























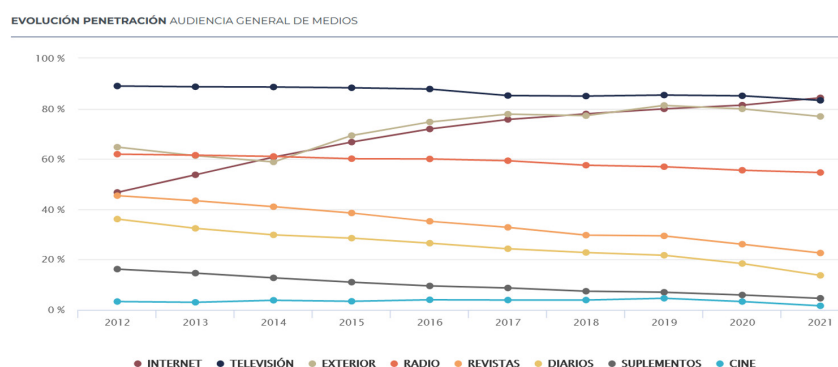




For Quintás-Froufe and González-Neira (2021), the measurement of the *online* audience has difficulties in finding the most appropriate methodology for each medium and there are still many unanswered questions. These two researchers consider that we are still far from having a consensual and consolidated system for measuring the *online* audience because, given the vertiginous technological evolution and the transformation of listening modes and user interests, the measurement methods must adapt to the emerging digital media scenario, against systems that are already well established, such as the audiometer on television or the General Media Study (EGM) on the radio.

The data, agreed by the Spanish radio market, is currently supplied by the *Asociación para la Investigación de Medios de Comunicación* (AIMC), which prepares a report on Internet radio consumption, based on the personal statement of each individual in the sample designed to carry out the General Media Study (EGM). From these data, it can be deduced that the audience is moving towards the Internet to listen to the radio, compared to conventional wave devices (FM and AM), as shown in the following chart (1).

**Chart 1:** General radio audience in the media landscape in Spain in 2021



**Source:** AIMC/EGM, 2021. <https://reporting.aimc.es/index.html#/main/cockpit>

According to the General Media Study, the daily radio audience in the last wave of 2021 stands at 54.6% of the population. In 2016, five years earlier, it was 60%, data that reflects a sustained downward trend. However, listening to the radio over the Internet has gone the other way. In 2016 the daily audience was 3.9% of the population and in 2021, 7.8%, exactly double (AIMC/EGM, 2021).

One of the main challenges regarding digital measurement is monitoring based on the individual and not on the device, and the introduction of massive analysis techniques and artificial intelligence, to globally increase the accuracy of the data. It is about overcoming the quantification data of the download or the IP address associated with *streaming* to quantify people who listen. There is still no precise measurement tool to quantify the listening behind the download of a podcast, beyond the individual declaration of each user. For this reason, the AIMC is working with the Internet traffic data files provided by the networks, to quantify the *streaming's* audience and be able to add it to the Hertzian channel's audience. This association also works on the quantification of listeners in *podcast* listening.

#### 4.9. Pandemic time: production processes and digital tools that are here to stay

Scientific literature has documented the preference of Spanish citizens for television over other media in the first months of the Covid-19 pandemic (Montaña-Blasco et al., 2020). But the health crisis has marked a turning point in radio.

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The most critical moments of the pandemic forced broadcasters to speed up and make better use of digital technology for the production and broadcast of their programs. The ways of working also changed and the prominence of some professional profiles that until then, despite their importance, had been in the background, for example, technical and IT staff, was recovered. Equipment and broadcasts were minimized in workplaces, and content production was done, in many cases, from makeshift studios in the homes of radio professionals. The writing teams began to work in *online* meetings through platforms that until then had a restricted use in their professional routines, such as *Zoom*, *Google Meet*, or *WhatsApp*. The audience also gained prominence as content providers and gave testimony by phone or through social media of what was happening during the population's confinement (Rodero, 2020).

But it was the experimentation with digital production and broadcast tools that made it possible for the radio to continue to be a referential information point for the population, along with television (AIMC/EGM/Cuaderno de bitácora, 2020). Editing programs based on free access *software*, such as *Audacity*, were in many cases the lifeline for journalists who needed to write chronicles and edit radio reports.

According to Martínez-Martín and López-Pulido (2020), radio used social media to broadcast content simultaneously with conventional Hertzian programming. *Skype* became a fundamental network for conducting interviews with guests, and virtual meetings with sports, culture or entertainment protagonists were an alternative option to conventional radio interviews and round tables.

In the absence of mobile units, the stations incorporated *smartphones* and other devices capable of transmitting, such as *Quantum*, which allow broadcasting with good sound quality through an IP. Its *Quantum Lite* version has already become widespread as a tool for live connections for radio reporters. The use of social networks as a support for broadcasting and interaction with the audience was also a relatively new experience for large networks. In this sense, Martínez-Martín and López-Pulido (2020) refer to the broadcasts through *Instagram Live* or similar radio programs mediums, like Efecto Doppler, from Radio 3 on Radio Nacional de España. Months before, the large generalist channels had already used *Instragam* as a medium to report on the inauguration of the President of the Government, in January 2020, just before the pandemic (De-Sola-Pueyo et al., 2021).

The accelerated experience of taking advantage of digital technology that stations carried out during the pandemic generated professional routines and new production models, and they are here to stay because all these novelties are already part of the daily life of the radio, both in Spain and in most countries.

## 5. Discussion and conclusions

The arrival of the Internet and other ICTs substantially transformed the organizational structure of the radio, work dynamics, professional profiles, formats, languages, content offer, and forms of consumption. Additionally, fiction genres that had practically disappeared from the conventional radio programming grids have been recovered, such as the radiogram and the docudrama.

In the scenario of changes that characterize digital radio, the *podcast* is born, as an alternative to conventional programming and aims to conquer a part of the younger audience. It also requires few costs and provides a transmedia dimension.

The new ways of producing, transmitting, and listening to radio offered by the Internet enrich the scenario because they force *streaming* and *podcasting* to coexist with traditional radio. In this converging scenario, wave radio still coexists with digital platforms, although some reports such as the one prepared by the *Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport* in 2021 for the British Government already set an expiration date for traditional radio, specifically as of 2030.

The changes have even affected the identity of radio because the new configuration of the medium, especially the migration of content to the *online* environment, allows us to speak of a multimedia dimension and also of PostRadio. For this reason, in the current digital universe, radio loses part of its essence by incorporating features of other media (*streaming* and *podcasting*) and, for this reason, it has been forced to redefine its role as a content provider for a multi-media and multiscreen society, and in multimedia and transmedia scenario, necessary to respond to the demands of an increasingly fragmented and segmented audience.

Mobile devices made it possible to approach new sectors of the audience to respond to new consumption habits, thanks, above all, to *streaming* and *podcasting*.

One of the greatest achievements of *streaming* is that it freed the listener from the time dependency established by the programming grids when listening to live programs since it allows asynchronous listening, just like the *podcast*. Thus, the listeners can manage their radio time without depending on predetermined schedules by the stations. For this reason, *streaming* and *podcasting* are responsible for the loss of one of the most genuine hallmarks of radio: live listening and the instantaneous disappearance of the message. With these new parameters (on-demand radio and the possibility of listening to content as many times as someone wants, at the time and place they want) the need arises to redefine what radio is and what it is not, something about which there is still no solid consensus in the academic, scientific, and professional world.

New digital devices, such as the *Smart Speaker*, allow listening to *streaming* audio and open up a universe of interactive possibilities that were not available to traditional radio. The forms of content consumption are increasingly diverse, although Spaniards' favorite listening device for *streaming* services is the mobile phone, except for sports broadcasts, especially football. Here, radio is still the preferred device because listeners like to participate in the narration of the event while it is happening.

Social media has also become a great ally of the radio for the distribution of its content because they offer great distribution possibilities that allow broadcasts to be increased.

One of the radio's biggest challenges is designing and producing suitable and competitive hybrid content for a scenario where conventional radio coexists with digital. The offer, moreover, is conditioned by the existence of numerous multi-support, multi-platform, multimedia, and transmedia distribution channels. Both models have their own audience, but the audience of conventional radio is trending downwards, while Internet radio is experiencing a progressive trend.

Radio, like the other media on the digital scene, is a constantly evolving medium, and to compete in the *online* environments, where changes are permanent, it needs to adapt to the demands of networks and the Internet of things, where algorithms have an increasingly prominent role. And the new proposals, to be competitive, have to be based on programming models that interact with citizens and that respond to the informational, cultural, and entertainment needs of listeners who live in a society where immersive experiences are increasingly valued. In the new radio, the audience will have a participatory role as a promoter of ideas for content and also through direct participation, to provide data and information that can be shared by more citizens. The contributions made during the COVID-19 pandemic (sharing information, exchanging experiences, helping, requesting resources, etc.) are an example of radio made by everyone and for everyone.

The audience is immersed in a process of constant change and has not yet found a stable reference point for information and entertainment. It is increasingly fragmented and segmented and is also more critical and demanding, and this context requires that content be adapted to the needs of users (cross-media) to attract a significant number of listeners.

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The changes produced in listening habits with the arrival of media convergence require rethinking the way of measuring radio consumption, both in conventional stations and other audio content, typical of *online* platforms.

To give an adequate response to citizens, it is necessary to know their needs, but the current audience measurement systems are not yet adapted to the new digital scenario, where there are contents and forms of consumption that do not fit the parameters designed to measure the conventional radio audience. And this is another of radio's greatest challenges, designing audience measurement systems with techniques and methods that monitor listeners promptly and offer data that make it possible to obtain both quantitative and qualitative values of the audience, although this initiative, which requires significant investments, does not depend directly on the stations.

The technological changes affected the structures of the stations, the formats, and the forms of access and consumption of content, but also the professional profiles since the new media reality requires labor figures that did not exist until now to face obligations that are also new. Since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the traditional labor categories (editor, sound technician, and documentary maker) have begun to coexist (and in some cases to be displaced) with other emerging profiles linked to the multimedia and convergent dimension of the medium, such as webmasters, *social media editors*, or the experts in marketing and digital rights management.

Radio faces a triple challenge: a formal evolution, renewing content proposals, and adapting structures to the convergent scenario.

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