



Jacobs  
media strategies



# Radio Talent In the AI Era

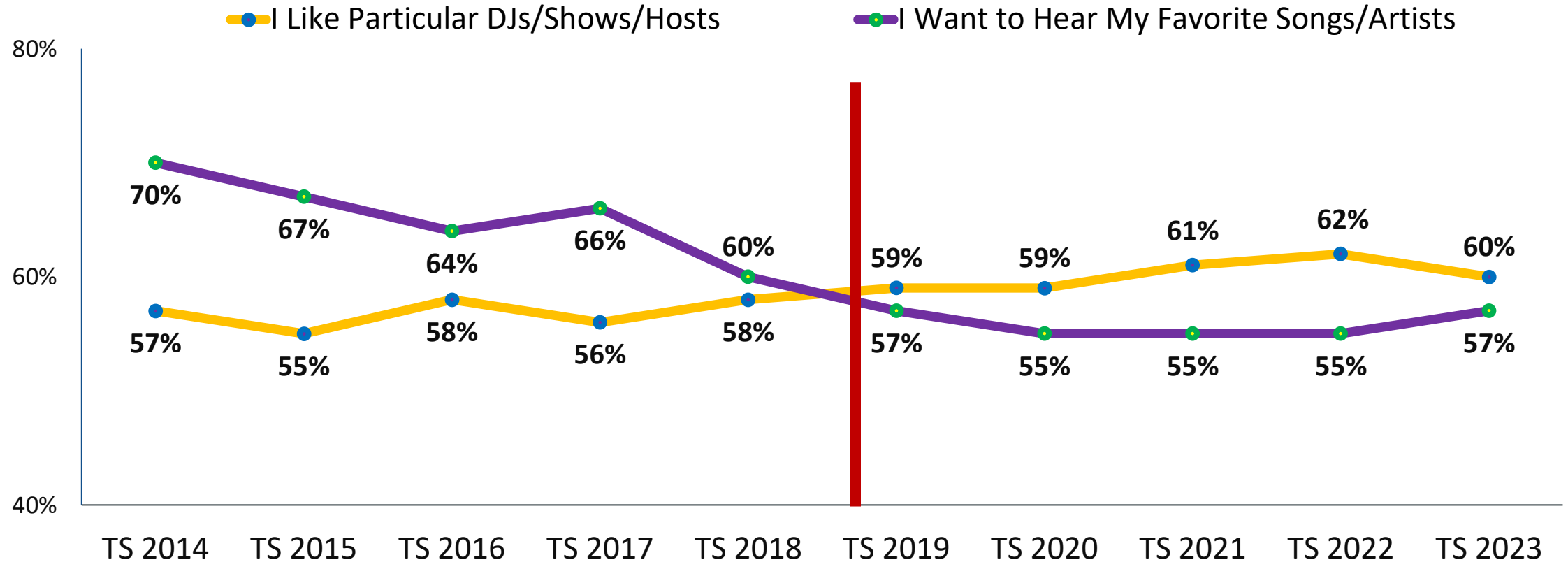
# Methodology

- N = 442 currently employed talent
  - 432 commercial radio air personalities in the U.S.
  - 10 commercial radio show producers in the U.S.
- N = 60 unemployed commercial radio personalities in the U.S.
- N = 502 total
- Interview dates: July 6-19, 2023
- All responses were collected online via Jockline Daily and Jacobs Media databases - and lots of word of mouth
- The data is unweighted
- This is a web survey and does not represent all radio air talent



jacobs media  
**techsurvey**  
**2023**

# Personalities Continue to Outpace Music, But the Gap Has Narrowed



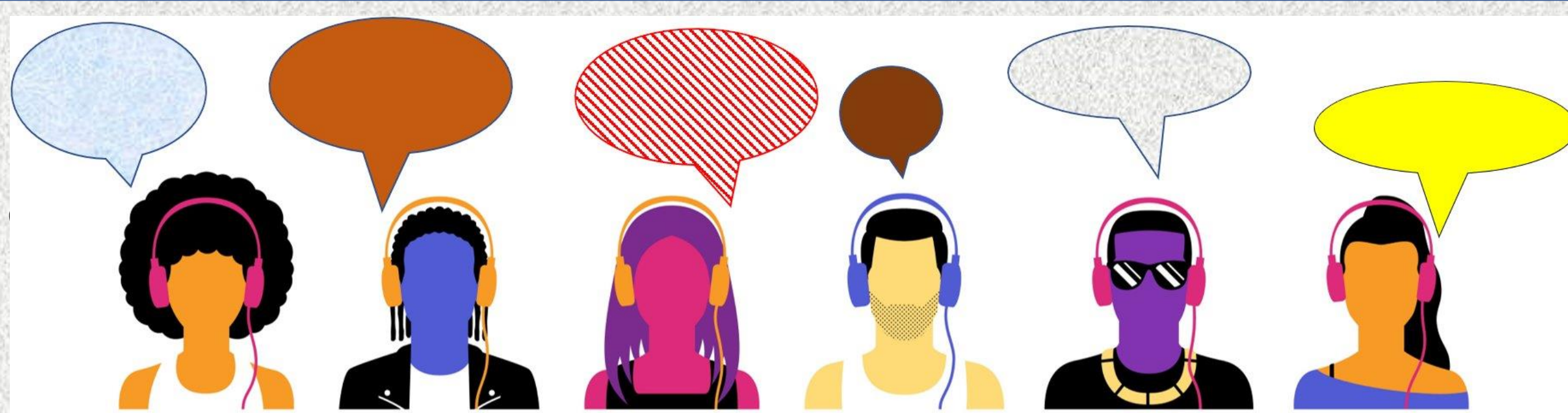
Among those who listen to AM/FM radio,  
% who say this is a main reason they listen



# Key Findings

# Questions/Observations

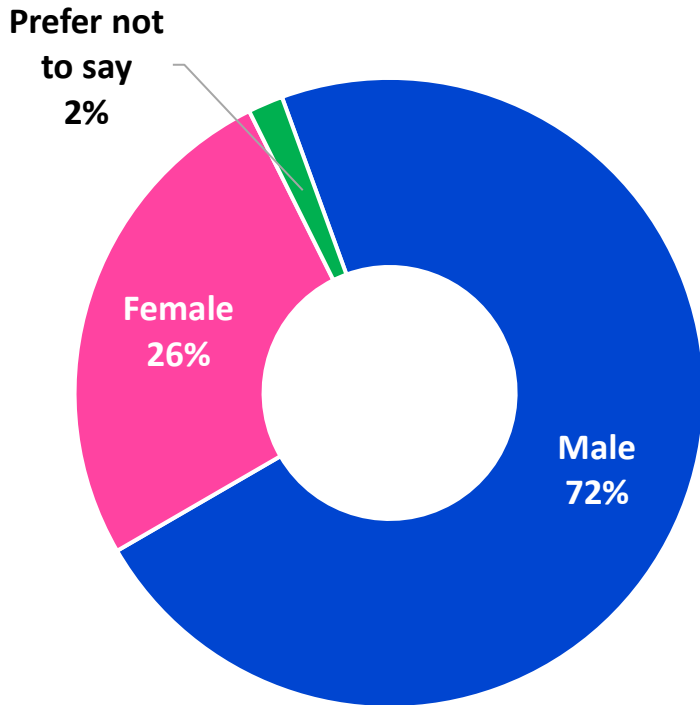
1. Station culture has been greatly impacted by COVID & WFH. We are not back to “normal.”
2. How many “hats” can you wear before you stop being effective? Or burn out?
3. The biggest companies have much work to do – reputationally & otherwise.
4. And medium/small companies have an opportunity to become THE destination for talent. No one owns “the hill” for best company to work among air talent.
5. AI is viewed more as a threat with some concern about industry job losses. Yet, relatively few view it as a core “skill” to learn.
6. The gulf between male and female talent about women’s upward mobility continues to be problematic.
7. Talent generally continue to feel taken for granted.
8. Training is inconsistent to improve skills, especially social media and technology-oriented areas.
9. Economic worries are weighing on the collective minds of air personalities.
10. Stress levels continue to run high as concerns persist about more layoffs.
11. Give anyone you know who’s “on the beach” a hug. More are giving up on radio as a career.



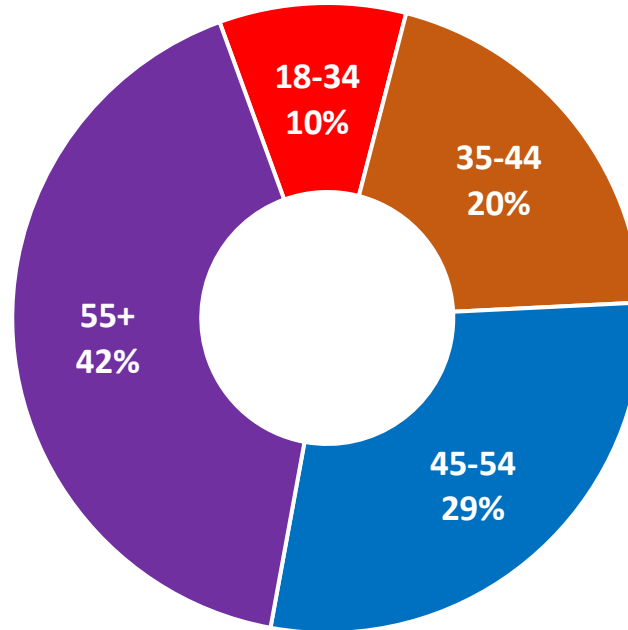
# The Demographics of U.S. Radio Talent

# Who We Surveyed: Air Talent Skews Male, 45+, & Gen X

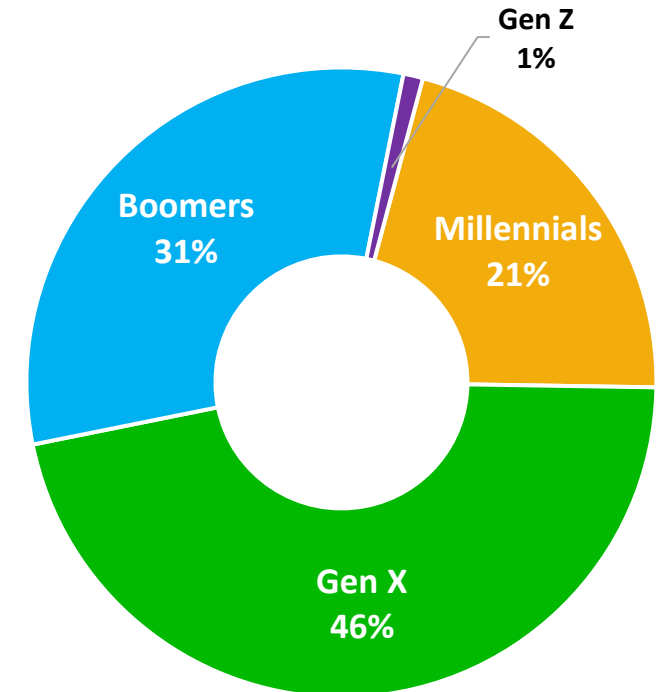
## Gender



## Age



## Generation

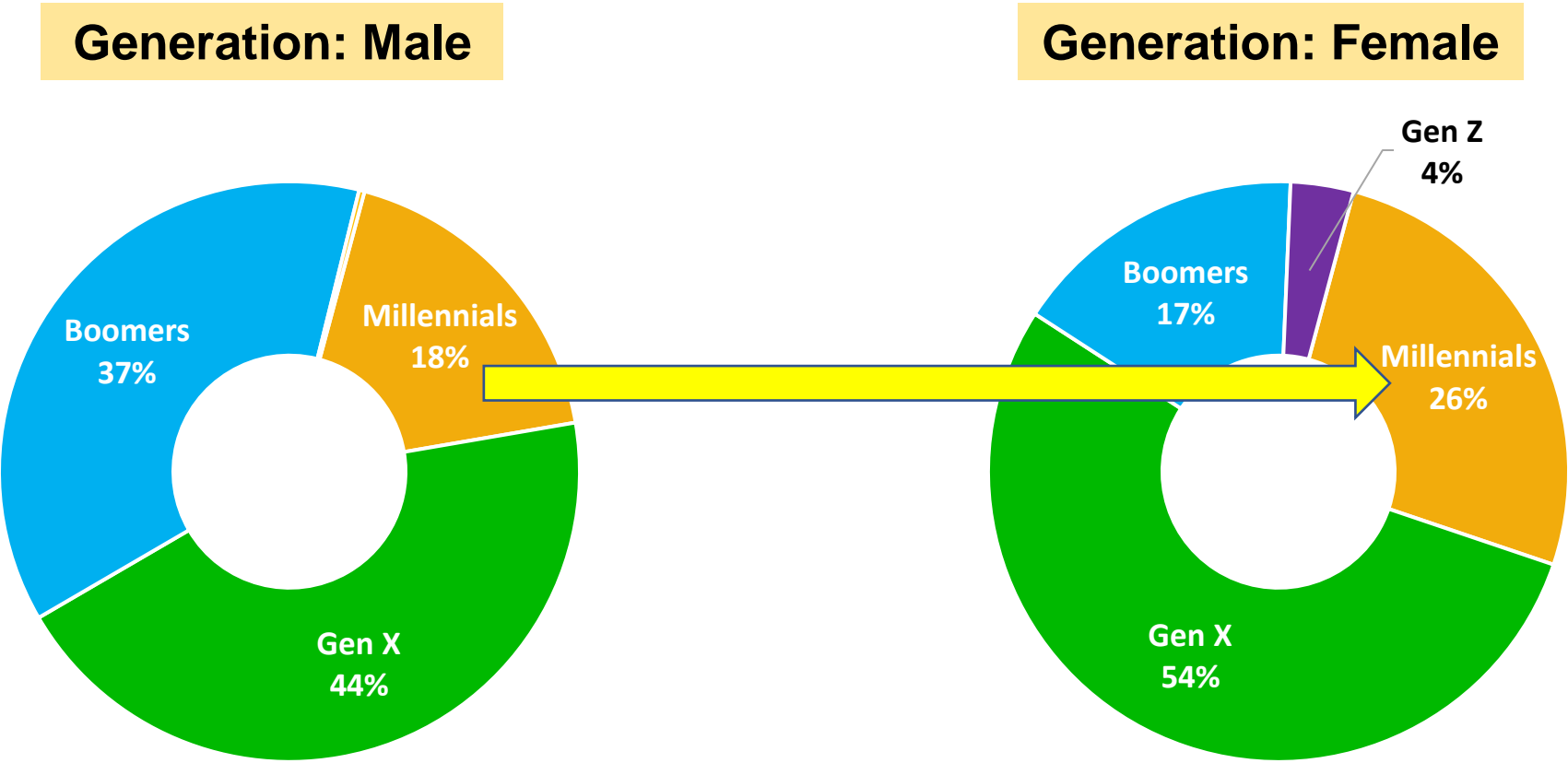


**Average Age: 51.3**

Among On-Air Talent

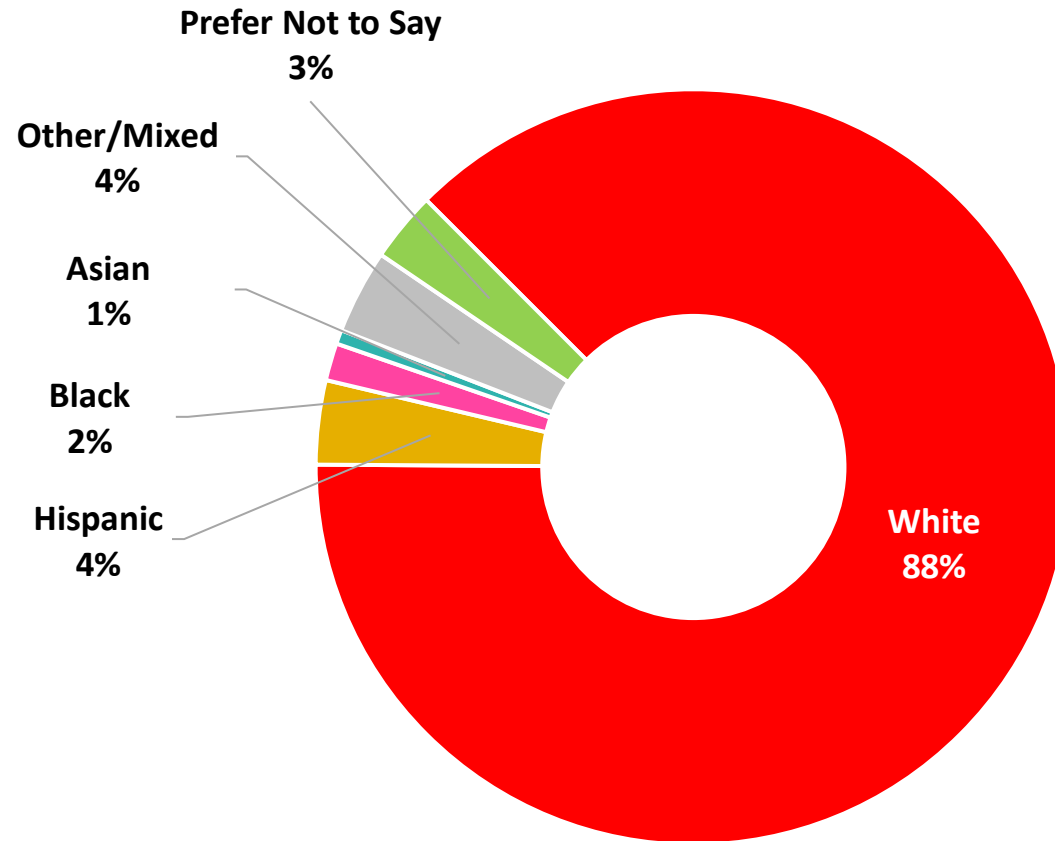


# Female Talent Is Quite a Bit Younger Than the Males



# Nearly Nine in Ten Respondents Are White

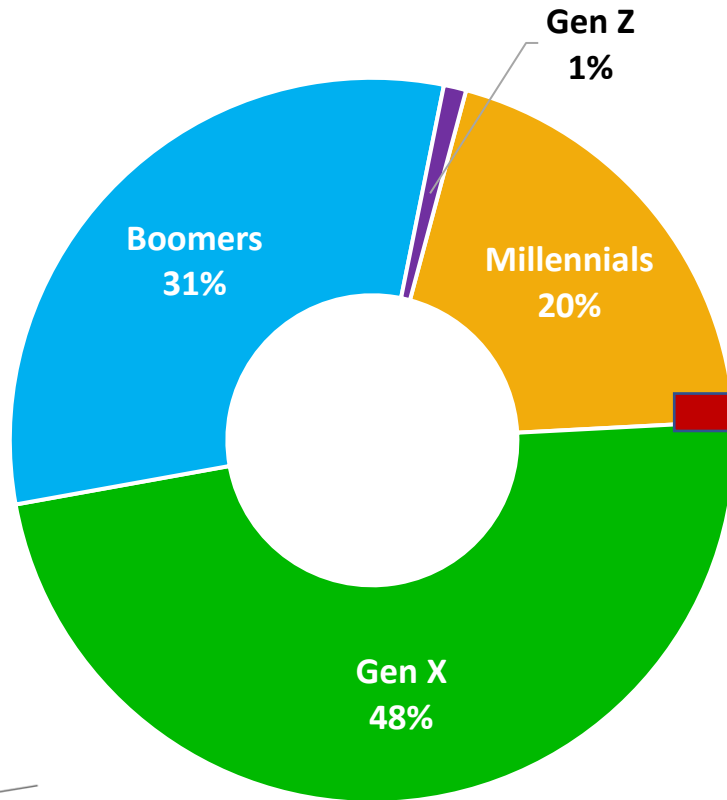
## Race/Ethnicity



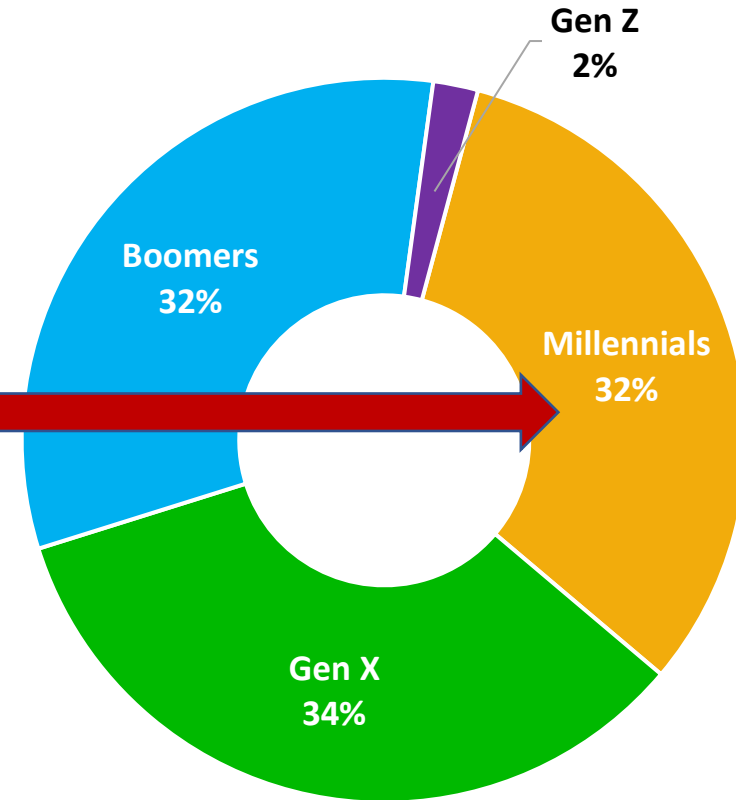
Among On-Air Talent

# People of Color on the Air Are Apt to Be Considerably Younger

Generation: White



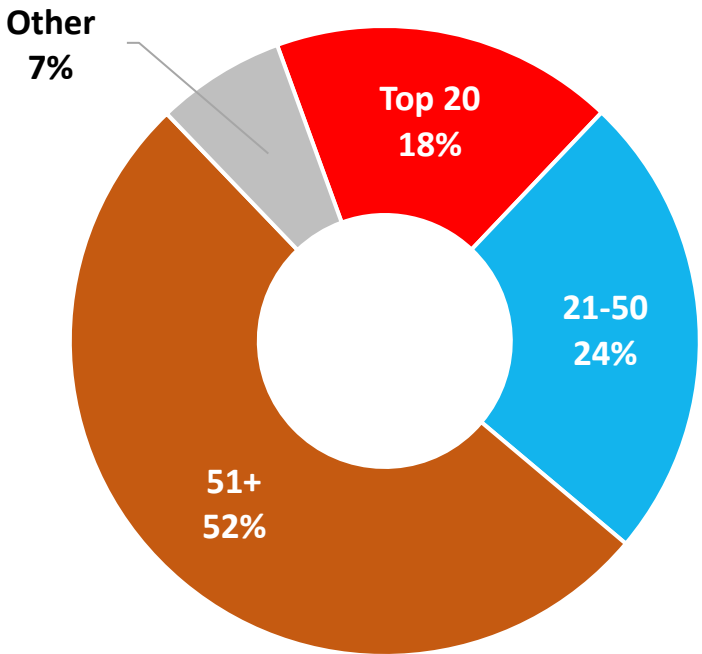
Generation: Non-White



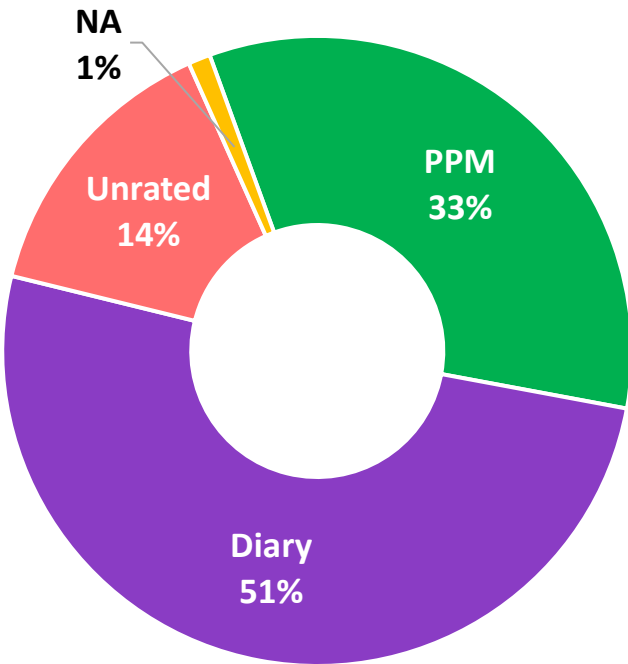
Among On-Air Talent

# Who We Surveyed: Market Size, Methodology, Ownership

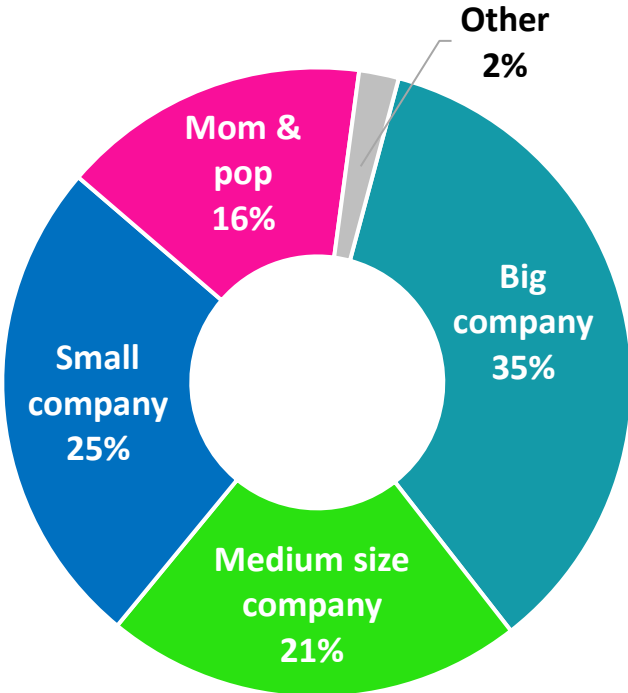
**Market Size**



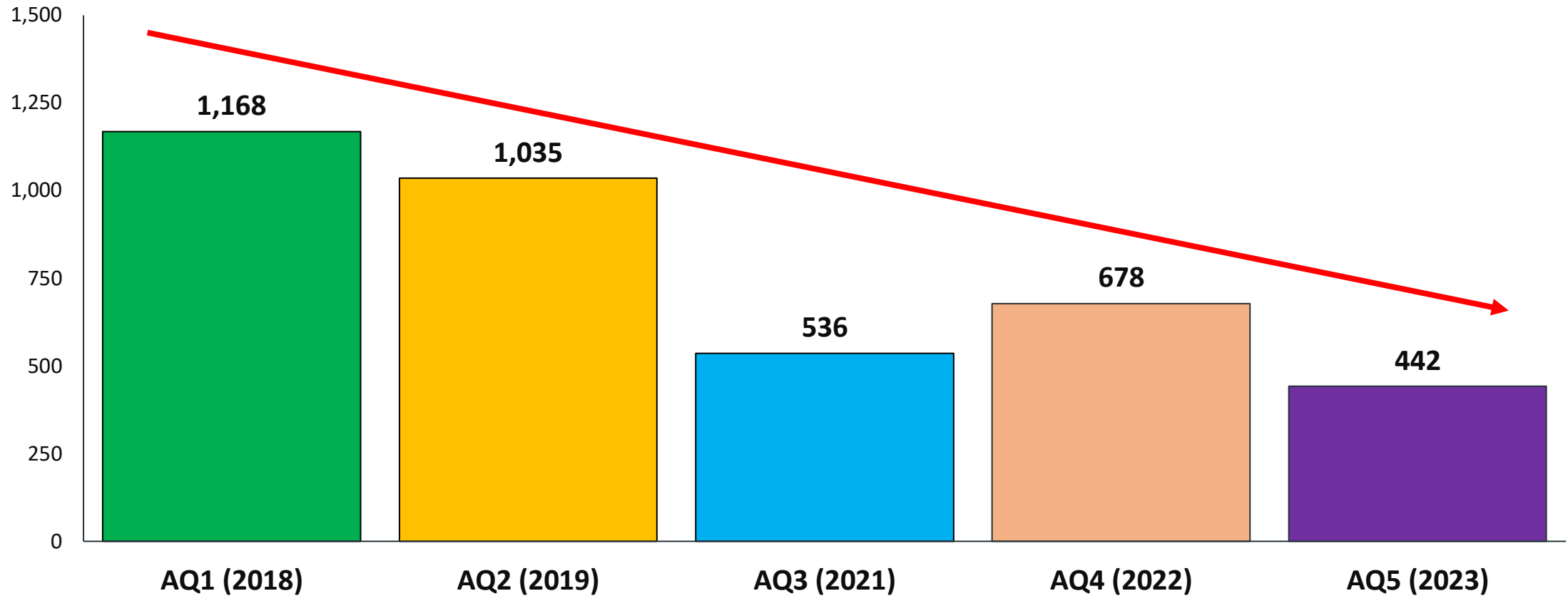
**Ratings Methodology**



**Ownership**

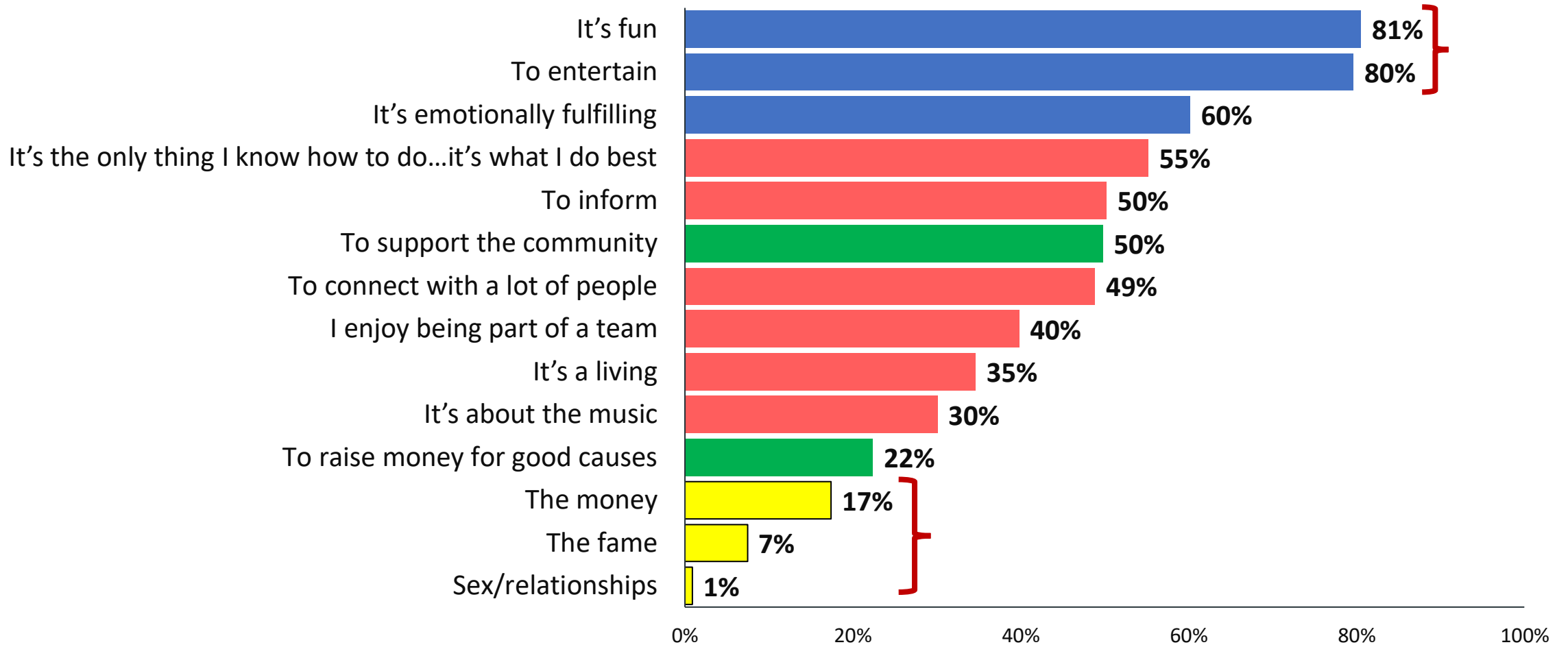


# AQ5 Has the Lowest Sample Size Since the Study Launched



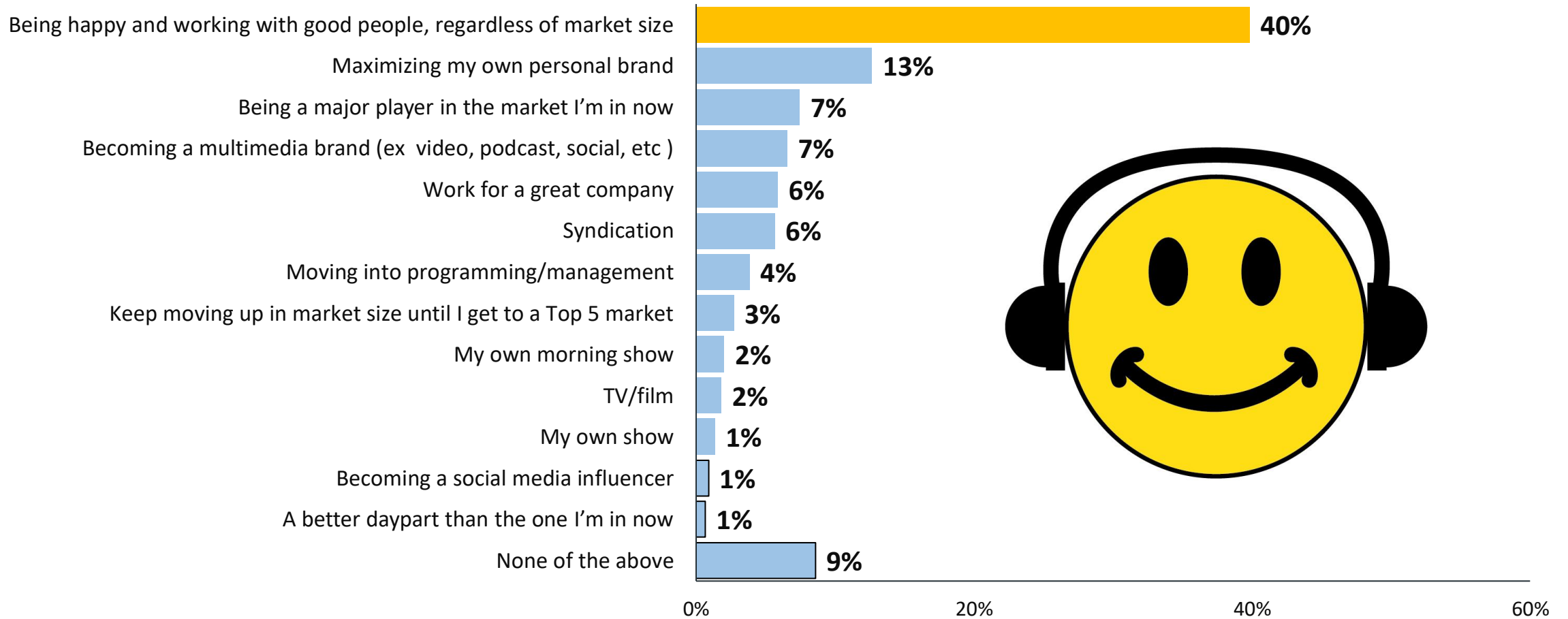


# Why Be On-Air? It's Fun, to Entertain, Emotionally Fulfilling



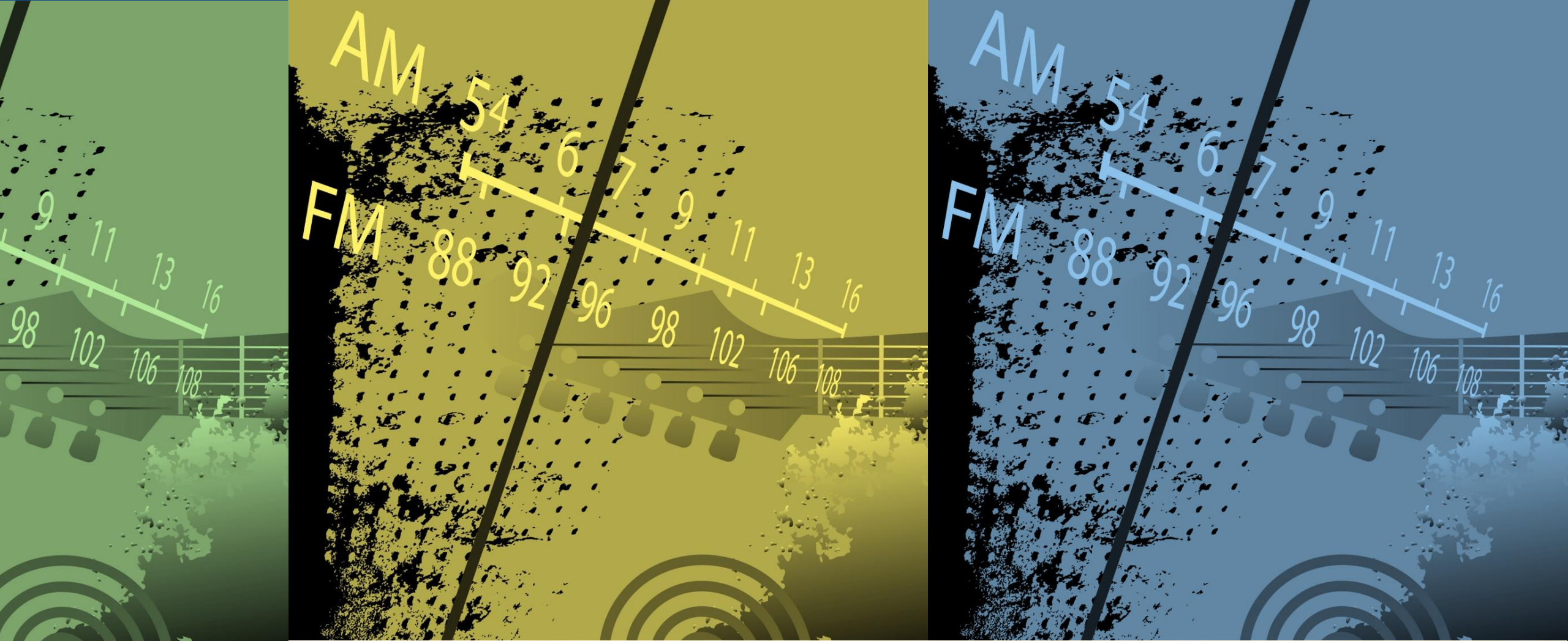
% who say this is a main reason they are on the radio

# Being Happy and Working With Good People Is the Ultimate Professional Goal



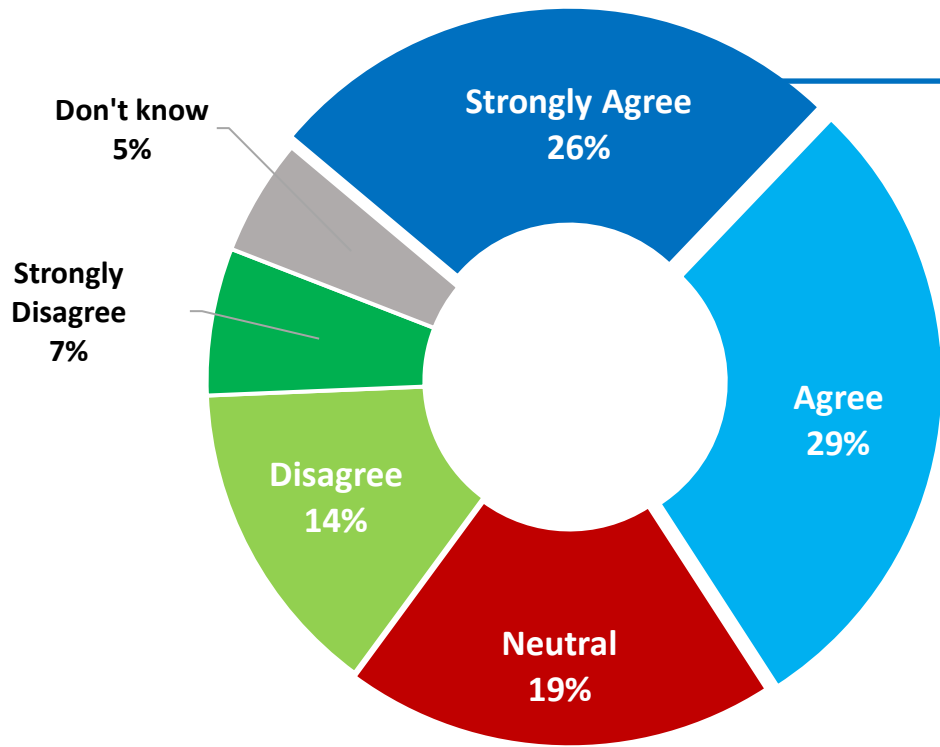
Among On-Air Talent



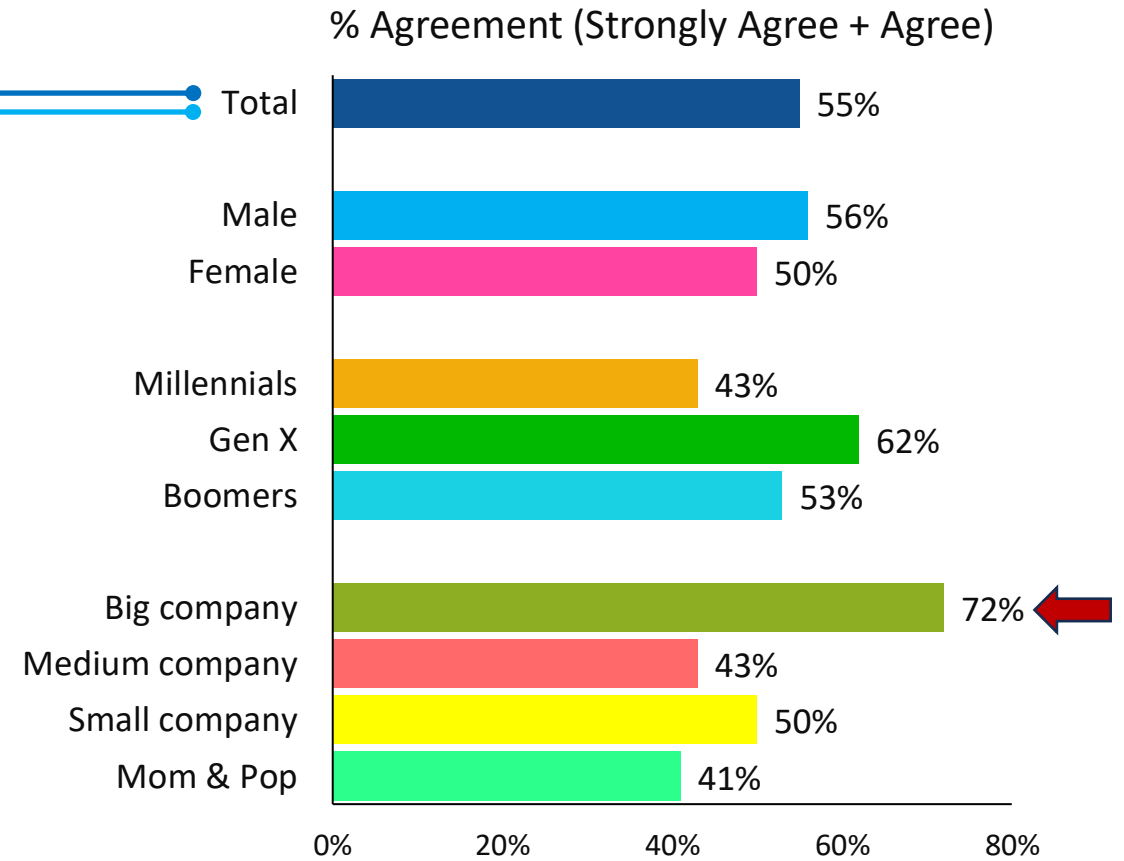


# The State of the Radio Workplace

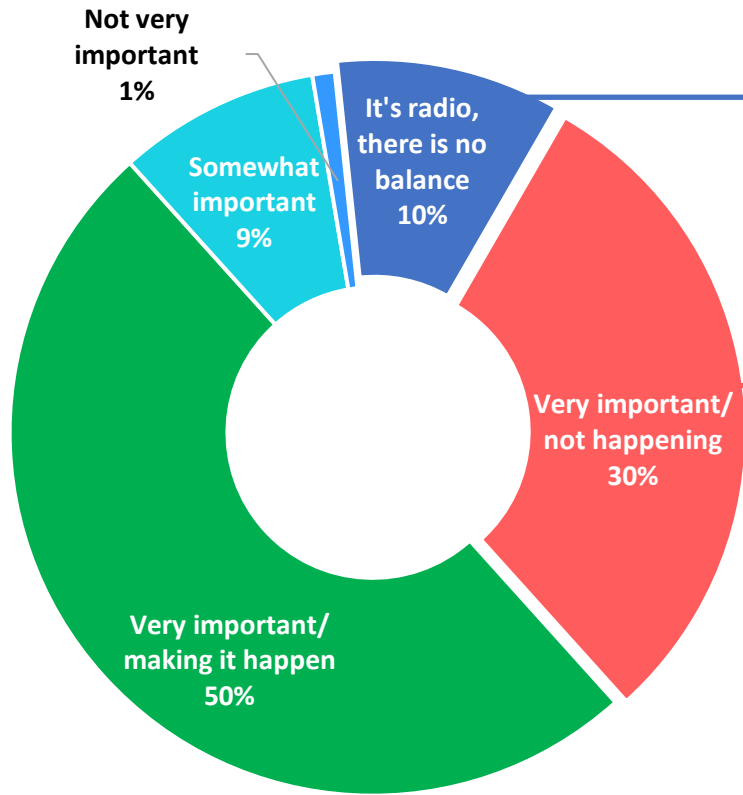
# Most Agree COVID Changed Their Station Culture, Especially Those in the Biggest Companies



*"Since COVID, our station culture just isn't the same as it used to be"*

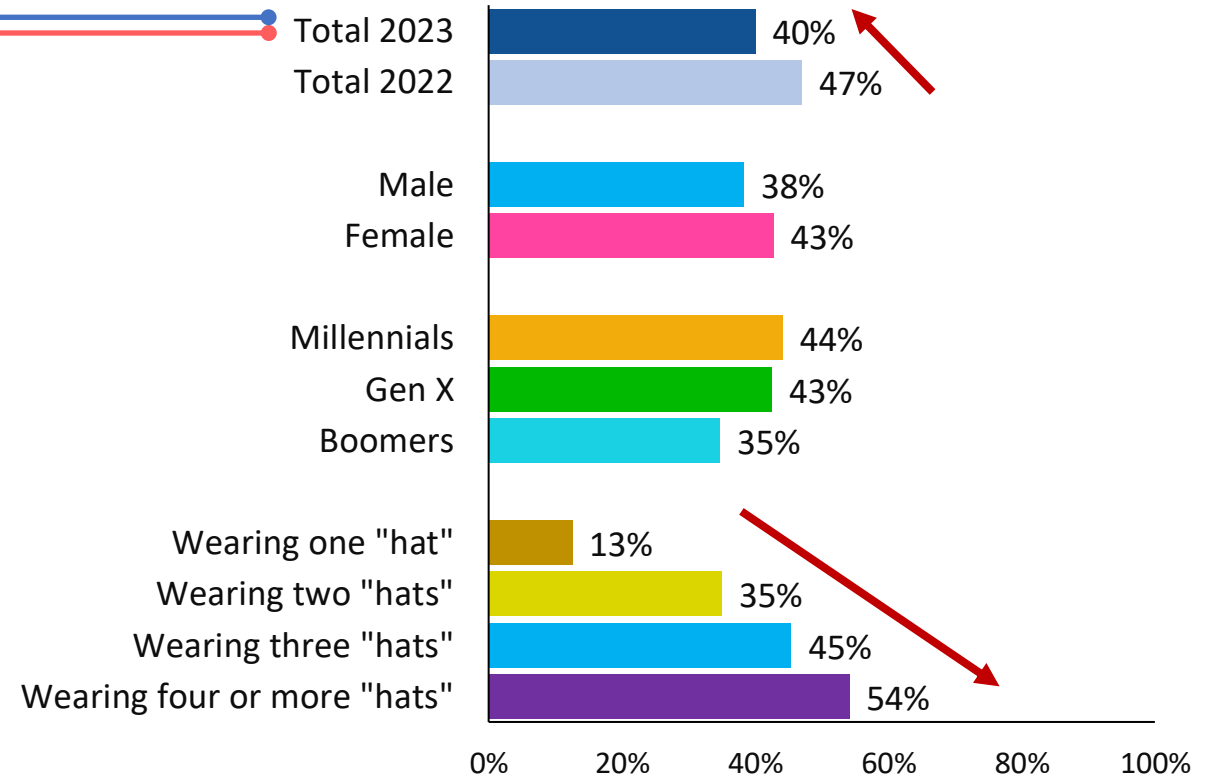


# Four in Ten Still Say a Work/Life Balance Is Not Happening



*“When it comes to work/life balance, which ONE of the following statements best describes your opinion?”*

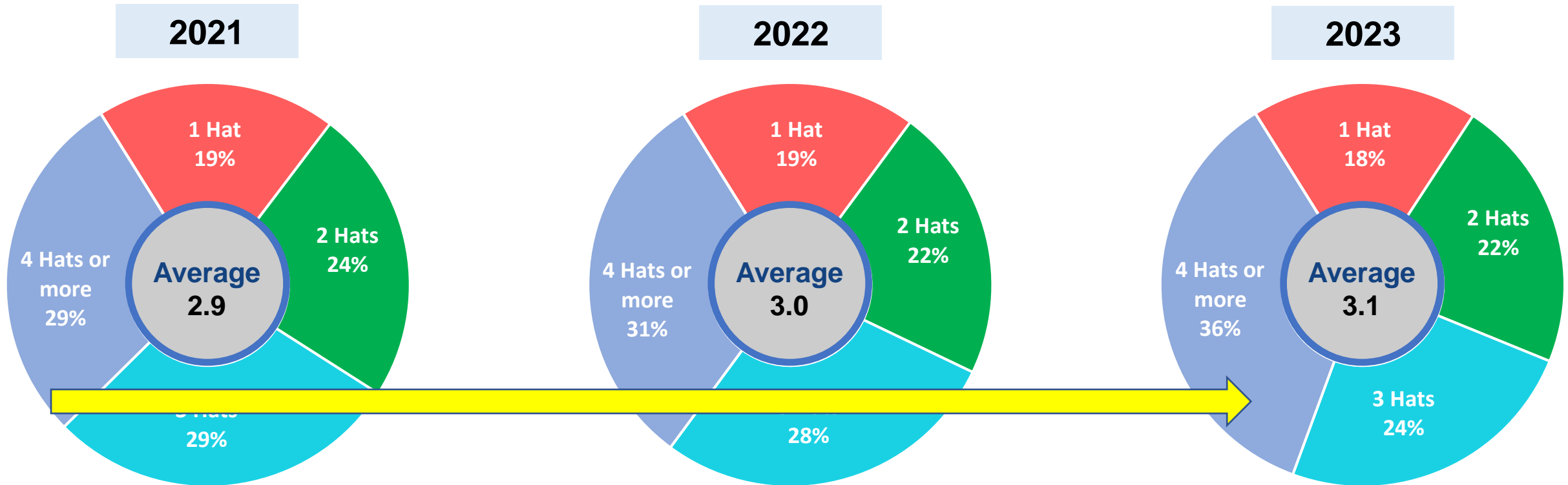
% Saying Work/Life Balance Doesn't Exist or Is Very Important But It's Not Happening



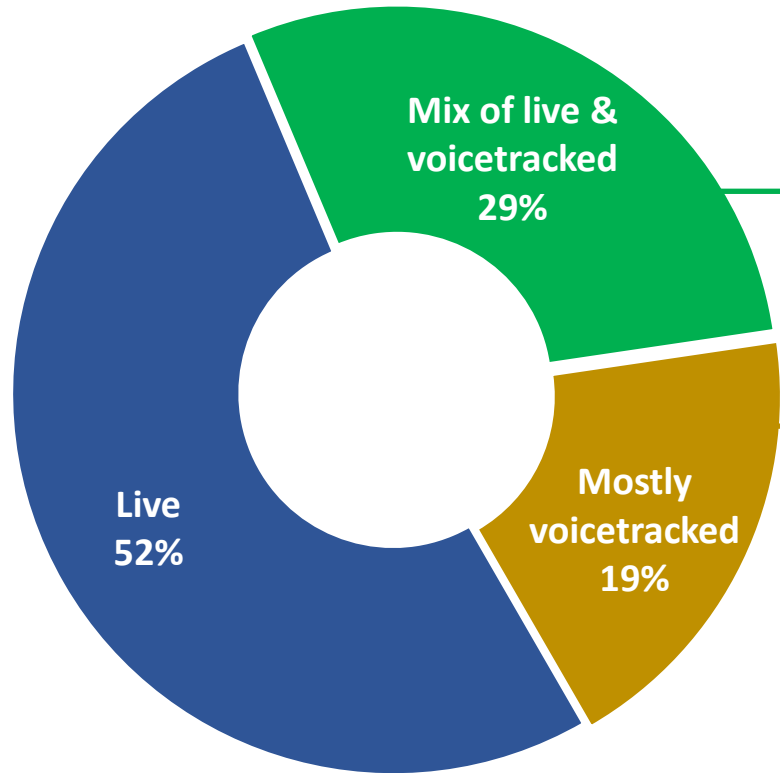
Among On-Air Talent

# The Trend Is For Radio Personalities to Have More Duties; More Than One-Third Now Wear FOUR or More Hats

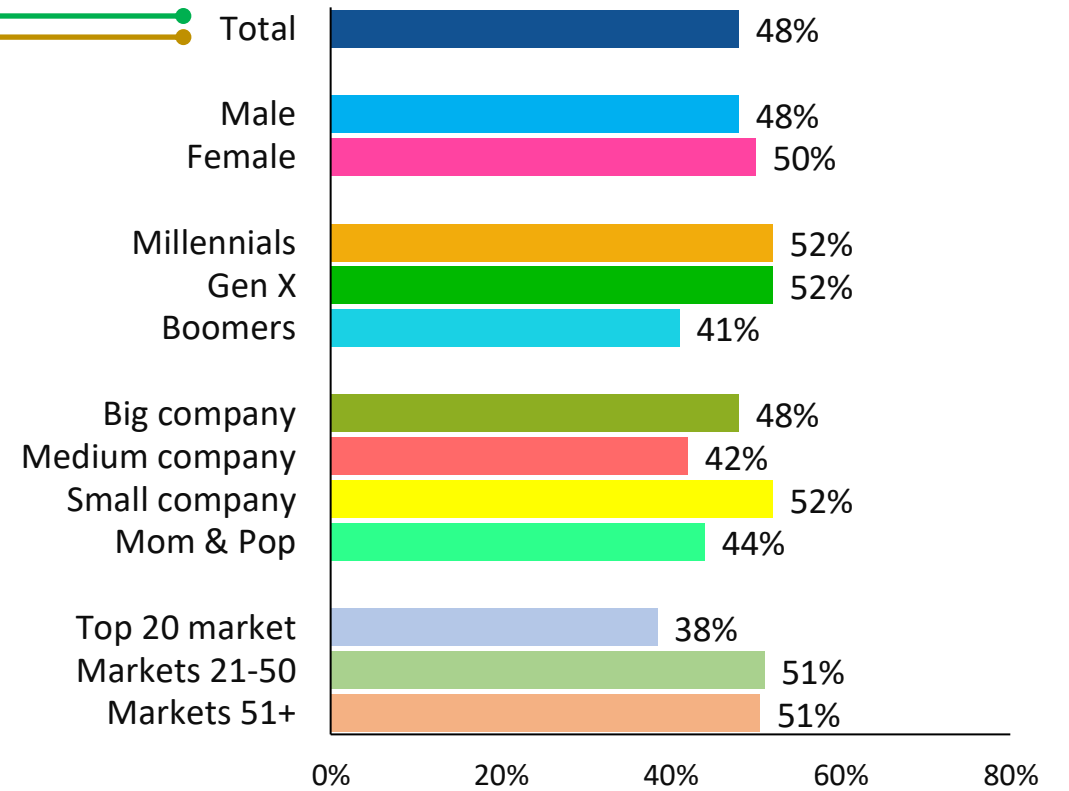
*“Many radio personalities have more than one job. For example, you may be the program director and on the air – or you may be on the air for more than one station in the cluster or company – or in addition to being on the air, you may be the music director, the promotion director, etc. How many ‘hats’ are you now wearing?”*



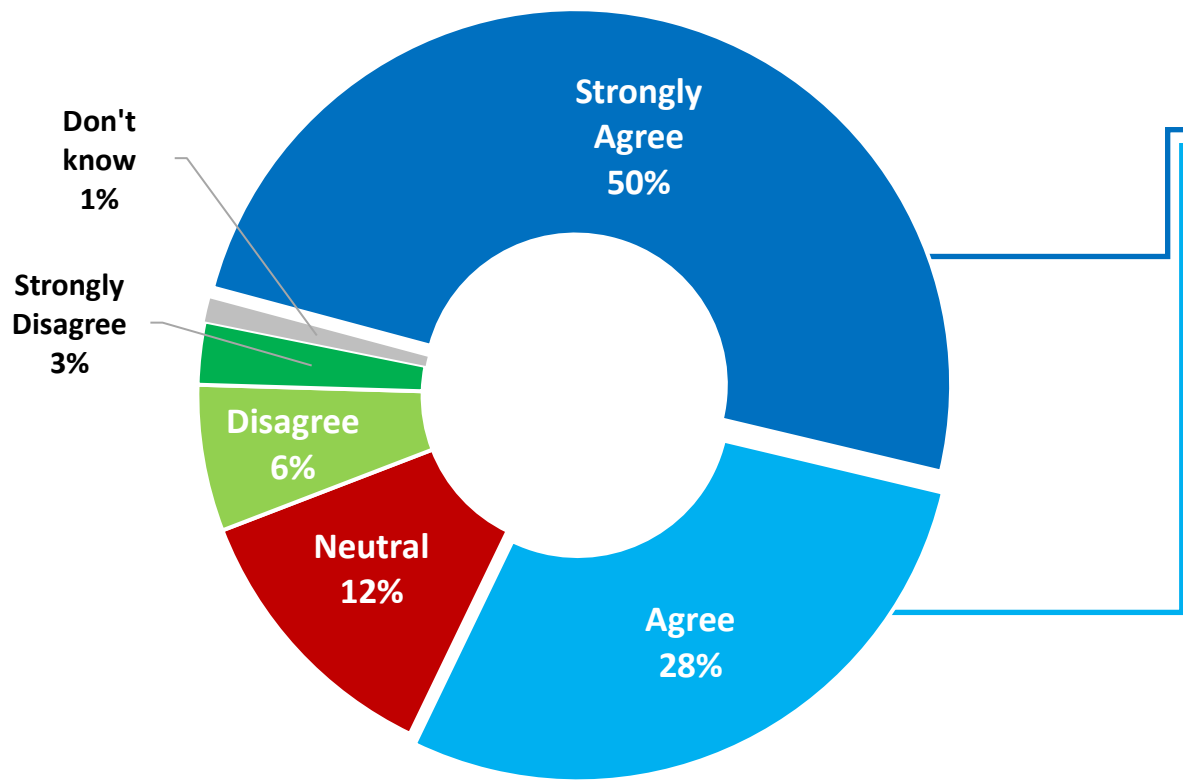
# About Half Are Doing at Least Some Voicetracking



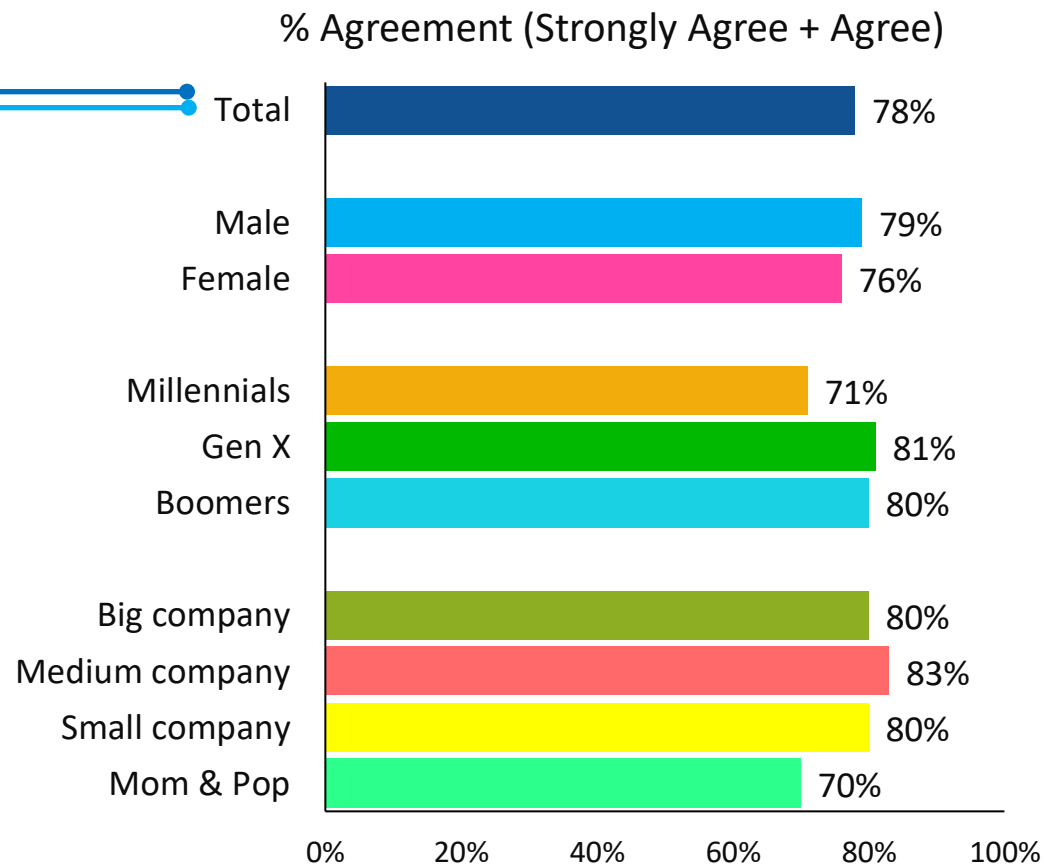
% Voicetracking (Exclusively or Mixed With Live)



# Most Agree Live Radio Is What It's All About

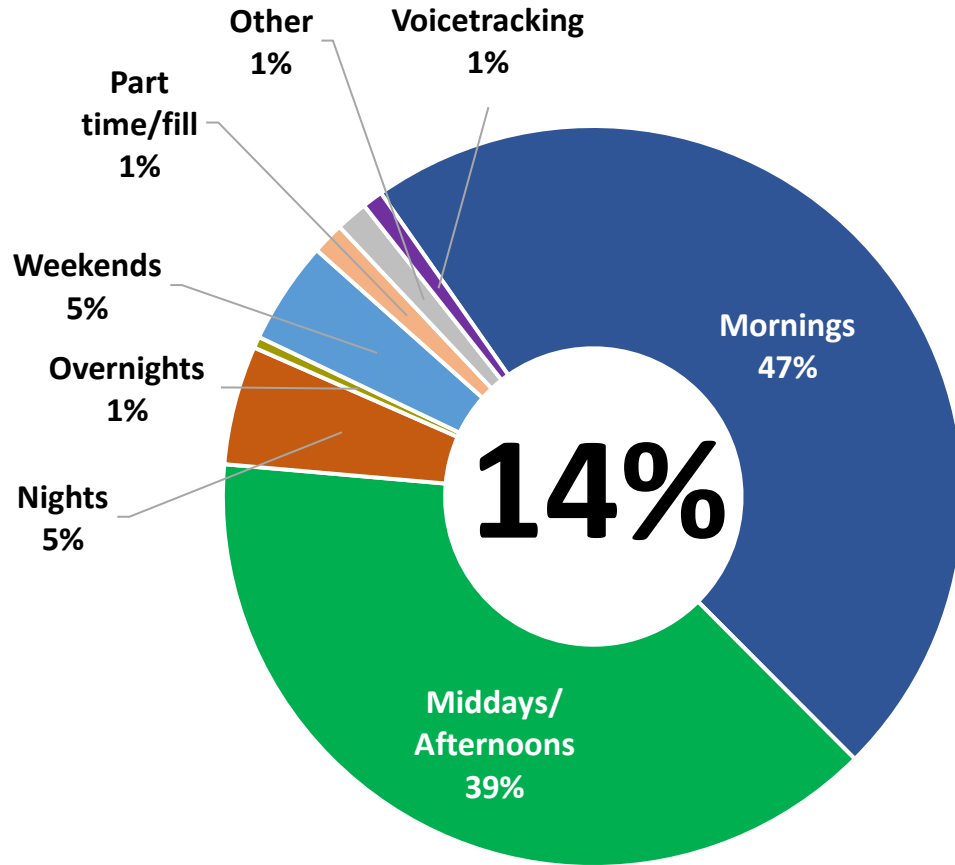


*"Even with voicetracking, live radio is what radio is all about"*

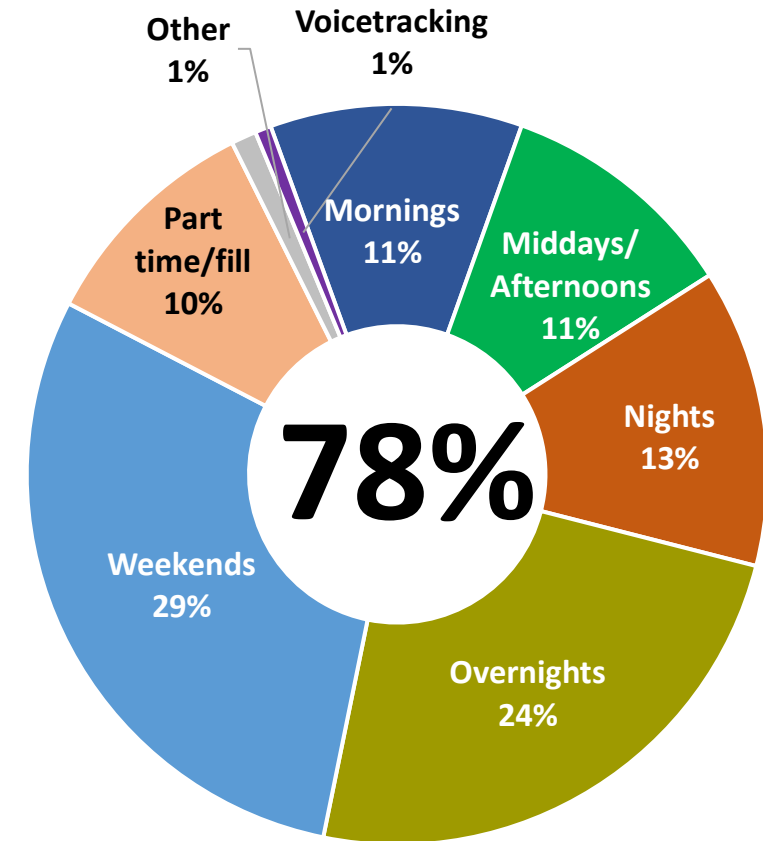


# The Importance of Airshifts to Nurture New Talent

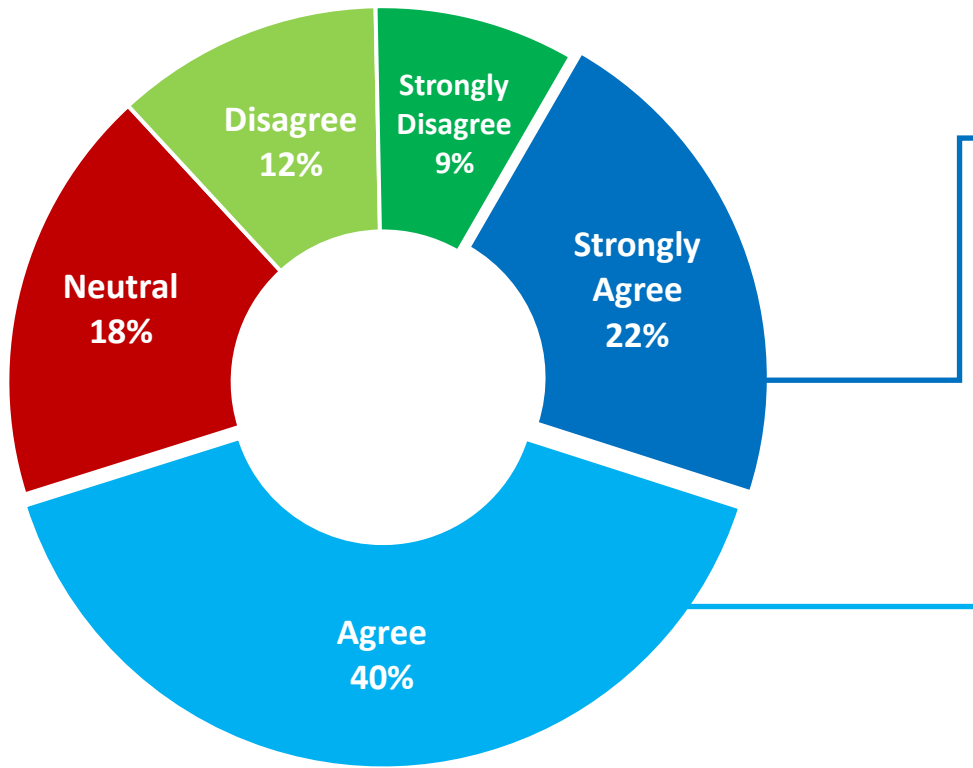
## Current Airshift



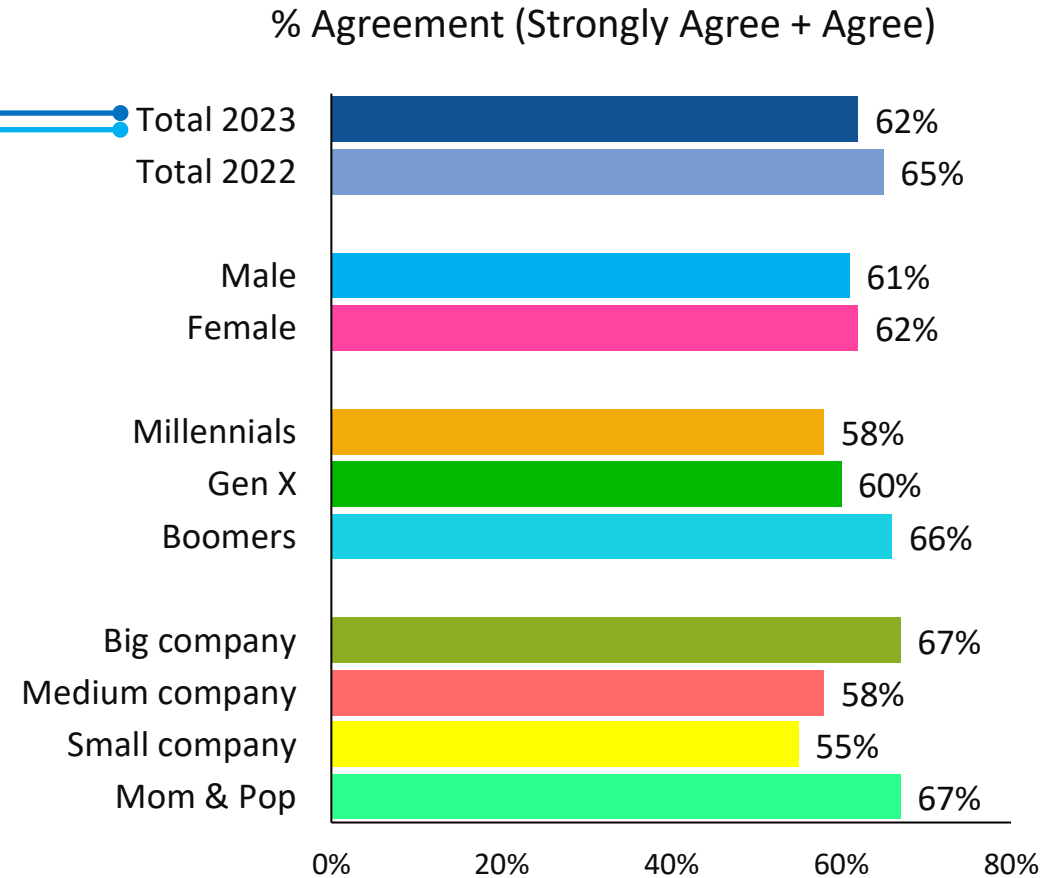
## First Airshift



# There Is Considerable Concern Over Offending Certain Audience Segments



*"I'm concerned about covering topics that may offend certain segments of the station audience/my audience"*



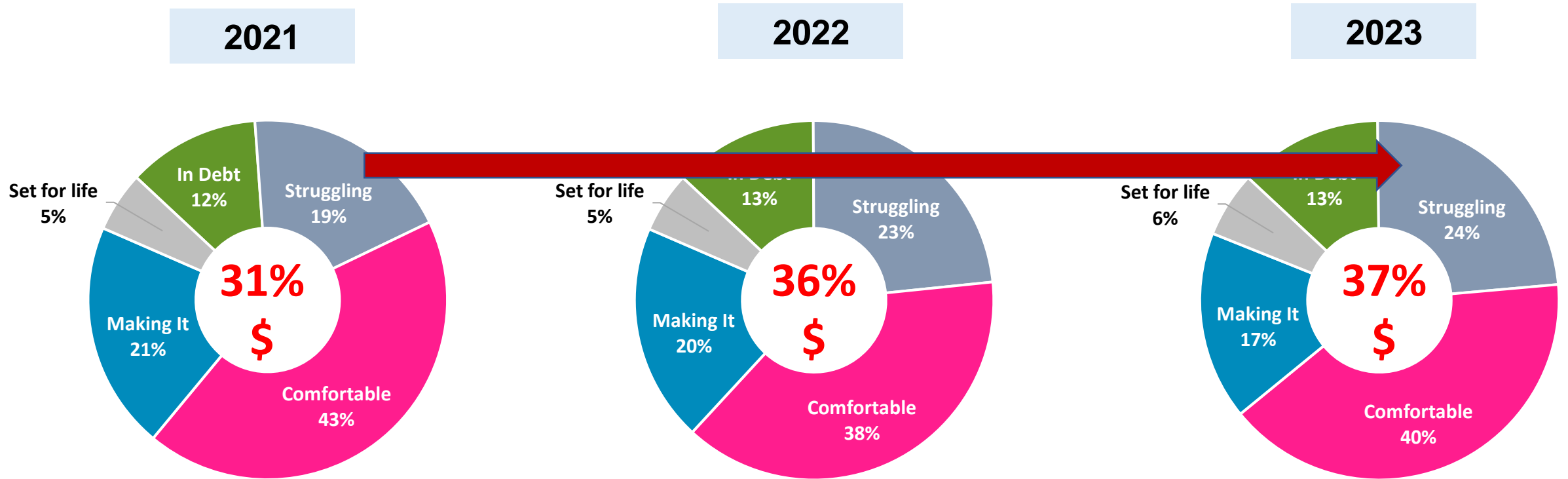




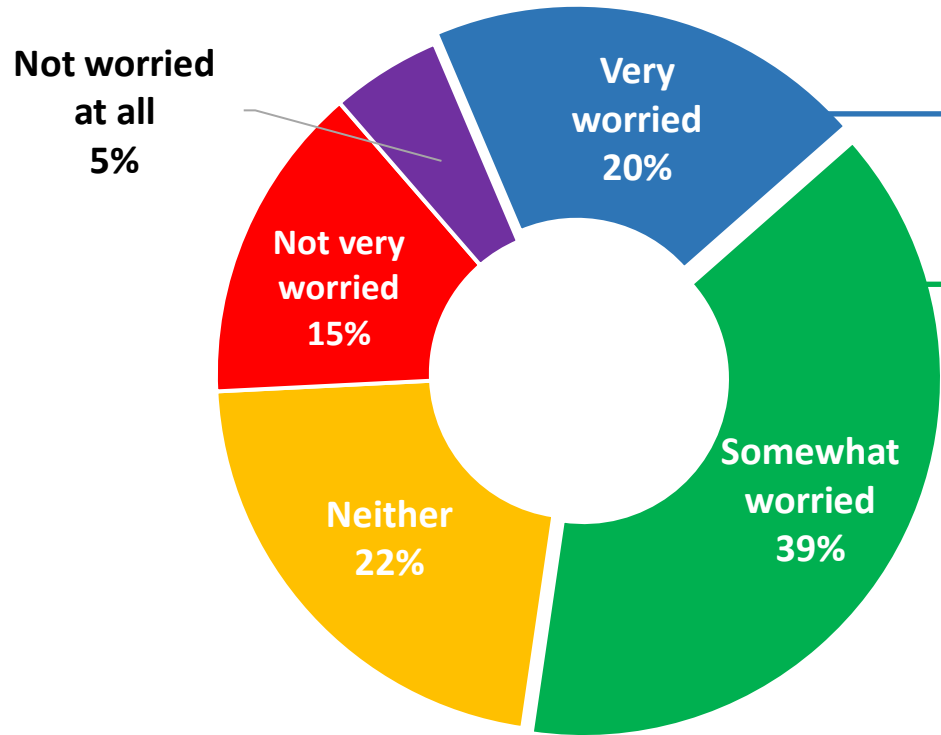
# Money Matters

# A Majority Are in Good Shape Financially, But Nearly Four in Ten Are In Debt or Struggling

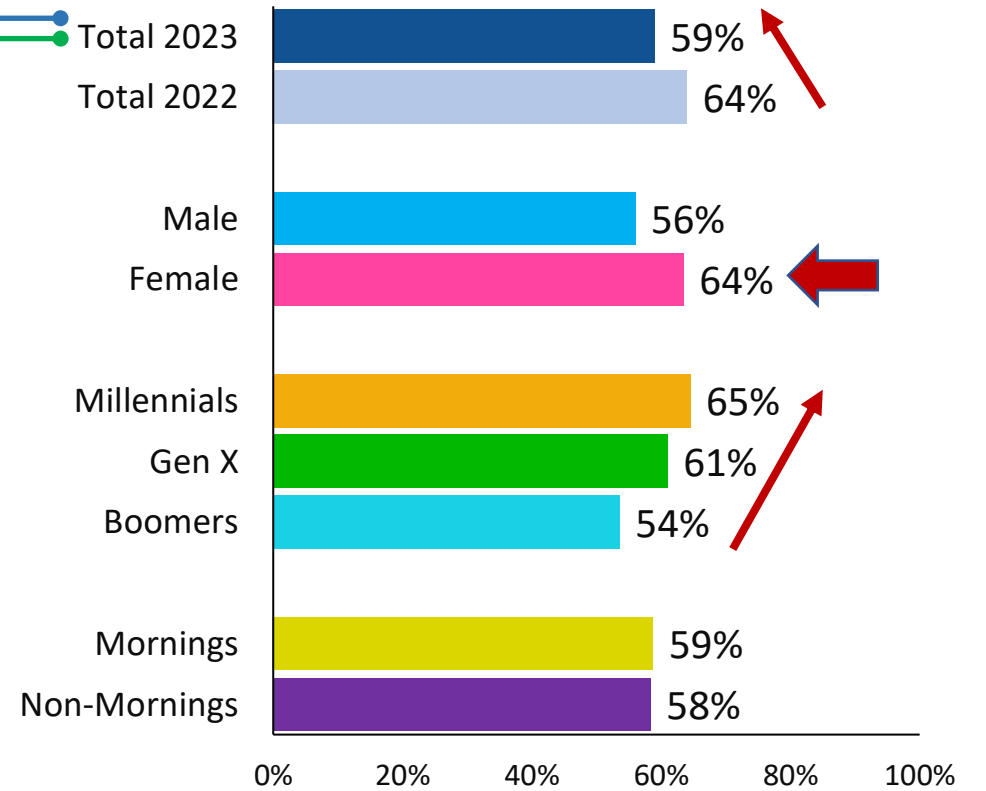
*“Financially, are you...”*



# Though Down From 2022, Nearly Six in Ten are Worried About a Recession or Reductions In Staff



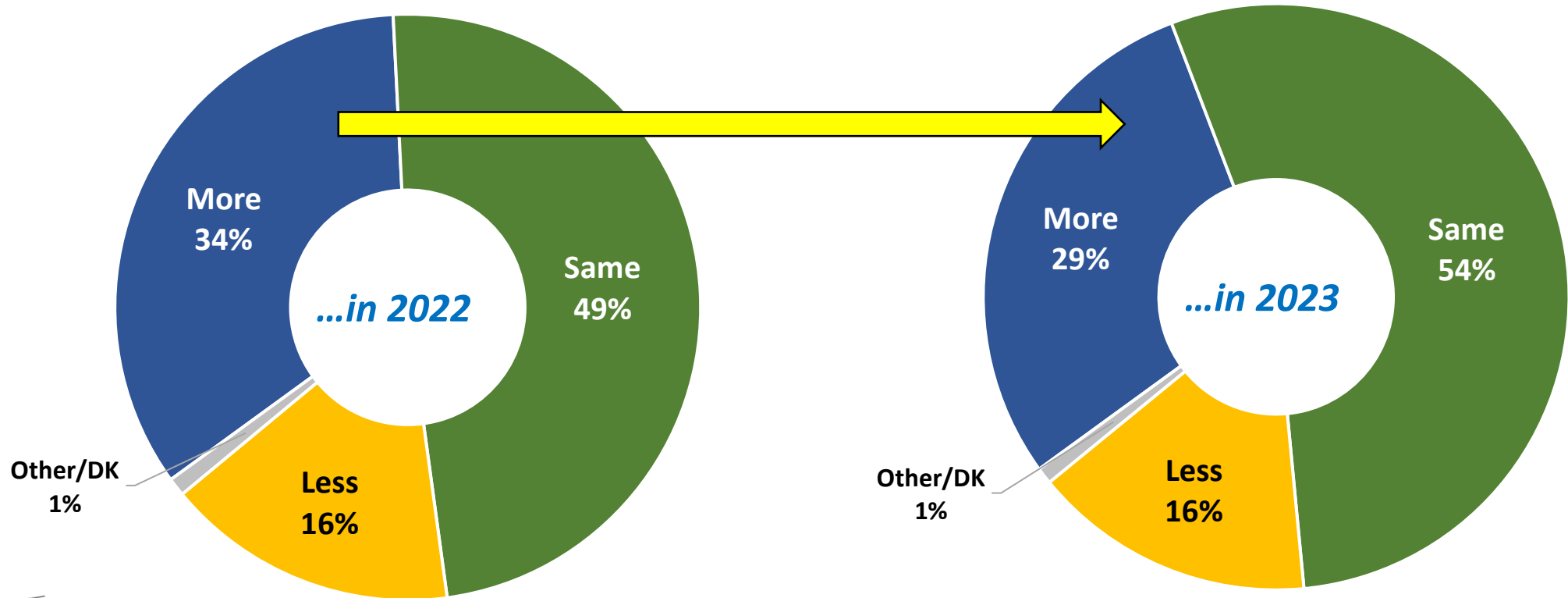
% "Very" or "Somewhat" Worried About a Recession



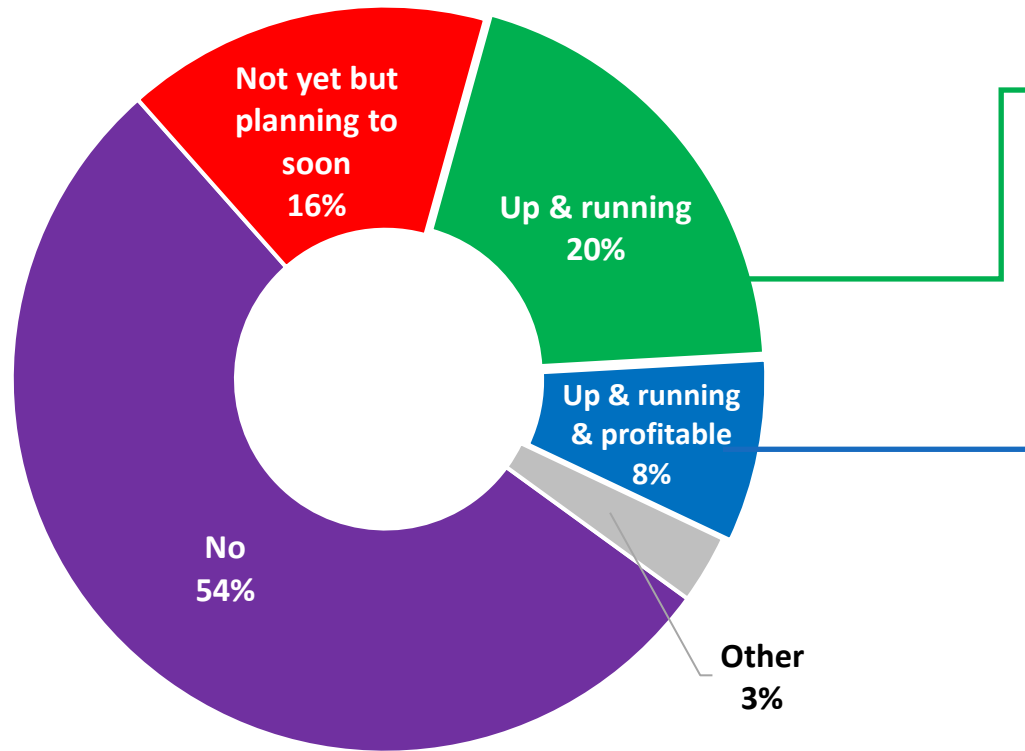
*"There continues to be talk of more economic pressure during the next several months. How worried are you that a recession or general reductions in staff at your station will negatively impact you personally?"*

# Fewer Expect To Make More Money This Year

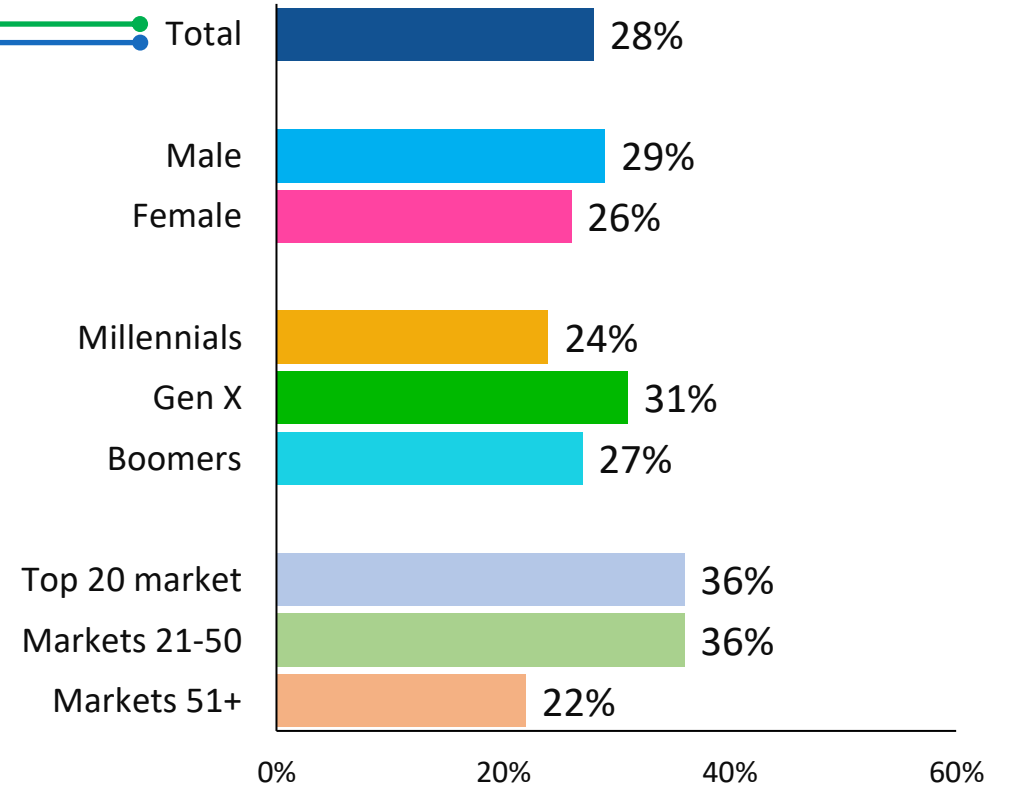
*“Regarding your overall compensation from all radio-related sources (salary, bonuses, appearances, etc.), how much money do expect to make this year from your radio job compared to what you made...?”*



# Side Hustles? Nearly Three in Ten Are Now Involved in a Second Business



% Whose Secondary Business Is Up and Running (and/or Also Profitable)



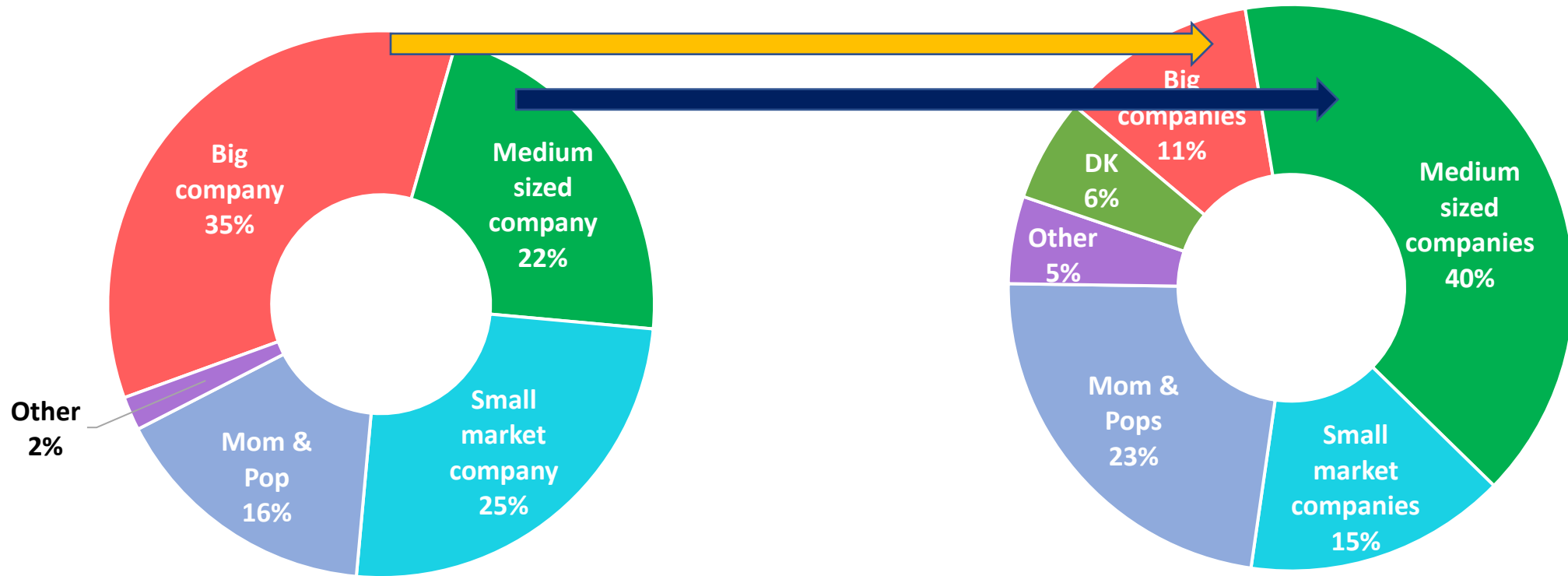
*“In addition to your normal job in radio, have you started and/or invested in a secondary business that you hope will become successful?”*



# Over One-Third Work For One of the Big Radio Companies, But if They Could Do It Again...

Current Ownership

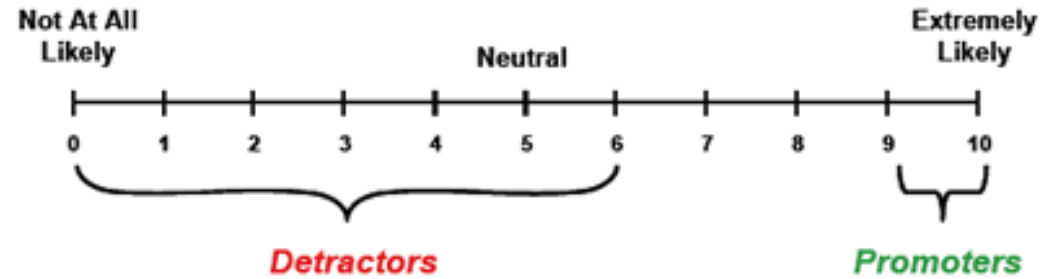
If I could do it again



# NET PROMOTER



## Likelihood To Recommend

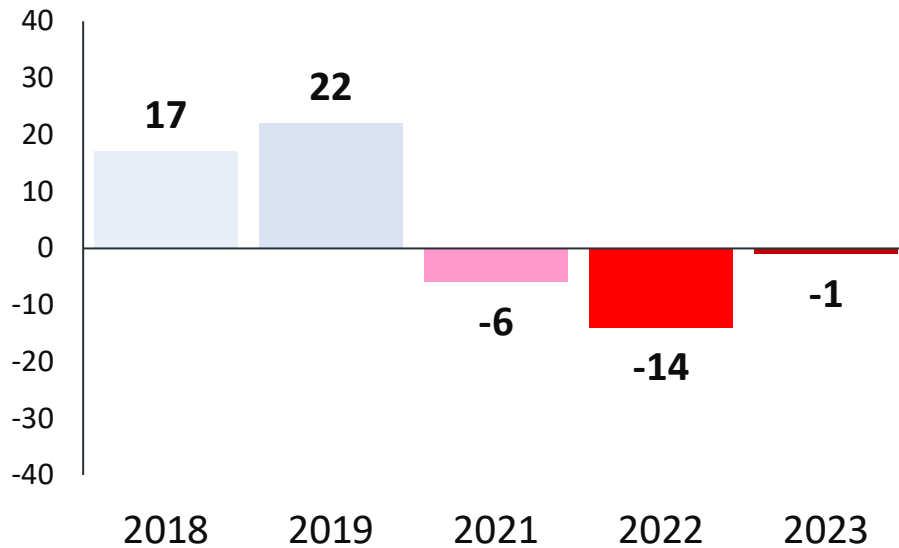


$$\% \text{ Promoters} - \% \text{ Detractors} = \text{Net Promoter Score}$$

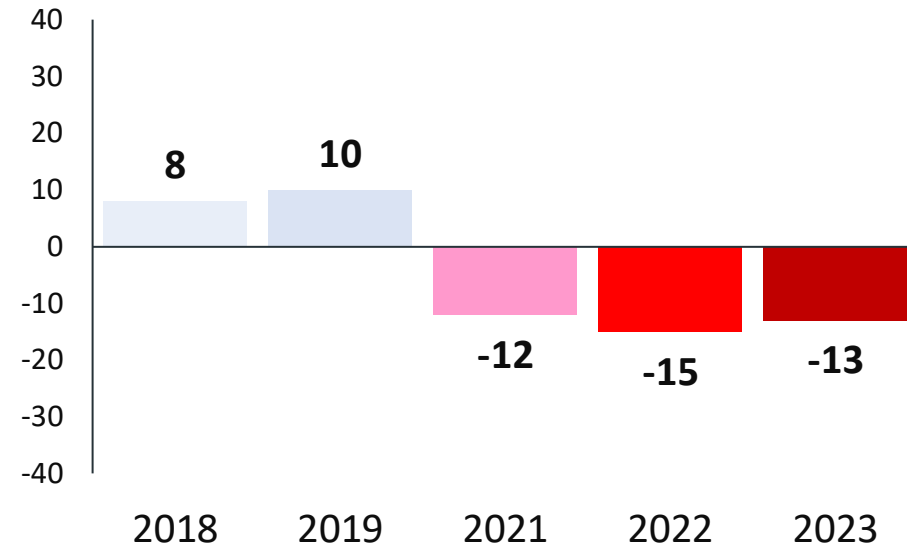


# While Still Sharply Lower Than Pre-COVID, Recommendation Scores for Radio Stations Improve (While Company NPS Scores Remain Low)

NPS: The Station You Work For

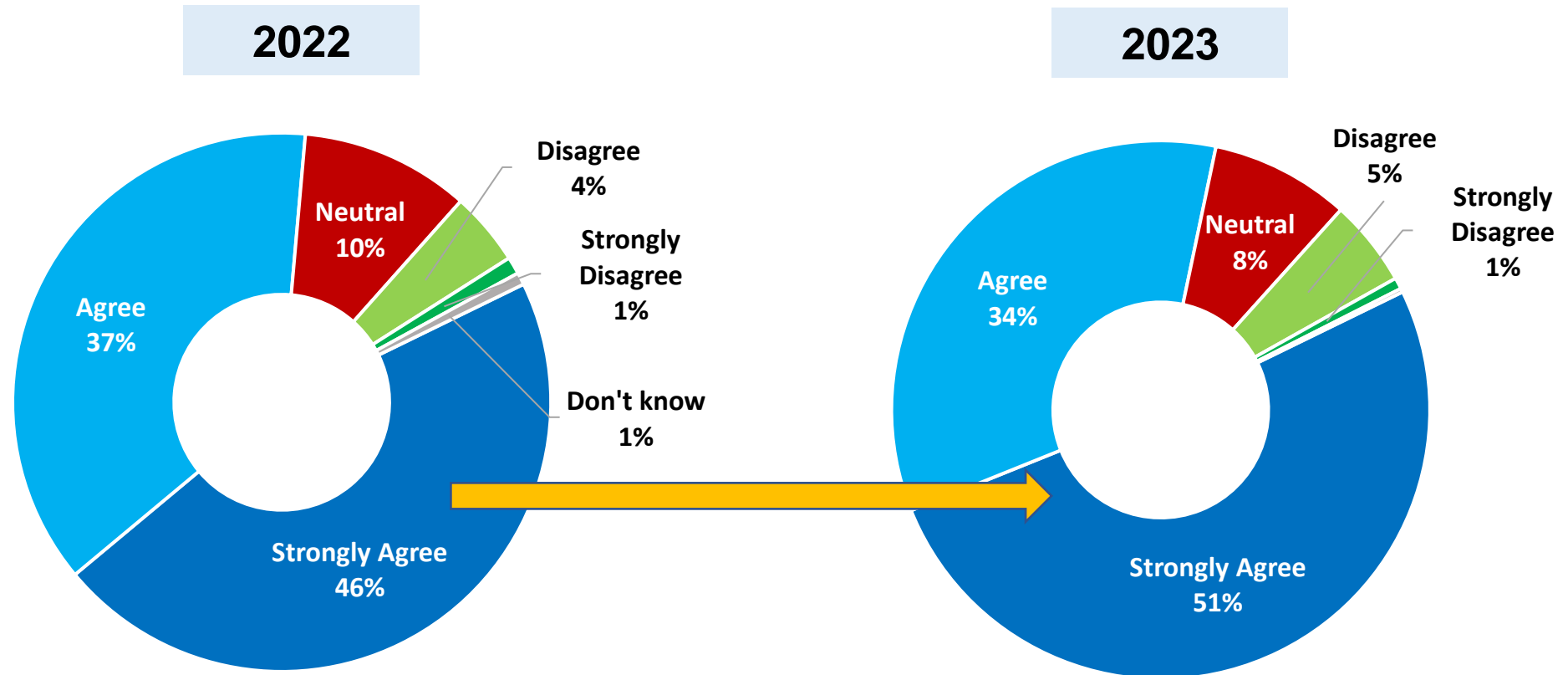


NPS: The Company You Work For

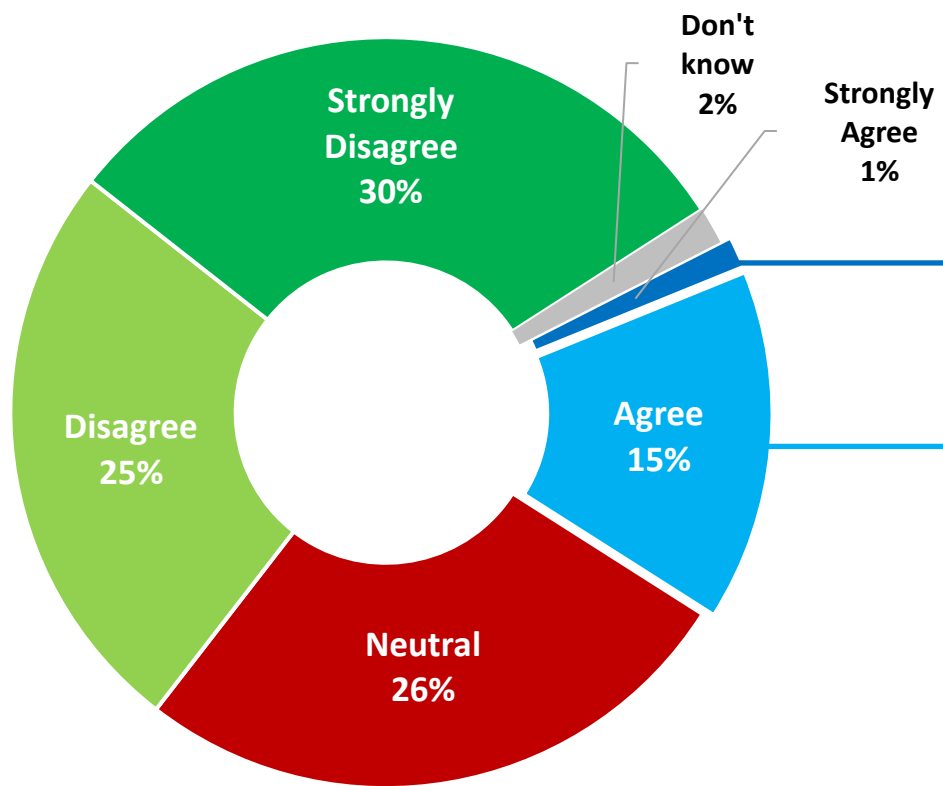


# A Majority of Talent in Radio Feel Especially Taken For Granted

*“Overall, talent in radio is taken for granted.”*

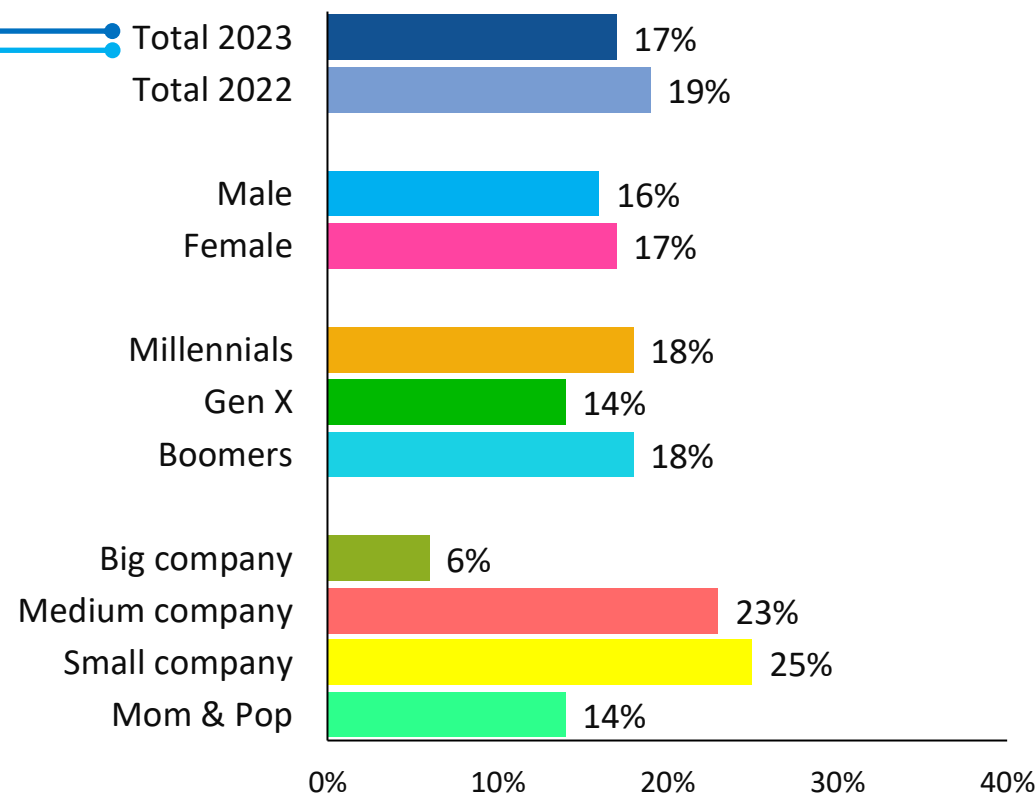


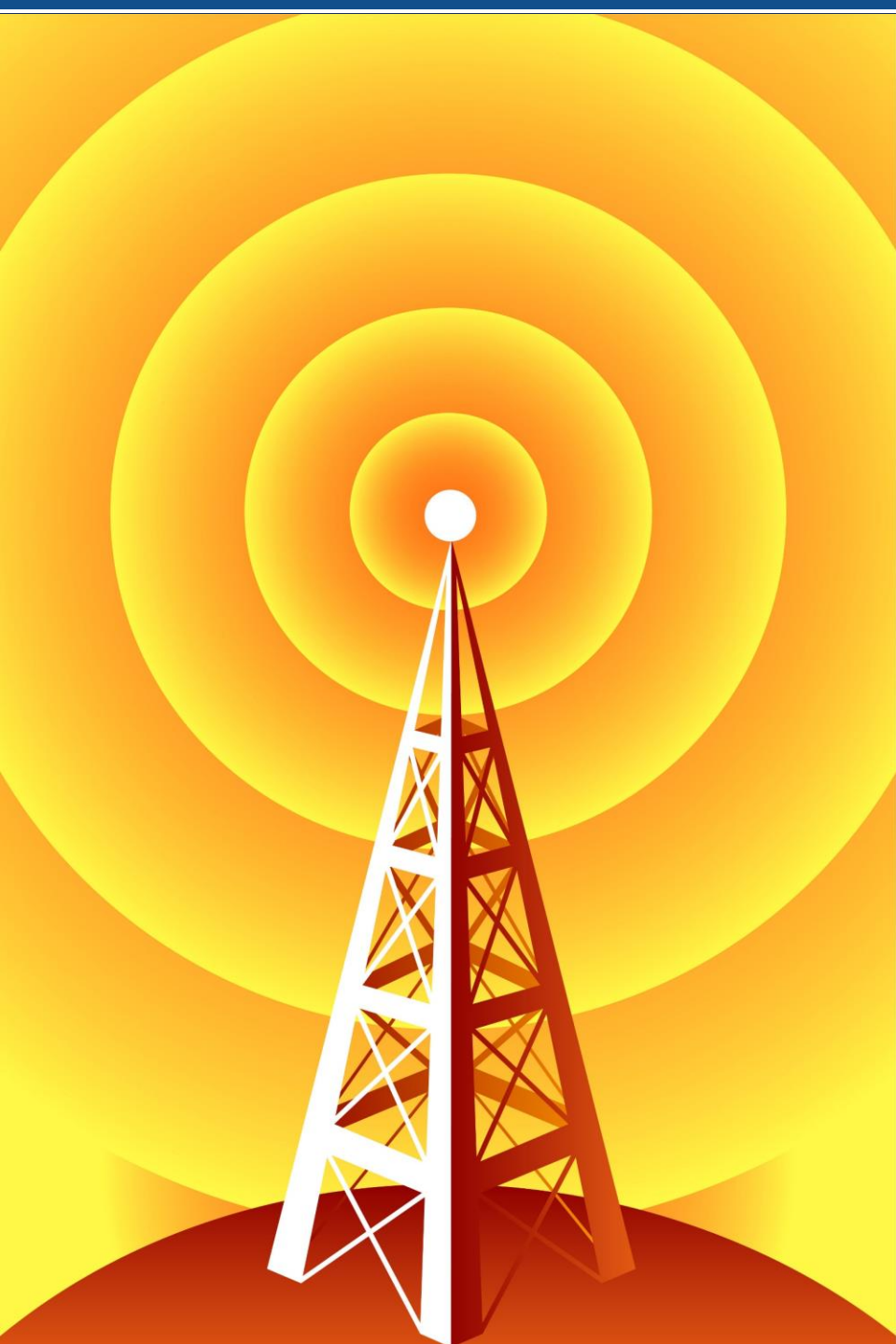
# Most Believe Their Station/Company Are Not Discovering or Developing Air Talent; Medium & Small Companies Are the Exceptions



*"My station/company is doing a good job discovering/developing young talent"*

% Agreement (Strongly Agree + Agree)



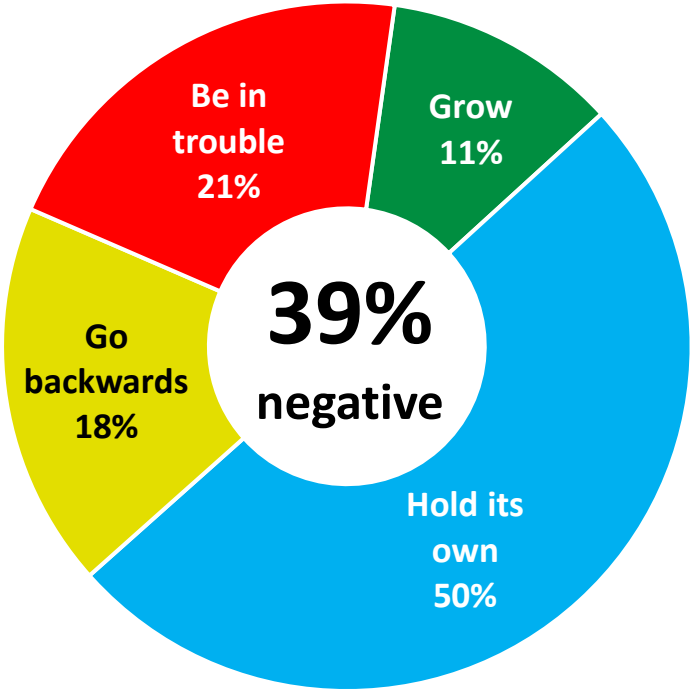


# **The Outlook for Radio**

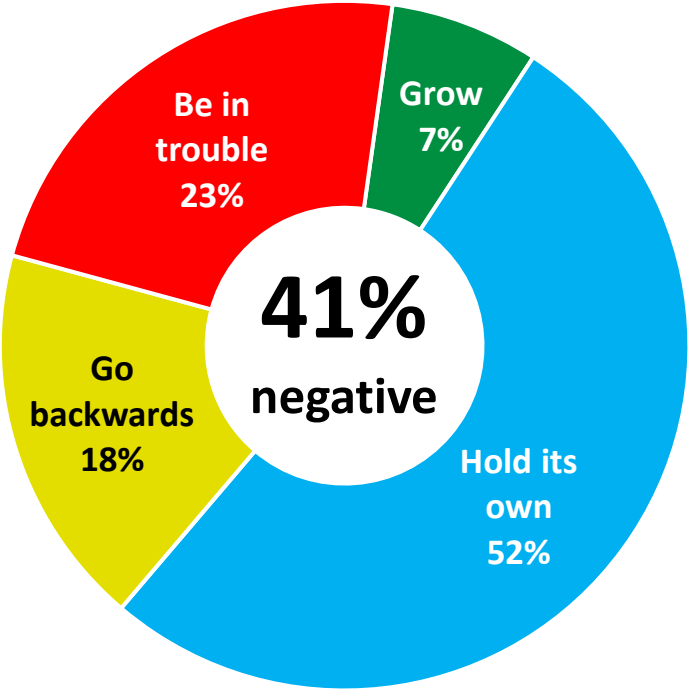
# A Majority Feel Broadcast Radio Will Hold Its Own Over the Next 5 Years, But Few See Much Growth

*“In the next 5 years, you think broadcast radio will:”*

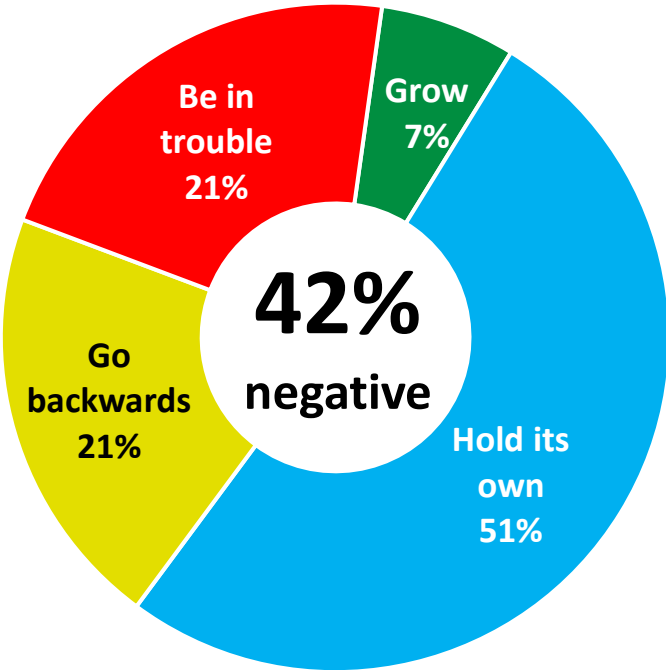
2021



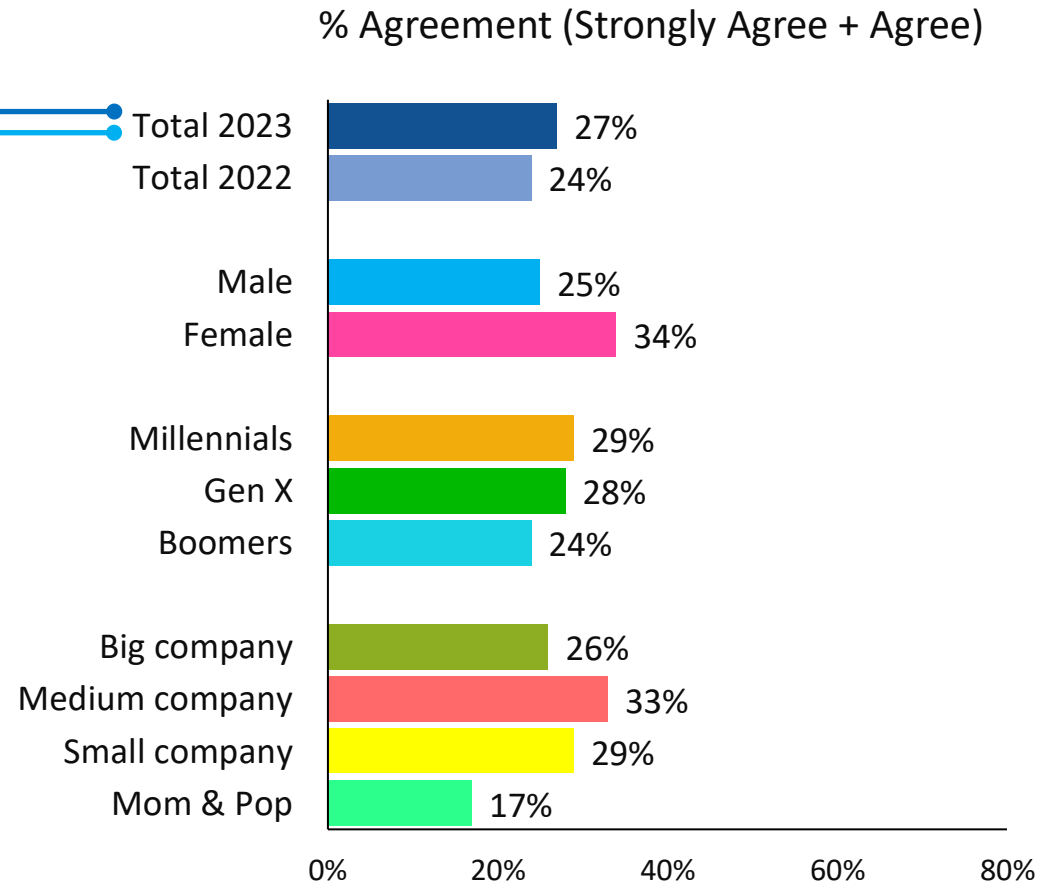
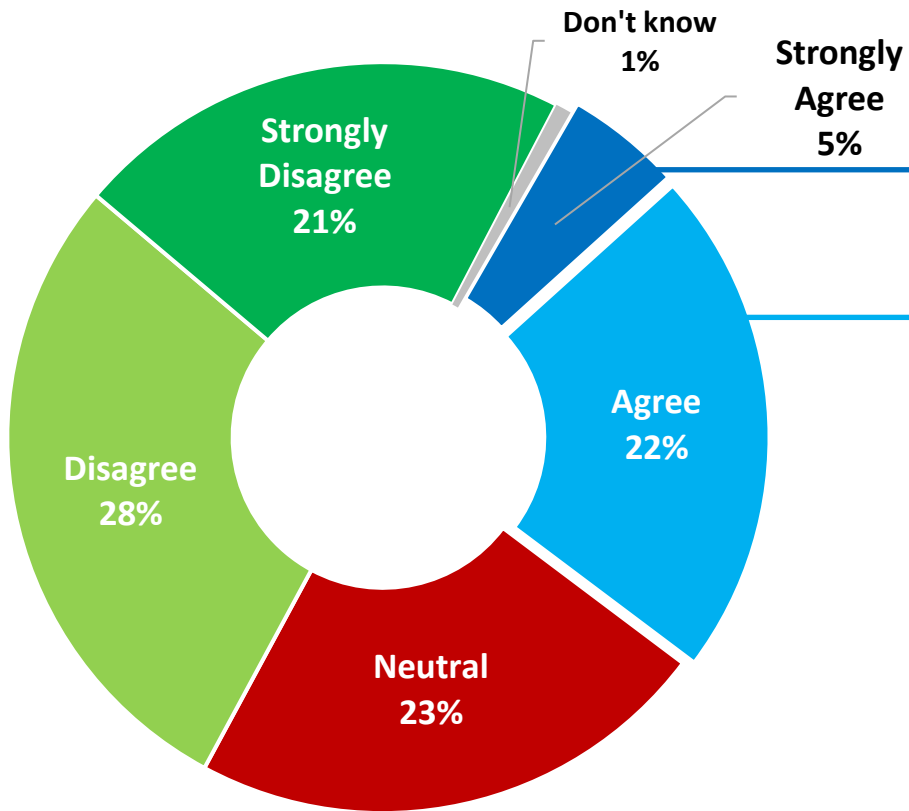
2022



2023



# Just Over One in Four Feels Radio Is Keeping Pace With Audio Competitors Like Spotify and SiriusXM

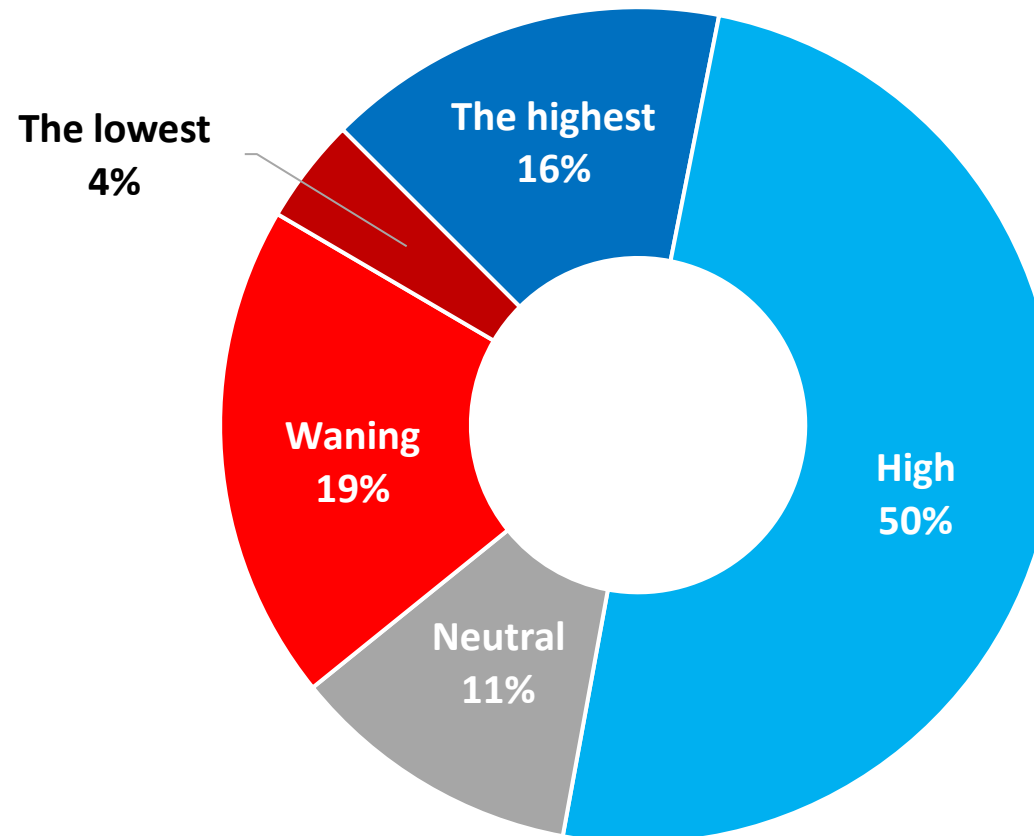


*“Broadcast radio is doing a good job keeping pace with other audio competitors (ex. Spotify, SiriusXM, etc.)”*

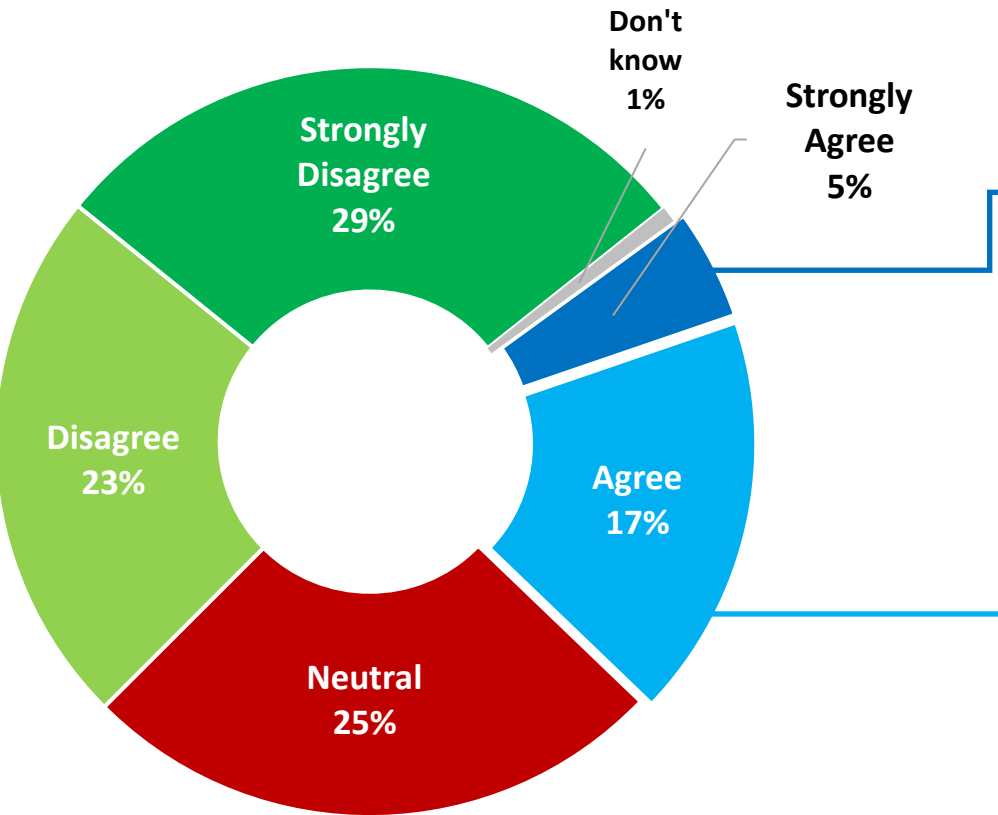
Among On-Air Talent

# Good News: Two in Three Are Still Passionate About Radio

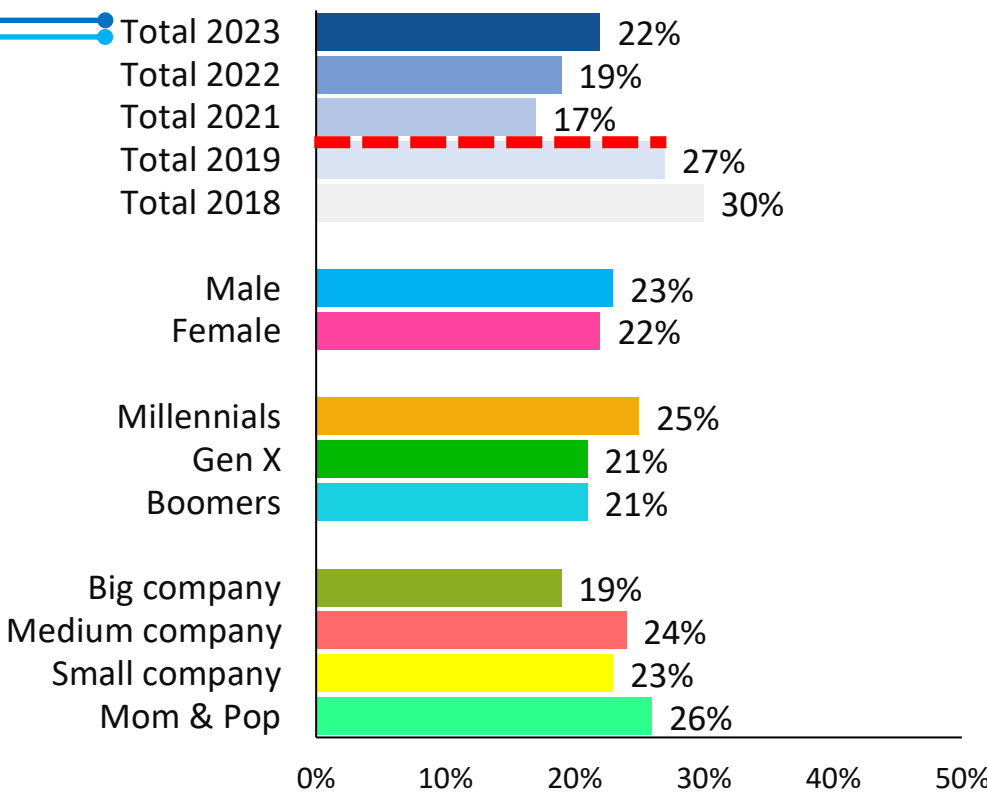
*“Your current passion level for the broadcast radio business is...”*



# Few Highly Recommend Radio as a Career, Especially Since COVID



% Agreement (Strongly Agree + Agree)

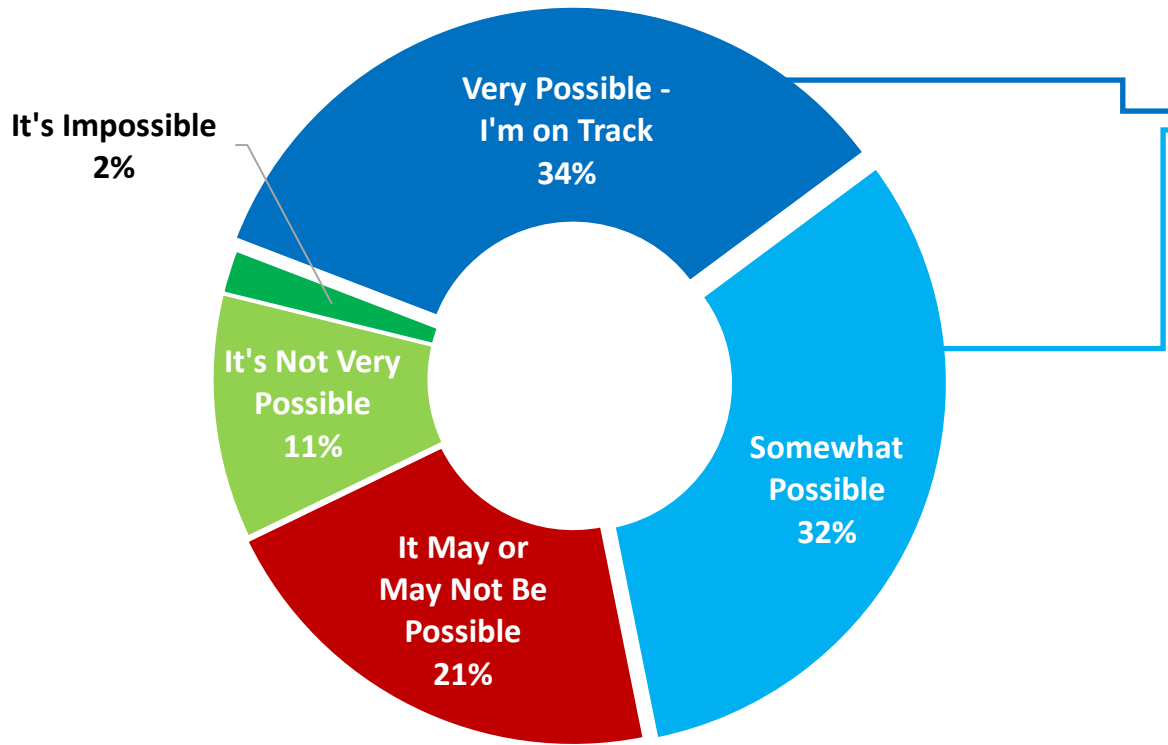


*"I would absolutely recommend a high school student pursue radio as a career"*

Among On-Air Talent

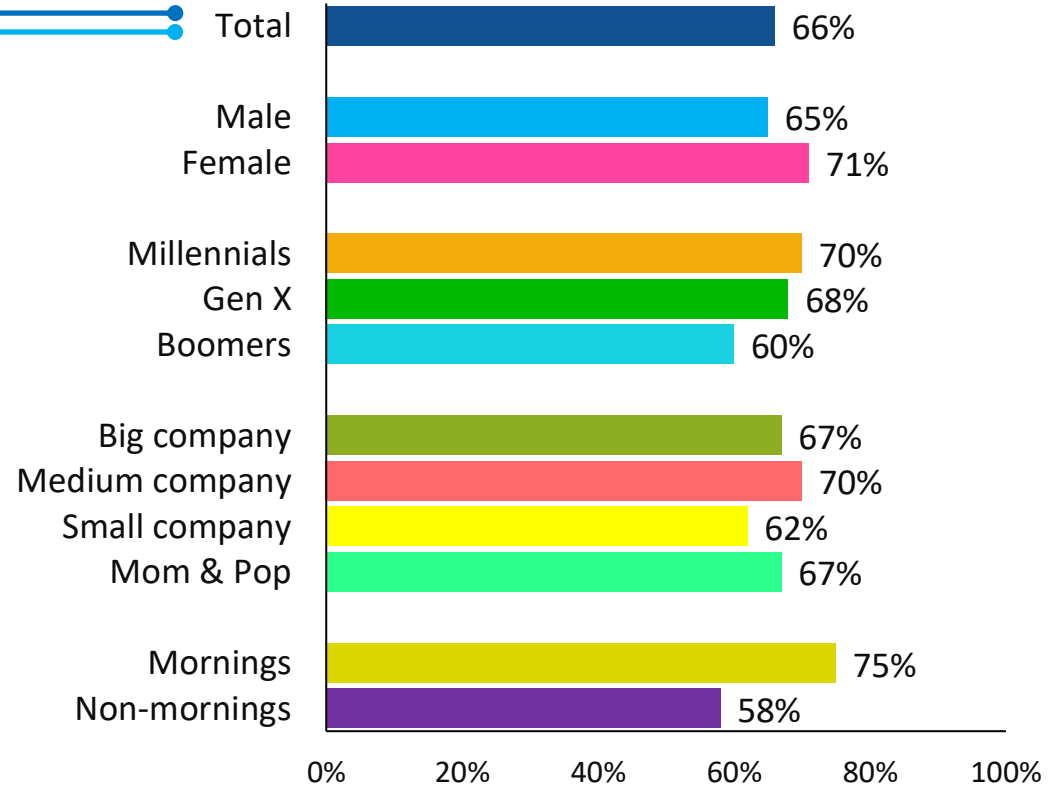


# Two-Thirds Think It's Possible to Achieve Their Radio Dream

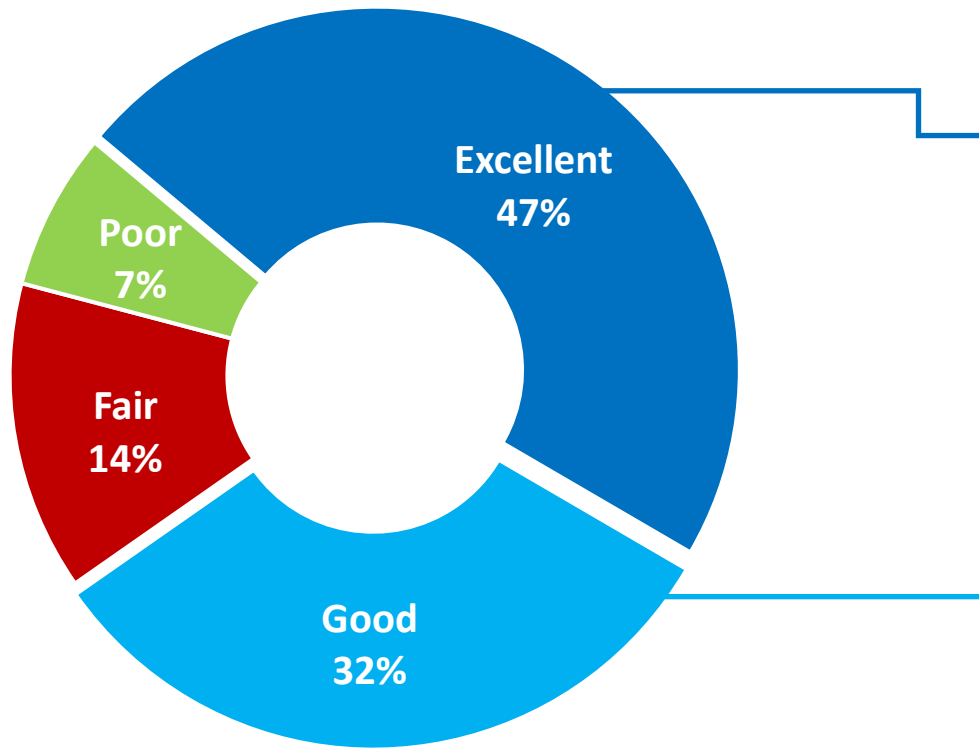


*"How do you feel about the current possibility of achieving your ultimate radio dream – whatever it may be?"*

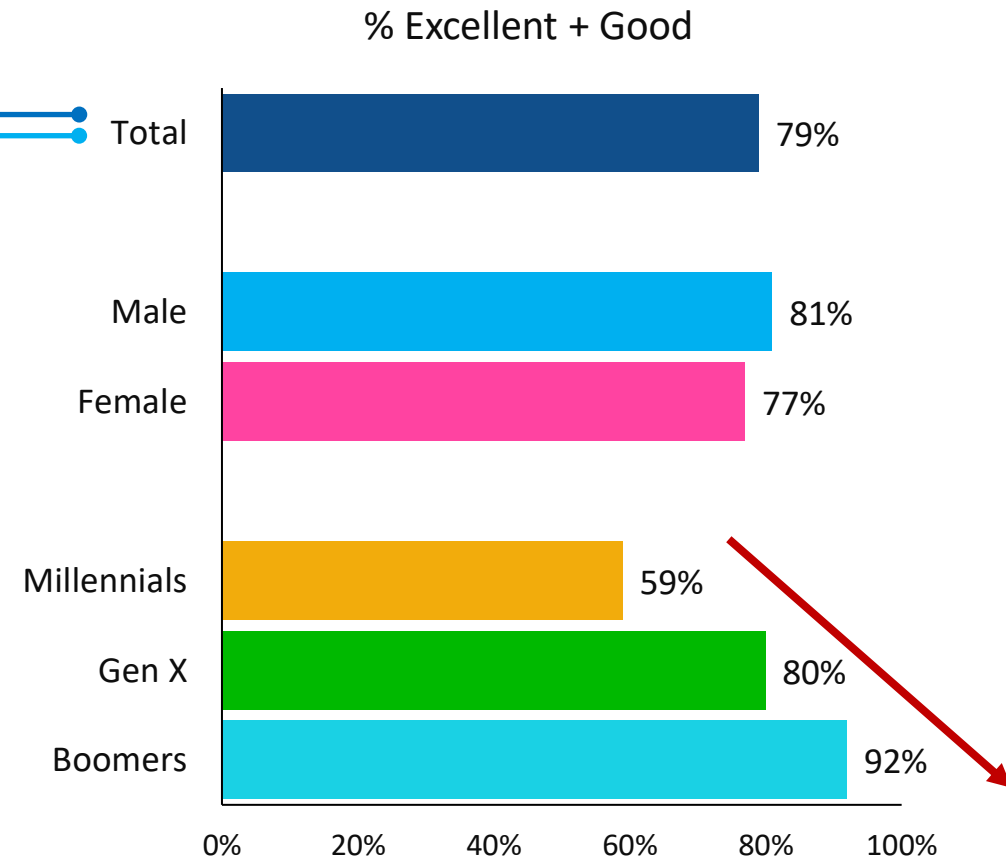
% Possible (Very + Somewhat) to Achieve Ultimate Radio Dream



# Boomers and Gen Xers See The Finish Line But Millennials Are Less Certain They'll Spend Their Entire Career in Radio



*“What do you think are the chances you will spend your entire career working in radio?”*



*“There’s no shortage of people talking about what’s wrong with radio.  
What are the areas in which you feel radio is improving?”*



*“There’s no shortage of people talking about what’s wrong with radio.  
What are the areas in which you feel radio is improving?”*

*“It’s evolving with the changes in technology, utilizing podcasts, videos, and digital marketing to reach the audience.”*

*“We’re starting to realize that we have to be omnipresent, not just on the air but online and in the community.”*

*“I think people are really focusing on local and that’s where radio’s sweet spot is.”*

*“Our stations connect well with the local community we have mainly live dayparts. It think that is improving in many companies.”*

*“Technology is giving us access to more material to share and more ways to share it.”*

*“Realizing that social media platforms and podcasts can be used to increase audience reach.”*

*“The “mom and pop” radio stations are doing a good job catering to the local community.”*

*“I thank God for social media. We had stopped doing phones years before Covid hit and while social media isn’t quite the same, radio has done a decent job of utilizing it.”*

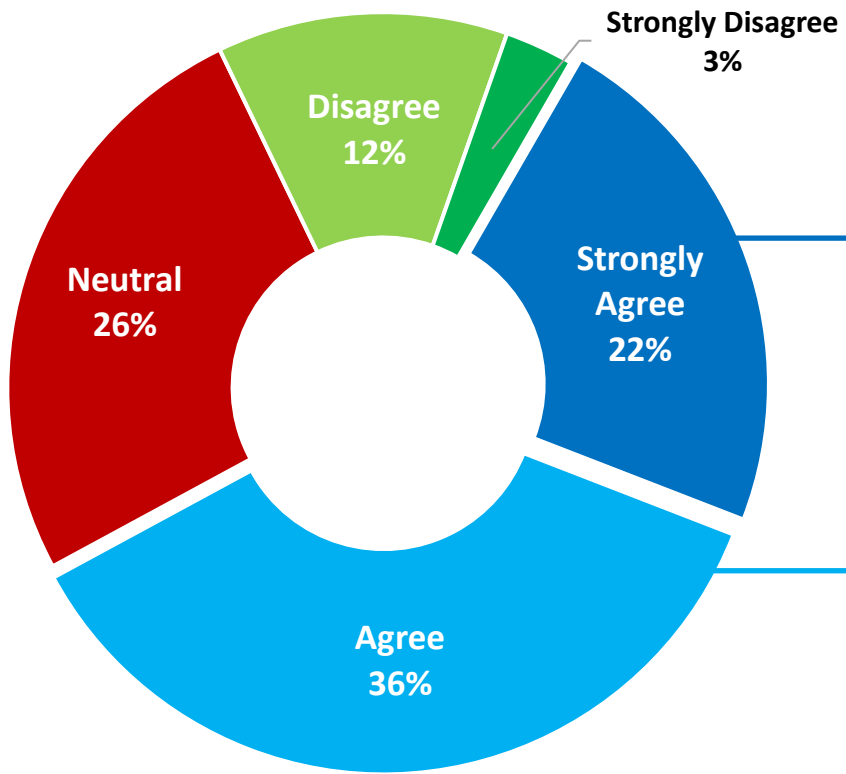
*“I think the smart companies are slowly starting to add some diversity to staff rosters. And I’ve noticed some companies are looking at actually investing in their talent.”*

*“Social media outreach is huge and I think as each day goes on we are getting better at reaching news audiences through out social media platforms.”*

*“Radio is utilizing podcasting and social media to SUPPLEMENT broadcast radio, joinin’ ‘em instead of trying to beat ‘em so to speak”*

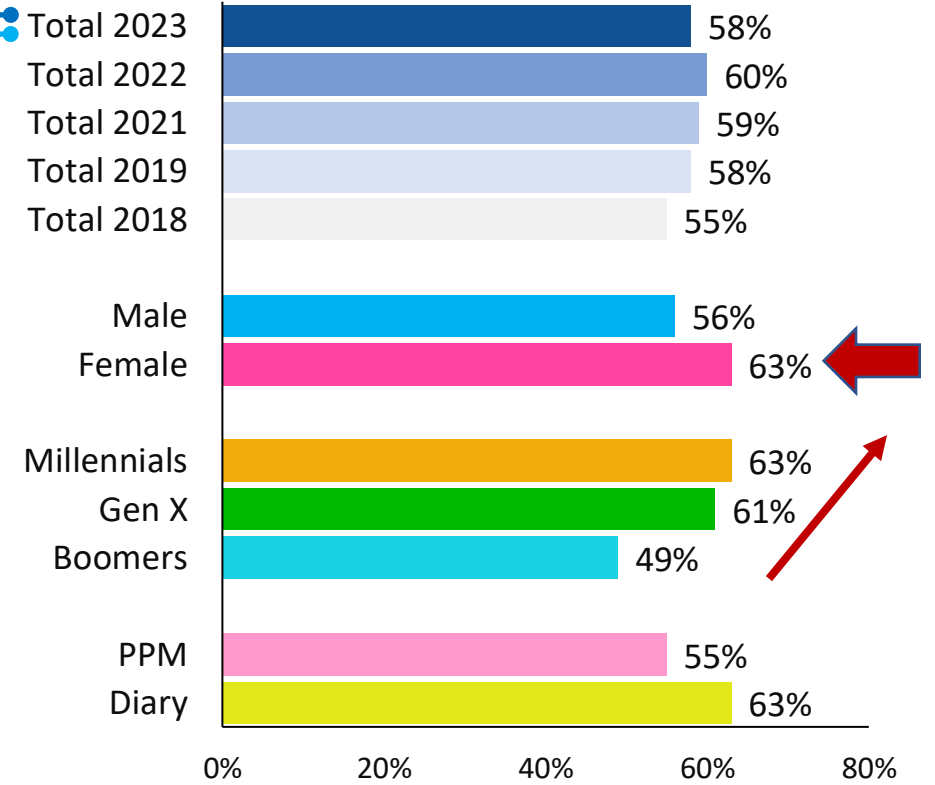


# Angst and Insecurity Persist, Especially Among Women and Millennials

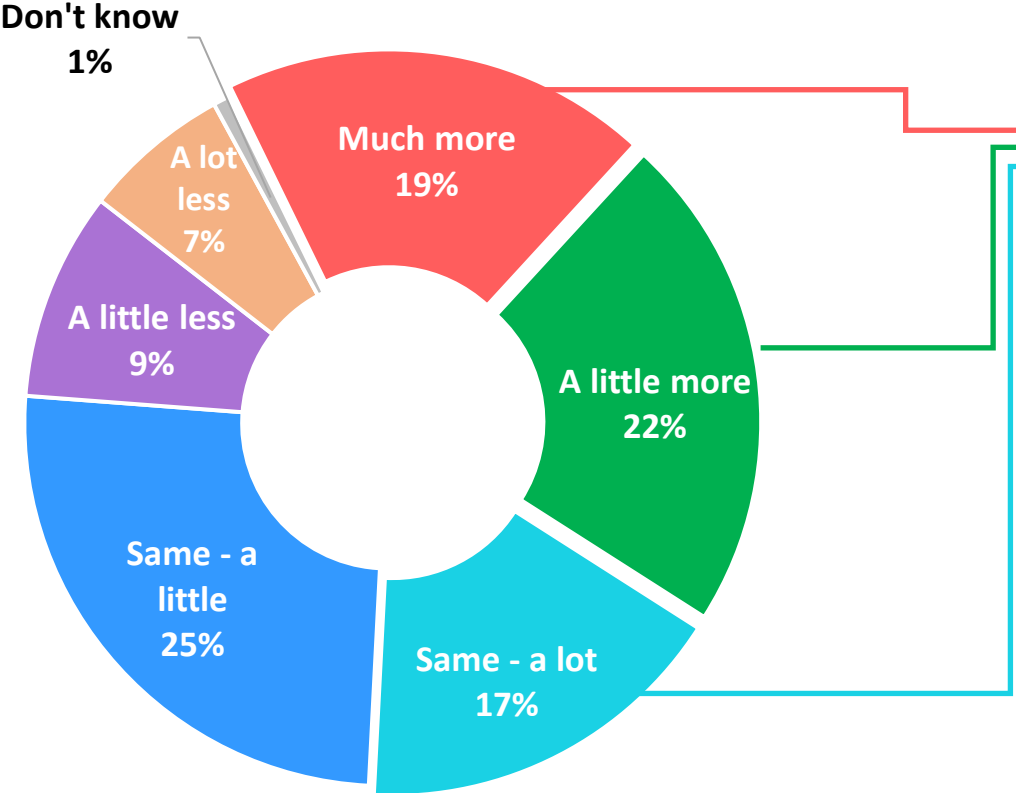


*“As stations employ fewer people, I feel a great sense of angst and insecurity”*

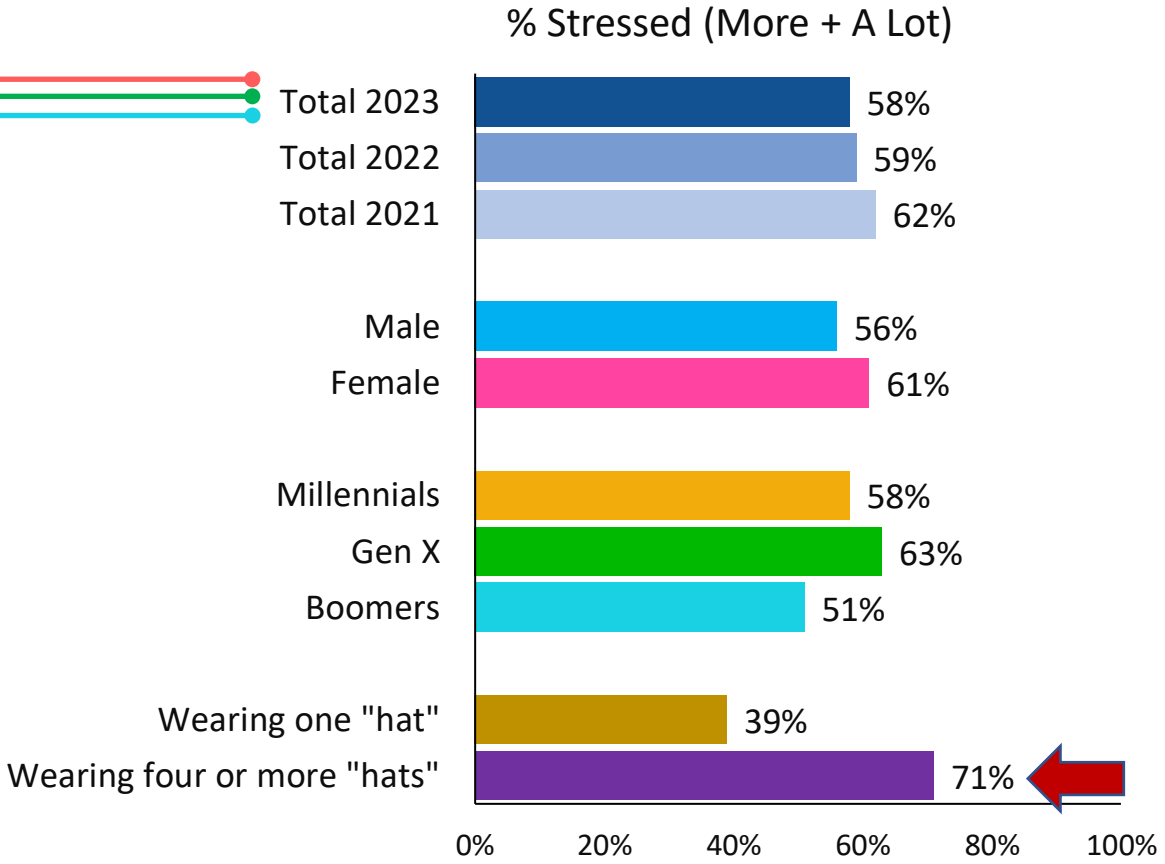
% Agreement (Strongly Agree + Agree)



# Nearly Six in Ten Claim Job Stress, Especially Those Wearing 4+ "Hats"



*"Compared to one year ago, how would you describe your overall level of job stress?"*



*“Thinking about your career in radio and the industry in general, what keeps you awake at night?”*





## *“Thinking about your career in radio and the industry in general, what keeps you awake at night?”*

*“My biggest fear is that no matter how hard I work my career will not end on my own terms.”*

*“The constant layoffs and young people’s lack of interest in radio.”*

*“That at any moment my company could deem me replaceable, and I’d have to start all over again.”*

*“The seeming inability to compete with streaming/podcasting and attract younger listeners.”*

*“Being able to pay my bills and not lose my house.”*

*“AI, poor pay and low staffing are all concerns of mine, but the biggest worry is that too many radio higher-ups don’t bother to try new ideas.”*

*“If I lose my job again but I still don’t have my business up and running.”*

*“20-24 spots an hour. We can’t compete with streaming this way, but we can’t make money otherwise.”*

*“How sexist the industry still is. The industry still has a long way to go with inclusion, sexual harassment and making things equal for everyone.”*

*“The consistently terrible decisions of the Executive Team which caused the stock to plummet.”*

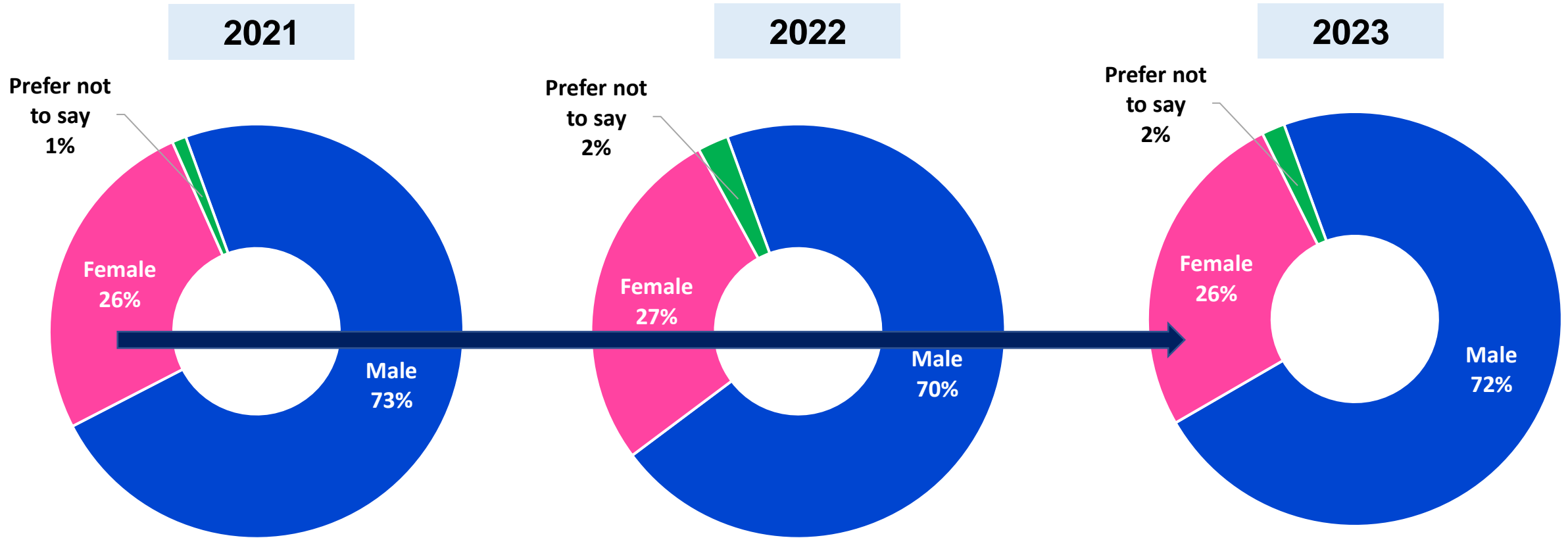
*“The lack of respect for programming and the product overall from sales, management and ownership.”*

*“The fact that people who don’t know the first thing about the daily operation of a radio station are making decisions.”*

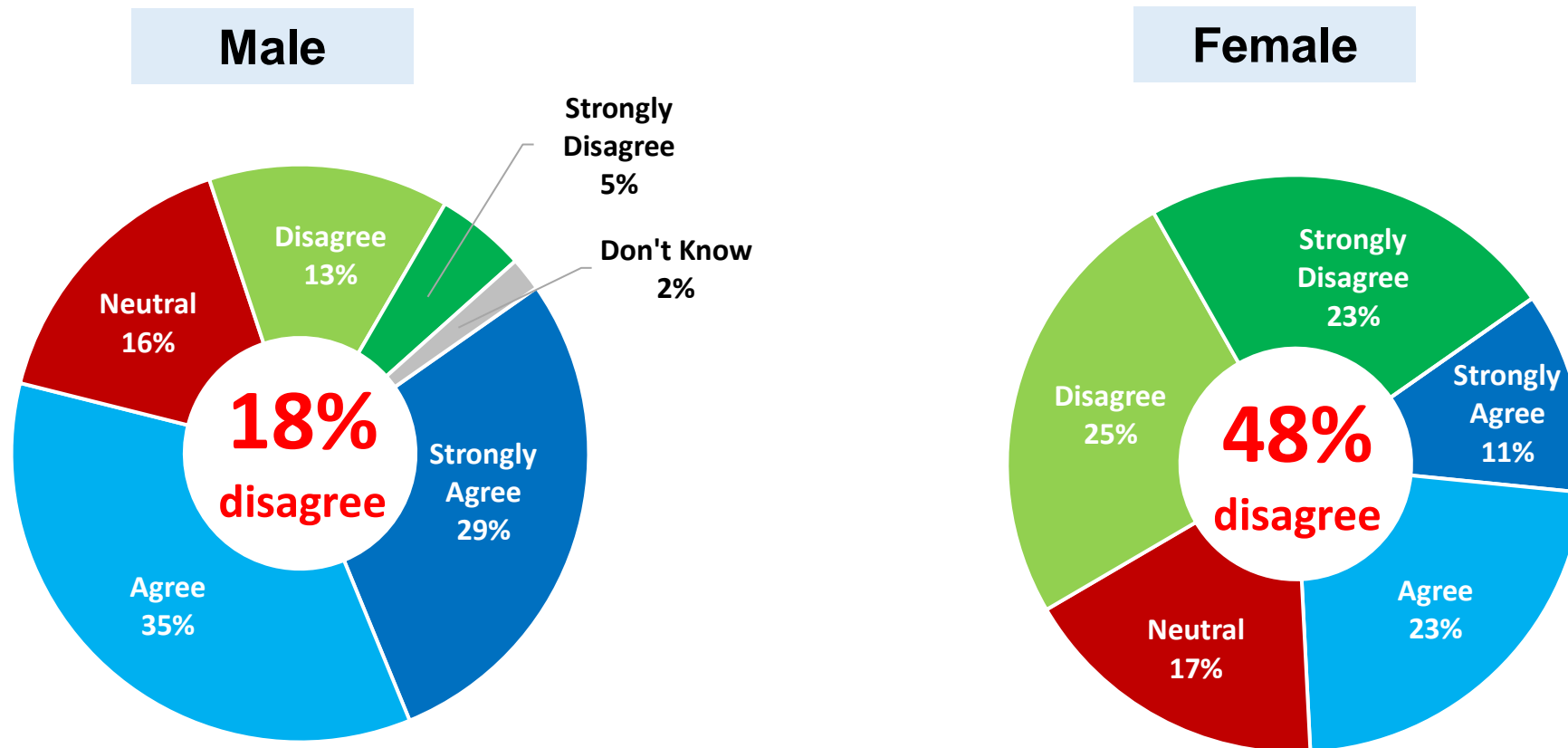
*“The future of our industry. The large companies are in so much debt and with the downturn in the economy it feels like we’re going to see more jobs eliminated. It’s a never-ending cycle.”*



# Only One in Four On-Air Respondents Are Female



# Nearly Half of Women Disagree There Is Gender Equality For Advancement – More Than Twice That of Men



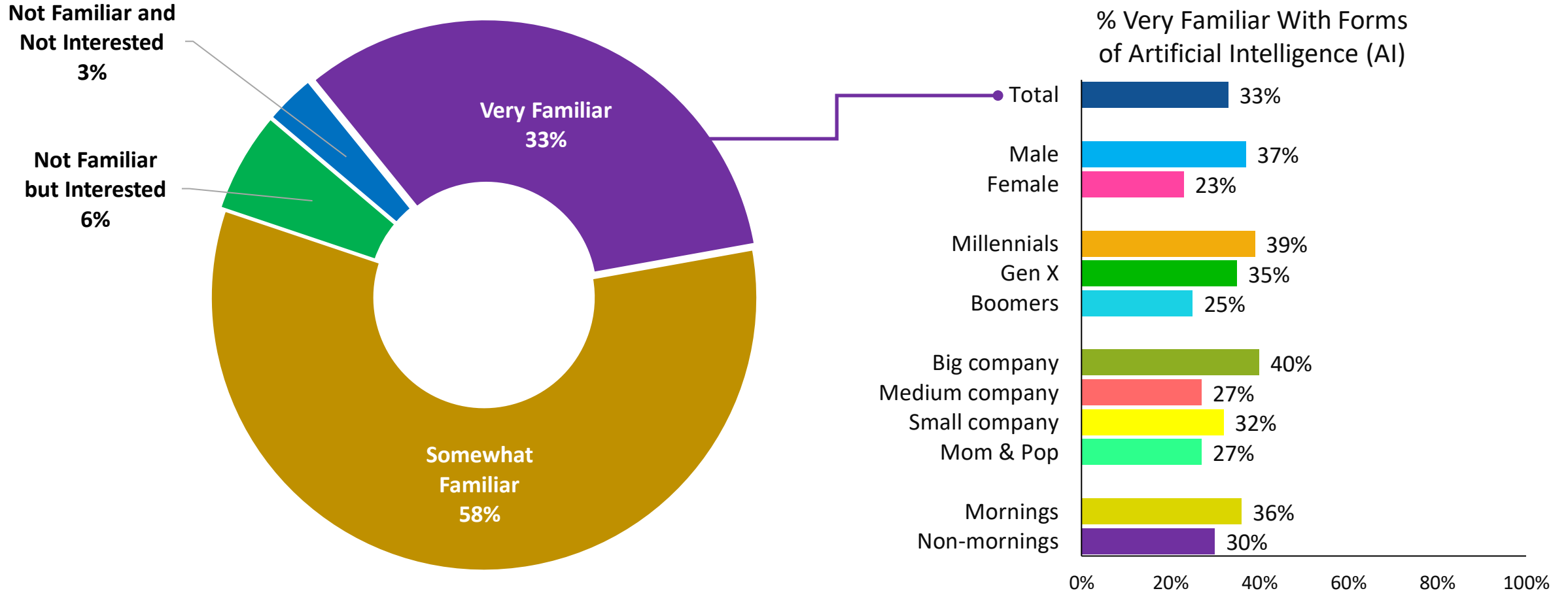
*“Women have as good a chance as men to advance in the air studio”*

Among On-Air Talent



# The AI Conundrum

# Radio Talent Are Well Familiar With AI

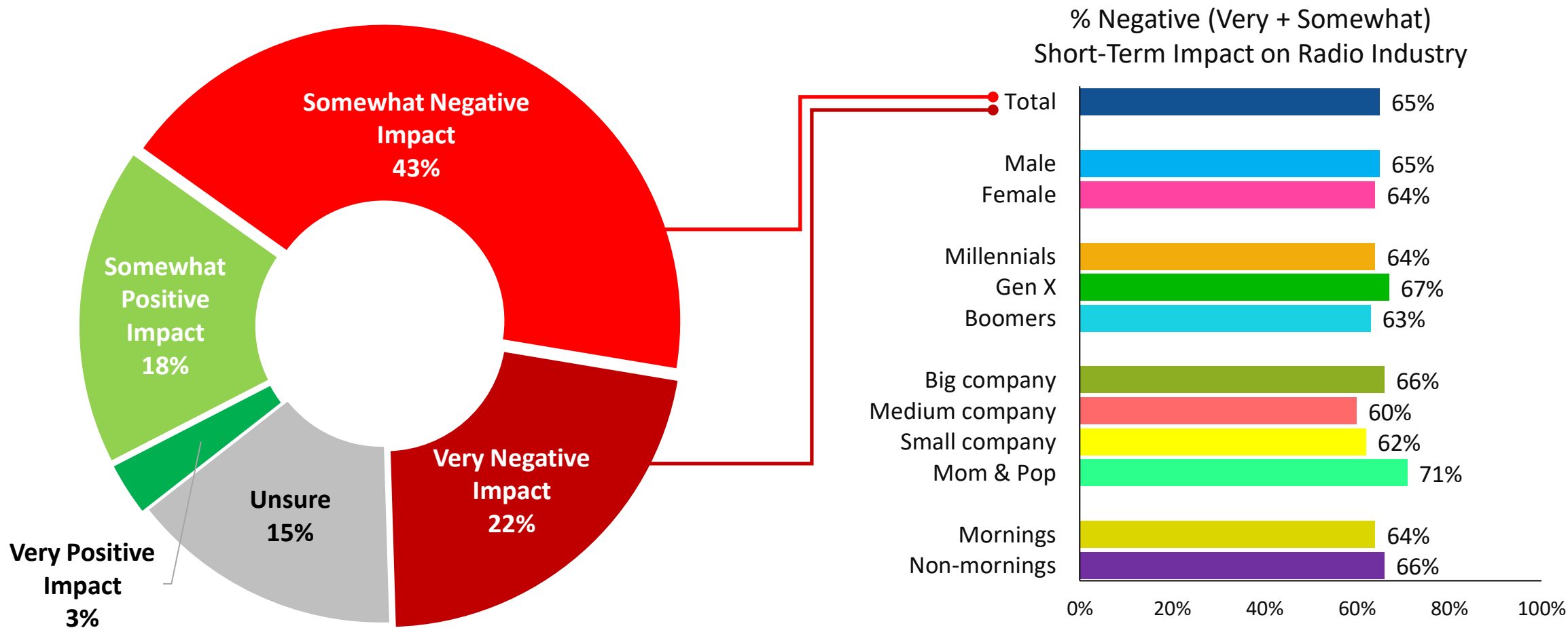


*“AI applications can be used in various forms, including creating realistic images, cloning voices, writing copy, and organizing content.*

*In general, are you familiar with these (and/or other) forms of AI?”*

Among On-Air Talent

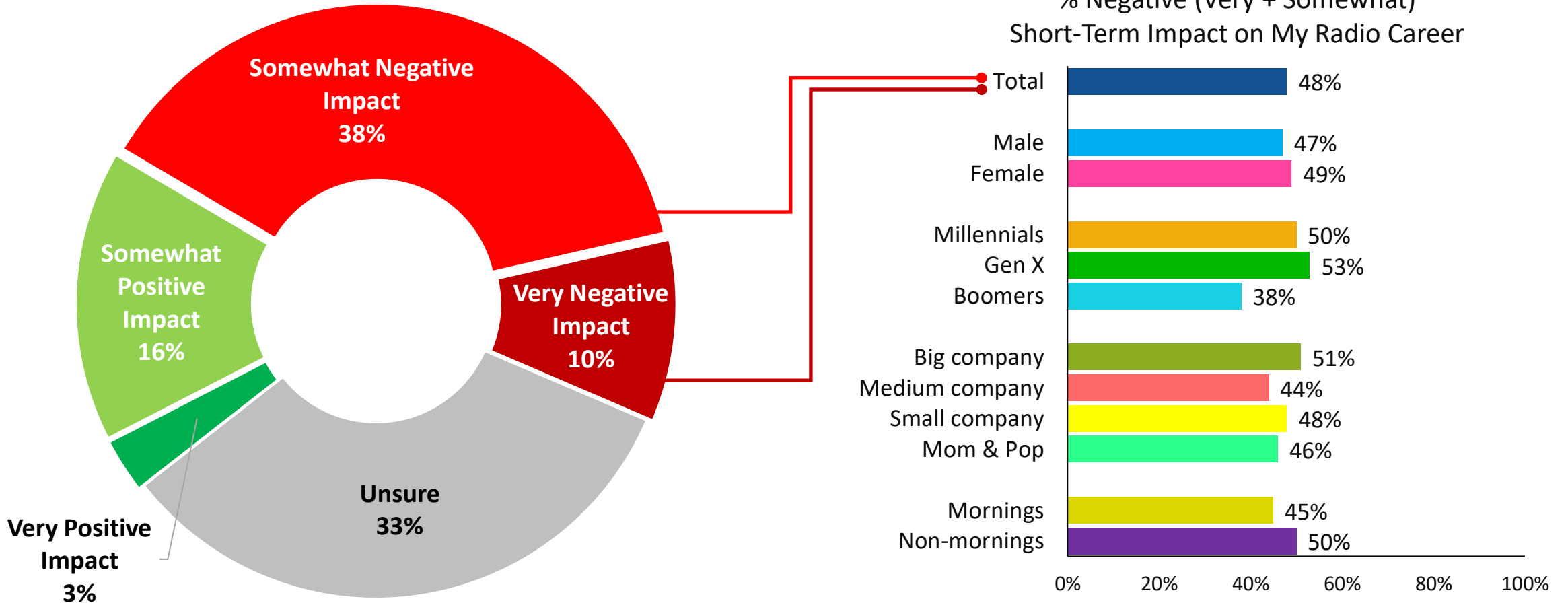
# Nearly Two-Thirds Lean Negative About AI's Impact on Radio



*“What best represents your opinion about AI (regarding the radio industry)?  
In the short term (that is, within the next year or two), I expect AI will generally have a....”*

Among On-Air Talent Familiar With AI

# Nearly Half Believe AI Will Have a Negative Short-Term Impact on Their Radio Careers

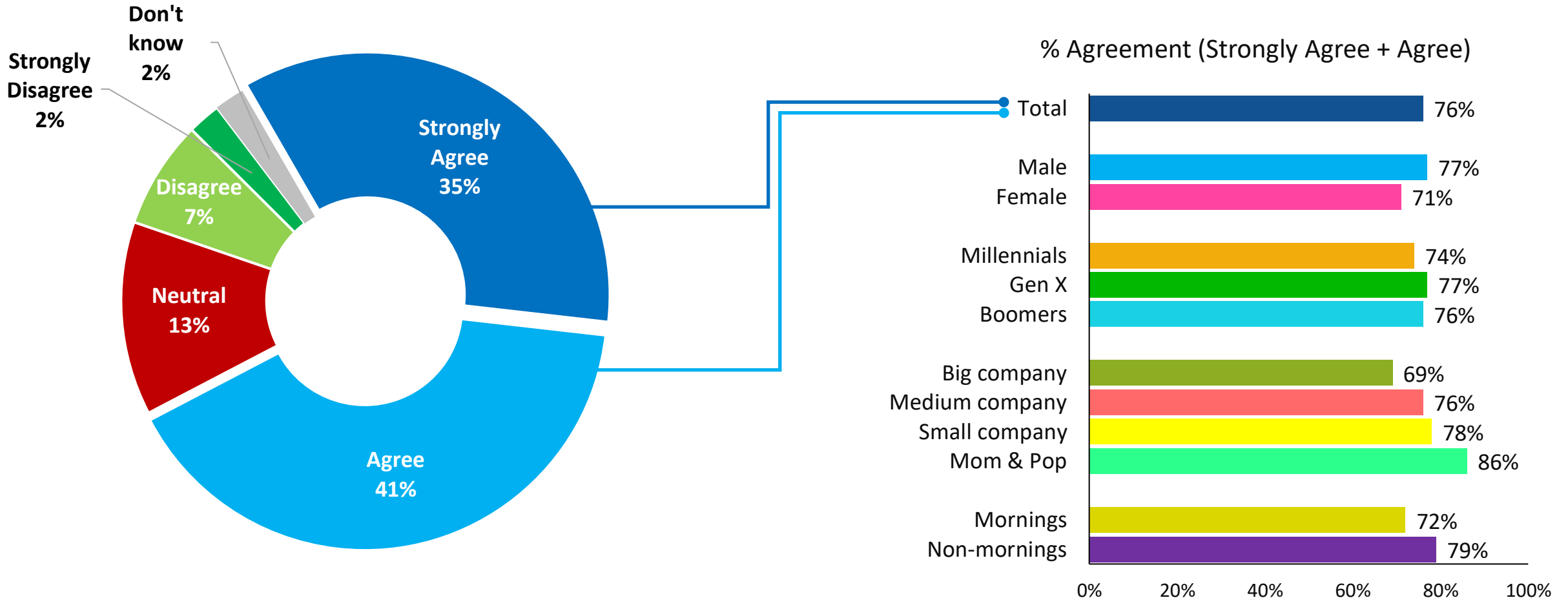


*“What best represents your opinion about AI and your radio career.  
In the short term (that is, within the next year or two) I expect AI will generally have a....”*

Among On-Air Talent Familiar With AI



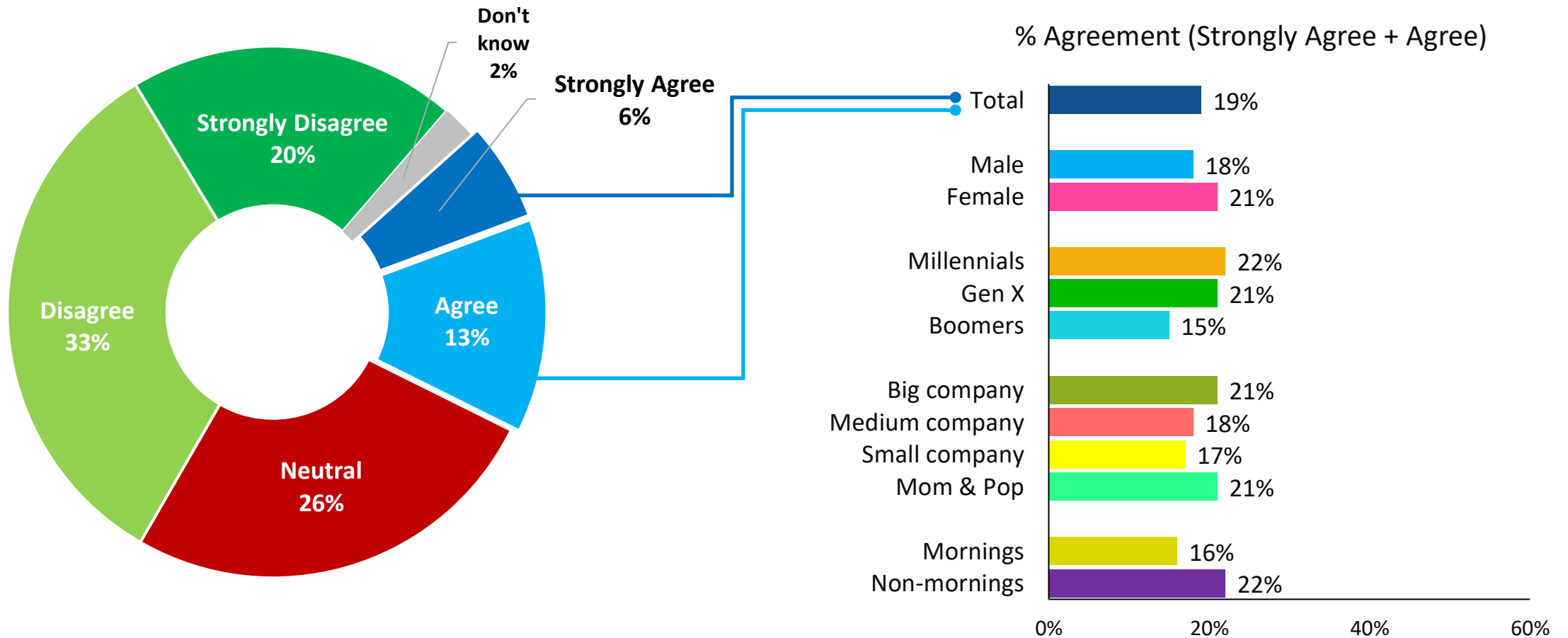
# A Big Concern About AI? Radio Job Losses



*"I'm personally concerned that AI technology will lead to many more on-air radio jobs being lost"*

Among On-Air Talent Familiar With AI

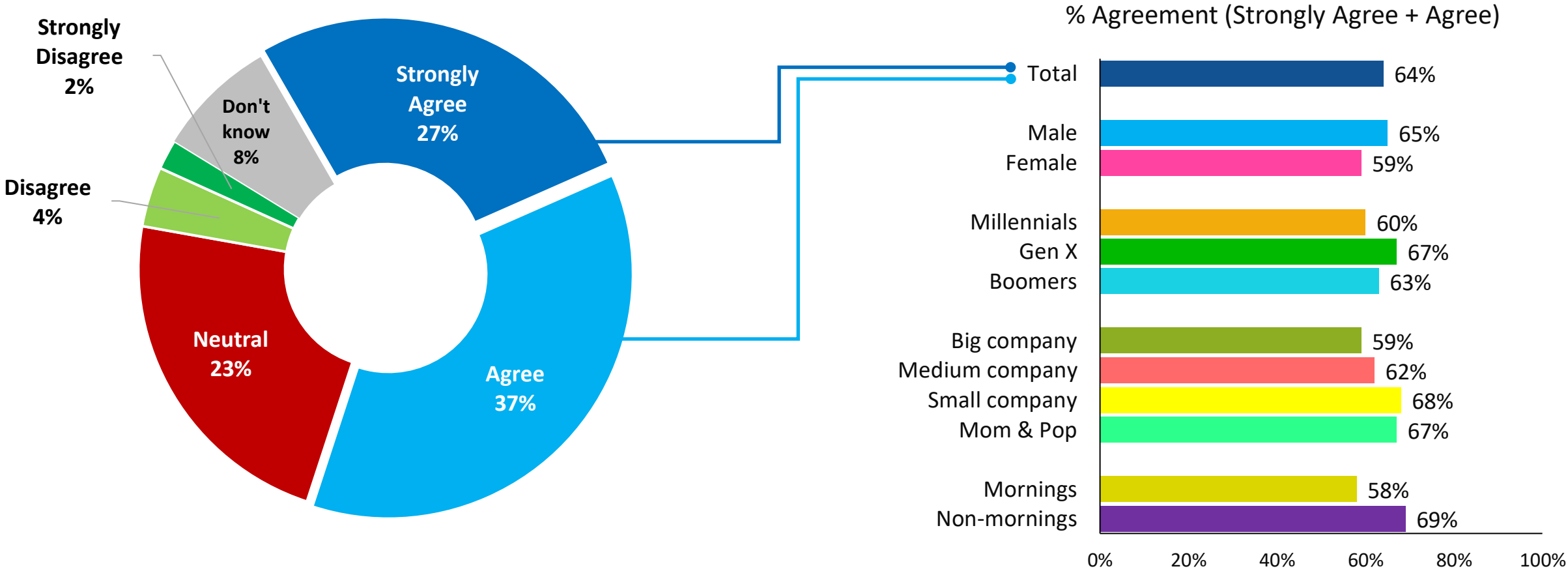
# Only One-Fifth Fear Losing Their Jobs To AI



*"I often fear losing my job to AI"*

Among On-Air Talent Familiar With AI

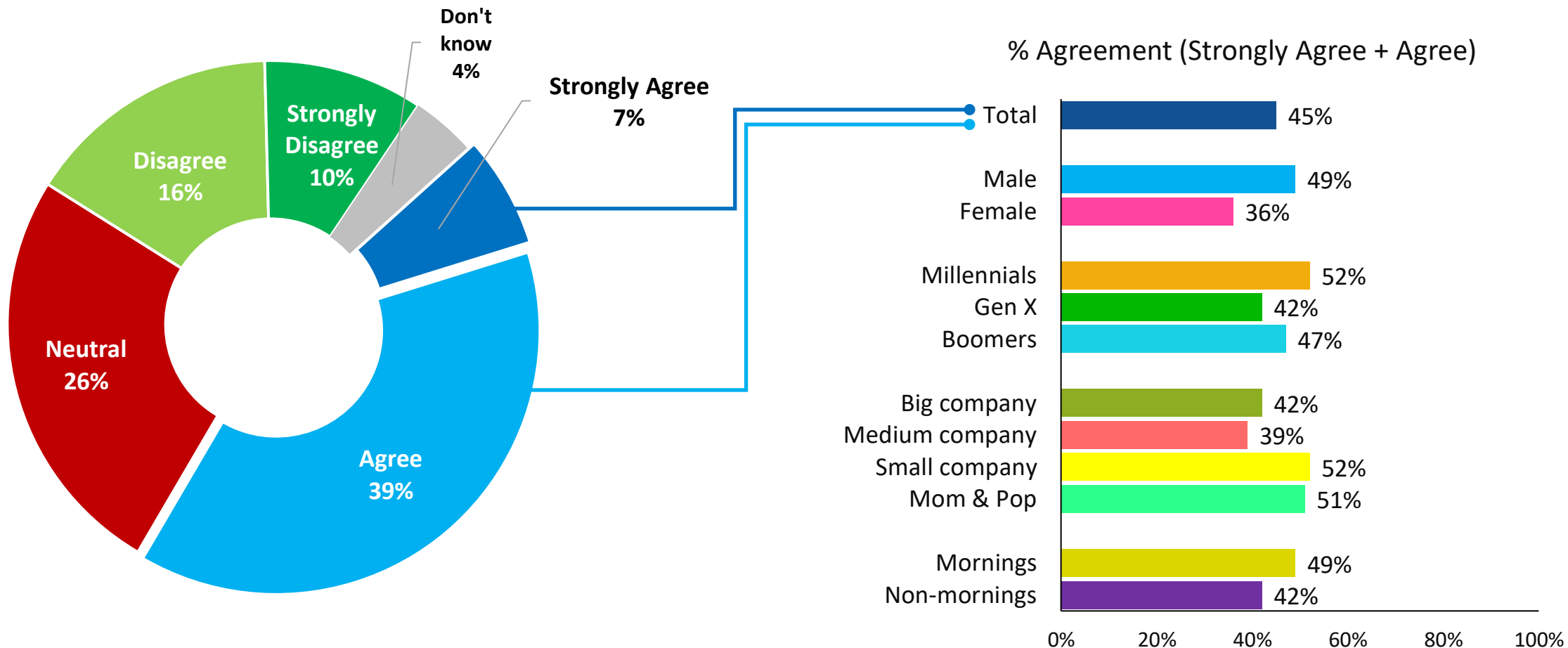
# Nearly Two-Thirds Believe Some Radio Companies Are Moving Too Quickly On AI



*“Some radio companies are moving too quickly with AI”*

Among On-Air Talent Familiar With AI

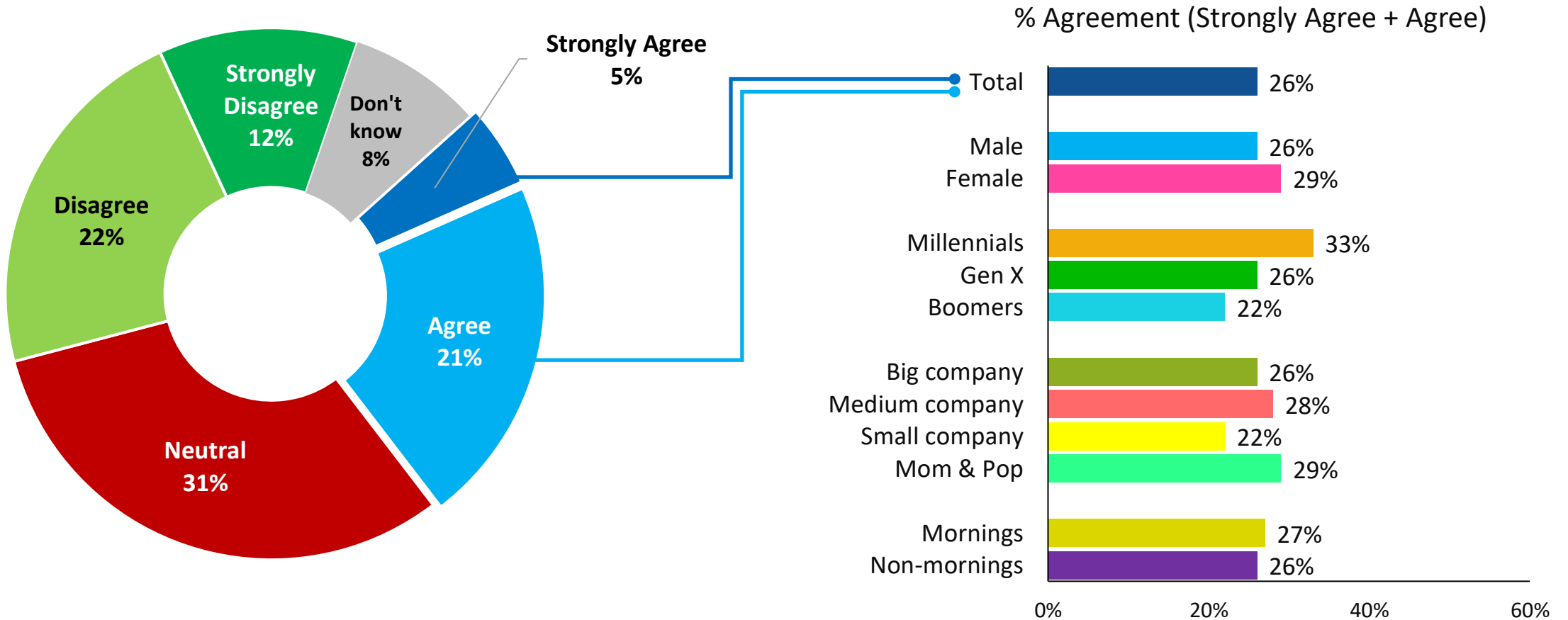
# An Upside of AI? According to Nearly Half, Job Efficiencies



*"I can see how AI would lead to efficiency in getting my job done"*

Among On-Air Talent Familiar With AI

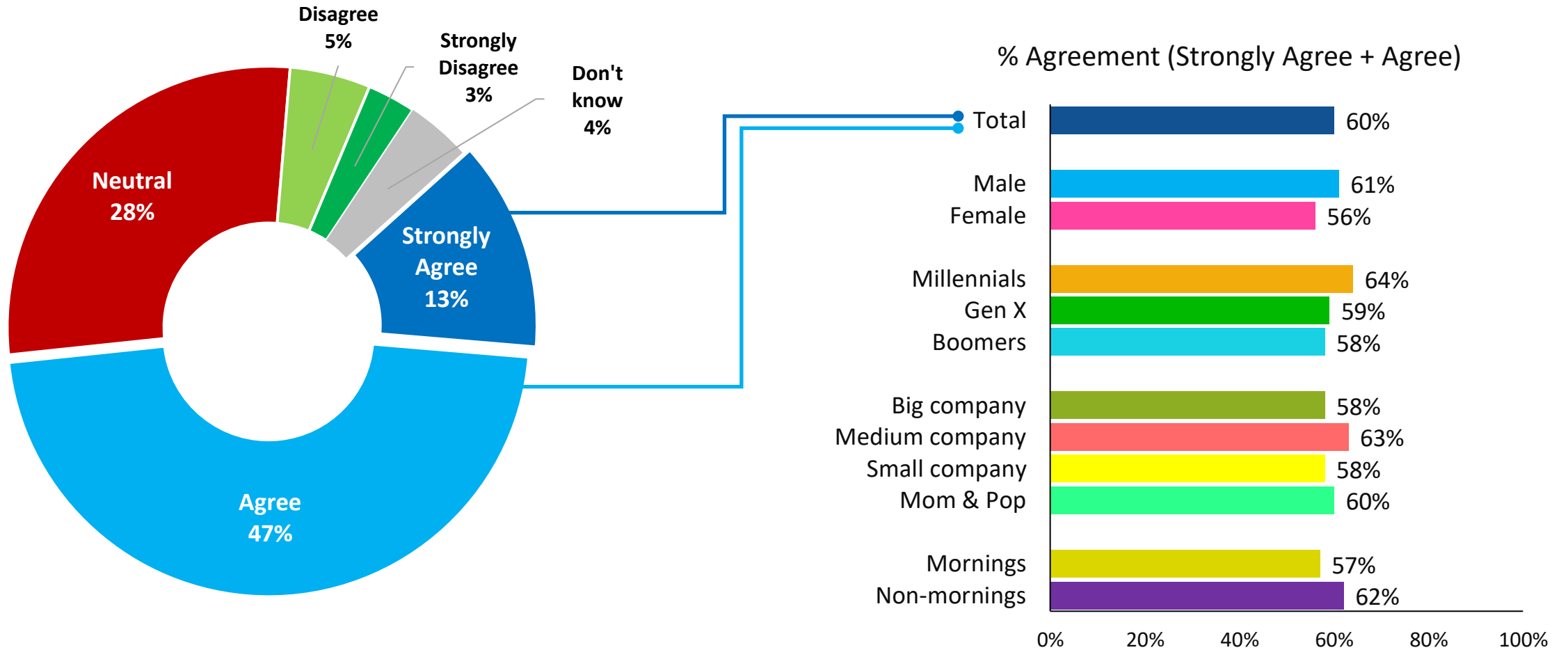
# One in Four Say AI Could Help Build Their Personality Brands



*“AI technology could be a way for me to build my personality brand”*

Among On-Air Talent Familiar With AI

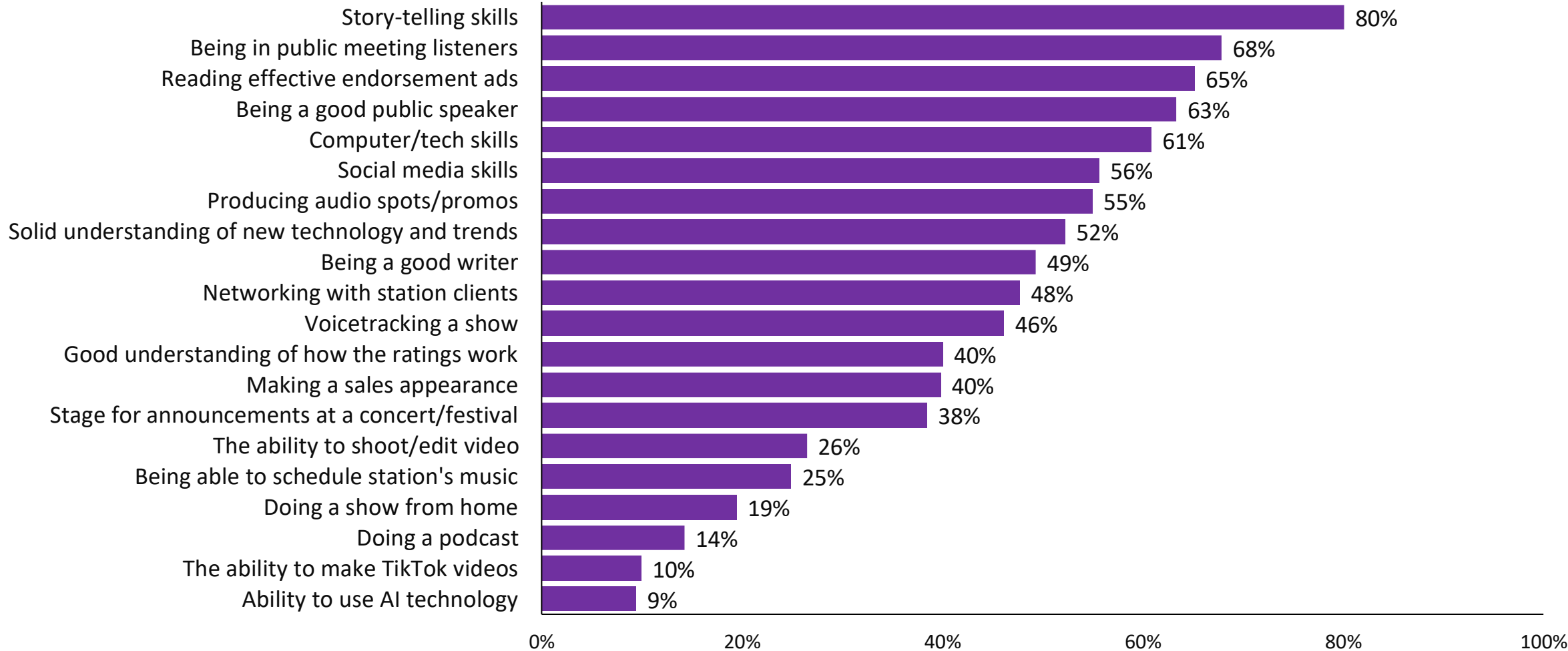
# Six in Ten Express Confidence They Can Adapt to AI



*"I believe I am adaptable enough to make AI work for my career"*

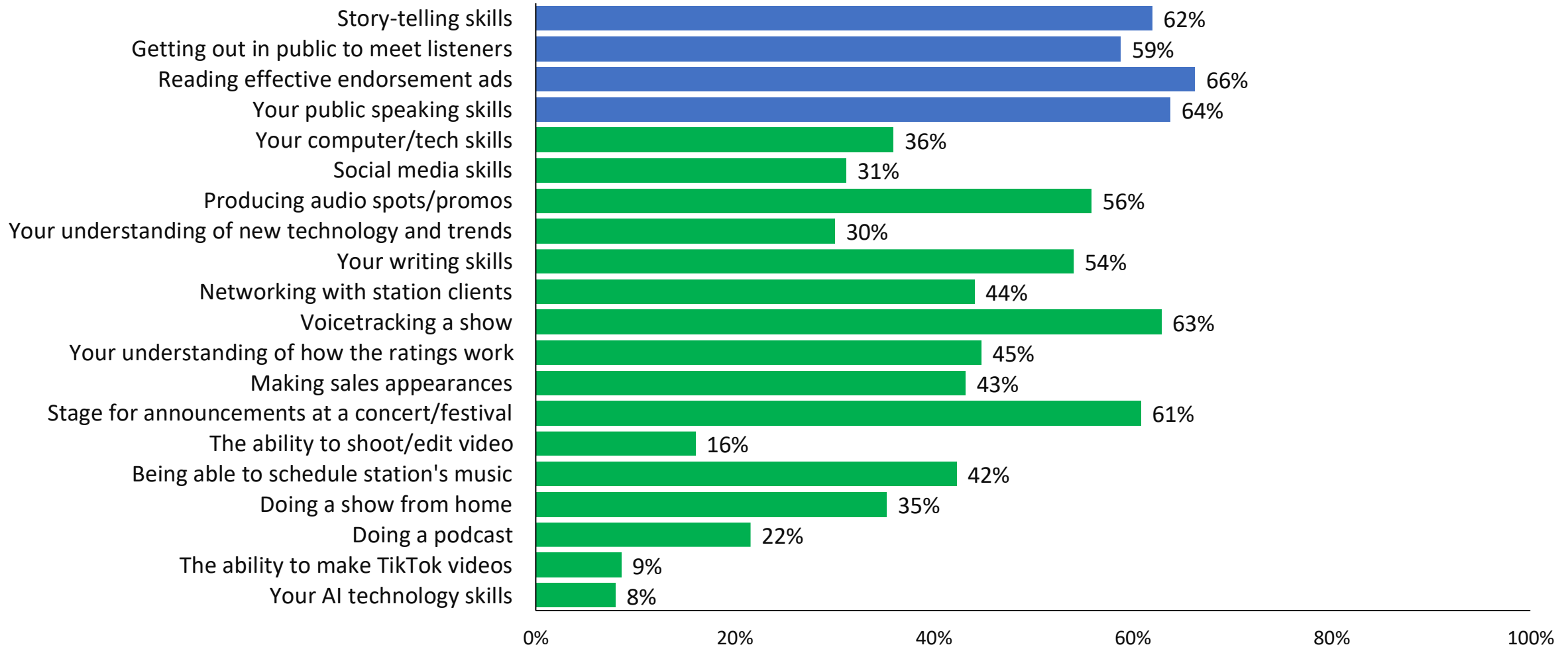
Among On-Air Talent Familiar With AI

# Very Important Skills for Being Successful on the Air in 2023



Among On-Air Talent, % who say each skill is "very important" to being successful on the air

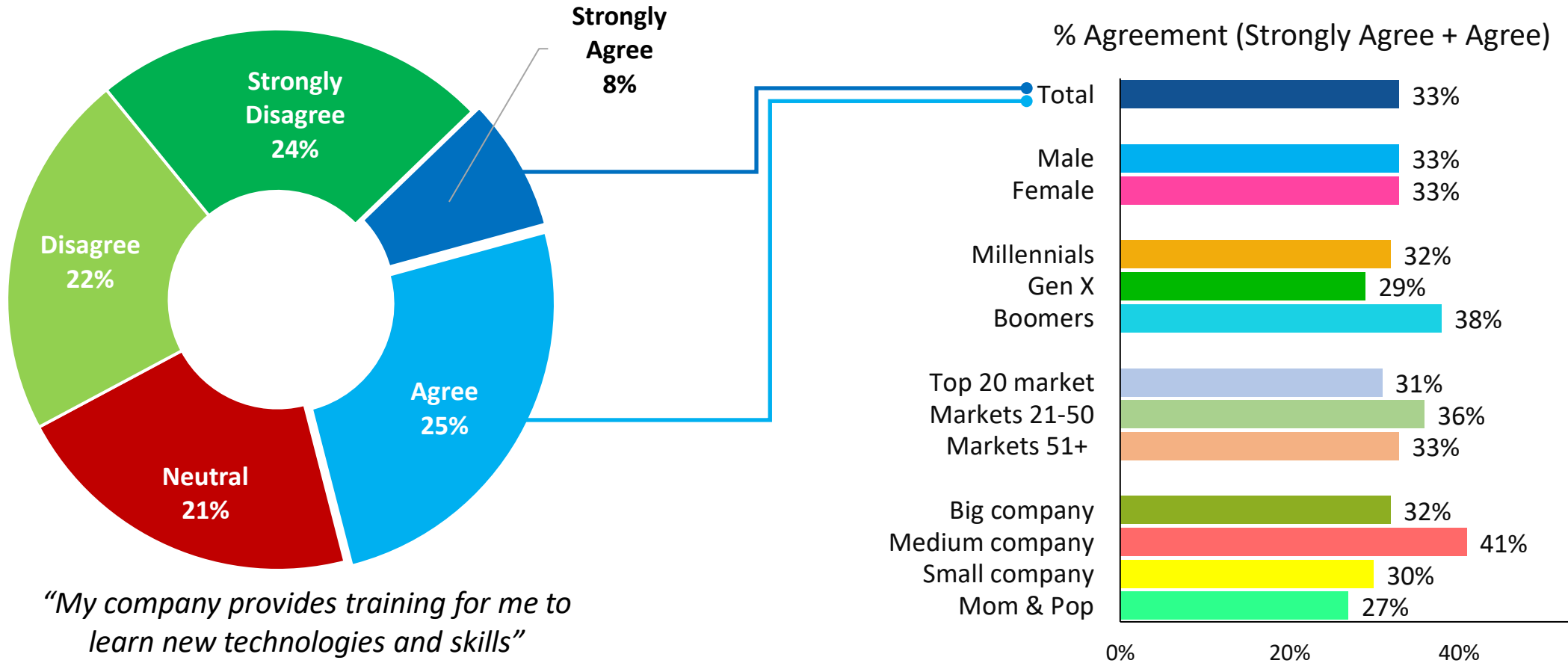
# Self-Rated Skills for Being Successful on the Air



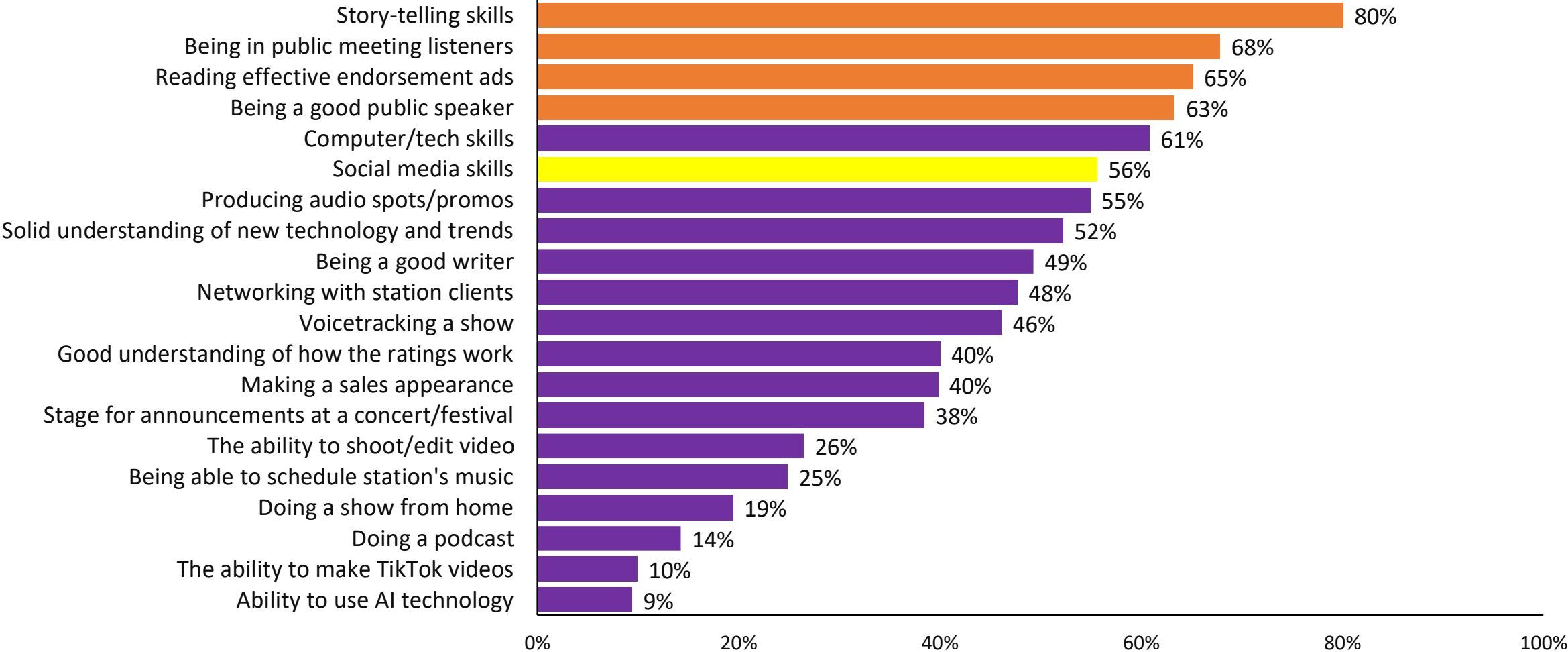
Among On-Air Talent, % who rate themselves as "excellent" for each skill/ability  
In order of Total



# Only One in Three Says They Receive Training to Learn New Technologies and Skills

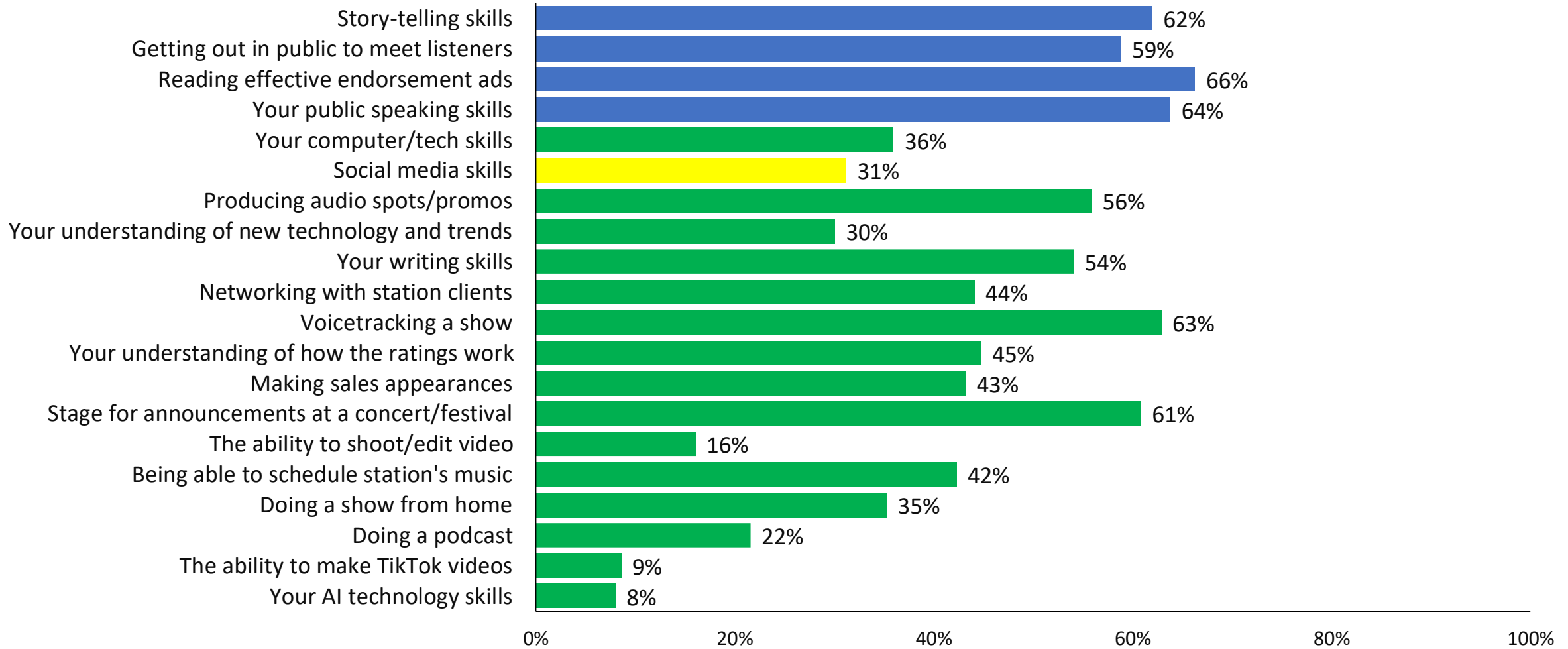


# Very Important Skills for Being Successful on the Air in 2023



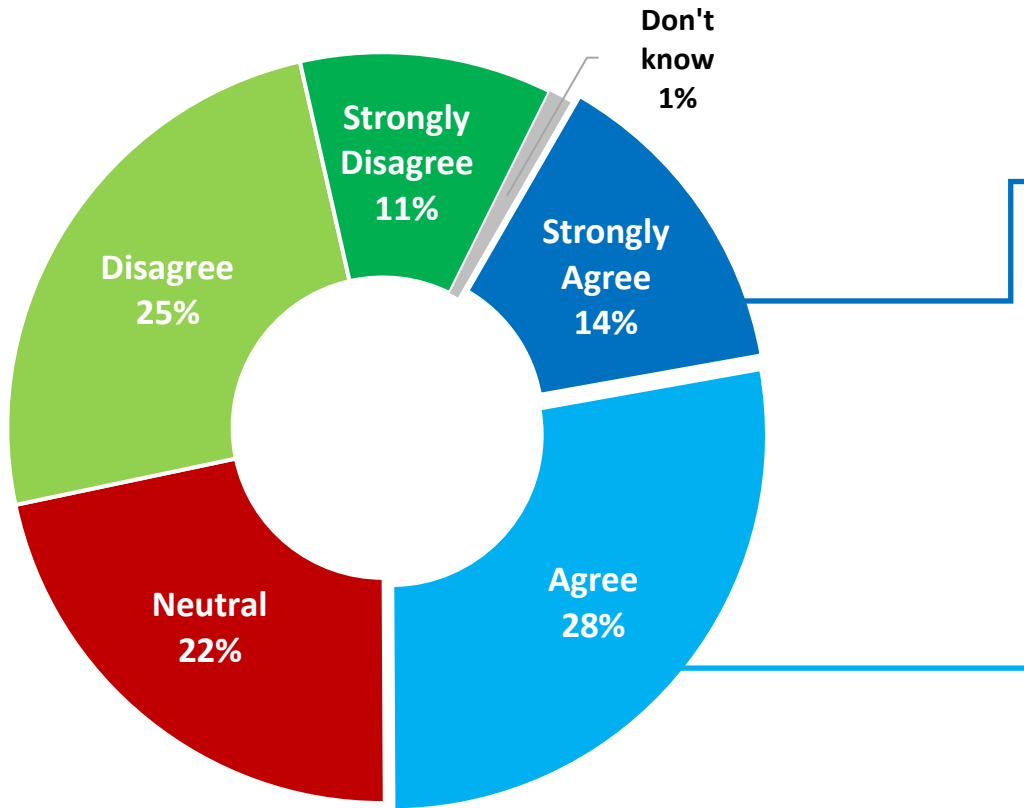
Among On-Air Talent, % who say each skill is "very important" to being successful on the air

# Self-Rated Skills for Being Successful on the Air



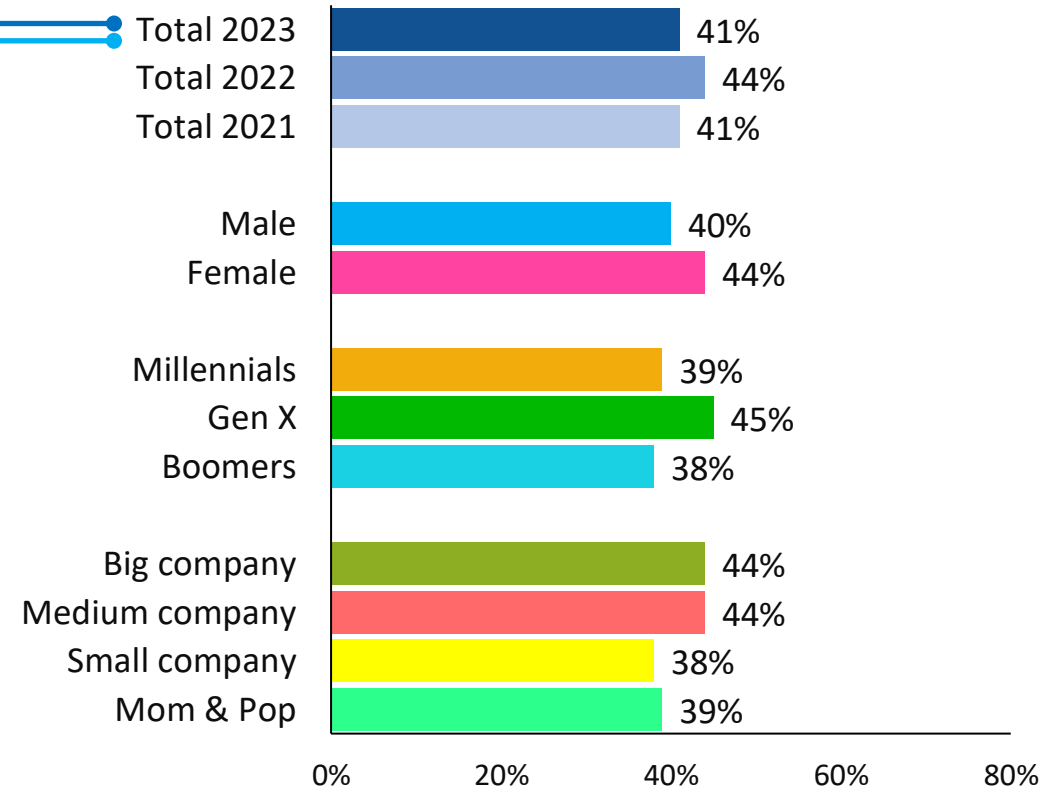
Among On-Air Talent, % who rate themselves as "excellent" for each skill/ability  
In order of Total

# Four In Ten Say Social Media Distracts Their Air Work

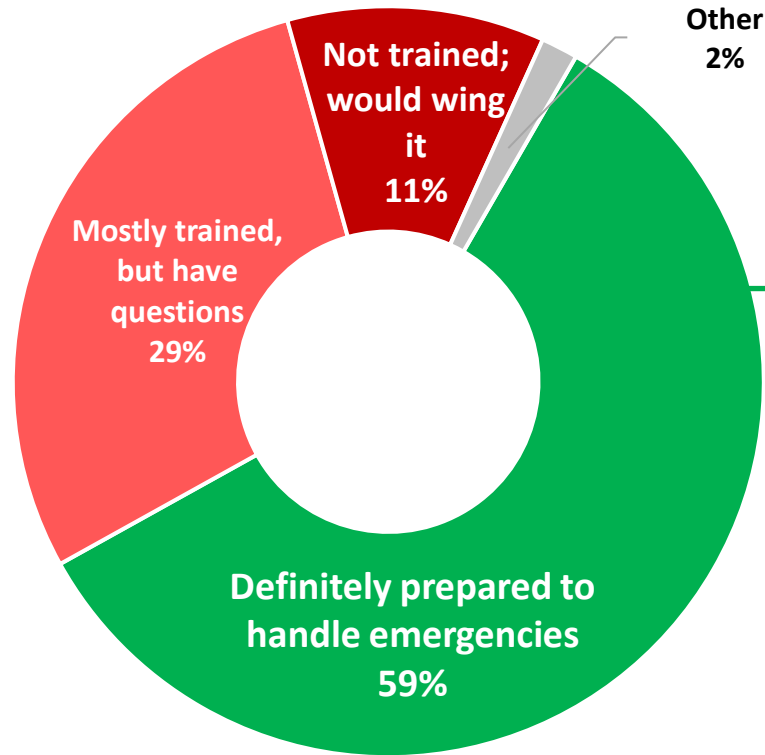


*"Social media often takes away time from me doing my show"*

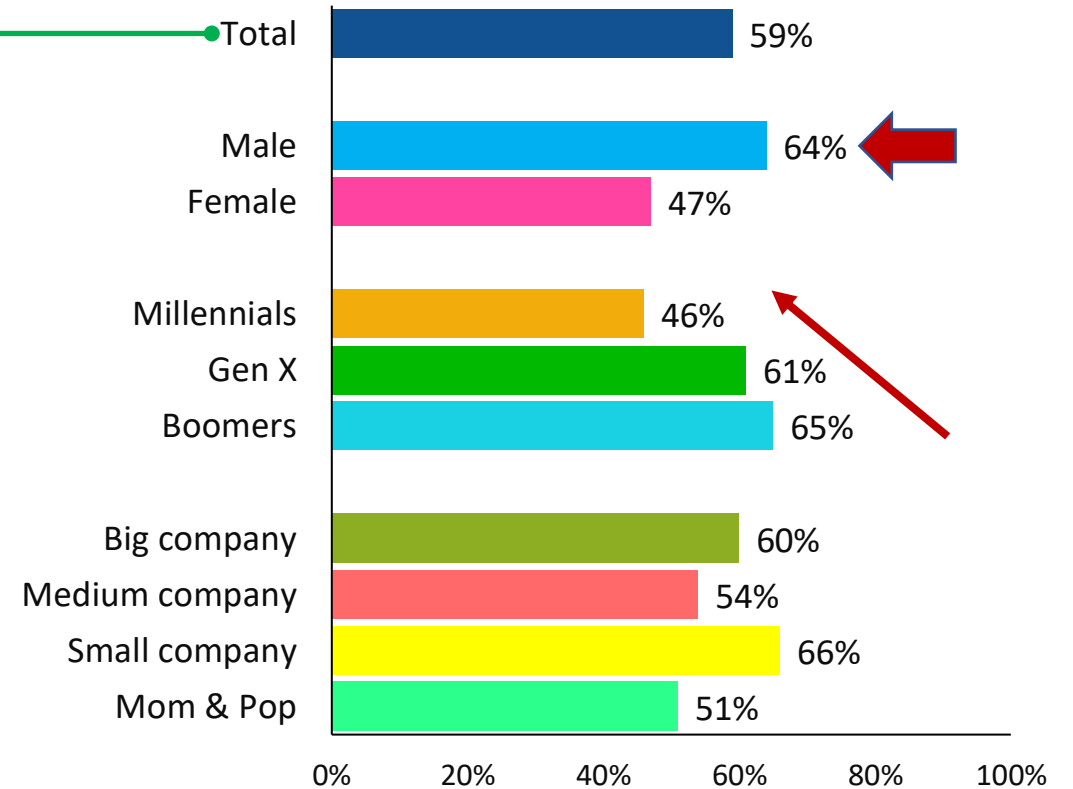
% Agreement (Strongly Agree + Agree)



# A Majority Say They Are Trained to Handle an Emergency On-Air



% Saying They Are "Definitely" Properly Trained to Respond to an Emergency on Air

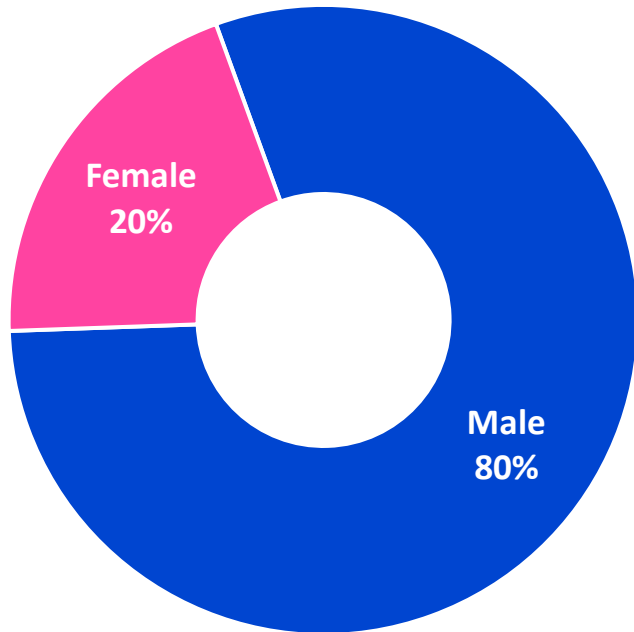


*"Do you feel that you have been properly trained to respond if you were on the air during an emergency in your market (ex. weather emergency, mass shooting, train derailment, etc.)?"*

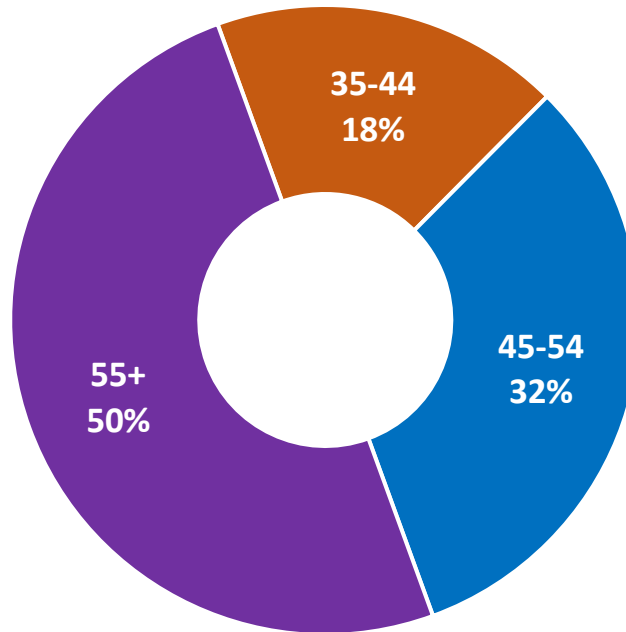


# Who Is On the Beach?

## Gender

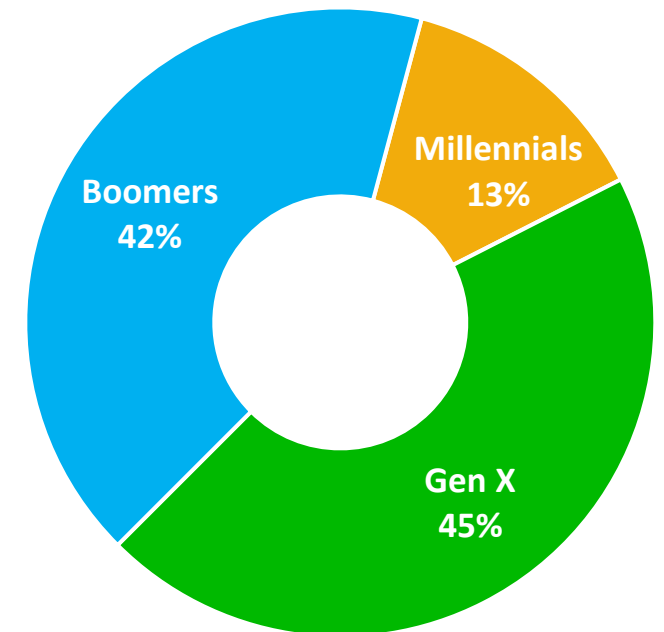


## Age



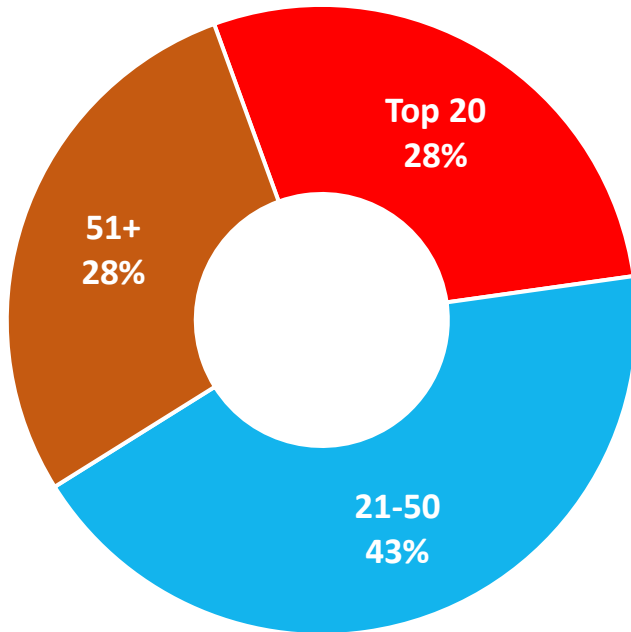
Average Age: 55.3

## Generation

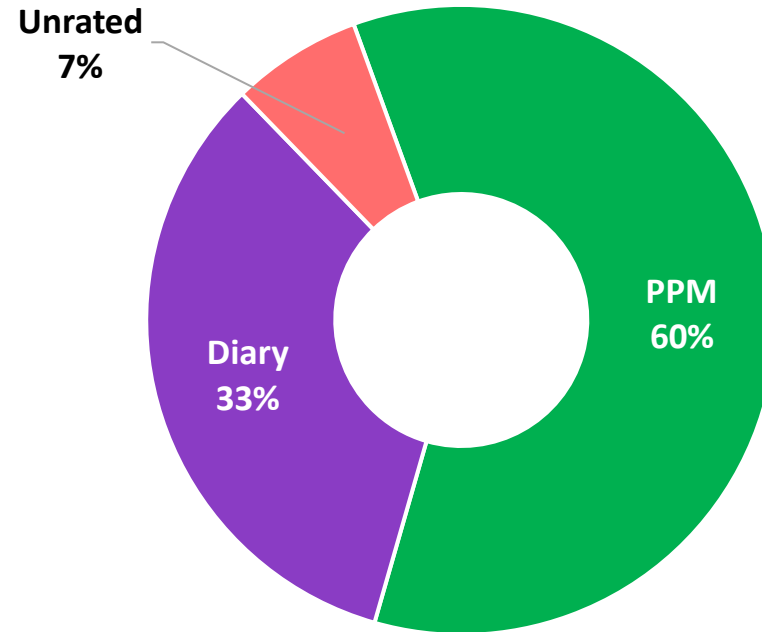


# Who Is On the Beach?

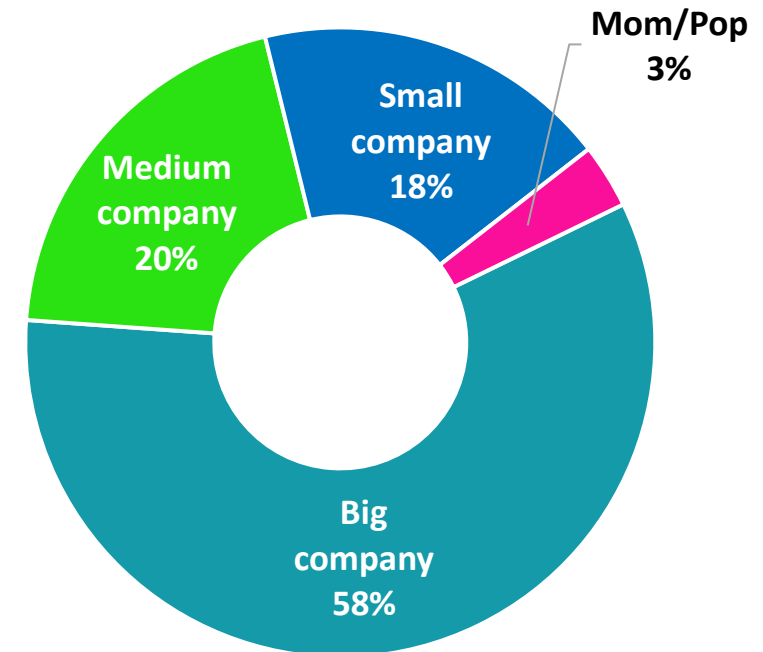
## Market Size



## Ratings Methodology



## Ownership

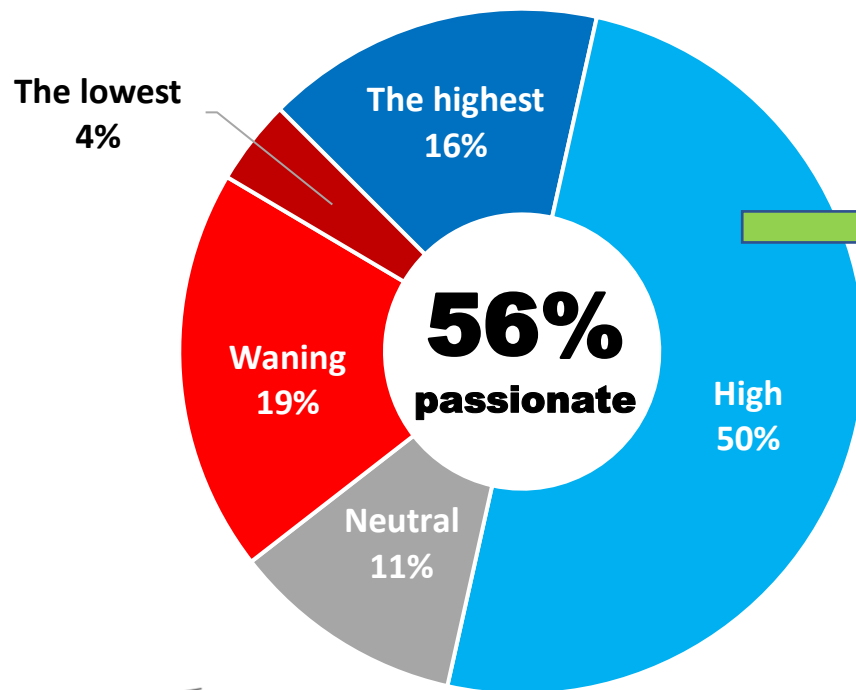




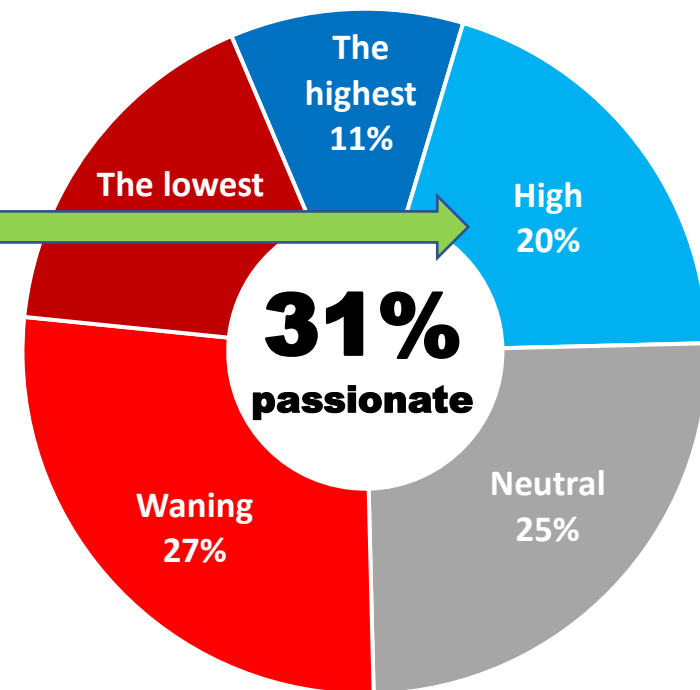
# Out of Work Radio Talent Are Considerably Less Bullish on Radio

*“Your current passion level for the broadcast radio business is...”*

## Currently Employed



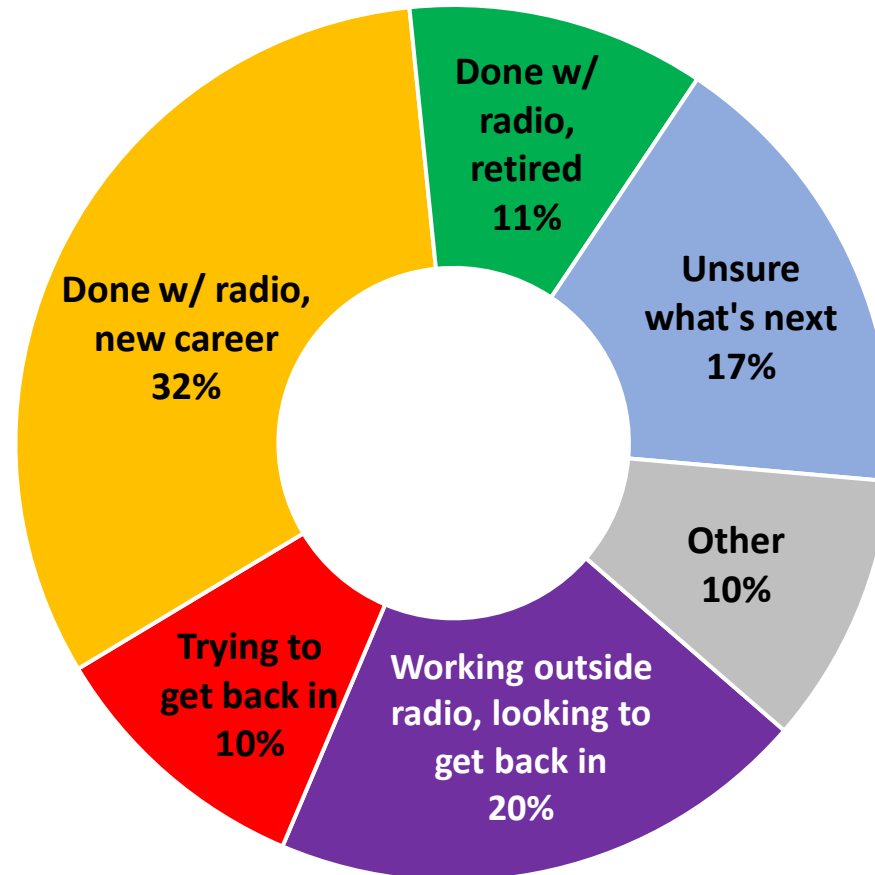
## On the Beach



# Among Those On the Beach, More Than Four in Ten Say They Won't Be Back

*“Which ONE of the following statements best describes your career plan at this point?”*

## On the Beach



THANK YOU!

- [www.jacobsmedia.com](http://www.jacobsmedia.com)
- [www.jacapps.com](http://www.jacapps.com)
- [fred@jacobsmedia.com](mailto:fred@jacobsmedia.com)
- @fnjacobs
- @jacobsmedia
- [www.jacobsmedia.com/blog](http://www.jacobsmedia.com/blog)