

# Syrian Podcasts

Understanding Audiences and Exploring  
the Potential for Expansion

A Survey of Podcast Users and Digital Media Audiences



Radio Arta



Enab Baladi



Radio Rozana

Conducted by



مركز السياسات وبحوث العمليات  
Operations & Policy Center



This project is funded by the European Union through Free Press Unlimited



This study is one of the outputs of the “Creative Podcasts in the Service of Syrian Social Cohesion” project, in cooperation with and funded by three

Syrian independent media organizations:

Radio Rozana, Enab Baladi, and Radio Arta FM.

The project aims to contribute to dialogue and pluralism, and to promote peaceful coexistence among the various components of Syrian society. It also aims to develop the capabilities of independent Syrian media organizations to produce highly professional podcast programs.



Radio Arta



Enab Baladi



Radio Rozana

The study was carried out by the Operations and Policy Center (OPC).

2021



مركز السياسات وبحوث العمليات  
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# Executive Summary

Podcasting as an emerging medium continues to capture global interest; as a result, more Syrian individual and institutional producers are utilizing it. A number of promising Syrian podcasts have emerged in recent years, and their producers are now looking to accelerate the medium's use in-country, driven by the belief that podcasting, with its ease of use, calm communication environment, and the ability to cover topics rarely broached by traditional media, can add something to the fragmented and overactive Syrian communicative space.

However, producers' attempts to generate content take place within a large vacuum of information about the characteristics of the Syrian podcast audience. Syrians' experience with podcasts has, to date, never been systematically researched. Even the periodic reports issued by some international organizations about Syrian media audiences do not cover podcasts.

This study was initiated by three Syrian media organizations (Arta FM, Enab Baladi newspaper, and Radio Rozana) as the first step in understanding the creation and distribution of podcasts in Syria. Its scope includes not only the characteristics of the producer and the content, but also the demographics, habits, and preferences of the audience. Such a broad scope helps to provide podcast producers with the necessary feedback to develop production and marketing strategies.

This study took a survey approach embodied in the design of a two-model questionnaire targeting a sample of 600 respondents, divided equally between the podcast audience and the non-podcast digital media audience. The results of the quantitative data analysis were supported by a series of focused discussion sessions and in-depth interviews with podcasters, producers, and individuals from the Syrian media sector.

The study concluded that the Syrian communicative space is a suitable environment for the growth and development of podcasts, evidenced by the high percentage of internet access and rates of smartphone use, and the reliance on both in accessing media content. According to the sample, the audience for Syrian podcasts consists mainly of young people 15–34 years old (not surprisingly). Women are more inclined to listen to podcasts than men. Syrians living in-country are more likely to use podcasts than those abroad. Education level did not appear to have a significant impact on whether a person was a podcast listener or not.

The study also showed that a large percentage of our Syrian digital media audience sample had never heard of podcasts, indicating the need for efforts to introduce and promote the medium. As for the sub-sample of podcast listeners, the study showed a low level in weekly listening rates; it also showed that the majority of the sub-sample listened to podcasts during their free time, breaks, or before bed, indicating lower rates of podcast use as a simultaneous practice with other activities.

The sample data showed that users prefer short podcast episodes. The range of interest topics was wide and closely proportioned, with the largest proportions being news content and social/cultural content. Respondents also greatly preferred podcasts in the Syrian colloquial dialect over classical Arabic.

The study produced a set of recommendations for Syrian podcast producers, including:

- Recommendations related to content in terms of formal features or topics
- Recommendations related to access
- Preliminary features of what could become a long-term strategy to "localize" podcasts within the Syrian environment, through podcast promotion via traditional media (especially television) and via social media (especially Facebook)
- The importance of periodic and reliable feedback on the Syrian public, whose indicators are expected to witness changes and fluctuations during the next three to five years

To achieve the goal of localizing podcasts, the study proposes establishing a network of Syrian podcast producers, formed into a centralized body capable of mobilizing resources and coordinating their audiences to serve the growth and development of Syrian podcasts.

The last section of the study deals with the issue of the economic feasibility of podcasts, presents global developments in the field, explores the podcast market and its future prospects in Syria, and reviews the potential options for Syrian producers in the interim and in the future.



# Contents

<b>1. Introduction: The Emergence of Podcasts .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2. The Research Problem .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>3. Methodology .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>4. Results of the Study .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>4.1 Podcasts in Syria .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>4.2 Suggested Expansion Trends and Their Requirements .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>4.3 Is Podcasting in Syria Economically Feasible? .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>5. Conclusions and Recommendations .....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>6. Annex (1).....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>7. Annex (2).....</b>	<b>37</b>



# 1. Introduction: The Emergence of Podcasts

Since 2018, the annual digital media report issued by the Reuters Foundation has indicated that there are global indications of reverse migration from social media platforms toward other alternatives. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and others, which have grown rapidly during the last decade and competed with traditional media to dominate the public communication space in most regions of the world, seem to be losing their growth momentum in the number of their users. The growth curve has already started to decline in countries like the US, France, Brazil, and others.<sup>1</sup> This does not necessarily mean that social media will be absent from the communicative space, but for many reasons it will have to give way to new methods, forms, and techniques of communication.

For the results of this reverse migration in social media to materialize in Syria and the Arab region may require more time, but it seems to have already begun. According to recent studies,<sup>2</sup> an increasing number of young people in the Arab world have lost interest in traditional media forms that do not address their interests and daily concerns, and in social media platforms that are considered unreliable and lacking credibility. As a result, young people are looking for new ways of expression and communication.

Podcasts, as a medium of communication, are likely to be among the media platforms that will benefit most from this reverse migration, indicated by its skyrocketing growth rates.<sup>3</sup> The simplest definition of a podcast is “audio content broadcasted through special platforms that allow users easy access on demand.”<sup>4</sup> But in more specific terms, podcasts are digital audio files with diversified content that young people increasingly resort to in search of interesting knowledge and to escape the content deluge in social media and traditional media.<sup>5</sup>

Experts classify the short history of this new communication medium into two phases. The first was with the creation of podcast technology by American software engineer Dave Weiner in 2004,<sup>6</sup> when US media increasingly used podcasting to provide selective audio content to its audience. The second phase began as the popularity of podcasts became more evident during the last five years, and the number of podcast users increased globally as the spectrum of its producers broadened—media and individual producers, corporations, education institutions, unions, civil society organizations, and others.

Since 2018, podcasting has nearly doubled in its scope and reach. Today, more than one million podcasts operate worldwide. The total number of episodes of these programs exceeds thirty million, and their content is broadcast in more than a hundred languages.

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1- Nic Newman et al., “Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2018” (Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2019), pg. 9, <https://bit.ly/3B3tgvp>

2- Amal Khattab, “A Study of the Egyptian Youth’s Use of Podcasts” (in Arabic), Journal of the Faculty of Arts, 2017, p. 47, [https://jfab.journals.ekb.eg/article\\_67935.html](https://jfab.journals.ekb.eg/article_67935.html).

3- Gavin Whitner, “Podcast Statistics (2021) – Newest Available Data + Infographic,” Music Oomph, April 27, 2021, accessed August 23, 2021, <https://musicoomph.com/podcast-statistics/>.

4- Bruno C. Jham et al., “Joining the Podcast Revolution,” Journal of Dental Education 72, no. 3 (March 1, 2008): pp. 278-281, accessed September 3, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.0022-0337.2008.72.3.tb04493.x>.

5- Somaya Al-Yaqoubi and Muhammad Al-Raji, “The Podcast: Work Requirements and Content Characteristics” (in Arabic), PDF, Al Jazeera Media Institute, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3vvhzfg>.

6- Ibrahim ElShamy, Hadil Khenissa, and Somaya Abbas, “Podcast Industry in the Arab World,” Podcast Inc, accessed August 28, 2021, <https://www.podcastinc.io/post/podcast-industry-in-the-arab-world>.

7- Gavin Whitner, “Podcast Statistics (2021) – Newest Available Data + Infographic.”



In the Arab world, podcasts gained some popularity in late 2008, especially in the Arab Gulf,<sup>8</sup> but content and dissemination remained limited. Social media platforms, accessible in Arab countries at the same time, were more popular and appealing. But since 2016, podcasts have become a popular trend, with various production conditions and audiences. In its latest report, the "Arab Podcast" website (which follows up on the development of podcasts in Arab countries) recorded exponential growth in the number of podcast programs, from 36 active programs in 2016 to 458 by the end of 2020.<sup>9</sup> The total number of Arabic-language podcast episodes has surpassed 36,000.

**NOTE:** The "Arab Podcast" website does not list all Arabic podcasts for documentation, but rather archives and classifies podcasts at the email request of podcast creators or publishers, so real numbers are likely to be greater.

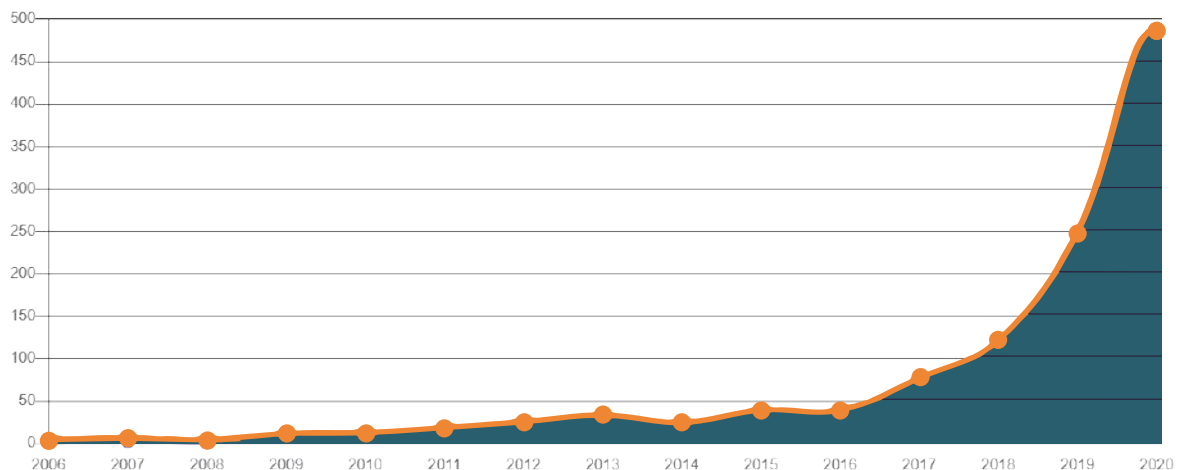


Figure 1 shows the growing number of Arabic podcast programs (Source: The Arab Podcast Website)<sup>10</sup>

These figures illustrate two facts: 1) Compared with Western and Asian countries, the content of Arab podcasts is still scarce and limited, and 2) The rapid growth of Arab podcast content has made it a promising medium of communication. The emergence of networks and platforms hosting podcasts in the Arab world has greatly promoted the expansion of podcasts and their influence. Among the most prominent of these networks are Sowt ("The Voice") in Jordan,<sup>11</sup> Mustadfir in Saudi Arabia,<sup>12</sup> the Kerning Cultures Network in the UAE,<sup>13</sup> and the Storyteller (Hakawati) network in Lebanon.<sup>14</sup>

Syria suffers from a large information vacuum regarding podcasts and their target audiences, as well as regarding content producers. Studies on the subject are almost nonexistent due to the volatile dynamics in Syria, and the decade of conflict that has dispersed the country's population. The strained conditions in the country have led to difficulty in compiling data, be it within any in-person space available or even via databases of various digital platform users. Even periodic studies on the topic conducted by a few international institutions rarely mention anything about podcasts.<sup>15</sup> Because of this information vacuum, three Syrian media organizations (Arta FM, Enab Baladi newspaper, and Rozana Radio) have funded this study, which was carried out by the Operations and Policy Center (OPC).

8- "About Us" (in Arabic), The Arab Podcast Site, accessed August 26, 2021, [//ar-podcast.com/about/](https://ar-podcast.com/about/).

9- "Podcast in Numbers" (in Arabic), The Arab Podcast Site, accessed August 26, 2021, <https://ar-podcast.com/stats/>.

10- "Podcast in Numbers" (in Arabic).

11- "Home Page" (in Arabic), Sowt Podcast Platform, accessed August 26, 2021, <https://www.sowt.com/ar>.

12- "Home Page" Mstfdr Podcast Platform, accessed August 26, 2021, <http://www.mstfdr.com/>.

13- "Home Page" (in Arabic), Kerning Cultures Podcast Platform, accessed August 26, 2021, <https://kerningcultures.com/ar/home/>.

14- "Home Page" Hakawati Podcast Platform, accessed August 26, 2021, <https://hakawati.fm/>.

15- Free Press Unlimited, "Syria Audience Research Study," PDF, January 2021, accessed August 28, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3G53MS2>.



The "Arab Podcasts" website database lists only 16 Syrian podcasts<sup>16</sup> out of 458 active Arabic podcasts. We know that the production volume of Syrian podcasts is greater than this number, and many podcasts aren't listed in the website database, indicating continued limitations in production and access.

## 2. The Research Problem

It has been nearly four years since podcasts first made an appearance in earnest in the Syrian social communication space. Preliminary indications of growing local interest in this communicative medium are evident in the increase in the number of programs and producers, and in the increasing knowledge and interest of at least certain segments of the Syrian public in podcasts. Although global indicators clearly point to a promising future for podcasting, the specific topography of the podcasting landscape in Syria is still opaque.

This study builds on the methodologies and results reached by podcast studies in different regions of the world, and attempts to probe the podcasting landscape in Syria, with the objective of understanding:

- Where does the Syrian digital media audience stand in the global "podcast revolution"?<sup>17</sup>
- What is the correlation between this audience and the podcast landscape in terms of viewing, following, and preferences?
- What about the production of Syrian podcasts, their content, and who are its producers?
- How can this initial study and its results help formulate recommendations that will aid media organizations in expanding the Syrian podcast audience base and enhancing the position of podcasting as an influential communicative medium in the Syrian media space?

With these questions in mind, this study aims to present practical proposals that will achieve two objectives: 1) Understand podcast audience trends, preferences, and characteristics in order to enable podcast-producing organizations to build more effective communication with their audience, and 2) Probe the trends of the non-podcast digital media audience in order to explore ways of introducing and drawing them into the podcast audience base.

But why pay special attention to podcasts in the Syrian context?

This study adopts the hypothesis that a podcast can be an exceptionally appropriate and important communicative medium in the Syrian communicative space for many reasons, including those related to the conditions of the country and others related to the characteristics of podcasts. Ten years of conflict has displaced half of the population, including 6.7 million people who have become refugees abroad.<sup>18</sup> It also damaged and/or incapacitated about half of Syria's infrastructure, including power and communications networks.<sup>19</sup> More dangerous, however, is the conflict-created fragmentation among Syrian communities, reflected in the widespread escalation of loud debates, fake news, and the dissemination of hate speech and incitement to violence within the Syrian communication and media space over the past ten years.<sup>20</sup>

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16- "Search Result: Syria" (in Arabic), The Arab Podcast Site, accessed August 31, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3B06zrV>.

17- Bruno C. Jham et al., "Joining the Podcast Revolution," *Journal of Dental Education* 72, no. 3 (March 1, 2008): pp. 278-281, <https://bit.ly/3Ehi1I9>.

18- UNHCR, "Refugee Data Finder," 2015–2020, accessed August 23, 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download/?url=m3MWea>.

19- Iain Overton and Jennifer Dathan, "Syria in 2020: The Deadly Legacy of Explosive Violence and Its Impact on Infrastructure and Health," AOA (Action on Armed Violence), December 18, 2019, accessed August 25, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3vJ4gZr>.

20- "A Comparative Study on Hate Speech and Incitement to Violence in Syria, 2020" (in Arabic), PDF, The Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3vvnH7G>.

At the same time, the number of Internet and smartphone users among Syrians has increased significantly in the past decade.<sup>21</sup> Most of those who left the country now have access to the telecommunications networks in their host countries, whose services are often more developed than their counterparts in Syria. Even in-country, the spectrum of internet service providers has expanded significantly, especially in the areas outside the Assad regime's control. The need to follow the news, and to communicate with relatives and acquaintances (due to the displacement of the Syrian population), have been significant factors in encouraging Syrians of different age and social groups to enter the world of digital communication.

As a result, there is an active audience consuming media content, a large part of which has intermittent or unstable access to the Internet due to poor infrastructure, in addition to interacting within a tense communication space. These limitations may constitute a fertile environment for increasing the popularity of podcasts in Syria, because of its many advantages:

**1. Ease of Access:** Listening to podcasts requires only a smartphone and an adequate internet connection; users simply click once on their phone to listen to a podcast while simultaneously doing other activities. Furthermore, podcast production is relatively inexpensive and doesn't require a lot of equipment and techniques, so theoretically anyone can record and broadcast content on podcast platforms. This feature sets podcasting somewhere between the general media landscape and the social media landscape.

**2. Communication Environment:** Podcasting is a focused and imaginative form of monophonic communication that allows a wider audience to delve deep into their topics and process large amounts of information. Podcasts create a calm and balanced environment for the dissemination of ideas and knowledge. The intimate acoustic environment makes podcasts very different from that of social media, which is filled with various types of mental stimuli and distractions.

**3. The Nature of Content:** Podcasts have the ability to access sensitive topics that traditional media tends to shy away from because of their complexity, especially those related to social issues and societal changes. With sound alone, and time focused on going beyond short summaries, podcasts make it possible to process information in a more nuanced and detailed manner.

**4. Encouraging Freedom of Expression:** Podcasting as a means and as a technology can be a significant catalyst in the battle for freedom of expression in Syria. Given that broadcasting takes place on open platforms and does not require large production costs, podcasts can create important opportunities for journalists, individual producers, non-profit organizations, and other entities to contribute to the communication space freely, without being limited by donor conditions or editorial restrictions, and by using digital tools that cannot be easily blocked, restricted, or tracked by authorities.

**5. The "Empty Stadium":** Ramsey Tesdell, CEO of the Sowt platform, one of the most prominent Arab podcast production platforms, said: "While there is fierce competition among social networks, the field of audio production appears like an empty stadium."<sup>22</sup> He describes podcasts as a promising and untapped field within the Arab environment, especially the Syrian one.

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21- Free Press Unlimited, "Syria Audience Research Study."

22- Mai Khalaf, "The Arab Podcast: Abundant Opportunities and an Empty Stadium," Noon Post, March 10, 2019, <https://bit.ly/3vtBJqq>.



### 3. Methodology

This study was based on a multi-tool and multi-phase methodological approach, designed by researchers at OPC and implemented in partnership with Radio Arta FM, Radio Rozana, and the Enab Baladi newspaper. These organizations provided both funding and access to their audiences to make this research possible, and their staff actively participated in producing the report. The following steps were taken in the completion of this study:

**Analysis of audience data available to podcast producers' partners:** The process of analyzing podcast audience data established an anecdotal level of knowledge about this audience sample in terms of size and distribution. It also flagged vacuums in that knowledge to help formulate questions for a survey.

**Brainstorming sessions with local journalists and podcast producers:** Occurring in the second phase of this research study, these sessions aimed for a greater understanding of the content currently being produced, and eliciting the producers' perceptions about both the potentials and obstacles of podcasting in their various working environments. The sessions also served as an opportunity to build a direct communicative relationship between producers and their audience by consulting with content producers on topics they could ask their audience about, which would be included in the research questionnaire.

**Two simultaneous questionnaires, one targeting a sample of the Syrian podcast audience, and the other targeting the "non-podcast" audience:** The two questionnaires served as the main tools for data collection, and will be detailed in the next section.

**A quick screening of the Syrian content available on main podcast platforms:** The survey covered three platforms: Google Podcasts, Apple Podcasts, and SoundCloud. In an attempt to form a comprehensive vision of Syrian podcast production, OPC posed the following questions: What is the size of the production? Who are the producers? What is the nature of the topics covered?

**In-depth interviews with Syrian and international podcasters:** With the completion of data collection and analysis, OPC had a comprehensive summation of Syrian podcasts in terms of content, producers, audience, and other factors. To complete the picture, OPC conducted three in-depth interviews with both Syrian and international podcasters, in order to gain additional proposals that were then added to those of the producers and the target audience. This made it possible to generate effective recommendations to partner institutions interested in reaching a new audience via podcasts in particular.

The study was dependent on four stages or cycles of data collection and analysis, each focusing on the same axes but using a different tool in each stage. The work stages can be imagined as overlapping layers, each supplementing the other, resulting in a highly comprehensive and clear picture of the subject matter.

### 3.1 The Questionnaire and the Research Community

In this study, we used two simultaneous questionnaires targeting two different audiences: the Syrian podcast audience, and the Syrian non-podcast audience (also referred to as the digital media audience). The justification for the dual mode relates to the objectives of the study; the podcast audience survey is useful in understanding trends and enabling media organizations to increase their use of podcasts, but it does not provide information about how the base of that audience can be expanded. Therefore, it was necessary to also survey the digital media audience who do not currently listen to podcasts—which provides an expansion map for podcasting going forward.

OPC selected its respondents from the audiences of three Syrian media institutions: Radio Rozna, Radio Arta FM, and Enab Baladi newspaper. Together, these three organizations have approximately 2.6 million followers on Facebook, providing us with a huge research community.

These three organizations produce media content in various forms: visual, print, radio, and podcast. Different audience segments were targeted in each organization. For reasons of accessibility, OPC limited the scope of its research community to these three organizations.

The sampling method used in this study combines two methods. First, voluntary sampling, which includes making the questionnaire openly available to a wide audience of potential participants in the study. Second, the quota sample, in which the required participation rate is predetermined, to ensure the balance of the sample.

The data collection process was conducted over the span of a month, from 25 July to 26 August 2021. The process followed two methods:

- An electronic questionnaire was disseminated through the social media platforms of the three media organizations (mainly Facebook and Instagram), and a promotional campaign encouraged public participation. The survey process lasted about two weeks.
- Structured interviews, conducted online, were launched in the third week of data collection, with the aim of accelerating the data collection process and intensifying the targeting of specific social segments in order to achieve gender, age, and location balance within the sample.

Five field researchers (female and male) from OPC conducted the data collection process; three of them were in Syria and two were outside. The researchers communicated directly with prospective participants, based on lists of contact details of people who interacted in one way or another with the social media platforms of the three organizations during the two weeks prior to the commencement of data collection.

The total sample size was 600 respondents, divided equally between the podcast and non-podcast audiences, equally between respondents residing in Syria and respondents residing outside Syria, and equally between males and females. The following figure shows the main considerations and factors taken into account for the study sample.

Variable	Responses	Number	Percentage
Have you listened to any podcasts in the last month?	No	304	50.7%
	Yes	296	49.0%
	Total	600	100.0%
		Number	Percentage
Place of residence	Outside Syria	299	49.8%
	Inside Syria	301	50.2%
	Total	600	100.0%
		Number	Percentage
Gender	Female	300	50.0%
	Male	300	50.0%
	Total	600	100.0%
		Number	Percentage
Age	15-26	201	33.5%
	27-34	197	32.8%
	35-42	115	19.2%
	43-50	50	8.3%
	Over 50	37	6.2%
	Total	600	100.0%
		Number	Percentage
Education level	Intermediate (Secondary and Institute)	212	35.3%
	High (university and above)	305	50.8%
	Low (primary and below)	83	13.8%
	Total	600	100.0%

Figure 2: The main considerations and factors taken into account within the study sample.

This sample is not representative of the broader Syrian public; it is drawn solely from the audience of three independent Syrian media organizations, which differs greatly from the audience of government media. Furthermore, the sample is not necessarily representative of the audience of the three organizations, characterized by heterogeneity and which, in turn, includes social, ethnic, and geographic sub-diversity.

The sample data derives its value from the orientations, experiences, and preferences of 600 Syrians, distributed across different locations inside and outside the country, from different age groups and educational and social backgrounds. OPC undertook the conducting of this study despite the country's instability and the lack of ability to carry out extensive field surveys in it.



For the podcast audience, the survey questions revolved around the following themes:

- A. Measuring audience trends inside and outside Syria to include gender distributions, age groups, education levels, and other factors
- B. Understanding the listening habits and preferences of the podcast audience, focusing on the young adult segment
- C. Identifying podcast platforms and applications that are most frequently used by this audience
- D. Identifying the podcast audience's most relevant and interesting topic choices, offering insight for topics of future productions
- E. Exploring the level of acceptance toward current or future Syrian providers charging a fee for podcast services

For the non-podcast audience, the questions revolved around the following themes:

- A. Measuring the distribution of the three media organizations' audiences across various outlets of media production, and gaining access to estimates of audience numbers in each organization
- B. Surveying the extent of the Syrian digital media audience's knowledge of podcasts
- C. Identifying the availability of technical means (such as internet connection and apps) to enable the public to access available podcast content, especially in Syria
- D. Determining which segments of the Syrian digital media audience are most likely to convert quickly to podcasts, based on age, city/countryside residency, level of education, etc.
- E. Exploring the possibilities (opportunities and obstacles) of podcasts becoming one of the primary mediums of independent media to reach Syrian young adults

## 4. Results of the Study

### 4.1 Podcasts in Syria

This section introduces the results of surveys conducted on the most commonly used platforms for podcasts in Syria (Google Podcasts, SoundCloud, and Apple Podcasts), and points out some of the most prominent features of the content. It also shows a summary of the general characteristics of the podcast audience sample, including their listening habits, content preferences, platforms used, etc.

#### 4.1.1 Syrian podcasts: what do they talk about? Who produces them? What is the size of their feed?

In the past ten years, Syrian audio content producers and radio stations have paid attention to the importance of audio platforms, the most important of which has been SoundCloud. By using SoundCloud to broadcast radio stations and other audio content on the Internet and reach a large audience, these producers have been able to achieve their main goals. The platform is also a low-cost way for listeners to access music and other forms of audio content. However, until a few years ago, podcasting as a form of independent media was not popular in Syria.

When evaluating the production of podcasts in Syria, there was a problem in distinguishing between broadcast content replayed on the platform and original podcast content. But in the past few years, Syrian media outlets, especially radio stations, have increased their production of live and interactive programs broadcast live on Soundcloud.

Therefore, for this research, OPC has set two standards to distinguish the two forms of content currently available on the podcasting platform. The first was naming the program, whether the product is categorized as a podcast or not. The second was categorizing the program's genre and consistency, and the basic features of specifically-identified podcasts such as their quality of production and the regularity of their publishing.

Applying the above criteria, we were able to identify only 47 Syrian podcasts; most of them are currently in hiatus, or were limited-length to begin with (as in the case of documentary podcasts). This is not an indicator that Syrian podcasts are going through a crisis, but that the life cycle of Syrian podcasts is short. The currently-suspended Syrian podcasts averaged only 15.2 episodes, indicating that many Syrian producers successfully start podcasts but struggle to maintain them. Only a quarter of the producers that start podcasts manage to sustain them. (See the list of Syrian podcast content in Appendix 1).

The survey was also able to identify 910 individual episodes produced from 2011 until today. There were no podcast productions in Syria before 2011.

Of the 47 podcasts OPC identified, only five were produced by an independent party; one case could not be confirmed, and the rest (41) were produced by organizations. Syrian radio stations ranked first in producing podcasts, followed by other media such as newspapers and websites; civil society organizations ranked second to last in podcast production.

The topics presented in these podcasts revolve around stories of the Syrian conflict and the experiences of individual Syrians within those dynamics. The most prevalent topics were stories and testimonies about events that took place in the country over the last ten years, and the discussion of social issues.

#### 4.1.2 The Syrian Podcast Audience: Characteristics, Habits, and Preferences

This study confirms the widespread assumption that podcast audiences in Syria are predominantly young, but it tends to negate the belief that people with higher education are more likely to listen to podcasts. The study also reveals that Syrian women tend to use podcasts more than men, and that Syrians living in-country are more interested in Syrian podcasts than those living outside the country (especially those in Turkey).

##### 4.1.2.1 General Features: Who Listens to Podcasts and Who Doesn't?

The study questionnaire asked respondents if they had listened to any podcast during the month prior to their participation in the survey. On the basis of their answer, respondents were classified as "podcast listeners" or "non-podcast users," and by comparing the general characteristics of respondents from the two categories, OPC was able to distinguish significant associations, the most obvious of which is age. The highest percentage of podcast listeners fell between the ages of 27–34, surpassing 53% among that age group. More than half (~51%) of respondents aged 35–42 listen to podcasts, and 48% of respondents aged 15–26 listen to podcasts.

Respondents older than 42 years (the smallest sub-sample for age) do still listen to podcasts, but at a lower rate (less than 42% as the average between the "43–50" and "Over 50" age groups).

### Have you listened to any podcasts in the past month?

#### Age

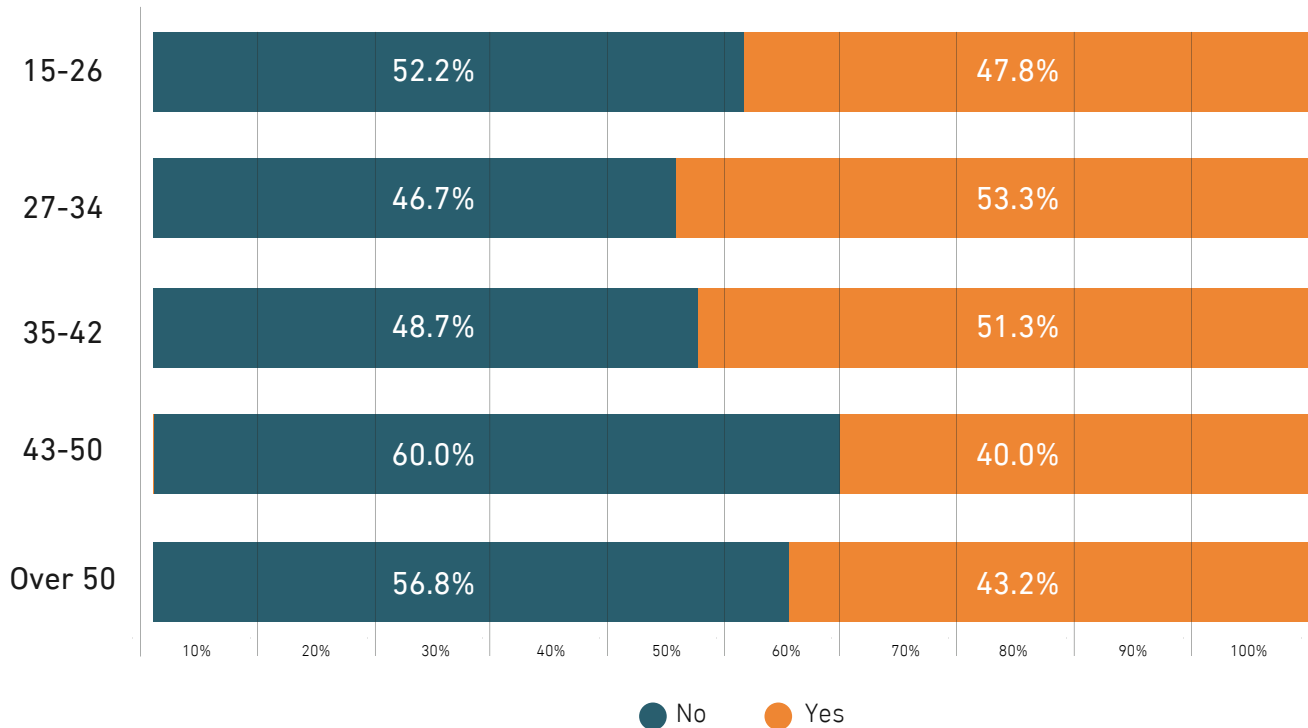


Figure 3 shows the distribution of the respondents of the total sample according to age and whether or not they have listened to any podcasts in the past month.

Compared with male respondents, more female respondents indicated that they had listened to at least one podcast in the month prior to the survey (about 56% to about 44%), a difference of more than 12%. Further research is needed to expand our understanding of these results, but it is still useful to understand that women in general seem to listen to podcasts more than men.

### Have you listened to any podcasts in the past month?

#### Sex/Gender

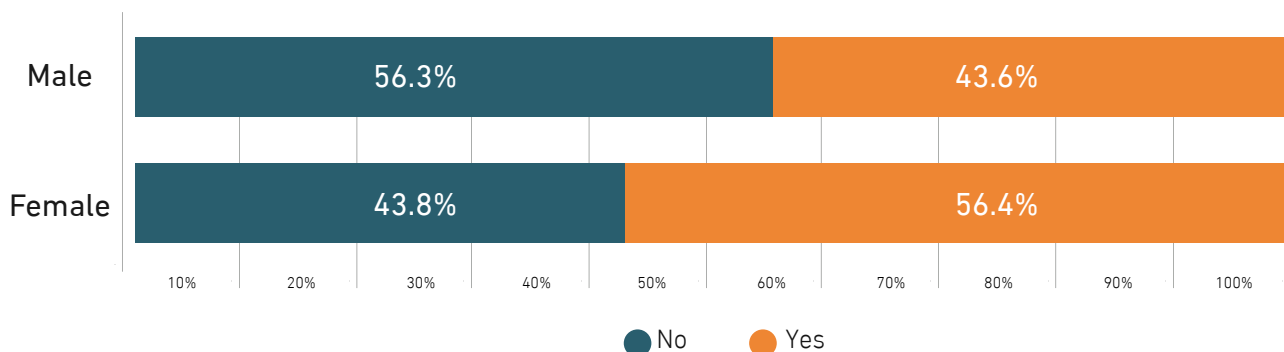


Figure 4 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the gender variable and whether or not they have listened to any podcasts in the past month.



The data further showed that respondents living in Syria tended to listen to podcasts to a greater extent than respondents living outside Syria. The difference between the two segments was also about 12%. Forty-four percent of respondents living abroad were classified as podcast listeners, compared to 56% of those living in Syria. Despite poor internet connection and services, the number of podcast listeners was higher in Syria, mainly because podcasts do not require a high-speed internet connection.

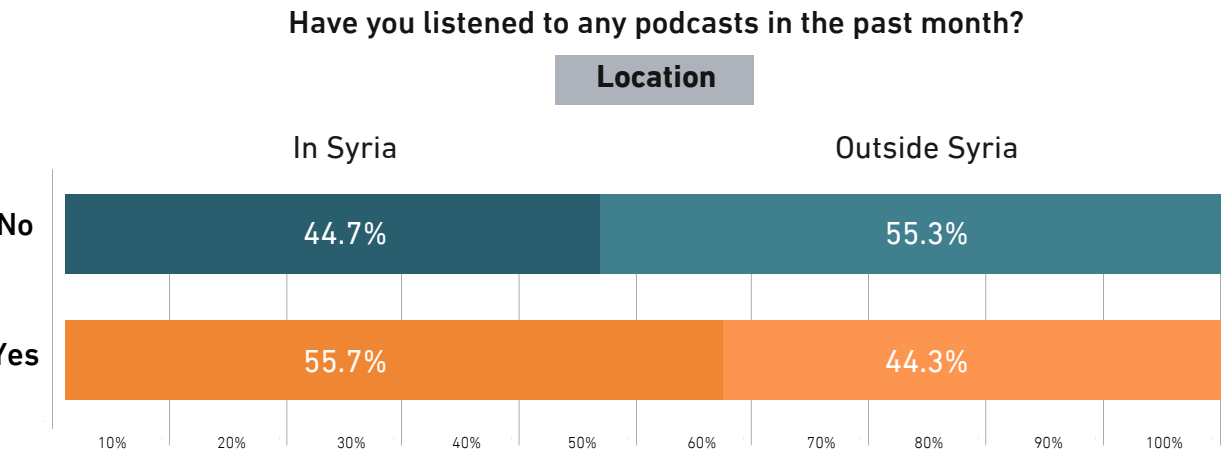


Figure 5 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to place of residence variables and whether or not they have listened to any podcasts in the past month.

The final variable in this section—and the most interesting one—is the level of education, which does not seem to have a significant effect on a person’s interest in podcasts. According to the data, there is no direct correlation between education level and listening to podcasts. In the table below, the respondents are divided into three categories; because the sample is biased towards the most educated groups, the percentages may be somewhat misleading. However, when we take this prejudice into consideration, people with average and low levels of education have higher listening rates than those with higher education. The majority of highly educated respondents do not listen to podcasts, while the opposite is true in the case of the average and poorly educated respondents.

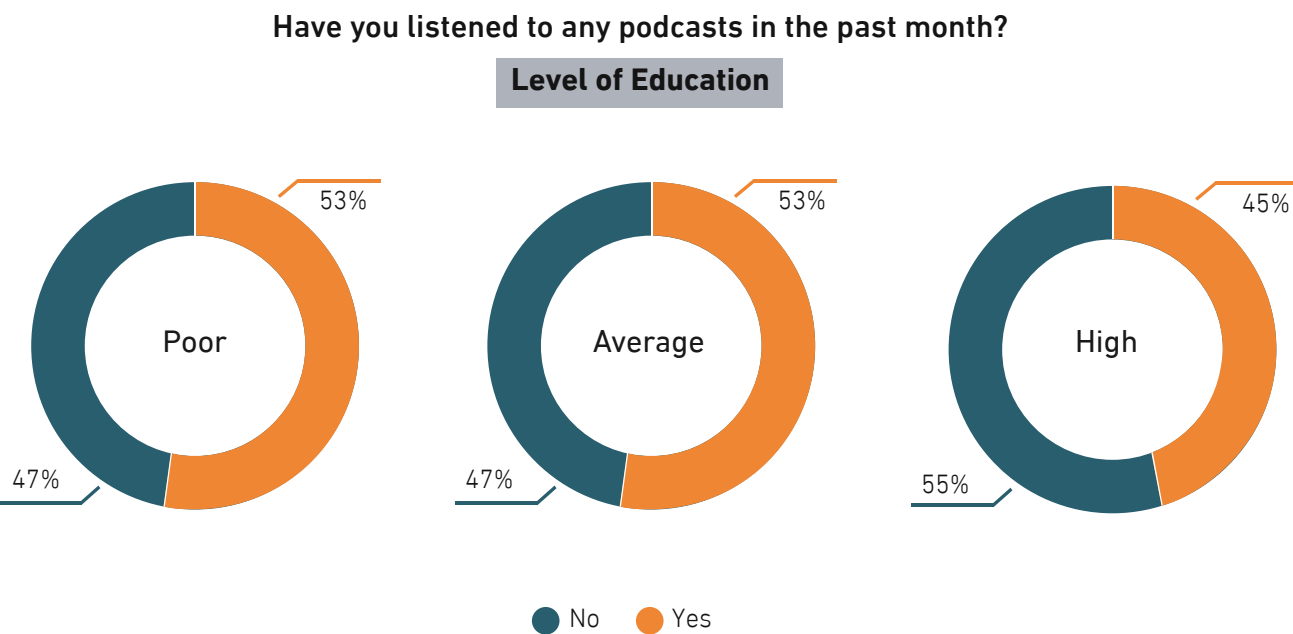


Figure 6 shows the distribution of the respondents of the total sample according to level of education variables and whether or not they have listened to any podcasts in the past month.

It can be inferred that these results largely refute the stereotype that podcasting is the media of choice only for highly educated people. The ease of use of podcasts and their ability to penetrate the Syrian public as a medium of communication makes them likely to be popular. As a result of these findings, it is feasible for Syrian podcast producers to invest in reaching various segments through content diversity, and in debunking the notion that podcasts are only for the highly educated.

So far, this study has provided an overview of the most significant differences between the two sub-samples of this study — podcast users and the non-podcast digital media audience. Readers interested in exploring these points in more detail can use the interactive database.<sup>23</sup>

The following sections will focus on the data gathered from the first sub-sample (podcast users), who accounted for 296 (49.3%) of the 600 respondents. The first of these will offer a better understanding of the perceptions, listening habits, and preferences of Syrians who listen to podcasts.

4.1.2.2 Listening Habits

According to the samples in this study, the Syrian podcast audience is not made up of voracious listeners. On average, each respondent listened to 2.6 episodes of podcasts in the week prior to participating in the survey (in the United States, an average person listened to 7 episodes per week).<sup>24</sup> In the Arab world, the latest report from the Arab Podcast website indicated that each participant in their survey listened to an average of 4.7 hours of podcasts per week.<sup>25</sup> Calculating the exact number of hours requires knowing the duration of each episode, but in broader terms this number suggests that the weekly listening rate is much higher than in Syria.

These numbers can be considered as an indicator of the novelty of Syrian podcasts within the Syrian community. It can also be linked to the availability of Syrian podcast content, and to the amount of content Syrians can relate to and through which they are able to express their concerns. According to previous research, the more the podcast industry in a country develops, the more the listening rate (the average time each listener listens to podcasts per week) may increase. For example, in 2017, the number of episodes per listener in the United States was less than 5 episodes per week; by 2021, it had increased to 7 episodes.<sup>26</sup>

How many podcasts have you listened to in the last week?

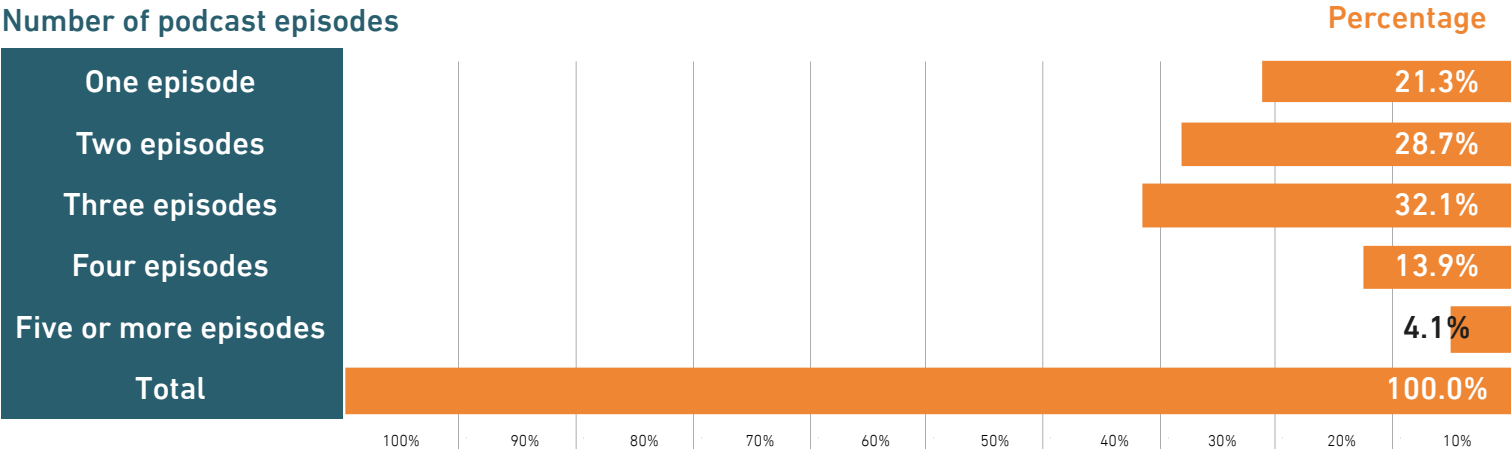


Figure 7 shows the distribution of “podcast users” respondents according to the number of episodes they listened to in the last week before participation in the study.

23- See the interactive database at: <https://bit.ly/3vvtD0B>.  
24- “2021 Podcast Stats & Facts (New Research from Apr 2021),” Podcast Insights, updated August 25, 2021, accessed September 9, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3joQAxE>.  
25- Abdul Rahman Al-Omran, “Arabic Podcast Poll 2019” (in Arabic), The Arab Podcast Site, 2019, accessed September 9, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3aYzPVy>.  
26- “2021 Podcast Stats & Facts (New Research from Apr 2021).”

What are the most significant factors that draw Syrians to podcasts? At the early stages of this research, OPC posed a query about various features of podcasts that were likely to make podcasts a suitable communication medium in Syria.

The most important factor among these features for Syrian respondents was “ease of access and use,” with about 37% of podcast listeners saying that this was their primary draw toward podcasts.

The second feature was related to the “calm and focused” communication environment that podcasts provide—a one-way audio communication virtually free of interactions or distractions. Over 30% of respondents indicated that this was the most attractive factor to them.

Finally, 24% of respondents said that “the nature of podcast topics that traditional media does not usually cover” was what most drew them to listen to podcasts.

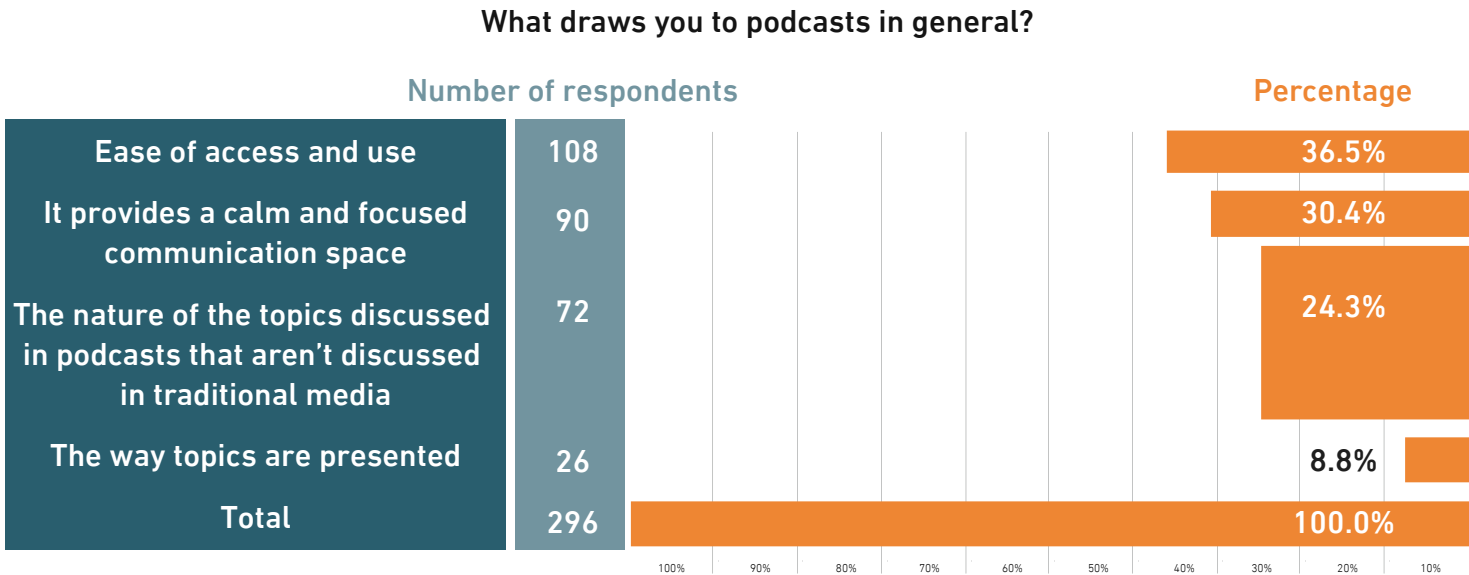


Figure 8 shows the distribution of “podcast users” respondents according to what draws them the most to podcasts.

The data shows that for the vast majority of Syrian podcast listeners in our sample, the convenience of access and use, the peaceful communication space, and the uniqueness of podcast topics are the most important characteristics. Although the first and second features are largely related to the technical nature of the podcast, the third feature is entirely related to the podcast producer, whose task is to choose topics that will always appeal to the audience.

In this context, it is useful to understand when podcast respondents listen; our data revealed that the majority of respondents don’t listen to podcasts as a simultaneous activity with something else. Thirty-eight percent of respondents said they listen to podcasts on their breaks and during leisure time, while almost 25% listen to podcasts at night before they go to bed. Taken together, these two groups constitute approximately 63% of the sub-sample. Only one-third of the study respondents said they listen while doing other activities.



### When do you find yourself listening to podcasts the most?

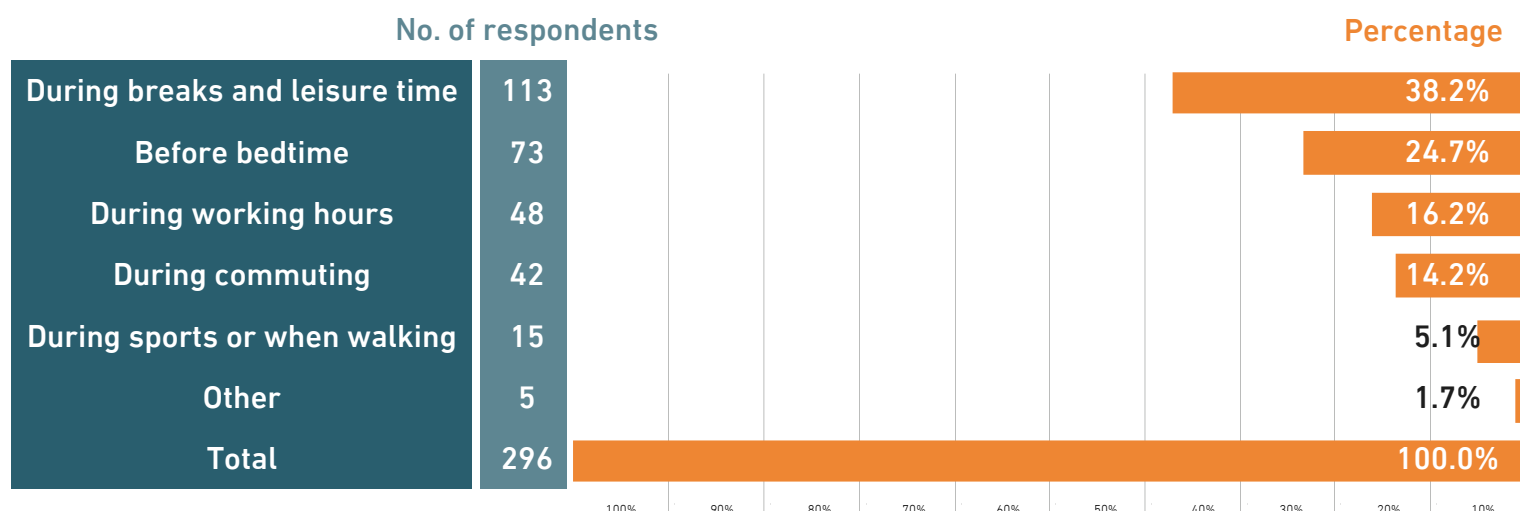


Figure 9 shows the distribution of “podcast users” respondents according to when they most often listen to podcasts.

This result speaks directly to Syrian podcast producers, who must work on the assumption that they are more likely addressing a listener who has free time and is primarily focused on the content they are listening to. This assumption will affect choices made during the process of selecting, producing, and broadcasting both topics and overall content.

#### 4.1.2.3 Preferences

In this section, we show the preferences of podcast listeners for the type of show they follow: Syrian or non-Syrian, preferred topic, platform, language, and their ideal time to listen to the podcast. Perhaps the best place to start in this section is with a brief discussion about the fierce competition the Syrian podcast producer faces among Arab producers.

The results of the study show that Arab podcasts are an important competitor for Syrian podcast producers. Only 22% of the respondents said that they listen only to Syrian podcasts, compared to 24% of those who listen only to podcasts produced by an Arab entity, and to approximately 4% of the respondents who mainly listen to foreign podcasts. However, the remaining half of the respondents said they listen to a mix of podcasts from all three sources, perhaps indicating the intensity of the competition. The question is, does the mixed podcast audience tend to support any of the three types of podcasts or podcast producers over the others?

### What are the podcast programs that you mainly follow?

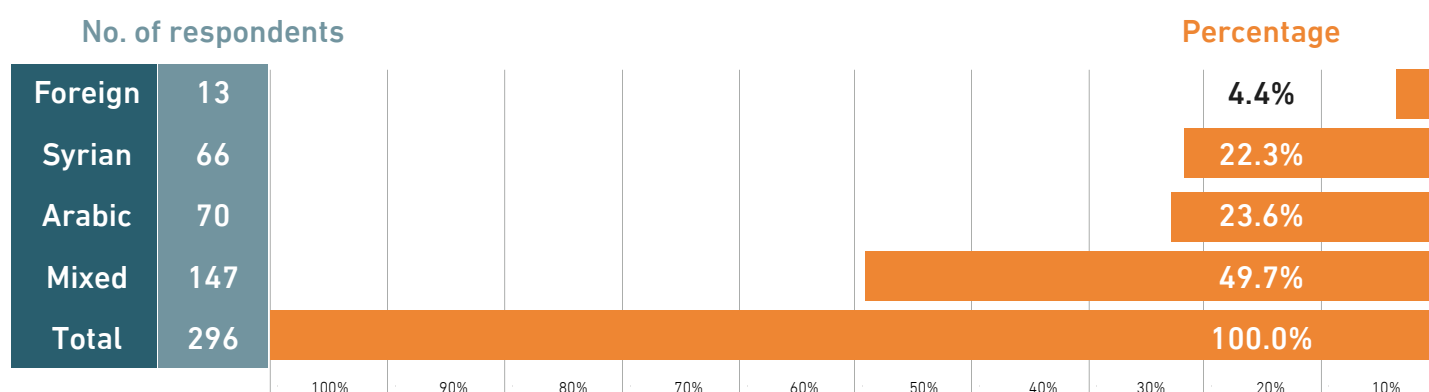


Figure 10 shows the distribution of “podcast users” respondents according to the type of podcast programs they follow.

According to the results of this study, Arab podcasts and foreign podcasts are more developed and richer in content than newly emerging Syrian podcasts, increasing the challenges for Syrian producers. Even so, these producers have an opportunity to take advantage of certain strengths; most importantly, their ability to create podcasts that depict in detail the daily lives of Syrians, reflecting the Syrian’s concerns, needs, and aspirations. Successfully achieving this goal may be a key factor in preventing the loss of listeners to other producers.

Another indicator that may favor Syrian producers over Arab producers is that the majority of respondents said that they prefer listening to podcasts in the colloquial dialect (“Syrian Arabic”) over classical Arabic. As shown in the table below, more than 77% of respondents prefer the colloquial dialect. This at least narrows the scope of competition for Syrian podcast producers to the borders of countries that speak dialects similar to Syria’s—Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, and perhaps Egypt. Podcasts broadcast in the North African or Arab Gulf dialects, for example, are less likely to offer strong competition.

Which do you prefer, listening to podcasts in colloquial Arabic or classical Arabic?

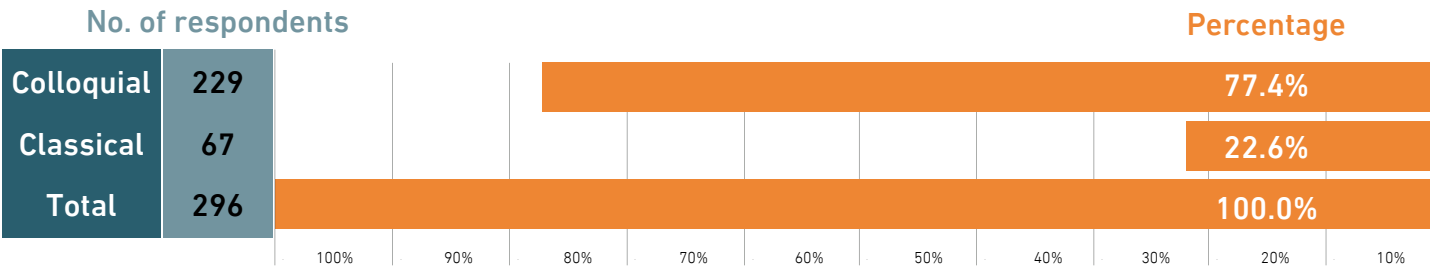


Figure 11 shows the distribution of “podcast users” respondents according to their preference of listening to podcasts in the classical language or the colloquial dialect.

As for most-used podcast platforms by the study’s podcast users, Google Podcast was the most used, accounting for about half of the sub-sample (roughly 49%). This was followed by SoundCloud, with 31% of the sub-sample respondents using SoundCloud.

Apple Podcasts and Spotify, both global leaders in their number of listeners, were the least popular among the study’s respondents; their percentages did not exceed 13% for Apple Podcast, 4% for Spotify.

What is your most used platform when listening to podcasts?

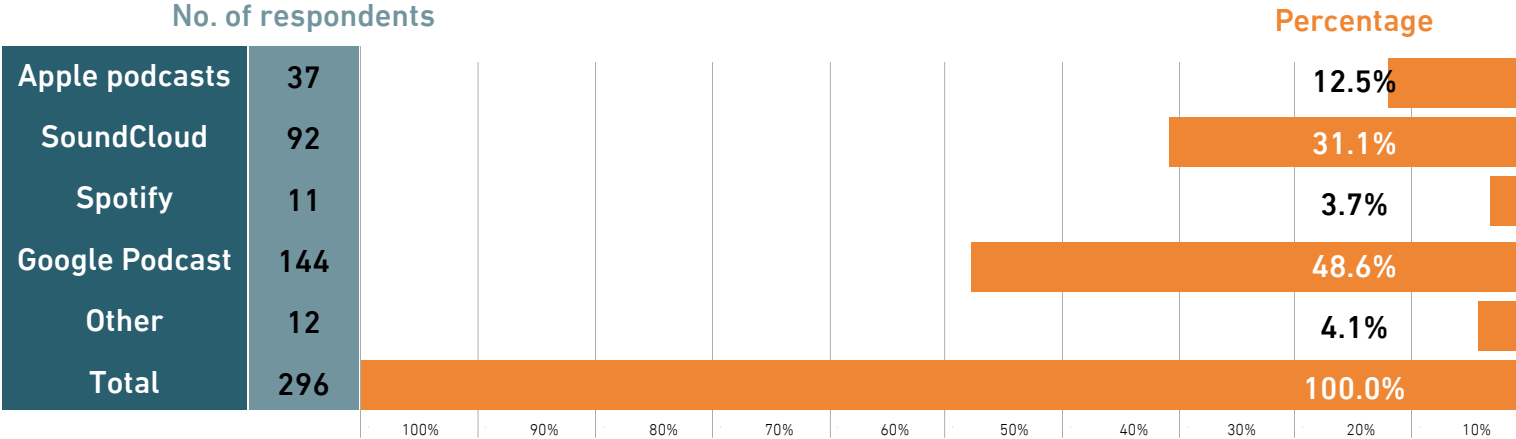


Figure 12 shows the distribution of “podcast users” respondents according to their most used platforms when they listen to podcasts.

It is worth noting that among the respondents who mainly listen to Arabic podcasts, Google Podcasts ranks third (its users do not exceed 17%); 39% of listeners prefer Apple Podcasts.<sup>27</sup> This may explain why Google Podcasts is the most popular among Syrians; the largest percentage of Syrian audiences use Android phones, which makes it easier to access podcast content through Google instead of Apple.

Another point of difference between those who prefer podcasts produced in Syria and those who prefer Arab or international podcasts is the preferred length of podcast episodes. OPC found that Syrians tend to prefer short episodes; about 60% of “podcast user” respondents said that they prefer episodes lasting 10–20 minutes. Figure 13 below shows that as the duration of the podcast episodes provided increases, the preference percentage decreases linearly; for those who like episodes longer than 40 minutes, the percentage drops to about 2%.

In your opinion, what is the ideal duration for a podcast episode?

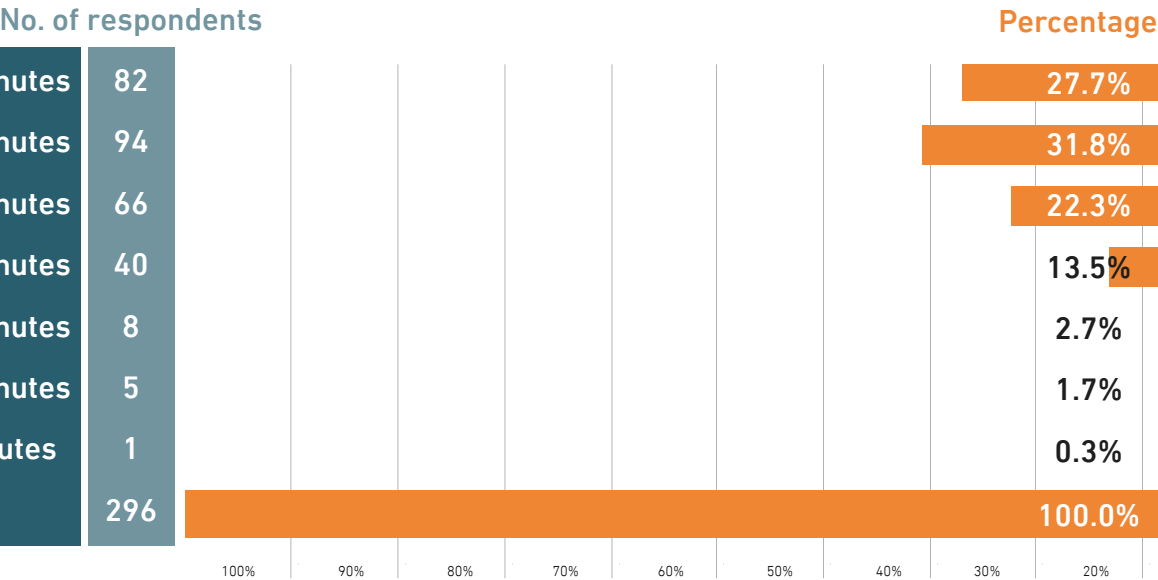


Figure 13 shows the distribution of “podcast users” respondents according to their preferences for the duration of a podcast episode.

These numbers are worth noting, as studies among non-Syrian Arab podcast listeners indicate a preference for longer episodes; the Arab Podcast Site report indicates that long content (40 minutes or more) is the most preferred for Arab listeners.<sup>28</sup> In the same context, a global study containing a sample of 10 million podcast episodes found that the average length of a podcast episode is about 38 minutes.<sup>29</sup>

We can then deduce from this comparison that the preferences of our sample’s Syrian podcast listeners are not in line with the global trend. However, that may change as the Syrian podcast sector develops and matures.

27- Abdul Rahman Al-Omran, “Arabic Podcast Poll 2019” (in Arabic), The Arab Podcast Site, 2019, accessed September 10, 2021, <https://ar-podcast.com/b/ststs-2019/>.  
 28- Abdul Rahman Al-Omran, “Arabic Podcast Poll 2019” (in Arabic).  
 29- Dan Misener, “I Analyzed 10 Million Podcast Episodes to Find the Average Length ,” Pacific Content, 2018, accessed September 10, 2021, <https://blog.pacific-content.com/how-long-is-the-average-podcast-episode-81cd5f8dff47>.

We will now explore the content categories that Syrian listeners care most about, and the content categories that they think are most needed. This will provide an indication of the demand for the various types of content normally presented in podcasts. For this study, OPC adopted Apple Podcasts' content categories.

As shown in Figure 14, "podcast user" respondents showed great interest in content classified as "society and culture," both in terms of current follow-up rates and the percentages of those who want to listen to more of this type of content. About 68% of the respondents said they currently listen to content of this type, and 60% said they would like more programs that focus on those topics.

The second largest percentage showed a great interest in "news content;" about 56% of respondents said they are currently listening to news content, and 43% said they would like to listen to more podcasts that deal with news content. On a similar note, respondents expressed an interest in podcasts with "educational content." Just over half of the respondents currently follow educational podcasts, and about 43% expressed a need for more educational podcasts.

Other categories, such as sports, comedy programs, and family programs, appear to be at a secondary level of importance; all have interest rates of more than one-third of the sample respondents.

Lastly—but not insignificant—were categories like "religion and spiritualism," "drama and films," "health and fitness," in addition to "history" and "technology." Even here, the percentage of interest among podcast users in the sample exceeds 20%.

What kind of content do you follow most when listening to podcasts?			What kind of content do you feel you need more of when you listen to podcasts?		
	No	Percentage	No	Percentage	
News	166	56.1%	127	42.9%	
Society and culture	200	67.6%	176	59.5%	
Comedy programs	108	36.5%	91	30.7%	
Money and business	86	29.1%	75	25.3%	
Sports	110	37.2%	95	32.1%	
Education	150	50.7%	128	43.2%	
Health and fitness	106	35.8%	76	25.7%	
Religion and spiritualist	104	35.1%	89	30.1%	
Crime stories	81	27.4%	76	25.7%	
Arts	95	32.1%	94	31.8%	
Science	86	29.1%	81	27.4%	
History	94	31.8%	82	27.7%	
Drama and film	99	33.4%	86	29.1%	
Technology	92	31.1%	103	34.8%	
Relaxation and meditation	67	22.6%	78	26.4%	
Family	104	35.1%	100	33.8%	
Government news	119	40.2%	109	36.8%	
Fantasy	74	25.0%	67	22.6%	

Figure 14 shows the distribution of respondents (podcast listeners) according to each of the content categories they mostly follow, and the content categories they feel they need more of.



The results send a clear message to producers: although certain content categories seem to be of greater interest than others, demand for all podcast content remains high. Diverse podcast content is a major need and desire for the Syrian audience.

## 4.2 Suggested Expansion Trends and Their Requirements

In this section, we present the results of the analysis of the “non-podcast” sub-sample (i.e., the digital media audience in general) of 304 respondents, with a focus on understanding how much knowledge of the medium these respondents have even if they don’t listen to it. We also attempt to identify audience segments that are most likely to become podcast listeners in the short and medium term. The study builds on currently available data and on recommendations from experts in the field, to determine which requirements are most likely to enable podcast producers to attract new audiences.

### 4.2.1 Knowledge of podcasts and the availability of objective conditions to reach it

The results showed that about 66% of “non-podcast” respondents knew nothing about this medium. An additional 30% of respondents said that while they have heard about podcasts, they have never listened to one.

The remaining ~ 5% is still significant in this study, as it represents respondents who said they had once listened to podcasts, but then stopped. The 5% figure may be an indication of low rates of decline in podcast use among the Syrian public; in other words, evidence of high retention rates among the podcast audience.

#### How familiar are you with podcasts?

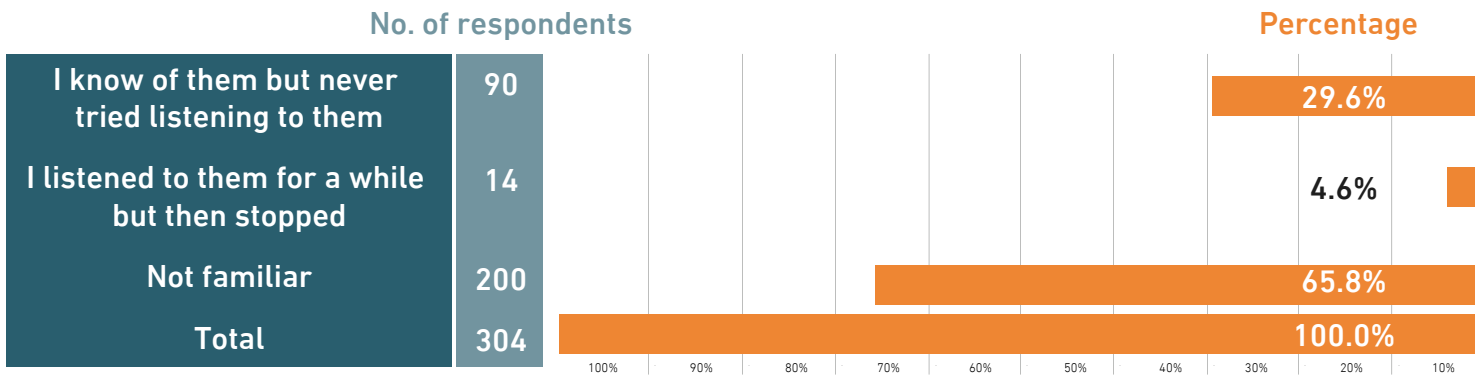


Figure 15 shows the distribution of “non-podcast” respondents according to their familiarity with podcasts.

The above figures are not randomized, and not necessarily expressive or reflective of the broader Syrian public. Two of the media organizations participating in this study are podcast producers, and as such their audiences would be better aware of and informed about podcasts. OPC believes that the broader Syrian public is less informed about podcasting than this sample shows, given that the current composition of the sample includes more young people and more of those already knowledgeable and interested in podcasts. (They are also more educated than the general Syrian public, but as stated in the Executive Summary, education level did not have a significant impact on podcast use.)

Now that we understand the audience, we can delve into the availability of the three basic needs for becoming familiar with and accessing podcasts in Syria: the availability of a decent internet connection, possession of a smartphone, and the knowledge of how to use it. The sample data shows that the vast majority of respondents (about 93%) have access to the Internet, either easily or with burdens mainly related to cost.

There is a relatively large margin of difference in the circumstances of Syrians living inside and outside the country. The percentage of those who said that the Internet is “accessible only in specific areas” in their region was larger among respondents who live in Syria (14%); the percentage decreased among those living outside the country to approximately 2%.

The same applies to the financial burdens of accessing the Internet. About 56% of respondents living in Syria said that they pay high fees for internet service; the percentage drops to less than 16% among respondents living abroad. (See the interactive database)

What is the availability of the Internet in the area where you live?

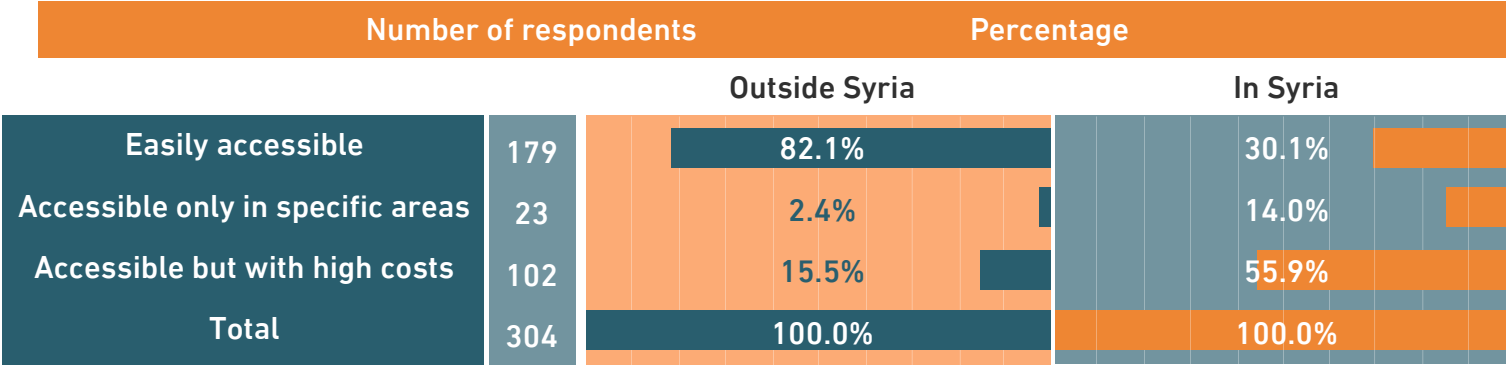


Figure 16 shows the distribution of “non-podcast” sample respondents according to the availability of internet in their area.

Based on these findings, internet availability itself does not appear to be a major obstacle to podcast listening, although internet access is expensive for most Syrians living in Syria. Even for this segment, podcasts are still the least expensive medium of communication, as they do not require constant internet access.

Internet access is available to and used by approximately 82% of the respondents, who said that they rely mainly on their phones for any type of media access. Smartphone ownership is certainly not an obstacle to accessing podcasts; on the contrary, the majority of non-podcast respondents use their phones to stay informed. They are, quite literally, just a click away from entering the world of podcasts.

What device do you primarily use to access media such as news, programs, etc.?

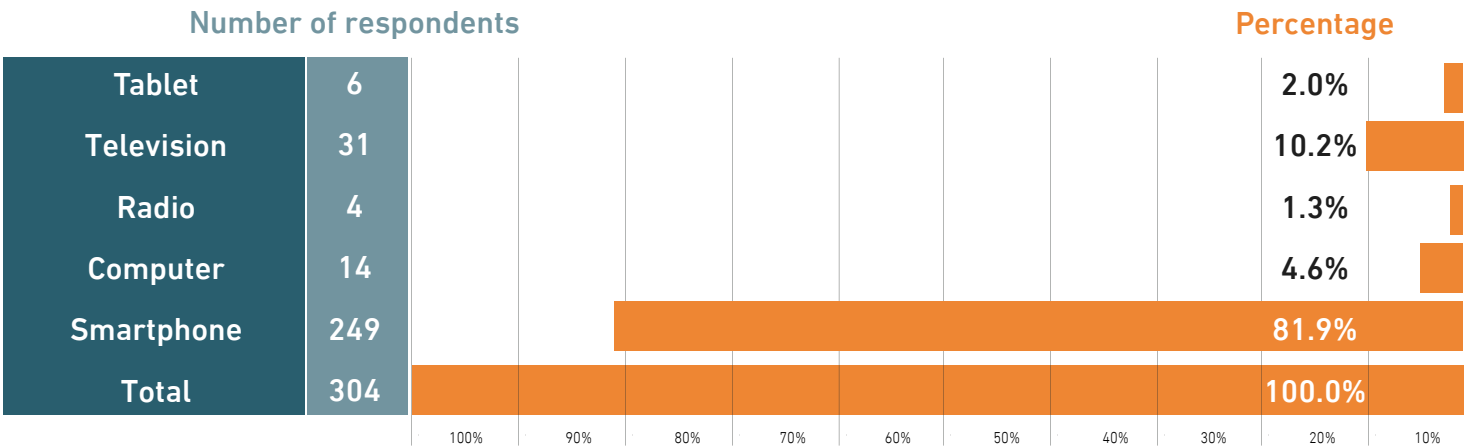


Figure 17 shows the distribution of “non-podcast” respondents according to the device they use to access media.

As shown in Figure 17, the basic tools needed for podcasts to reach a broad audience in Syria are readily available. However, a large part of the Syrian public is still unfamiliar with them. Syrian producers may have to do more than just produce engaging content; they may first have to advertise and promote the medium itself.

4.2.2 Polling segments most likely to start listening to podcasts

This section investigates five variables within the “non-podcast” sample respondents; both the high or low percentages of each variable give useful indications in estimating the percentage of respondents most likely to start listening to podcasts. Those variables are:

- Number of hours of smartphone use per day
- The frequency of listening to music from a smartphone
- The frequency of exercising or walking
- The average time the respondent spends in their daily commute
- The respondent’s perception of social media.

We believe that the higher the proportions of these variables among the sample respondents, the greater the proportion of potential podcast listeners among them.

Because smartphones are the most widely used device for accessing podcasts, it is necessary to explore respondents’ average daily usage of their smartphones. The sample results indicate a high usage rate; more than 35% of “non-podcast” respondents indicated that they use their smartphones for more than 5 hours a day. When expanded to include people who use their smartphones for four or more hours a day, the percentage jumps to more than 62%. On the other hand, less than 8% of respondents said that they use their mobile phones for no more than one hour per day. Figure 18 shows the complete distribution:

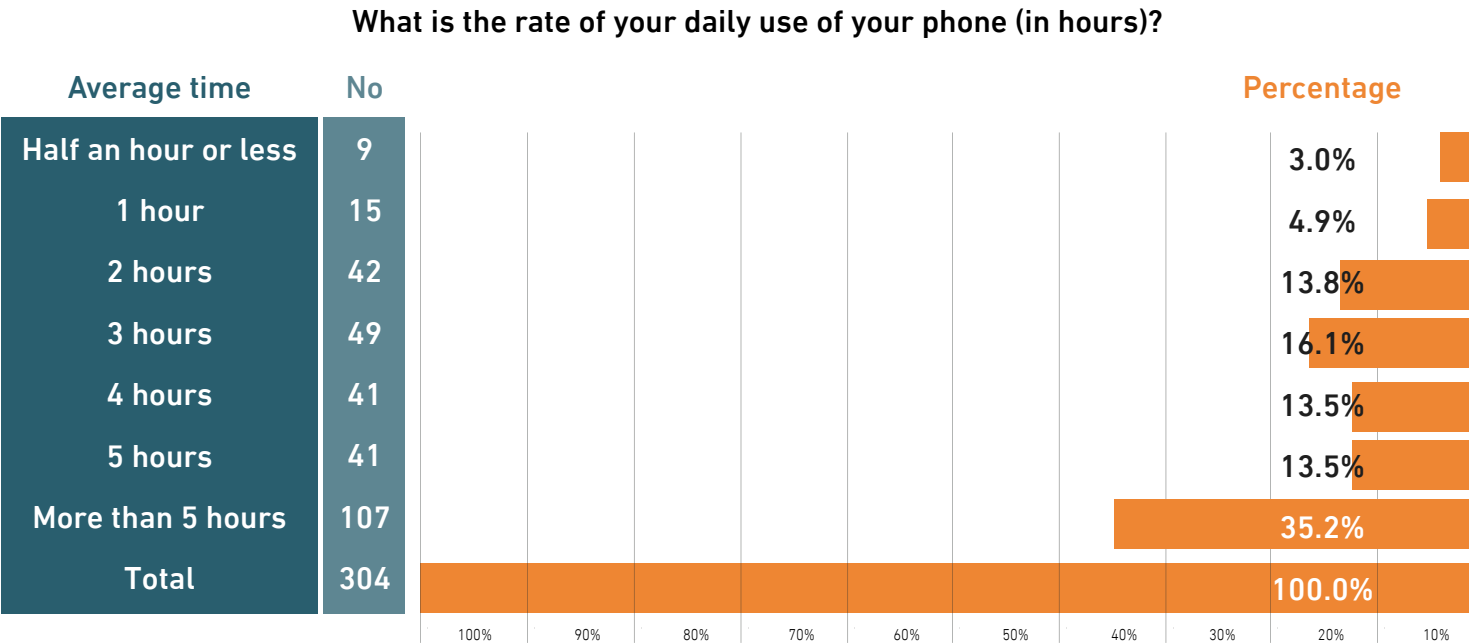


Figure 18 shows the distribution of “non-podcast” sample respondents according to the rate of smartphone use per day (in hours).

Higher rates of smartphone use among respondents mean that they are more likely to have access to podcasts. The smartphone usage rates of most non-podcast sample respondents places them among potential podcast users. For podcast producers, it's important to understand that the bulk of their potential audience is waiting for attention-grabbing content.

Smartphone users have a better potential for becoming podcast listeners, particularly those with the habit of listening to music or other audio content from their phone. More than half of the non-podcast sample (54%) “usually” do this; the second largest percentage, almost 29%, said they do this “sometimes.” Both of these groups offer a good potential for replacing their music, radio, or other content they listen to with podcasts. Less than 17% of the respondents said that they “rarely” or “never” listen to audio content on their phone.

Do you usually listen to music or other audio content from your phone?

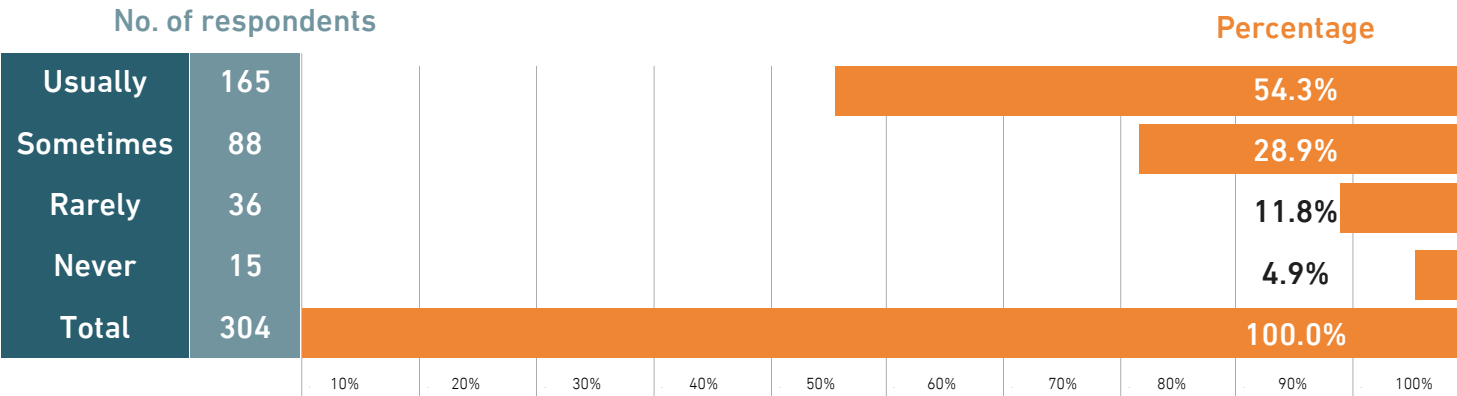


Figure 19 shows the distribution of “non-podcast” sample respondents according to their habits of listening to music or any audio content from their phone.

We now turn to non-podcast respondents’ frequency of some daily activities usually associated with listening to podcasts. In particular, the study focused on public or private transportation (“commuting”) and the average time each respondent spends in their daily commute, as well as the frequency of daily exercise or walking. These activities put the respondent in an “idle state” mentally, where no mental or sensory activity is required other than location awareness and breathing (traveling by bus, for example). The idle state is a convenient time to listen to podcasts. The more of this time a person has, the more likely they are to become a podcast listener.

In Figure 20 below, we note that 52% of non-podcast respondents said that they exercise or walk on a daily basis. The exact time they spend in these activities was not measured, but regardless of the duration, the indicator is promising.

Do you practice any sports frequently? Walking or any other exercise?

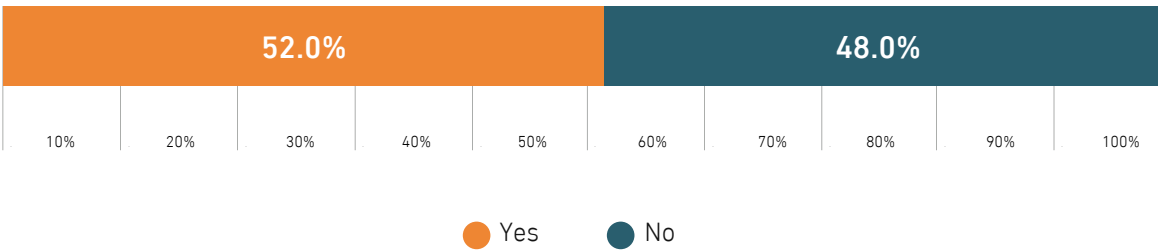


Figure 20 shows the distribution of “non-podcast” sample respondents according to their frequency of practicing sports or walking.



We then asked about commuting; the results are shown in Figure 21. About a third of the non-podcast sample (~32%) said they do not need to commute on a daily basis; about 20% more said their average daily commute does not exceed half an hour. This makes up slightly more than half the sample; however, it does leave about 47% who would have time to listen to podcasts on the way.

**During working days, how much time do you spend in transportation, in both public transportation or private vehicles?**

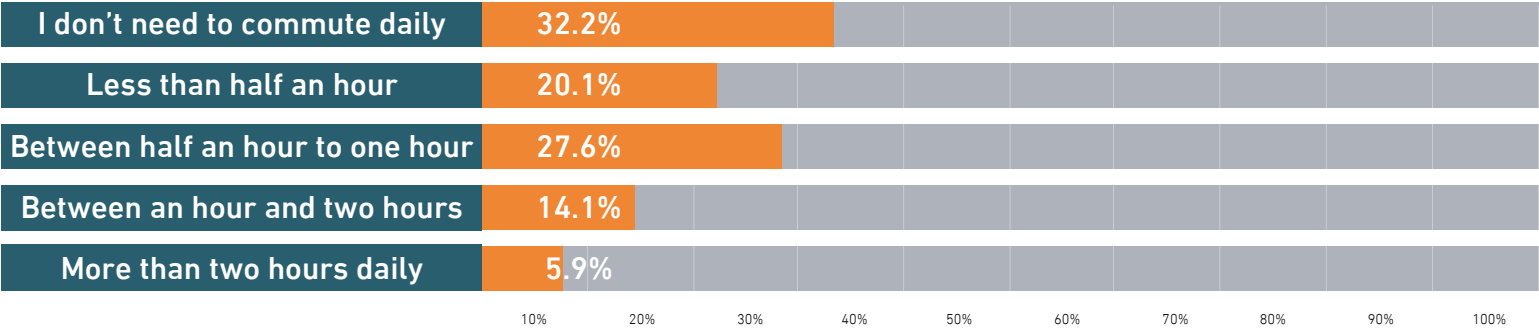


Figure 21 shows the distribution of “non-podcast” sample respondents according to the average time they spend commuting during their working days.

Next, we asked a question related to the adverse reaction towards social media mentioned earlier in the report. If there is a global trend to stop using social media, after it attracted traditional media audiences over the past decade and before, is there a similar situation among the Syrian public?

According to the data shown in Figure 22, less than 12% of non-podcast respondents expressed a negative attitude toward social media and media in general; approximately 28% expressed a positive attitude, saying that they enjoy the availability of many means of communication. But the majority, more than 60%, expressed a mid-range attitude, saying they “sometimes” feel tired of social media.

**Do you feel tired of the hype in social media and traditional media?**

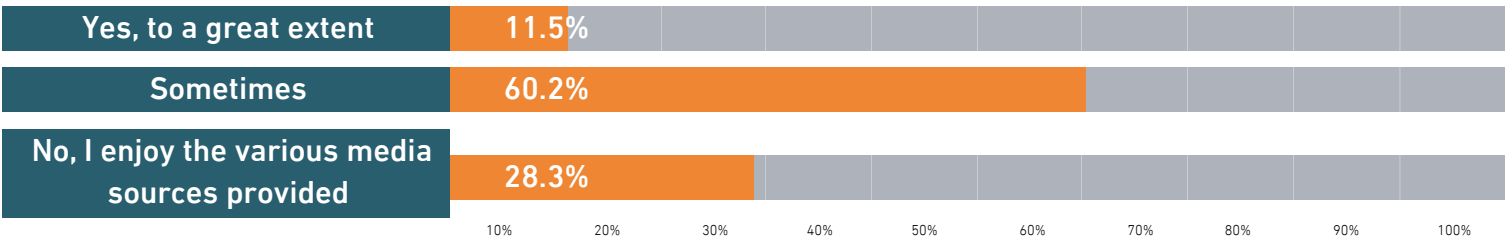


Figure 22 shows the distribution of “non-podcast” sample respondents according to their feelings about social media.

The indicators seem encouraging to launch podcasts into the Syrian communicative space, where they have the potential to become influential. But the mere existence of positive indicators does not mean that Syrian podcasts will reach audiences easily; the process of connecting with an audience can be long and complicated. With this in mind, we next looked at the requirements for attracting new audiences to the podcasting world.

### 4.2.3 Requirements for drawing in new audiences

The results of this section are based on summaries of interviews with podcasting and digital media experts, as well as the results of the analysis of non-podcast audience data. Four crucial things emerged as essential elements to any effort at spreading podcast culture among Syrians:

- Quality technical and journalistic content
- Relevant and diverse topics and themes
- An effective promotional environment
- An effective preliminary strategy for raising podcast popularity among Syrians

#### Quality Technical and Journalistic Content

Syria media researcher, Enrico de Angels,<sup>30</sup> says that the nature of the conflict in Syria is unique, especially in terms of the dominance of digital media in its communicative space. Although digital media was crucial in breaking the pattern of traditional media (mostly governmental in the early days of the conflict)—and giving a voice to the marginalized public as well as tools for expression—it put the Syrian media product in a highly competitive global space with outlets such as Al Jazeera, the BBC, and other major global media, both digital and broadcast.

From the researcher's point of view, competitiveness in the podcast world is based on two dimensions. The first is the technical quality of the product (the audio output). Podcasting is a medium with relatively simple equipment, but it requires quality production technology and direction to strengthen the dissemination of information. There has been a lot of development in audio production in recent years; according to de Angels, Syrian podcasters face the challenging task of catching up, so they can push their products to the global standard. The second dimension is journalistic quality: the quality of the narration and the narrative structure. De Angels said that Syrian producers have accumulated a lot of experience and qualifications in this area; the vacuum here is much smaller.

Syrian journalist—and one of the first podcast producers in Syria—Ammar Hammo<sup>31</sup> agrees with de Angels that Syrian producers face challenges in both technical and journalistic quality, but he sees journalistic quality as the greater challenge: “the Syrian podcast product is technically more advanced than it is in terms of content.” Hammo views podcasting as an art and a creative work, rather than a journalistic template with established and recognized rules and foundations; he suggests that many Syrian producers are still beginners or amateurs in the creative facets of the medium.

In Syria there is a unique podcast experience, and presenting it in this study contributes to enriching this dialogue. For example, the “A Message to the Syrians”<sup>32</sup> podcast produced by Radio Alan—currently the most popular Syrian podcast—has achieved a reach of about 1.5 million listeners since its launch nearly a year ago. According to its producer and presenter, Ayman Abdel Nour,<sup>33</sup> the episodes are released simultaneously on social media platforms, especially Facebook and YouTube.

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30- Enrico de Angels, independent media researcher, Zoom chat with OPC researcher, September 12, 2021.

31- Ammar Hammo, independent media researcher, Zoom chat with OPC researcher, September 12, 2021.

32- “A Message to the Syrians ” podcast, Apple Podcasts, accessed September 13, 2021, <https://apple.co/3E90t8Z>.

33- Ayman Abdel Nour, independent media researcher and producer/presenter of the “Message to Syrians” podcast, Zoom chat with OPC researcher, August 9, 2021.

“A Message to the Syrians” offers political news content, not considered overly popular in the world of podcasts. It relies solely on the voice of its presenter, with no advanced techniques used in the audio output. In production terms, there’s nothing “special” about it. Which prompts the question: What makes this particular podcast so popular?

In an attempt to understand more about its success, OPC spoke with the producer and presenter of the program, Ayman Abdel Nour, who currently resides in the US. He said, “I do not consider myself a podcaster. I did not even know what a podcast was until a year ago. I had a message that I wanted to deliver to Syrians, and a friend advised me to try podcasting, and explained to me what it was. Indeed, I found a space in it to build intimate communication with Syrians, away from stereotypes. I am broadcasting my messages today in a simple colloquial dialect, and talking to the listeners as if I am sitting with them in the same place, not as a rigid broadcaster with a written text to read from.”<sup>34</sup>

Abdel Nour believes that Syrians are tired of reading and watching television as a result of the crowded media space. What they want today is to listen and speak in their own simple language about issues that affect their lives. Abdel Nour continues: “I try to present simple and objective information about domestic political issues to my audience, without delving too deep into complexities and without bias.”<sup>35</sup>

This study gleans two factors from the experience of “A Message to the Syrians.” The first is that the program’s content fills a major need for Syrians, in light of the weak coverage of Syrian political news or the lack of interest in it by many traditional media outlets. The second factor is related to the podcast host himself; Abdel Nour is a well-known Syrian media activist and founder of one of the oldest Syrian news websites, “We Are All Partners,”<sup>36</sup> a position that has enabled him to access information and sources to provide content for his followers.

### Relevant and Diverse Topics and Themes

To a certain extent, podcasts have the advantage of providing a suitable space to discuss sensitive social topics that are not usually covered by traditional media. However, it is very important for Syrian podcast producers to avoid marketing podcasting as a space for only sensitive topics. Associating podcasts only with sensitive topics may hinder their popularity among conservative Syrian communities. It is best to adopt a policy of diversified content, and present podcasts as a space that meets the different interests of different social segments.

The non-podcast audience sample data provides useful information about the topics and interests that respondents consider the most important. Contrary to the popular belief that podcasts are not a space for daily news, the sample respondents show that news content is what they care most about; more than 56% of the sample chose that category, the highest percentage among all of the content categories offered on the questionnaire.

These results are in great agreement with the findings of Reuters researcher Nick Newman, who concluded that although news podcasts make up only 6% of the total podcast content on Apple Podcasts, those news podcasts pull in about 21% of the total Apple Podcasts listener audience.<sup>37</sup> The study also suggests that news podcasts have become more popular, with production in this genre increasing after the success of US newspaper The New York Times’ “The Daily,”<sup>38</sup> launched in 2017—which garners millions of listeners for its short news podcast.

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34- Ayman Abdel Nour, Zoom chat.

35- Ayman Abdel Nour, Zoom chat.

36- “About Us” (in Arabic), We Are All Partners in the Homeland via All 4 Syria, accessed September 13, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3jkXJPq>.

37- Nic Newman and Nathan Gallo, “News Podcasts and the Opportunities for Publishers” (Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, May 20, 2020), <https://bit.ly/3nf0ZEL>.

38- Michael Barbaro (host) for The New York Times, The Daily (podcast), Google Podcasts, accessed September 13, 2021, <https://bit.ly/30Dmsb9>.

Therefore, it is important for Syrian podcast producers to focus on current news podcasts, not merely historical or deep-dive topics; a large segment of the public appears to be just as interested in real-time news, likely due to Syria’s continued instability.

Figure 23 shows that the most preferred content categories after “news” are topics related to “society and culture,” which came in at more than 46%, followed by “drama and films” at approximately 36%. After that, other topics were more closely matched, including comedy programs, sports, educational programs, and others. But every single category had more than 25% of the sample respondents.

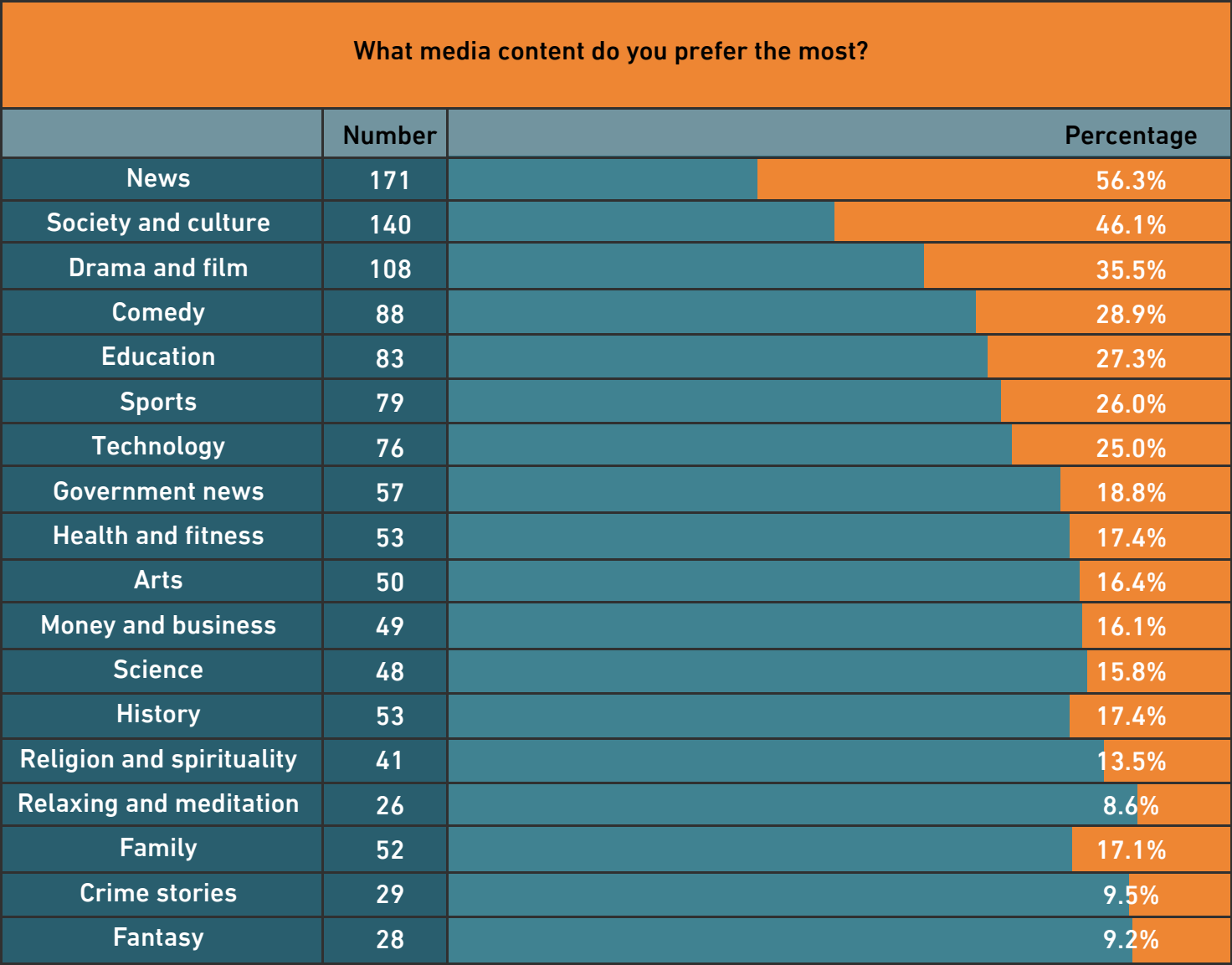


Figure 23 shows the distribution of “non-podcast” sample respondents according to their preferences of content categories.

There is an interactive relationship between the producer and the audience, in terms of the ability of the former to direct the interests of the latter and vice versa. This is why the above figures will be useful for Syrian podcast producers to help plan their content categories, at least in the short term. Diversity of content should align with the diversity of audience interests.

This study recommends that podcasts be promoted simultaneously through both social media and traditional media. According to data from the sample of non-podcast audience, television seems to be the most important traditional media; about 63% of the sample respondents said that television is their most commonly used method of information and entertainment.

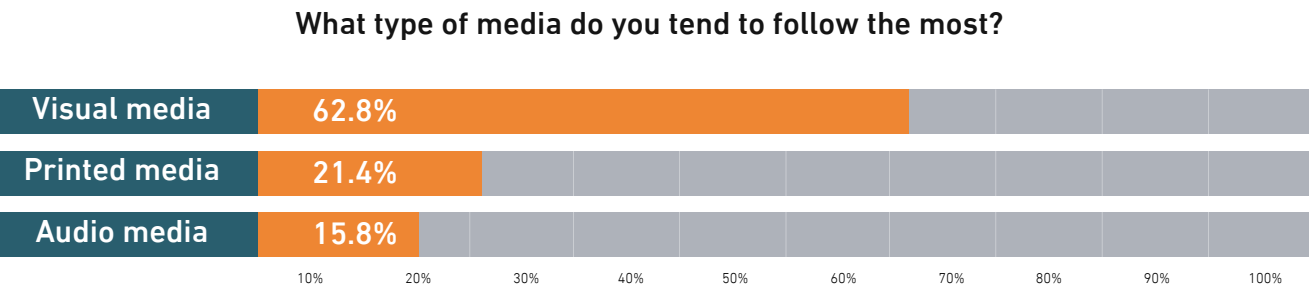


Figure 24 shows the distribution of “non-podcast” sample respondents according to the type of media they follow most.

Among social media platforms, Facebook is the top choice of Syrian non-podcast respondents; about 64% said it is their most commonly used platform. Instagram came a distant second at about 16%, and YouTube came third with about 11% of respondents.

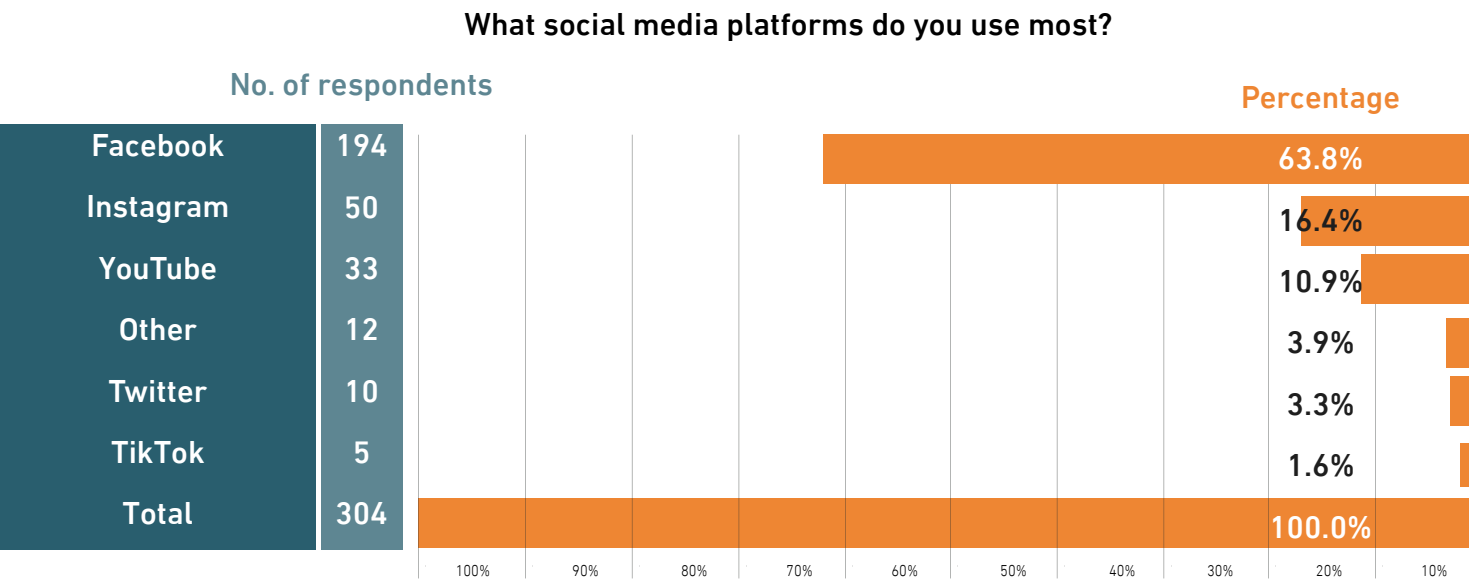


Figure 25 shows the distribution of “non-podcast” sample respondents according to the social media platform they use the most.

The above numbers indicate how podcast promotion efforts can best be distributed across traditional and social media. Not that promotion should be limited to the options offered in the survey; there are numerous other means and platforms for reaching various audiences. But according to the above data, special emphasis should be placed on TV and Facebook.



The results reviewed thus far indicate that the Syrian communicative space is largely a developing environment for podcasting. The experts we spoke to saw promising possibilities for podcast investment within the Syrian media environment. But the process of localizing this new communication medium in Syria requires a long-term strategy that works, at the very least, on three levels:

- Creating good and varied content
- Finding ways to deliver that content to an audience still familiarizing themselves with the medium
- Finding regular feedback channels from audiences to producers, beyond simply personal impressions and individual interactions with the content

The third point is currently the most important, because podcasts are still a novelty in Syria. It is likely that audience indicators will not settle into clear patterns in the first few years of introducing podcasts; there will likely be many fluctuations that require monitoring, analysis, and further recommendations.

Implementation of such a strategy requires a strong supporter; perhaps a network that includes Syrian podcast producers from various organizations as well as independent producers, who will inform the podcasting environment and industry as it develops. As mentioned earlier, there is Arab expertise in this field, including the Sowt platform in Jordan and the Mustadfir platform in Saudi Arabia, as well as others.

The proposed network will not only help mobilize resources and organize collective efforts to localize podcasts in Syria, but it will also create an integrated platform for Syrian podcast content. Among other innovations, a smartphone application dedicated to Syrian podcast users can be created. In the future, the network can increase the income-generating capabilities of podcasts, as described in the next section.

### 4.3 Is Podcasting in Syria Economically Feasible?

#### 4.3.1 The global podcast market and the income sources it provides

The podcast production market is growing annually, and the conditions of social distancing and bans on gatherings during the past year and a half have contributed to an increase in both followers and advertisers for podcasts. In the US alone, the podcast production market is expected to exceed \$1 billion this year.<sup>39</sup> The Chinese market has reached 23 times that number, with 7 billion US dollars in podcast subscriptions.<sup>40</sup>

US podcast platform Luminary raised about \$93 million to create a Netflix-like platform for audio. Gimlet Media, also US-based, raised \$28 million to build HBO Audio; they were later bought by Spotify for \$230 million.

Arab podcast producers, on the other hand, are still seeking to expand their audience network and raise their production level; they have begun to opt for fundraising via public campaigns, a step that may launch other initiatives to raise needed production funds. This will be reflected in one way or another in the size of the audience of a specific podcast.

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39- Podcast Industry Report: Market Growth and Advertising Statistics in 2021, insider intelligence [Link](#).

40- Marwa Fakihi, "The Podcast Industry in the Arab Gulf Countries: Expanding Beyond the Region" (in Arabic), The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, March 19 2019, accessed September 13, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3C43pVf>.

Arab platforms that already distribute audio products (mainly music) have also recently begun to take an interest in publishing and distributing podcasts to their users (Anghami is one such platform), all of which reflects a growing regional interest in podcasting.

According to research conducted by Arabian Gulf platforms and companies, youth groups are the largest consumers of podcasts in the region. This will have a major impact on the financing options available to podcast producers, as many of the methods currently used globally will be more easily accepted by these emerging age groups that have already started to consume premium (paid) online entertainment content.

Forbes magazine offers several ways for podcast producers to make money through their work.<sup>41</sup> The first is by marketing ad space; studies show that advertisers are taking a greater interest in podcasting as its global popularity increases. Podcast producers can market advertising space directly in their work or through advertising agencies.

Paid subscriptions are another revenue method; major podcast-hosting platforms such as Spotify are using this feature more often.

Forbes mentions several other options that may be more effective for podcast producers in Syria. Events organized for podcast producers, offering fee-based invitations to listeners and investors, can bring in revenue for production support. Another option that producers may prefer is to ask followers for donations in exchange for free or bonus content.

#### 4.3.2 The Syrian market for podcasts and its potential sources

In our interview with Ammar Hammo,<sup>42</sup> he said that the current novelty of podcasts for the Syrian public constitutes an investment stage, to enhance the medium's presence among the Syrian public. But investment takes time; product development and audience growth will have to advance before it becomes even theoretically possible to talk about generating income.

Other factors to consider include a country where half of the population is on the brink of starvation<sup>43</sup> and the culture of electronic product piracy that was extremely common even before the conflict.

But if the conflict can be said to have any upside at all, for this industry it might. It seems that the migration of Syrians outside the country may create promising opportunities for Syrian producers; the podcast-user sample data in this study demonstrates that. Syrians abroad are more inclined (and likely more able) to pay for online services and to pay subscription fees for podcast content that caters to their tastes. It may also give them a way to feel they're assisting their homeland in the only way they can right now.

As shown in Figure 26, about 40% of podcast user respondents who live outside Syria stated that they had previously paid for online services (applications or subscriptions to certain sites). The same criteria reached barely 8% among the sample of respondents who were living in Syria. It would be useful to point out here that the majority of podcast user respondents living abroad reside in Turkey, where income levels among refugees are not high. The percentage of podcast listeners willing to purchase internet services will be higher among Syrians residing in Western and Arab Gulf countries, for example, where income levels tend to be higher.

41- Jeff Umbro, question answered on Quora, "How Do Podcasts Make Money?" Forbes magazine, January 20, 2021, accessed September 14, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3GcdYs3>.

42- Ammar Hammo, independent media researcher, Zoom chat with OPC researcher, September 3, 2021.

43- United Nations, "The number of Syrians falling into hunger and poverty is more than ever due to the spread of COVID-19" (in Arabic), UN News, June 26, 2020, accessed September 14, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3b1KI8N>.

## Have you ever purchased services online? Such as buying apps or subscribing to websites?

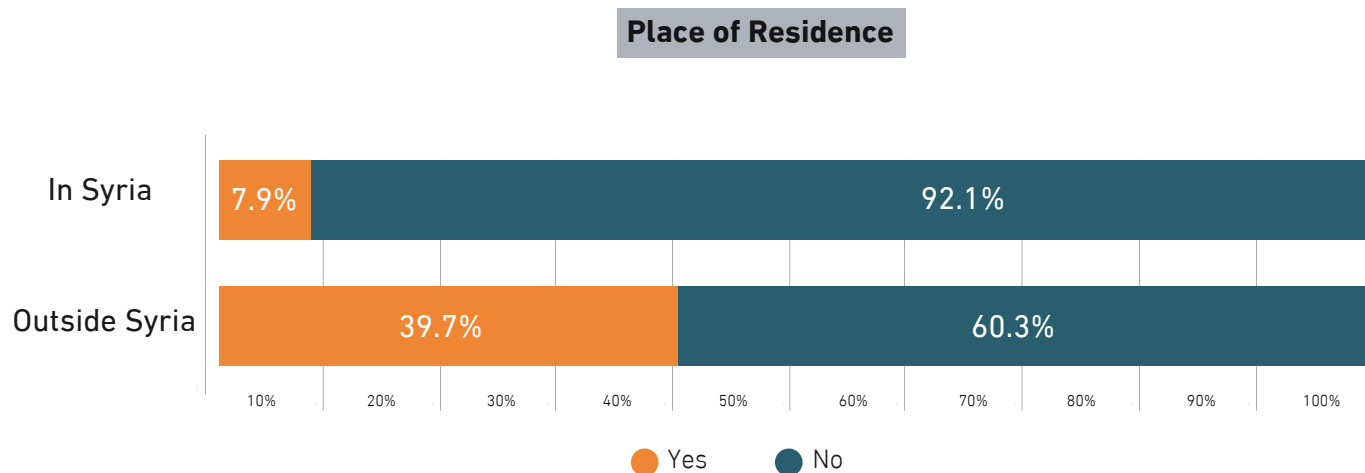


Figure 26 shows the distribution of podcast audience respondents according to place of residence and the history of purchasing services or applications online.

The figures presented above do not mean that Syrian podcast producers should focus only on the Syrian audience abroad. Although the podcast audience sample living in-country is less able to purchase services online, it shows a greater desire to support podcast content that caters to their preferences.

The percentage of respondents living abroad who were willing to pay for a podcast subscription dropped to around 33%, compared with 40% who said that they had already purchased services. But the percentage of those who expressed their willingness to pay among domestic respondents rose to 20%, despite the less than 8% percentage of those who had previously purchased services. This would seem to indicate a willingness to sacrifice some income for quality, relevant programming.

## Are you willing to pay a subscription fee for access to podcast content that caters to your preferences?

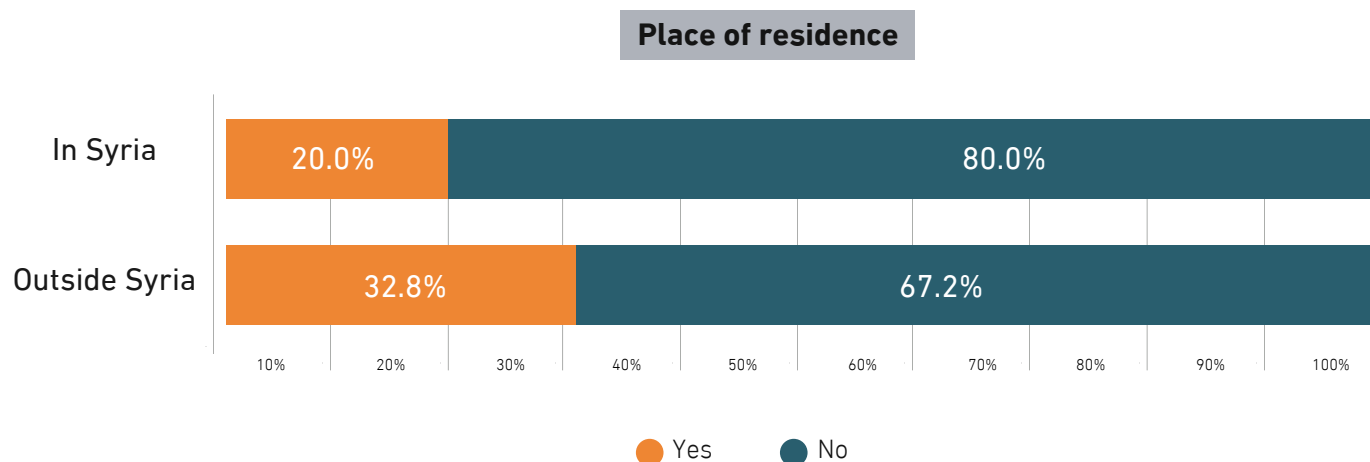


Figure 27 shows the distribution of podcast audience respondents according to their place of residence and willingness to pay a subscription for a podcast that caters to their preferences.

In short, plans to fund Syrian podcasts from the pockets of domestic audiences will take several years to implement. But there are promising indicators among Syrians living abroad, where there is a relatively greater financial capacity and a wider spread of online purchase culture and availability. However, relying solely on the funds of Syrian listeners abroad runs the risk that podcast programs will only satisfy the preferences of those listeners at the expense of the larger domestic population.

Another important point raised by one of the experts OPC spoke to is that Syrian podcast producers are likely to face greater competition for the Syrian audience living outside the country, particularly with podcast producers in countries hosting Syrians like the Arab Gulf countries, Egypt, and the EU.<sup>44</sup>

With the spread of podcasting culture among Syrians, potential sources of income from individual donations and subscriptions can play an important role in improving prospects for success. Gathering Syrian podcast content into one place, with the combined energies of multiple producers, may also be an important factor.

One of the Arab successes in this field is the Sowt platform, which includes a series of podcasts from various Arab producers on social and cultural topics. During the past year, the platform launched two services paid with monthly or annual subscriptions: “Sowt Plus,” which gives access to podcast episodes produced by the platform; and “Sowt Pages,” which airs podcasts from a number of leading publishers such as Harvard Business Review/Majarah, Maazif, Mada Masr, 7iber, and Al Jumhuriya.

The economic feasibility of the above still hasn’t been determined; but whatever the indicators are now, it is certain that they are likely to grow in the future as production of Arabic podcast content increases and its audience base expands.

Our proposed network can strengthen the position of Syrian podcasts in the Arab world and enable Syrian podcast producers to build partnerships with relatively more developed Arab networks and platforms. These partnerships can provide opportunities to learn from Arab experiences and facilitate access to Syrian podcasts in the wider Arab space.

Other than subscriptions and other audience-funded means, investment in advertising and media sponsorship for Syrian podcasts does not seem promising in the short term. The Syrian business sector is suffering, in light of the continued fluctuating dynamics of the conflict, and will probably not be willing to invest in podcasts until they occupy an important position in the communicative space. Limited opportunities at the local level can be expected, but expansion possibilities remain subject to the stability of Syria’s political and economic situation.

For Syrian podcast producers, the best opportunity now seems to be to capitalize on the growing global interest in podcasting and the enthusiasm of donors who support it. A Syrian podcast network, with a convincing strategy to localize podcasts in Syria and sound perceptions about the gains this new medium can bring to the Syrian space, can arouse the interest of donors.

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44- Enrico de Angels, independent media researcher, Zoom chat with OPC researcher, September 12, 2021.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

- **A fertile environment:** The results of this study confirm that the Syrian communicative space is a fertile environment for the growth and development of podcasts. This is evidenced by the large number of Internet users consuming media materials through smartphones. The study asserts that the ongoing conflict in Syria and the media clamor associated with it may constitute a factor pushing more Syrians into the calm and stress-free environment podcasts offer.
- **The essential need for a high-quality, diverse product:** The cornerstone in the attempt to localize podcasts in Syria is the product itself, in both broadcast quality and content relevant to the preferences of the Syrian public, which is diverse but primarily seeks news content and social/cultural topics. The presentation of content as a creative medium and an art form is the third leg of this cornerstone, completing the product's value. Stepping into a global podcast world of high technical standards and polished presentations can pose a challenge to Syrian producers seeking to capitalize on the advantages offered by the podcast format; sufficient development of these elements (technical setup, relevant content, and artistic presentation) is a process that may require a large investment from Syrian producers.
- **Limited listening time and a preference for brevity:** Data from our sample of Syrian podcast listeners indicate that they are not heavy listeners, as evidenced by the fact that the weekly listening rate of Syrians is about half that of the greater Arab region. It is less than 30% of the listening rate in the United States.

Syrians are also not long podcast listeners, evidenced by the sub-sample's majority preference for content that does not exceed 25 minutes; globally, audience preferences tend to be for longer podcasts.

- **Getting the product to the audience:** Even the most perfect content is useless without a plan to get that content to an audience who does not understand the medium. Promoting the concept of podcasts is just as crucial as promoting content. This study highlights the importance of presenting podcasts as a mass communication medium and as a space that accommodates most life topics, not as a cloistered medium for the 'elite' that focuses only on sensitive topics.
- **The right platforms for listening and promotion:** Most of the podcast listeners who participated in the research use Google Podcasts first, and then Soundcloud. The non-podcast participants primarily follow visual media (mostly television), and traditional social media platforms (Facebook most, then Instagram and YouTube). This is valuable information for planning and budgeting the promotion of Syrian podcasts.
- **A Syrian podcast network with a strategy:** The localization of podcasts in the Syrian environment requires a strategy, and a strong institutional holder to implement it. Therefore, we propose the establishment of a Syrian podcast network that includes Syrian podcast producers. In addition to creating a single entity to aggregate various content produced by Syrian podcasts, the network can also serve as a forum for the growth of Syrian podcasts by mobilizing resources and coordinating efforts.



# Annex 1: Data for surveying Syrian podcast content on Google Podcasts, Apple Podcasts, and SoundCloud

Name of podcast	Classification	Producer	Topic	Status	Episodes	Language	Link
Hamasat	Institutional	Rozana	Humanitarian stories	Discontinued	12	Arabic	<a href="https://www.rozana.fm/ar/podcasts/%D9%87%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9">https://www.rozana.fm/ar/podcasts/%D9%87%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9</a>
Syrian Matters	Individual	Mohammad Naser	Politics	Discontinued	20	Arabic	<a href="https://soundcloud.com/syrian-affairs">https://soundcloud.com/syrian-affairs</a>
Strange	Individual	Ahmad al-Zuhayli	Lifestyle	Discontinued	22	Arabic	<a href="https://podcasts.google.com/feed/aHR0cHM6Ly9hbmNob3luZm0vcy9hZnJlYT41L3BvZGNhc3QvcnNz?sa=X&amp;ved=0CBEQIvsGahgKEwoovq6y_vyAhUAAAHQAaaaaa-gY">https://podcasts.google.com/feed/aHR0cHM6Ly9hbmNob3luZm0vcy9hZnJlYT41L3BvZGNhc3QvcnNz?sa=X&amp;ved=0CBEQIvsGahgKEwoovq6y_vyAhUAAAHQAaaaaa-gY</a>
Your Religion is Your Debt	Institutional	Rozana	Social	Discontinued	8	Arabic	<a href="https://www.rozana.fm/ar/podcasts/%D8%AF%D9%8A%D9%86%D9%83-%D8%AF%D9%8A%D9%86%D9%83">https://www.rozana.fm/ar/podcasts/%D8%AF%D9%8A%D9%86%D9%83-%D8%AF%D9%8A%D9%86%D9%83</a>
The Great Syria	Institutional	Nuun Post website	Politics	Discontinued	8	Arabic	<a href="https://soundcloud.com/podcastnoon/sets/ad0qwgirz3hm">https://soundcloud.com/podcastnoon/sets/ad0qwgirz3hm</a>
Among People	Institutional	Heinrich Paul	Humanitarian stories	Discontinued	11	Arabic	<a href="https://soundcloud.com/verandahbs/sets/beenelnas">https://soundcloud.com/verandahbs/sets/beenelnas</a>
Story of a Refugee	Institutional	Heinrich Paul	Humanitarian stories	Discontinued	12	Arabic	<a href="https://soundcloud.com/verandahbs/sets/hekayetiiajee">https://soundcloud.com/verandahbs/sets/hekayetiiajee</a>
Far from Sight	Institutional	Heinrich Paul	Humanitarian stories	Discontinued	7	Arabic	<a href="https://soundcloud.com/verandahbs/sets/outofight">https://soundcloud.com/verandahbs/sets/outofight</a>
Umm Subhi and Umm Izzat's Sayings	Institutional	Anassi for Media Production	Drama	Discontinued	15	Arabic	<a href="https://soundcloud.com/umsubhi_umizzalproverbs/tracks">https://soundcloud.com/umsubhi_umizzalproverbs/tracks</a>
Studio Damascus	Individual	Khaled Ismail	Social	Discontinued	10	Arabic	<a href="https://soundcloud.com/khaled-osta-esmael/tracks">https://soundcloud.com/khaled-osta-esmael/tracks</a>
Razan	Institutional	Al-Jumhuriyah Net	Documentary	Discontinued	6	Arabic	<a href="https://soundcloud.com/razan_sowl">https://soundcloud.com/razan_sowl</a>
Join Hands	Institutional	European Union Trust Fund (Madad)	Humanitarian stories	Discontinued	5	Arabic	<a href="https://soundcloud.com/takatofpodcast/tracks">https://soundcloud.com/takatofpodcast/tracks</a>
Orient	Institutional	Orient	Politics	Active	32	Arabic	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/hashtag/%D8%A3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%AA_%D8%A8%D9%88%D8%AF%D9%83%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA">https://www.youtube.com/hashtag/%D8%A3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%AA_%D8%A8%D9%88%D8%AF%D9%83%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA</a>
I am Syria	Individual	I am Syria	Documentary	Discontinued	24	Arabic	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCGOn5Okawm2yMiWN2ETfuvQ/videos">https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCGOn5Okawm2yMiWN2ETfuvQ/videos</a>
Message to Syrians	Institutional	Al-Aan radio	Politics	Active	56	Arabic	<a href="https://soundcloud.com/alaaanfm/sets/d25zpfawwn3">https://soundcloud.com/alaaanfm/sets/d25zpfawwn3</a>
Scheduling	Institutional	Syria Podcast	Humanitarian stories	Discontinued	8	Arabic	<a href="https://soundcloud.com/syriapodcas/sets/jaddouleh">https://soundcloud.com/syriapodcas/sets/jaddouleh</a>
Looking for Meaning	Institutional	Syria Podcast	Humanitarian stories	Discontinued	6	Arabic	<a href="https://soundcloud.com/syriapodcas/sets/obnpy8pqm8ed">https://soundcloud.com/syriapodcas/sets/obnpy8pqm8ed</a>
Branch 251	Individual	Group of Syrian and German podcasters	Documentary	Active	75	Arabic/English	<a href="https://podcasts.apple.com/de/podcast/branch-251/id1510202145">https://podcasts.apple.com/de/podcast/branch-251/id1510202145</a>
Female Narrators	Institutional	Syrian Female Journalists Network	Humanitarian stories	Discontinued	7	Arabic	<a href="https://soundcloud.com/sfjn-1/sets/t7xaejv1lem">https://soundcloud.com/sfjn-1/sets/t7xaejv1lem</a>
Podcast of a Nation	Institutional	Watan FM	Social	Discontinued	85	Arabic	<a href="https://soundcloud.com/watanfm/sets/qwrn8fi7xmxe">https://soundcloud.com/watanfm/sets/qwrn8fi7xmxe</a>
Female Storytellers	Institutional	Syrian Female Journalists Network	Humanitarian stories	Discontinued	5	English	<a href="https://soundcloud.com/sfjn-1/sets/female-storytellers">https://soundcloud.com/sfjn-1/sets/female-storytellers</a>
Syria Podcast	Institutional	Creative Inception	Documentary	Active	33	Arabic	<a href="https://soundcloud.com/podcastsyrja">https://soundcloud.com/podcastsyrja</a>
They Aren't Back Yet	Institutional	Rozana	Humanitarian stories	Discontinued	5	Arabic	<a href="https://www.rozana.fm/ar/podcasts/%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%87-%D9%85%D8%A7-%D8%B1%D8%AC%D8%B9%D9%88%D8%A7">https://www.rozana.fm/ar/podcasts/%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%87-%D9%85%D8%A7-%D8%B1%D8%AC%D8%B9%D9%88%D8%A7</a>
Morning Smile	Institutional	Rozana	Drama	Discontinued	47	Arabic	<a href="https://podcasts.google.com/feed/aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuemB6YW5hLnZlL2FyL3BvZGNhc3RzLyVEQCvBQCVEQ_CVCMyvE0SU4NSVEQCvBOS0IRDgIQUIRDgIQIGRDgIQIGRDgIQUCnNz">https://podcasts.google.com/feed/aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuemB6YW5hLnZlL2FyL3BvZGNhc3RzLyVEQCvBQCVEQ_CVCMyvE0SU4NSVEQCvBOS0IRDgIQUIRDgIQIGRDgIQIGRDgIQUCnNz</a>
Women	Institutional	Enab Baladi	Documentary	Active	24	Arabic	<a href="https://podcast.enabbaladi.net/archives/qt-series/women">https://podcast.enabbaladi.net/archives/qt-series/women</a>
The Group	Institutional	Enab Baladi	Social	Active	19	Arabic	<a href="https://podcast.enabbaladi.net/archives/qt-series/alshilla">https://podcast.enabbaladi.net/archives/qt-series/alshilla</a>
Syrian Memory	Institutional	Enab Baladi	Documentary	Active	39	Arabic	<a href="https://podcast.enabbaladi.net/archives/qt-series/syrian-memory">https://podcast.enabbaladi.net/archives/qt-series/syrian-memory</a>
Simit and Tea	Institutional	Enab Baladi	Social	Active	34	Arabic	<a href="https://podcast.enabbaladi.net/archives/qt-series/simit-ve-cay">https://podcast.enabbaladi.net/archives/qt-series/simit-ve-cay</a>
Syrian Citizen	Institutional	Enab Baladi	Humanitarian stories	Active	34	Arabic	<a href="https://podcast.enabbaladi.net/archives/qt-series/syrian-citizen">https://podcast.enabbaladi.net/archives/qt-series/syrian-citizen</a>
Homeland	Institutional	Syria Direct	Humanitarian stories	Discontinued	7	Arabic	<a href="https://soundcloud.com/syriadirect_audio/sets/arddyar">https://soundcloud.com/syriadirect_audio/sets/arddyar</a>
Farewell, Home	Institutional	Syria Direct	Humanitarian stories	Discontinued	6	Arabic	<a href="https://soundcloud.com/syriadirect_audio/sets/home-is-always-on-my-mind">https://soundcloud.com/syriadirect_audio/sets/home-is-always-on-my-mind</a>
Voices from the Disapora	Institutional	Syria Direct	Humanitarian stories	Discontinued	3	Arabic	<a href="https://soundcloud.com/syriadirect_audio/sets/voices-from-the-diaspora">https://soundcloud.com/syriadirect_audio/sets/voices-from-the-diaspora</a>
Revolutionary	Institutional	Syria Direct	Humanitarian stories	Discontinued	5	Arabic	<a href="https://soundcloud.com/syriadirect_audio/sets/thawriyya">https://soundcloud.com/syriadirect_audio/sets/thawriyya</a>
Syrian	Institutional	Syria Direct	Humanitarian stories	Discontinued	10	Arabic/English	<a href="https://soundcloud.com/syriadirect_audio/sets/souriyeh">https://soundcloud.com/syriadirect_audio/sets/souriyeh</a>
Syria The Truth's Podcast	Undetermined	Syria The Truth	Politics	Discontinued	6	English	<a href="https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/syria-the-truths-podcast/id650542052">https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/syria-the-truths-podcast/id650542052</a>

Stories from Syria Podcast	Individual	Gareth Chantler	Humanitarian stories	Discontinued	2	English	<a href="https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/stories-from-syria-podcast/id1330922130">https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/stories-from-syria-podcast/id1330922130</a>
Margins	Institutional	Sawalef	Humanitarian stories	Discontinued	32	Arabic	<a href="https://play.anghami.com/podcast/1016241463">https://play.anghami.com/podcast/1016241463</a>
Story of Syria	Institutional	Radio Fresh	Social	Active	1	Arabic	<a href="https://soundcloud.com/fresh-sy/30-8-2021aa">https://soundcloud.com/fresh-sy/30-8-2021aa</a>
Jusoor	Institutional	Jusoor for Research	Politics	Active	14	Arabic	<a href="https://soundcloud.com/jusoorpodcasts">https://soundcloud.com/jusoorpodcasts</a>
What Athletes Have Not Requested	Institutional	Suriyali	Social	Discontinued	4	Arabic	<a href="https://soundcloud.com/souriali/sets/myr">https://soundcloud.com/souriali/sets/myr</a>
What the Audience Has Not Requested	Institutional	Suriyali	Social	Discontinued	10	Arabic	<a href="https://soundcloud.com/souriali/sets/myj">https://soundcloud.com/souriali/sets/myj</a>
Cities in the Syrian Revolution	Institutional	Suriyali	Documentary	Discontinued	6	Arabic	<a href="https://soundcloud.com/souriali/sets/cir">https://soundcloud.com/souriali/sets/cir</a>
Braids	Institutional	Suriyali	Humanitarian stories	Discontinued	94	Arabic	<a href="https://soundcloud.com/souriali/sets/jad">https://soundcloud.com/souriali/sets/jad</a>
Abu Fakir Fuyyaj	Institutional	Suriyali	Social	Discontinued	15	Arabic	<a href="https://soundcloud.com/souriali/sets/abu">https://soundcloud.com/souriali/sets/abu</a>
The Syrian Human	Institutional	Suriyali	Social	Discontinued	12	Arabic	<a href="https://soundcloud.com/souriali/sets/hos">https://soundcloud.com/souriali/sets/hos</a>
A Beseiged Doctor	Institutional	Hawa Smart	Documentary	Discontinued	8	Arabic	<a href="https://soundcloud.com/search/sets?q=%D8%B7%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A8%20%D9%85%D8%AD%D8%A7%D8%B5%D8%B1">https://soundcloud.com/search/sets?q=%D8%B7%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A8%20%D9%85%D8%AD%D8%A7%D8%B5%D8%B1</a>
Off Air	Institutional	Hawa Smart	Entertainment	Discontinued	6	Arabic	<a href="https://soundcloud.com/hawa-smart/off-air-06-04-2014">https://soundcloud.com/hawa-smart/off-air-06-04-2014</a>

## Annex 2: The Study Questionnaire

1	Place of residence	inside Syria
		outside Syria
2	Sex	Male
		Female
		Other
3	Age	15-26
		27-34
		35-42
		43-50
		More than 50
4	Education Level	High (University or above)
		Low (Primary and Below)
		Intermediate (secondary and institutes)
5	What is your occupation?	Do not work
		Office work
		Student
		Physical work
6	Have you listened to any podcasts in the last month?	Yes
		No
For Podcast Users		
101	What are the main podcasts you listen to?	Syrian
		Arabic
		Foreign
		Mixed
102	What attracts you to podcasts in general?	Ease of access and use
		Because it provides a calm space of communication
		The nature of topics that are not covered in traditional media
		The way it addresses topics
103	What kind of content do you most prefer?	News
		Society and culture
		Comedy Shows
		Finance and business
		Sports
		Education
		Health and fitness
		Religions and spirituality
		Music
		Crime stories
		Arts
		Sciences
		History
		Drama and movies
		Technology
		Mediation
		Education and family
		Government news
		Fictional stories
104	How many podcasts have you listened to in the last week?	One episode
		Two episodes
		Three episodes
		Four episodes
		Five or more episodes

105	What platform do you use the most to listen to podcasts?	Apple Podcast
		Google podcast
		Spotify
		Sound Cloud
		Other platforms
106	In general, when do you listen to podcasts?	Driving/Commuting
		At work
		While working out or walking
		Rest and leisure time
		Before bed at night
107	On a scale of minimum (1) and highest (5), what is your level of satisfaction with the current Syrian podcast content in terms of the following aspects?	The nature of the topics covered
		The way the topics are addressed
		Production volume
		Quality
		Ease of access to the product
108	What new podcast content do you feel is most needed?	News
		Society and culture
		Comedy Shows
		Finance and business
		Sports
		Education
		Health and fitness
		Religions and spirituality
		Music
		Crime stories
		Arts
		Sciences
		History
		Drama and movies
		Technology
		Mediation
		Education and family
		Government news
		Fictional stories
109	Which do you prefer, listening to a podcast in Modern Standard Arabic or in Syrian dialect?	MSA
		Syrian dialect
110	In your opinion, what is the ideal length of time for a podcast episode?	Between 10-15 minutes
		Between 15-20 minutes
		Between 20-25 minutes
		Between 25-30 minutes
		Between 30-40 minutes
		Between 40 - 50 minutes
		More than 50 minutes
111	Have you ever purchased services online? Like buying apps or subscribing to sites?	Yes
		No

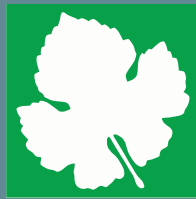
112	Are you willing to pay a subscription fee for access to podcast content that meets your satisfaction?	Yes
		No
For Digital Media Audiences		
201	How familiar are you with podcasts?	I don't know
		I know of it but I haven't tried it
		I used to use it
202	Why did you stop using it?	
203	What type of media do you tend to follow the most? (Choose from the following according to your preference)	Audio media
		Visual media
		Newspaper
204	How available is internet connection in the area where you live?	Readily available
		Available but with high costs
		Available in limited areas only
205	What device do you mainly use to access media materials such as news, programs, etc.?	Computer
		TV
		Smart phone
		Tablet
		Radio
		Other
206	What is your daily phone usage in hours?	half an hour or less
		One hour
		Two hours
		Three hours
		Four hours
		Five hours
		More than five hours
207	Do you usually listen to music or other audio content on your phone?	yes often
		sometimes
		Rarely
		Never
208	Which three social media platforms do you use most? (in order)	Facebook
	First	YouTube
	Second	Twitter
	Third	Instagram
		Snapchat
		TikTok
		Other
209	What media content do you prefer to follow the most?	News
		Society and culture
		Comedy Shows
		Finance and business
		Sports
		Education
		Health and fitness
		Religions and spirituality
		Music
		Crime stories
		Arts
		Sciences

		History
		Drama and movies
		Technology
		Mediation
		Education and family
		Government news
		Fictional stories
210	Do you do any sports frequently? Walking, working out, or something else?	Yes
		No
211	During working days, how much time do you spend on transportation, whether public transportation or private vehicles?	I don't need to commute every day
		Less than half an hour
		Between half an hour and an hour
		Between one and two hours
		More than two hours a day
212	Do you feel tired of the hype of traditional and social media?	No, I enjoy having multiple sources
		Sometimes I feel so
		Yes very much





Radio Arta



Enab Baladi



Radio Rozana

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