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### **...The More They Stay the Same**

Community radio is largely philosophically unchanged since the days when its own Johnny Appleseed, Lorenzo Milam, distributed money and advice as grubstakes to undeveloped FM territory.

To Milam, a 60s-style activist, the airwaves were bereft of art, honesty and free speech. He urged like-minded citizens to apply to the FCC and open outlets “available to anyone who might have that dreadful need to communicate.”

And so from the beginning, community radio emphasized the needs of those behind the microphones rather than the needs of the public at large.

Despite that operational paradox, community radio’s pioneers sincerely aimed to offer an alternative to mainstream media, especially for America’s minorities and poor.

Whether, decades later, community radio has achieved its goals is the subject of this AUDIENCE 98 report.



# The Importance of Community Radio

For several decades community radio has struggled to survive as an “alternative” to commercial radio and the network-affiliated public radio system that it pre-dates.

Community broadcasters say they offer a different brand of public radio – one largely driven by locally originated programming – that is greatly appreciated by its listeners.

Though their numbers are admittedly small, these listeners are said to view as vital their community station’s service – and support it as an important resource. Indeed, community radio’s lore is inculcated with stories about stations’ roles as sole carriers of critical community information, particularly in isolated areas.

Who are community radio’s listeners? What do **they** say about community radio? How important is it to **them**?

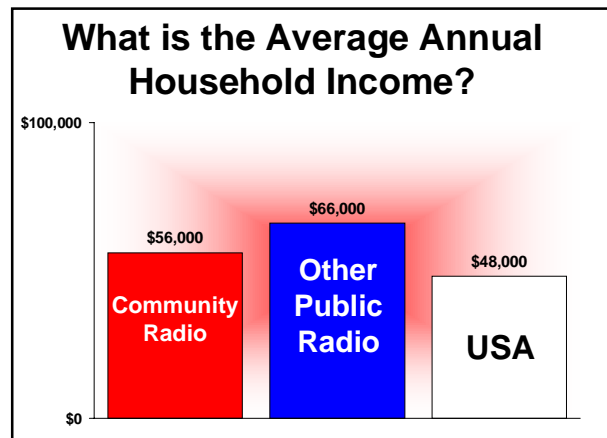
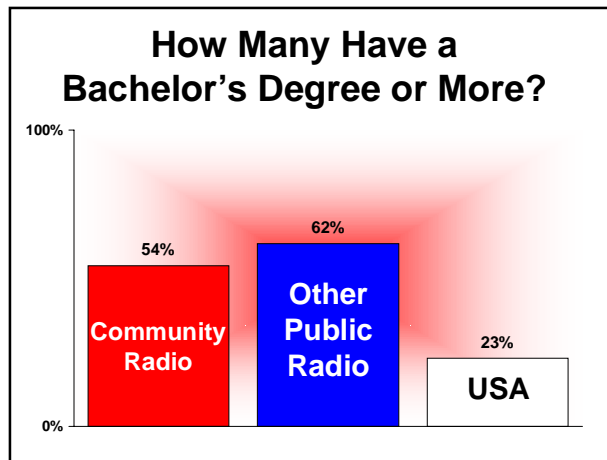
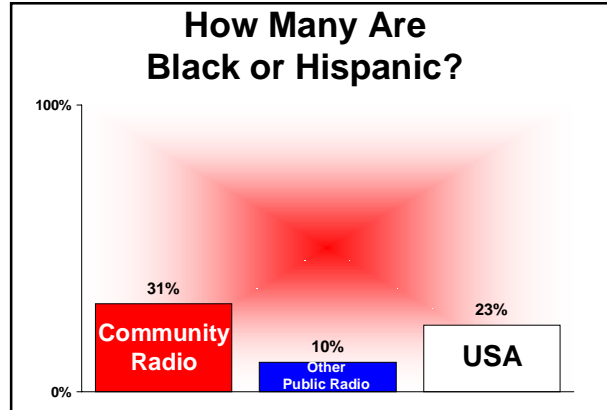
## Community Radio’s Audience

Community radio listeners are **slightly** younger, **slightly** less educated, and **slightly** less affluent than other public radio listeners.

With an average \$56,000 annual household income and 54% college graduates, **community radio listeners look more like other public radio listeners than they do like most Americans.**

There is one difference, however, and that is the racial composition of the audience. In markets where Arbitron measures race, community radio’s listeners are three times more likely to be black or Hispanic than are network-affiliated listeners.

For the most part, however, these minority listeners differ from others only in race; as a whole **their education levels and incomes are comparable.**



These differences are caused by the programming choices made at community stations – no NPR news, little classical music; many more hours of jazz, blues, R&B and alternative rock.

## Loyalty and Reliance

Network-affiliated stations elicit more loyalty and reliance from their listeners than community stations draw from their listeners.

In fact, one-third of community radio’s listeners **are** part of “the rest of public radio’s audience” and spend most of their public radio listening time tuned to network-affiliated stations. If “loyalty” is a measure of importance, then for these listeners, community radio doesn’t measure up:

Their average loyalty to community radio is 18%; to network-affiliated public radio it’s 36%.

For the other two-thirds of its audience, loyalty to community radio is 22%.

The vast majority of this larger group of listeners relies little on community radio. To these listeners, community radio **is** an alternative – to **commercial** radio.

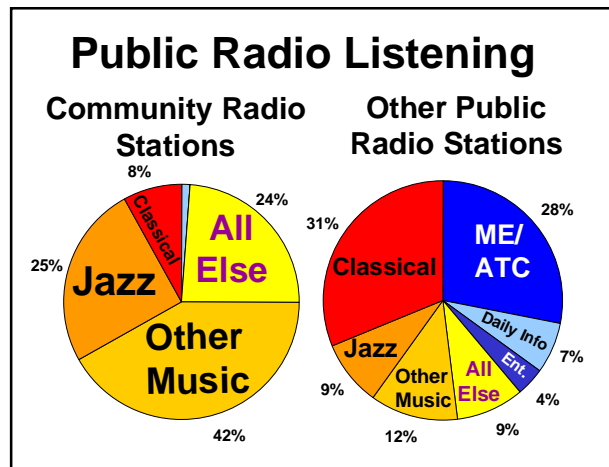
They spend three-and-one-half times as many hours listening to commercial radio each week as they do to community radio.

## Personal Importance

Would listeners miss their community radio stations if they were to go away?

The answer is yes – but no more than network-affiliated public radio listeners would miss theirs.

Community radio and network-affiliated public radio listeners rate the “personal importance” of their respective services virtually the same.



## Giving

Giving is a proxy for how much a public radio listener values public radio’s service. By this measure, **community radio listeners value their stations less than other public radio listeners value theirs.**

By a ratio of 5:4, listeners are more likely to contribute to network-affiliated stations than to community stations.

Though both groups of listeners believe that their support is critical and government support is minimal, those who listen to community radio rely less on its service. As reliance is an essential step to giving, they are less apt to financially support their community stations. Their slightly lower incomes are **not** the reason they are less likely to give.

## Intentions and Impact

Fifty years after its founding, community radio remains a small component of radio listening in America. By AUDIENCE 98’s definition of community radio, **it provides six percent of public radio’s national AQH – or about 82,000 out of nearly 1,400,000 listeners** tuned in at any moment to public radio across the country.

## Radio Listening in America



*This chart represents, in geometric proportions, listening to all radio, network-affiliated public radio, community radio, and Pacifica.*

About a third of community radio listening is concentrated at the five Pacifica stations in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Houston, New York and Washington, DC that – for many in our industry – define “community radio”.

Twenty-four years ago, in his book about the early days of Pacifica station WBAI, Steve Post wrote:

“It was the intention of Pacifica’s founders to develop a radio station that spoke to the minority. They believed that in a society

which supposedly guaranteed the right of its citizens to freedom of speech, no matter what their views, there should be free and open access to the electronic media as well.”

Though execution varies widely from station to station, in a broad sense this is still the mission articulated by most community broadcasters.

Despite those early intentions, community radio, by and large, now serves an overwhelmingly white, educated, middle-class, Baby Boomer audience.

By the measurements of loyalty, reliance, personal importance and giving, it serves many in its audience less well than network-affiliated public radio. The majority of its listeners choose commercial radio much more often than community radio.

So while community broadcasters’ sense of mission seems to be as strong as ever, that mission and its outcome appear to be at odds. By supplying a mirror built from listener facts, AUDIENCE 98 offers community radio an opportunity for reflection.

– Leslie Peters  
– Jay Youngclaus  
– David Giovannoni

## The Importance of Community Radio

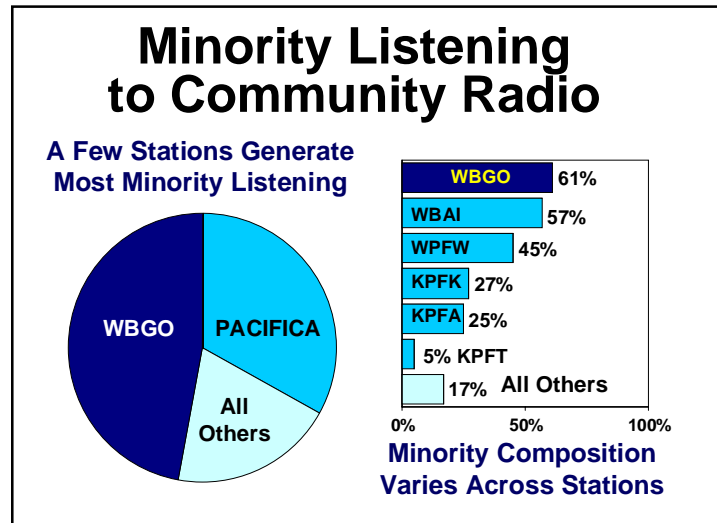
### The Majority of the Minorities

AUDIENCE 98 finds that community radio's listeners are three times more likely to be black or Hispanic than listeners to other public stations. But this singular fact is too simple to adequately represent reality.

One station – WBGO in Newark – serves half of all minorities listening to community radio in the U.S.

**Another third is concentrated at the five Pacifica stations.** Not only does this reflect Pacifica's impact on community radio listening in general, it shows the substantial minority audience of WBAI and WPFW in particular.

In fact, minority composition (the percent of a station's audience composed of minorities) varies widely from station to station – even in the Pacifica group.



Of course, some community stations **are** heard primarily by minority listeners – particularly if they program in Spanish. But their audiences are small in relation to WBGO's and Pacifica's.

The majority of the minorities are concentrated at a few stations. Subtract out WBGO and Pacifica and all remaining community stations put together account for only one-in-five minorities listening to community radio at any given time.

- David Giovannoni
- Leslie Peters
- Jay Youngclaus

## The Importance of Community Radio

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### The Pacifica Difference

In 1999 Pacifica celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, a remarkable accomplishment given its tumultuous history. As in the past, Pacifica today has enormous impact on community radio:

One-in-three listeners tuned at any moment to community radio in America is listening to Pacifica.

However, as a group, the five Pacifica stations in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Houston, New York and Washington, DC serve their listeners no better than community radio in general.

In fact, average loyalty by Pacifica listeners to Pacifica stations is lower (17%) than community radio listeners' loyalty to their non-Pacifica, community services (22%).

Giving is a different story. **Pacifica listeners are a third more likely to give to a Pacifica sta-**

**tion than listeners to other community stations are to give to theirs.**

Because personal importance of the service is about the same for Pacifica compared to other community radio stations, the difference in giving may be explained by the difference in funding beliefs.

The critical importance of listener support, coupled with belief that government funding is minimal, is more widespread among Pacifica listeners than among any other segment of the public radio audience.

That's perhaps unsurprising for an organization that originated the concept of "listener-sponsored" radio – as well as that boon and curse of public broadcasting, the on-air pledge drive.

– Leslie Peters  
– Jay Youngclaus

## The Importance of Community Radio

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### The Case for Community Radio

With its mission to celebrate the cultural diversity of New Orleans, WWOZ is an example of a station whose role is integral to the community it serves.

Over 40 dedicated volunteers create programs expressing their well-informed passion for blues, zydeco, gospel, Irish, Brazilian, Cajun, African, Latin American, Caribbean, bluegrass, brass band, reggae and other various musical styles which derive from the confluence of African, Latin, European and American cultures in this unique port city.

As such, it is impossible to imagine that the station's program service could be duplicated anywhere else, which may be the ultimate measure of its localism.

More than just a reflection of the community, WWOZ is deeply involved in the culture: preserving the traditions of New Orleans, while supporting its rich and complex living heritage through the active promotion of current musical activities.

WWOZ still honors the tradition of local radio stations providing exposure to local musicians. Every other hour, the station airs a comprehensive musical event calendar. WWOZ averages three-to-four interviews with musicians daily, and airs four-to-six live musical events per month from remote performance venues, including parks, museums, churches, festival sites and many of the city's famous music clubs.

During the annual New Orleans Jazz & Heri-

tage Festival, 'OZ broadcasts live performances from any of six stages, and then heads to the clubs from sunset to sunrise for additional live music pickups.

Past production projects have included special programs on Earl King, Irma Thomas, James Booker and two Mardi Gras packages, one hosted by Dr. John, the other awarded a Golden Reel for its portrayal of the city's musical lifestyle. One production is a 13-part series, "Night Train to New Orleans," tracking the history of New Orleans rhythm and blues through first-hand accounts of independent record producers.

WWOZ has created high-school, street academy, music and college class outreach activities to provide the next generation with an appreciation of the city's heritage. It has also helped improve their technical skills and professional contacts – both essential to cultural continuity and renewal.

An innovative minimal-cost health care clinic for New Orleans musicians could not succeed without WWOZ, according to the program's administrators.

Far beyond its mission, this community-licensed station is an essential component of the Crescent City's cultural eco-system. To quote pianist Eddie Bo: "WWOZ is the only station in New Orleans that takes care of its own."

– David Freedman  
Station Manager,  
WWOZ New Orleans



## The Importance of Community Radio

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### Re-Examining Public Radio's Values

The time has come to ask the question:

Does public radio have the responsibility to ensure that all segments of the American population are served?

In the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967, public radio's founders drafted language that encouraged "a source of alternative telecommunications services for all citizens of the Nation" addressing the needs of "unserved and underserved audiences, particularly children and minorities."

Is this mission still relevant? For community radio – which perhaps has remained truest to public radio's original mission – the answer is a resounding "yes".

AUDIENCE 98's data informs us that network-affiliated public radio, in general, is doing a laudable job serving white, middle-class, middle-aged, moderately affluent, educated people. Community radio – as defined by AUDIENCE 98 – is also, principally and generally, serving this population, but with lower average loyalty.

The timing for this information could not be better. **At this pivotal moment when public radio is moving to a more listener-sensitive economy, we need to take stock of our values.** What are our roots? What makes us worthy of public support? What makes us different from commercial media?

The single most distinguishing characteristic of public radio is its mission to serve this country's underserved.

If we aren't doing it well, we need to use what we know about radio – and how people use it – to do better. But it's a principle that we should never abandon.

In areas where a community station is the only public station, we have tried to be many things

to many people. While this tack runs counter to building a core audience and higher loyalty, responsibility to the many people in these communities has driven our decisions.

But today, two-thirds of Americans have the choice of two, three or even four public radio stations in a single market. **The majority of these stations consciously targets the "NPR News audience"** – leaving community radio to address the needs of everyone else not well served by commercial radio.

Community radio wants and needs to do better, but improvement in loyalty and giving must be sought in the context of mission – and with the cooperation of the rest of public radio.

A couple of possible scenarios come to mind:

Instead of serving all underserved listeners in an area with a few hours here and there for each group, a community radio station could **choose one type of underserved listener, and serve that listener well, all of the time.** In effect, that's what many Native American, Latino and African-American stations are trying to do today.

By providing a programming service that appeals consistently to the interests and needs of one type of underserved listener, a community station may reduce audience size, but substantially increase listener loyalty – a prime measurement of public service.

But the ability of a smaller audience of perhaps poorer listeners to support the station is a big question. **At what income level does public service disconnect from public support?** AUDIENCE 98, which could only survey today's public radio listeners, cannot tell us about the giving behavior of different types of future listeners.

Another scenario concerns the network-affiliated public stations, many of which are seek-

ing to establish second services in their markets, offering a different stream of programming to the NPR News audience they already serve.

In the spirit of public radio's mission, why not offer a second service targeted to an underserved audience?

Perhaps the greatest opportunity that AUDIENCE 98's report offers is the chance for all of public

radio to pull together; work with this information; investigate new ideas; and divide responsibility to fulfill the promise envisioned by public radio's founders – of a radio alternative, free of commercial pressures, offering the best possible public service to all Americans.

– Carol Pierson  
NFCB President

## The Importance of Community Radio

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### What Is Community Radio?

To study a thing first requires a definition. For the purposes of this AUDIENCE 98 report, “community radio” is defined as the five Pacifica stations and any community licensee station that generates 80% or more of its listener-hours from locally-originated programming.

To be included in this analysis, a station must be mentioned in at least one of the more than 300,000 Arbitron radio listening diaries upon which this study is based.

Of the 413 stations in AUDIENCE 98’s database, 40 met our definition of community radio. They are: KAZU, KBBF, KBOO, KDHX, KDNA, KHDC, KILI, KKFI, KMPO, KNNB, KOTO, KPAC, KPCW, KPFA, KPFI, KPFT, KRCL, KSER, KSJV, KTNA, KUVO, KVMR, KXCI, KZUM, WBAI, WBGO, WCNY, WDNA, WERU, WICN, WLCH, WMMT, WMNF, WORT, WPFW, WRFG, WVMR, WWOZ, WYEP and WZRU.

– Leslie Peters  
– Jay Youngclaus