

OXFORD

What Brands Want 2025

How Audio Publishers & Platforms Can
Win Over Advertisers

Q4 | 2025

Executive Summary

This report presents insights from Oxford Road's July 2025 Chief Audio Officer (CAO) Summit, where senior brand decision makers gathered to discuss best practices in audio and podcasting. Our survey of these decision makers highlights both the opportunities and the barriers shaping investment in the medium.

Key Findings



Measurement is the #1 barrier: 50% of respondents cited limitations in performance data as the main constraint on spend.



Programmatic expansion is accelerating: One-third of brands already buy audio programmatically; another third expect to enter the channel within a year.



Video podcasts are under-measured: 76% of brands would increase their podcast investment if attribution for YouTube podcasts matched that available for audio. Nearly a quarter would grow spend by 50% or more.



Other concerns persist: Rising ad load, brand safety, and AI-generated voice endorsements all present risks that require industry-wide solutions.



Growth potential is significant: Applying reported uplift levels to a \$2.5B baseline podcast market suggests up to \$1B in additional spend could be unlocked with standardized video attribution.

Opportunities for the Industry

- Standardize attribution across audio and video
- Establish clear definitions of podcasts in the age of video and AI
- Address ad clutter and brand safety proactively
- Provide transparent programmatic pathways
- Support full-funnel measurement, not just performance metrics

Introduction: The Voices that Matter

In July 2025, Oxford Road hosted its third annual Chief Audio Officer (CAO) Summit at Terranea Resort in Rancho Palos Verdes, Southern California.

Seventy-five brand decision makers—including six of the top 10 spenders in **podcasting**—came together to hear from strategists, creators, and, most importantly, from each other.

As part of the event, we conducted a survey to gauge sentiment on key issues facing the audio industry. All respondents are active or recent investors in podcasting; many also invest in other forms of audio (radio, streaming, satellite). Responses were anonymized to encourage candor.

This report summarizes the findings, with a focus on podcasting’s ad load, brand safety, AI, programmatic, creative, and, above all, measurement and attribution—the most frequently cited barrier to growth.



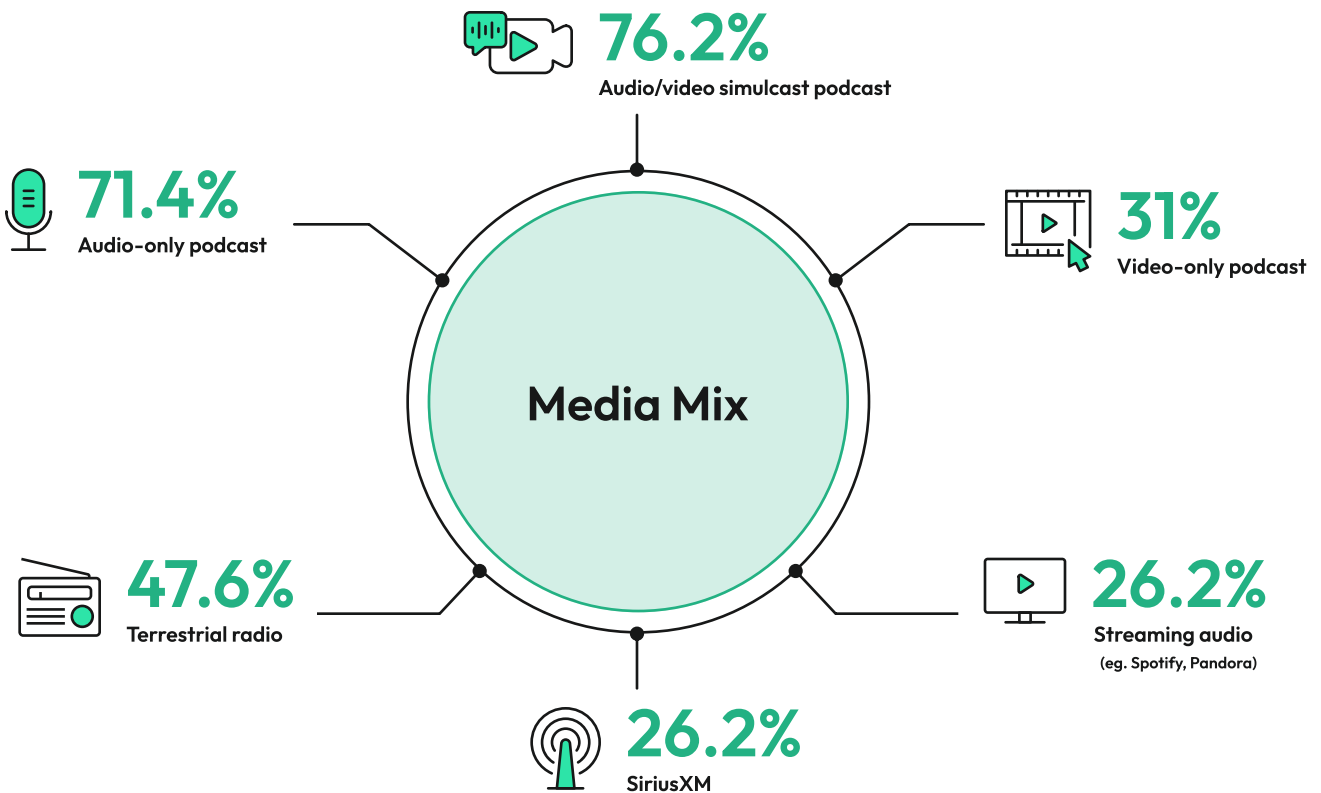
Audio Investors

The 2025 CAO brands represented roughly 15% of total U.S. podcast ad spend.

Almost half also advertise on pure-play streaming platforms, and radio is important for many, too: around half invest in traditional radio and 26% invest in satellite radio, underscoring radio’s ongoing value, particularly in a buyers’ market, in delivering cost-effective reach.

Notably, over 75% reported investing in simulcast podcasts (audio + video, typically on YouTube), and 31% invest in “video-only podcasts.” This degree of video engagement, while not surprising, contrasts sharply with frustrations expressed about the lack of measurement and attribution in the video podcasting space. More on that shortly.

Which audio channels are currently part of your media mix?

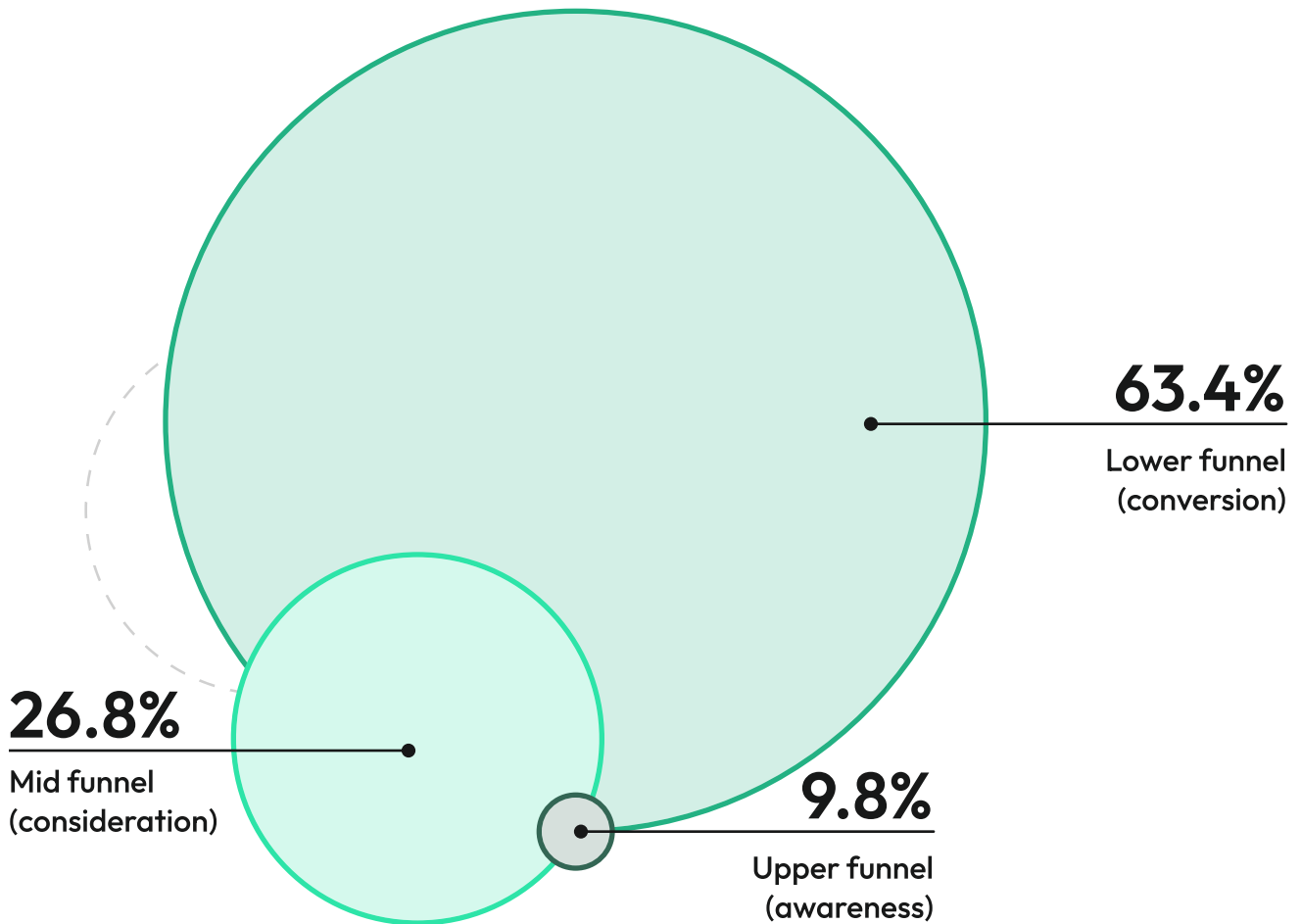


Skew Towards Performance Metrics

Respondents skew heavily toward performance marketing. Only 10% measure upper-funnel impact, and just over a third track any high-funnel metrics at all.

In our view, this narrow focus underrepresents the broader contributions of podcasts to brands. According to [Kantar](#), for example, podcasts drive 70% stronger purchase intent than other media, with dramatic impact on awareness and favorability too. Many marketers and executive teams are increasingly recognizing that ad investment has both long- and short-term effects. Publishers should help marketers demonstrate value across the full funnel by combining attribution with brand-lift evidence and long-term outcomes.

Which stages of the funnel are you measuring for audio performance?



Growth Prospects and the \$1B Unlock

When respondents were asked about their biggest barrier to increasing spend, two answers dominated:

33% cited budget constraints

50% cited limitations in performance data and attribution

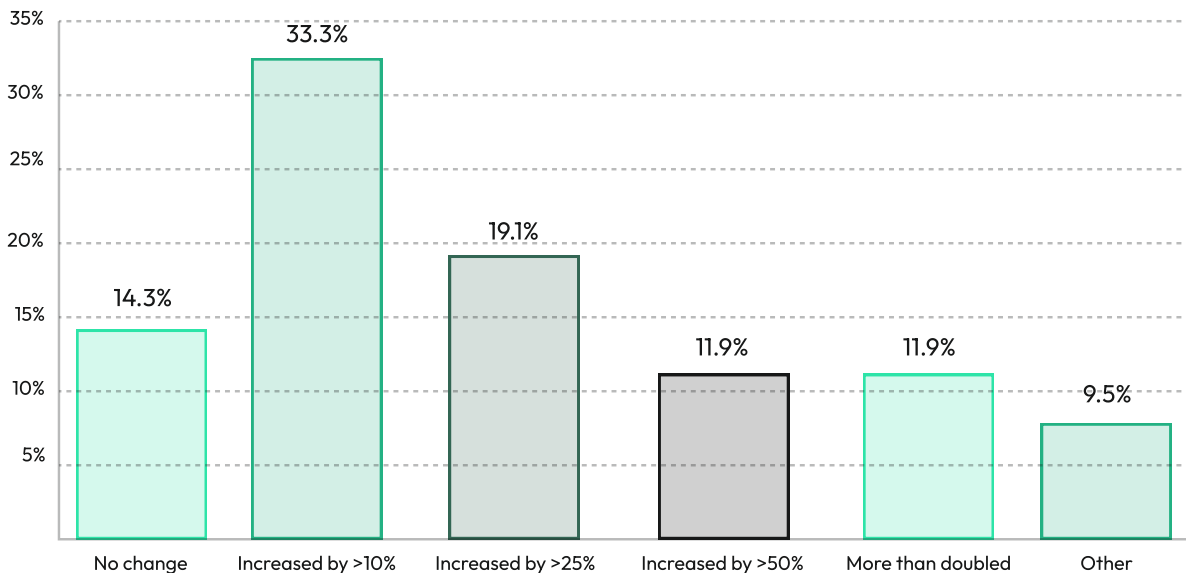
A majority (71%) stated that current measurement tools are less useful than in other channels. While that figure is down compared to last year (83%), there remains a gap that needs to be addressed. That gap is most acute when it comes to video podcasting:

76% of brands said they would increase podcast spend if YouTube attribution were standardized with audio

50% Nearly a quarter (24%) would increase spend by 50% or more

Assuming a \$2.5B U.S. podcast market baseline, and assumptions about spend growth based on our survey results, the potential incremental spend equals roughly \$1B (before any other growth factors are considered). Standardization, transparency, and granularity are what brands want most from attribution. If the market can deliver, the upside is tremendous.

How would your audio investment change if YouTube podcasts offered measurement on par with embedded pixel attribution?



Programmatic Promise

Programmatic podcasting remains small but is expanding rapidly:



Today, ~12% of podcast ad spend is programmatic, growing 15%-20% annually over the next few years.



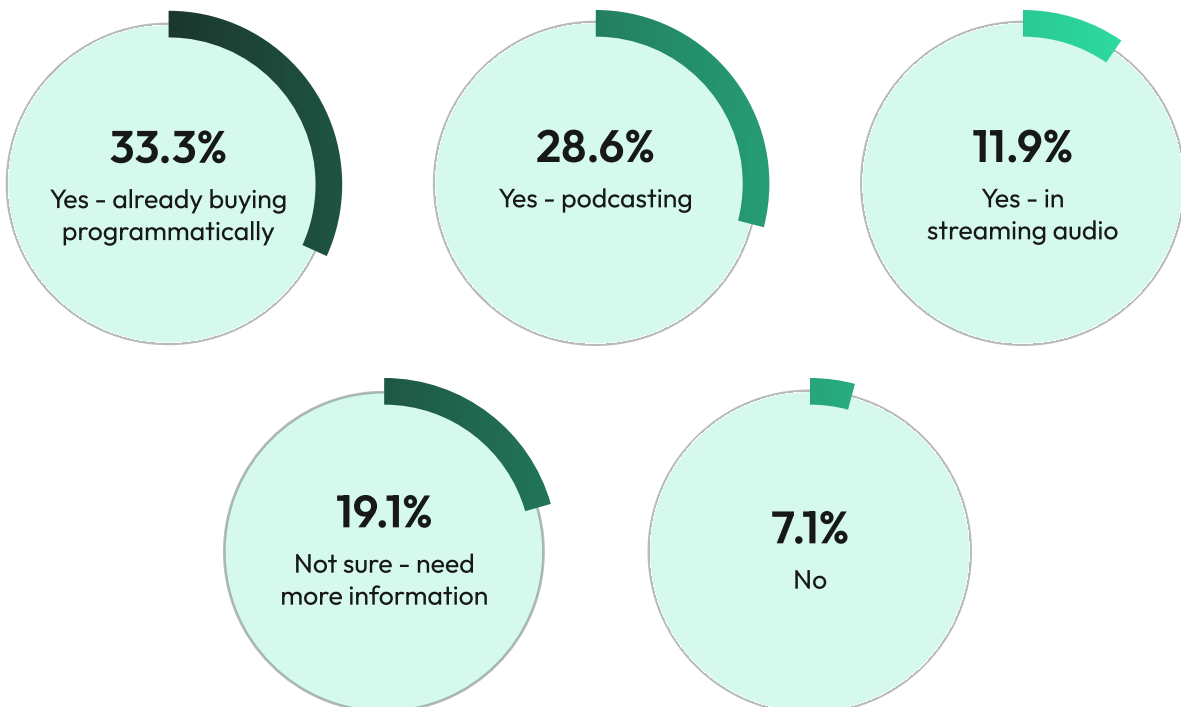
CAO brands are leading the market, with one-third of surveyed brands already buying audio programmatically.



Another third plan to do so within the next year.

There is plenty of scope for growth here. Publishers who provide clarity, transparency, and data exposure in programmatic will be those best positioned to capture this demand.

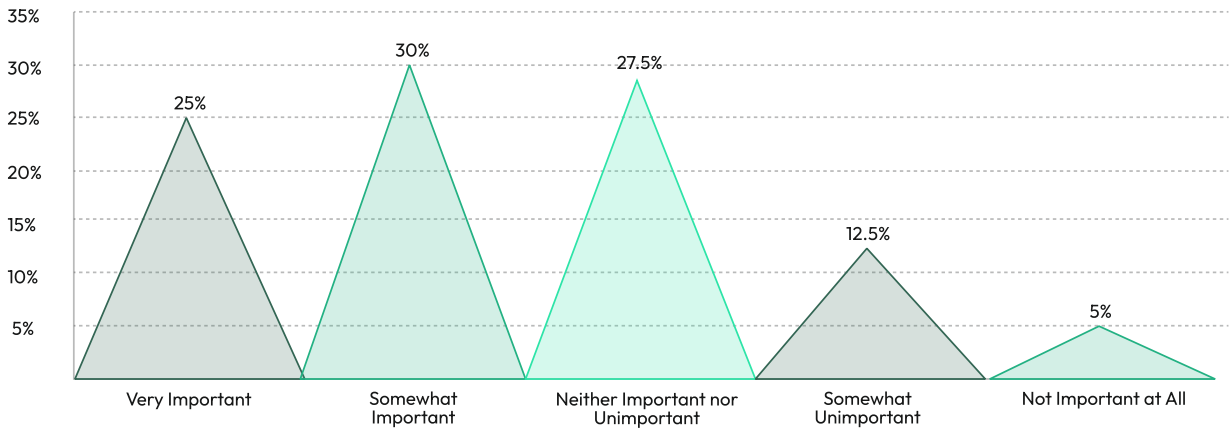
Do you plan to buy programmatic audio in the next 12 months?



Other Concerns & Opportunities

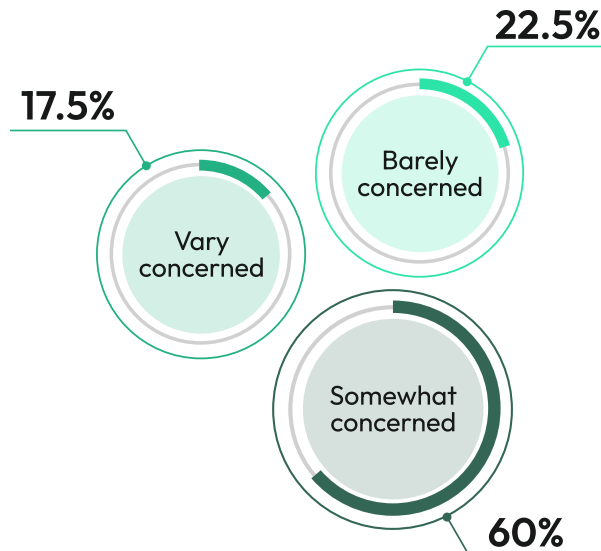
Definitions: 55% said a consistent definition of “podcast” is important, given growing confusion across audio, video, influencer, and YouTube teams, and challenges with budget allocation, channel management, and attribution.

How important is it to have a consistent podcast definition for your business?



Ad Load: Nearly 80% of respondents are concerned about rising clutter. Tools like “The Oxford Clock” can help publishers optimize placement and protect ad effectiveness.

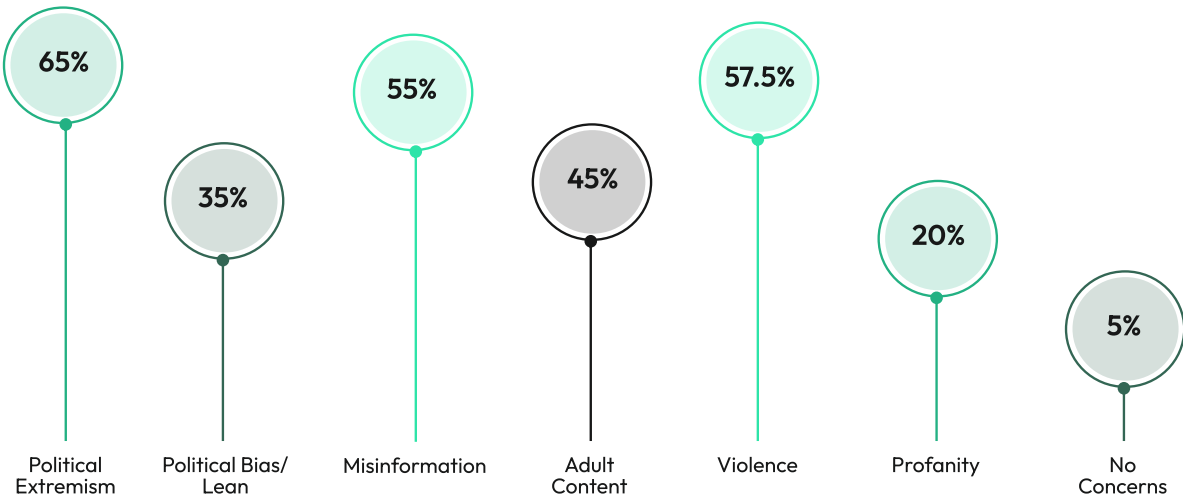
How concerned are you about increasing ad loads in podcasts?



Other Concerns & Opportunities

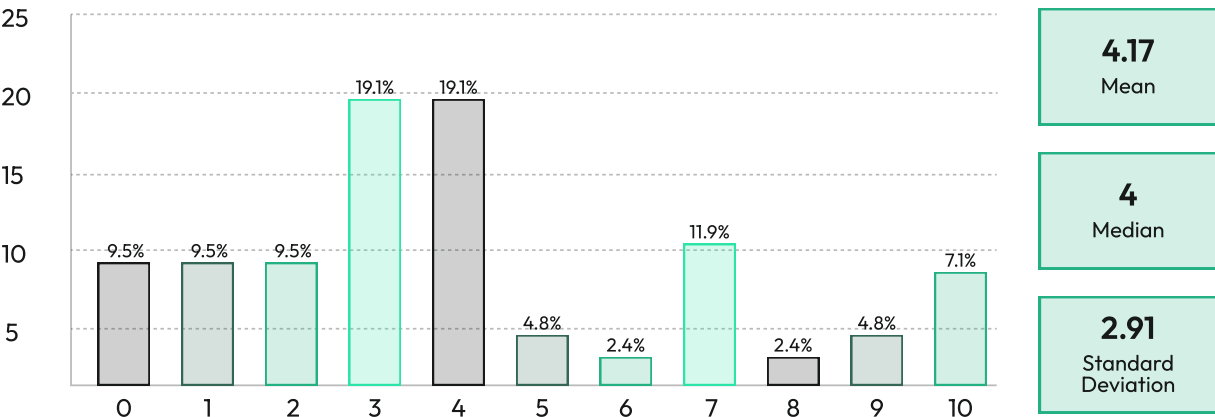
Brand Safety: Political extremism, violence, and misinformation remain top concerns. Reliable tools are still lacking, especially post-GARM.

What are your primary brand safety concerns when advertising in audio?



AI Host Reads: Brands remain skeptical, rating comfort with AI voice clones at 4/10 (albeit up from around 1.5 in 2024). Disclosure and industry standards remain essential to protect trust.

How comfortable are you with AI-generated host reads or voice clones for personal endorsements?



Conclusion & Recommendations

The audio industry stands at a turning point. Advertisers are ready to increase investment, but only if publishers, platforms, and agencies deliver the tools and standards they need.

Recommendations



For Publishers

- Limit ad clutter; adopt structured ad load frameworks
- Provide transparent, fully collaborative programmatic support
- Avoid AI voice cloning unless disclosed and aligned with best practices
- Sell with a full-funnel promise and partner with brands and agencies on longer-term metrics
- Provide and create solutions to accommodate brands' attribution needs
- Endorse and participate in standardization initiatives to accelerate industry adoption



For Platforms

- Standardize response measurement (attribution) across audio and video podcasts
- Support cross-channel comparability (reach, impressions, attribution)
- Advance brand-safety solutions beyond GARM

Final Thought

If the industry can deliver on measurement, particularly attribution that spans both audio and video, advertisers have signaled they are ready to invest at scale. The next phase of growth for podcasts and audio will not be defined by content or distribution alone, but by trust, transparency, and accountability in how results are measured. Those who lead on these fronts will unlock the full value of the medium.