



RETRO REVIVAL



FOR BRANDS INTENT ON INFLUENCING CULTURE, THE NOSTALGIA TREND IS KEY

SPECIAL REPORT / JUNE 2026



LUMINATE

Introduction

Want to Get Ahead? Look Back

There may be no more powerful trend making its mark on 2026 than the nostalgia that pervades pop culture.

Look no further than social media, where the memes that came to dominate the early part of the year ranged from the ubiquitous “2026 is the new 2016” rallying cry that hearkened back to what consumers loved most a decade ago to the celebrities sharing their 1990s-era photos set to the tune of the Goo Goo Dolls hit “Iris.” And that yearning for yesteryear extends far beyond Instagram or TikTok. Some of the biggest songs released in 2026 are blatant throwbacks to the 1990s and Y2K. Reboots and revivals of beloved properties have flooded both big and small screens. Analog media, such as CDs and DVDs, have found renewed popularity among those younger than Spotify and Netflix.

So why are we all drowning in nostalgia lately? First, thank the internet, where all of human history is a click away, micro-niches chip away at the monoculture, and algorithms repurpose past trends for younger generations. Combine this unprecedented accessibility to days gone by with an increasingly turbulent present, and it makes sense why the younger, highly online generations are finding solace in the past. Naturally, marketers have noticed the nostalgia; just think back to the 2026 Super Bowl, where companies from Pepsi to T-Mobile flooded the big game with commercials that blitzed our collective cultural memories.

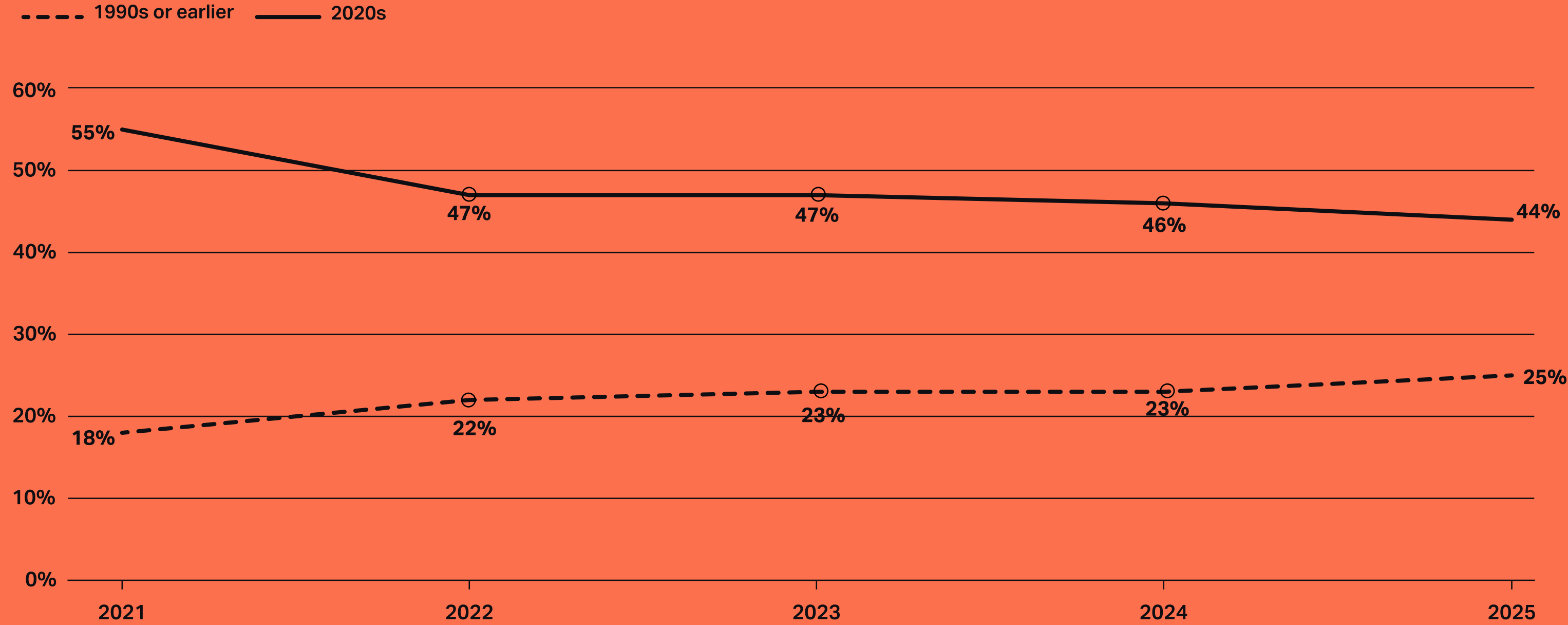
But there are many more strategies brands can employ beyond the most expensive night on the primetime calendar to tap into this golden age of nostalgia. And Luminate data can help. This report utilizes Luminate consumption and survey data to explore how nostalgia informs U.S. consumers’ preferences and decision-making. As more people than ever are regularly listening to older music, this deep dive uses Luminate’s extensive music consumption data as a springboard for analyzing current consumer trends defined by nostalgia. In doing so, we provide key examples of how Luminate findings can help brands leverage nostalgia and effectively reach consumers.

Of course, nostalgia is just one of many data-driven trends on which Luminate is capable of helping marketers capitalize to get across their brand messages, from our ability to spotlight emerging artists they want to work with to detecting trends in growing global markets. But there’s no better time than this year’s Cannes Lions event — which annually brings together brands and platforms for an exploration of best practices — to zero in on the nostalgia surge that no executive can afford to ignore.

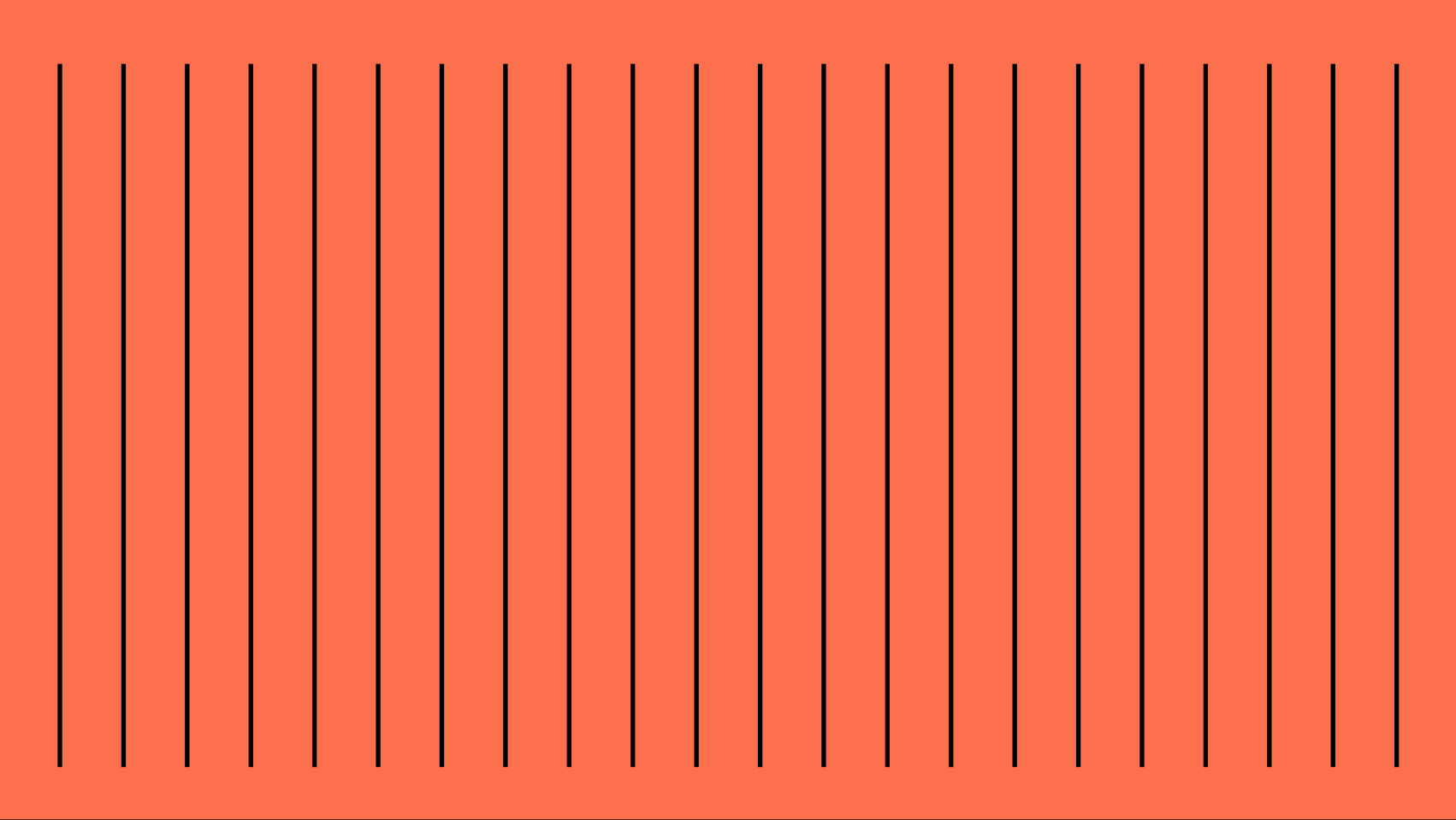
CONSUMERS AGES 13-24 ARE INCREASINGLY TURNING AWAY FROM CURRENT MUSIC TO ENGAGE WITH SONGS RELEASED BEFORE THEY WERE BORN.

FAVORITE DECADE OF MUSIC, AMONG TEENS AND YOUNG ADULTS

Share of U.S. consumers ages 13-24 who listen to the following decades of music the most



SOURCE: LUMINATE U.S. ARTIST + GENRE TRACKER, 2025





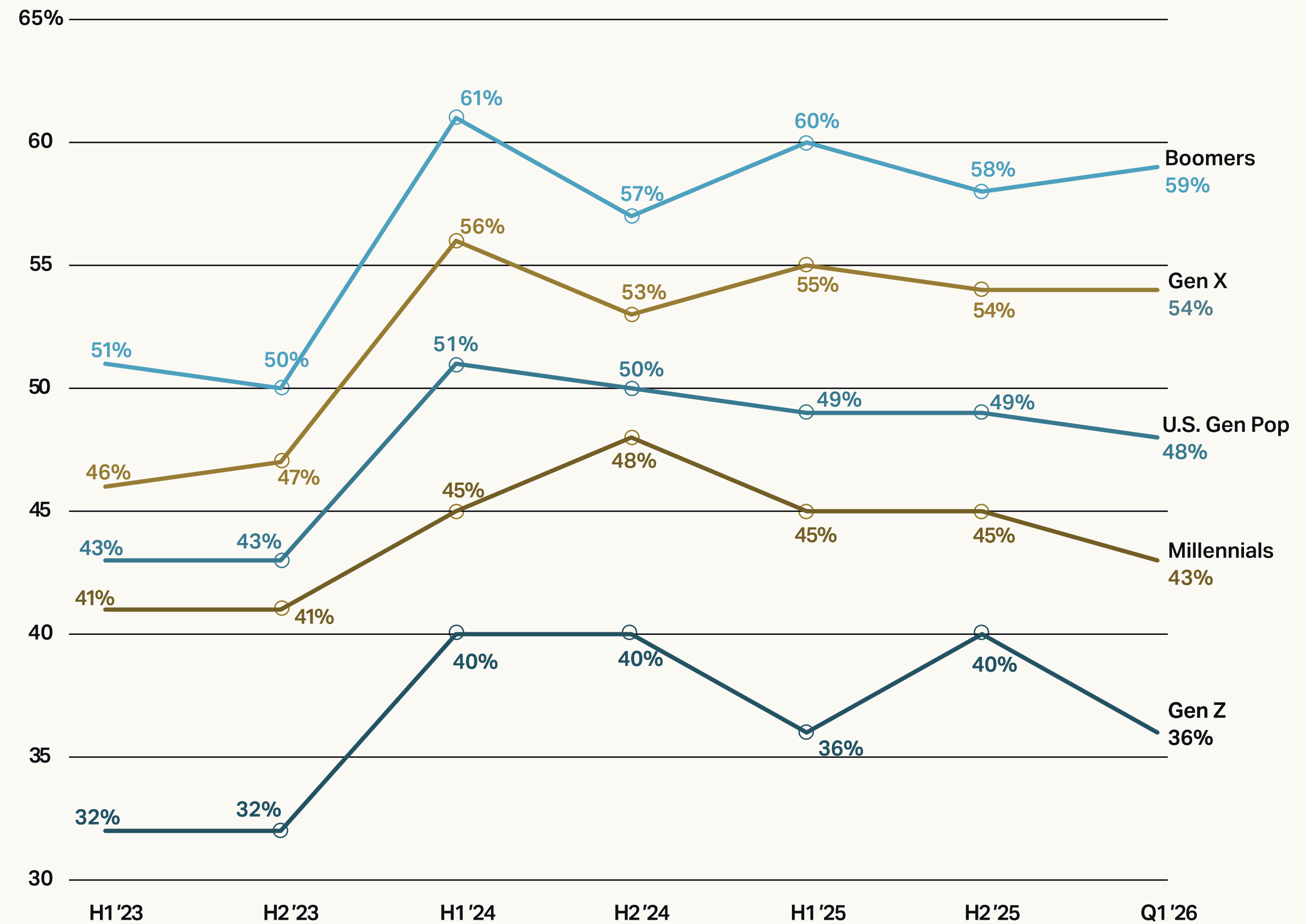
JOHN LENNON
CREDIT: ETHAN A. RUSSELL

Interest in older music is on the rise for every age group.

As consumers age, they're much more likely to say they enjoy listening to past decades of music — with Boomers the most likely, followed in order of birth by Gen X, Millennials and Gen Z. This makes sense given that each generation of listeners tends to form its preferences when they're young and carry them throughout their lives.

LISTENERSHIP OF MUSIC FROM PAST DECADES

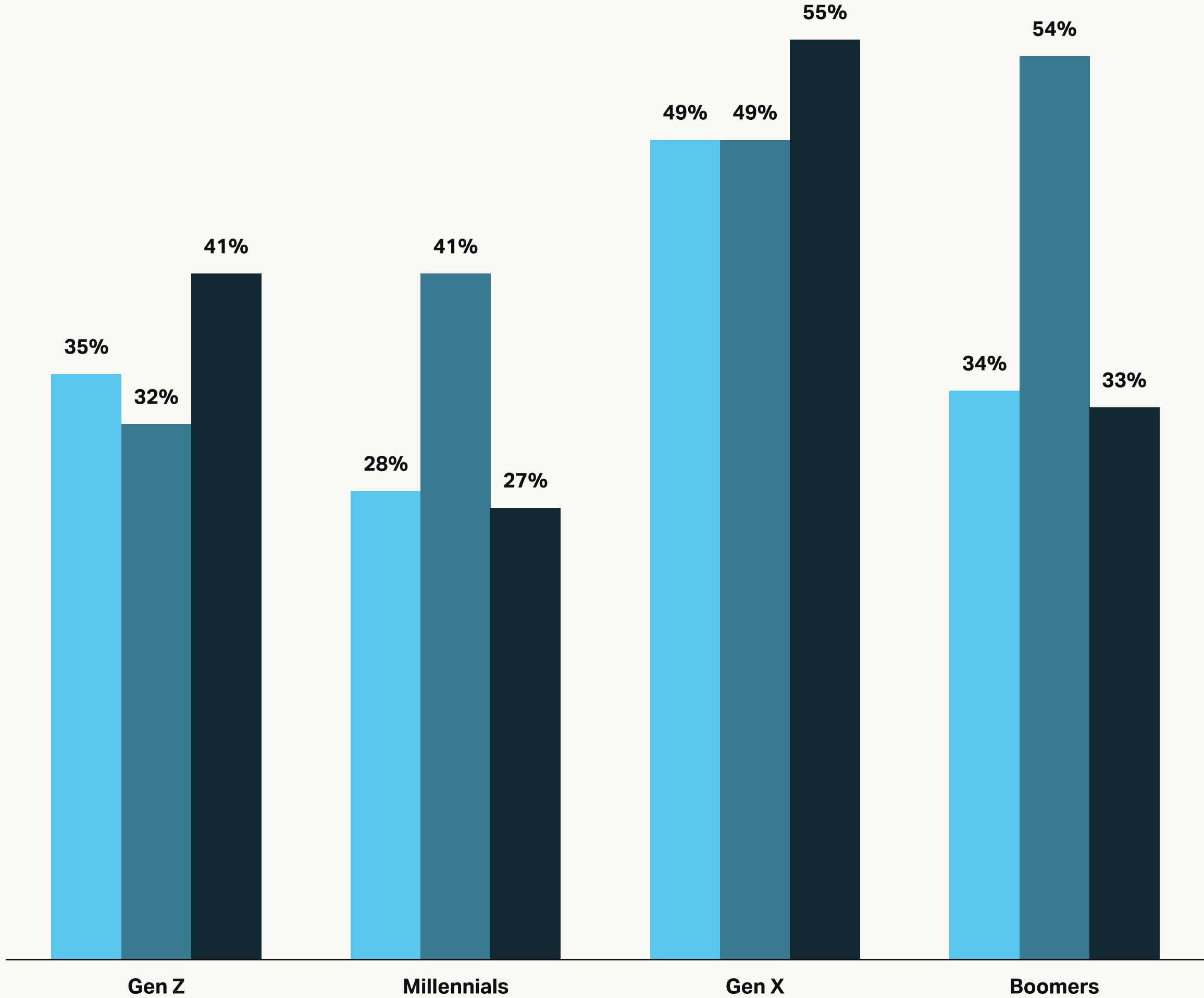
Share of music listeners who strongly agreed with the statement, "I enjoy listening to music from past decades"



MUSIC PURCHASE MOTIVATION, BY GENERATION

Share of music purchasers who selected "nostalgia" as an important factor when deciding to purchase each of the following formats

● CDs ● Vinyl ● Cassettes



Physical media is back, and nostalgia is a big reason why.

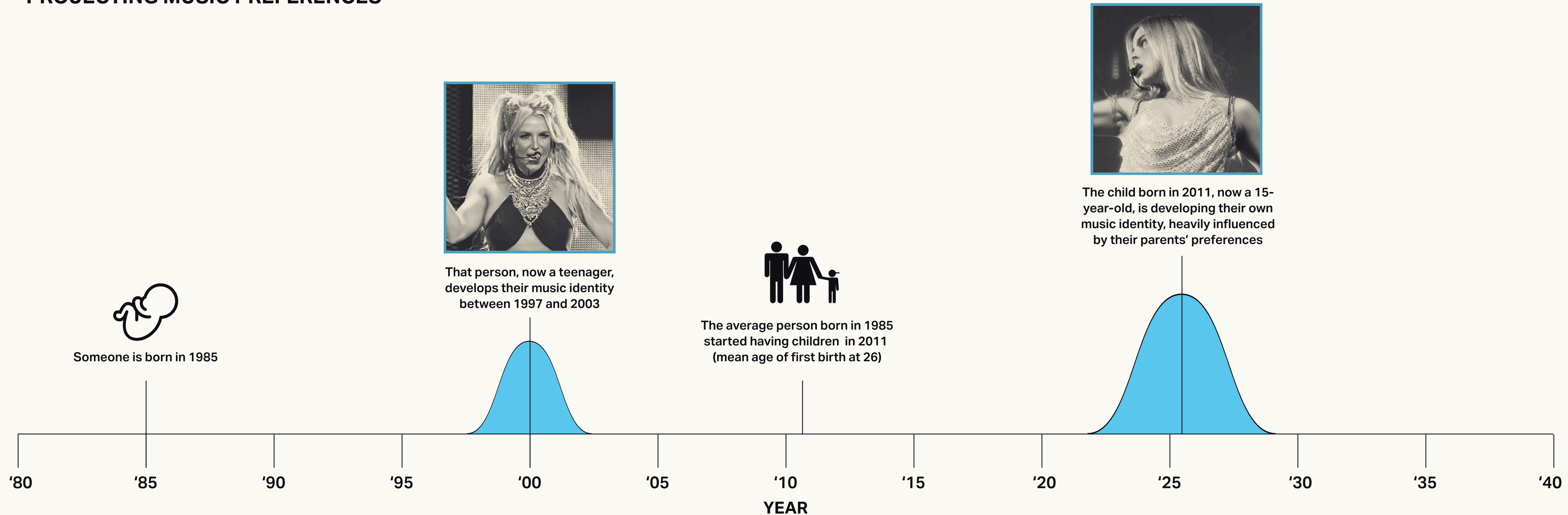
Vinyl, CDs and even cassette tapes were once thought dead, dying or niche, but now sales for all three are reinvigorated. Consumers specifically say nostalgia is what's motivating them, particularly Gen Xers who experienced firsthand the emergence of all these physical media formats.

SOURCE: LUMINATE U.S. MUSIC 360, 2025

Data can be used to predict when music will make a nostalgic resurgence.

Each age group's music preferences predominantly take shape during their teen years. Consequently, the resurgence of those preferences can be anticipated years later — when that age group has children. For example, if a person born in 1985 develops their musical tastes between 1997 and 2003, a nostalgic resurgence of music from those years can be anticipated to materialize largely during the 2020s, including the prominence of new Y2K-era acts such as Addison Rae and PinkPantheress.

PROJECTING MUSIC PREFERENCES





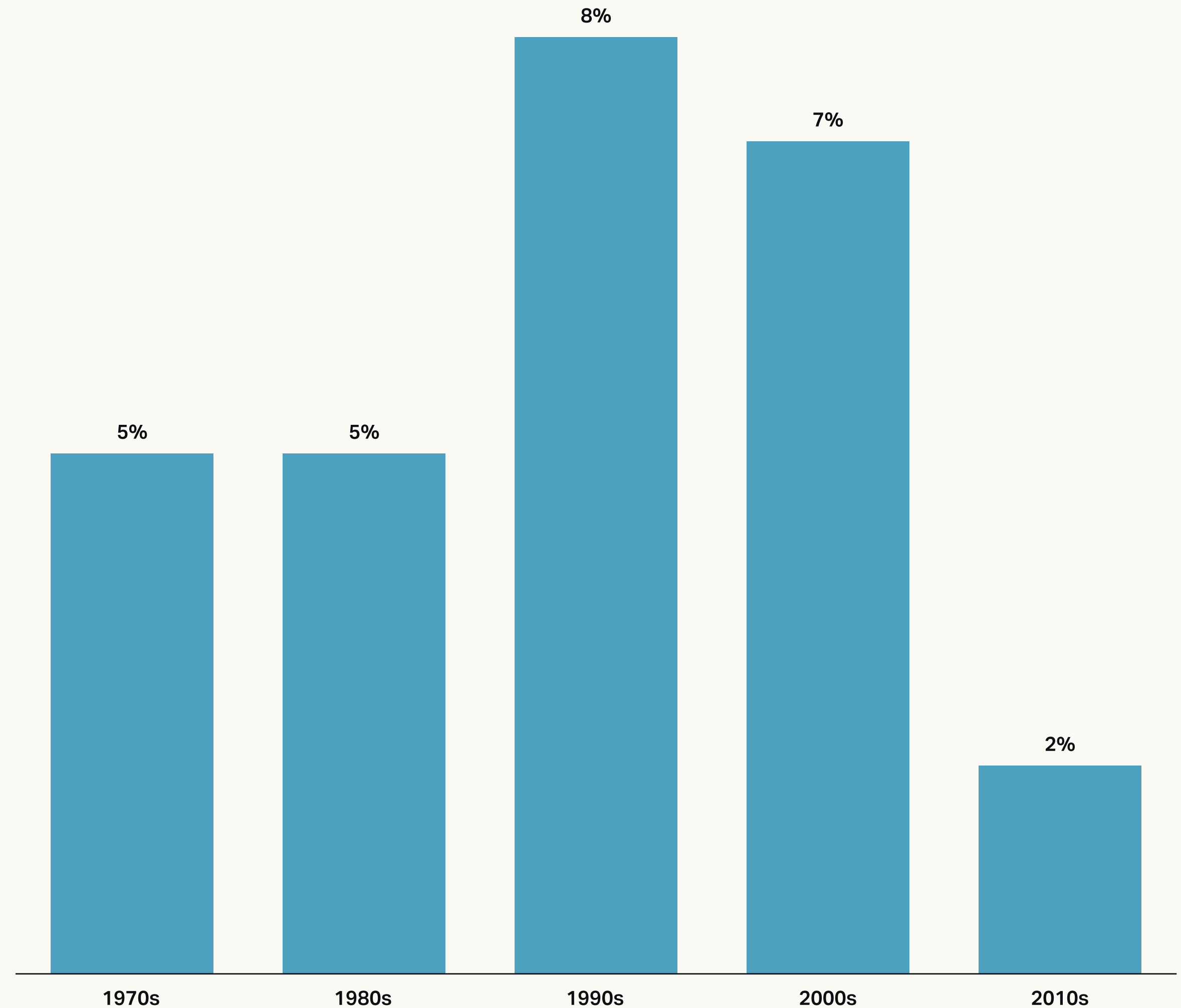
NSYNC
CREDIT: WWD, DNR

1990s and 2000s music nostalgia is peaking.

Streaming consumption of popular music titles released in the 1990s and 2000s is growing faster in recent quarters than catalog titles released in other decades, a trend developing alongside the reemergence of Y2K-era culture, style and aesthetics. The timing of the Y2K revival aligns with the intergenerational music theory posited on the previous slide: Parents of today's teens are likely to have developed their music preferences during the '90s and 2000s, which in turn influences the music interests of the kids in their households.

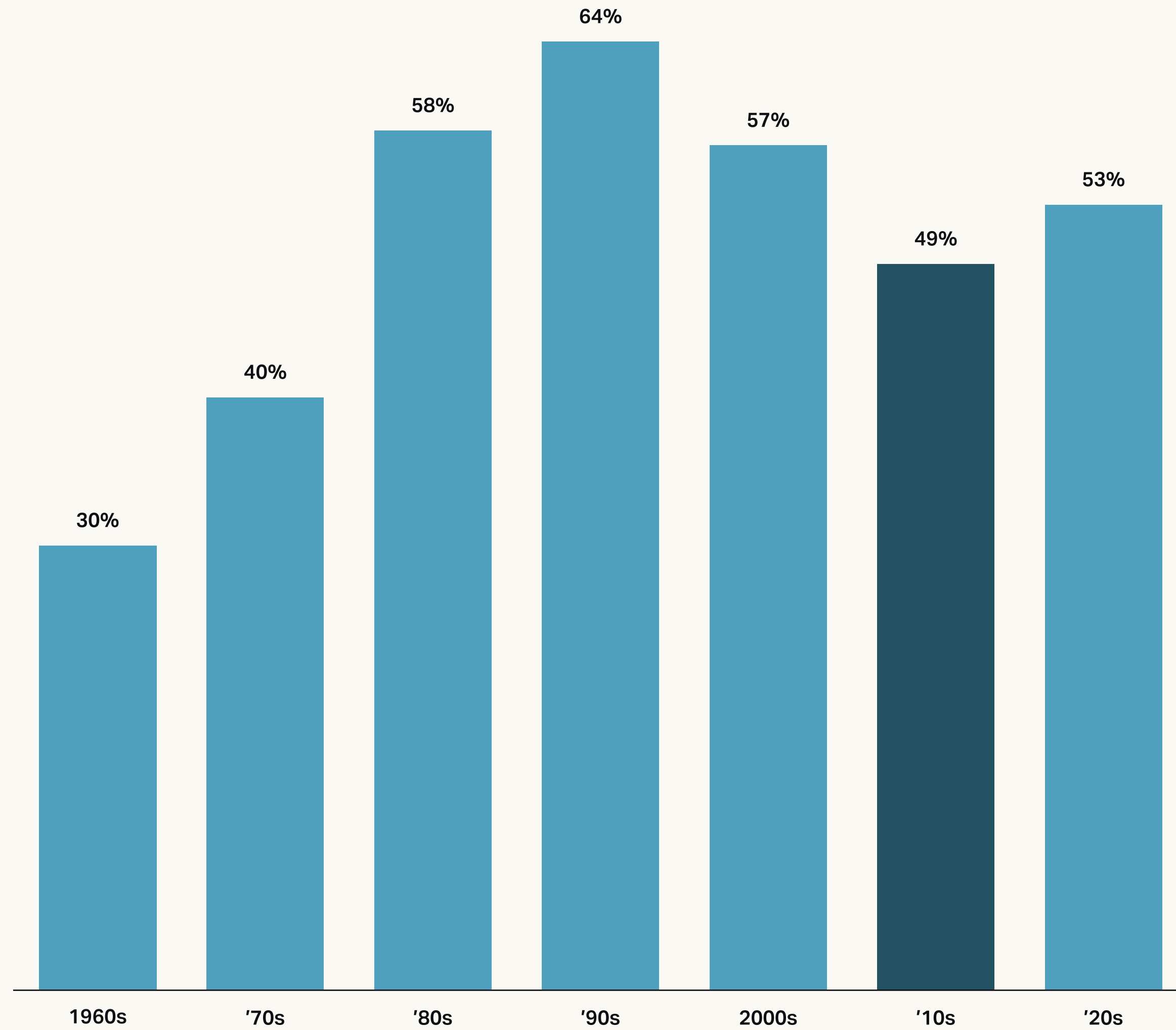
MUSIC STREAMING GROWTH, BY RELEASE DECADE

On-demand audio average YoY growth rate, Q2 2024 vs. Q2 2025, among top 35K titles released 1970-2015



DECADES OF MUSIC CONSUMERS LISTEN TO

Among U.S. gen pop



SOURCE: LUMINATE U.S. ARTIST + GENRE TRACKER, 2025



RIHANNA
CREDIT: FILMMAGIC

Music from the 2010s is due for a revival.

Songs from the 2010s are currently less popular, with fewer people listening than to other decades of music. But the intergenerational music theory explains why a comeback can be expected: The cohort of listeners most likely to return to 2010s music — consumers born in the 1990s and 2000s — are Gen Zers still carrying the influences of their parents' music preferences even as they develop their own.



GOO GOO DOLLS
CREDIT: RYAN PERGOLA

Viral songs can be anticipated from previous eras.

Brands can evaluate streaming activity to identify older songs from previous decades of music that are in vogue again. For instance, most of the fastest-growing top 20 catalog titles in 2025 were 1990s and 2000s releases, often returning to current popularity because they are trending on TikTok or appearing in a widely seen streaming TV show or film.

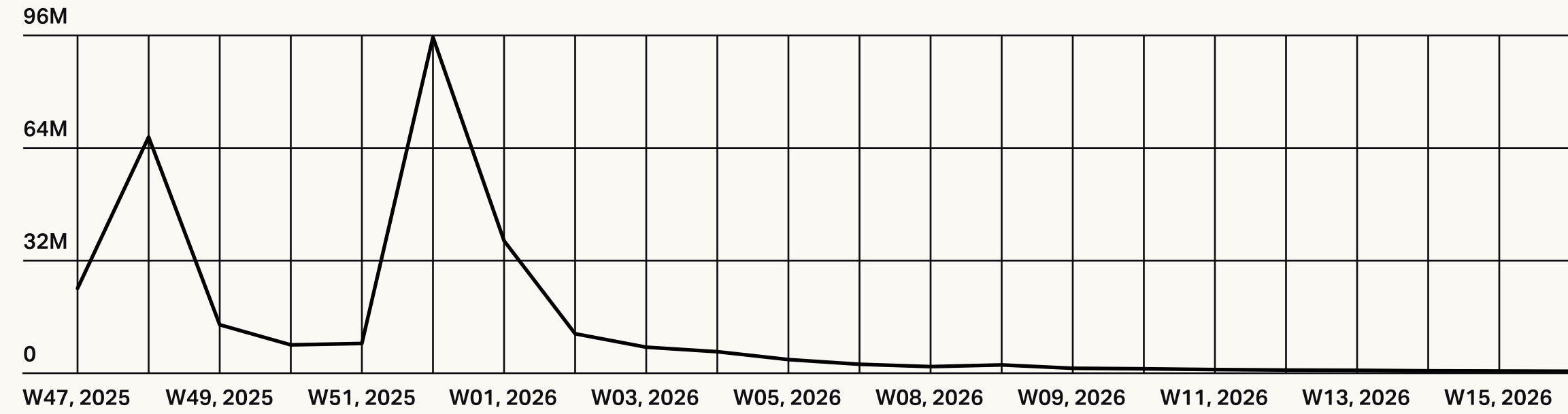
TOP 10 FASTEST-GROWING CATALOG TITLES

U.S. on-demand audio streaming volume growth, 2025 vs. 2024

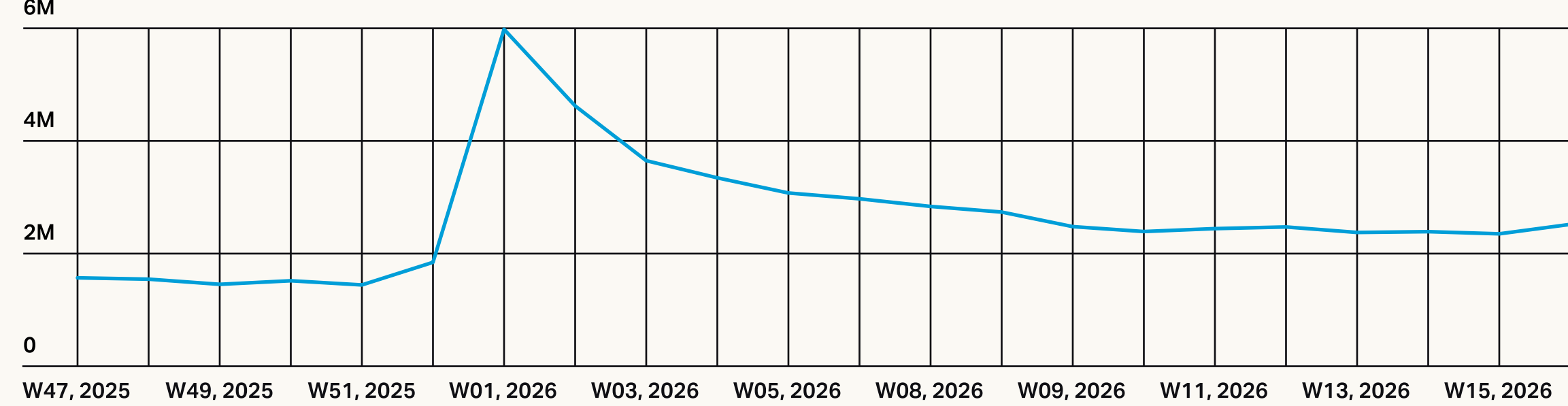
Title	Artist	Decade Released	Released ODA Increase	ODA Growth (%)
"Headlock"	Imogen Heap	'00s	172.1M	419%
"Let Down"	Radiohead	'90s	153.5M	685%
"Creep"	Radiohead	'90s	124.7M	64%
"Iris"	Goo Goo Dolls	'90s	116.4M	52%
"Breakin' Dishes"	Rihanna	'00s	109.2M	150%
"Rock That Body"	Black Eyed Peas	'00s	106.5M	705%
"Lover, You Should've Come Over"	Jeff Buckley	'90s	104.8M	232%
"August 10"	Julie Doiron	'90s	89M	721%
"Sparks"	Coldplay	'00s	86.7M	59%
"Neon Moon"	Brooks & Dunn	'90s	77.3M	48%

STREAMING CONNECTION: *STRANGER THINGS* LIFTS PRINCE

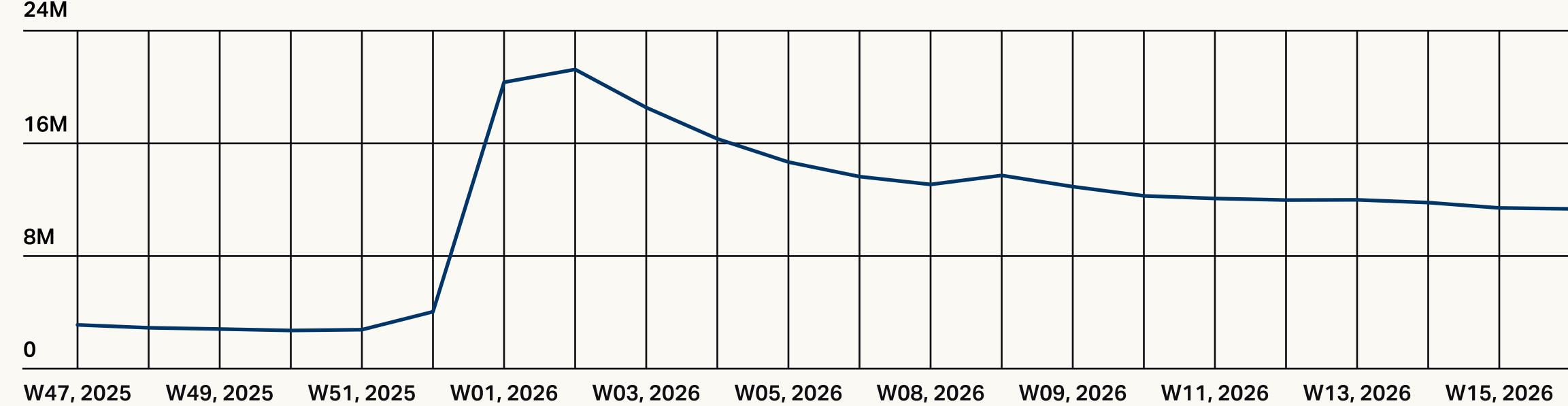
“Stranger Things” S5 (Total Hours Watched)



“When Doves Cry” (Global ODA Streams)



“Purple Rain” (Global ODA Streams)



SOURCE: LUMINATE STREAMING VIEWERSHIP (M) (HOURS WATCHED); LUMINATE CONNECT (ON-DEMAND AUDIO STREAMS)



STRANGER THINGS
CREDIT: COURTESY OF NETFLIX

Older songs find new life on SVOD and social.

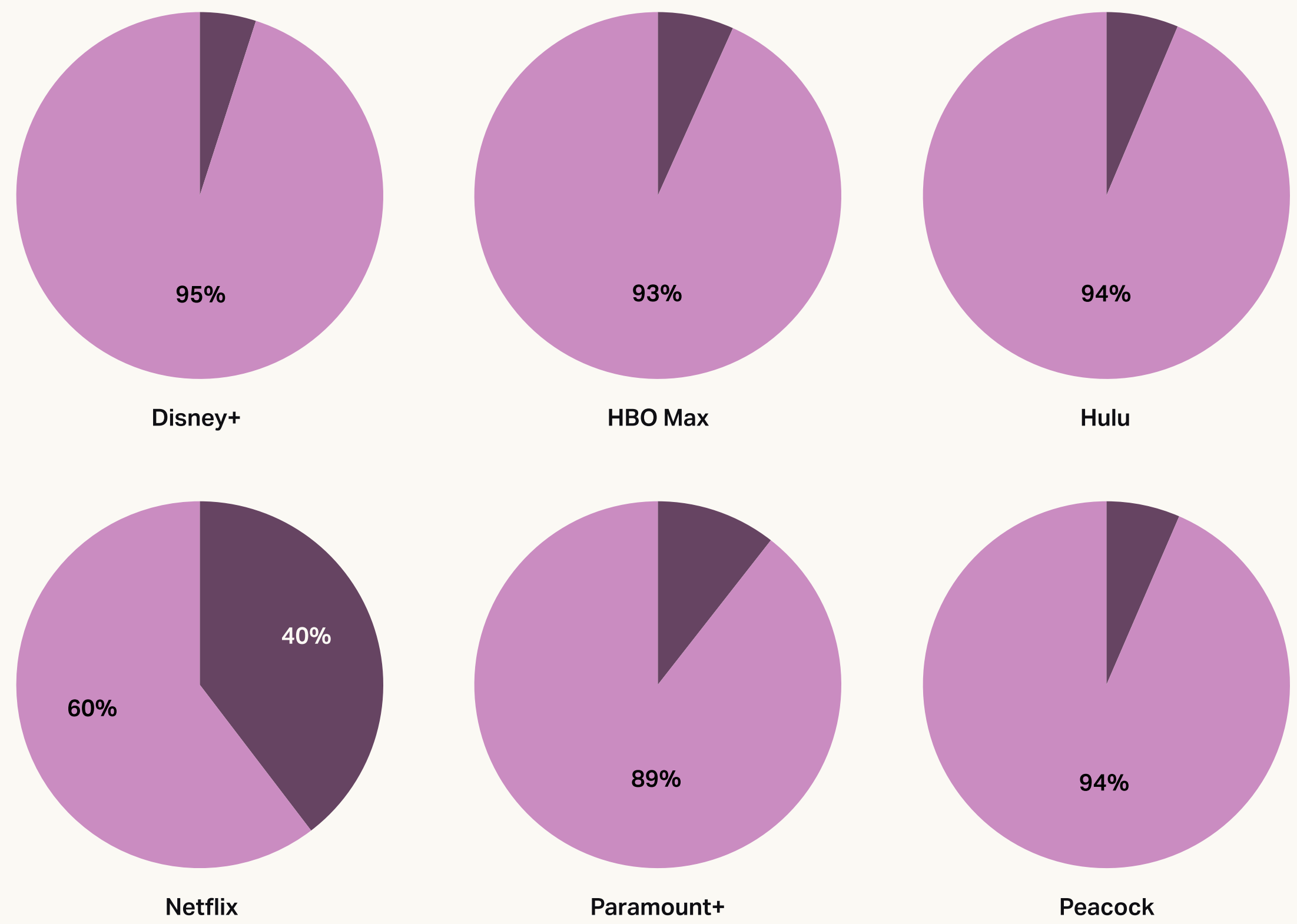
The power of streaming or social media to create new paths to music discovery for young consumers is evident with increasing frequency. The phenomenon occurred more than once alongside the Netflix hit series *Stranger Things*, with its soundtrack of 1980s classics. While Kate Bush’s “Runnin’ Up That Hill” in season four is the best-known example, two Prince songs in the show’s fifth and final season experienced similar streaming spikes in January.



CONTENT SHARE OF U.S. VIEWING HOURS ON SVOD SERVICES

For Q1 2026

● Catalog ● Original



Older programming drives most viewing on SVOD services.

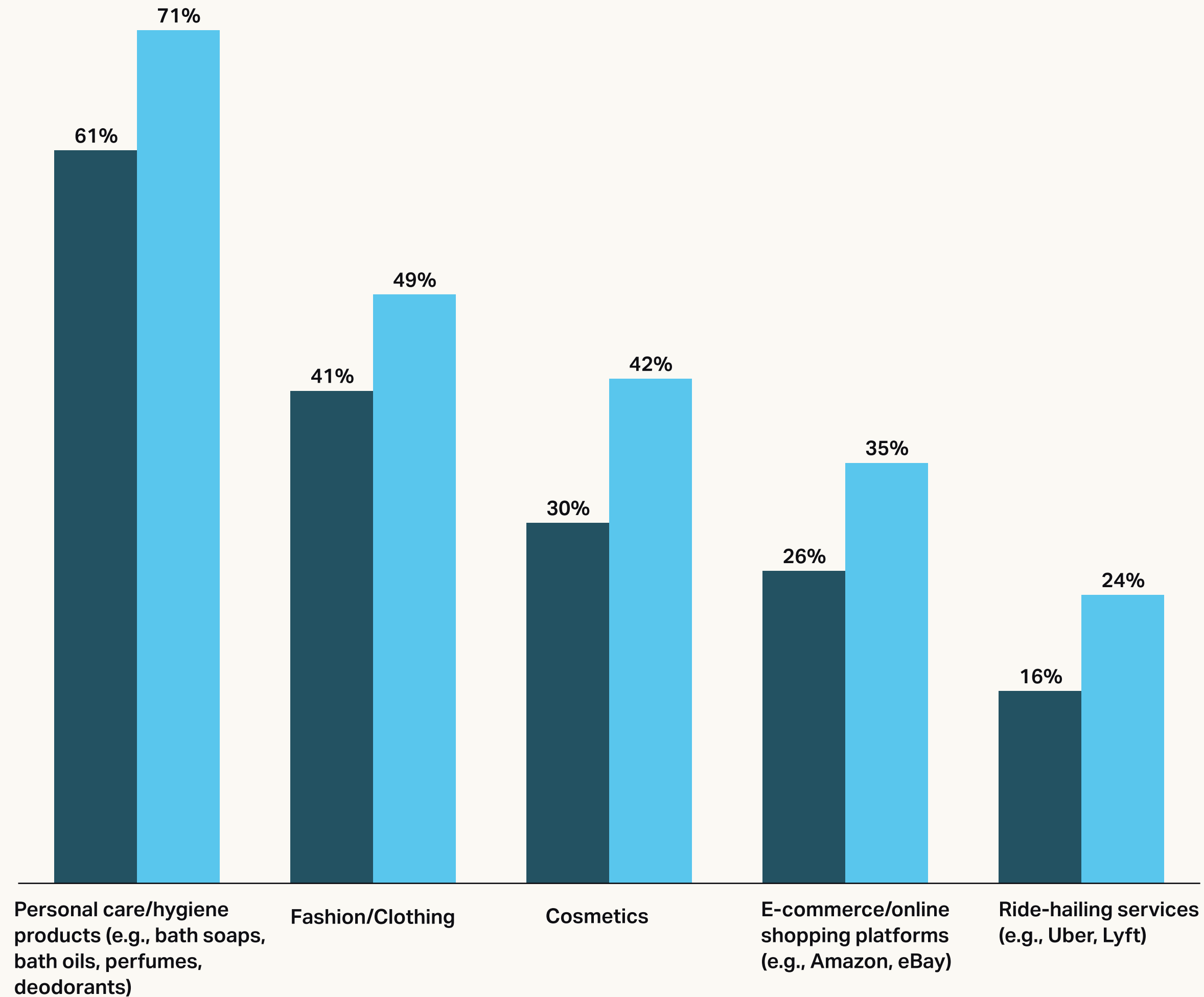
Nostalgia plays an important role in viewer engagement on streaming video services. While fresh originals typically attract new subscribers, non-original catalog content on streamers is critical for retention. For every major SVOD service except Netflix, about 90% of U.S. viewing time goes to licensed fare, which is comprised of almost entirely older shows and movies. Audiences return or discover anew long-running former hit series such as *Friends*, *Gilmore Girls* and *Suits* as comfort TV.

SOURCE: LUMINATE STREAMING VIEWERSHIP (M)

CATEGORY PURCHASERS AMONG NOSTALGIC MUSIC LISTENERS

Share of U.S. consumers ages 35-44 who have made a purchase in the following categories in the past 3 months or plan to purchase in the next 3 months

● Total ● Nostalgic listeners*



SOURCE: LUMINATE U.S. MUSIC 360, 2025; *CONSUMERS WHO INDICATED THEY PLAY MUSIC TO SET A NOSTALGIC MOOD



Nostalgic music listeners are ready to shop.

Nostalgic music listeners — surveyed consumers who said they have played music to set a nostalgic mood — may be more prevalent and inclined to buy within certain product categories. For example, nostalgic music listeners ages 35-44 are more likely than consumers overall to have made a recent purchase or plan to in multiple product categories, with the largest point gaps for cosmetics and personal care/hygiene products.



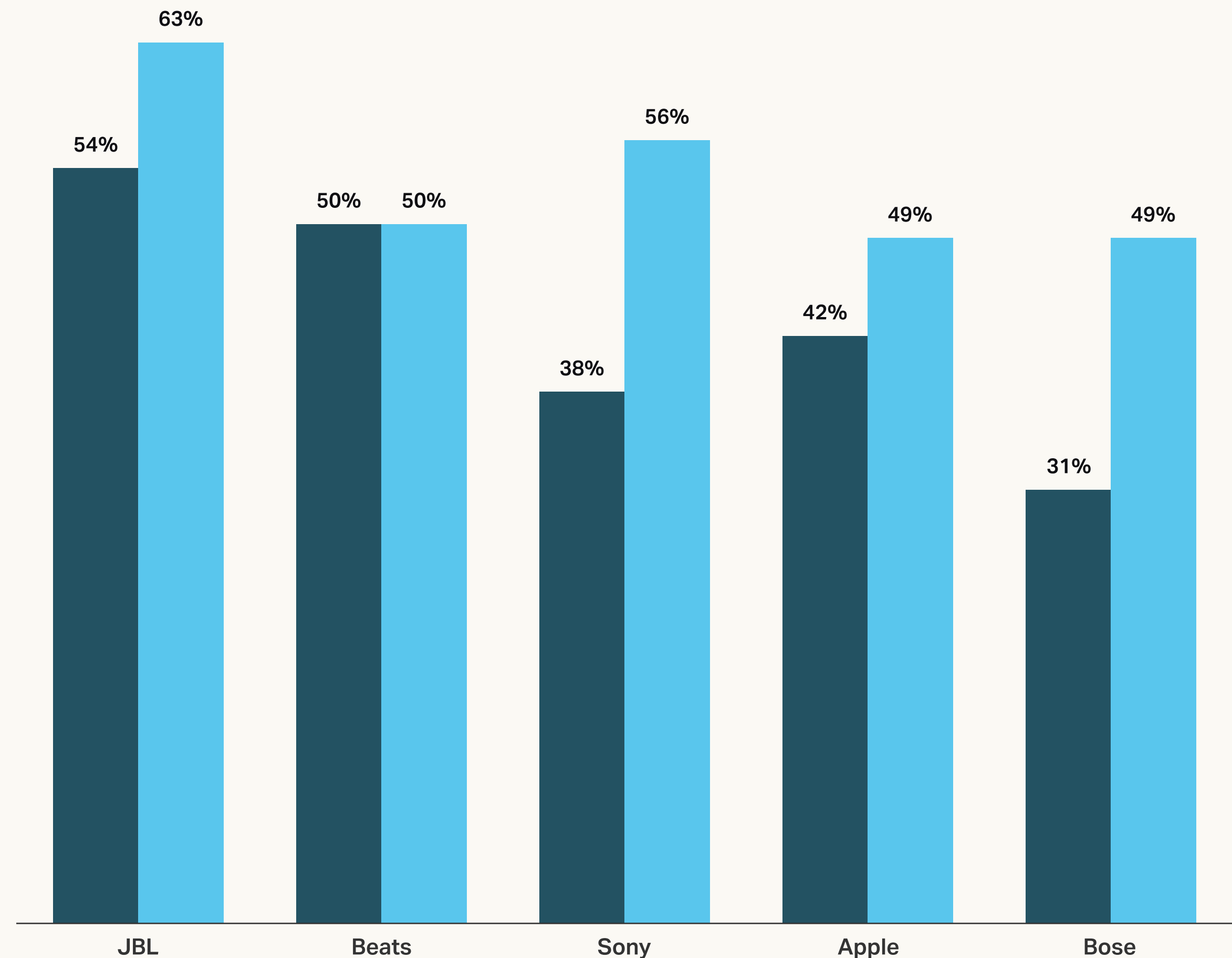
Some brands resonate loudly with nostalgic listeners.

Marketers can compare how nostalgic music listenership overlaps with product purchase intent down to preferences at the brand level, helping to determine when leaning into nostalgia is a good idea. For example, among 18-to-34-year olds who plan to buy a Bluetooth speaker, nostalgic listeners are more likely to be interested in Sony and Bose, each with an 18-point gap, versus non-nostalgic listeners.

SPEAKER BRAND CONSIDERATION AMONG NOSTALGIC MUSIC LISTENERS

Share of U.S. consumers ages 18-34 who say they intend to buy a Bluetooth speaker in the next 3 months

● Non-nostalgic listeners ● Nostalgic listeners*



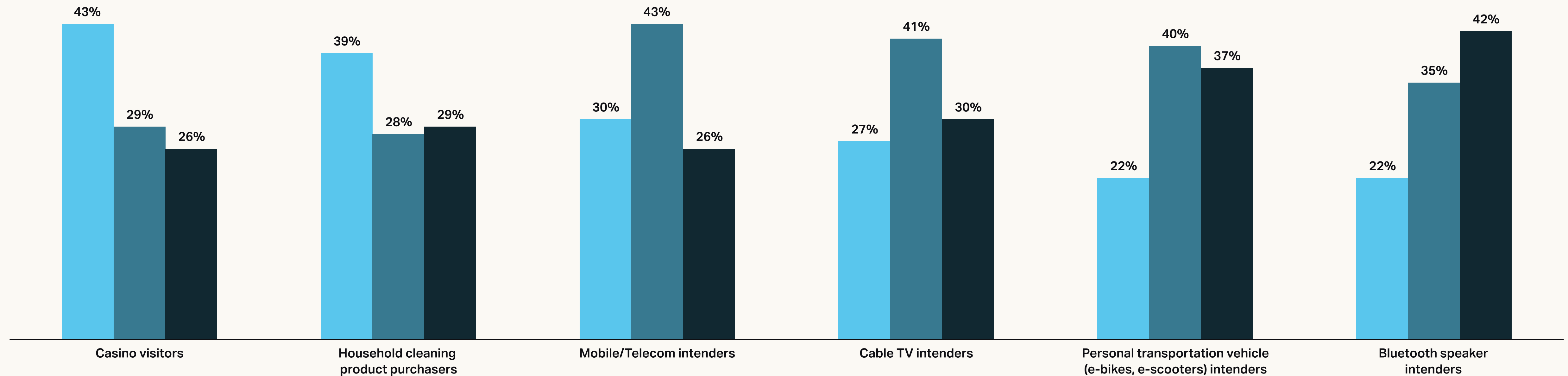
Product buyers or intenders may be bigger fans of some decades of music over others.

Marketers can identify and track the most common music decade listening preferences among consumers who have recently made or intend to make a purchase in specific product categories. For example, casinogoers and household cleaning product purchasers are more likely to prefer music from the 1980s or earlier than other decades. Telecom intenders tend to prefer 1990s and 2000s music, while gadget lovers are most interested in 2010s and current music.

FAVORITE DECADES OF MUSIC AMONG CATEGORY PURCHASERS & INTENDERS

Among U.S. gen pop

● 1980s or earlier ● 1990s & 2000s ● 2010s & 2020s



Fans of some decades of music may be more compelled by artist brand endorsements.

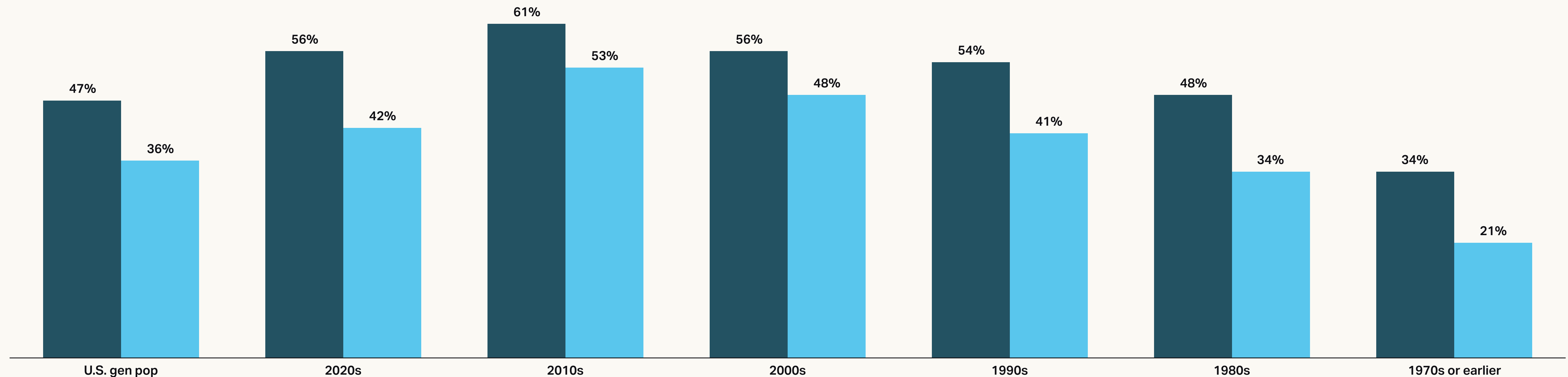
Music artists endorsing products can positively influence purchase intent among fans, though Luminate data suggests this is more likely to be true among consumers who prefer more current music. In particular, fans of 2010s music are the most likely to say they can be influenced to buy or consider a product if an artist they like has endorsed or spoken about it.

ARTIST INFLUENCE ON PRODUCT CONSIDERATION, BY FAVORITE MUSIC DECADE

Share of U.S. consumers preferring each decade of music who agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements

● I am more likely to purchase products/services endorsed by artists I like

● I would consider changing my opinions on a topic/product/service if one of my favorite artists voiced their opinions on it

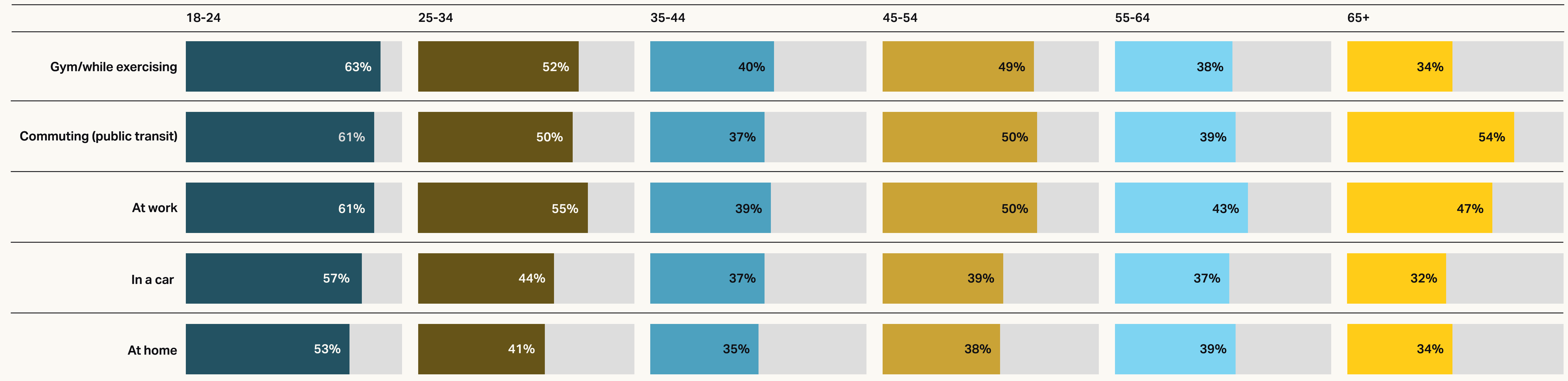


Nostalgic engagement may be more likely to occur in some locations than others.

Some locations may be more likely than others to inspire nostalgic listening among different age groups. For example, consumers ages 18-24 are most likely to engage in nostalgic listening during exercise; with those 25-34 most likely to at work, while Boomers 65+ do while commuting in public transit. Consistently for each location, young adults, particularly those 18-24, are the most likely to be nostalgic listeners, as they age into nostalgic experiences through media.

WHERE MUSIC LISTENERS FEEL NOSTALGIC, BY AGE

Share of music listeners who listen to music in the following locations and play music to set a nostalgic mood



Luminate Consumer Insights for Brands & Marketers

Luminate data and insights can help brands across product categories understand key attributes of valuable audience segments to design more effective marketing campaigns and strategies. For instance, a consumer packaged goods brand interested in activating nostalgic listeners among category purchasers can determine their demographic makeup and media content and engagement preferences (e.g., streaming, discovery, social media) to craft the right creative messaging and identify the best marketing channels, music for ads, music artists for endorsements and more. Luminate survey data can help brands evaluate and compare multiple diverse consumer audiences, both general and granular, across the following criteria.

Who They Are and How to Reach Them	What They Like	Actionable Recommendations for Marketing Strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demographics (e.g., gender, age, location)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Genre and language preferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Talent partnerships
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Viewership metrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Artist/talent awareness and likability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Audience analysis and recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social media usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Live event attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trendspotting and forecasting
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Music discovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Merch preferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brand partnership strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Platform preferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Price sensitivities (e.g., concerts, ad-free experiences)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Live event opportunities

Methodology

This report features data gathered and analyzed from the following Luminate products:

- **U.S. Music 360°** is an original survey conducted quarterly online among U.S. consumers ages 13+ representative of the general population according to the U.S. Census on age, gender and region. This report features findings collected in Q2 and Q3 2025 across two survey waves fielded May and September among a total of 8,033 U.S. respondents.
- **Artist + Genre Tracker** is a best-in-class research tool to help the music industry and brands understand consumer attitudes and perceptions toward specific music artists and genres, alongside evolving media usage and purchasing behaviors. It provides U.S. consumer survey results and other performance metrics for over 600 artists and 100 genres or subgenres. Since September 2021, surveys have been conducted quarterly online among U.S. consumers representative of the general population according to the U.S. Census on age, gender, ethnicity and region. This report features findings collected in Q3 and Q4 2025 across two survey waves conducted in September and December among a total of 8,028 U.S. respondents age 13+.
- **CONNECT** is a cloud-based music database and analytics platform that tracks, measures and visualizes music consumption activity by ingesting first-party data shared directly by over 500 partners across digital streaming, physical sales and radio.
- **Streaming Viewership, Modeled, or SV(M)**, shows viewership on titles across the major U.S. streaming platforms. SV(M) offers access to next-day modeled viewing figures, reporting minutes watched and views for library and original content, as well as gender and age demographics.



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IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT US [HERE](#).

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