

Celebrating a century of informing, entertaining and educating

By  Danette Breitenbach

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Today, World Radio Day, sees radio celebrates 100 years.



Source: © Unesco [Unesco](#) Today radio celebrates 100 years

In November 1894, in the basement of the Faculty of Science of Bordeaux, France, Albert Turpain sent and received his first radio signal, using Morse code transmitting distance up to 25m, through four walls 50 cm thick.

Today there are more than 44,000 radio stations that broadcast to five billion people, or roughly 70% of the world. The invention of portable radio in 1947 made radio even more popular.

While mobile phones have changed the consumption habits of millions, many mobile phones come with built-in radio chips and this has helped to keep the radio industry effective more than 120 years after the first radio broadcast. For example in countries such as Zambia, a third of the people listen to the radio on their phone handset every week.

Needing only a few towers to broadcast a signal over wide areas, radio has remained popular, especially in areas where mobile networks are patchy or absent.*



World Radio Day 2024

Candy Dempers, MediaHeads 360 13 Feb 2024



Radio in Africa

The first radio broadcast in Africa was an orchestral recording of German composer, Felix Mendelssohn, on 18 December 1923. It was transmitted from the Railway Headquarters in Johannesburg, marking the first recorded history of radio on the African continent.

Today, radio is still the most popular medium in Africa, and it's where the majority of the continent gets their news, information, and entertainment.

The Conversation quotes studies that estimate radio listenership to be between 60% and 80% of the continent's 1.4 billion population.

Despite the rapidly changing media landscape, on the continent radio remains the most [popular mass medium](#).

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 509, February 2022 found, "Radio remains overwhelmingly the most common source for news in Africa. On average across 34 surveyed countries, two-thirds (68%) of respondents tune in at least a few times a week.

This is because of its accessibility and reach. It says that across the 34 countries it surveyed, radio remains, by a substantial margin, the mass medium most commonly used by people looking for news. Two-thirds (68%) of respondents say they use it at least a few times a week, including 45% who tune in every day.

Television comes second, with more than half (54%) of adults watching the news at least a few times a week, followed by social media (41%) and the Internet (37%). Only about one in six (18%) report regularly reading a newspaper.

It also found that radio remains the most "democratic" of the media, in that gaps in access based on residence, gender, education, and age are relatively small.

"Larger gaps exist for other media sources, for which access might require higher amounts of formal education, more disposable income, or residence in more populated areas," it says.

In addition, radio access is nearly identical in rural and urban areas. It also found that men are consistently more likely than women to use media to access news.

It does add here, "Interestingly, the gap here is largest for radio, where men are 11% more likely than women to tune in regularly (74% vs 63%). Statistically significant gaps exist for other sources, but they are smaller."

It further explains, "The size of the gap for radio might be a function of its relative popularity in rural settings and among populations with less formal education, where norms proscribing women's political involvement might be more prevalent. Among urban, better-educated populations that are more likely to access digital media, gender-inclusive norms might be more accepted."

Looking forward to radio's next century

Celebrating World Radio Day globally, Unesco shines a broad floodlight on the medium's remarkable past, relevant present and promise of a dynamic future.

It says this celebration comes at an opportune time, as radio – though statistically popular and enormously trusted by the

public – “faces increased challenges to audience and revenue numbers from digital platforms, pervasive social media, digital and generational divides, the headwinds of censorship and, for some media, stifling consolidation-induced debt as well as economic hardships exacerbated by a soft advertising market”.

The UN body points out these highlights:

- The indelible history of radio and its powerful impact upon news, drama, music, and sports.
- The ongoing utilitarian value of radio as a relatively free and portable public safety net during emergencies and power outages brought on by natural and human-made disasters such as storms, earthquakes, floods, heat, wildfires, accidents and warfare.
- The continuing democratic value of radio to serve as a grassroots catalyst for connectedness within underserved groups including immigrant, religious, minority and poverty-stricken populations; and as an instantaneous bellwether of public opinion expressed through the auspices of free speech in the public space.

It adds, "It is a remarkable achievement for a major mass communications medium to continue its relevancy past 100 years and still be a force for freedom of expression, joy and knowledge. As we proudly tell its story, let's welcome radio's future in the next century."



Umhlobo Wenene mourns the passing of two radio legends

8 Feb 2024



South Africa celebrations

The SABC is commemorating the day with several panel discussions with some of the country's key thought leaders, who will be reflecting on the last 100 years of radio broadcasting as well as the future of radio in South Africa and globally.

The SABC's 19 radio stations have catered to diverse radio audiences in their languages for over eight decades.

To mark World Radio Day, SABC Radio has partnered with two higher education and training institutions, Wits Centre for Journalism and the University of Johannesburg (UJ), to hold dialogues where ideas will be shared by various experts, at UJ premises as well as SABC Radio Park.

Individual stations will also hold various activities.

Key SABC Radio broadcasts

- Phalaphala FM's 09h00-12h00 show will broadcast live from the University of Limpopo.
- Munghana Lonene FM's 12h00-13h30 show will broadcast live from the University of Limpopo.
- Thobela FM will also provide live reports from the University of Limpopo as well as broadcasting live from Ditjong in Saxonwold to celebrate World Radio Day.
- Umhlobo Wenene FM will have a swap of the drive time shows for the day where the programme 'iBrakfesi Eyondlayo Ekuseni' team will take over the afternoon drive show and the afternoon drive team 'Enochatha' will take over the breakfast show slot.
- In line with the subtheme of educating the nation, the 09:00 – 12:00 programme on Umhlobo Wenene FM will be broadcasting live from Ndema Secondary High School in Tsomo, Eastern Cape, in partnership with Hollywood Bets Foundation.
- Lotus FM's 'The Breakfast' which broadcasts from 06h00-09h00, will in collaboration with Ukhozi FM breakfast team, present the station's breakfast show.
- Lotus FM's 09h00-12h00 show 'Style in the City' will also do a simulcast broadcast with 5fm.

- Lotus FM's 'Lunch Break' broadcast from 13h00-15h00, will conduct a simulcast broadcast with Radio 2000 and SAFM.
- Munghana Lonene FM and Thobela FM will do a simulcast on the 'Tamintlangu Sports Show' between 19h00-20h00.

5FM

5FM is crossing radio borders and breaking the boundaries this World Radio Day, with the Great Radio Takeover. The station invites you to tune in all day to catch all your favourite shows as they link up with their counterparts from other stations to join forces and create radio magic together.

Kicking off the day, 5 Breakfast linked up with Goodhope FM's Stan Mars on "The Big Breakfast Show". Stephanie Be on 5 Mid Mornings is joined by Krsna Priya Dasa who hosts "Style in the City" on Lotus FM. 5 Lunch will then take the reigns as they create radio magic with "The Royal Playground" on Radio 2000 between 12:00-13:00 with David Mashabela.

Driving you home, the 5 Drive team will be catching up with a different Campus station every hour from 15:00-18:00. Finally, wrapping up the day, your queen of 5 Nights, Karabo, will be joined by Sima Fiyo from Tru FM all the way from the Eastern Cape between 20:00-21:00.



Radio Workshop's *This Coal Life* IDA's Best Standalone Audio Documentary

13 Dec 2023



Radio Workshop

For World Radio Day, Radio Workshop produced a podcast episode entitled *Dear Radio*, sharing four personal stories about radio in Africa.

For Munira Kaoneka, radio provided the soundtrack for her yearly family road trips to their ancestral home in the Usambara mountains of Tanzania.

Nduka Orjinmo takes us back to the day when rumours of Nigerian dictator General Sani Abacha's death spread like wildfire. The only way for him to be sure was to tune into the BBC on his father's old Sanyo radio.

[Listen here.](#)

In Kenya, late-night talk radio shows helped Onyango Otieno escape his troubled life at home.

In the final story, radio host Julie Kilama shares how as a young teen in Uganda, a life-changing experience with radio shaped her dreams and took her on an unexpected journey.

*[Aljazeera](#)

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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