



June 5, 2008

TO: Interested Parties  
FROM: Bob Moore & Hans Kaiser  
RE: U.S. Voters and Radio Listening Behavior

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In our recent survey of U.S. voters, we explored listener frequency of four categories of radio programming: Conservative and Liberal talk radio, public radio/NPR and Christian radio. What we learned may surprise you. Of the four, the most listened to radio programming is reportedly public radio/NPR, with more than half of U.S. voters listening to public radio at least occasionally. Christian radio programs were the next most popular, followed closely by Conservative talk radio. Liberal talk radio showed the lowest levels of listenership among voters.

A study of American Journalism may provide some insight as to the differences in listenership by talk radio versus news radio. A comparison of the broad topic areas covered by talk radio programs versus the media overall in 2007 reveals that talk radio tends to focus most on election and politics (28%), followed by discussions of the media itself (16%) and U.S. foreign affairs (12%). In contrast, the broad topic areas covered by the radio news media are almost evenly divided among U.S. foreign affairs (17%), elections/politics (13%) and non-U.S. foreign affairs (11%).<sup>1</sup> These differences in subject matter may contribute to voters' radio programming choices.

Not surprisingly, there are several differences in listener preference by subgroup. Highlights of our findings appear in the following pages. Please feel free to contact us with any questions.

### **Listenership of the Four Types of Radio Programming**

Of the four types of radio programming tested, public radio/NPR enjoys the highest level of listenership, with 34% reporting they listen at least once a week or more often and 29% listening several times a month/occasionally. Another 35% say they never listen to public radio.

Christian radio also enjoys fairly frequent listenership (22% once a week or more, 20% several times a month/occasionally), though a majority of voters say they never listen to Christian radio (57%).

Conservative talk shows, like Rush Limbaugh and Sean Hannity are more popular today among American voters than Liberal talk shows like Air America and Ed Schultz. Specifically, 17% of voters say they listen to Conservative talk radio once a week or more often, while 21% listen several times a month or occasionally, compared with only 7% who listen to Liberal talk radio once a week or more often

and 13% who listen to the same programming several times a month or occasionally.

These patterns are consistent with radio programming ratings from Fall 2007, which place Rush Limbaugh and Sean Hannity in the top two most listened to talk radio programs.<sup>2</sup>

**Frequency of Listenership Among Radio Program Categories**

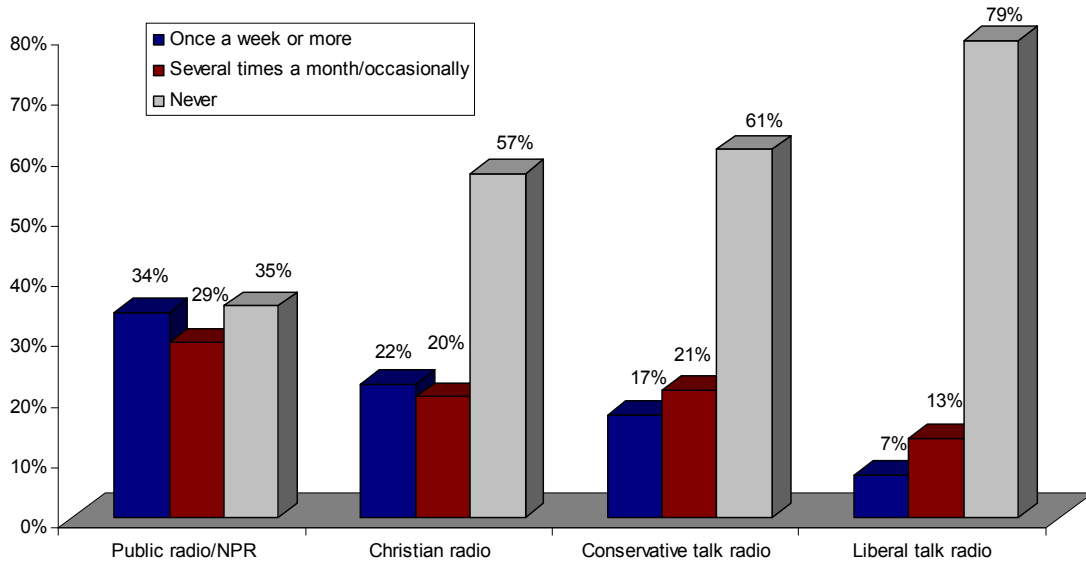
"Please tell me how often you listen to:

Public radio or NPR;

Christian radio;

Conservative talk radio, like Rush Limbaugh and Sean Hannity; and

Liberal talk radio, like Air America and Ed Schultz?"



**Key Subgroups: Who Are Frequent...**

**Public Radio Listeners?**

Among the most likely to listen to public radio once a week or more are voters in the Pacific and Northeastern regions of the country, Democrats, voters earning \$100,000 or more per year, voters with post-graduate education and non-Caucasian voters.

**Christian Radio Listeners?**

Most likely to listen to Christian radio programs once a week or more are voters in the South, Republican women, very Conservative Republicans, voters who earn less than \$30,000 a year and voters who attend church once a week or more often.

**Conservative Talk Radio?**

Among the voters who are more likely than their counterparts to listen to Conservative talk radio once a week or more often are voters in the Pacific region, men age 50-64 and Republicans – and particularly Republican men, Republicans age 55 and older and very Conservative Republicans.

**Liberal Talk Radio?**

While only 7% of U.S. voters report listening to Liberal talk radio once a week or more often, a couple of subgroups report higher listenership than their counterparts, including voters age 18-29 and self-identified Liberal Democrats.

**Radio Program Listenership – Once a Week or More Often: Key Subgroups**

	<b>Public Radio/ NPR</b>	<b>Christian Radio</b>	<b>Conservative Talk Radio</b>	<b>Liberal Talk Radio</b>
<b>All</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Region</b>				
Pacific	<b>43%</b>	16%	<b>25%</b>	11%
Mountain/Plains	32%	22%	18%	5%
North Central	30%	25%	14%	9%
South	27%	<b>33%</b>	16%	4%
Northeast	<b>40%</b>	13%	13%	8%
<b>Party</b>				
Republican men	27%	23%	<b>39%</b>	6%
Republican women	18%	<b>30%</b>	21%	3%
Republicans age 18-54	25%	26%	27%	4%
Republicans age 55+	21%	25%	<b>38%</b>	6%
Independents	30%	24%	17%	6%
Democrats	<b>45%</b>	19%	5%	10%
<b>Philosophy</b>				
Very Conservative GOPs	27%	<b>40%</b>	<b>51%</b>	7%
Somewhat Conservative GOPs	22%	24%	<b>27%</b>	3%
Moderate/Liberal GOPs	25%	15%	19%	6%
Moderate Democrats	<b>40%</b>	21%	6%	5%
Liberal Democrats	<b>51%</b>	11%	5%	<b>16%</b>
<b>Income</b>				
Less than \$30,000	30%	<b>36%</b>	9%	9%
\$30,000-49,999	34%	25%	16%	12%
\$50,000-74,999	34%	17%	16%	5%
\$75,000-99,999	35%	25%	20%	5%
\$100,000 or more	<b>46%</b>	14%	21%	9%
<b>Education</b>				
0-12 years	26%	<b>27%</b>	12%	8%
13-15 years	33%	<b>28%</b>	22%	7%
16 years	37%	19%	20%	7%
17+ years	<b>48%</b>	14%	13%	8%
<b>Church Attendance</b>				
More than once a week	33%	<b>52%</b>	21%	5%
Once a week	37%	<b>36%</b>	20%	8%
Several times a month	33%	13%	21%	9%
Several times a year	<b>41%</b>	10%	16%	6%
Less often	24%	5%	13%	3%
Never	35%	3%	7%	11%
<b>Ethnicity</b>				
Caucasian	32%	20%	18%	5%
Non-Caucasian	<b>43%</b>	<b>30%</b>	12%	<b>13%</b>

Interestingly, when we look at the crossover between radio program listeners, we find just 24% of frequent Christian radio listeners also listen to Conservative talk radio (on a regular basis) while just 33% of Conservative radio listeners also listen to Christian radio (regularly). In fact, Conservative talk listeners are more likely to tune into NPR (42%) on a regular basis than Christian radio.

Looked at another way, almost half (45%) of Conservative talk show listeners never listen to Christian radio while less than one-third (32%) never listen to NPR. And 54% of regular Christian radio listeners never listen to Conservative talk radio but only 35% of them never listen to NPR.

Please feel free to call or email with any questions.

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*This memo contains results of a telephone survey among a representative sample of 800 voters nationwide. The interviews were conducted April 23-27, 2008. The potential sampling error is plus or minus 3% at the 95% confidence level.*

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<sup>1</sup> The State of the News Media 2008, An Annual Report on American Journalism, by the Project for Excellence in Journalism.

<sup>2</sup> Talkers magazine, online edition.