

# Nielsen: Radio Is America's Number One Mass Reach Medium



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In 2023, Nielsen dropped the blockbuster news that AM/FM radio's total audience overtook television for the first time in history. Days short of the first anniversary of that study, Nielsen now reveals that three percent advantage has soared as TV gets left behind.

Radio now boasts a 12% larger average audience than TV among 18-49-year-olds. This growth reflects radio's expanding influence, reaching 40% more individuals in this age group than TV. Daily engagement with both TV and radio is nearly identical, averaging just over an hour, as shown by the Cumulus Media/Westwood One Audio Active Group blog.



TV's appeal among the 18-49 demographic has significantly declined, with a 29% drop in weekly reach and a 62% decrease in daily viewing time since 2018. Conversely, half of TV's ad impressions now target individuals aged 65+, highlighting a mismatch with advertisers aiming for a younger audience. In contrast, AM/FM radio presents a more balanced demographic distribution, with 40% aged 18-49.

Nielsen's Q3 2023 Total Audience Report confirms over-the-air radio remains the most widespread media in America, surpassing social media, online video, TV/internet-connected devices, and traditional TV among adults 18 and older. Particularly among the 18-49 demographic, AM/FM shares the top spot with social media for weekly reach, edging out online video and connected TV devices, with traditional TV ranking fifth.

The World Advertising Research Center emphasizes the importance of reach for media effectiveness, noting growth typically stems from attracting light or infrequent buyers. This underscores the effectiveness of wide-reaching media like AM/FM in driving sales and profits, contrary to the limitations of narrow targeting.

Despite common misconceptions, AM/FM radio listening extends beyond typical "drive times," with 59% occurring outside these periods. Midday hours attract the most listeners, debunking the myth that drive times dominate radio engagement. Weekend listening also proves more substantial than many advertisers assume, equaling the reach of morning and afternoon drives.

