

The Podcast Host

# IndiePod Manifesto

**Indie Podcaster** ['Indi 'pod,kæstə]

*(compound noun)*

1. An audio creator who independently produces and manages their own podcast, free from major networks or corporations.



# A letter to the indies...

Here's to the bold ones. The independent thinkers. The storytellers who dare to challenge the status quo. To those who believe that every voice matters, and that no story is too small to be heard.

Here's to the podcasters who choose not to be confined by the mainstream, who reject the uniformity of thought and embrace the richness of diversity. The ones who explore the depths of their passions, no matter how niche, transforming their unique perspective into a symphony of sound.

Here's to the independent podcasters who craft stories that resonate with the human spirit, day in and day out. To those who create not for fame or fortune, but for the joy of connecting with others, of sparking a conversation and of giving voice to the voiceless.

Here's to those who dare to break through the noise, who dare to delve deep in a world that sleepwalks through the shallow, the superficial. The ones who carve their own path and inspire others to follow in

their footsteps, to create something that matters, something with purpose.

Here's to the indie podcasters who hone their craft, always thinking long-term, adapting, collaborating, and staying dedicated to the growth and sustainability of their podcast. The ones driven by a passion for sharing their authentic voice, embracing creative freedom, and fostering meaningful connections with their listeners.

Here's to the independent podcasters who shatter the barriers of expectation and redefine what it means to be a creator. To the ones who empower us to challenge our thinking, to listen deeply, and to be part of a revolution in storytelling.

For it's in the depths of our individuality that we find the strength to unite, the power to change, and the potential to knock a dent in the universe.

So to all of you out there, who dare to pick up the mic and set your voice free, we salute you.

And to those who have yet to begin, we welcome you to our tribe of independent thinkers, to find your voice, and to stamp your mark on the world.

Because when we embrace our differences, when we celebrate our authenticity, when we dare to create something new – that's when we can truly change the world, one story at a time.

**Here's to the independent podcasters. Long may your voices ring.**

# The 10 Pillars of Indie Podcasting

**Follow this guide and you'll not just survive, you'll thrive.**

Backed by the voices of 1,200 podcasters who took part in our IndiePod Census, and our decades of collective experience

# Partners



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## PILLAR ONE:

# Indies play the long game

## Overnight success is a myth in podcasting, and indies know it.

When you see a successful podcaster become “famous”, apparently out of nowhere, you don’t see the years they’ve spent building the foundations of that success.

“You need to stick at this, consistently, for the long haul” is never welcome advice. It’s natural to want the quick fix, the one simple tip, the silver bullet solution. But podcasting offers big rewards for those who can take this advice on board and get to work.

The indie starts with nothing but an idea. They’re prepared to grow an audience from scratch, turning up consistently for the long haul, whilst having fun and enjoying the process. The indie will give much more in those first few years than they’ll ever get back.

Patience and consistency can’t be driven by willpower alone, though. Big audacious goals can help guide the way when things are tough, whilst workflows, tools, and support networks can smooth out those inevitable bumps even more. For the indie, it’s not about being frantically busy for years. It’s about working sustainably at your own pace, obsessing over quality, and asking the question, “What’s next?” when it comes to serving your audience.

There’s a magical moment of critical mass in podcasting where previous episodes become a back-catalogue. This body of work becomes an audience growth machine, pulling in new listeners daily. At this point, a podcast is like an unstoppable train with infinite seats. And the podcaster can look upon it and say, “I built this.”



## Key Takeaways

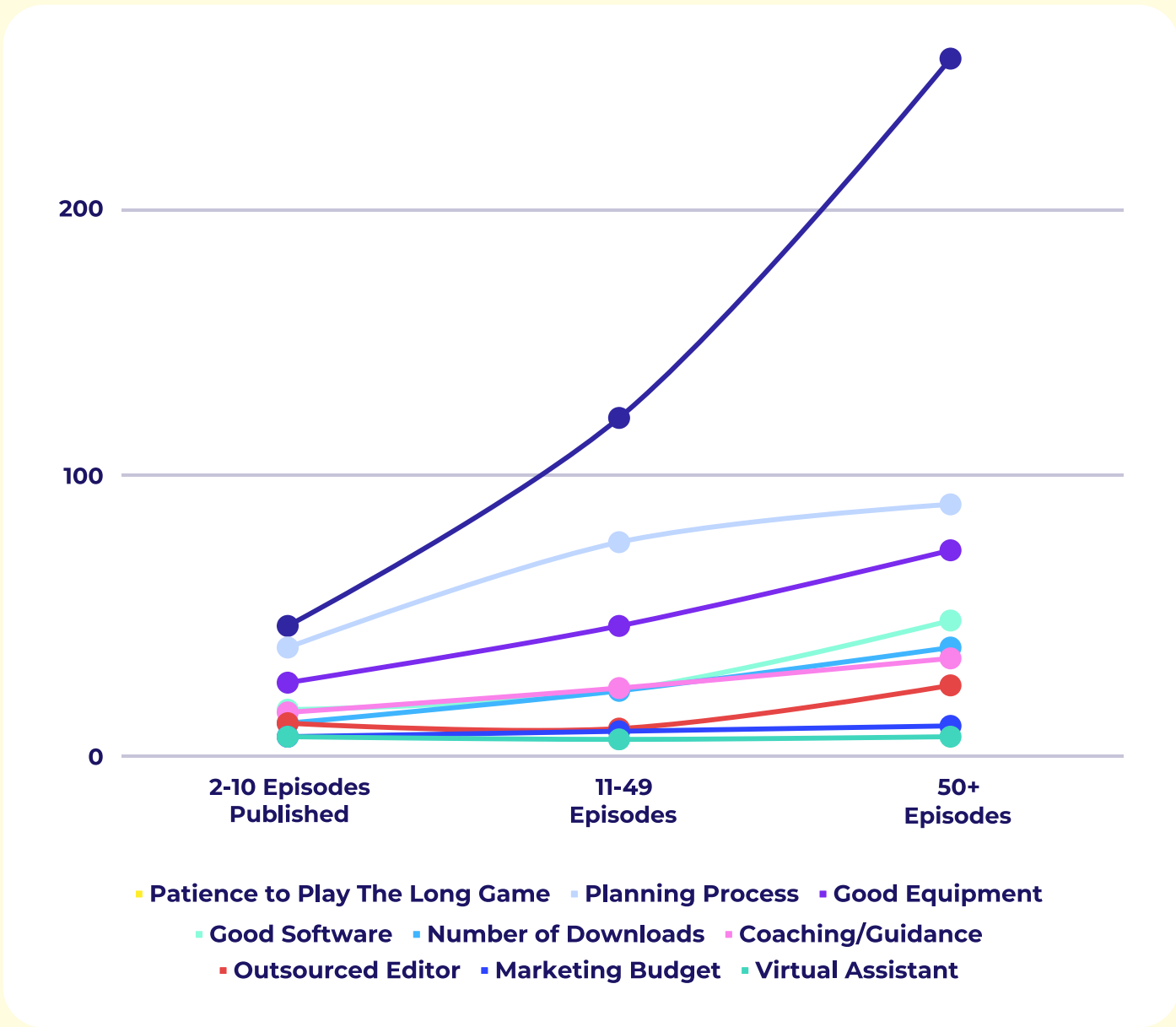
1. Embrace the fact that there’s no overnight success in podcasting. This is a fantastic opportunity to personally get to know your early core of listeners.
2. “Playing the long game” doesn’t mean waiting months or years to have fun. Enjoyment can start right away. It’s not about being busy or frantic, so take things at your own pace.
3. The only thing to obsess over is quality. How can you best serve your listener and deliver value for them in that next episode?

# The Data



## The most important elements for podcasting success

Over 35% of experienced podcasters agree, playing the long is the single most essential ingredient to achieving success in podcasting, followed, albeit well behind, by planning and good equipment.



## The most important elements for podcasting success, refined by experience

The evidence is overwhelming, if you're looking to take some insight from those who have both 'walked the walk' and 'talked the talk', this is it. As podcasters gain experience there is one stand out element to achieve success in podcasting and that is to "Play the Long Game".

"Understanding it's a slow burn. You don't get immediate crowds busting down the door to listen: that doesn't mean you aren't doing something awesome."

Jackie Niedemeyer,  
IndiePodder



## PILLAR TWO:

# Indies are driven by their purpose

## “Why” is an important word for indies.

Why this topic? Why this audience? Why me? Why now? In those early days, the indie podcaster thinks carefully about each “Why”. They define their purpose early, keep their topic and goals as narrow as possible, and have a good idea of what “success” looks like to them.

It’s tempting to believe that creating content “for everyone” means excluding no one. If your potential target audience is much bigger, it seems like it would increase your podcast’s potential, too.

But, if you create a podcast for everyone, you’re creating it for no one. Indies know this, and they’re not afraid to opt for audience quality over audience quantity.

Indies are motivated to help their listeners. They seek to inspire and motivate them. And they see themselves as budding thought-leaders in their space, with unique gifts and perspectives to bring to the wider conversation.

Whilst some indies openly wish for podcasting to become their full-time source of income, others are happy to treat it as a hobby or creative outlet. They enjoy talking about their passion and would be doing it whether they got paid or not.

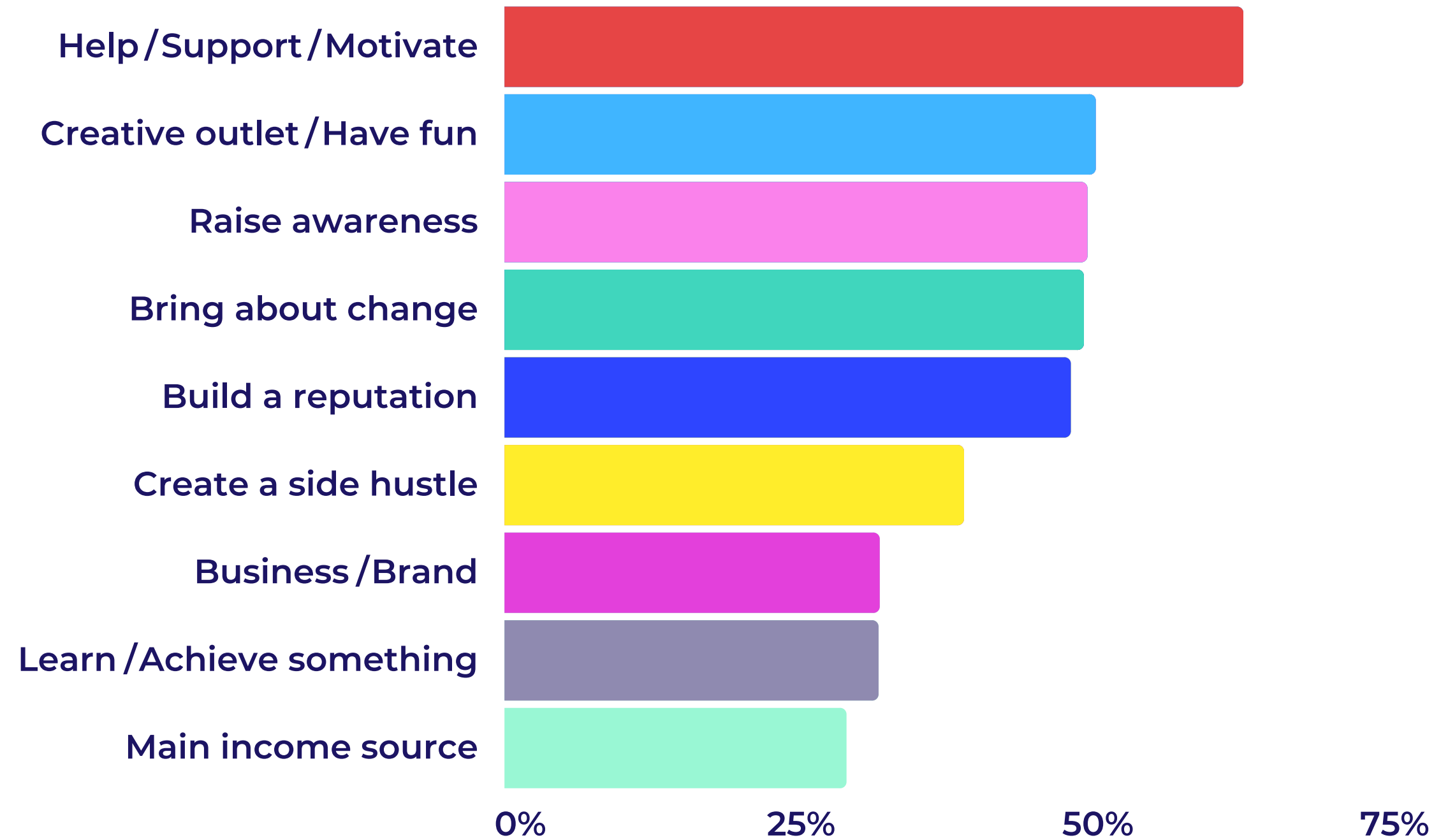
That said, these shows can become magnetic to listeners and advertisers alike. It’s natural that many podcasters find that their show becomes a side gig as well as a hobby. After all, when you spend those early days sowing the seeds of an audience, the opportunities will start to snowball once it germinates.

## Key Takeaways

1. Think carefully about your “Why” in the early days. Setting goals and motivations can help guide you, especially when the week-to-week tasks begin to cloud out the big picture.
2. Don’t be afraid to go narrow. If your podcast is “for everyone”, it’s for no one. Even if you think you have a niche, is there another niche within that niche?
3. Enjoyment, fun, and creativity are not at odds with making money. If your enthusiasm and consistency generate a loyal following, you’ll have no shortage of opportunities.



# The Data



## What motivates you to podcast?

Indiepodders are motivated by the opportunity to provide value to their listeners and enjoy the creation process while they do.

“Podcasting has become an equalizer of sorts, providing a platform for often-marginalized people who are passionate about their message and determined to be heard. Independent podcasters understand that their unique perspectives, stories, and experiences are what set them apart from ‘big media’. They recognize that without their contributions, the world would be missing something special.”

Allegra Sinclair,  
Creator and Host of Your  
Confident Self Podcast





## PILLAR THREE:

# Indies streamline their workflow

**Indies can deliver quality content consistently for the long haul because they work smart.**

The indie podcaster recognises that they can't and shouldn't do everything themselves. Outsourcing is a popular option amongst those in a position to do so. For others, it's about prioritisation. Focusing on the tasks they enjoy, as well as those that move the needle, lets them decide whether to pay someone else to do the rest or set them aside completely.

Indies are streetwise when told they "should" add certain elements to their workflow. One example of this is video. Whilst some decide that video fits well into their content strategy, budget, and workflow, others are happy to concentrate their full resources on audio content.

Indies can also make a little go a long way and don't need to spend eye-watering sums on their tools. They know that gear and software are about finding the most suitable setup, not necessarily the most expensive.

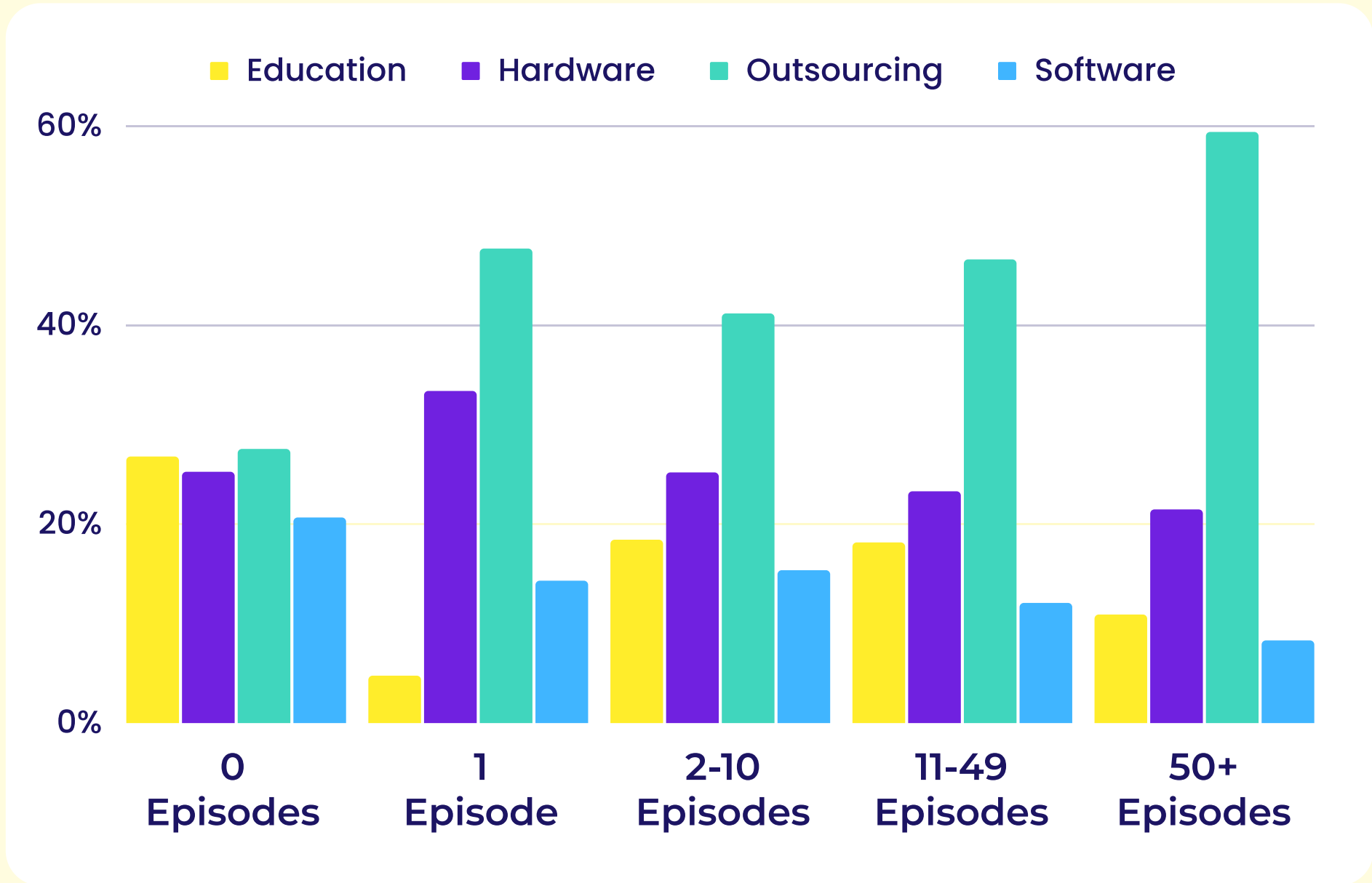
When a podcaster does fewer things but does them better, it positively impacts their ability to consistently publish quality over a long period of time. The ability to focus on the things that matter is an indie superpower, and one of the big tenants of podcasting success.



## Key Takeaways

1. Indies deliver quality content consistently by working smart.
2. Outsourcing and prioritisation are key strategies for indies.
3. Indies make decisions that fit their content strategy, budget, and workflow.
4. Indies prioritise finding the most suitable gear and software, not the most expensive.
5. Focusing on fewer tasks can positively impact consistent, long-term quality.

# The Data



## Podcaster Experience & Where They Would Spend Money First

When asked if they had \$1000 to invest in podcasting where would they spend it, 48% of census participants answered 'Outsourcing'.



## Video & Experienced Podcasters

Experienced Indie podcasters are less likely to use video than new Indiepodders. Interestingly 48.4% (I don't record video and have no plans to, and I record video to see my guests) of Indiepodders don't anticipate to publish any video whatsoever.



**“As an indie podcaster, I know that burnout can be a major concern. However, that’s why you have to be honest with yourself and really assess your strengths and weaknesses. When you’re able to do that, you’ll know where your passions lie and, more importantly, what you're capable of.”**

Donna Elwin,  
A Paranormal Chicks Co-Host

PILLAR FOUR:

# Indies experiment and adapt



## One key area we can look to for examples of this is podcast formats.

For indies, their format is an ever-evolving work in progress, and something never set in stone.

Starting out on a solo basis makes perfect sense for most indies. After all, they don't need to rely on anyone else but themselves, and podcasting solo means shining the light fully on their own experience or expertise. It also guarantees full ownership and control of the content.

But there comes a time when many indies will branch out from their solo roots. Maybe they'd reached the natural limit of their knowledge on a topic and wanted to bring in different perspectives. Perhaps they began to crave the

chemistry and interaction in talking with others. Or, they might've levelled up on gear and software, and gained the confidence to start recording multiple voices.

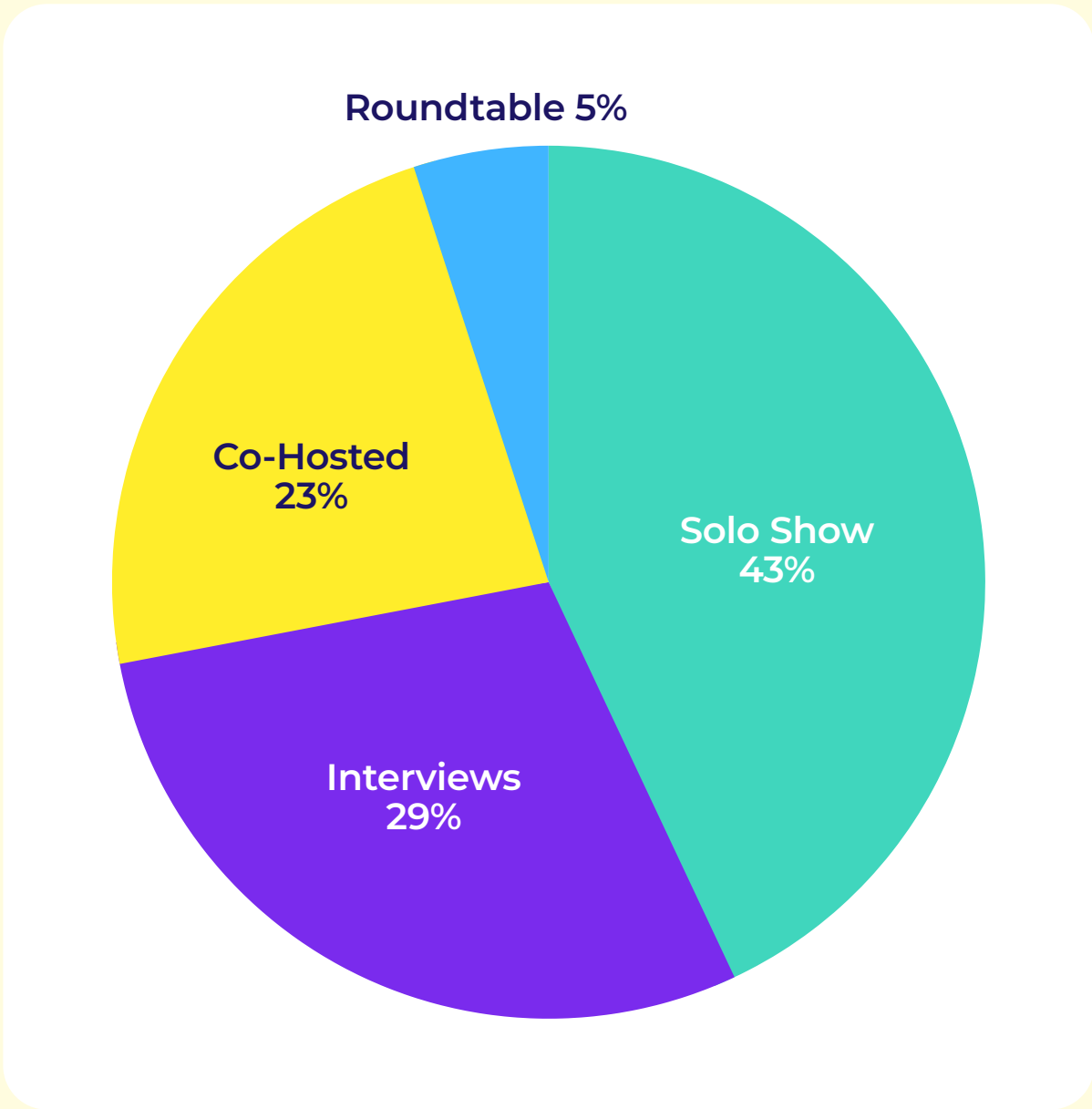
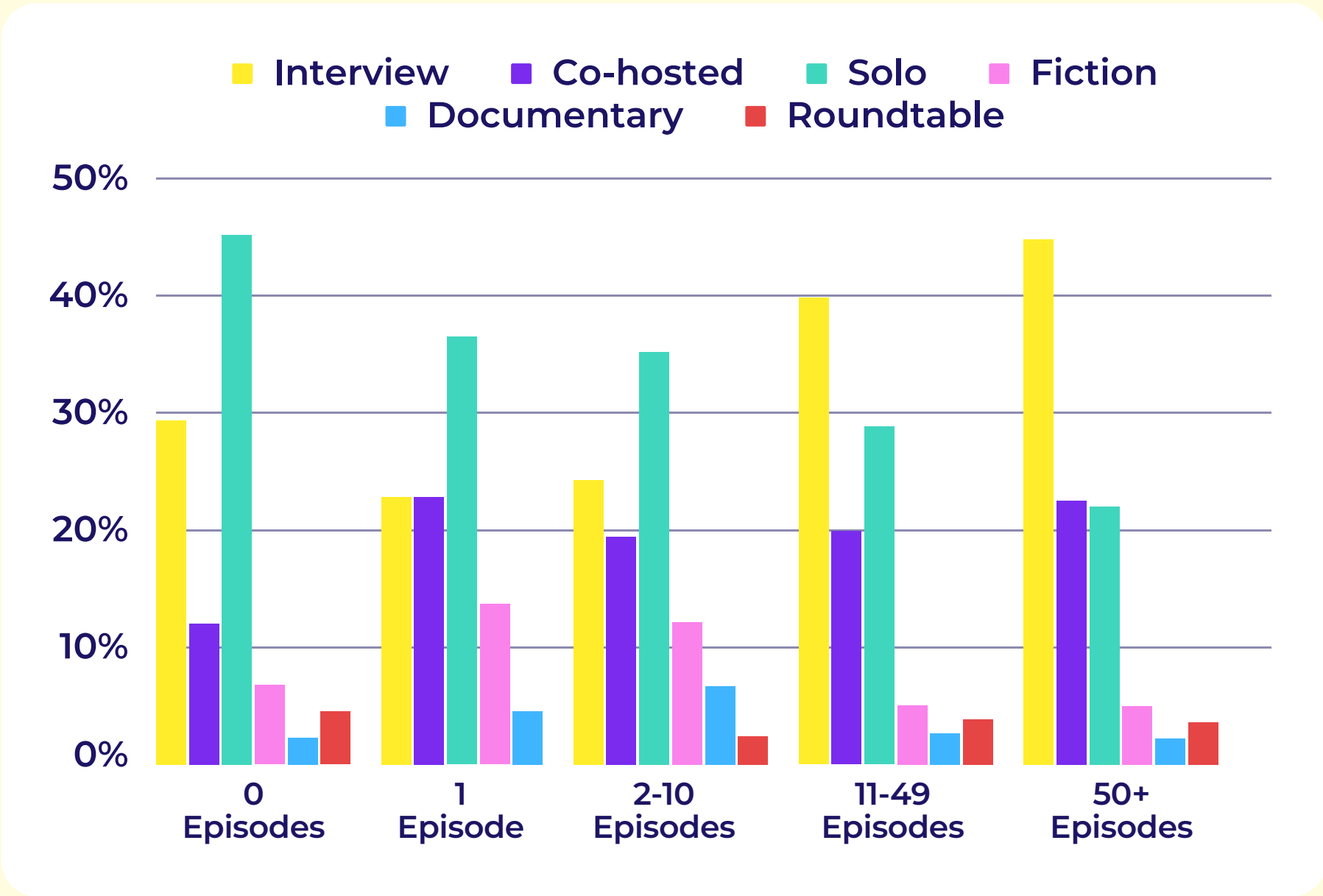
Regardless of the reasons, indie podcasters are open to experimentation and change. This culture is healthy for the medium, allowing creators to stay fresh, enthusiastic, and consistent. It also gives listeners a more diverse and varied experience than if everyone continued to do what they have always done.

Podcasting is about creativity, not rigidity, and indie podcasters are free to tweak formats and develop innovative ways to serve their audience.

## Key Takeaways

1. Indie podcasters' formats are always evolving and never set in stone.
2. Starting out on a solo basis allows indie podcasters to have full ownership and control of the content, and shine the light fully on their own experience or expertise.
3. Many indie podcasters will eventually branch out from their solo roots to experiment with different perspectives, chemistry, and recording styles.

# The Data



## Podcast Format & Experience

As indiepodders gain experience they become more willing to experiment with new and different formats. Note the declining trend in solo shows and inclining trend in interview formats.

## What Format is Your Podcast?

Solo format podcasts are favoured among independent podcasters at large while other formats provide opportunities for experimentation and diversification.

“Podcasting isn’t a competition to ‘win’ or ‘lose’, podcasting is a scene. Independent podcasters listen to each other’s shows, get inspired, and try new things.”

Lindsay Harris Friel,  
Creator at Jarnsaxa Rising and  
ADWIT Podcast





PILLAR FIVE:

# Indies learn from listeners



## Indie podcasters strive for conversations, not sermons.

Far from being aloof and inaccessible, indies really want to hear from their listeners.

Sadly, though, very few of them feel that they get enough feedback. The vast majority are desperate for more, but podcasting as a medium hasn't quite cracked the feedback nut yet. There's no clear place for all listeners to leave comments and replies for their favourite podcasters. This leaves it up to creators themselves to figure out their own individual points of contact. And, whilst many do a great job on this front, it can be an uphill battle at times.

Fortunately, there are organisations and movements working to address this. The Podcast

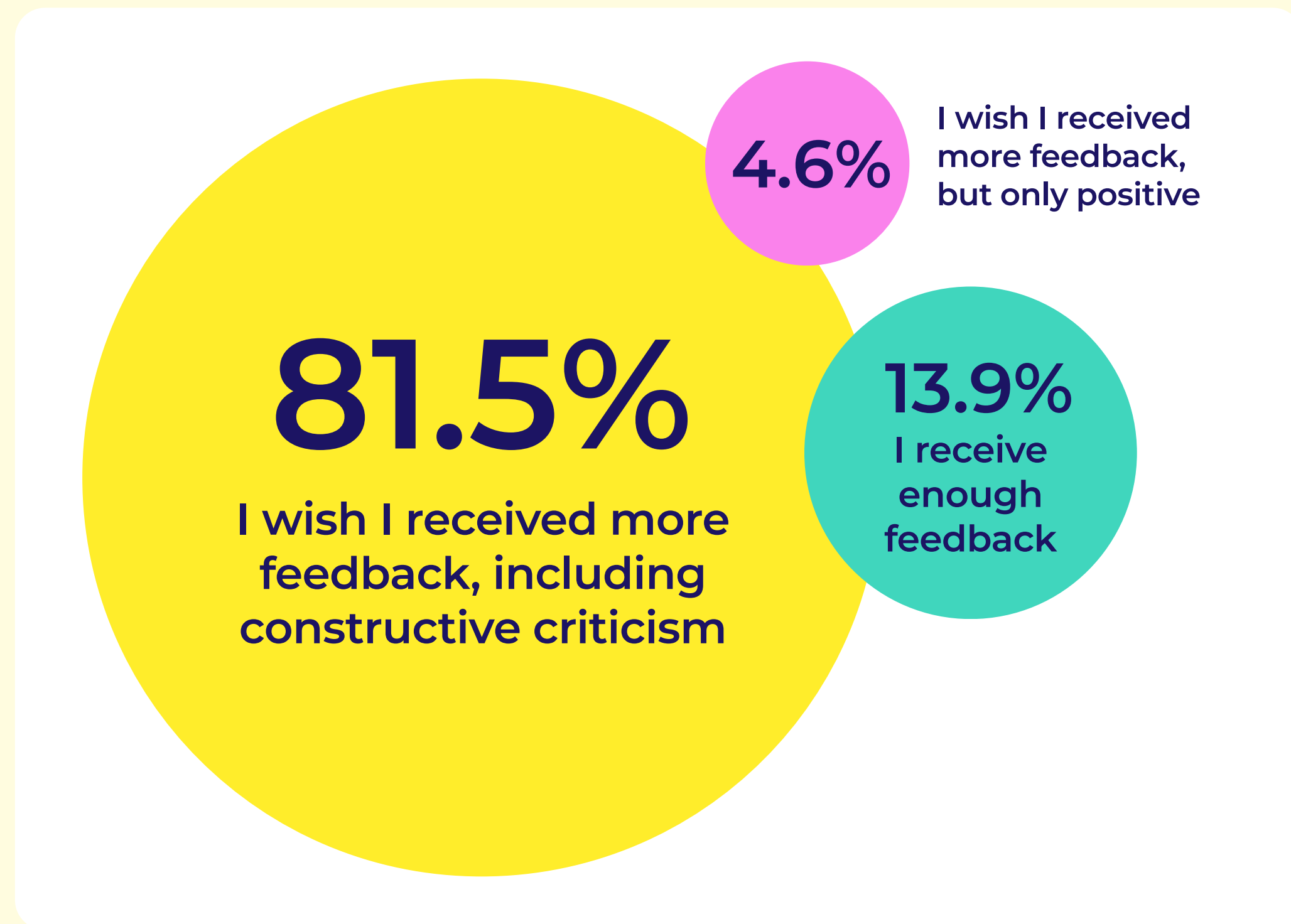
Index, Podcast Standards Project, and those who support open podcasting seek to make features like cross-app comments a mainstream reality for podcasters, and this has the potential to address one of the biggest pain points in podcasting.

Experience and consistency can help harness more engagement, too. After all, the bigger a podcaster's back catalogue, the more Calls to Actions are answered with each new listener binging their way through swathes of old episodes. Ultimately, indie podcasters crave feedback, suggestions, and contributions. And, as much as they love to get behind the mic and talk, they want that conversation to be *with* their listeners, not *at* them.

## Key Takeaways

1. Indie podcasters prioritise conversations with their listeners over delivering sermons.
2. Most indie podcasters want more feedback from their listeners but struggle to receive it, as podcasting as a medium has yet to fully address the issue of providing a clear place for listeners to leave comments and replies.
3. Organisations and movements such as The Podcast Index and the Podcast Standards Project are working to address this feedback issue by advocating for features like cross-app comments.

# The Data



## Listener Feedback

Listener engagement acts as one of the most standout metrics recorded from the IndiePod Census. More engagement is essential for indiepodders, it will be up to the industry to deliver.

“Motivation, finding the right ways to place your work in the arena for others to hear it. Learning, and having a community that you can both teach and reach out to.”

Reginald Davis,  
IndiePodder



# Indies own their content and monetise on their own terms

In the dictionary, the word “independent” is defined as “not dependant”, “not controlled by others”, or “not subject to another’s authority”.

So how do we know that indie podcasters are truly independent?

We see evidence of independence in all areas of the podcasting workflow. For starters, most indies are entirely self-taught. Indie podcasts also tend to start out as solo ventures, so there’s no ambiguity over control, ownership, or authority. And indie podcasters love their home studios, too.

On the content side, indies see their biggest USP as their unique personal angle. It’s that perspective they bring with them behind the mic that their listeners simply can’t find anywhere

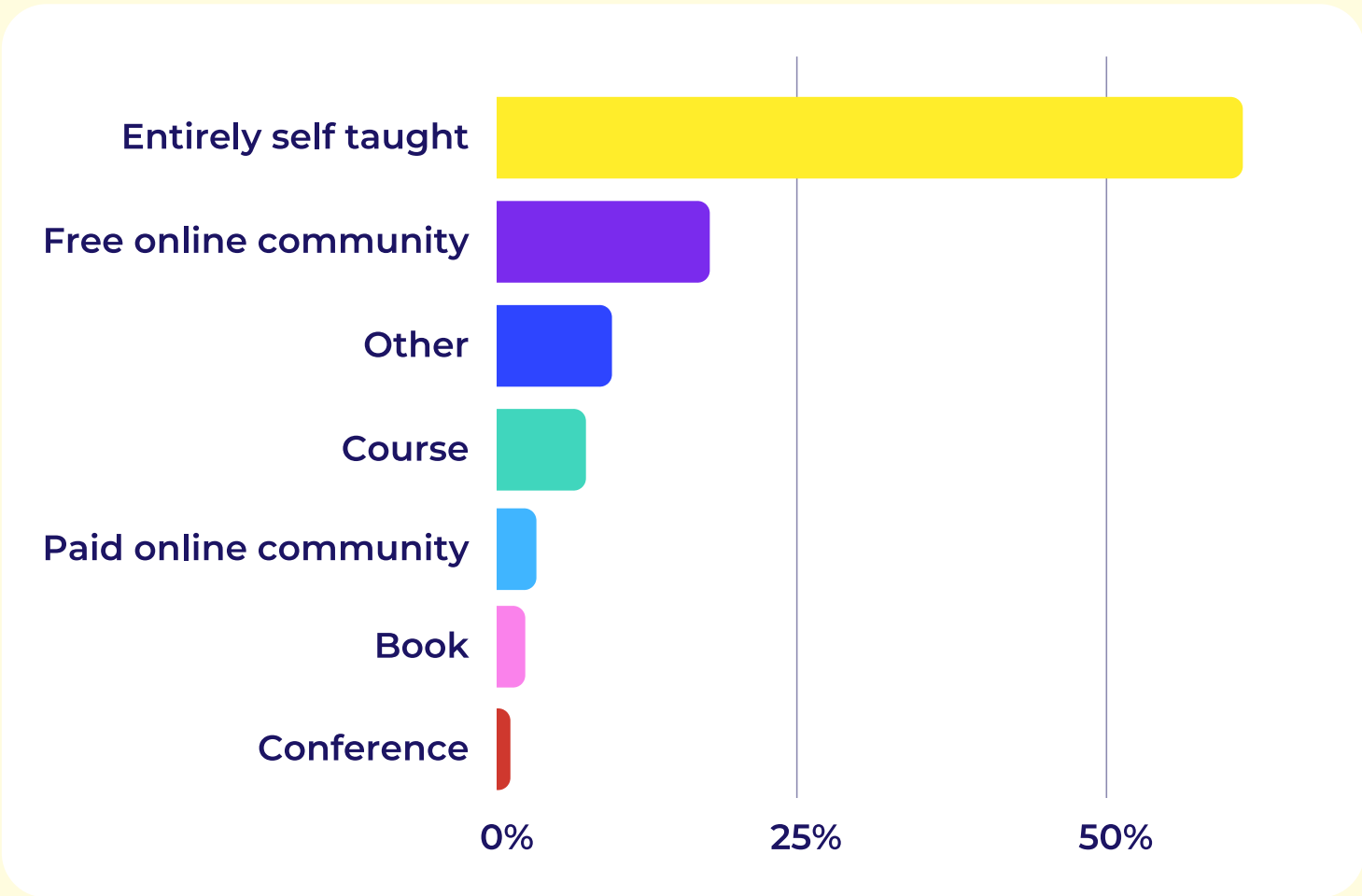
else. This makes a podcaster magnetic to their target audience, and when you combine it with long-term consistency, you have the perfect recipe for unstoppable growth.

Though most indies start out on a path of creativity and enjoyment, their ventures evolve into side gigs over time. Far from the old “sell out” route, though, this is done without giving up ownership or control. It isn’t so much about selling your podcast to a big network; it’s about sourcing and forging the partnerships that work best for you, monetising on your own terms, and paying your own way, using the platforms you know, like, and trust.

## Key Takeaways

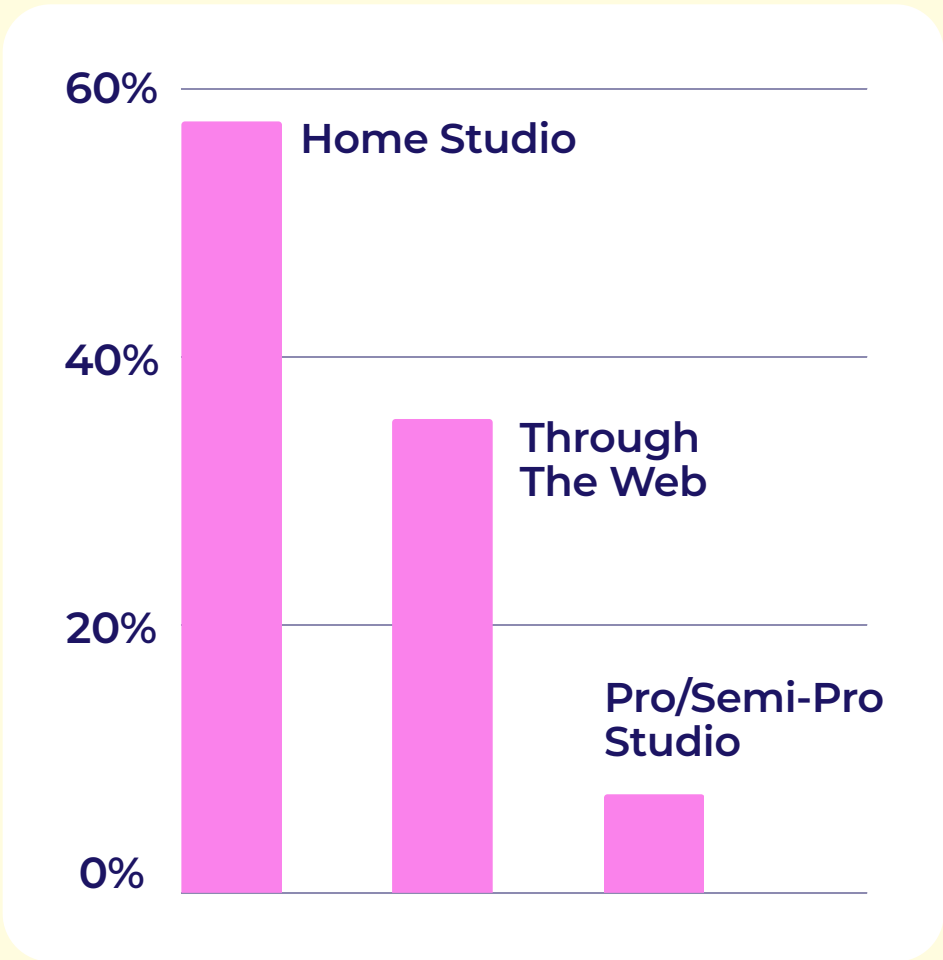
1. You don't need to be formally trained in podcasting. You can learn at your own pace, through your own experience, and from trusted free resources out there on the web.
2. You don't need to join up with networks, sponsors, or partners to make your show a success. These are all options, but you can make it work without them.
3. Embrace and own your voice, your background, and your perspective. You are truly unique.

# The Data



## Where did you learn to podcast?

IndiePodders are independent by nature, problem solvers, solution oriented.

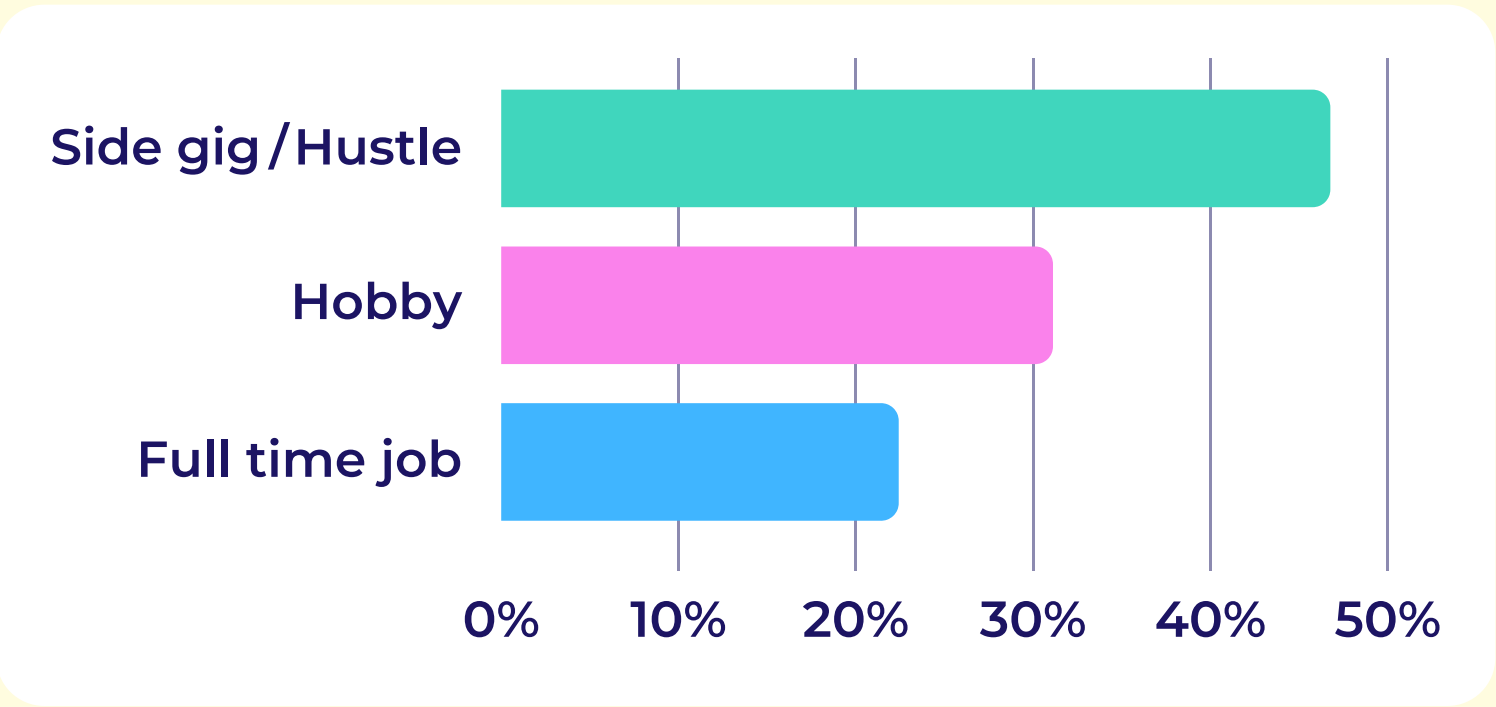


## Where do you currently record your podcast?

Empowered by their own determination, indiepodders record where and when it suits them, making the most of at-home setups.

## How do you view your podcast?

A modest difference between those carrying out podcasts for financial benefit and those purely podcasting for the passion of it.



“At Ausha, we think that Indie podcasters should stay independent, and in total control of where and how they promote their show, because it's their most important asset. They should also be able to pick the hosting, distribution, and monetization partners they want, without being locked into specific ecosystems.”

Odile Beniflah,  
Head of US at Ausha





## PILLAR SEVEN:

# Indies value individuality and applaud sincerity

**Independent podcasters have unique and diverse perspectives, which empowers differences and celebrates authenticity.**

For anyone collecting data, there can be satisfaction in spotting clear answers, big correlations, and obvious patterns. But, looking across the board at our thousands of survey participants, both in our Census and Podcast Planner, it's often more a case of diversity over dominance.

Indies are podcasting in all genres, from music and history to business and education, and that remains true from Gen X to Boomers and everyone in between. Indie podcasters of all ages and genders offer a broad spectrum of content with unique angles and solutions.

Two essential factors in podcasting are motivation and the definition of success.

There are also the struggles, obstacles, and challenges that stand between podcasters and their goals. Again, we see a wide range of perspectives here, which makes podcasting all the stronger for it.

Then, there are the nuts and bolts of podcast creation: how they look and how they sound. There's a healthy assortment of formulas here. Of video and audio, we see no clear dominance. Formats, episode lengths, and release schedules are also a mixed bag.

In all, this serves to create the melting pot of indie podcasting, which brings a tremendous diversity of content to our earbuds and should be celebrated.



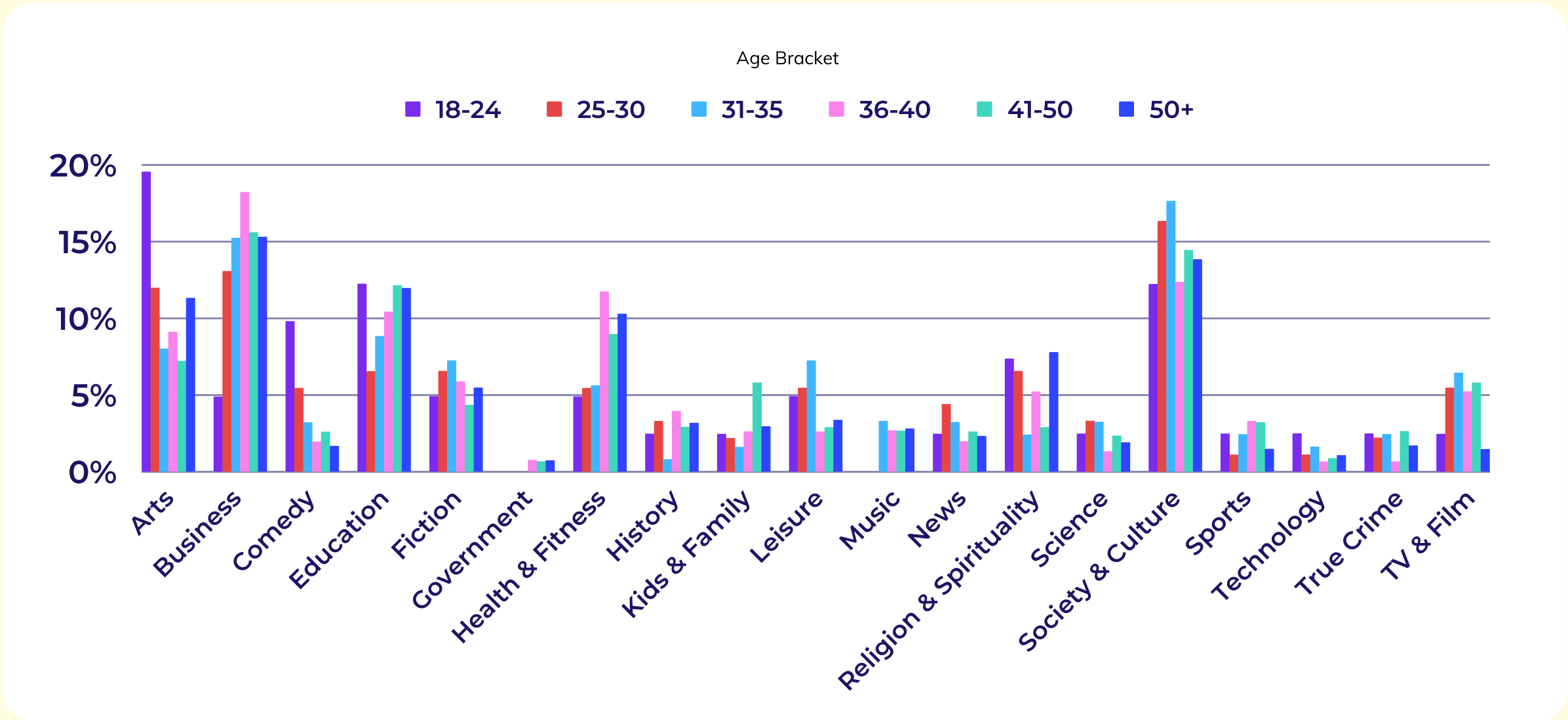
## Key Takeaways

1. There's no "success genre" in podcasting. Don't opt for a topic purely because you think it will be more popular than another you're more passionate about.
2. Likewise, your podcast won't live or die on factors like format and episode length. What enables you to get quality episodes out on a consistent basis?
3. Build relationships with podcasters of different backgrounds who're podcasting about completely different topics. This is how we learn and grow.

# The Data

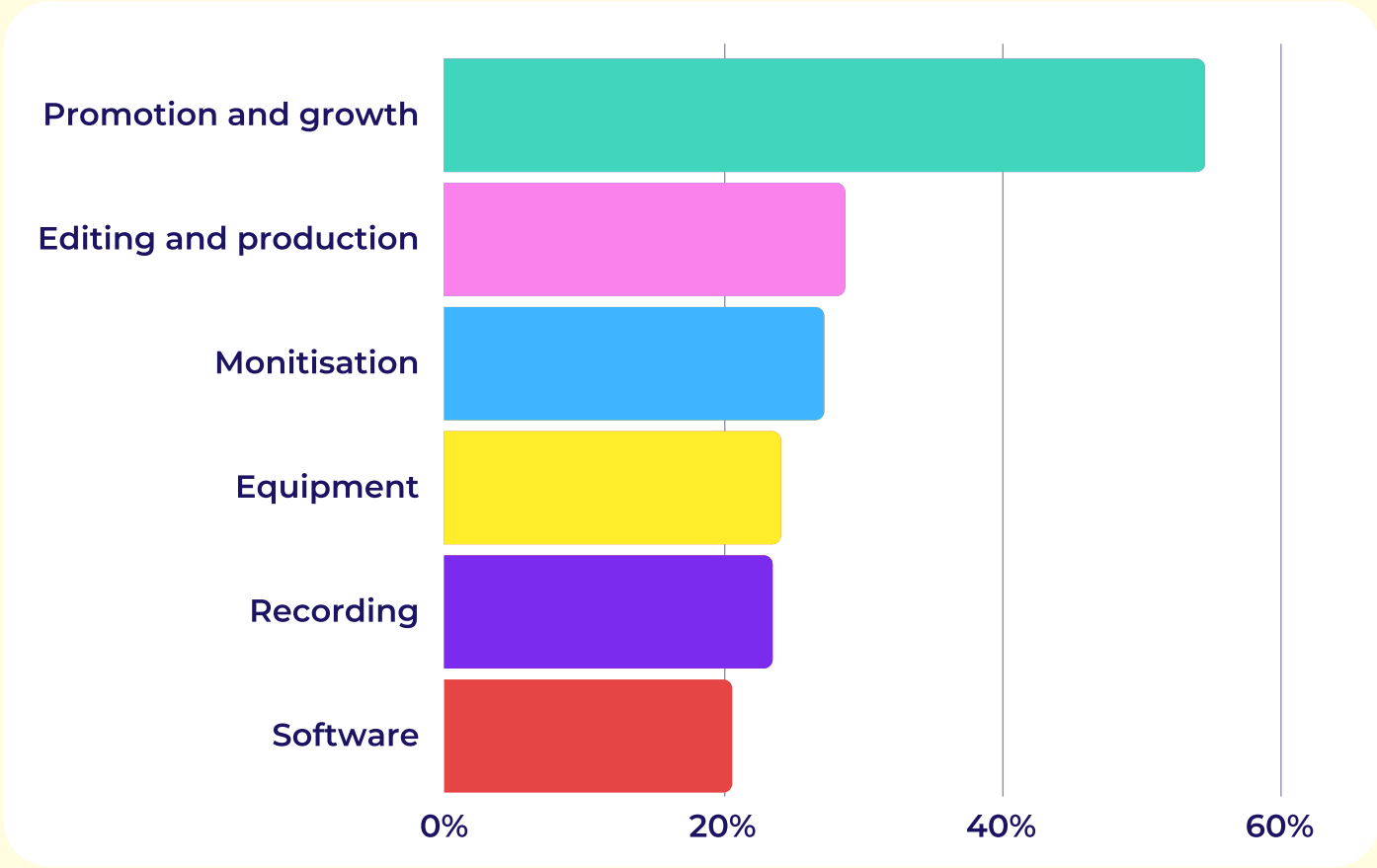
## Genre by Age Demographic

Despite a few more popular genres, we can observe that podcasters are a dynamic bunch, sharing content on topics across the spectrum.



## What stands between you and launching your podcast?

Marketing and listener growth are high priorities for podcasters, understanding what resonates is essential.



“Realizing that everything is not for everybody and that’s okay. You find your people, get into a rhythm and keep on going”

Holly Dines,  
IndiePodder



## PILLAR EIGHT:

# Indies use their passion to overcome challenges and defy the odds



## Many indie podcasters have suffered from impostor syndrome at some point in their journey.

People naturally compare themselves to others, and this is particularly true when starting a new podcast. There will always be someone better qualified, well-resourced, and with a bigger head start.

During the planning stages, new podcasters don't need to look far to find reasons not to start. Perhaps they feel too old, or too young. Maybe they're from a disadvantaged background and are entirely self-taught, whilst others around them are professionally trained. Or, what if they plan on running a "learning journey" style show, but wonder why anyone would listen when there are already experts out there?

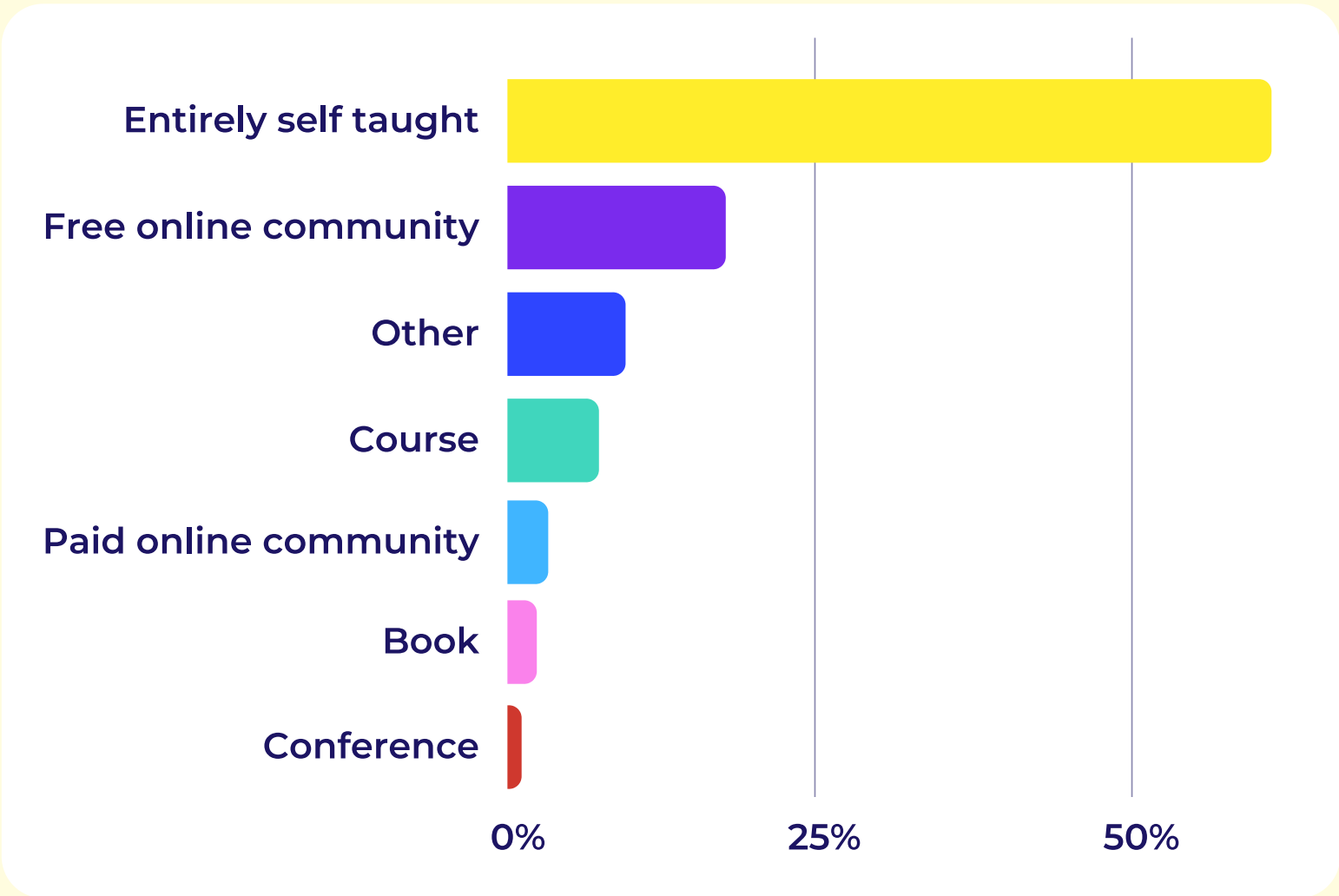
If these doubts and challenges were enough to put podcasters off completely, we'd never have any new podcasts. Fortunately, this isn't the case. Indies draw from a strong sense of purpose and an energetic enthusiasm to blast through any barriers, overcoming the odds to create content and community for those who need it most.

Indies build from the ground up, ever strengthened by the snags and hurdles they've overcome. Challenges never go away, no matter how many episodes someone has under their belt. But, in time, indies come to relish them instead of avoiding them. Often, the path of most resistance is ultimately the most rewarding.

## Key Takeaways

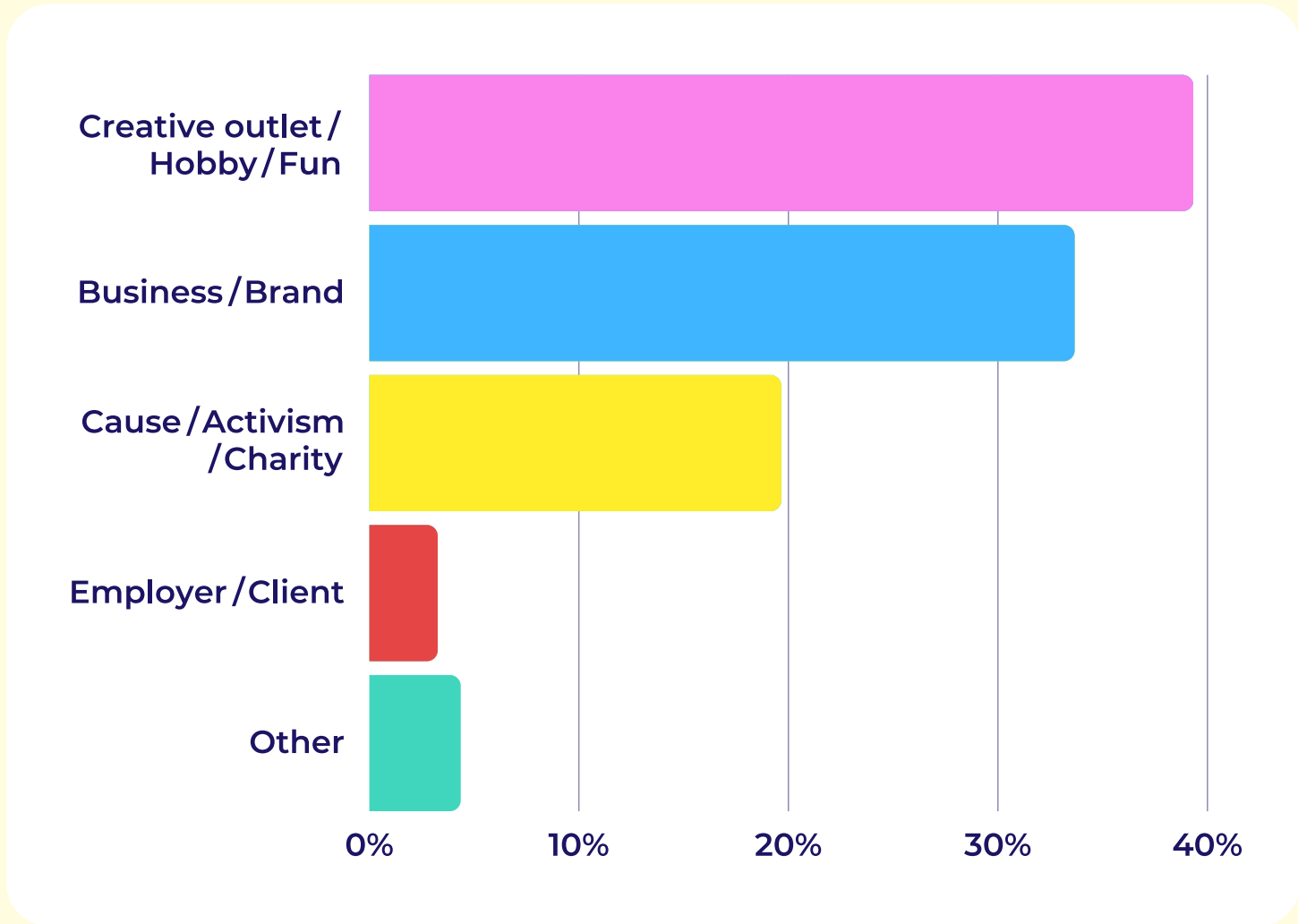
1. Make peace with your doubts and perceived limitations. They are completely natural. Always remember your "Why".
2. Don't compare yourself to others. There will always be someone out there with a bigger audience or more experience. You can never be them - but, more importantly - they can never be you.
3. Wear each challenge you overcome as a badge of honour. Look at everything you've been through in life so far, and you're still here!

# The Data



## Where did you learn?

Podcasting is an accessible medium across and embraces this through equitable values. Self education is encouraged and accessible.



## What is the purpose?

Indiepodders are driven by their curiosity and creativity.

“The drive to podcast, from independents, is fuelled by resilience, necessity, and enjoyment. Resilience is evident in those who persist behind the mic against all odds. Necessity arises as many individuals rely on podcasting to empower themselves and their communities, utilizing their voices as the sole means to do so. And yes, enjoyment, since podcasting is challenging. Despite the difficulties, the sheer delight and joy it brings serves as the fuel that motivates most of us to keep podcasting.”

Elsie Escobar,  
Director of Community and Content  
& Co-Founder of She Podcasts





## PILLAR NINE:

# Indies change the way their listeners see the world



## Podcasts are more than just another way to pass the time on that morning commute.

You're choosing to spend time with a particular podcaster or topic, and a lot of exciting chemistry can occur in your brain during that period.

We know indie podcasters have many perspectives, motivations, and purposes. And whether they're fully aware of it or not, they leave their listeners with a little something in each of their episodes. For some podcasters, that's to teach, coach, or motivate. For others, it's entertaining or pushing their audience's emotional buttons.

Each word a podcaster speaks in our ear colours another tiny pixel on our own lens of

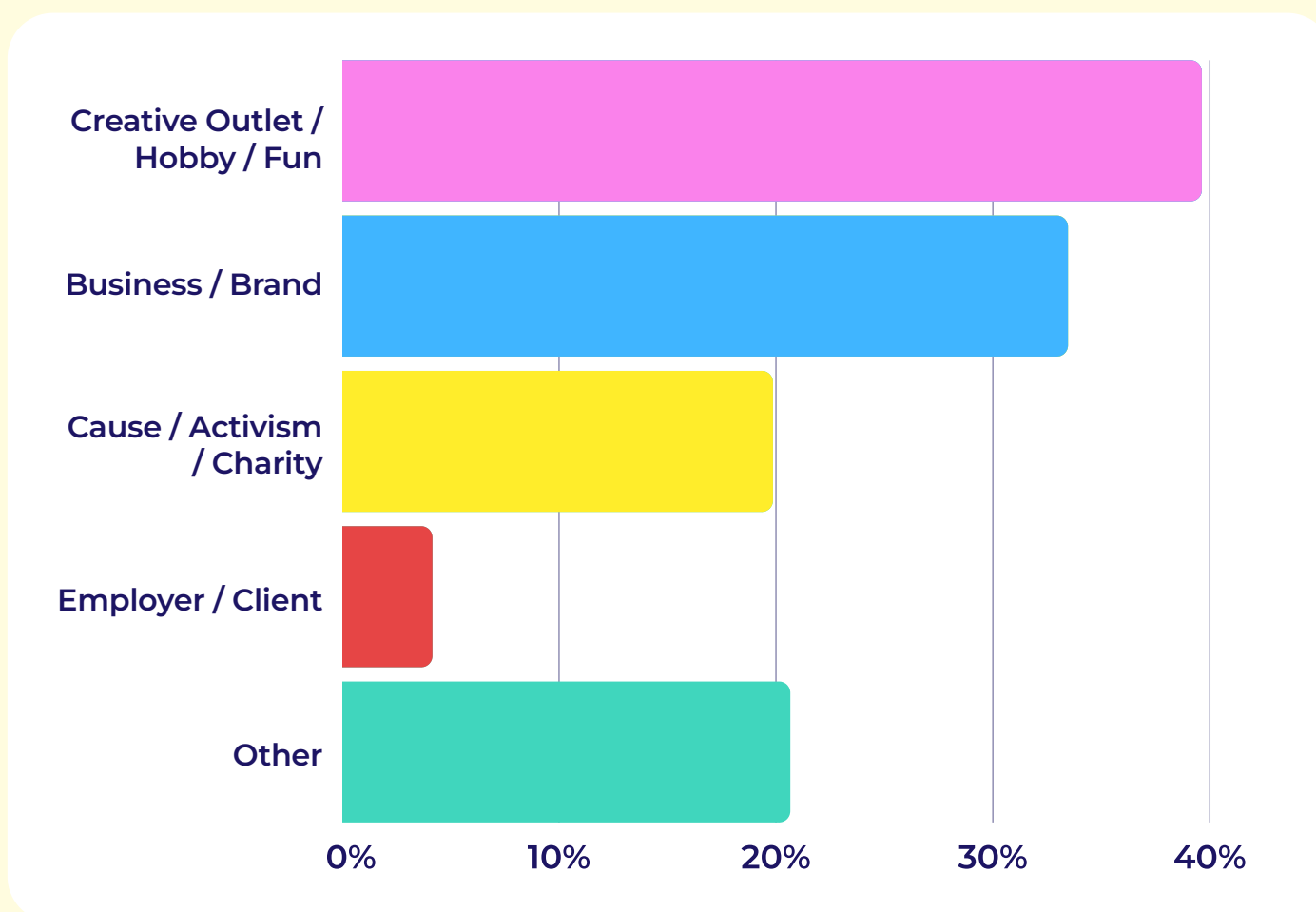
reality. That's not to say listeners blindly accept everything podcasters say, but there's a constant osmosis between our backgrounds, experiences, opinions, and the content we consume. Our minds are in flux, constantly updating, calibrating, and re-adjusting.

In a way, a podcast episode is a collaboration between the creator and the listener. A podcaster might create the audio, but the episode "happens" in the listener's mind. And because we use the tools of our own imaginations, it's fair to say that no two listeners will ever experience a podcast in the same way.

## Key Takeaways

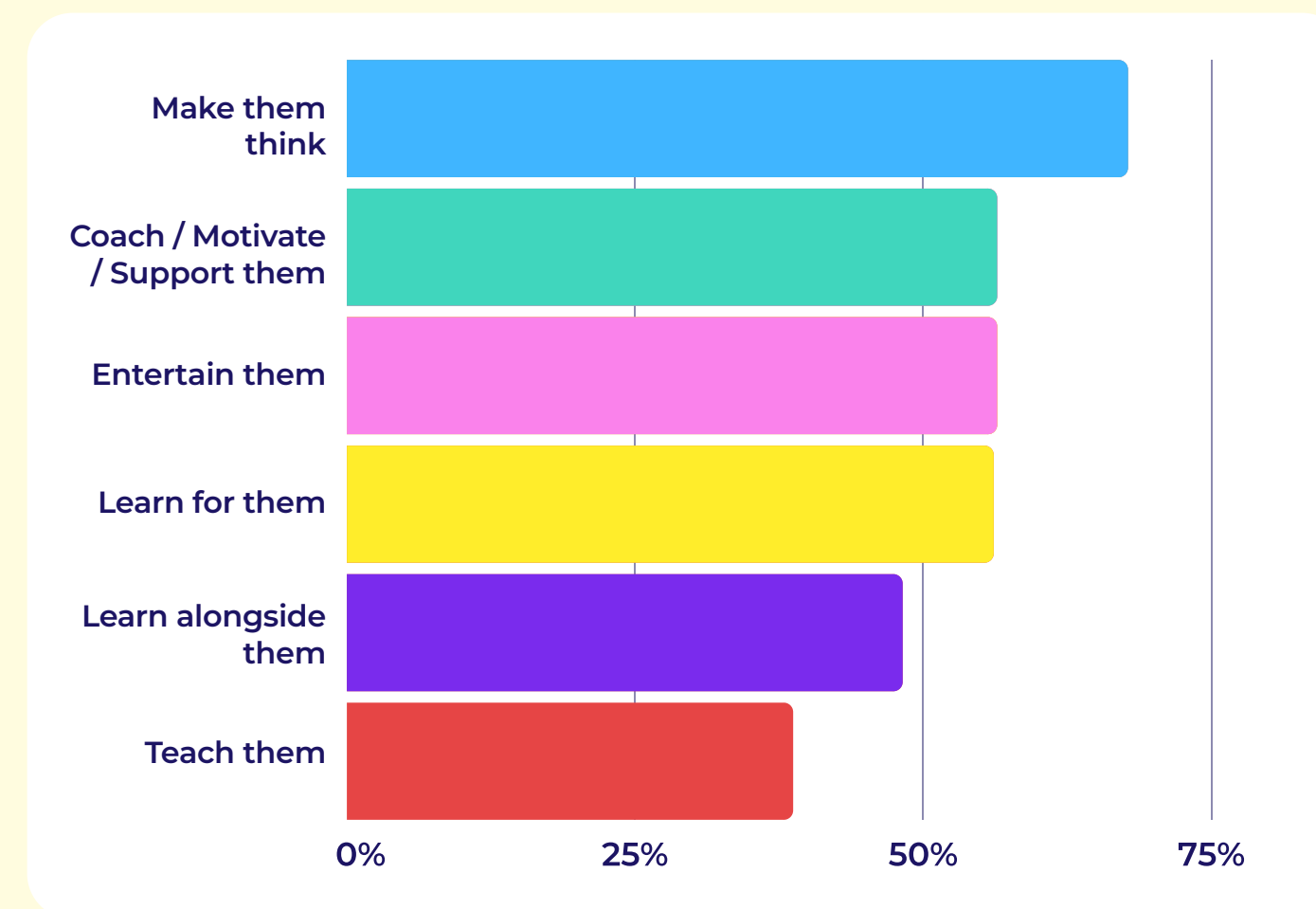
1. You might sometimes feel like you're talking to yourself when you get behind the mic, but remember that someone is always listening. And they've deliberately chosen to listen to you.
2. Recording comes with responsibility. This shouldn't hold you back or subdue your authenticity, but it's important to remember that words have power. What you say can have a profound impact on someone, for better or for worse.
3. Embrace the privilege of creating such intimate content that's so widely accessible. Push the boundaries of what's possible with sound, and keep your listeners wanting more.

# The Data



## What is the purpose of your podcast?

Fulfilling one's self is a guiding purpose for podcasting, perhaps that honesty of passion and insatiable appetite to satisfy one's own curiosities is what translates so powerfully to the listener.



## What problem are you solving for your listener?

Over 35% of experienced podcasters agree, playing the long is the single most essential ingredient to achieving success in podcasting, followed, albeit well behind, by planning and good equipment.

“Independent podcasters don't have the same restrictions that network-backed or branded podcasts have and are therefore free to think really big. Because of this, we hear from creators on all sorts of topics — weird, wonderful, and everything in between. A potential listener can search for any topic they're interested in and find something on that topic. It's not always going to be the best audio quality or have the strongest, most sustainable premises, but independent creators are constantly trying new things and expanding beyond the bounds of traditional media.”

Arielle Nissenblatt,  
Head of Community and Content  
at SquadCast.fm, and Founder and Head  
Curator at EarBuds Podcast Collective



# Indies put purpose and passion ahead of fame and fortune



## Podcasting success varies a lot, depending on who you ask.

But one thing most indies have in common is that fame and fortune are pretty low on their radar.

Sure, money can pay the bills and give us more freedom and opportunities. Few people would go as far as to knock it back. But there's a reason the world's not full of wealthy podcasters who started out with the ultimate goal of getting rich. These people tend to quit after a handful of episodes, if they even start at all.

For many indies, podcasting success is being able to help, support, and motivate their listeners. To others, it's all about that creative outlet and

the act of having fun. We also see frequent examples of podcasters who want to bring about change, raise awareness, or build a reputation as thought leaders. In some cases, it's a combination of all of the above.

When podcasters have a passion or purpose, combined with the workflow and tools to consistently publish new episodes, outcomes like money and authority are natural byproducts.

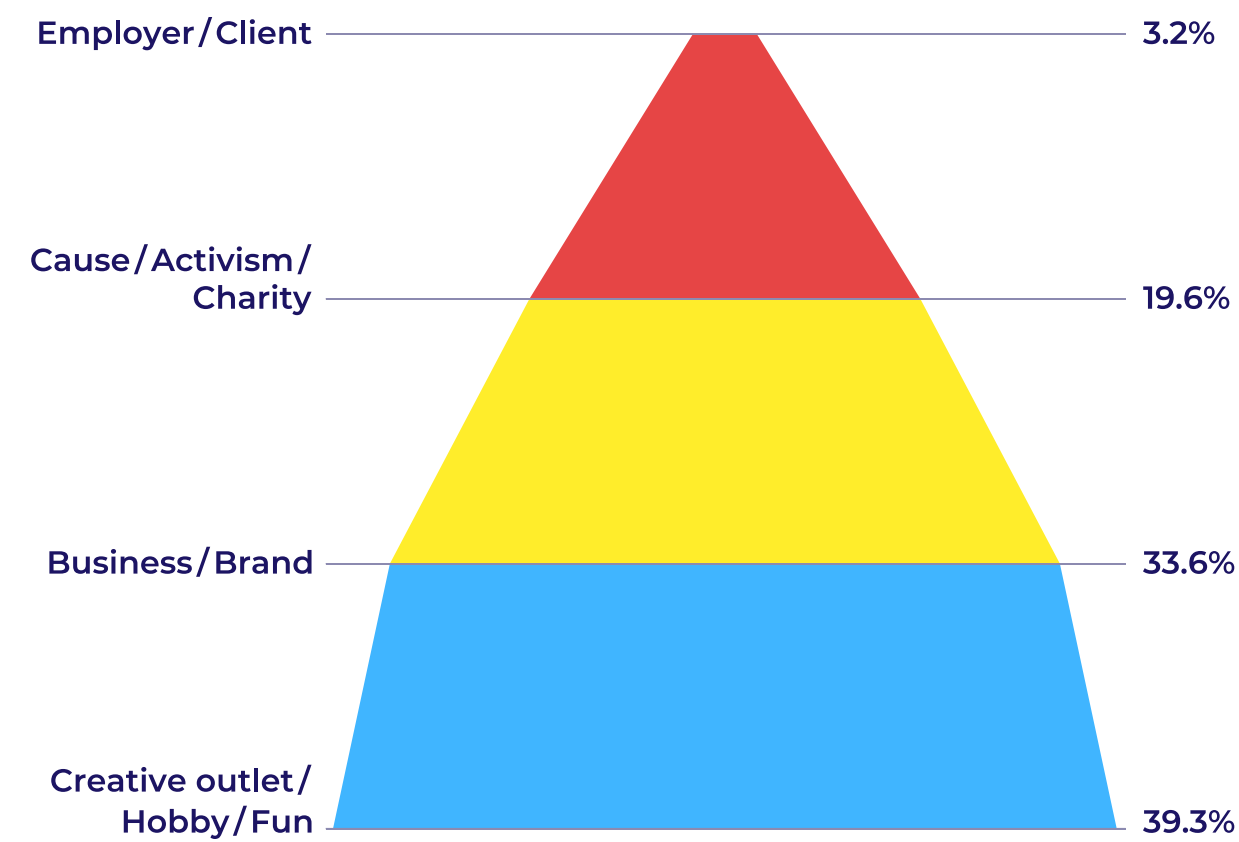
Of course, this doesn't mean that many indies aren't setting out to build or grow a business. But monetisation requires an engaged audience, and in an intimate medium like podcasting, the goals of fame and fortune aren't going to bring one kicking down your door.

## Key Takeaways

1. Ambitions and aims to make money in podcasting are fine, but they can't be your primary motivation.
2. It takes time to grow an audience, let alone monetise it. Without a compelling "Why" in place, quitting is easy once you don't see immediate results.
3. If you turn up consistently for the long haul with the same enthusiasm and passion in episode 100 as in episode one, then you'll have no shortage of monetisation opportunities.

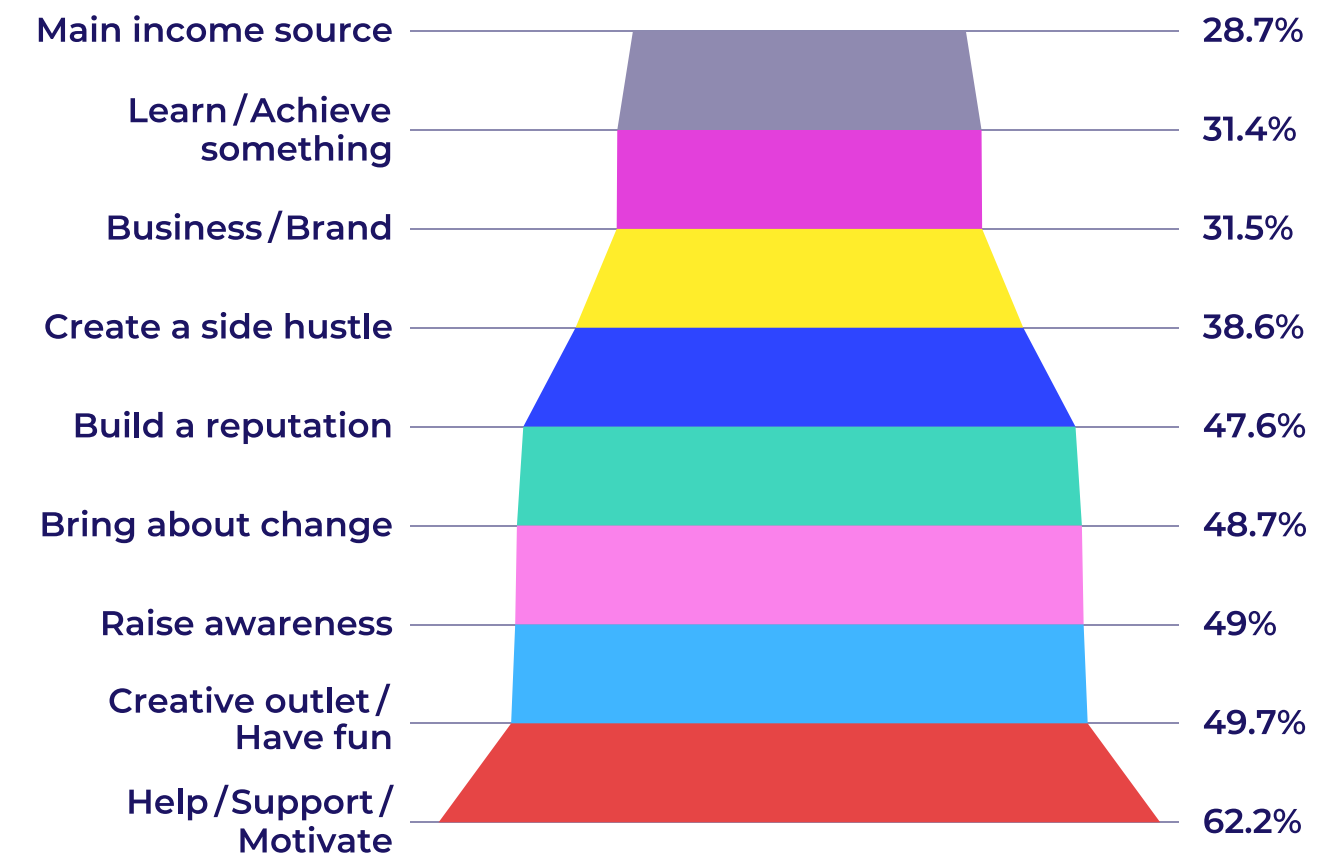


# The Data



## What is the purpose of your podcast?

Indie podcasters are driven by creativity and the opportunity to share a message and be heard. We've re-visualised this data to show just how foundational these are.



## What does podcasting success look like to you?

Together, between the motivations for success and purpose, these capture the reasoning, justification and purposefulness with which indies approach their podcasting. By embracing these pillars and turning up for the long haul, you plant a flag for what you're achieving and set the path for where you're headed.



**“My first question to any new podcaster is always: “Are you excited enough about this idea that you would commit to it for 3 years even if no one ever listened? I've had the privilege of getting to know a lot of really successful indie podcasters, and in almost every case, this was the mentality they went in with.”**

Jeremy Enns,  
Founder & Lead Podcast Growth  
Strategist at Podcast Marketing  
Academy



# Home is where the like-minded people are

Come and visit the 1200 trailblazing podcasters in the IndiePod community, and tell us all about what you're working on. Stay for the lively discussion, monthly events and free resources. **We can't wait to meet you!**

[indiepod.thepodcasthost.com](https://indiepod.thepodcasthost.com)

The  
Podcast  
Host



# Alitu

## Super simple podcast maker for indie creators

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"Our podcast wouldn't be possible without Alitu. We use it for absolutely everything - recording audio, inviting guests, editing and publishing the finished product. It is so easy to use and we would never consider using anything else!"

James, co-host of Dates, Weights and Protein Shakes

