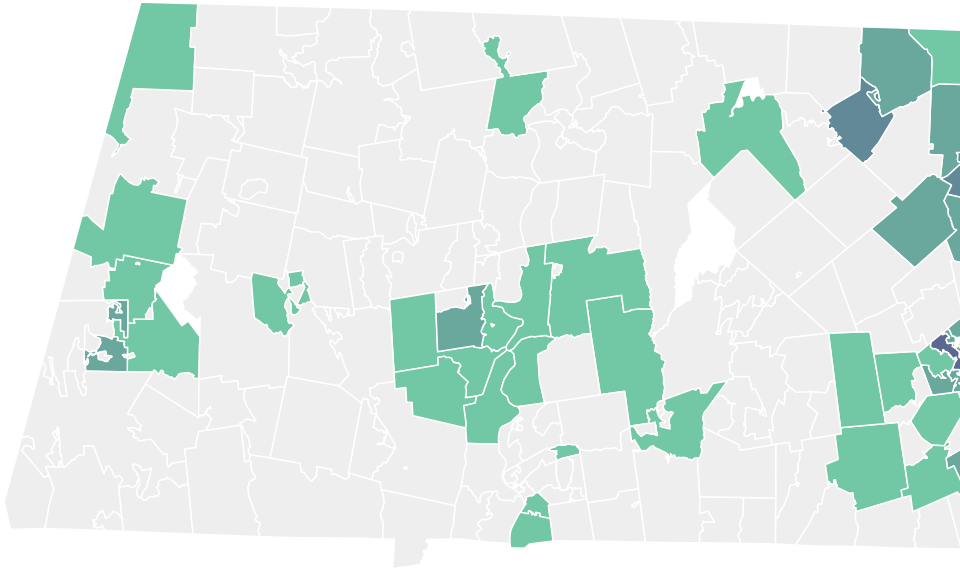


- **28% Boss**  
Director    Manager  
Executive    Supervisor
- **26% Established**  
Associate  
Senior
- **14% Freelancer**  
Freelancer  
Self-Employed
- **8% Starting Out**  
Assistant    Junior  
Entry Level    Trainee  
Intern
- **5% Entrepreneur**  
Employer  
Owner

# Work Sector



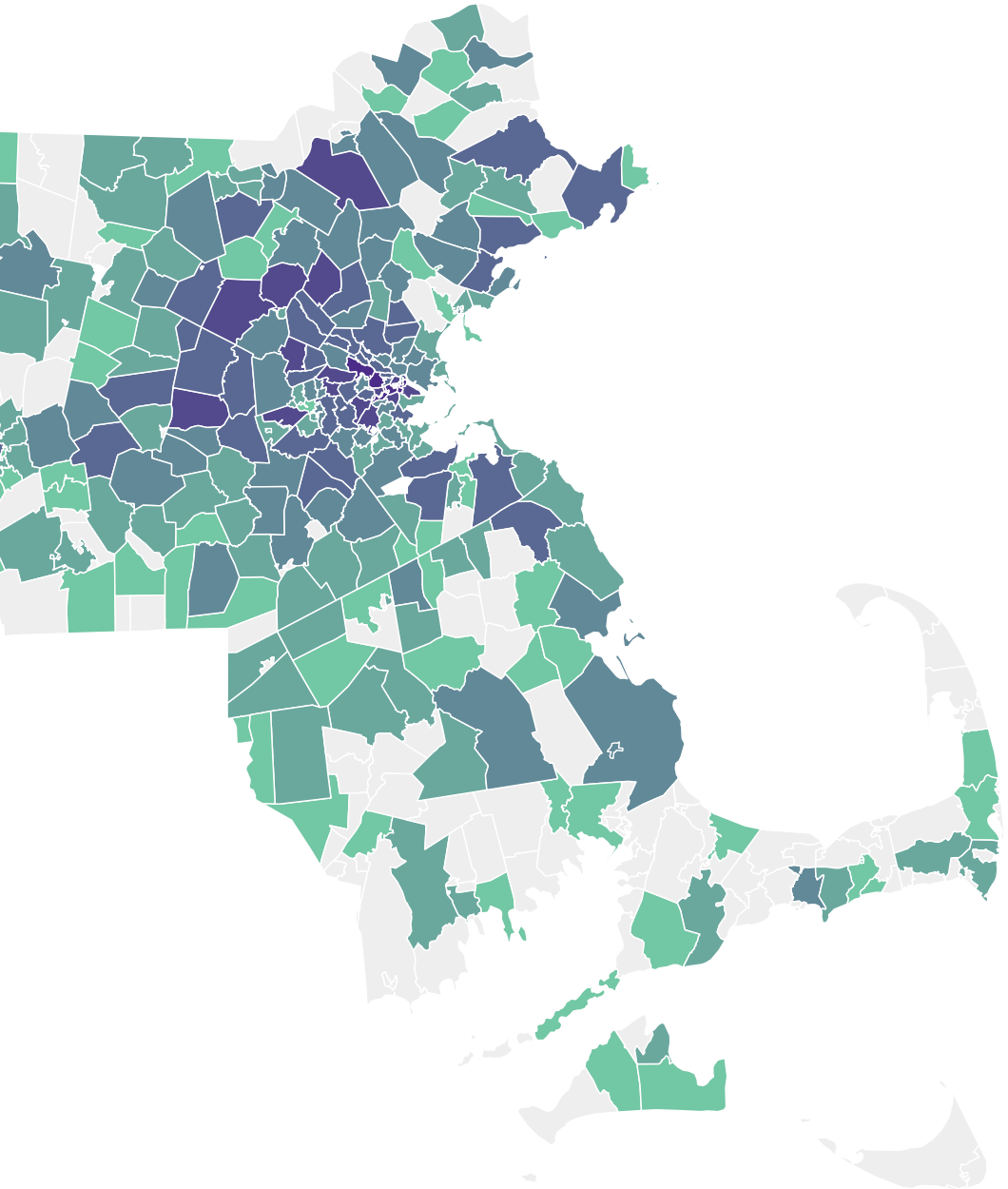
# Work Location



## Total Respondents

### By ZIP Code

- None
- 1
- 2-4
- 5-9
- 10-24
- 25-49
- 50+



# Engagement with WBUR

To better understand the people who make up our audience, we continue by exploring how they experience WBUR. The Let's Talk Survey featured 10 questions about our audience's relationship with the station itself, including three with long-answer responses that generated hundreds of pages of free text. Our team utilized a combination of both the quantitative approach required for the Audience Overview, as well as qualitative textual analysis techniques, to unpack the way our audience relates to us.

This section mixes charts and graphs with narrative descriptions in order to provide a clear picture of the ways in which people experience WBUR. We present those experiences by tracing the journey an audience member takes through the engagement funnel. That journey begins when a person first becomes Aware of WBUR, continues as they Consume regularly, deepens when they

are compelled to Talk to us, and culminates in their pledge of Support to the station. We also examine the key triggers that cause our audience members to end their journey by Exiting the funnel.

It is important to note that public radio organizations do not currently share a standard practice for quantifying audience engagement. During the creation of WBUR's Dynamic Growth Dashboard, BizLab led station personnel in the definition and classification of key metrics representing the health of the organization. Among the most significant classes of metrics identified was the audience engagement funnel, which gives us a framework to quantify and track the progress of our audience members as they deepen their commitment to our organization.



A clear understanding of all of the milestones in the journey a person takes, from initial discovery through to becoming a sustaining member, dramatically

increases the likelihood that we will be able to serve that person well and ultimately earn their support.

WBUR's Engagement Funnel has Four Tiers



- p. 50 **Awareness**      *Knowing that WBUR exists.*
- p. 64 **Consumption**      *Regularly listening to, reading stories from or attending events held by WBUR.*
- p. 74 **Talk**      *Reaching out to WBUR via phone, mail, social media, etc.*
- p. 80 **Support**      *Volunteering time, donating money, buying products or generating revenue for WBUR.*
- p. 92 **Exit**      *Leaving any tier of the funnel.*

# Awareness



When we refer to our “audience” we are speaking about people who regularly consume our content, call in to our shows and volunteer their time. Before a person does any of those things, they must first discover our station. While it is true that our audience survey by definition was not intended to reach people who did not regularly tune in to, but were only merely

aware of the existence of, our station, we are still able to learn about the ways in which awareness begins. By listening to the stories our respondents have shared about how they discovered WBUR, we are able to reconstruct the varied, yet well-traveled, paths which listeners take from being vaguely aware of WBUR to becoming a regular consumer.

*p. 51* **Discovery Paths**

*p. 51* **Born & Raised on Public Radio**

*p. 52* **NPR Affiliates & Syndicated Programs**

*p. 53* **Curious Flipping & Scrolling**

*p. 54* **Word of Mouth Recommendations**

*p. 56* **Conversion Triggers**

*p. 56* **Personal Changes & Life Events**

*p. 58* **GeoChanges**

*p. 62* **National & World Events**

*p. 63* **Quality Journalism & Captivating Programs**

# Discovery Paths

Asking our survey respondents to describe the moment in which their awareness of WBUR began yielded a rainbow of detailed recollections that ultimately fell into four main categories. Before we explore these major paths of discovery, it is important to take a moment to recognize that brand recognition and awareness are not the same thing. In telling the tales of their earliest memories of WBUR, many respondents cite the moment they became aware of National Public Radio in general, rather than our station specifically. By

the time a person's awareness leads to regular consumption, they must surely know our call sign, URL or frequency in order to intentionally tune in. Prior to that moment though, they might conflate our station with another public radio affiliate or only have a general awareness of NPR. Regardless of whether a person knows specifically about our station, or if they are only familiar with public radio in general, we can trace the ways in which a fuzzy awareness comes into focus.

## Born & Raised on Public Radio

Many of our respondents report that they grew up listening to WBUR or another NPR affiliate. With more than half our respondents born outside of Massachusetts and 6% of them with roots beyond the borders of the United States, not everyone had the opportunity to be exposed to our station in

their childhood. Regardless of which NPR affiliate they first encountered, our audience members cite fond memories of listening with one or both of their parents. Sometimes they recall the sound of WBUR in specific locations like the family kitchen. In other instances they reminisce about listening

from the back seat of their parents' car. Interestingly our respondents often speak of "growing up on" or "growing up with" NPR as if it were a nutritious staple or a life companion. Those who were born and raised listening to public radio describe their strong affinity for our station as a deep rooted part of their

identity, with one person going so far as to say that WBUR is "in my DNA".


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**51%** Born in a state other than MA.

**6%** Born outside of the U.S.

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*"NPR was the background music of my childhood. Car Talk still produces palpable memories of my dad."*



## **NPR Affiliates & Syndicated Programs**

Of the more than half of our respondents who were not born in Massachusetts, most of them report moving to the Boston area as adults. Unsurprisingly, many of our current audience members stated that they were avid public radio followers in the city or town where they previously lived. For those who still live outside of the Boston, their specific awareness of

WBUR has two main drivers. First, folks who are regular consumers of the NPR affiliate in their home state often seek out a Boston-based public radio station because they are looking for local coverage.

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**6%** of our audience has never lived in the Boston area.

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Alternatively, several respondents report first learning about WBUR through our syndicated programming. For the 6% of our audience

reporting that they have never lived in the Boston area, syndication has proven to be a significant source of awareness.

*“I first discovered WBUR through Here & Now on my NPR station (WUOM, Ann Arbor). When I don’t like WUOM’s programming during the work day, I switch to WBUR. **Boston news interests me because I run the marathon each year and my daughter is at MIT.**”*



## Curious Flipping & Scrolling

For the folks who do find themselves in our signal range, another key driver of awareness is a general state of curiosity. Sometimes our respondents, whether out of boredom or a desire to find something new, were motivated to simply “flip the radio dial”. When finding themselves in this open state of mind, some of our audience members report stumbling upon our station in an almost accidental fashion. Others

were specifically looking for talk radio, or when referring to a moment of discovery in the far past, they might have been searching for a genre of music we once offered. This active seeking on the analog dial is mirrored in a digital world that extends far beyond the reach of our transmitters. Several respondents report finding WBUR online after they decided to download an NPR-related app or “start listening

to podcasts”. Whether flipping, scrolling or clicking, a prime cause of awareness is a curious audience member with access to one of the many different technological platforms that we use to distribute our content.

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**40%** of our audience works in Education, Healthcare and STEM.


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## Word of Mouth Recommendation

Even if a person was not exposed to NPR in their childhood, if they never sought it out on their own or stumbled upon it by chance, they still might know someone who did have an experience like that. Consequently, the final major driver of an audience member’s awareness of WBUR is a word of mouth recommendation.

explicitly recommended that they check out our station. These recommendations sometimes come up naturally in conversation, as one respondent recounted, “I was missing an intellectual community and my friend mentioned she got her fix from WBUR”. Other times the advice takes on the form of a prescription, especially when,

***“A college professor required my class to listen to public radio for an hour a day and keep a journal. I got into the habit of listening and never stopped!”***




Many of our respondents report that a friend, romantic partner, family member or colleague

as many of our respondents recalled, issued by high school teachers and college professors.

Indeed, many of our audience members first encountered NPR as a part of their formal education. A significant number of those people drew attention to their status as a Boston University alum, citing it as the reason they first heard of our station. Similarly, a surprising number of respondents said they had learned about WBUR from a current or former employee. Direct connection, whether through a shared parent institution or a grown-

up child who is interning in the newsroom, is a powerful source of awareness. Finally, repeated direct experience to WBUR is the last notable path to discovery. Many respondents are exposed to our programming at work, and overwhelmingly those workplace environments tend to be laboratories. Alongside the home, classrooms and labs make up the most important sites in which word of mouth recommendations are taking place.

*“My parents always listened when I was younger so I would hear it with them in the car. **When I was studying for the GRE’s, an acquaintance told me to start listening to NPR, as it would give me a lot of information useful for my masters degree in international relations. I got hooked.”***




# Conversion Triggers

Knowing that WBUR exists is a prerequisite for becoming a regular consumer, but awareness alone does not compel a person to tune in. When we asked our survey respondents to describe how they discovered WBUR, many of them went on, unprompted, to speak about their journey further into the engagement funnel. After detailing their path to awareness they explained what caused them to convert to regular consumption, and

the key drivers for repeat consumers fall into four main categories. While an audience member's road to discovery might predispose them more towards one conversion trigger than another, it is important to remember that every journey through the engagement funnel is unique. Nonetheless, we can continue to fill in the picture of our audience by understanding the four main reasons they become consumers.

***“I got an Amazon Echo for Christmas, and when trying it out, I asked to hear the news. NPR came on, and I’ve been tuning in every day since.”***



## Personal Changes & Life Events

Many of our respondents consider being a public radio follower to be a symbol of edification. Accordingly, our

audience members often report their conversion to regular consumption being driven by a decision to better



themselves. That decision was sometimes the result of a soft campaign of peer pressure from friends or colleagues who began with a word of mouth recommendation.

changes often caused our audience members to adopt a new habit. For some people, WBUR has been a companion during difficult times, and for others it has been an old friend

*“My parents listened to NPR, and I discovered WBUR while I spent a LOT of time alone, recovering from cancer, while living in Boston at 21 years old.”*

Alternatively, and surprisingly, many of our respondents reported that their conversion took place in their teens as a sort of coming of age. Sometimes they linked that moment with getting a driver’s license and pursuing personal freedom, and other times they described it as a conscious decision to embrace a family tradition. In other cases significant life events, both exciting and difficult, were the cause for conversion. Losing loved ones, breaking up with romantic partners, graduating college, starting a new job and other similarly noteworthy

they were able to reconnect with using a new technology. Regardless of the precise motivation, respondents who converted for personal reasons tend to express their affinity for our station in strong emotional terms.



## GeoChanges


Another major trigger for conversion is rooted in the changes that people make in their geographic patterns. Especially when our audience members report being avid NPR listeners, they often convert to WBUR after moving to the area. In several cases our respondents reported that they began following WBUR in preparation for their move, easing it into their media diet as they weaned off their local NPR affiliate. Other audience members became regular consumers instead because their workplace or commute changed. In some

cases their new job brought them into signal range, and for other people it was the mere fact of having to commute by car that sealed their conversion. Finally, a surprising number of respondents reported seeking out WBUR content after a family member moved to Boston in order to keep abreast of what was happening in their new local area. When a person makes a geographic change, it can trigger them, and the people they love, to begin regularly consuming WBUR.


*“When I moved here in 1988, I looked for something to replace my beloved KCRW.”*



*“I started listening on the radio in my car **while delivering chicken wings** after I graduated college. Those were tough times.”*




*“Lived in Boston for many years and listened to WBUR since it began broadcasting BBC. **Moved back to Pittsburgh after my husband died and found WBUR online. I feel connected to a thread of sanity** here in the Rust Belt.”*



*“I always listened to MPR in my car when I lived in Minnesota and spent a lot of time driving. When I moved to Boston, I missed public radio (but not driving). Then **I discovered I could listen to the live stream of WBUR on my tablet in my kitchen while cooking and getting ready for work in the morning. I love it.**”*



***“I was in Boston on September 11, 2001, waiting to fly to Tokyo. I listened to BBC on WBUR as the most reliable source of information at a traumatic time. I kept listening when I later moved to Boston. And after subsequently moving to Albuquerque, I continued to listen to WBUR via the internet.”***



## National & World Events

A sizable portion of our audience points to a significant event that took place on the national or world stage as the catalyst for their conversion. Our respondents cite several major moments in history including the Gulf War, 9/11, the London Bombing, the Marathon Bombing and the 2016 Presidential Election. Whether gripped with fear, or just inspired to better understand what's happening in the world, these extraordinary events often send people in search of a trusted voice. It is the balanced, intellectual reputation of

NPR and WBUR that is often communicated along with word of mouth recommendations that serves as the foundation for many of our audience member's conversion. Our ability to provide comprehensive, unbiased coverage represents an important factor in the successful conversion of those who tune in during a time of crisis.

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*“During the economic recession **WBUR** helped to explain everything to me.”*



## Quality Journalism & Captivating Programs

For our respondents who happened upon WBUR by chance, or for those who were repeatedly exposed at work, one of the main reasons they choose to continue listening on a regular basis is the caliber of content we produce. In some cases, our audience members cite the high quality of our journalism describing it as “news with substance” and “calm, rational, even-handed reporting”. Other respondents named specific programs or hosts that captivated their attention. The most frequently cited passion-inducing shows and talent include Car Talk, Christopher Lydon, Con Salsa with José Massó, Dear Sugar, On Point with Tom Ashbrook

and Wait Wait... Don't Tell Me! Sometimes it takes a specific kind of programming to draw a casual listener in deeper, but for other people it is the nature of our coverage in general which keeps them interested. Whether due to the overall quality of our shows, or the unique character of a particular program, the final major trigger for conversion relies on the core product we produce, our content itself.

---

*“Fresh off the boat in 2000, was looking for news radio and a friend was shocked I had not heard about NPR/WBUR. **From the moment I listened to Tom Ashbrook, and later everything else, I was hooked for life.**”*



# Consumption



Once a person begins to regularly consume WBUR's content they enter the second level of the engagement funnel and can officially be considered a member of our audience. It is important to note that our station has defined consumption to be the practice of regularly listening to, reading stories from or attending events held by WBUR.

The Let's Talk Audience Survey presented respondents with 7 short-answer questions about their consumption habits. These questions focused on how our audience consumes our on-air and online content. We did not explicitly ask about the ways in which they consume our in-person offerings like talks and panels. Nonetheless, many of

x x x x	<i>p. 66</i>	<b>Time Since Conversion</b>	x x x x
x x x x	<i>p. 67</i>	<b>Listening vs. Reading</b>	x x x x
x x x x	<i>p. 68</i>	<b>Means of Access</b>	x x x x
x x x x	<i>p. 70</i>	<b>Program Following</b>	x x x x
x x x x	<i>p. 72</i>	<b>Time of Day &amp; Week</b>	x x x x
x x x x	<i>p. 73</i>	<b>Frequency &amp; Duration</b>	x x x x
x x x x			x x x x
x x x x			x x x x
x x x x			x x x x
x x x x			x x x x

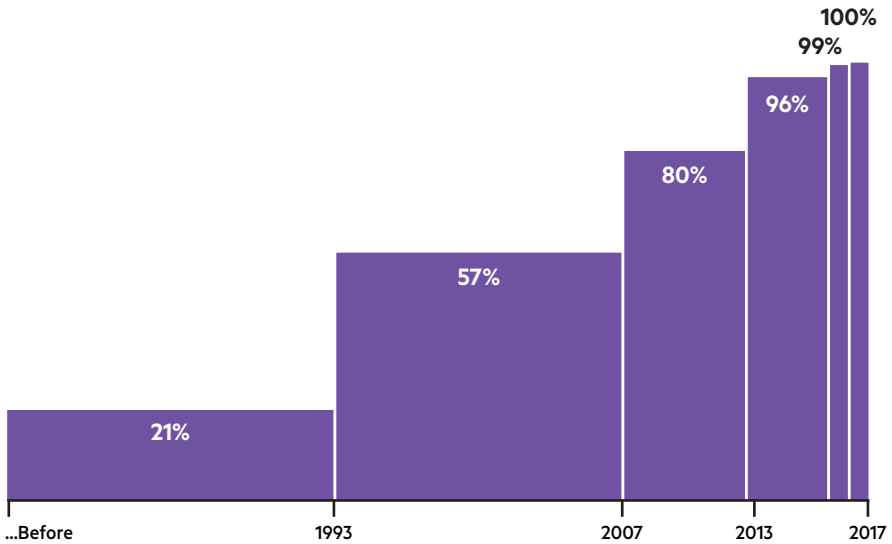


our respondents spontaneously offered a variety of comments about WBUR's events. Though this section focuses on the ways in which our respondents consume our audio, written and visual content, we encourage the curious reader to revisit the original survey results as there is ample data to perform a follow-up analysis that would shed further light on how our audience consumes our events. For now, we explore how long our respondents have been consuming our terrestrial and digital content, whether they

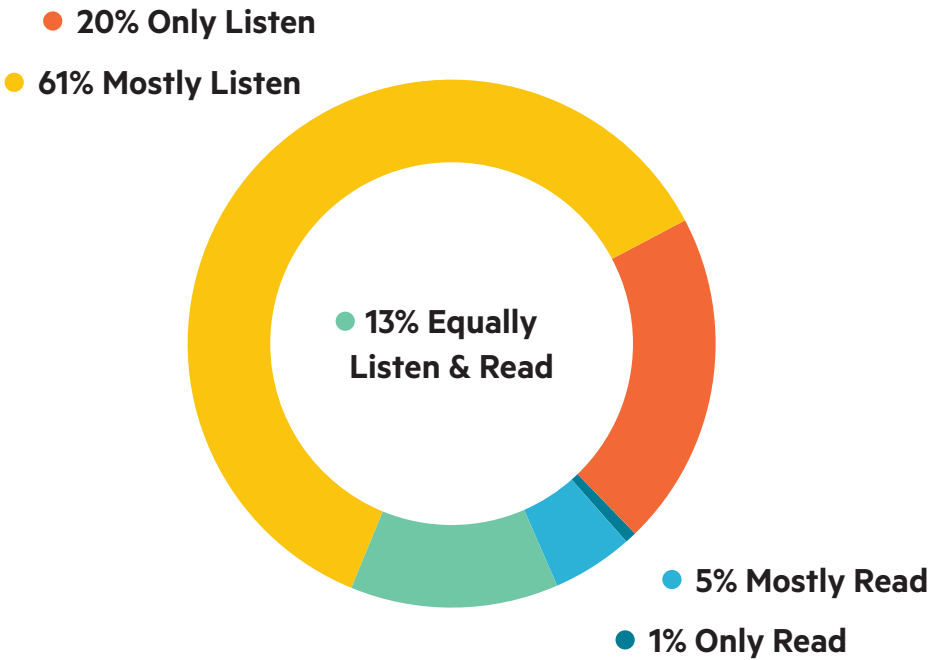
prefer listening or reading, what devices and technologies they use, the times when they tune in or visit, how long they stay, and what they consume while they're with us.

# Time Since Conversion

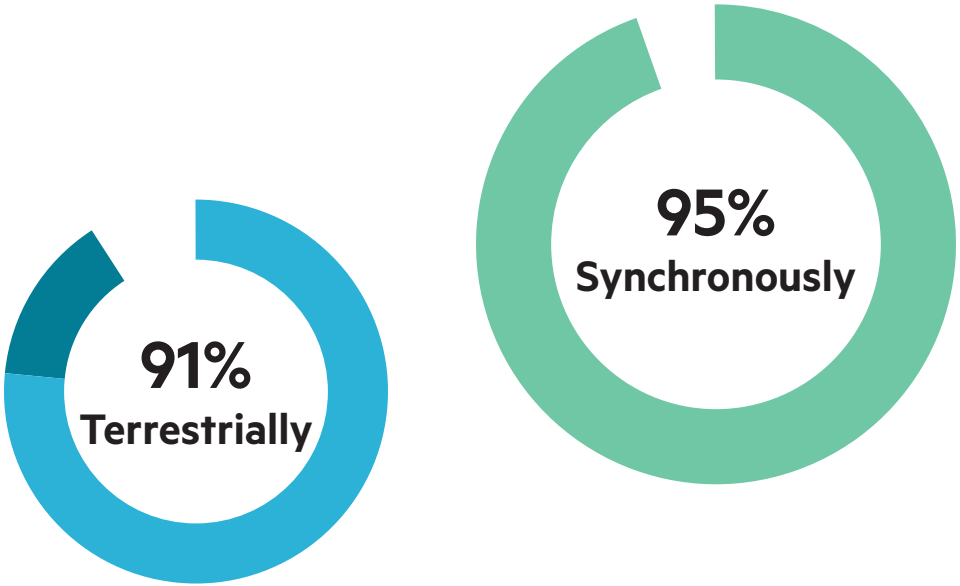
Four out of five audience members began listening to WBUR in the last decade, and one in five have been with us for over 25 years.



# Listening vs. Reading

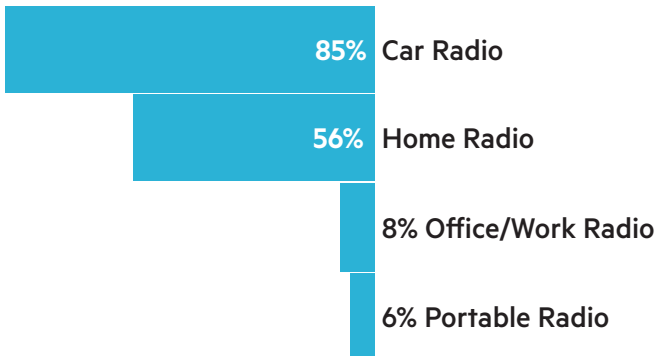


# Means of Access



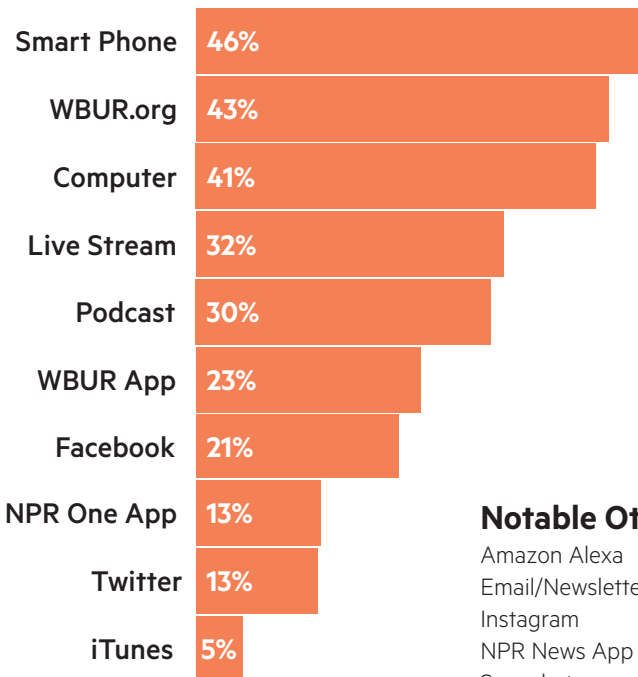
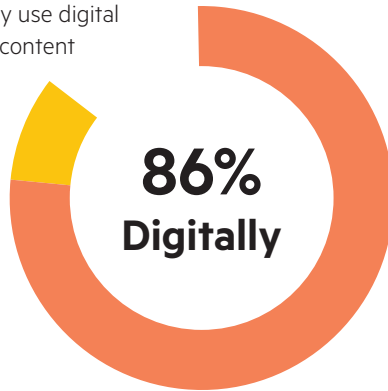
■ **14% Terrestrial-Only**

Respondents who exclusively use analog technology to consume our content



**9% Digital-Only**

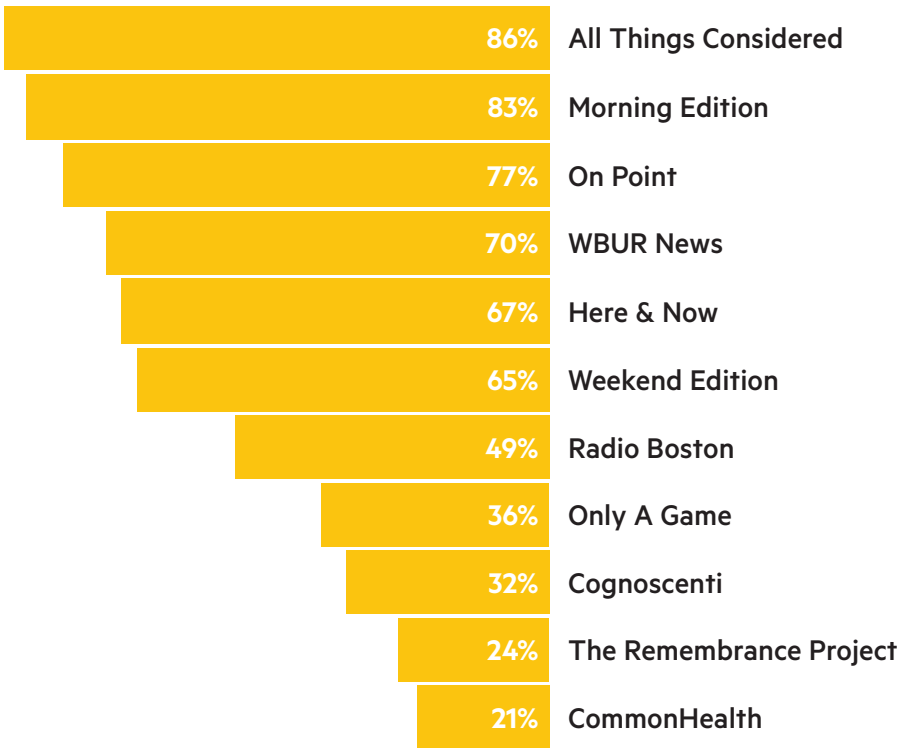
Respondents who exclusively use digital technology to consume our content

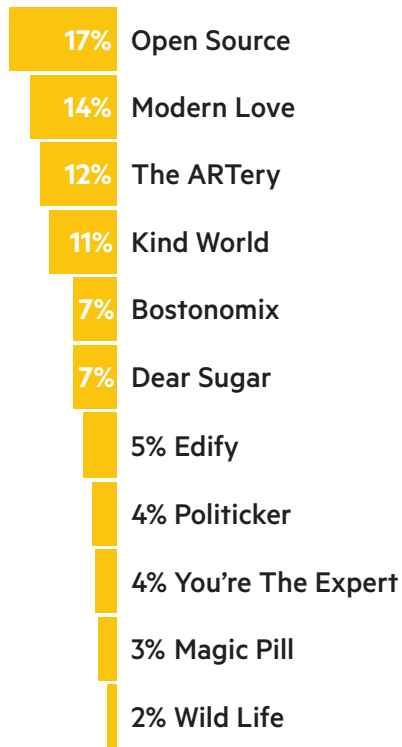


**Notable Other Means**

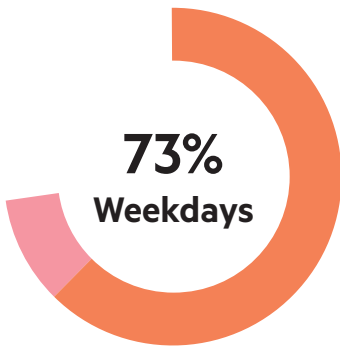
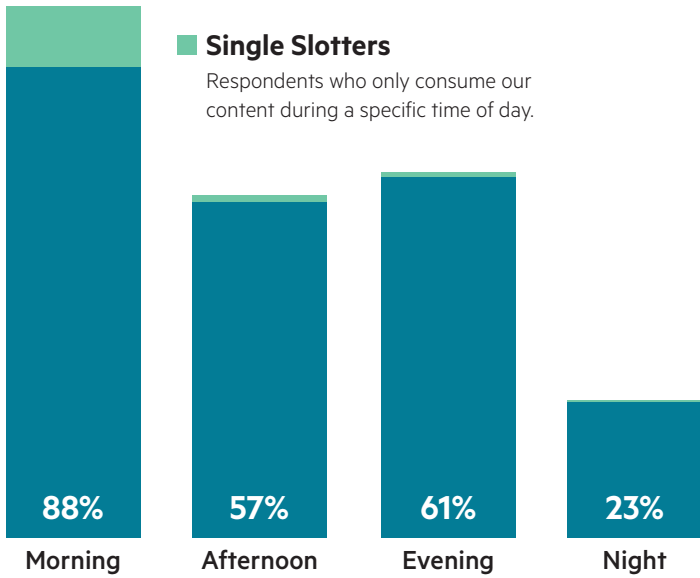
- Amazon Alexa
- Email/Newsletter
- Instagram
- NPR News App
- Snapchat
- Sonos
- Stitcher
- Tablet
- TuneIn

# Program Following

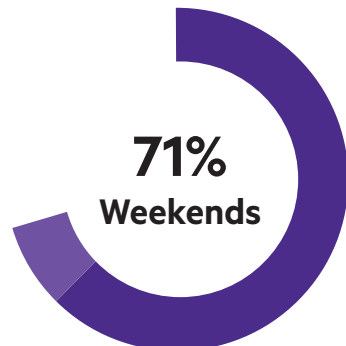




# Time of Day & Week



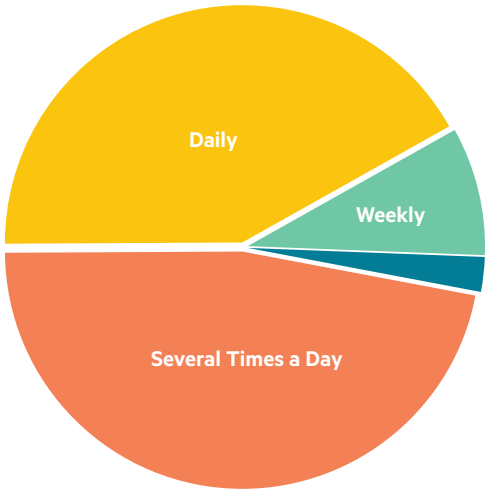
**10% Weekdays-Only**  
Respondents who exclusively consume our content on weekdays



**8% Weekends-Only**  
Respondents who exclusively consume our content on weekends



# Frequency & Duration



- 47% Several Times a Day
- 42% Daily
- 9% Weekly
- 2% Monthly/Rarely

- 35% 15 Mins to Half Hour
- 28% An Hour or Two
- 17% Until Story Finishes
- 16% Keep It On/Open
- 3% Just a Few Minutes



# Talk



When a regular consumer of our content is compelled to reach out and contact us, they make the leap from passive listener and enter the third tier of the engagement funnel as an active participant. Conducting the Let's Talk Survey was a way to invite our audience to speak up, and we were overwhelmed by the level to which they did. Not only did we receive a staggering 3,662 responses, but many of them were incredibly thoughtful and detailed.

This research study stands as an example of how we can embrace, rather than fear, innovation, and utilize modern means to better engage our audience. Now that most Americans consider the internet a basic utility and have a smartphone in their pocket, we were able to conduct the largest survey done on behalf of WBUR in ten years without relying on an external marketing research firm. By speaking directly to our audience we have proven that

x x x x  
x x x x  
x x x x  
x x x x  
x x x x  
x x x x  
x x x x

<i>p. 75</i>	<b>Calling Etiquette</b>
<i>p. 76</i>	<b>Good Form</b>
<i>p. 77</i>	<b>Bad Manners</b>

x x x x  
x x x x  
x x x x  
x x x x  
x x x x  
x x x x  
x x x x

x  
x  
x  
x x

we have the power to facilitate an incredibly rich dialogue with the public without the need for a middleman. The volume of the response to our survey further demonstrates how important it is to communicate our willingness to listen. So in this section, we explore an unexpected topic that emerged from our respondent's comments, that is, their views on the customs surrounding call-in shows.

## Calling Etiquette

The Let's Talk Survey did not pose any specific questions concerning on-air participation, but nonetheless, our respondents volunteered a variety of spontaneous comments on the topic. Analyzing what they had to say about call-in shows and the callers who participate in them, we distilled a concise code of conduct that our audience believes all parties involved ought to follow. This on-air etiquette can be seen as reflection of the way in which the Standards & Values,

presented in Section 5, apply to a specific type of engagement. Though only a small handful of respondents related stories of phoning in themselves, the comments audience members made about those who do call in allow us to better understand the unique role that callers play. Our audience sees the callers as extensions of themselves. Like representatives, callers speak on behalf of the people, allowing the voices of the audience to be heard. That privileged role, however, comes with increased scrutiny. As representatives,

callers must follow the audience's code of ethics, and likewise our audience expects that we treat their representatives according to the same Standards & Values.

## Good Form

Because our audience values hearing from people in their own words, they often speak positively about the way in which call-in shows allow them “to hear from regular Americans across the country”. They expect that callers focus on either their own first-hand experiences or speak about facts they are qualified to explain, whether as certified experts or knowledgeable laypeople. In order to assure the quality of the representatives that do speak on air, our audience expects that we pay special attention to the way we screen and balance callers. Healthy moderation is typified by the presence of a variety of informed perspectives on a given topic, not a battle between polar opposites. Further, our audience appreciates when the callers are given ample time to speak without making them feel

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*“I would like more debate and discussion on controversial issues. It is **something I really appreciate about On Point, where callers and guests on opposite sides of an issue are talking to each other in the same space.**”*



rushed. Our respondents enjoy thoughtful dialogue and remind us that it requires both skilled referees alongside well-prepared participants.


## Bad Manners

Our audience expects that callers positively contribute to a shared dialogue. Respondents are especially critical of people who are “uninformed”, call in to spread “misinformation” or recycle talking points from pundits. Our audience is particularly unhappy if these callers slide down the slippery slope from an ignorant diatribe to a prejudiced tirade that borders on hateful speech. But in most cases, the callers who stray from facts just come across as “embarrassing” or “annoying”. The audience expects their representatives to add something insightful to the conversation, rather than “ramble and rant”, and they rely on our moderation to facilitate that discussion. Though callers who are not considered good representatives will still slip through our screening, the audience is particularly critical of our transgressions against civility as well. Several respondents expressed a deep discomfort with the frequent “interrupting” and “cutting off callers”, going so far as

to say that some of the male hosts could be “rude and condescending” and were even perceived as “bullying” their callers. Our audience expects us to challenge callers to provide factual evidence of their opinions, but to do so with calm determination rather than aggression. When other callers misbehave, it is disappointing to our audience, but when we violate the shared norms, it is an even graver offense. With the incredible power of holding the mic, comes the great responsibility of knowing how to pass it and when to listen.

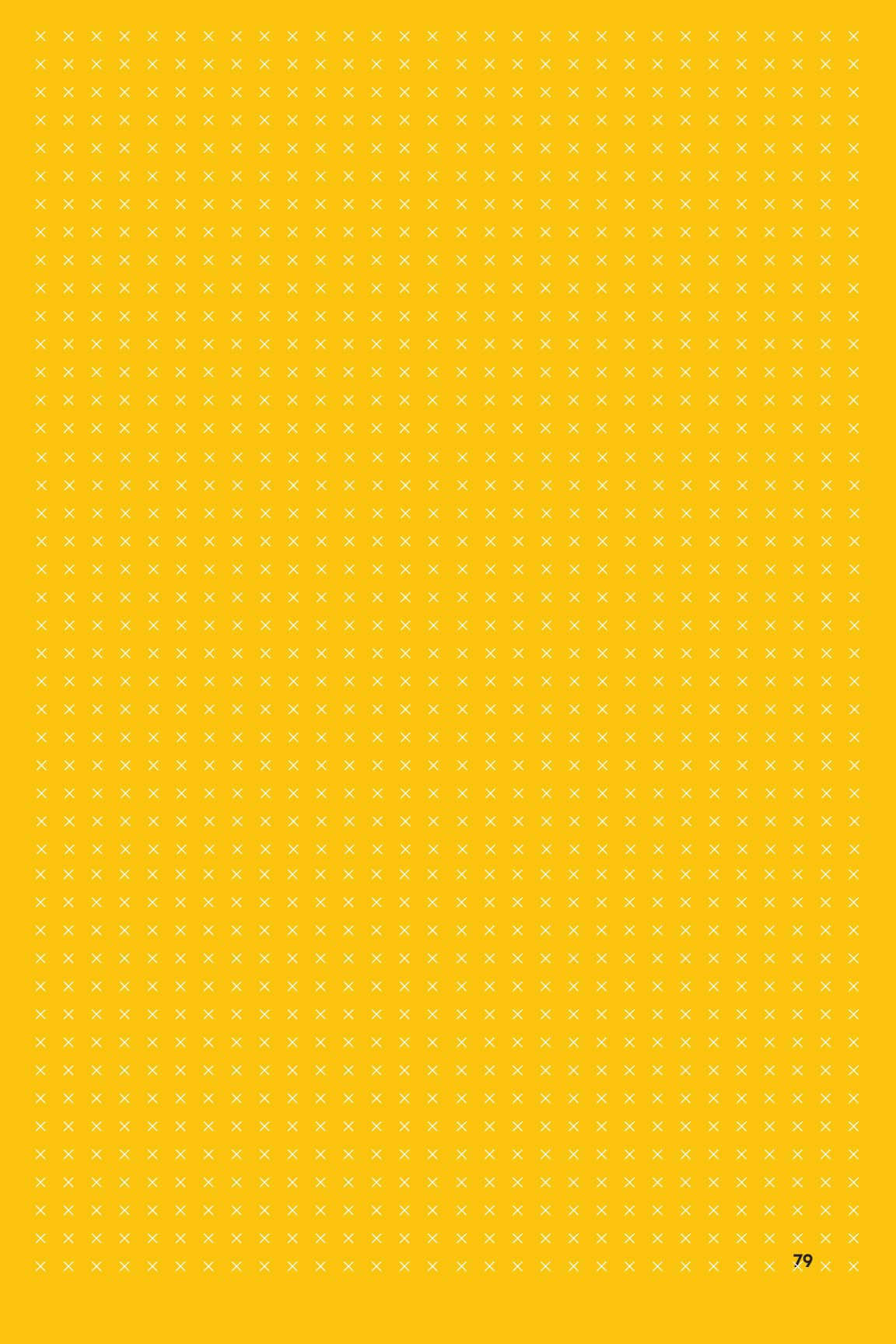
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***“I find it distressing to listen to people being interrupted.”***



*“I am listening less to call in shows. Occasionally there will be callers who know a lot and that’s great. But I don’t want to spend my time listening to people vent. **I want to learn something. That’s why I listen to WBUR.**”*





# Support



Though we did not ask our respondents any direct questions about financial support for our station, a surprising number of people spoke up about the ways in which we fund WBUR. Many of those comments came from audience members who regularly donate their money, volunteer their time or purchase tickets and merchandise. From the wealth of feedback we were

able to learn more about what drives our audience to make that financial commitment, joining our cherished supporters in the fourth and final tier of the engagement funnel. Equally importantly, we also uncovered a series of hopes, fears, expectations and suggestions from our respondents that might help guide our future fundraising efforts.

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# Donation Catalysts

As we noted previously, many of our audience members offered up detailed accounts of their journeys through the funnel from awareness to consumption. These respondents often continued to tell the story of how they ultimately went on to support WBUR, either by giving a one-time gift or, more often, by becoming sustainers.

In a striking parallel to the Conversion Triggers, our audience spoke about four main motivators that inspire their donations.

## Program Passion

Several of our respondents attribute the motivation for their donation to be a desire to support a particular program.

Dear Sugar and On Point are cited as favorites worthy enough of to earn support in and of themselves. Interestingly, some of our audience members say they donated to our station in order to support programming we carry from NPR affiliates. Respondents specifically mention their desire to support


Marketplace, On the Media and Planet Money in addition to the original content WBUR creates.

## National & World Events

Just as crises on the global stage motivate our audience members to become regular consumers, so to do these epic events catalyze donations. Several respondents reported that they had become sustainers due to the results of the recent presidential election. Concern about possible cuts to the budgets of public media organizations, as well as restrictions on the freedom of the independent press, led some of our respondents to make their first donations. The stability we have provided for our audience in the past has helped to engender their support as our organization comes under threat in the present.

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*“Know that we are all behind you and while the “president” keeps putting you down. Know that we are here for you and support you. Usually I just gave during drives but I am now a sustaining member to show solidarity.”*



## GeoChanges & Reconnections

For self-professed lifelong supporters of public radio, many of our respondents begin donating to WBUR as a part of settling down in Boston after a recent move. This act of membership transfer is something that our audience

members treat as quite natural, even expected. When our respondents say they have “always supported public radio”, they specifically mean by making donations to their local public radio stations. To be a public radio supporter,

then, is to donate locally, and consequently it is not a betrayal to perform a membership transfer. Interestingly, it is more unusual for a person to donate to a station far from their home. Several respondents describe cases in which this happens as a part of a reconnection with WBUR. While some of our audience members began their donations after returning to

Boston, a surprising number of respondents spoke of the ways in which their digital reconnection with the station caused them to begin donating again. With fond memories of listening to WBUR when living here in the past, several audience members report donating thanks to our digital distribution.

*“I heard WBUR’s programming while living in Kansas. I downloaded the NPR app once I moved to Massachusetts so I could listen to both WBUR and my Kansas City news from KCUR. I became a sustaining member of WBUR this year.”*



*“I have always been a big local NPR supporter. Moving to MA means switching to WBUR.”*


## Identity Capstones

Especially for our audience members who believe that being a public radio follower is a symbol of edification, pledging financial support to WBUR is often considered a signifying action. Several respondents spontaneously reported that they rely on our programming even though they are not able to financially support our station at this point in their lives. Others speak proudly of the moment they were finally able to start donating, often affirming


their current identities as “sustaining members”. We see, then, that the completing the journey to the final level of the engagement funnel is also a goal for many of our respondents. Whether Born & Raised on NPR, or learning of its existence later in life by a Word of Mouth Recommendation, making one’s first donation to WBUR is one of the most important markers of a true public radio follower’s identity.




*“If I could afford it,  
I’d donate millions.”*



*“I hope WBUR makes a great tote bag  
in 2017 so I can represent my childhood  
NPR station and support the important  
work being done.”*



*“I discovered WBUR back when I was a graduate  
student in Boston in 1980. I moved away  
and could not get the station anymore until  
internet streaming started on smartphones.  
Now I listen again daily, and contribute to my  
home station as well as WBUR.”*



# Funding Wishlist

We asked our respondents what they would like to see from WBUR in 2017. Along with a variety of recommendations related to our content and distribution (that we explore in the Opportunities for Reaction), our audience members also expressed four main wants

and wishes when it comes to our financial future which we examine in this subsection.

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*“Public radio is special due to its funding and mission.”*



## Financial Independence


While some respondents characterized us as having “no ads”, others thought we featured too many messages from our sponsors. But no matter which of those camps an audience member falls into, our respondents praise our financial independence. They believe that our funding model demonstrates our integrity while providing listeners with “ad free” content. Our audience is proud of WBUR’s “independence from corporate advertising” and links our reputation for presenting “unbiased facts” directly to our

“listener supported” funding model. They encourage us to remain “unaffected by advertisers” and caution us to reject support from sponsors who do not live up to the audience’s Standards & Values. Several respondents questioned whether we had received funding from the Koch brothers, and encouraged WBUR to refuse any offer of their support in the future. Distancing ourselves from “sleazy sponsors” and large corporations, especially in the pharmaceutical industry, is seen as essential to maintaining our integrity.


*“I always give and I wish there was an app that provided **uninterrupted WBUR** to people who have a current membership.”*



*“I want continued in-depth coverage. Follow the money, straight to your corporate underwriters if necessary.”*



*“I’d like more retro womens-fit tee shirts. I would love to show off my NPR pride, but NPR does the same thing a lot of companies do. They exclude womens-focused products and then wonder why women do not buy or wear them.”*






## Financial Transparency

Not only does our audience want us to remain financially independent, they also call, in no uncertain terms, for us to be more financially transparent. As individuals give up ever more of their private information to large organizations, they are beginning to require once opaque institutions to expose themselves to a similar level of

scrutiny. Our audience wants to know where our money comes from and where it goes. Especially given that this request comes from a group of people who took the time to reveal many personal details of their own, it does not seem unreasonable that they would want us to respond in kind.

*“We are constantly asked to provide money, without any regard to whether it is financially possible, and are never provided with results of fundraising or actual budgets and expenses.”*




## Modern Models for Uncertain Times

Several of our respondents acknowledge that relinquishing donations from dubious backers might place our organization under further financial strain. Indeed, many people express worry about the security of our future funding, especially those who feel they cannot contribute any more than they already do. However, our respondents also

share words of encouragement, urging us to explore alternative business models. They express a willingness to help us find a new way to support ourselves and even offer specific suggestions. Our audience members agree that we need to modernize our business model in order to weather these uncertain times.

*“I would welcome more discussion of effective ways in which individuals can contribute or volunteer, both to help others and to make a political difference.”*



## Spotlight on Volunteering

The final item on our audience’s funding wishlist is to see an increased focus on volunteering. Especially for respondents who do not have the means to give a monetary gift, they would like to know more about how they can donate their time to support our station. Our audience wants to get involved beyond just answering a phone during a fundraising drive. They want more hands-on, engaging ways of volunteering that allow

them to make a real difference. Interestingly, several of our respondents explicitly requested more first-hand stories from actual volunteers. In addition to “more advertised volunteering opportunities” they also want to hear from “interesting people talking about volunteering”. Our audience wants to roll up their sleeves to help us and hear tales from those folks who have had an impact of their own.

*“I’d like to see more cooperation with WGBH. There’s no need for two NPR radio stations in Boston area. There should be more consolidation at the upper ends. Public radio is non-profit and donations are paying for it. You could increase broadcasting in coordination with WGBH by decreasing upper management expenses.”*





regular consumption, but they are unlikely to willfully erase their memory of our station. In actuality, these people either remain peripherally aware of WBUR, or they have actively chosen not to engage with us further, and so it does not make sense to imagine the awareness tier of the engagement funnel as having a frequently used exit route. Instead, we can, and ought, to attempt to analyze the drivers which compel our audience members to abandon listening sessions, hang up

calls or cancel donations. While in most cases these exits are temporary pauses in activity, or returns to antecedent tiers of the funnel, sometimes these departures are permanent. Stemming tides of attrition might require changes to the way we serve the public. But in order to entice our audience members to stay, we must first understand why they leave.

## Consumption Turn-Offs

None of the respondents report that they have permanently stopped consuming our content. Of course, this is to be expected as our survey targeted our audience members who, by definition, consume our content. Reaching people who intentionally retreated to the awareness tier of our engagement funnel would require an entirely different kind of research study, one likely aimed at non- and former-consumers, and thus

distributed in a wholly other manner. Even though we did not gather data about what causes a person to permanently tune us out, we were able to learn a great deal about the four main reasons that make our audience members temporarily reach for the dial.

## Reaching Limits

Often times our audience members take a break from consuming our content because they've reached some kind of limit. For several of our respondents who report listening regularly during their commutes, they often tune out from WBUR once they've reached the edge of our signal range. For others it is the end of their commute, and the need to exit the car, that causes them to, sometimes reluctantly, reach for the dial.

Several respondents explicitly cited their frequent "driveway moments" and explained that they often remained in their car to continue listening, not only because they were enjoying the program, but because they would have been unable to once inside their destination. Indeed, smaller changes in location, like moving from room to room in a home, can limit a person's ability to consume our content. Whether it's due to the lack of a Wi-Fi speaker in the garage, or a kitchen radio that doesn't quite pickup our signal, sometimes our audience faces limitations

from their technological devices. Relatedly, those who listen to our podcasts, read our stories online or tune in to listen to particular programs, often report turning away from WBUR once they come to the end of the content they are consuming. This motivation is clearly shared by the 17% of respondents reporting that they typically tune in "until the story finishes". However, for the 16% of our respondents who say they "Keep WBUR On/Open", the main reason they tune out is a need for sleep. Most switch us off when their day ends and they are "out of time", but some respondents reported regularly falling asleep and waking up to the sound of WBUR. However, not all of our respondents have the capacity, or desire, to consume our content 24/7. In some cases, respondents report being "overwhelmed" saying they "can't take any more news". Others, instead of citing a feeling of mental exhaustion, simply report that they stop consuming our content once they've had their fill.

*“I turn it on when I want to be informed and turn it off when I need a break from being informed.”*

*“I have to turn it off when I get overwhelmed by this current news cycle. Also sometimes it is not appropriate for my kids to listen to, but you guys are very good about warnings for that issue.”*


*“I listen when I drive, so sometimes I will park and finish a story but other times I can’t, so I have to stop. I don’t often go back and find the story on my phone to finish it, but I frequently want to, so I may be changing that behavior in the future. I’m not as savvy about doing that, so information on how to would be helpful.”*

## Focus Changes

Audience members who turn away from WBUR because they've reached their limit often turn towards another source of media. Many respondents cited this need for variety in their media diet as a motivator for moving on. Frequently our audience turns off our news to turn on music or live sports. Respondents tend to turn towards music, and away from WBUR, when they are looking for something less mentally taxing or because they are interacting with other people around them. In some cases, parents turn off difficult stories to shield their children, and in others, they merely prefer to consume a different kind of media when they are with their kids. Folks who are working tend to turn off WBUR when they need to talk with colleagues

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***“My kids enjoy listening with me, but sometimes the content is too adult for their ears.”***



or concentrate more deeply. Our respondents report requiring silence, or music, for deep concentration at work, whereas a general need for quiet in the home was often more closely linked with a desire to read or rest. Variations in activity and changes of focus occur frequently throughout the courses of our audience's days, and so it is to be expected that our respondents report tuning out when they need to buckle down or just let go.


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*“I like to listen to music. I don't like to listen to News or Politics all the time. I want to know what's going on but then move on. I love the podcasts because then I can pick what I want to listen to.”*





*“I work from home and listen to WBUR in the background if I don’t have to be on the phone. **I mute it/turn it off when I need to be talking to someone or need to crunch numbers or do something that requires a higher level of concentration.** Otherwise, I’ll often be listening while simultaneously doing lower level work.”*



## Values Violations


While it seems unwise to attempt to prevent audience members from temporarily exiting the funnel because they’ve hit a personal limit, or need to change their focus, there are other cases in which we might want to reevaluate some of our actions that contribute to more sudden departures. The most often cited cause of a respondent’s rapid exit from the engagement funnel is a transgression of any of the Standards & Values described in Section 5. Above all, our audience is quick to tune us out when we demonstrate a failure to listen. When our

hosts interrupt their guests, talk over the experts, or cut off their callers, they display a lack of civility our audience does not tolerate. Similarly, when our respondents feel we are displaying a lack of understanding or empathy to the varied circumstances of the public we serve, they also stop consuming our content. To a lesser extent, our audience also tunes out when they perceive our coverage as being too shallow or repetitive, which is most often a problem for listeners who stick to fixed time windows. Though it might seem not to be a violation of their


values, many of our audience members reported tuning out when we air the voice of Donald Trump. Our respondent's want to hear from people in their own words, but when it comes to our current president, they overwhelmingly prefer not to be subjected to the sound of his voice. Our audience, in this case, would rather we speak for him.

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*“Donald Trump’s voice makes me **lunge for the off button.**”*



*“I have to confess, as much as I like most of the hosts of the various shows, I sometimes find the interviews incredibly rude and obnoxious **with constant interruptions of answers** to the questions asked. I also think increasingly the hosts seem to use interviews as opportunities to show off how knowledgeable they are.”*



***“I sometimes agree with the criticism that public radio has an unconscious bias toward the affluent “elite.” This is particularly noticeable during the fundraisers, where they make statements like “The \$125 you’ll spend on Winston Flowers is the same you’d probably be spending anyway on Valentine’s Day”. Sorry, not so for most people. Or they encourage you to donate some amount which is the “same as you spend on your daily latte”. Again, not so. Things like this rankle, to be honest, because they seem to be pitched to the entitled by the entitled. I do love WBUR this is my only real criticism.”***



## Polarizing Programming & Stale Sounds

Even if we have not violated the Standards & Values of our respondents, sometimes people leave WBUR when they are unhappy with our content. The programs which captivate many of our consumers, and catalyze their donations, are the very same ones which cause other respondents to tune out. The most frequently cited of these polarizing programs include BBC, Car Talk, Christopher Lydon, Cognoscenti, Con Salsa with

José Massó, The Moth, On Point with Tom Ashbrook The Remembrance Project, Sunday Puzzle, TED Talks and Wait Wait... Don't Tell Me! While our respondents expressed this mixture of deep-seated dislike and passionate support for some of our content, they seemed to agree upon their dissatisfaction with the Marsh Chapel Services. Rather than being angered by the program, many respondents just feel that it is out of place on a “news

*“In truth, my favorite way to spend a Sunday is to clean the house while listening to the news. **I respect that people participate in Sunday worship, and that broadcasting that enables many more people to participate, who may not be able to get to church. I just can’t stand hearing it on the radio for some reason. It just bums me out every single Sunday. Somehow that broadcast occurs exactly when I’m in housecleaning mode. But I understand that many people must look forward to it.**”*

station” with some even saying it makes them “uncomfortable”. Some respondents speculated that other listeners must surely benefit from the programming, and indeed a lone respondent in our dataset expressed enthusiasm for the Sunday service. There is, however, no type of programming which is as universally disliked as our on-air fundraisers, especially those involving the sale of flowers. A full 7% of our respondents elected to tell us that they turn off WBUR during fundraisers, including the 2% that stressed they tune out after having donated. Interestingly, though, our respondents were surprisingly sympathetic while issuing their complaints. Our audience prides itself on our public funding model, but our respondents view the pledge drives as a kind of old-fashioned form of punishment that they are made to endure regardless of whether they already support us. Our respondents unhappily describe these times as “a week without news” and our sustainers are left feeling particularly frustrated. It should not be surprising, then, that during our fundraising

times, our audience members often report switching over to WBGH to supplement what they perceive as an absence of news in their day. Because our audience members have a rich media landscape to draw upon, it is important to reflect on the effects that the balance and variety of our programming schedule has on our audience.

*“Pledge drives are a turn-off. I know they are necessary but as a sustainer I find them very annoying and I feel they’ve gotten much longer recently. **I wish there was some way for sustainers to listen to programs drive-free or at least drive-reduced. I would up my monthly pledge for that!**”*



“Fundraisers make me turn off WBUR because I end up feeling ashamed that I can’t afford to donate. **Even though I work two jobs in public education and am in graduate school, I can barely afford rent. Buying roses or golf jackets or a chance to win tickets to Hamilton in New York seems to be aimed at people with more to give and easier lives.** It would be great to win tickets but I wouldn’t be approved for time off work so what’s the point? I wish I could donate but last year I waited in line at the food cupboard once a week so I consider shopping in a grocery store to be a privilege. **Maybe there should be other ways to donate where you can invest in certain topics.** I would find a way to donate specifically for investigative reporting on topics like the front lines of the war on our planet or what the hell we can do to protect trans people of color from being murdered because those seem more important than being able to eat dinner.”

# Conversation Killers

From the rich responses of our audience members, we had the unexpected opportunity to learn about a major reason why they drop out of conversation with us. Unfortunately, it is often our own failure to reply that ends the dialogue with our audience. In extreme cases, these unrequited contacts can become permanent blockers to a person's advancement to the final tier of the funnel.

*“I tried to contact WBUR last week to share a great idea I had for fundraising and could not get through to anyone. I could not even identify who I should contact on your website.”*



## Missed Connections

Audience members regularly reach out to WBUR in myriad ways: calling in to our shows, writing letters of complaint, commenting on our articles, replying to our tweets, and so on. Every time we fail to respond, we relinquish an opportunity to strengthen our relationship and risk eroding our audience member's trust in our commitment

to serve the public well. Indeed, several respondents frustratedly recounted stories of unanswered correspondence. Amusingly, and perhaps not uncommonly, one respondent recalled a time they tried to call in to a show only to realize they were listening to a program that had previously aired.

*“I heard it while in my landlord-friends’ plants while they were on vacation (they left the radio on to deter a break-in). Chris Lydon’s “The Connection” was playing and, not realizing it was an evening replay, I tried to call in. I even remember the topic: the orphan whose acceptance to Harvard was rescinded when it became public that she’d killed her mother!”*






## Donation Blockers

If we repeatedly fail to respond to the entreaties of an audience member, this series of missed connections can lead to a build up in frustration that permanently deters a person from supporting our station. Several audience members who do not feel that they are being heard report that they are

consciously holding back their donations in protest. Our failure to demonstrate that we are listening is causing some of our respondents to remain stuck in the third tier of our engagement funnel.

*“There is an entire perspective absent from all of your coverage of education stories. I have written you, several of you, many times over many years about the absence of this perspective, and it makes no difference to you. The ONLY reason that I have not become a dues-paying member of BUR is this issue. I even wrote Kravetz a long while ago, asking for a response to my question about why BUR refuses to cover the issue; he never responded, so I didn’t become a member.”*




# Support Termination

Every audience member's journey through the engagement funnel is unique, but surprisingly our respondents only reported one type of reason for withdrawing their support. The same values violations that cause audience members to turn-off our content are the transgressions which lead regular donors to abandon their pattern and sustainers to revoke their pledges. Once a person has entered the fourth tier of the engagement funnel, unless they move to a new city and transfer their allegiance to a different NPR affiliate, they seem to only terminate their support of WBUR if believe they have reason to question our integrity.


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***"I stopped contributing because you run ads for Homeopathic advertisers."***




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***"I rescinded my donation because the announcer likened listening to WBUR without donating to stealing your neighbor's newspaper. That is extremely offensive, it would be like churches telling people they can't attend if they don't give money at the door."***



*“I have been a devoted and enthusiastic listener and supporter for the decades I’ve lived in the Boston area, but my relationship to WBUR has changed radically since the election. I am turning it off more than on now. I cannot listen to the “neutral, objective” coverage of the Trump presidency. I feel you have abandoned us, your listeners, with your business as usual attitude. **I will not be contributing money again until and unless there is a serious and significant reappraisal by WBUR of its role and responsibilities in light of the clear and present danger represented by Trump & Co.**”*



# Audience Deep Dive

Analyzing both the demographics of our respondents as well as the ways in which they engage with WBUR, allowed us to develop a robust picture of what our

audience actually looks like. Having achieved a broad understanding of our audience as a whole, we can now deepen that conception by examining our respondents in more precise

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detail. By exploring different facets of our audience through a variety of lenses, we are able to gain additional insight into the similar or separate subpopulations that exist within the public we serve.

The analysis required for this deep dive into the perspectives of our respondents was conducted directly members of WBUR's newsroom. During our very first team sessions, it became clear that though the BizLab team had the necessary skill in Human-Centered Participatory Research & Design to execute this study, it was the members of the newsroom who possessed the nuanced understandings of their respective domains required to interpret the audience's responses. Though our Principal Investigator assisted the journalists, producers and editors in identifying scientifically-sound areas of the data for further exploration, the findings presented in this section are solely the work of individuals from WBUR's newsroom.

Ethnography is the science of writing about people and cultures. Listening to what a group of people say, attempting to induce an understanding of what they mean, and then putting that analysis into one's own words are the fundamental steps that describe both rigorous social science as well as excellent journalism. In hindsight, it is perhaps unsurprising, then, that the members of WBUR's newsroom were so well able to adapt the skills they use to make the news for this research study. However, it should still be noted that the Principal Investigator was nonetheless stunned by acuity of the observations the team made in their final written pieces. The best ethnographies surprise you at first, yet seem naturally obvious by the end. Our team collaborated to create this deep dive in hopes that we would bring some of our most inspiring findings to the surface for our colleagues around the station.

# Communities of Practice

Building upon our understanding of audience engagement, we explore three subgroups of our respondents who share a common behavior or expression of their identity. Our team was drawn to investigate these populations in order to deepen our

understanding of their specific experiences. By focusing on podcast listeners, readers, and the voices of WBUR's youth, we can learn more about what these sometimes overlooked communities have to say about our service.

## Podcast Listeners

By Alison Bruzek, Associate Producer, Radio Boston

Of the more than 3,600 respondents to the Let's Talk Survey, 1,123 indicated that podcasts were one of their favorite sources of media, or about 31 percent. The following findings drawn upon that 31 percent of respondents, which are referred to here as podcast listeners, and provide a contrast to the full pool of survey respondents, which are referred to as total listeners.

Podcast listeners, perhaps unsurprisingly, also enjoy the podcasts produced by WBUR, including "Modern Love," "Kind World," "Dear Sugar," and "Magic Pill." In total, 26

percent of podcast listeners also listen to "Modern Love," compared with 14 percent of the total listeners and 15 percent of podcast listeners listen to "Dear Sugar" as compared with 7 percent of total listeners.

Podcast listeners in WBUR's audience are most likely to listen while they're doing chores. Overall, 61 percent of podcast listeners said they listened while doing chores, compared to 49 percent of total listeners. The most impressive difference between podcast listeners and all listeners however, indicates that podcast listeners may like to share

the experience with others. Twenty-seven percent of podcast listeners said they listened while with family, compared to 9 percent of total listeners. Podcast listeners were also more likely to listen while walking, while exercising, and while commuting.

In addition, 17 percent of total listeners indicated that they finish the entire program or story before tuning out. However, 22 percent of podcast listeners indicate that they finish a program or story before moving on. I was surprised the number of podcast listeners who finish a program isn't higher, given that podcast listening is usually an on-demand experience and therefore, you can pause and restart and finish an episode at any time.

Overall, the demographics of those who are listening to podcasts are very similar to total listeners. Most are white, middle-aged, and have an advanced degree. I had thought, based on the Edison Research Podcast Consumer 2016 study,

that a majority of podcast listeners would be younger than 54, with most being young adults. However, that doesn't appear to be the case for WBUR listeners. This could mean WBUR has successfully attracted an older audience to podcasts, through its content, or it could mean it's missing out on the opportunity of attracting younger listeners.

I would like to see WBUR podcasts attempt to appeal to a younger audience – not by dumbing down the concepts or ideas presented on the radio, but with younger, more diverse hosts whose lens through which they view the world is different. I would like to see more perspectives represented in WBUR's podcasts, much like WNYC has introduced “2 Dope Queens” to share the perspective of young African Americans in New York City, or “Nancy” with gay Millennials.

My critique was also seen in the 0.8% of total listeners who voluntarily indicated they wanted to see more podcasts from WBUR in 2017. One

listener said that there is a need for the station to better appeal “to a more diverse audience, and a younger audience.” The listeners cited stations like WNYC or companies like Gimlet when it comes to podcast production studios they admire.

They also asked for more “great stories” and local issues discussed by “experts” and cited WBUR’s award-winning podcasts, “The Finish Line” and “Car Talk” as exemplary podcast types that they’d like to see more

of. A single listener who asked for podcasts that “are not just radio broadcasts.”

I also agree with that listener that podcasts as a medium are different than the radio and therefore the types of audio and creative experiments brought to bear can be things that would never be heard on broadcast. I’d like to see them treated as a separate media type to be created for, rather than the place where we put content that doesn’t fit on our airwaves.

## Readers

By Abby Conway, Digital Producer & Editor

While a few of the members of WBUR’s audience who identify themselves as readers -- those who consume our content only by reading, mostly by reading or equally by listening and reading -- said that they first heard of us via podcasts like Modern Love or Dear Sugar, the majority indicated that they first discovered WBUR via the radio.

A very small portion of our audience, 1% of respondents,

say they get news from WBUR only by reading articles, and a further 5% indicated they mostly read articles but sometimes listen. 13% of our audience said they spend an equal amount of time reading and listening, but more than 80% of respondents said they mostly listen and sometimes read or only listen.

But even among the 6% who spend more reading than listening, most say they found




WBUR via the radio or used words like “radio” and “listen” to describe how they discovered us. A lot of them indicated that no matter where they live they always look for the local NPR station, or that they grew listening or “have always listened.” While more than half of the respondents in this group provided an answer to how they discovered us, only ten individuals indicated they found us online, via social media, email, or through friends sending them links to stories online. Even among those, many indicated listening was a part of their journey to our website.

In responses to what makes people turn off WBUR or leave the website, some people who indicated they mostly read said the current political climate makes it harder to listen. Some indicated feeling overwhelmed by the news these days. They prefer to read so they can pick and choose which subjects they consume. Others indicated they stop reading/listening when they feel the stories/programs are “blatantly one-sided” and they assume the audience is

as well. Some also indicated being overwhelmed by their options online. One indicated a desire for an evening newsletter summarizing the important stories of the day so they didn’t have to “read 100 stories in 100 places.”

Listening is a convenience -- something people indicated they often do while doing something else: cooking, driving, working. But many indicated that they do spend time reading some news websites -- mostly newspaper sites. Respondents’ answers to how they discovered WBUR suggest a high level of loyalty to NPR and to public radio (though not necessarily WBUR). But 80 percent of those loyal listeners don’t frequent the website to read news, even though they’re reading news elsewhere. These findings might lead us to ask how do we encourage more of our listeners to adopt the practice of reading our news as well?

*“I grew up in the metrowest area listening to WBUR with my dad. When I lived in Somerville in the mid-Aughts, I listened to On Point every day. I moved to New Haven in 2009 and then to Western Mass in 2011. **I reconnected with WBUR by subscribing to the Modern Love Podcasts and then seeing story after story referenced in Politico’s Massachusetts Playbook.** When I read some of the stories, I realized that there was a daily newsletter and I subscribed immediately. I also began following WBUR on Instagram and I love the stories and reporting! I really enjoyed the dispatches from the women’s march and from the Patriots Victory Parade yesterday.”*



## Voices of Youth

By Amy Gorel, Digital Editor & Producer, ARTery

To secure a future audience, the trends and interest of young people should be of a particular interest to the station. The average age of the more than 3,600 WBUR audience members who were surveyed is 51 years old, with a standard deviation of 16 years. There were 359 people between the age of 19 (the youngest respondent) and 30, representing 10% of the total respondents. The following

observations were pulled from those young audience members.

While there was not a strong preference, as might be expected, in this age group for online listening over car radio listening, or for podcasts over radio programs, there were a few clear topics of interest that this demographic says the media is overlooking or that they would like to see more coverage of

including the environment, marginalized groups or diverse voices, and “glocal” news.

Many of the open response answers were very broad, and listed groups of people that could be described as “underrepresented” or “minority” groups like LGBTQ, people of color, low-income people, prisoners, the elderly, the young, and people who live in rural areas. This age group seems interested in hearing from people different from themselves and learning what they don’t know. A respondent who indicated we are missing more broad perspectives wrote:

*“I like hearing viewpoints of people who I generally disagree with so I can understand where they are coming from.”*

They also seem interested in genuine, nuanced coverage of other groups, as expressed by this respondent regarding the white, rural voters in the 2016 election:

*“They are talked about, but rarely do I see them being interviewed or discussed in a way that makes them feel, natural, real.”*

Another respondent wrote “the media often goes for the ‘easy win/headline’ when taking aim at bigotry or hate speech,” citing an example of criticizing a citizen’s behavior instead of reporting on institutional systems of racism or public servant’s actions.

Respondents in this age bracket also seemed particularly interested in the environment and climate change coverage, though weren’t very specific in what coverage they were looking for. A few answers showed a slant toward the idea that humanity is not doing enough to protect the environment, with phrases like “environmental justice” and questions about what they could do to help.

In terms of what the media is overlooking, a number of respondents indicated they wanted more international

news, but also better coverage of our local communities. For example, one respondent said she would like coverage of areas beyond Boston, like Lawrence, Lowell and Worcester, while many also cited national outlets like NPR, BBC and New York Times as their main sources of news.

Very few of the young respondents mentioned age-specific interests, but those that did included issue-based requests. For example, one respondent who was 30 years old said we should be covering more “issues for older adults: retirement, health care, elder abuse.” On the other end of the spectrum, a 29-year-old respondent indicated the media should cover millennial issues like “buying homes and the housing crisis in New England.”

My observation from this data is that the stereotypical ways organizations look at millennials, and younger demographics, does not align with what that demographic is seeking. For younger audiences, podcasts, Snapchat and other

new media isn’t as important as the content we create and the stories we tell. However, having this content available on alternative platforms is likely a given for this audience. None of them mentioned other platforms in their open responses, but for example, 6 out of the 11 respondents that used Snapchat were in the 19-30 year old bracket. Young people are interested in serious news, and interested in hearing viewpoints outside of their own -- and unwilling to accept minority underrepresentation in coverage.

# Topics of Interest

Just as the richness of the responses from our audience allows us to gain deep insight into their engagement and experiences, so too does it reveal a great deal regarding their perspectives and preferences. Our audience mentioned a wide variety of topics that interested them within their responses. Some of these are coverage areas

we already think of as beats or verticals, while others might not yet be specific subjects of the station's focus. Nonetheless, all of these topics emerged from the response data as matters which are important to our audience, and to best serve our public, we would be wise to listen what they have to say on these important subjects.

## Environment & Climate Change

By Lynn Joliceour & Lisa Mullins, All Things Considered

Our listeners care about science, details, and diversity in the voices they hear on our air. That is clear in a wide array of their survey responses – including those pertaining to the environment. Overall, however, the respondents who point to the environment do so without going into detail. They make cursory mentions of the general topic. This indicates that our listeners, like most of us journalists and society at large, have a limited understanding of climate change. But it's clear they want to have a deeper knowledge of the issue and

they're looking to us to help provide that information.

When it comes to what the media is overlooking, 5% of respondents specifically mentioned the environment (using terms such as climate, planet, fracking, oil, pollution, nature, and animals). When asked what they'd like from WBUR in 2017, 2% mentioned coverage of environmental issues.

Among the answers that reference environmental topics, some themes emerge. One

is an obvious thirst for more reporting, done in an in-depth manner, about the actual science behind environmental degradation. And this coincides with a grave concern about Trump administration policies that will harm the environment. One respondent stated, “I would like to see real analysis of the impact of TRUMP policies on environment...not the regular talking heads, but real long piece analysis.” Our audience wants to learn what the domino effect of environmental decline is (not only what it will mean for the shoreline, the air and the water in New England, for example – but what it means now and will mean in the future for our economy, health, etc.). Indeed one respondent wrote, “We need information on the dollar impact of all the awful environmental destruction taking place.” The survey responses indicate that we need to break through polarization on controversial issues by not telling stories with a binary “pro” or “con” approach.

It is clear our listeners want to hear voices of varied political

persuasions. That doesn’t mean they want to give credence or wide exposure to climate change deniers. But they would like to hear conversations in which we look for commonalities, with one respondent imploring us to

*“get people from different viewpoints together to find common ground to move forward...environmentalists and climate deniers”.*

And they want to bring together people who come from different points on the political spectrum but still support evidence-based policy and sound regulation, stating that, “More diverse perspectives on climate change would be good. It’s an environmental justice, public health, economic issue that should have champions on both sides of the aisle. We need to stop painting this as an environmental issue about which people choose whether or not to believe”.

Another common sentiment – that if the threat to the environment isn’t clearly and

fully explained/reported now, reporting on it later will be a fruitless endeavor - is reflected by one audience member who wrote, “if people aren’t aware of what’s going on with the environment it’s going to be too late by the time a majority realizes it. People need to be educated and informed...if we cannot drink the water and breathe the air what good are all the jobs and money in the world”. Another respondent echoes that desire for:

*“Honest, no holds barred coverage of environmental risks! Not just special programs, but inserted in daily news! We have got to wake up!”*

Given the need for factual information to help people form opinions, and given people’s general curiosity about how things work, we should consider telling environmental stories through an educational prism; for example, how, exactly, DOES sea level rise work? Let’s see and hear it.

Other observations from the survey include interest in the Dakota Access Pipeline story and a feeling among our audience that we and other media did not report this story early enough and extensively enough. Sixteen respondents mentioned DAPL, with all indicating they want to hear more about it and believe it was and still is underreported. Also, there seems to be interest in the program Living on Earth. Sixteen respondents mentioned it, with twelve saying they like the program and/or wish it were on later in the day. Four commented that they either don’t like the show and its production value or that the program makes them anxious. One takeaway is that listeners appreciate environmental coverage and want more of it. It’s worth noting that Living on Earth approaches controversial issues mainly with a pro-environment perspective. What’s required of WBUR would be more journalistic.

In this age of widespread uncertainty and unsettled nerves, it’s worthwhile to

note that numerous survey respondents asked for positive stories – including those about environmental activism and effective environmental policies at the local and state level. We should actively explore under-reported climate change solutions that are being researched in this region, as well as the inventive remedies

to environmental decay that are working and in use. This will serve to round out the depth our listeners are seeking. They don't want to be talked at; they want to hear about real science and solutions that will broaden their knowledge and inform their own actions related to environmental protection.

## **Health, Mental Health & Wellness**

By Martha Bebinger, Reporter

Many respondents said WBUR is doing a good job of covering health care. But nearly 300 respondents, or just under 10 percent of survey participants, mentioned “health” or health related topics among those the media is overlooking. Some answers were single words; most were several sentences that explained a concern. A few would have met the word count for an Op-Ed.

Mental health is the main issue that respondents say needs more attention. Interest in this topic covers a wide gamut from the science of, to provider payments, to

the impact a parent with a mental illness has on a child or children. The second most named topic that is too often overlooked is disabilities. Here readers and listeners want more about school and work policies, access to buildings, job training programs and a range of learning issues. It's worth noting that 8% of respondents said they have a disability (for 3% it's an ailment, 2% mental, 1% learning, 2% mobility, 1% auditory, 1% visual). Addiction and the opioid epidemic came in third. Our audience is interested in the science of addiction, solutions to the epidemic and stress faced by recovery staff.



In tone, a few comments are quite cynical with claims of corruption, fraud and manipulation or talk of Big Pharma and Big Healthcare. Many of the essay responses go into great detail about the challenges of caring for disabled children, friends who've struggled with addiction and fear about what is ahead for Medicare. The most passionate comments are about a woman's right to an abortion.

I do not see a unifying health care theme, beyond the common topics. There is a lot of frustration about the state of health care but no real call to action. I was particularly surprised that few people mentioned single payer health care or Medicare for All. I'm surprised because a call for single payer coverage is common in comments about my stories online and these comments often trigger vigorous conversations. I'm at a loss to explain why this issue got few mentions, only 6, among the thousands of responses.

The survey raises a question for

## Health stories people request fall into five broad categories:

- 1 / **Explainers:** *as in, how do Medicaid block grants work or why does health care cost so much?*
- 2 / **Daily Life:** *how do people who are blind get through a day or how is the job of a nurse changing?*
- 3 / **Analysis:** *are environmental laws working to protect water and air? Tell us more about the psychology of events in the news.*
- 4 / **Financial Scrutiny:** *of hospitals, CEO salaries at all health care institutions and of the influence of money on drug research.*
- 5 / **Solutions/Hope:** *many people asked for more "positive" stories about solutions, model programs and visionaries.*

me about geography. Several health comments mention locations outside Boston and Massachusetts. Our coverage is Boston-centric, and that still makes sense to me, but I wonder if it does to our audience. Finally, I want to mention that for a few people, health care stories prompt them to turn off the radio or leave wbur.org. These people said they don't

like to hear about suicide in the morning or about detailed medical procedures or health care "rants" that go on too long.

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**8%** Live in a state other than MA

**1%** Live outside of the U.S.

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## **Business & Economy**

By Zeninor Enwemeka, Reporter, Bostonomix

WBUR's audience wants stories about how the economy impacts the daily lives of regular people.

Survey respondents frequently mentioned economic inequality and income inequality as issues they feel the media is overlooking. They want to see more business stories that examine these topics. And they want to see more diversity in our business coverage. They want to know how business developments and economic changes impact minorities, rural areas, low-income people,

young people and the middle class.

Here's how one respondent put it: "NPR is great at covering policy, and there are also some good 'personal story' pieces. I would love to see more of those two things connected in the story, particularly how policy is impacting people/communities (particularly when those people/communities are at-risk or marginalized, such as the poor, people of color, transgender, the incarcerated, etc.)."

Readers and listeners also want more diverse voices. One survey respondent said,

*“those in the Boston area who are not affluent; those falling further down the economic ladder who are working; those who can no longer afford to live in the metro area; minority perspectives”*

are overlooked in the media. That desire for diversity can also extend to location, with some respondents saying WBUR needs to cover more businesses and communities outside Rt. 128.

WBUR’s audience is also concerned about “dark money” and how money influences different institutions – particularly government. They want us to “follow the money” so to speak into how different industries and institutions are funded and regulated. Maybe there are some data projects or FOIA driven stories to do in this area.

There were also several references to Trump’s taxes, potential conflicts of interest and possible ties to Russia. It’s clear part of WBUR’s audience is interested in more reporting about this. What’s unclear is how this fits into our coverage. Perhaps this is directed more so at NPR.

Not surprisingly, WBUR survey respondents said they value in-depth reporting and analysis. They’re also looking for different perspectives. Aside from WBUR and NPR, our audience consumes The Economist, The Wall Street Journal, the New York Times, Boston Globe and BBC. These outlets were cited the most, though others were mentioned too.

What’s interesting in this survey is that there weren’t a lot of references to tech – really only a handful of respondents mentioned tech specifically. There were also a few references to finance and small businesses as areas not getting a lot of coverage. The overall impression from this survey

is that our audience wants to know what major developments in the business world and the economy mean for them. They want stories about how people are handling all of these things – income inequality, childcare and housing costs, etc. And they want to hear about

the challenges, failures and successes.

As we move forward with our biz, tech and innovation coverage – BostonomiX – we should continue to keep all of these things in mind.

## Education

By Max Larkin, Reporter, EDify

WBUR’s audience would like to hear and read more about education. More than 130 respondents, about 4%, listed schools and learning as issues they miss in our coverage as it is.

Of those respondents, a little less than half described the world of education as facing problems. However, these more critical respondents represent a majority of those who shared a definite assessment. Many of them, 18 people to be precise, generically described American education — especially public elementary and secondary schools — as “in decline,” “broken,” or “terrible,” or

expressed general concern about schooling.

There is no consensus about what’s driving that perceived decline: some attributed it to an impoverished curriculum, lowered standards, leaders putting profit above “public education,” and “high-stakes testing.” Both the “political right” and teachers’ unions came in for blame in individual answers. The consequences, they suggest, could include “mass ignorance,” fake news, unfilled jobs, and a teacher shortage.

Concerned respondents

tended to link educational shortcomings to broader economic, cultural, and political problems. They may disagree about causes and effects, but together they assume that what people learn and are taught while young serves as a vital determinant of the shape of American life. It should be noted that they talk less about lifelong learning as a social institution, though many see public radio as an ideally “educational” medium.

Almost as many listeners expressed a specific concern; the rising cost of education — especially college — led the way with 16 mentions. “Crushing” student debt was cited a problem both by millennials as well as by one older respondent, and others expressed interest in cost drivers as well as how people cope. Many expressed interest in learning more about how the American education system confronts inequality (especially when it comes to race and poverty), with 11 mentions, and mental health/special education, found in 8 responses.

But many respondents pointedly resisted “crisis” narratives, too, suggesting or assuming that the conversation tends to focus too much on failure. Out of 15 such entries, several expressed an interest in “successes” at public school, “how hard teachers work,” innovations, and “positive things” going on. Others had a distinct but related critique: that teacher and student voices are habitually “overlooked” in the media, leading to an inaccurate picture of the state of American schooling.

Working in education was clearly a powerful variable in these decisions. Many of those who complained of general crisis worked in schools or ed-related businesses, though some worked in ed-tech, a industry that has tried to disrupt the standard model. Most listeners who wanted more focus on the daily work and successes themselves worked in schools as teachers and administrators — this may come as no surprise. But an even greater proportion,

nearly all, of the respondents concerned with mental health, poverty, and racism worked in schools, suggesting that these may be “hidden” problems, best observed on the job.

## Race

By Zeninor Enwemeka, Reporter, Bostonomix

WBUR readers and listeners really want more diversity in our news coverage. They want more diverse voices on our air and more stories about diverse groups of people.

“Racial coverage still too shallow,” one survey respondent said.

*“The diverse representation ebbs and flows at WBUR but is mostly lacking,”*

said another. As we think about our audience’s responses, it’s important to note the demographic makeup of our survey respondents. 75% identified as white, 4% as multiracial, 2% Asian, 2% Latinx, 1% black, 1% Middle Eastern, and less than 1% Native

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**17%** of our audience work in Education.

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American. 17% did not identify their race/ethnicity.

Overall, WBUR’s audience wants nuanced and in-depth coverage of minorities and racial issues. And they want minorities to be covered in a variety of ways -- not just when something bad happens or when there’s a story about a so-called “minority issue.” One person really captured a lot of the sentiment by saying WBUR stories often “rest on the assumption that everyone listening is comfortably white and middle class.” This person also said “WBUR and NPR do a pretty good job of covering African Americans as the focus of a story. What you don’t do is to consider and include the perspectives and realities of Blacks and other people of

color, working class and poor people in other topics you cover.”

Survey respondents were also very specific about the groups they want to hear and read more about. They mentioned Native Americans, black Americans, Asians, Latinos, working class minorities, young minorities and women of color. Our audience also wants us to reach diverse communities in different neighborhoods as well as outside of Rt. 128. “Get out of downtown and Cambridge and head into Dorchester, Roxbury, and more,” one survey respondent said.

And respondents want to see diversity reflected in the people on our air – including experts, commentators, hosts and reporters. Several respondents said they want to hear more from non-white experts and analysts. “There are a lot of smart, informed folks who do good work on all issue areas who aren’t white dudes. I’d like to hear more of their voices,” one person said. Others mentioned diversifying WBUR’s staff.

“More diverse talent on air and stories by and about people of color,” a respondent said.

There was also mention of working class whites, often in reference to politics and the desire to hear from these voters. Though some expressed concern about too much intense focus on this demographic post-election. It’s worth noting that survey respondents are interested in other types of diversity as well – including class, age and sexual orientation. There was also mention of hearing more from people with disabilities.

The takeaway here is clear: WBUR’s audience wants more coverage of diverse groups – particularly minorities. And they want to hear from these groups in various of ways. Our audience turns to WBUR to learn about their community and the world around them. They want depth and perspective -- and diverse voices are key to giving that to them.

## Gender

By Elizabeth Gillis, Social Media Producer

WBUR listeners of all genders and sexual preferences are interested in hearing about issues that relate to gender and sexuality. While many topics fall on this wide spectrum, 3% of respondents think the mainstream media overlooks topics such as gender, women, sexuality, sexism, misogyny, sexual assault, rape, abortion, birth control, LGBT issues and intersectionality.

63% of our respondents were women while 27% were men. While 3% of respondents are trans-aware, another 0.4% identify as non-binary and 9% identify as LGBTQIA. In other words, regardless of their own gender and sexual

preference, our audience wants to hear stories about gender and sexuality and are aware of how we are talking about these issues.

In talking about topics having to do with gender and sexuality, respondents often also wanted to hear about intersectionality - and specifically race, sexual preference and transitioning - Native and indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, politics, marches, the 2016 election, youth and young people, and immigration. These respondents were likely to mention the voices they heard in the mainstream media and on WBUR both as hosts, “experts,” guests and subjects.

## The Arts

By Louise Kennedy, Senior Producer, Arts Engagement

A significant portion of our audience would like to see more coverage of the arts. Interestingly, however, most of those who ask for more arts

coverage say only that: “more arts,” with no specification of what “the arts” means to them.

Among those who do get more



specific, a few topics frequently recur: the local music scene (typically folk, rock and other popular forms), classical music, theater, books and authors (especially non-fiction), visual arts, and the intersection of arts and education. Funding for the arts and, more generally, questions of arts policy also interest our audience -- not surprisingly, given their strong interest in politics overall.

The local, personal focus is worth exploring more deeply. People say they want to know what local artists are doing, what local arts events they can attend, and how national trends in policy and funding affect the local arts scene. Several people specifically sought to learn more about art produced by Native American artists, and many expressed an interest in learning more about the arts of underrepresented communities. More broadly, the many respondents asking for more “positive stories” of “people doing good in their communities” also find that arts stories can satisfy this need.

Our audience members who are interested in the arts seek information on this topic from a wide range of sources -- though primarily in print, more than from other radio stations or from TV (except PBS, which many mention as a source). Several note their fondness for nonfiction books and for documentary films on Netflix and Amazon Prime. They cite magazines -- The New Yorker, the Atlantic, the New York Review of Books, the Economist -- and newspapers, from the Globe to The New York Times to the Guardian (quite a few are Anglophiles). They also love books.

Despite this deep interest in reading, however, they say they are more likely to “only listen” or “mostly listen” than to read our website, perhaps because they’re slightly older than the audience overall. And a surprisingly low portion of the people who express an interest in the arts, about 12%, also say they follow The ARTery.

As for what they'd like more of: Our arts lovers love storytelling. They also value wit and humor, especially when combined with deep thought. They seek out global perspectives; they love seeing connections between local arts stories and worldwide issues. And many of them want more music: both coverage of music stories and actual music, perhaps because many say they first discovered us when we were still airing music. They'd like more live events, especially ones like the Moth, book clubs, and poetry and music events. Several said they wished we'd do a weekend arts program.

Arts lovers turn to WBUR to satisfy their curiosity, to find out about quirky or unusual arts stories they haven't seen elsewhere, and to savor an intelligent, in-depth, witty take on the stories they do already know. They don't want celebrity gossip or shallow entertainment stories, but they do want to be entertained as well as informed. As one explained when asked what sources they follow:

*"It's basically NPR and music. Because they are fun, make me think, and bring me joy."*

## Glocal: Global, Local & (Im)migra(tion)

By Shannon Dooling, Reporter

Our listeners are living in the same politically charged, tumultuous and confusing world that we are as journalists. We're here to help them understand it all.

When it comes to global topics, there's a keen interest in the global economy and the impact it's having on our local communities. Learning about global politics and news stories around the world is important to WBUR listeners. Feeling connected to what's going on a world away while being rooted in how it may impact them in Massachusetts is a common theme among the survey respondents.

And speaking of Massachusetts, we need to get out and cover more of it. Our listeners and digital users want to know what's going on beyond the Greater Boston bubble, but not at the expense of deep dives into hyperlocal Boston communities. We're reminded that there is a diversity of thoughts, perspectives and experiences

in our seemingly monolithic blue state. It's up to us to make the connections between the Berkshires and Worcester and Boston and all of the tiny towns in between. According to the responses, this definitely could be a search for varying political views but it doesn't have to be political. It could be a 'day in the life' look at a long-time small business owner in Western Mass. or a feature on a South Shore teacher. There's a definite desire for stories about interesting people doing interesting things – all across the state, not just here in Boston.

Our listeners are also looking for a more diverse collection of voices. That means hearing from (and learning from) more people of color, people from varied economic and lifestyle backgrounds, more LGBTQ coverage and stories about immigrants and refugees. It seems the interest around diversity comes from wanting to hear not only from people with whom you agree but also people

with whom you may disagree – or people whom you simply don’t yet know. We owe it to our listeners and users to reach beyond our collection of go-to analysts and commentators to advance conversations in new directions.

To elaborate on immigration, there’s a sense that we should continue sharing personal stories of individual immigrants that reflect larger policy decisions. At the same time there is a noticeable desire for analysis as well: crime rates among immigrants, contributions to the economy, use of public benefits. Couching some of the personal stories within the context of hard data would be useful in dispelling myths and

falsehoods and would likely help make connections among the communities we serve as a public radio outlet.

And when it comes to the identity of these communities, WBUR’s reach is indeed global. There are 40 nations represented in our listener survey, spanning from Ireland to Israel. As a global leader in education, medicine and technology, the state we cover is home to a vibrant and diverse population that is thirsty for information and analysis. Leveraging this built-in diversity can surely help us expand on the variety of voices and perspectives we include in our coverage, telling the stories of our entire city and state.

## **Positivity & Kind World**

By Erika Lantz, iLab Associate Producer

A desire for “positive stories” and a hunger for “hard news” are not incompatible. In fact, a number of listeners cite the juxtaposition of fact-rich reporting with uplifting human

interest stories as an attribute of WBUR that makes them tune in.

64 respondents wrote that they feel that media outlets tend to overlook positive or uplifting

news, and 48 asked to see more positive news from WBUR. Listeners also commented that they feel overwhelmed by the “doom and gloom” of news media. 16 mentioned their frustration with the negativity of news media, which some perceive as a tactic, even a purposeful one, to evoke anger and fear in listeners.

The appetite for “positive” stories arises partly from fatigue. When asked what makes them turn off WBUR or leave WBUR.org, 10 people cited depressing news or negativity: “When I need to listen to music to balance out the negative things going on in the world,” wrote one respondent. “I feel so unhappy and found the stories just fed that unhappiness,” wrote another. A few mentioned leaving WBUR to take a “break.” “I don’t think I could stand it if it were only hard news all the time,” one explained.

The repetition of the same bad news over and over again also contributes to fatigue. “I was looking forward to the election cycle being over to stop being

overloaded with repetitive stories and soundbites -- but it just continues,” wrote one listener. Respondents prefer in-depth reporting over repetitive coverage that is exhausting but feels shallow.

Not everyone felt that human interest or positive stories were worth the airtime, of course. 6 mentioned that things like “touchy-feely human interest stories” or “fluff pieces” made them change the dial. But others referred to the same human interest stories as sources of connection and inspiration, or deeper reflections of the “rich tapestry of life.” They seek stories of kindness and goodness that enrich their lives.

21 listeners wanted to hear about more successes and solutions. They expressed a desire for “success stories of young people, especially non-white;” “realistic positive stories about public education,” “local success stories,” “success stories about women” or “regular people,” success stories that “inspire and motivate.” The word “collaboration” also came

up often, especially in requests for stories that show politicians who cooperate, or people who disagree with each other working together.

The request for solution-reporting seems connected to a genuine eagerness to participate in affecting positive change, and wanting examples for how to do that. “I most appreciate stories that help compassionate people know the best places to put their time, money, passion... to make the world a better place,” one respondent said. “I want to make a positive difference in the world.” Such learning comes from consistent coverage: “We need to learn from one another and we need to hear and read these things every day--not just

a passing glance from time to time.”

Human interest stories and hard news aren’t incompatible. The same listeners who want investigations, in-depth reporting, and facts also crave features that explore what it means to be human: 45 times, respondents asked for both in the same breath. “Keep up the fact checking!” wrote a listener, for example, who then also asked for “uplifting” and “heartwarming” stories, explaining, “We need to hear about goodness.” If WBUR is able to provide that “break” from draining, negative news, it may be able to keep listeners tuned in who would otherwise seek respite -- or inspiration -- elsewhere.


## **Sports**

By Shira Springer, Reporter, Sports & Society


While some survey respondents, 19 in total, wanted less sports coverage, others, 16 individuals, asked for more. But what does the divide tell us? At the most basic level, there seems to be an

issue with how listeners define or understand what sports coverage is or can be at WBUR. We’re not offering sports talk radio-style coverage or focusing on game stories, though a few

*“Because of our current political and social environment, deal with stories on conflict resolution, the maintenance of a vibrant democracy, the compelling need for sympathy and empathy and not just hate and isolation. Focus on stories that not only discuss problems (social, economic, or political), but also on success stories addressing those same problems.”*



*“In this current era of angst and disharmony, I would like to read and hear more about people and processes that are positive and effective. I feel that there is too much focus on anger and discord and all things concerning. Let’s hear more about successful educational programs for young children and ways that individual homeowners can create meaningful green spaces in their own backyards and towns where citizens are discovering ways to embrace cultural and ethnic differences. We need to learn from one another and we need to hear and read these things every day--not just a passing glance from time to time.”*



comments led me to believe that some respondents defined sports coverage in strictly a game analysis context. While the relatively low number of sports-related responses makes strong conclusions difficult, I think there's a need to make clear that WBUR wants to be innovative with its "sports and society" coverage and go well beyond the game.

So, if we understand WBUR's "sports and society" mission as going beyond the game, then what do listeners want to hear from that perspective? My best guess from the comments is they'd be open to a wide variety of topics, a mix of amateur and pro, serious and fun and even investigative, local stories with national or international ties, pieces that explore new innovations in sports tech or sports medicine. Anything at the intersection of sports and society seems fair game, including coverage that takes listeners behind the scenes and, as a handful of respondents suggested, goes beyond local teams.

When asked what issues or perspectives were overlooked in stories, one respondent wrote, "international sports," another, "Special Olympics from the athletes' perspective," and another still, "Locally, you'd think sports teams only exist in Boston rarely are other cities/teams spoken of positively or with interesting stories." When asked what else they'd like to see from WBUR, one listener responded "more coverage of the Bruins, Patriots, and area college hockey like the Beanpot please." Another wrote,

*"Love local stories that are not just sports teams or headlines, finding out about folks and organizations that usually don't get the spotlight."*

And I took that to hold true for "folks and organizations" that would fall into sports coverage, as well as "folks and organizations" that would fit into other coverage categories.



Perhaps the most intriguing responses came when listeners were asked about their favorite sources of media. I was surprised to see sports talk radio and sports tv stations mentioned by several respondents. For example, one said, “Sports radio—fun, distraction, esp 98.5.” There were also a few listeners who discovered WBUR after becoming bored or fed up with sports talk radio. Describing how they found WBUR, one wrote, “Got tired of listening to sports talk radio” and another responded, “Channel surfing after becoming bored with sports radio.” And a third responded, “Couldn’t handle the political bent of Dennis and Callahan’s show back when I used to listen to sports radio more often.” Also, it’s worth noting that some listeners turn off WBUR because they are turning into sports programming. One respondent stops listening to WBUR when “it’s baseball season and games take precedence over everything.” Another respondent turned off WBUR because of a “desire for music or

sports.” That tells me there’s an appetite for quality sports coverage on the radio and, potentially, a much, much larger audience out there ripe for introducing to WBUR and bringing into the fold. It also tells me that the potential sports audience wants something more in-depth and more intelligent than what they hearing on sports talk radio, perhaps something that gives them context or more insight into the players and games they like to watch when they turn off WBUR. Maybe the same desire for more in-depth, more intelligent goes for sports tv watchers, too.

Taking an agile approach to developing our sports and society coverage means we should be experimenting to determine which stories connect with listeners and which don’t. Our challenge is to figure out how the station can create sports coverage that appeals to NPR listeners; our opportunity is to pioneer new ways of sports storytelling that become must-listen radio.

# Standards & Values


We began this research study with the goal of understanding what our audience actually looks like. Our intent was to paint a robust picture of their demographics, reveal the ways they relate to us and deeply examine a variety of the subgroups within our audience. We hoped that by demonstrating our sincere desire to listen to their personal stories and unique viewpoints, we would elicit a wealth of useful data to pore over. Not only were we able to thoroughly answer our original research question, but we also gained some truly unexpected insights. The overwhelming volume of our audience's responses provided us with the opportunity to develop an accurate conception of the core beliefs which unite our listeners and readers into a cohesive collective.

In this final section of our report, we present the ten key principles which did not merely


emerge, but rather seem to have exploded out of the expansive long-answer responses we received from our audience. These ten principles take the form of guiding directives that the audience clamors for us to uphold. Uniting all ten of these maxims is a single mandate, an overarching objective that our audience believes is of the utmost importance now and for our future. We first explore that singular mission, and then detail the principles by which our audience believes we all must operate in order to achieve that goal.

# Bridge the Divide

*“Connecting otherwise divided communities through shared storytelling.”*



*“Developing conversations and projects that can bridge the divide in this country.”*



Though it may seem obvious that people across our country are feeling divided, our research team was struck by the hopeful resolve of our audience who clearly believe that this wound can, and must, be mended. Above all else, our audience shares the conviction that we must build bridges to unite our families, neighborhoods, towns, cities and states across the nation. Our audience believes that WBUR, a public media organization, ought to play a key role in helping to facilitate that process, by bringing people together in shared conversation. Our listeners and readers are eager to hear from diverse perspectives so that they can better understand and begin to truly empathize with folks

who hold opposing viewpoints on challenging issues. Only by talking, and really listening, to one another, do they believe we can unite ourselves and usher in a new age of prosperity powered by a diverse population working together. Our audience looks to us to help them create a space for common ground, where we can mediate the dialogue necessary to create a new shared understanding on which they can build our future. In order to achieve this noble goal, our audience has outlined ten standards and values which we must abide by ourselves and uphold on behalf of the public. These simple maxims serve as a clear guide which we can follow as we concentrate our efforts to bridge the divide.

**1/**

## **Explain the Mechanics**

Our audience wants us to explain the inner workings of complex things. They long for highly specific, practical examples that spare no detail. Our listeners implore us to be scientifically accurate about every STEM subject we cover, but also to bring that same level of acuity to both legal matters and journalism itself. Our audience wants us to explain the rules of the natural and social world, including how the free press itself is meant to function in our democracy.

**2/**

## **Give Us the Big Picture & the Long Game**

As a compliment to the focused explication of the intricate details of complex systems, our audience wants to understand the broader contexts in which a story takes place. They want us to report on the ways in which the past connects to the present so that we might uncover systemic effects that have rippled through time. Not only does our public require a historical context for our coverage, but they want us to explore the future consequences of possible decisions up for debate in the present.

**3/**

## **Investigate, Go Deep**

In some cases, internal mechanics, technical details, big pictures and long games are not sufficient to explain what is really going on with a story. When that is the case, our audience urges us to dig deeper and investigate behind the scenes. They rely on us, as journalists, to go where they, as listeners, cannot. Our audience is counting on us to find the hidden truth.

4/

## Report on Actions

It is important for our audience that we report on people's deeds, and not just their words. They want us to bring our investigative skills to bear and look behind the veneer of mere language to uncover a speaker's true intention. To do this, our audience insists we focus on being concrete in our conversations and ask questions about observable events, like what a person did, and not intangible vagaries, like what a person might have been thinking or hoping.

5/

## Uphold Standards of Accountability

There is a very real perception that truth itself is in jeopardy, and accordingly our audience beseeches us to hold the line. They want a clear understanding of who is culpable, or in control, of a given situation. Our audience implores us to call a spade a spade, a lie a lie, and to speak truth to power. It is our duty to make clear who should be held accountable, to not let them escape their responsibility or pass the buck.

6/

## Check Your Elite POV

Our audience warns us to be vigilant about accidentally talking, or reporting, from an ivory tower. They encourage us to stay defamiliarized and question our own norms. Our listener's reminds us to step outside of ourselves from time to time and imagine being in their shoes. While they do not want us to be ashamed of our privilege, they do believe it is essential that we keep it in check. With the great power to broadcast the stories of the public, comes the great responsibility to remember whom it is we are meant to serve.

**7** /

## **Shine Light on Inequality**

Redirecting that same enlightened clarity with which we examine ourselves, our audience entreats us to cast a beam of contemplation across the furthest reaches of our communities. They call on us to shine a light on the disproportionate effects that certain decisions, policies and events have on select parts of the population. Our audience maintains that the ways in which particular struggles affect some of us more than others should be at the very center of our discussions on those matters.

**8** /

## **Let Us Hear People in Their Own Words**

While it is important to report on the actions, rather than only the words, of those in power, our audience nonetheless wants to hear directly from people representing different points of view. They are especially interested in hearing from the actual experts on a particular STEM topic in a story, rather than the same generalists over and over. Our audience exhorts us to pass the mic to people we haven't heard from to demonstrate the diversity and nuance in the public's perspective. They caution us to be careful whose words we choose to repeat and offer that an increase in the multiplicity of voices we air should act as an effective inoculation against broadcast echolalia.

9/

## **Strive for Balance in Representation and Visibility for All**

Pressing for diversity, our audience urges us to pay close attention to maintaining a representational balance on all levels. We ought to strive for inclusivity not just throughout a day's coverage, or an hour's, but within the stories themselves and the angle of our reporting. Our audience specifically asked to hear more about: rural and small-town Massachusetts residents; middle-Americans; conservatives; women and girls; elderly people; young folks; black people; latinx folks; native americans; aboriginal peoples; asians; muslims; LGBTQIA\*s; military members, veterans and their families; prison inmates and guards; people with disabilities. In other words, our audience would like to see themselves reflected throughout our coverage.

10/

## **Show Us Possible Paths Forward**

Most surprising for our newsroom research team was the direct request from our audience that we include in our reporting more information about how listeners and readers can respond to a story. They ask, in no uncertain terms, that we explain in deeper detail the possible actions, reactions and next steps to a situation a person can take. Our audience does not want directives or commands, rather, they want a comprehensive explanation about how other people are responding through action. By reporting on who is taking up what mantle for which cause, our audience believes we can play a vital role by helping them make informed choices while shaping their own plans for how to best react.

# Opportunities for Reaction

In order to paint a robust picture of what our audience actually looks like, we asked thoughtful questions about their identities, needs and opinions. By truly listening to their responses we can draw inspiration for how we might better serve them. We employed a Human-Centered methodology for our research, not only to learn more about our audience, but also with the express intention of discovering promising paths for future

innovation that are grounded by our real-world observations. The wealth of knowledge that this book contains is intended to serve as a foundation that can inform the decisions we implement as an organization. Our mission at WBUR is to serve and engage the community through a dynamic exchange of ideas, and while our research team began this new dialogue with our audience, it will be up to the station as a whole to work

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together to decide how to react to what we've heard.

As you have been reading this book, you may have found yourself suddenly inspired with ideas for actions you could take. Journalists may have been prompted to think about a new angle on their coverage, while our membership team might have felt moved to try a new sort of campaign. Absorbing a rich ethnography and detailed demographics can be exciting and energizing, but it might also feel overwhelming or even paralyzing. With all this new knowledge washing over you, it can sometimes be difficult to regain your bearings, or, even if you weren't surprised by a single thing you read here, you might find that your colleagues don't

share that feeling. Not only as individuals, but also together as a group, we must decide how to make sense of our observations and choose how we will react with our next steps.

Just as the rigorous methodology we employed for our study allowed us to come to a consensus-based answer to our research question, so too does that same adherence to rigor enable us to take a methodical approach to innovation. In this final section we explain the transition from Human-Centered Research to Human-Centered Design, and provide a simple framework which we can use to make this leap.

## Innovation Framework

Taking a structured approach to creativity allows us to reduce risk and increase the likelihood of success. Being rigorous and strategic does not, however, imply that we should be timid or unadventurous. Meaningful innovation comes from a well-

informed strain of bravery. Rather than always erring on the side of caution, and choosing the least risky option, successful pioneers thoroughly investigate the underpinnings of their ideas and sometimes make the fully-informed decision to choose

a less secure path. Taking a calculated risk only makes sense when you have first weighed the cost of failure against the potential rewards.

Any idea which we put into action will require that we expend resources and utilize our personnel, regardless of whether the experiment ultimately fails or succeeds. Some ideas come at a much higher cost of implementation than others, and so those which require more of our money and time are inherently more risky as we will have more at stake. Risk, however, is not tied to cost alone, but also to our confidence level that an experiment will have the outcome we intend. Innovators evaluate how certain they are that their hypothesized expectations will actually come to pass, and that level of certainty depends on their confidence in the data they have collected to support their idea. The more reasons you can show to indicate you've got a good idea, the more likely it is actually good. Conversely, the fewer data points you have to support your model, the more risky, the

more uncertain, the outcome becomes.

Once we have understood the risk inherent in an experiment, we can weigh it against the potential reward, that is, the results which we are aiming for. The biggest payoffs are sometimes, but not always or only, the rewards for taking big chances. There are times, then, that we might be inclined to attempt to implement a high-cost, low-certainty model, if the potential outcome is especially desirable. But how do we know when that time comes? How do we decide what experiments to place our bets on?

No two ideas will have perfectly equal potential risks and rewards, but that does not mean it is impossible to weigh the relative merits of different plans. When attempting to innovate, rather than going all-in on a single bet, it is wise to build up a portfolio of experiments. Doing this well can both distribute risk and create potential for complementary support and relationships, not dependencies

## Use This Framework to Compare Ideas

**A****Experiment Model**

*What is your idea and how would it work?  
What are all the major moving parts of the system and how do they interact?*

**B****Supporting Data**

*What observations inspired this experiment?  
What data gives you confidence that this is a good idea?*

**C****Hypothesized Effects**

*What results are you trying to achieve?  
What observable change defines successful completion of this experiment?*

or blurred boundaries, between experiments. In the same way we were able to create and debate well-formed research questions within our team, we are also able to define a well-formed opportunity for reaction, so that we can conduct a concrete discussion with our colleagues around the station. In order to evaluate the

potential of our ideas, we must first put them into a suitable format for comparison.

A well-formed opportunity for reaction has three essential components: an Experiment Model, backed by Supporting Data, intended to produce a series of Hypothesized Effects.

By writing down our ideas in the same three-part format, we begin to create a standard for comparison which allows us to take a more strategic approach to our practice of innovation. Using this simple framework, thinking through the same six questions, gives us a way to formalize any idea, eliminate confusion and bring clarity to discussions about our uncharted future. This exercise

of moving from a general concept to a concrete proposal is the work of transitioning from research to design. Like most transitions, this process is not instantaneous. Innovation begins with an individual having an inspired idea, but for that idea to be implemented it must first be articulated as a clear course of action that several people can take as a group.

## Opportunity Classes

Throughout the course of our research, our team was continually inspired, suggesting potential ideas to one another. Though we focused the majority of our group session time on analyzing the data, we kept a running record of all the ideas for innovation as they occurred to us. Once our analysis was complete, we met for a final brainstorming session in which we shared and built upon the nascent opportunities that we had identified during the course of our research. In

some cases, we were directly inspired by comments from respondents regarding very concrete, yet sometimes surprising, services or products they would like us to provide in the future. However, many of the interesting avenues our team proposed came from using this newfound understanding of our audience to strengthen an existing concept that might not be entirely new, or evolve an older idea by giving it a fresh twist. While the research team members from WBUR's

newsroom drew from their experiences as journalists, BizLab's Executive Director was able to incorporate her knowledge of successful innovation from across, and outside, the public media industry, to our opportunity brainstorming process.

Sharing, discussing and compiling all of these potential opportunities for reaction to our audience research allowed us to begin to map out the space of possibilities ahead. Using the same ethnographic techniques we employed to analyze the responses from our audience, the BizLab team studied the wealth of ideas generated by our research group and found that the opportunities we identified fall into five main categories. This typology further strengthens our Innovation Framework by allowing us to place our ideas into one of five distinct classes that represent a specific type of risk/reward balance. A truly well-formed opportunity for reaction, then, should be defined not only by it's

Experiment Model, Supporting Data and Hypothesized Effects, but also it's Opportunity Class. By scoping our innovation in this way we can better balance the types of risks we are taking across our experimental portfolio.

Explicating all of the avenues for innovation our team identified is beyond the scope of this book, but we will briefly present fifteen of the ideas which we feel best exemplify the five opportunity classes which emerged from our immersion in this research. Rather than acting as models of well-formed opportunities for reaction, the ideas we present below are meant to illustrate the key characteristics of each type of opportunity. Understanding how our experiments can target different types of strategic innovation will be essential as we begin to transition from Human-Centered Research to Human-Centered Design.

1

## **Follow-Up Research**

In the process of answering one research question, it is not unusual for some newfound knowledge to spur on a deeper level of inquiry. From such a broad and expansive study, one distinct class of opportunity comes from the formulation of follow-up research projects. Rather than prompting further open-ended and generalistic questions, our team was inspired by our research with several ideas that ultimately had

too many unknowns for us to be able to define any kind of system or prototype, and so we found ourselves seeking concrete answers to how certain aspects of an experimental model might function.

## ***Small Business Underwriting***

One such model that occurred to our team was an exploration of how we might offer more small businesses the opportunity to underwrite our station. 5% of our audience are entrepreneurs themselves and 28% are in charge of their workplace's decision-making. This demographic understanding of our audience, coupled with their desire that we maintain our "independence from corporate advertising," provide strong signals that it would be worth exploring

a way to offer underwriting services to more local, small businesses in the Boston area. However, in order to effectively define an experiment to explore this sort of business model, it became clear that we would need to first engage with the existing marketplace to see what the demand for accessible underwriting really is amongst small-business owners and create a survey of what, if any, competing options they have available.

## ***Recycling Partnership***

Given our audience's strong interest in the environment, volunteering and alternative methods of fundraising, it occurred to us that there might be an interesting opportunity for a new way to raise money from and for the public. Bringing up the work done by FundingFactory, which helps support non-profits through recycling, we discussed the possibility of mounting a similar effort for our station.

Like the idea of Small Business Underwriting, a Recycling Partnership would also require further market research to gauge both demand as well as possible mechanics to understand the potential costs and benefits of such a model.

## ***CSA for Journalism***

Because our audience expressed a desire to directly support certain types of journalism, or specific sorts of stories, our newsroom team was inspired to propose a twist on the Community-Supported Agriculture movement that is growing in popularity. In this instance, we were unsure precisely of how such a model ought to work. In a traditional CSA you aren't able to choose the vegetables you receive, but if we were to offer our audience

the opportunity to buy a share of journalism in advance, we wondered what expectations they would have about the content they would receive. To create an experimental CSA for Journalism, then, we would first want to convene a group of respondents who expressed direct interest in this sort of model and engage in a Participatory Design exercise to better understand their needs.

## High-Impact, Small Changes

Throughout our research we came across several opportunities that would seem to require a relatively small effort on our part for a potentially big impact. This class of opportunity is characterized by what are sometimes surprising

observations that can spur on subtle shifts in our perspective. By staying defamiliarized we were able to see evidence in our research of how stepping outside of our regular patterns, just a little bit, could potentially make a world of difference.

### ***Women-Focused Perks***

63% of our audience identifies as female. Though WBUR is far from unique in the way that we tacitly assume the male gender to be the default, we do so at a very real financial cost. Many of our respondents expressed a displeasure that we, like the rest of society, fail to serve their needs specifically with respect to the gendered swag we offer. Balance in coverage aside, our listeners, and especially our

donors, would like to be offered t-shirts that fit their bodies. It may seem impossible to imagine a public radio station that provides more perks designed for women than men, but it seems more mathematically challenging to rationalize why maintaining the status quo is a wise financial choice when only 27% of our audience identifies as male.

### ***Family-Friendly Repacks***

Many of our respondents reported having to turn away from WBUR when needing to tend to their young children. 20% of our audience are parents

of minors, and it struck our team that there was an easy opportunity to repackage some of our existing content in a family-friendly way. Several



of our respondents praised the way we make sure to warn parents when stories are not appropriate for little ears, and others mentioned how particular programs are shared favorites that their children also enjoy. Simplifying the process

of finding, and streamlining the ability to access, family-friendly programming could lay the foundation for a new G-rated subscription service geared towards adults and children who listen together.

### ***Fundraising Sensitivity & Donor Fast-lane***

From the detailed commentary on our fundraising efforts, our audience surfaced two interesting opportunities relating to small changes in our on-air pledge drives. With 7% of people reporting that they tune out during these times, many of them indicated that the main reason they do so is out of a sense of guilt, embarrassment or shame. We often begin our entreaties with phrases like “When you buy flowers for Valentine’s Day...” which completely excludes the 25% of our audience who is single and further assumes that those who are partnered can afford the luxury of floral arrangements. Simply replacing “when” with “if” in our promotion would alleviate a source of unnecessary

emotional pain for many of our listeners. On the other end of the spectrum, 2% of our audience reported tuning out during fundraisers even though they already donated. The repeated requests for giving can be especially frustrating to those who have already pledged their support. Though it might be a large technical project, a fundraising-free digital channel for those who have already given, feels like a small change to our audience who can’t fathom why we haven’t done it already.

## **Clear Next Steps**

While some of the opportunities we discussed would not require a great deal of resources from the station, others would clearly require a more significant investment on our part. These ideas would demand interdepartmental coordination and so naturally designing an experiment to test these business

models necessitates significant discussion and planning. Often, these opportunities have been discussed in some capacity by various individuals around the station, but through our research we were able to see more clearly what might be required to implement them.

## ***Laboratory Membership***

Because several of our respondents mentioned becoming aware, and eventually converting to regular consumption, of WBUR while working in a laboratory, it seemed like a clear area where we might easily expand our service. With 23% of our audience working in Healthcare or STEM, many of

our listeners spend their entire day listening to the radio with their colleagues. Creating a membership package offering for corporations, hospitals and research institutions could be an incredibly effective way to expand both our consumer and supporter base with a single effort.

## ***Jeffersonian Dinners***

Our audience was very straightforward in their request that we facilitate community conversations that will bridge the current divide in our country. We received

numerous requests for “public events to bring listeners and community members together for more interactive dialogues, discussions, and debates, but in a forum designed to emphasize

the respectful and civilized sharing of ideas and questions.” Offering a series of roundtables or Jeffersonian dinners where audience members can benefit from our moderation skills

during an in-person event appears to be an obvious way to generate further support for the station by serving a pressing need of our public.

### ***Affordable Storytelling Events***

Given that 17% of our audience is under the age of 35, and 34% of the households which they contribute to earn less than \$100,000 a year, it was apparent to our team that offering more affordable storytelling events would be a wise move. For our listeners who aspire to one day be able to support us sustaining members, the

ability to purchase tickets to The Moth is not always within their present reach. By creating a pay-what-you-can-afford storytelling event series, or offering tours and talks in public spaces and business favored by our younger listeners, we could introduce a new way for us to connect with, and be supported by, our public.

## 4

### **Unexpected Avenues**

Where some opportunities we uncovered seemed to be clear next steps along a path we have already been following, other ideas popped up in a more surprising manner, offering themselves as unexpected avenues we might want to travel. Often times these ideas draw

upon our core competencies, but challenge us to apply them in less familiar scenarios. These opportunities may take us out of our comfort zone, thus requiring we tread a bit more carefully, but nonetheless, they appear to be promising directions for future exploration.

## ***College Membership***

Our research team was struck by the number of respondents who reported converting to NPR and WBUR during their teen and early college years. 5% of our audience is currently enrolled as students, but only a quarter of those listeners, about 1% of our audience, are what we would consider typical college-aged folks. With so many of our older listeners having reported developing a lifetime habit of listening in

their formative years, it seems clear we are currently missing the opportunity to effectively capture the attention of the current generation. By creating a bespoke membership offering and working directly with Boston-area colleges, we could rededicate ourselves towards serving our audience throughout the entire arc of their lifetimes by inviting younger listeners into our community more explicitly.

## ***Marathon Welcome Pack***

From our respondents who do not live locally, we were surprised to learn that many of them consume our coverage because they regularly run the Boston Marathon. Major sporting events draw large crowds to the area, and often those folks who attend are interested in learning more about the place they are visiting.

We have a unique opportunity to create a tailored experience for both the runners and their family and friends who come to cheer them on. By crafting a specific product for marathon traffic, we can leverage our deep knowledge of the local area to connect newcomers to the towns through which the race runs.

## ***Behind the Scenes Tours***

Our audience expressed a strong desire for more transparency from WBUR. Beyond just

financial accountability, our team saw indications that the public would like to see more of

the behind the scenes work that goes into creating the news. We were inspired to propose several means of opening ourselves up to the audience including story-specific panel discussions; a seminar series teaching our journalistic techniques; weekly how-it's-made blog posts; online Q&As or AMAs (Ask

Me Anythings). The interest our audience has in learning more about how we work is a fantastic opportunity to engage our listeners and readers more deeply and earn their trust by revealing our inner workings to the people whose support we seek.

5

## Big Swings

Finally, our team was inspired to propose several radical new directions which we might think about taking with our business. These bold ideas are grounded in a deep understanding of our audience's inclinations, but nonetheless represent large leaps from our present mode of operation. This opportunity class represents those big ideas that are often what we think of as revolutionary shifts, the firsts of their kind, innovation

with a capital 'I'. While it is important to recognize that if you attempt to swing for the fences every time, you might end up dislocating your shoulder, it is also true that you rarely hit a home run on your first try. It is impossible to revolutionize the way in which public radio is funded overnight, but we have come up with several ideas that might be the first sparks to ignite major change.

## Volunteer Power

WBUR's audience is highly motivated to affect the change they want to see in our world. They are eager to roll up their

sleeves, build bridges and lift up our community. Many of our respondents implored us to broaden the scope of our

volunteer programs. A means to support our station with hands-on work, rather than money alone, is especially important for our listeners who may not have extra cash, but can happily give their time. We have a unique opportunity to create an entirely new way of supporting our station precisely because our public is eager to do so. Leveraging hundreds of our listeners to raise funding by campaigning door-to-door in our local communities would be one way to harness the power of our volunteers. Similarly

we might task them with moderating large new areas of our online forums and through community-run events. Perhaps even more radically we might consider moving to an entirely volunteer-based transcription service, to eliminate a large internal cost while bringing our public closer to the heart of our organization. It is clear from our research the public wants to support us more deeply, more directly, but it is up to us to propose and promote a new way for them to pitch in.

### ***Multi-Station Membership***

Though it may seem counterintuitive at first, working together with organizations that we see as rivals, might actually be advantageous to all of the parties involved. Taking a nod from the ways in which ski resorts in Vermont are themselves beginning to follow an older Alpine business model, we might work with our “competitors” like WGBH to offer a multi-station membership. Many of

our respondents report that they donate to both WBUR and WGBH. Often they recounted the ways in which the on-air fundraising from one station drives them over to the other. While the Boston Globe may have recently come to the unsubstantiated conclusion that the very fact that two NPR affiliates continue to broadcast in the same area is proof positive that the market wants this configuration, our detailed

research points to a different underlying reality. Rather than being supported by two warring factions, we share a large number of our supporters with WGBH. Our listeners do not see us as opposing alternatives and many of our respondents pointed out the absurdity of the way in which their tax dollars were ultimately used to fund internal competition. By

embracing the reality that our audience refuses to be divided, we free ourselves to explore the previously taboo notion of working with our “rivals”. It is not unreasonable to think the the future of public radio rests on our ability to facilitate ever greater collaboration in the region we serve.

### ***Kickstarter for Community Causes***

Within our research, we also found inspiration to build upon another form of cooperation. Because our audience is eager not only to find new ways of supporting our station, but also to help their fellow citizens in need and strengthen their local communities, we might consider exploring new models of peer-funding. As a broadcast entity we have the great ability to motivate and mobilize large groups of people. By embracing that role more fully, we can imagine creating a platform to raise money for important community causes. Providing a forum for that essential coordination could be a logical

extension of our public service. Using our philanthropic skills to raise money not only for our own organization, but also for community-supported efforts across our coverage area, would place us in a unique position among public media organizations. We might just be able to get more for ourselves by first working to give back.

# Conclusion

Our research study began with the simple act of asking, what does our audience actually look like? By taking the time to truly listen, we learned a great deal more than we ever expected about our audience's identities, habits, opinions, needs and values. Now that we have heard what our audience has to say, we must reflect on the broad range of opportunities for how we might react and choose our next steps accordingly. However, before we tackle the opportunities for shaping our future, we must fulfill the obligations of our present.

We asked our survey respondents if they would be willing to come to the station to talk more with us, and 29% of our respondents, over one thousand people, said they would like to come in to continue this conversation. It is essential, then, that we let our audience know how carefully we listened to what they had to say and invite them to keep talking.

Our research team opened a dialogue with the public, but it is clear from the volume of our audience's response that it will take many of us to keep listening, reflecting on, and reacting to everything they have to say.

Though we have reached the end of this report, we hope that readers will be inspired to start new conversations, both with their colleagues at WBUR as well as the audience members they serve. Now that we have gained a shared understanding of our public, we can begin to think critically about how we ought to react to this knowledge. As we formulate plans and put them into action, we must always remember to center ourselves in the human experience, marvel at its diversity and seek meaningful motivations for the risks we decide to take.



# Appendix

## Let's Talk Audience Survey Questions

WBUR's newsroom wants to know what makes our audience unique. Whether you tune in daily or you've come across an article in your Facebook feed, we want to know more about you. All the questions are optional. This survey goes to the heart of your identity and experiences because we want to know how we can serve you better. However, if any question feels too personal, you can move on to the next one.

The whole survey should take 5-10 minutes to complete.

1. When did you start getting news from WBUR and/or wbur.org?
2. Which statement best describes how you get news from WBUR and/or wbur.org?
3. How do you access WBUR and/or wbur.org? Check all that apply.
4. Which WBUR programs or sections do you follow? Check all that apply.
5. When do you turn on WBUR and/or visit wbur.org? Check all that apply.
6. How often do you tune in to WBUR and/or check wbur.org?
7. How long do you usually listen to WBUR and/or browse wbur.org for at a time?
8. Where are you when listening to WBUR and/or reading wbur.org?  
Check all that apply.
9. Where do you live? (ZIP Code or Town/City)
10. How long have you lived in the Boston area?
11. How long do you plan to stay in the Boston area?
12. How would you describe your current living situation?
13. How would you define your current relationship status?
14. Are you a parent or guardian?
15. Are you currently a student?
16. Have you retired?
17. What sector/industry/field do you work in?
18. What level of responsibility best applies to your job title?
19. Where is your primary place of work located? (ZIP Code or Town/City)
20. What was your total household income last year?
21. Have you inherited wealth or assets?

22. Have you received public assistance?
23. What is the highest level of school you have completed or degree you have earned?
24. Have others in your family achieved this level of education?
25. What is your political affiliation, if any?
26. In what ways are you politically active? Check all that apply.
27. What is your religious affiliation, if any?
28. Do you attend religious services?
29. What is your racial/ethnic/cultural identity?
30. What country/countries are you a citizen of?
31. Where were you born? (Town/City/State/Province/Country)
32. How old are you?
33. What is your gender identity?
34. What is your sexual orientation?
35. Do you have a disability or impairment, and if so how would you define it?
36. What issues/topics and whose stories/perspectives do the media keep overlooking?
37. What are your favorite sources of media, and what makes them special?
38. How did you discover WBUR and/or wbur.org?
39. What makes you turn off WBUR or leave wbur.org?
40. What would you like to see from WBUR in 2017?

We will be hosting a series of community interviews, for which we'll invite survey respondents to share their experiences directly with members of our newsroom. If you're interested in participating please leave your email address so we can get in touch. Thanks!

41. Interested to come by and talk? Share your email address.
42. What's an example of a story you'd like to tell us?

