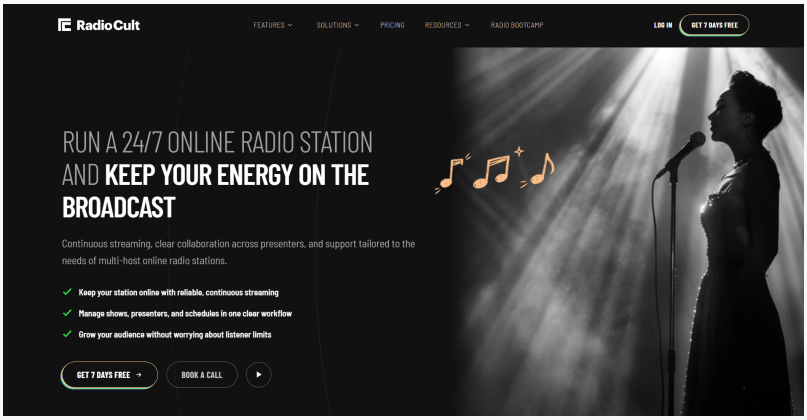
RadioCult Reviews What Radio's Move Online Means for Independent Broadcasters

Nearly a third of UK radio listening now happens online. RadioCult reviews what that shift means for independent and community broadcasters.



The RadioCult homepage, where broadcasters can start a 24/7 online radio station with scheduling, live and automated broadcasting, and unlimited concurrent listeners.

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, September 24, 2026 / EINPresswire.com/ -- Radio listening has not declined. It has moved. Across the UK and the United States, the share of radio consumed over an internet connection has grown year after year, which places independent and community broadcasters in reach of the same listeners as national networks. RadioCult, an online radio platform for independent broadcasters, has reviewed the published industry data on where radio listening now happens and what that shift means for stations operating without a network budget.

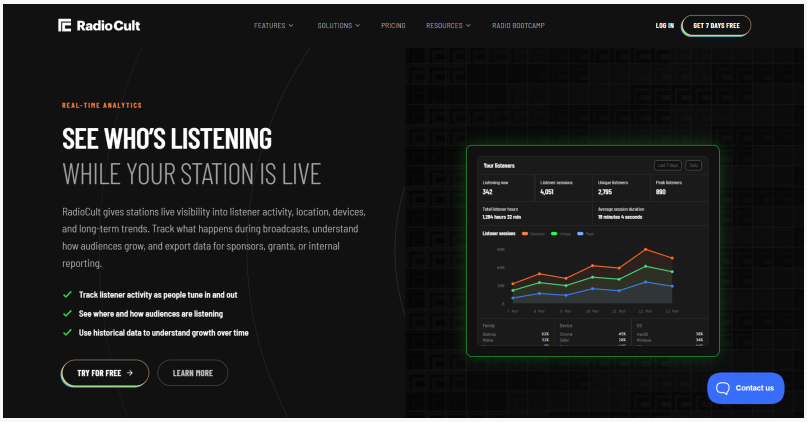
> “Listening moved onto connected devices, and that is the first time independent stations have been able to reach an audience on the same footing as a national network.”
>
> *A RadioCult spokesperson*

The first point the data makes is that radio remains a mass medium. RAJAR's Q1 2026 figures put UK weekly radio reach at 50.6 million adults, 87 percent of the population aged 15 and over, consuming 1.007 billion hours a week and averaging 19.9 hours each. In the United States, Nielsen reports that radio reaches 92 percent of adults monthly and accounts for 61 percent of daily ad-supported audio time, ahead of podcasts at 21 percent and streaming music at 15 percent.

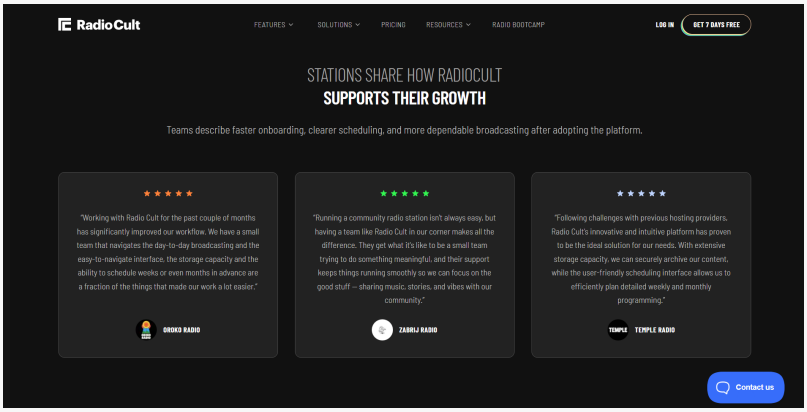
What has changed is delivery. RAJAR puts online listening, meaning smart speakers plus websites and apps, at 30.4 percent of all UK radio hours in Q1 2026, with smart speakers alone accounting for 18.8 percent, up from 17.6 percent a year earlier and representing roughly 190 million hours a week. In the United States, Westwood One and Edison Research put the

streamed share of AM and FM listening at 13 percent, up from 7 percent in 2017, while Edison's Infinite Dial 2026 found that 81 percent of Americans aged 12 and over had listened to online audio in the past month. Close to a third of UK radio listening now arrives without a transmitter.

That is the structural change independent broadcasters should read closely. A station with no broadcast licence now reaches listeners through the same smart speakers, apps, and directories that carry national stations, on the same terms.



RadioCult's real-time analytics, showing live and historical listener activity, unique and peak listeners, session trends, and device and OS breakdowns, with data stations can export for sponsors and grants.



Independent and community stations, including Oroko Radio, Zabrij Radio, and Temple Radio, describe faster onboarding, clearer scheduling, and more dependable broadcasting with RadioCult.

The independent layer of the sector is larger than it is often credited for being. FCC station totals from December 2025 record 1,994 licensed low-power FM stations and 4,755 noncommercial educational FM stations in the United States. The UK government's Community Radio Order 2025 covers more than 300 analogue community radio services. Alongside those sits an uncounted population of online-only stations, DJ collectives, student stations, and worship broadcasters that hold no licence at all and appear in none of these totals.

The audience they are competing for is also moving. Ofcom reports that UK listeners aged 15 to 34 now spend 58 percent of their audio time with streaming and podcasts, up from 40 percent in 2019. Nielsen puts radio's share among US 18 to 34 year olds at 47 percent against 32 percent for podcasts, and Westwood One notes the median podcast listener has aged from 29 in 2017 to 39 in 2025. Younger audiences have not left audio. They have spread across more of it, which means a station present on only one surface meets fewer of them.

"The headline that radio is dying has been wrong for a decade, but the headline that nothing has changed is wrong too," said a RadioCult spokesperson. "Listening moved onto connected devices, and that is the first time independent stations have been able to reach an audience on the same footing as a national network."

Read together, the data points to three practical priorities for an independent station. The first is presence, meaning the station is listed and playable wherever listening now happens, across smart speakers, mobile apps, internet radio directories, and an embeddable player on the station's own site. The second is continuity, because a station discovered through a directory at three in the morning needs something on air, which is what round the clock scheduling and automated playout provide without a station employing an engineer. The third is measurement, since a station that cannot show who listened, for how long, and from where has little to bring to a sponsor or a grant body.

Two further considerations follow from the funding picture. Independent stations rarely have the headroom to be penalised for a good week, so unlimited concurrent listeners matters most at the moment a show gets picked up or a promotion lands. And because much of the sector runs on grants, donations, and sponsorship rather than advertising, exportable listener data tends to be worth more than a live dashboard.

RadioCult's guidance on growing an online radio audience and on monetizing your online radio station, along with its reviews of the UK and US listening data, are available on its website.

About RadioCult
RadioCult is an online radio hosting platform built for independent and community stations that broadcast 24/7 with multiple presenters. It combines live and automated broadcasting, radio-native scheduling, station and artist management, and unlimited concurrent listeners in one platform, with human support and pricing that starts at $33 per month. Learn more at https://www.radiocult.fm.

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