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The Podcast Landscape 2026

September 2026

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AI and Podcast Consumers

From The Podcast Landscape 2026 · October 2026

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METHODOLOGY

How the study was conducted

AI and Podcast Consumers draws on The Podcast Landscape, Sounds Profitable's annual study of how Americans consume podcasts.

The 2026 wave surveyed **5,473 US adults 18 and older**, weighted to US Census targets.

The study asked everyone about AI-made media and which uses of AI they find acceptable, and asked the 4,141 podcast consumers how they use AI to find podcasts.

Part 2 profiles the 345 podcast consumers who name an AI assistant or chatbot as a way they find podcasts, compared with other consumers who are just as active.

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Most Americans have seen or heard AI-made media. They accept AI as a tool, not as the talent.

1 **Exposure is common.**

55% of US adults have seen or heard fully AI-generated content on a medium they use. On podcasts the figure is 20%, against 60% on TikTok.

2 **Surprise goes badly.**

35% were surprised by the last AI content they saw. Of those surprised or unsure, 48% felt annoyed or tricked.

3 **Tool yes, talent no.**

59% accept AI for translation. 22% accept AI-generated hosts and 51% call them unacceptable.

4 **A split verdict on AI-made TV.**

65% have had a favorite show canceled too soon. 45% of them would watch an AI-made new season; 41% would not.

5 **Many have tried AI to find a podcast; few rely on it.**

30% of podcast consumers have used a chatbot to find a show. 8% name it as a way they find podcasts.

6 **AI discoverers are the most AI-tolerant group.**

Against equally active consumers, they are about twice as likely to accept AI hosts (56% vs 29%).

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55% of adults have seen or heard AI-made content, mostly on social video

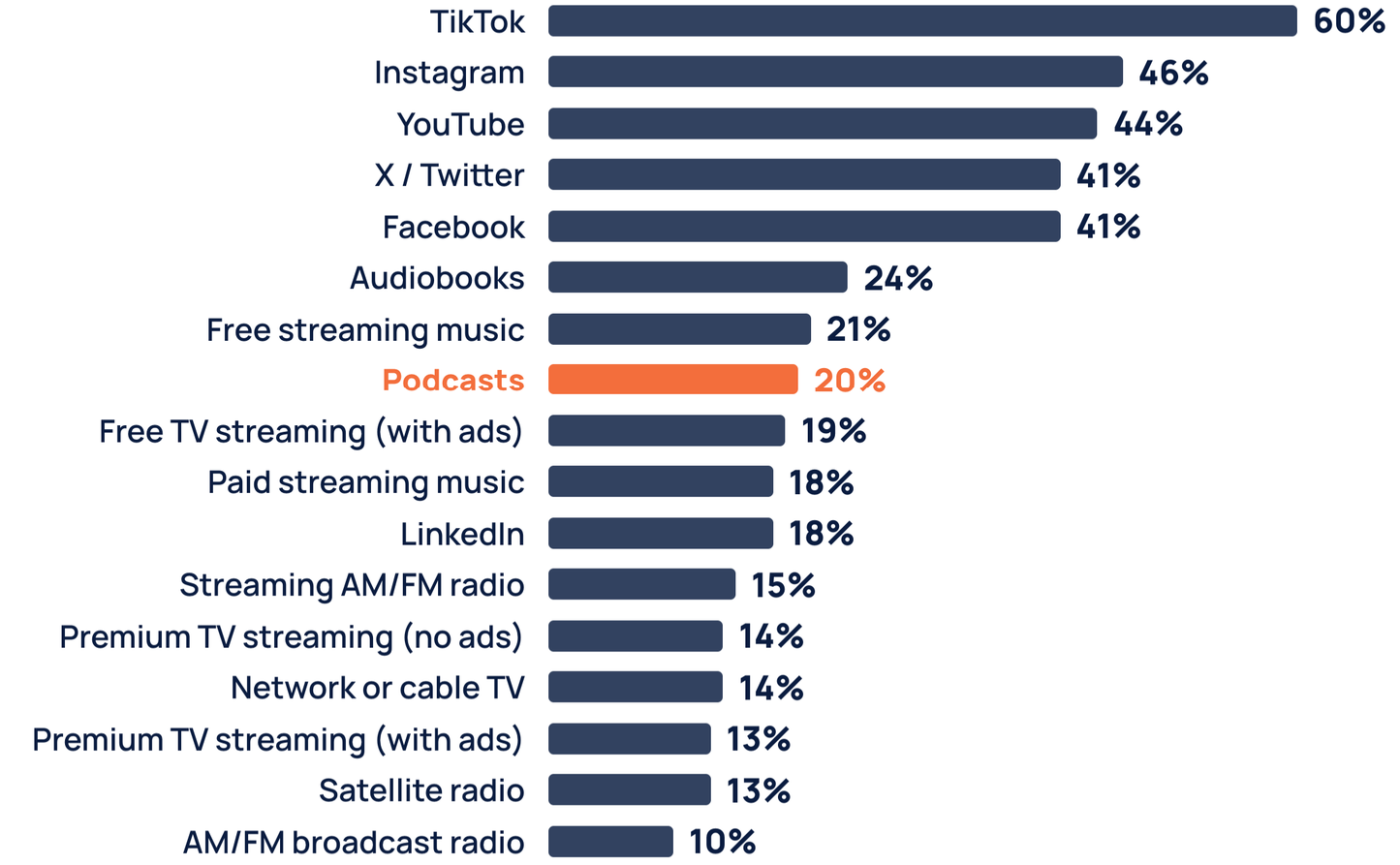
Podcasts sit in the middle: 20%, about the same as free music streaming (21%).

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% of each medium's past-month users who have watched or listened to fully AI-generated content on it

"Have you ever watched or listened to fully AI generated content on any of the following media?"

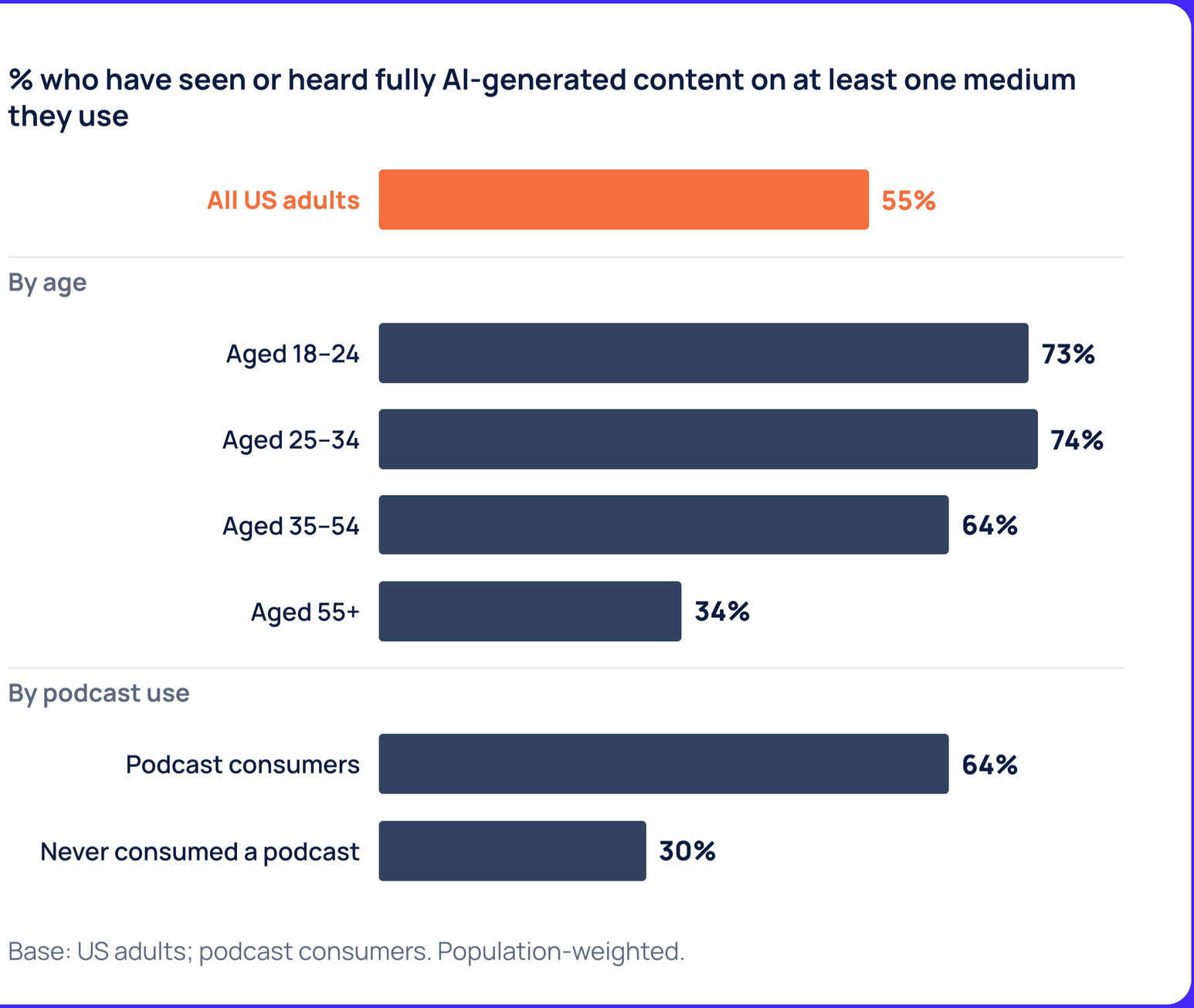


Base: US adults who used each medium in the past month. Population-weighted.

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Adults under 35 are twice as likely as those 55+ to report consuming AI content

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Base: US adults; podcast consumers. Population-weighted.

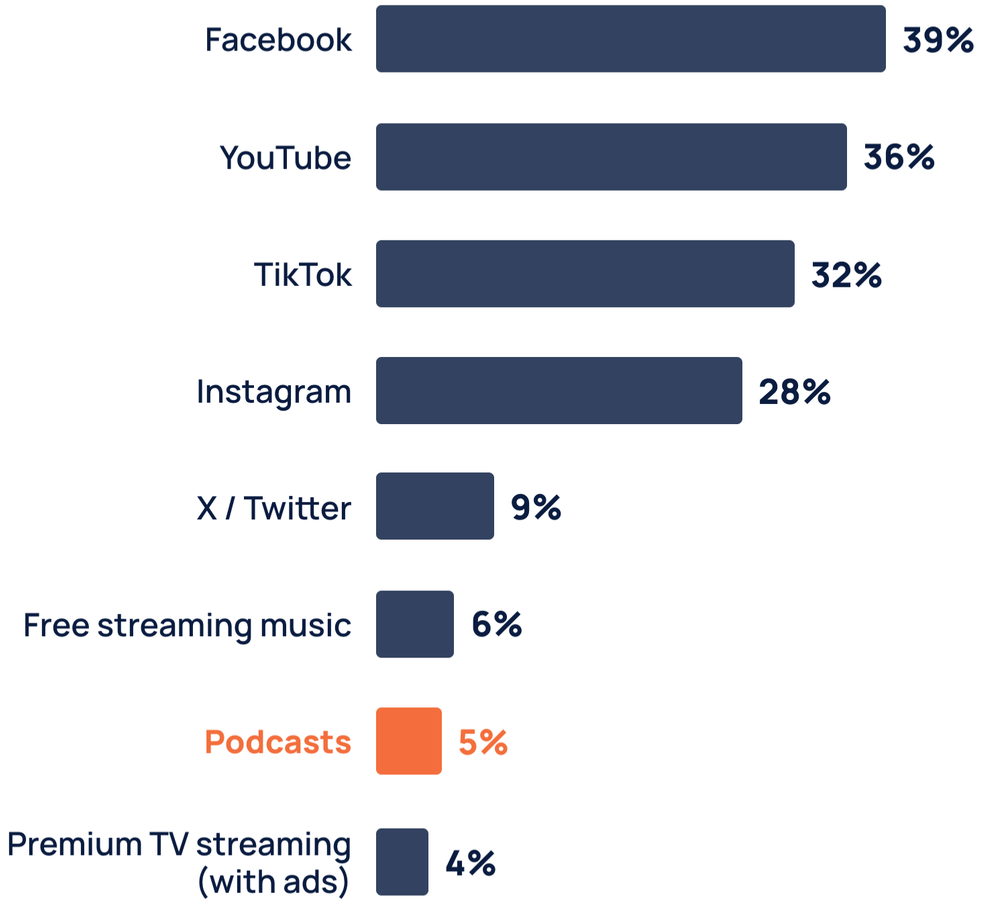
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For most, the last encounter with AI content was today or yesterday, likely on social media

66%

say their last encounter with AI content was today or yesterday (today 37% + yesterday 29%)

Medium where they last saw or heard AI-generated content (more than one could be chosen)



Base: adults who have seen or heard AI content. Population-weighted.

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A third were surprised by the last AI content they saw, and surprise mostly went badly

48% felt annoyed or tricked; 24% were unbothered.

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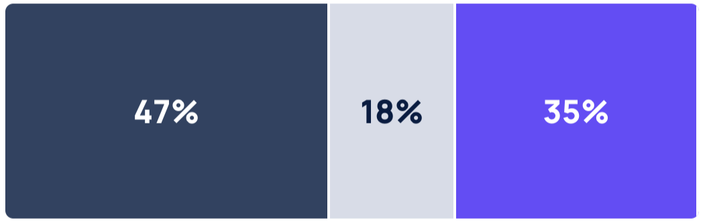
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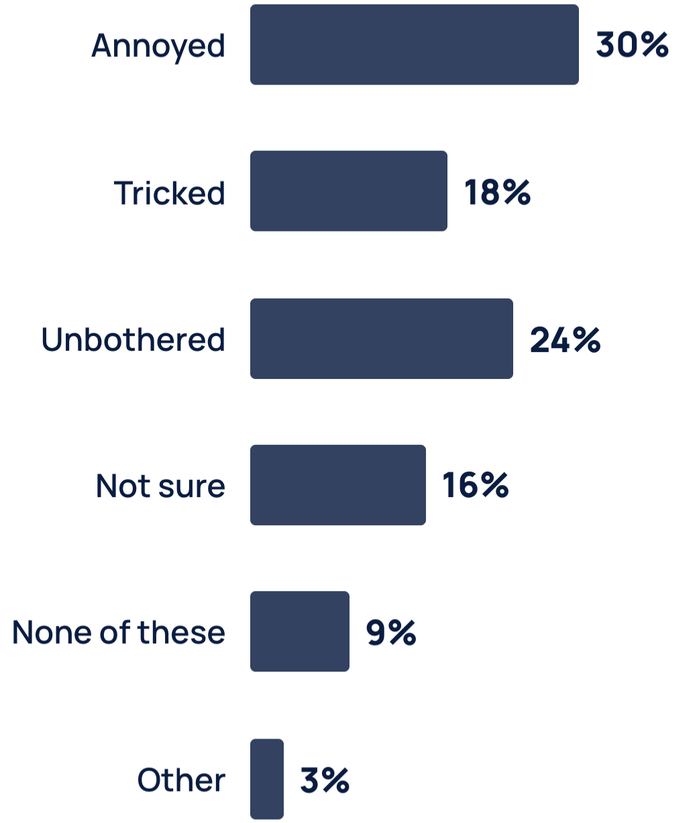
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When you last consumed AI-generated content, did you expect it?



- I expected AI content: 47%
- Not sure: 18%
- I was surprised to get AI content: 35%

How did you feel about getting AI content you didn't expect to be AI?



Base: adults who have seen or heard AI content; right chart, those surprised or not sure. Population-weighted.

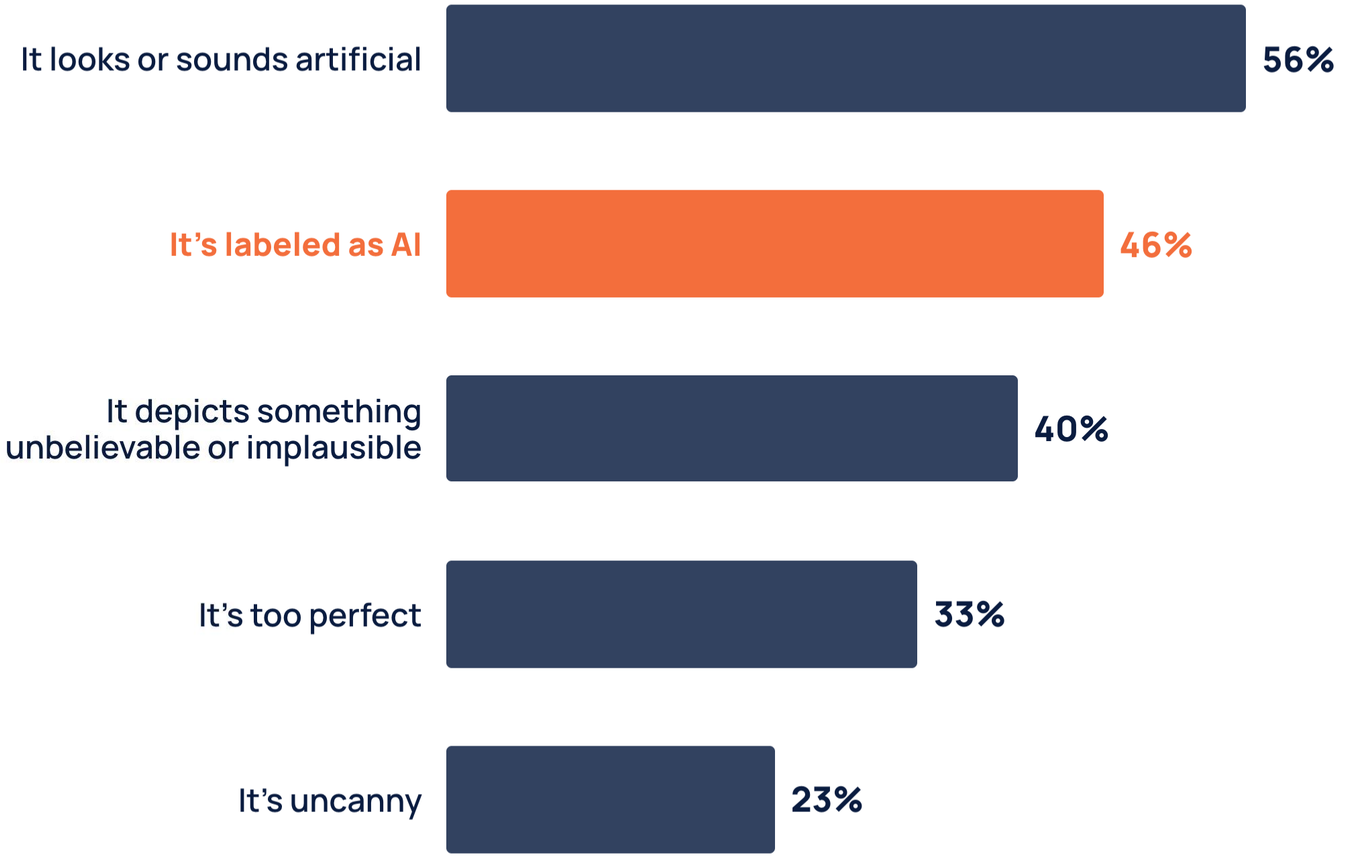
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People spot AI by how it looks or sounds, and by labels

A label is the second most common cue (46%), so labeling does have an effect.

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How do you know that the content you're watching or listening to is AI-generated? (all that apply)



Base: adults who have seen or heard AI content. Population-weighted.

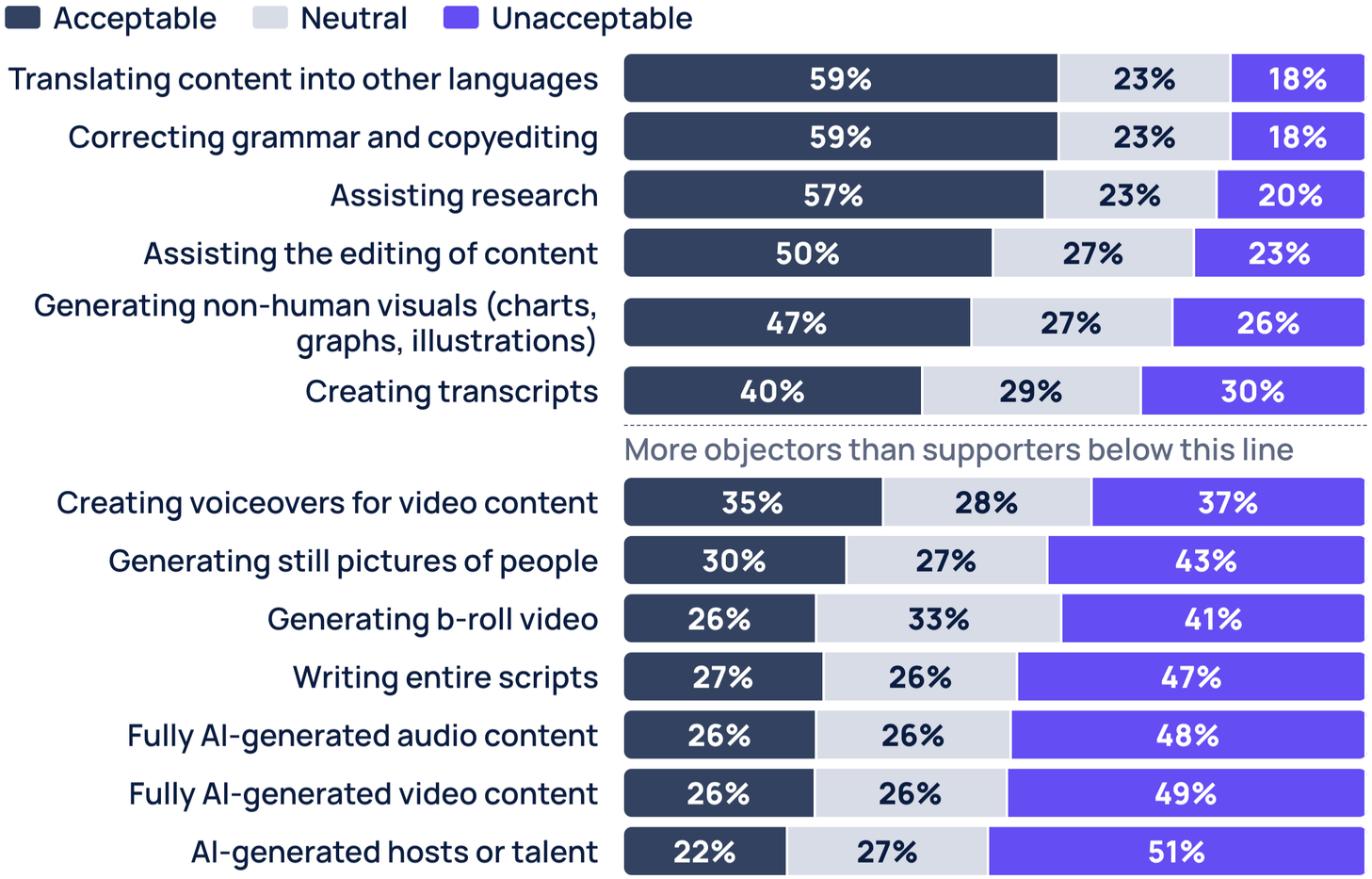
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People accept AI that helps a person do the work, not AI that replaces the person

70% of adults find at least one of these 13 uses unacceptable.

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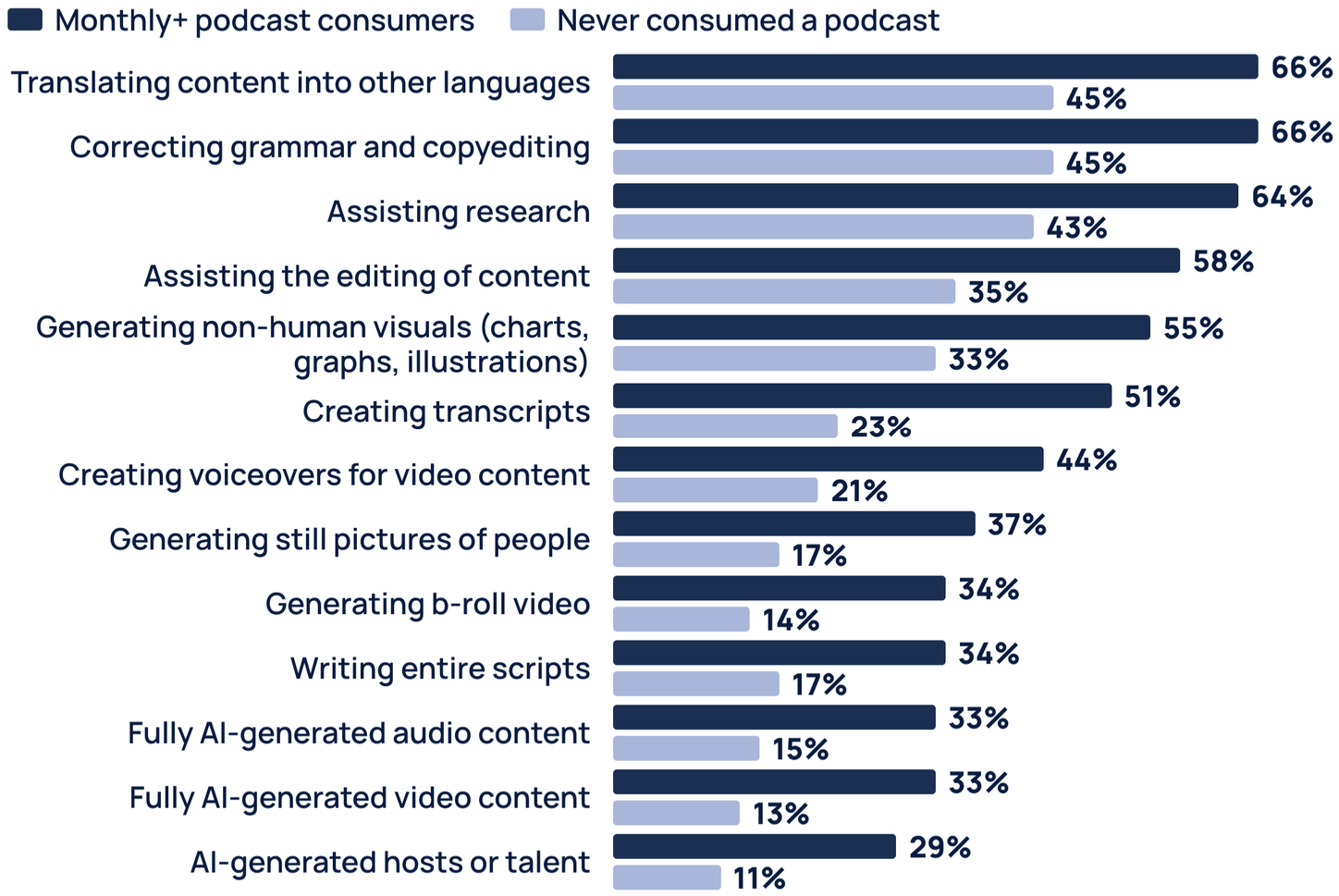
How acceptable do you find each use of AI in media production? (acceptable = very + somewhat)



Base: US adults. Population-weighted.

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Podcast consumers are more accepting of AI than people who have never consumed a podcast



Base: US adults; monthly+ podcast consumers; never-consumers. Population-weighted.

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Acceptance of AI by age

Adults 25–54 are the most accepting. 18–24s are about as skeptical as those 55+

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% finding each use acceptable, by age

Use of AI	18–24	25–34	35–54	55+
Translating content into other languages	52%	58%	64%	58%
AI-generated hosts or talent	18%	28%	27%	17%
Fully AI-generated audio content	22%	33%	32%	20%

Base: US adults. Population-weighted.

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Asked about an AI-made new season of a canceled favorite, Americans split almost evenly

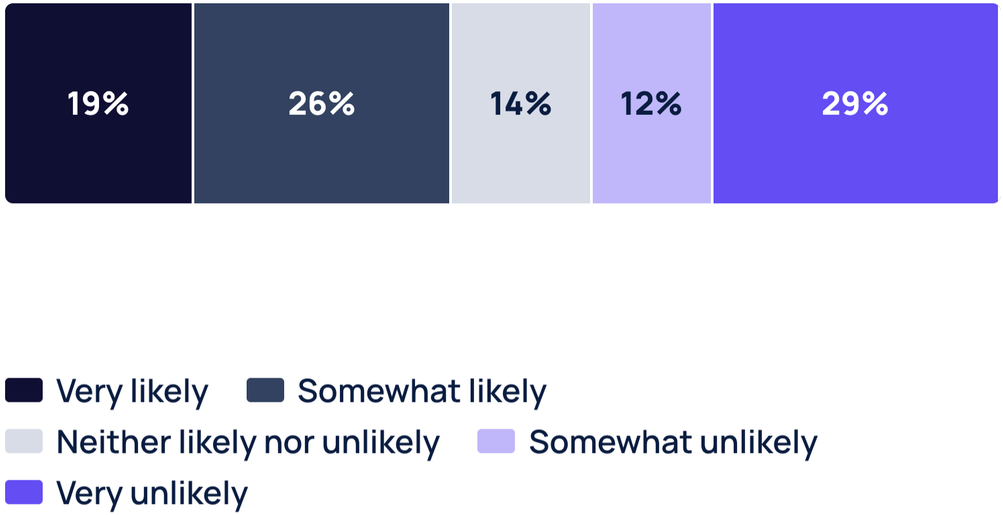
45% likely, 41% unlikely. Strong feelings lean against: 29% very unlikely vs 19% very likely.

65%

of US adults have had a favorite TV show canceled before they felt its story was finished (72% of 18–24s; 57% of those 55+)

"Imagine AI could create a brand-new season of that show — new episodes in the original's style, without the original cast or writers. How likely would you be to watch it?"

How likely would you be to watch it?



Base: US adults; revival question asked of those who had a show canceled. Population-weighted.

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Men, parents and adults 25–54 are the most willing; 18–24s are the most opposed

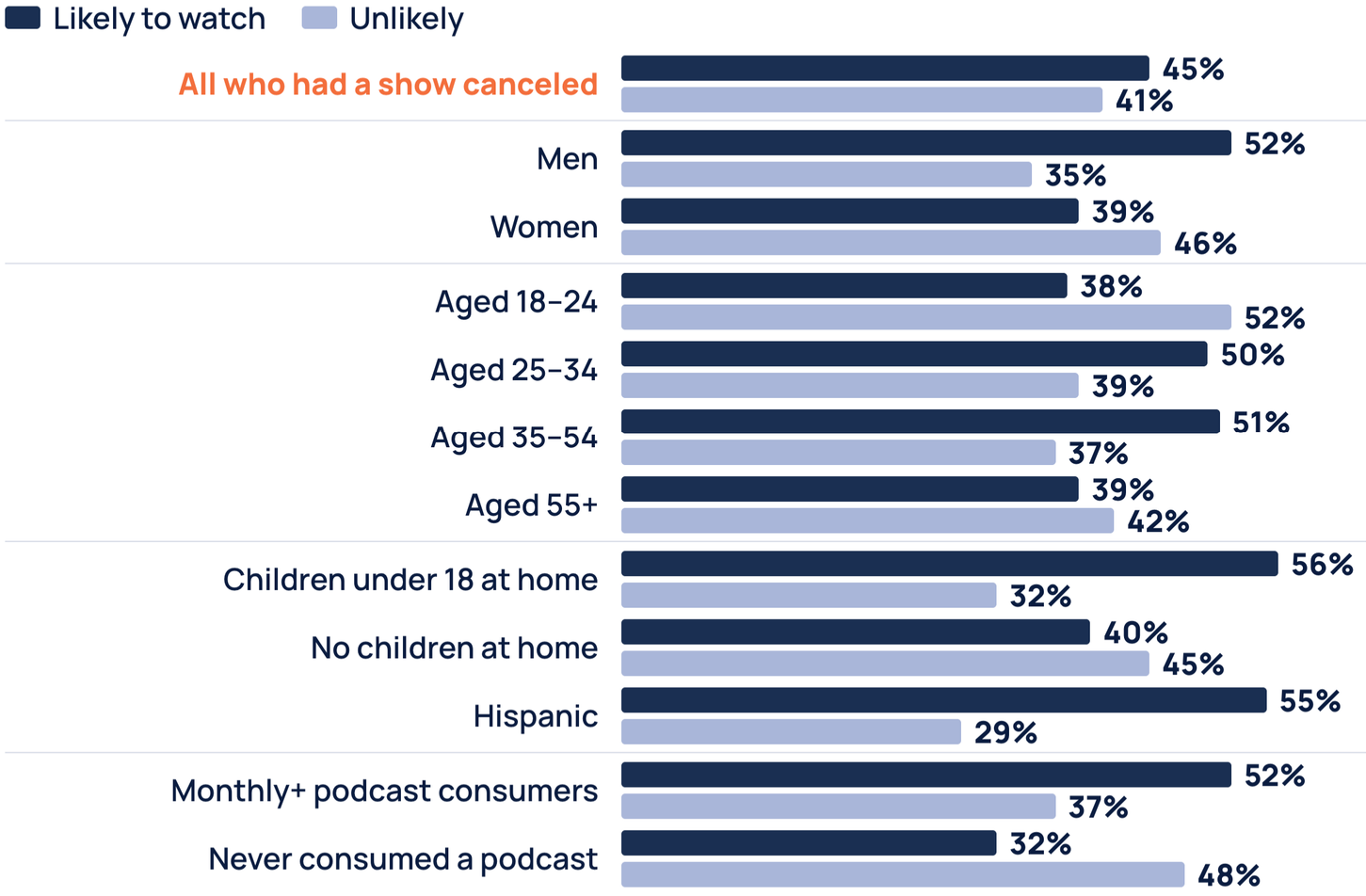
18–24s are the most likely to have lost a show and the most likely to say no: 52% unlikely.

Men 25–54 are the most willing (57%–58%); women 18–24 and 55+ the least (35% each).

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% likely and unlikely to watch an AI-made new season of a canceled favorite show



Base: adults who had a favorite TV show canceled. Population-weighted.

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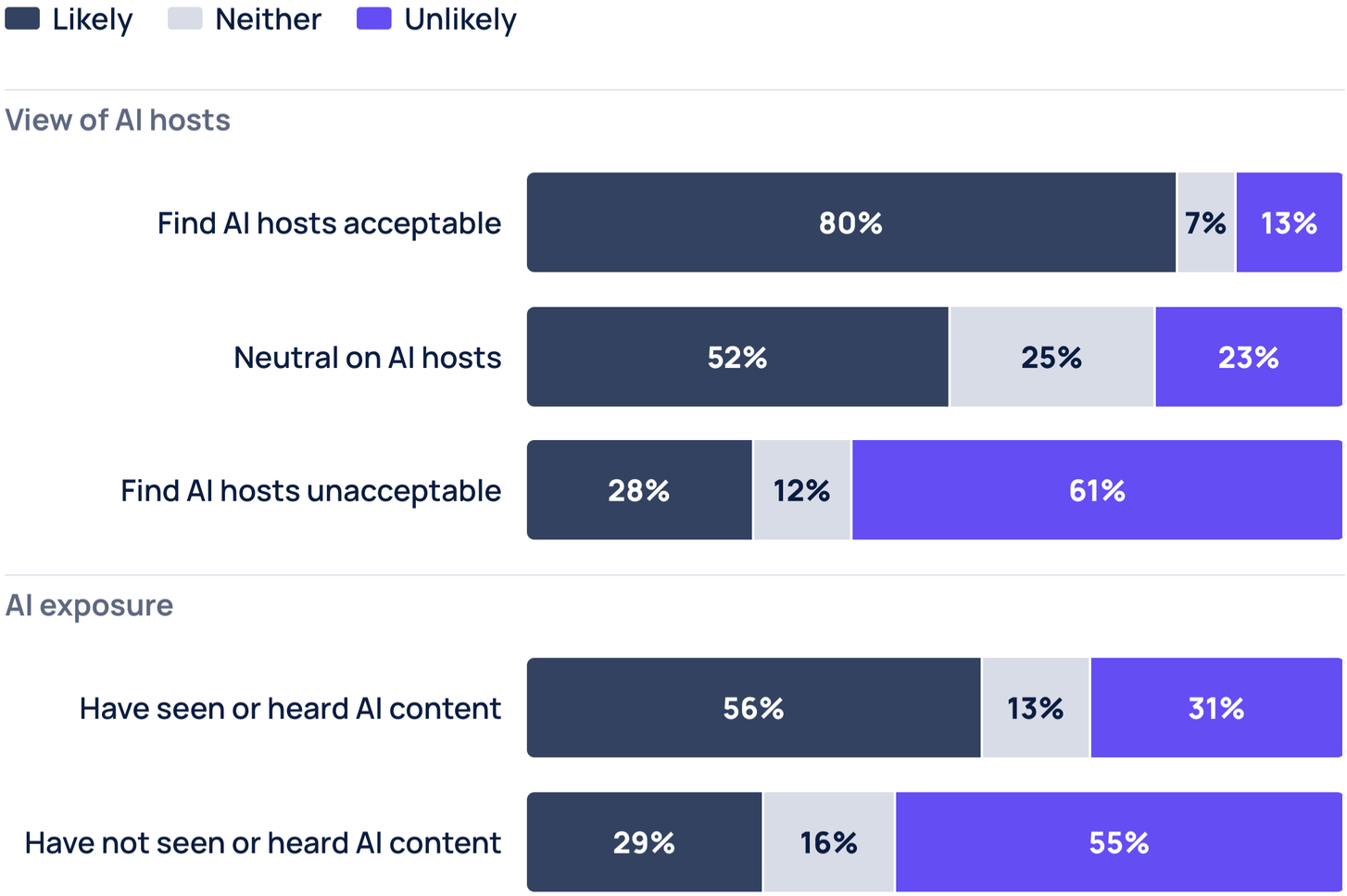
How people feel about AI predicts their answer better than any demographic

Even 28% of people who call AI hosts unacceptable would watch an AI-made season of a show they loved.

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Likelihood of watching an AI-made new season, by view of AI hosts and AI exposure



Base: adults who had a favorite TV show canceled. Population-weighted.

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Willingness ranges from 15% to 87% by show. Firefly, the most-named show, is among the least willing.

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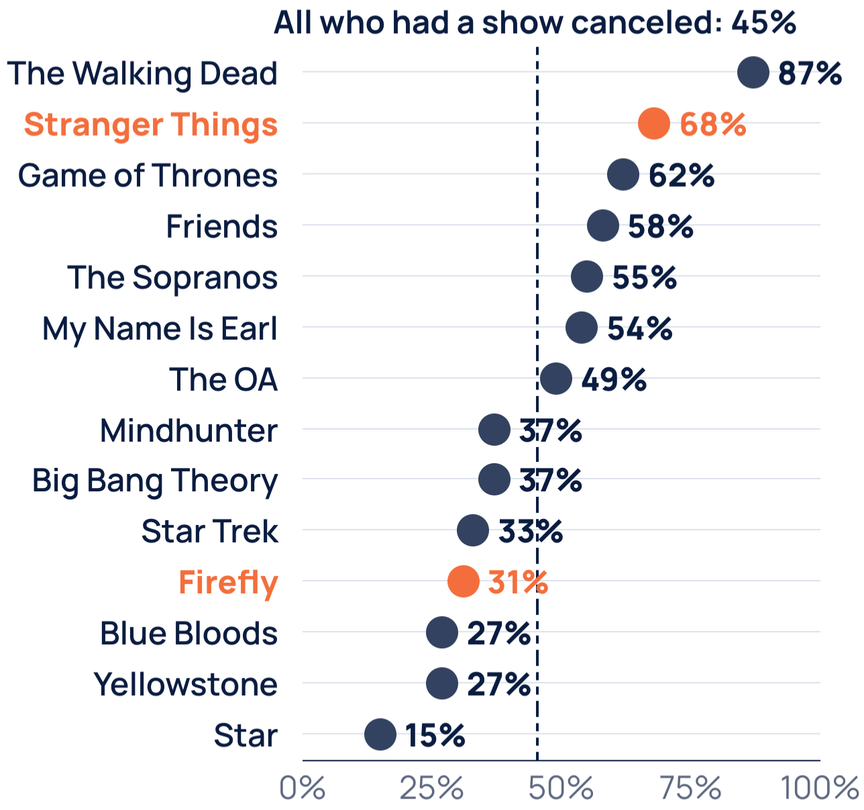
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% likely to watch an AI-made new season, by the show respondents named (shows named 20+ times)



Firefly is the most-named show. 61% of its fans would be unlikely to watch.

Stranger Things (68%) and Firefly (31%) are the two shows clearly apart from the 45% average. At these sizes a figure can be off by 15 to 25 points.

Percentages population-weighted. Mentions matched allowing for spelling variants; Firefly Lane, a different show, excluded. 'Star' was written on its own and most likely means the Fox drama.

Base: adults who named each show. Population-weighted.

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Fan profiles explain part of the spread

Older fans, less willing.

Blue Bloods and Yellowstone fans have a median age of 64–65, against 44 for all who had a show canceled.

Younger fans, more willing.

Stranger Things and Game of Thrones fans have a median age of 33 and 34, and more accept AI hosts (35% and 56%, against 21%).

Firefly fans run against their profile.

They are 70% men with a median age of 40, the most willing demographic, yet only 15% accept AI hosts.

Show named	Median age	M/F	Accept AI hosts	Likely to watch
Stranger Things	33	58% / 42%	35%	68%
Game of Thrones	34	59% / 41%	56%	62%
Firefly	40	70% / 30%	15%	31%
Blue Bloods	65	35% / 65%	17%	27%
Yellowstone	64	52% / 48%	21%	27%
All who had a show canceled	44	—	21%	45%

Base: adults who named each show. Population-weighted. Median age unweighted.

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30% of podcast consumers have used a chatbot to find a podcast, and 18% found one they still consume

Of those who tried, 60% found a podcast they still consume.

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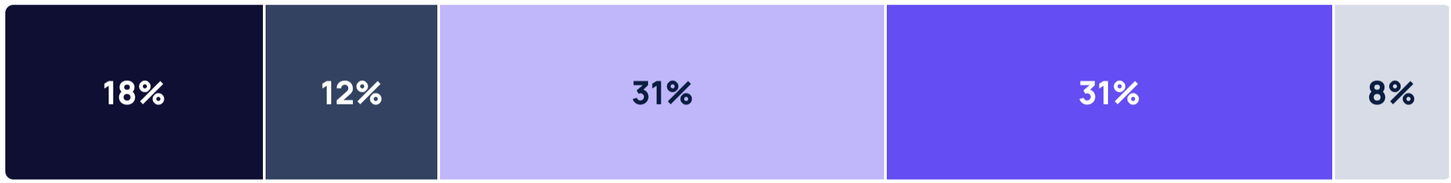
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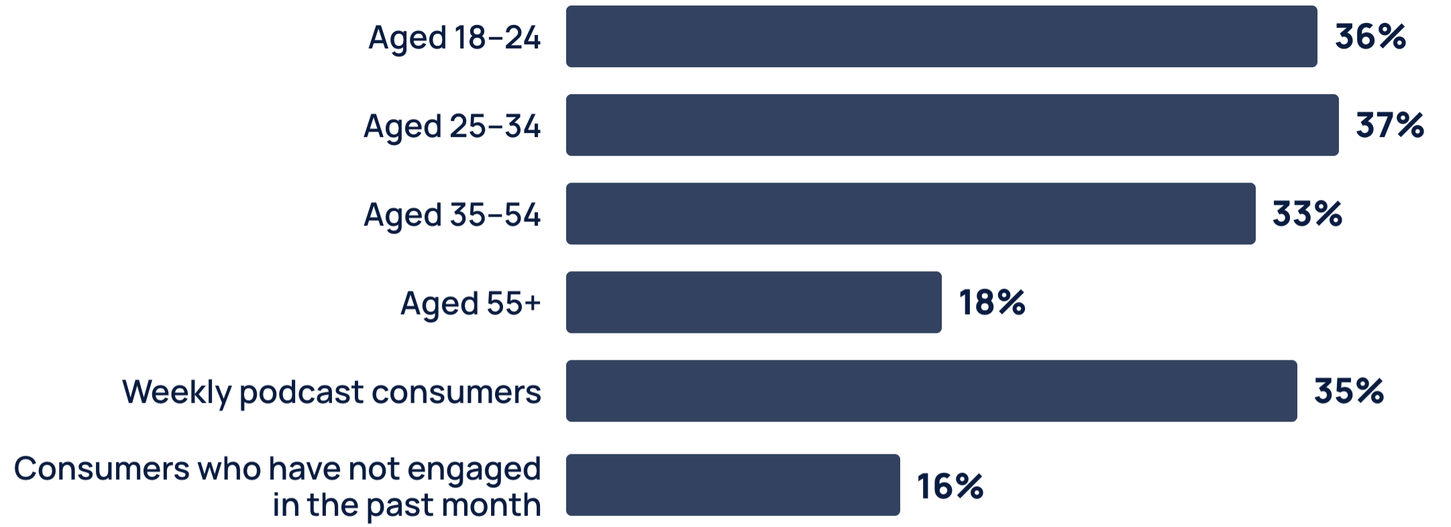
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"Have you ever used an AI assistant or chatbot (such as ChatGPT, Claude, or Google Gemini) to help you find a new podcast to listen to or watch?"



- Yes, and I found a podcast I now consume
- Yes, but nothing I stuck with
- No, but I'd be open to it
- No, and I wouldn't be interested
- I didn't know you could use AI this way

Have used a chatbot to find a podcast



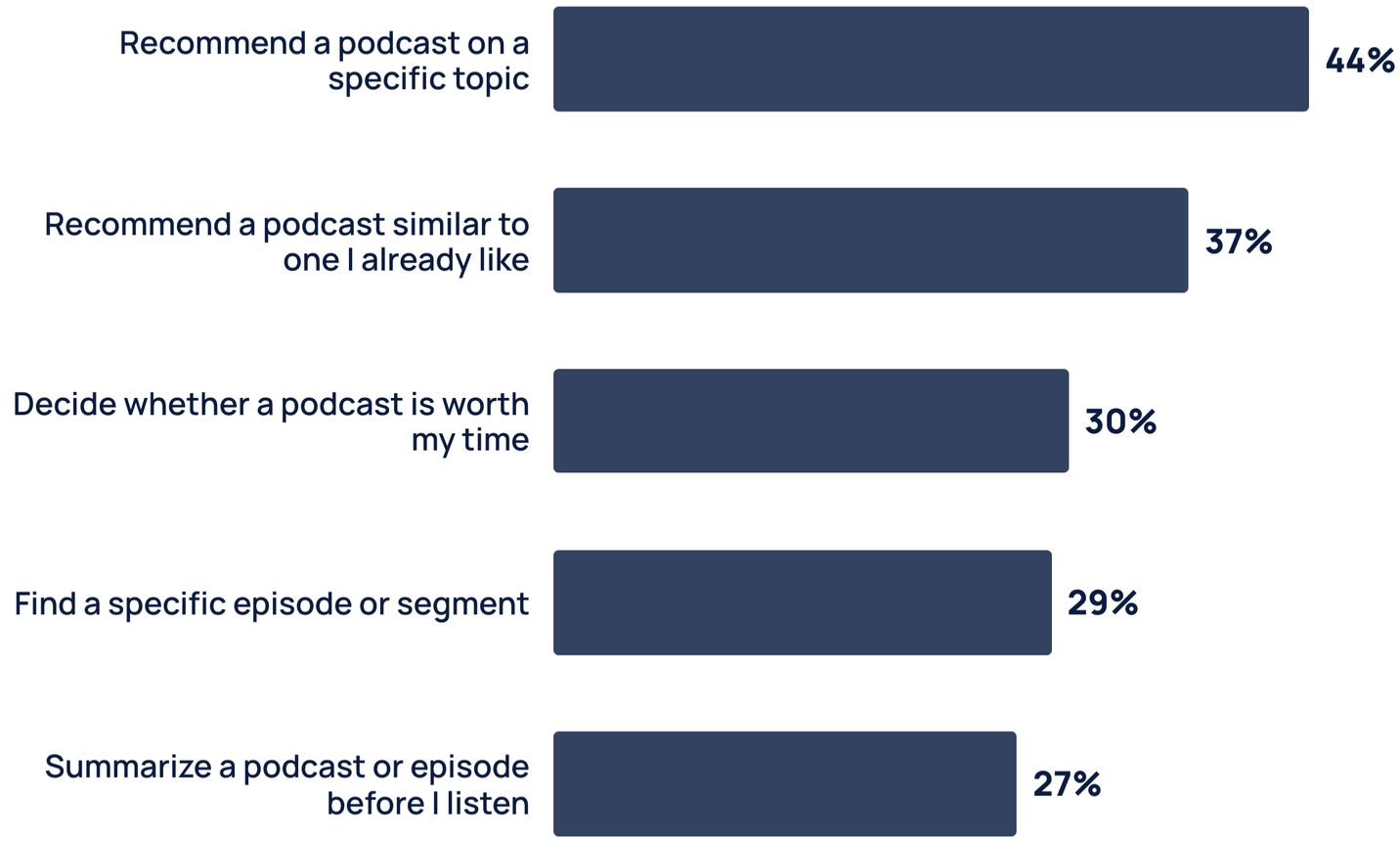
Base: podcast consumers. Population-weighted.

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Most ask for recommendations: a podcast on a topic, or one like a show they already like

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What have you asked an AI assistant to help you with when it comes to podcasts? (all that apply)



Base: podcast consumers who have used a chatbot to find a podcast. Population-weighted.

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Many have tried AI for discovery; few rely on it

Asked “Think about your favorite podcast. How did you find out about it?”, 5% name an AI assistant.

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30% said yes

“Have you ever used an AI assistant or chatbot (such as ChatGPT, Claude, or Google Gemini) to help you find a new podcast to listen to or watch?”

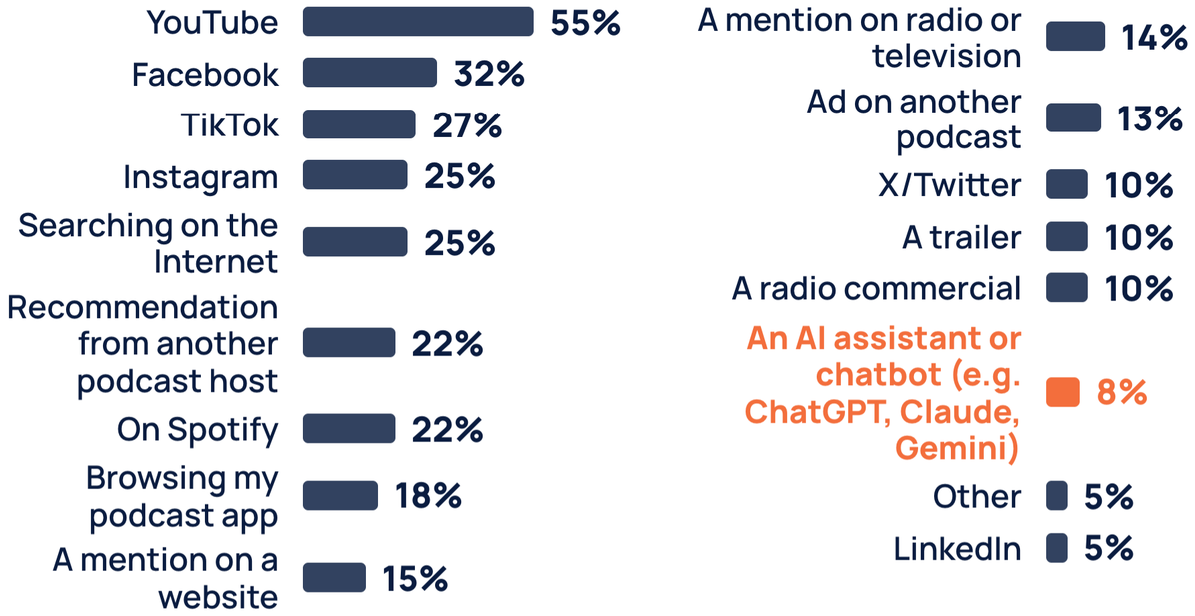
Counts anyone who has tried it even once.

8% chose AI

“Aside from personal recommendations, which of the following are ways you find your next podcast?”

Counts the routes people rely on. AI ranks 15th of 17.

Ways podcast consumers find their next podcast (all that apply)



Base: podcast consumers. Population-weighted. Both questions allow more than one answer.

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AI discoverers are 8% of podcast consumers: mid-life, more often men and parents

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AI discoverers are the podcast consumers who chose 'An AI assistant or chatbot' as a way they find podcasts. They tick 6.0 discovery methods on average, against 2.8 for other consumers. To separate what is specific to them from what comes with being a heavy consumer, they are also compared with other consumers reweighted to use as many discovery methods: 'equally active consumers.'

	AI discoverers	All other consumers	Equally active consumers
Men	**64%**	49%	49%
Aged 18–24	**9%**	13%	13%
Aged 25–34	**27%**	21%	21%
Aged 35–54	**40%**	34%	39%
Aged 55+	**24%**	31%	27%
Children under 18 at home	**56%**	34%	36%
Household income $100k+	**30%**	23%	24%
Bachelor's degree or higher	**49%**	36%	39%

Differences under about 8 points between AI discoverers and the comparison groups are within the margin of error.

Base: podcast consumers. Population-weighted.

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AI has worked for them: 60% found a show through a chatbot they still consume

	AI discoverers	All other consumers	Equally active consumers
Found a podcast through a chatbot they still consume	**60%**	14%	19%
Found their favorite podcast through an AI assistant	**31%**	2%	4%
Looked for a new podcast in the past week	**38%**	17%	24%
Found searching for a podcast easy*	**84%**	64%	70%
Discover through browsing a podcast app	**37%**	16%	26%
Discover through searching the internet	**48%**	23%	39%
Discover through YouTube	**68%**	54%	68%
Discover through TikTok	**42%**	25%	40%
Asked a chatbot for a podcast like one they already like**	**54%**	33%	38%

Against equally active consumers, they don't use YouTube, TikTok or Instagram more for discovery. They search more: in podcast apps, on the web, and with AI.

Equally active consumers: other podcast consumers reweighted to use as many discovery methods as AI discoverers.

* Among those who have searched. ** Among those who have used a chatbot to find a podcast.

Base: podcast consumers. Population-weighted.

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They consume more, and less of it on YouTube

6.7 hrs a week with podcasts (weekly consumers; others 5.5)

3.9 shows followed (monthly+; others 3.3)

6.2 genres in the past month (monthly+; others 3.8)

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	AI discoverers	All other consumers	Equally active consumers
Consumed a podcast in the past week	**68%**	52%	59%
Watched a video podcast in the past week	**57%**	43%	49%
Consume podcasts with others at least occasionally	**66%**	37%	45%
YouTube is their main podcast app	**29%**	41%	40%
Genre: Technology*	**42%**	16%	24%
Genre: Health & Fitness*	**39%**	17%	22%
Genre: Science*	**31%**	13%	20%
Genre: Business*	**28%**	13%	19%
Genre: Kids & Family*	**20%**	8%	11%

Equally active consumers: other podcast consumers reweighted to use as many discovery methods as AI discoverers.

* Consumed in the past 30 days, among monthly+ consumers.

Base: podcast consumers. Population-weighted.

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Comfort with AI is what sets them apart: about twice as likely as equally active consumers to accept AI hosts

Acceptance has limits: 22% of AI discoverers still call AI hosts unacceptable.

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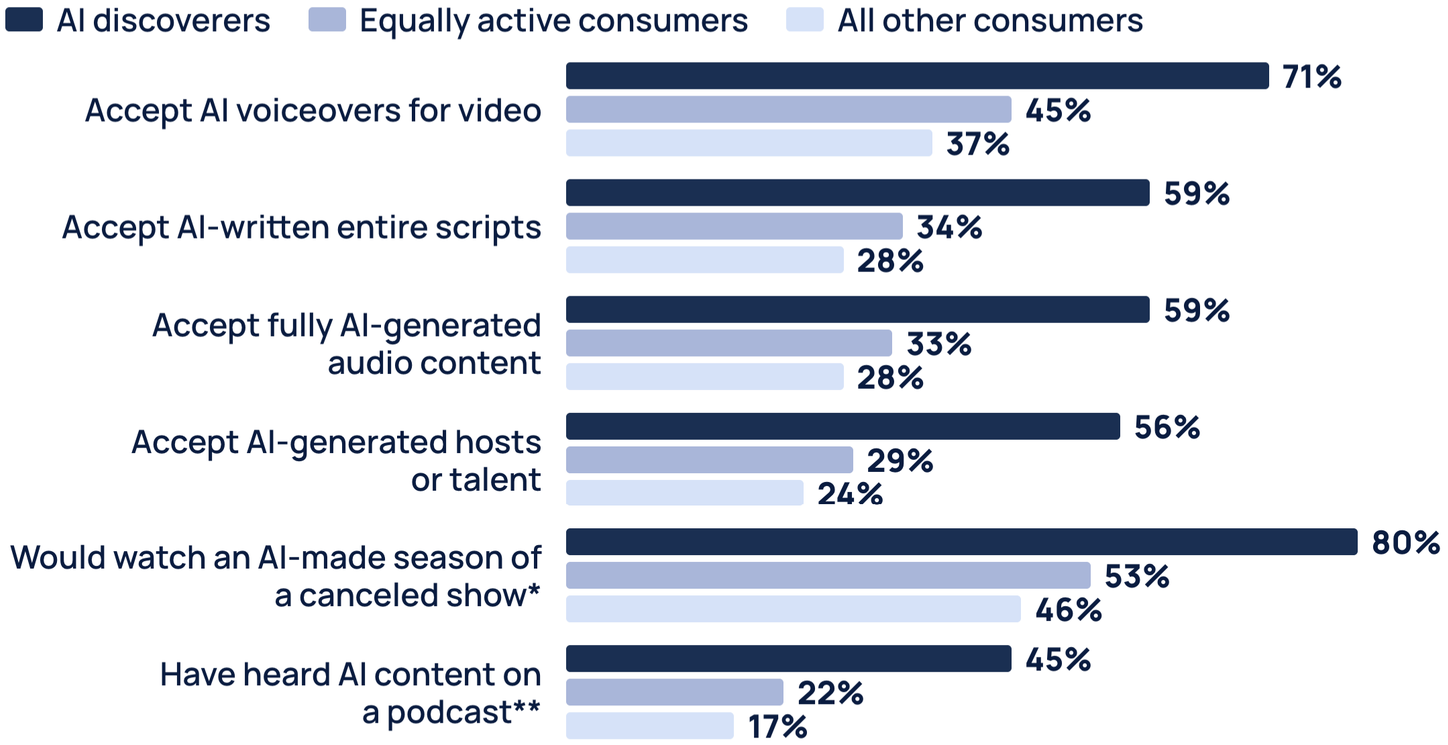
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Comfort with AI: AI discoverers vs other podcast consumers



They rank first of 16 discovery groups on accepting AI hosts, fully AI-made audio, and watching an AI-made season of a canceled show.

Equally active consumers: other podcast consumers reweighted to use as many discovery methods as AI discoverers.

* Among those who had a favorite show canceled. ** Among past-month podcast users.

Base: podcast consumers. Population-weighted.

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They are the discovery group most open to branded podcasts, and pay for ad-free podcasts at twice the rate

	AI discoverers	All other consumers	Equally active consumers
More likely to try a podcast made by a company or brand	**70%**	36%	43%
Pay for an ad-free podcast experience*	**36%**	17%	21%
Agree ads are a fair trade for free podcasts*	**93%**	82%	86%
Prefer host-read ads*	**47%**	44%	47%
Say podcasts carry too much advertising**	**39%**	39%	40%
Recommend podcasts to people they know	**77%**	52%	65%
Likely to check out a podcast someone recommends	**87%**	67%	78%

They pay for ad-free podcasts more often, but are no more likely to say podcasts carry too much advertising, and no different on host-read ads. They rank first of 16 discovery groups on branded podcasts and on recommending podcasts.

Equally active consumers: other podcast consumers reweighted to use as many discovery methods as AI discoverers.

* Monthly+ consumers. ** Monthly+ consumers who use podcasts as an audio medium.

Base: podcast consumers. Population-weighted.

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Summary

1. **Chatbots already send people to podcasts.** 18% of podcast consumers found a show they still consume through one. Most ask for “a podcast about X” or “something like a show I already like,” so it’s worth checking what ChatGPT, Claude and Gemini say when asked those questions about your topic.

2. **People separate AI that helps from AI that replaces.** Translation, copyediting, research and editing help are broadly accepted. AI hosts and fully AI-made shows are rejected by about half of adults and accepted by about a quarter.

3. **Surprise costs goodwill.** Half of those surprised by AI content felt annoyed or tricked, and a label is already the second most common way people recognize AI. Saying when AI was used is cheaper than being found out.

4. **AI-made TV splits the audience.** 45% would watch an AI-made season of a canceled favorite and 41% would not, and the fans of the most-missed show are the most opposed.

5. **Don’t read AI discoverers as a preview of everyone.** They are heavy, broad consumers whose comfort with AI is about twice that of equally active consumers. They show where early adopters are, not where the average podcast consumer is heading.

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