

Ballymena independent local radio licence applications

Questions and responses: Mid FM

These are the responses received from CN Group to the non-confidential questions asked by Ofcom regarding their application for the Ballymena licence with Mid FM (Ballymena).

1. Can you confirm the grounds upon which you selected Mid FM (Ballymena)'s target audience of 25-64 year olds.

On analysing our research it became apparent that there was some conformity between the listening habits and tastes & interests of many 25-64s. In contrast it was particularly evident that the requirements of 15-24s and 65+s were so opposed that it would be impossible to devise a programme strategy that would directly appeal to both ends of the age spectrum simultaneously, although we have ensured these groups are catered for outside of day-time programming.

We ran four cross breaks through the entire research results (see below) including one for 25-64s and one for 25-54s, in an attempt to differentiate between these two consumer groups' attitudes and demands.

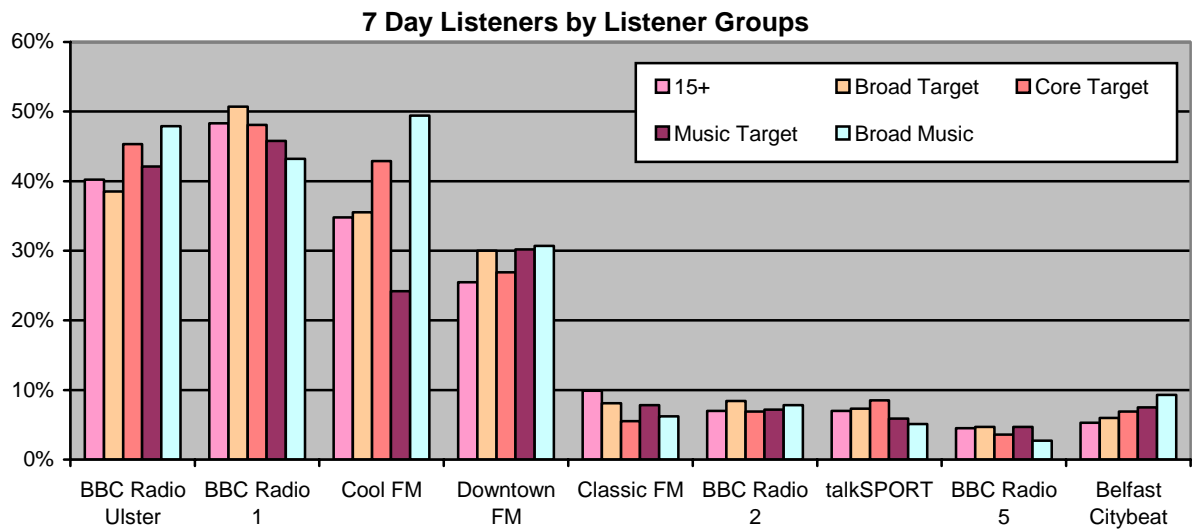
The following excerpt from our research summary shows the cross tabs we ran in an attempt to design a product that would appeal to the widest possible audience base in Ballymena:

Target Market

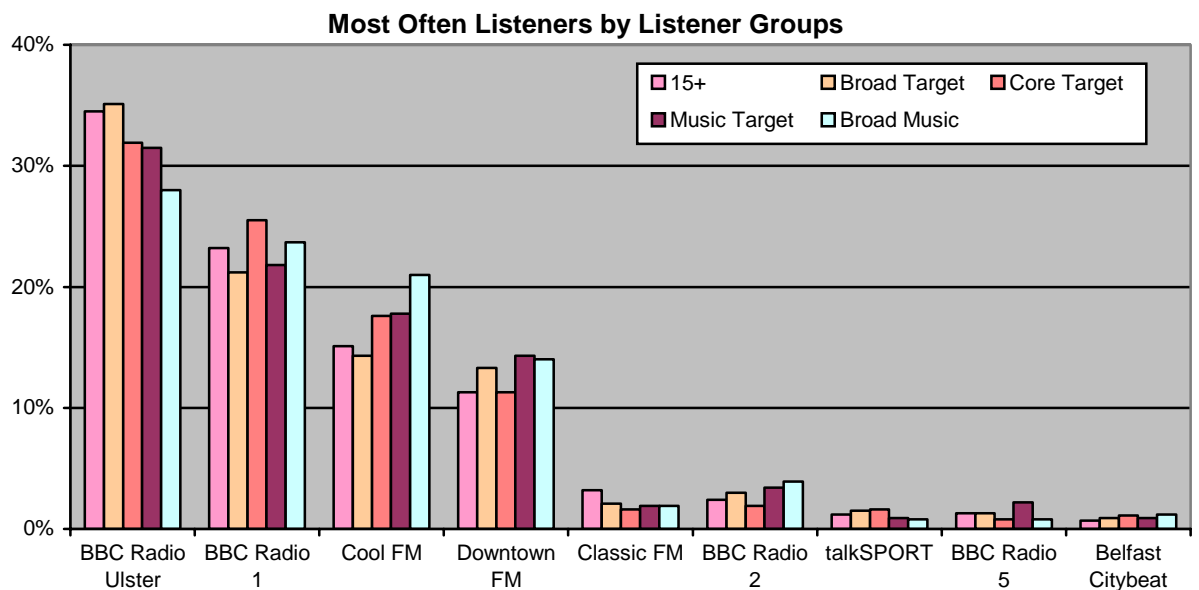
The following charts show the responses for five different consumer groups:

- ◆ Group 1 – Broad Target - Those respondents aged between 25 and 64 who stated they were Definitely, Very Likely or Likely to listen to the new station. This consumer group represents 63% of all adult radio listeners in Ballymena.
- ◆ Group 2 – Core Target - Those respondents, aged 25-54 who stated they were Definitely, Very Likely or Likely to listen to the new station. This consumer group represents 49% of all adult radio listeners in Ballymena.
- ◆ Group 3 – Music Target – Those respondents who stated they liked all the classic hits, 60s through to 90s and were Definitely, Very Likely or Likely to listen to the new station. This consumer group represents 43% of all adult radio listeners in Ballymena.
- ◆ Group 4 – Broad Music – Those respondents who stated they liked all the classic hits, 60s through to 90s and also Adult 00s and were Definitely, Very Likely or Likely to listen to the new station. This consumer group represents 35% of all adult radio listeners in Ballymena.

Current Listening Habits

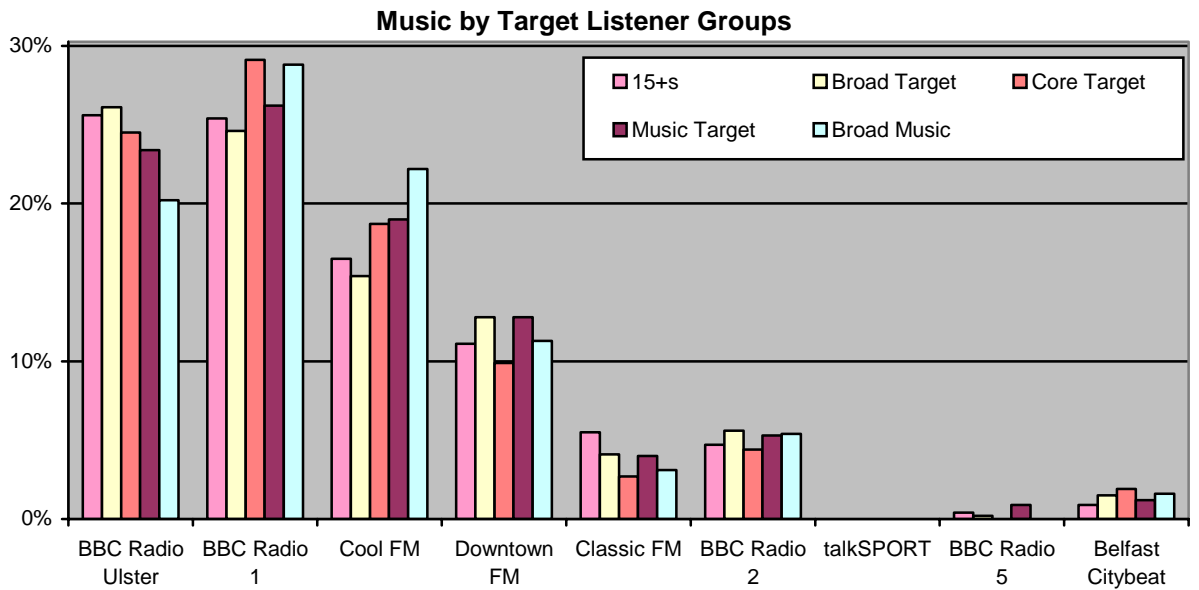


BBC Radio Ulster, Radio 1, Cool FM and to some extent Downtown are popular amongst all our listener groups. Cool FM does well amongst a broad music listener group that includes Adult 00s music.

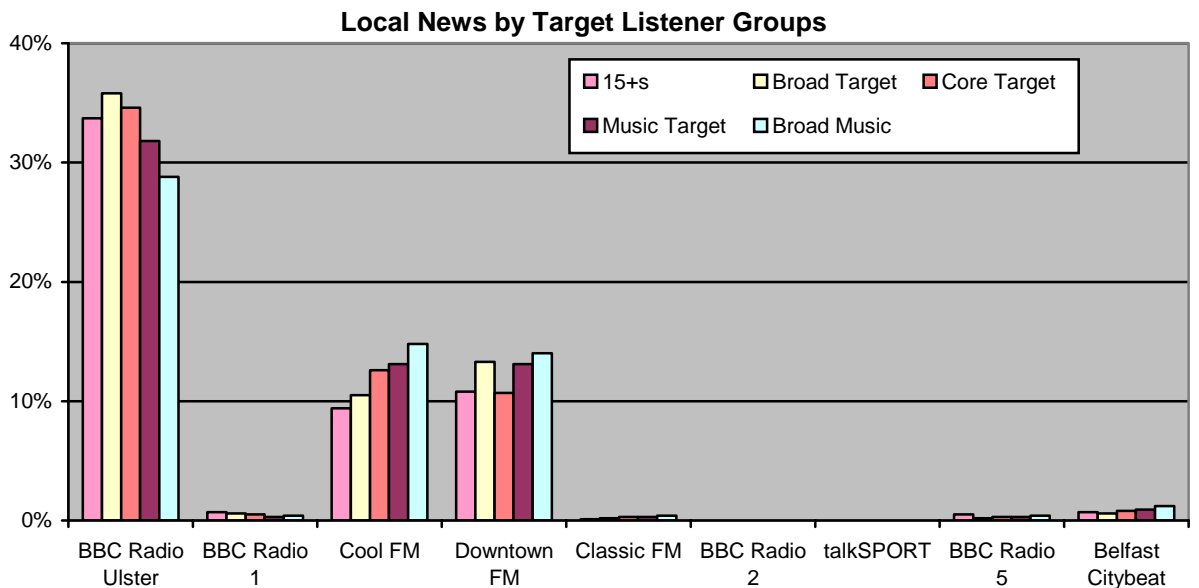


Listeners that will most appreciate Mid FM (Ballymena) are listening to BBC Radio Ulster, BBC Radio 1, Cool FM and Downtown.

Best Station ForMusic, Local News, Traffic & Travel, Local What's-ons and Local Sport

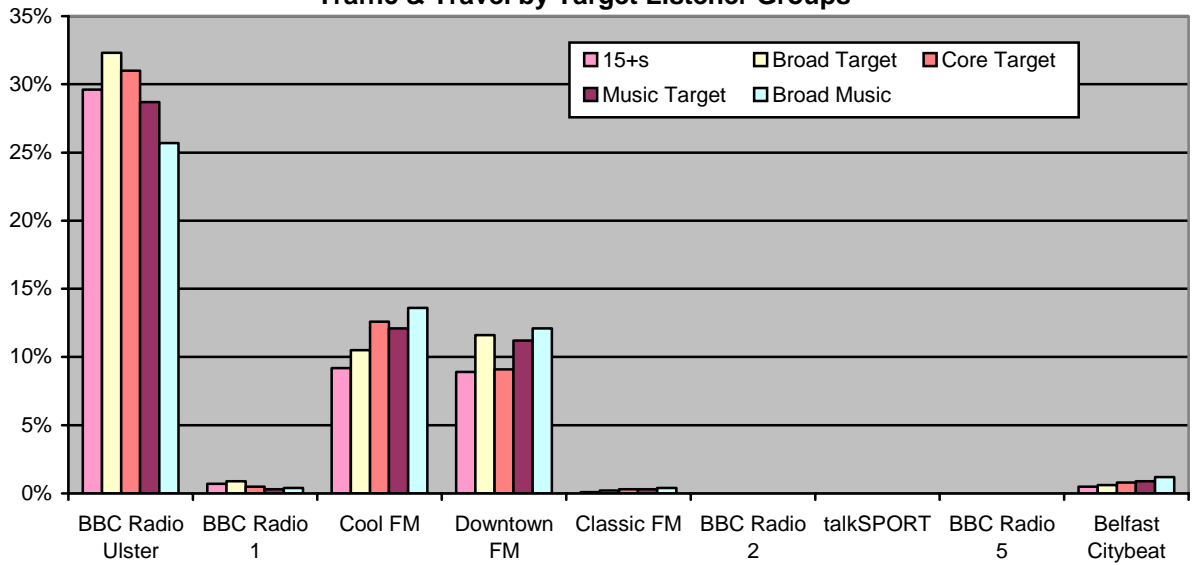


Mid FM (Ballymena)'s target audience considers BBC Radio 1 and BBC Radio Ulster best for music.



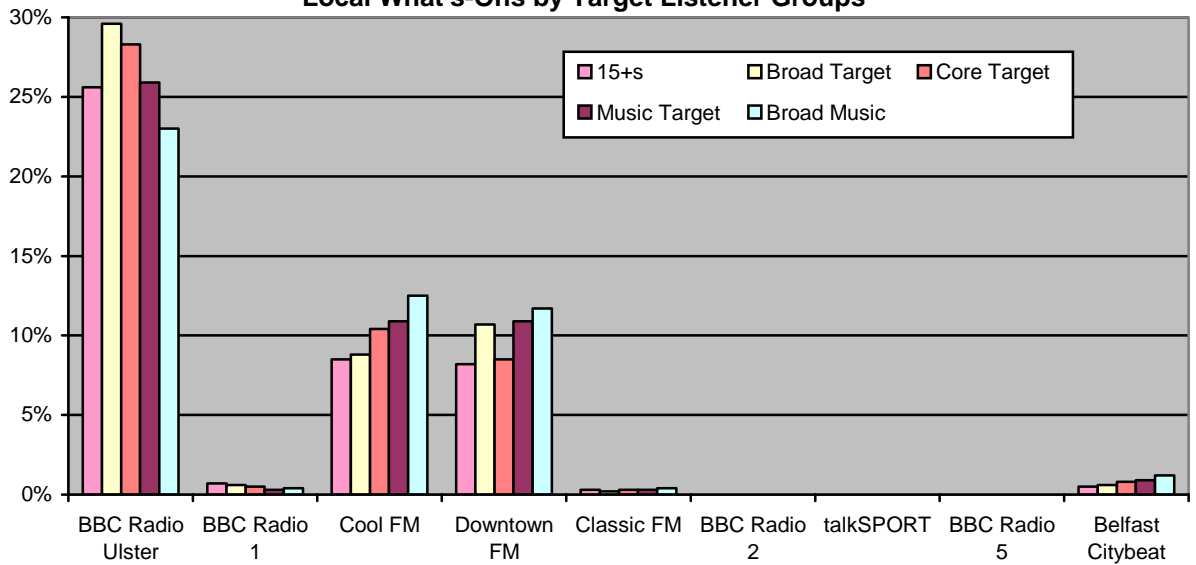
BBC Radio Ulster is the dominant local news provider in the market, hardly challenged by Cool FM or Downtown.

Traffic & Travel by Target Listener Groups

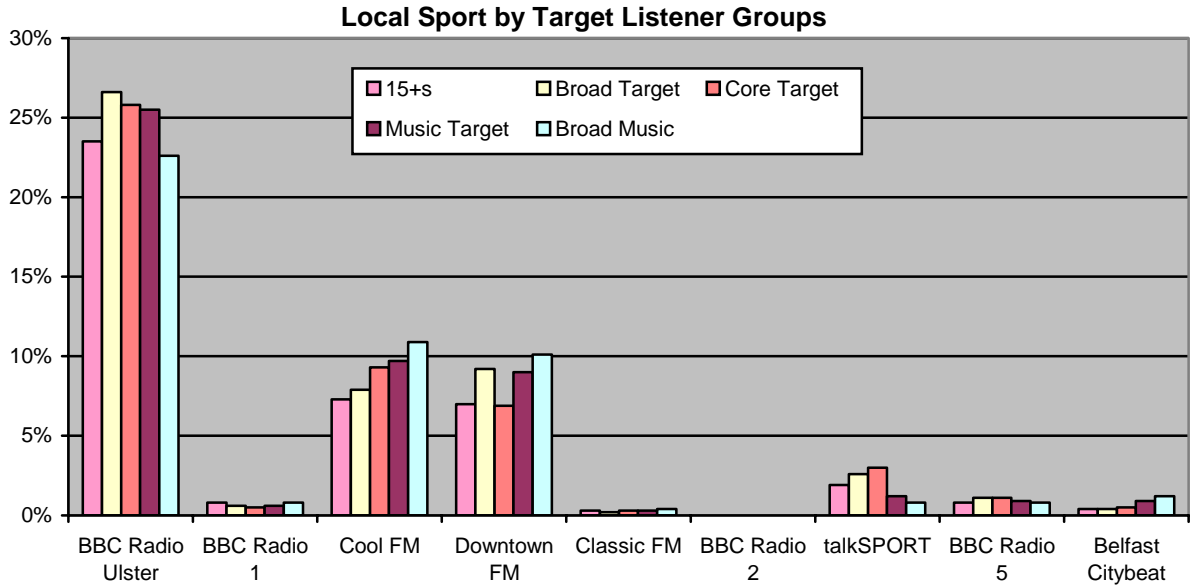


Amongst Mid FM (Ballymena)'s target audience, BBC Radio Ulster is clearly the best for traffic & travel.

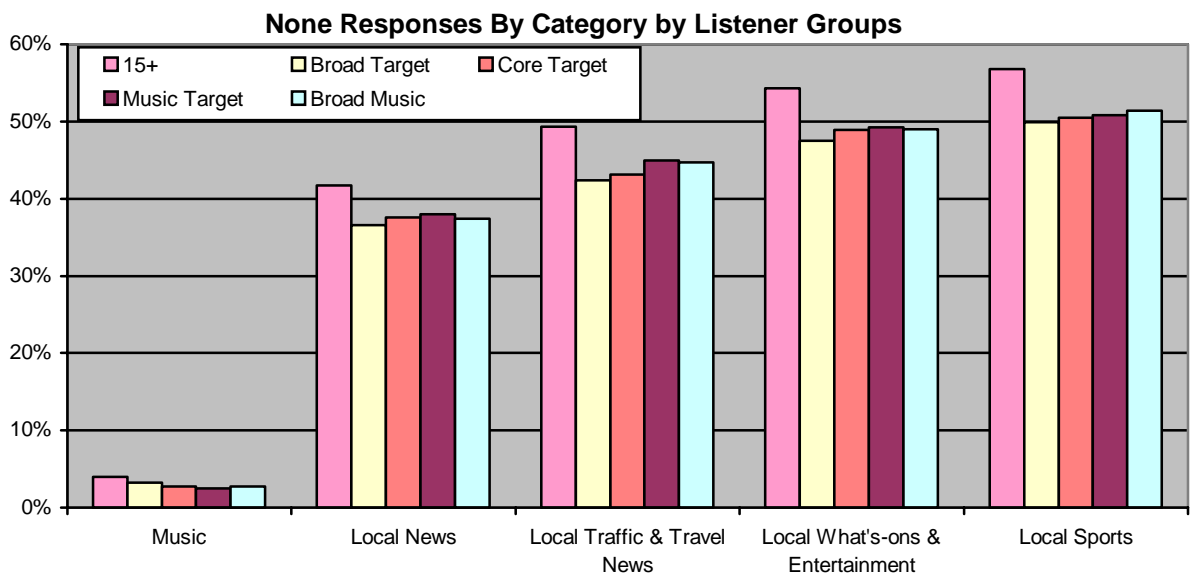
Local What's-Ons by Target Listener Groups



BBC Radio Ulster is again currently considered the best for local what's-ons amongst those listeners who are likely to listen to Mid FM (Ballymena).



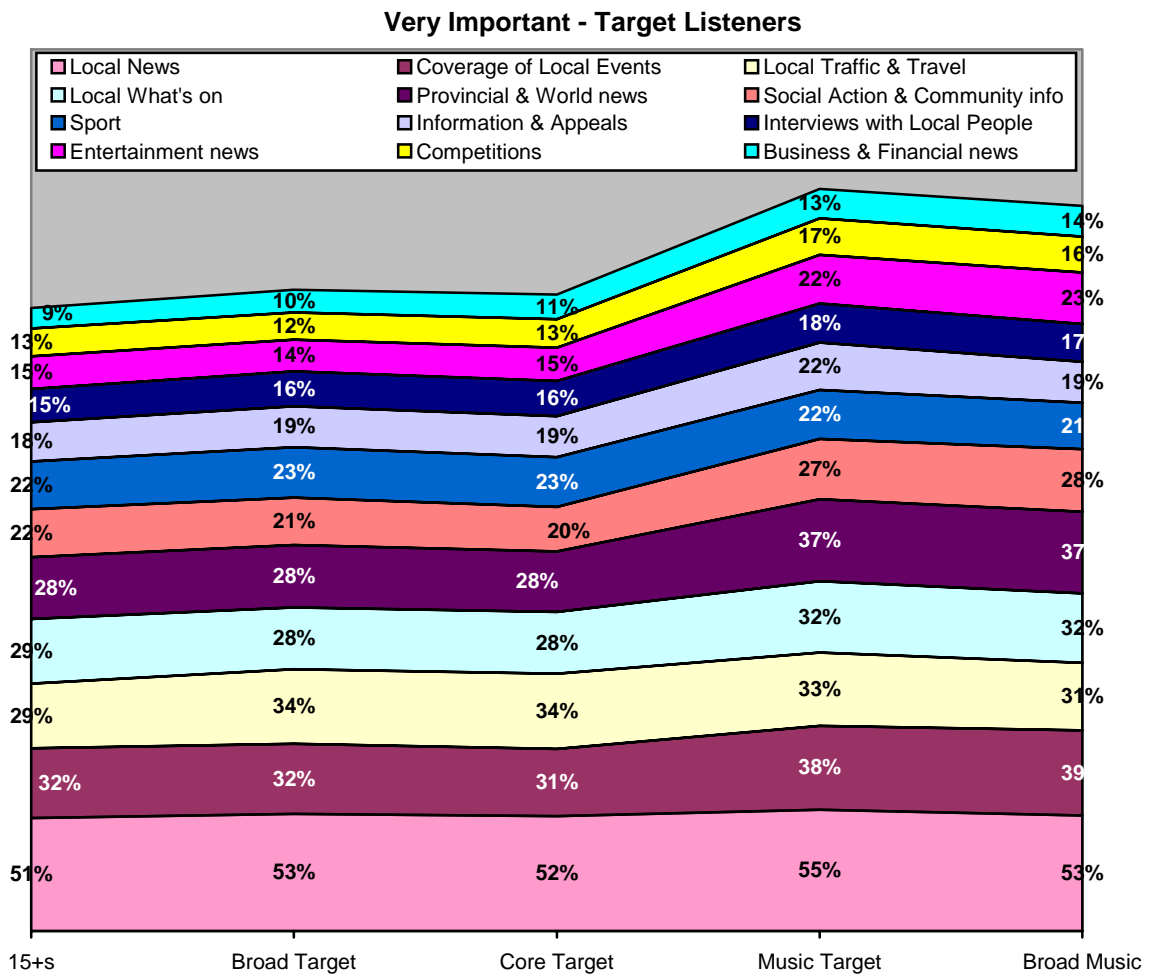
BBC Radio Ulster again scored best for local sport, scoring well across all listener groups.



The target audience shows a marginally lower negative response rate to these categories than all adults 15+.

However, it is clear that the lack of a local radio station providing local news and information is uniformly acknowledged by all consumer groups including 25-64s and evidently causing listening to Commercial Radio in Ballymena to suffer as listeners migrate to BBC Radio Ulster for these essential speech features.

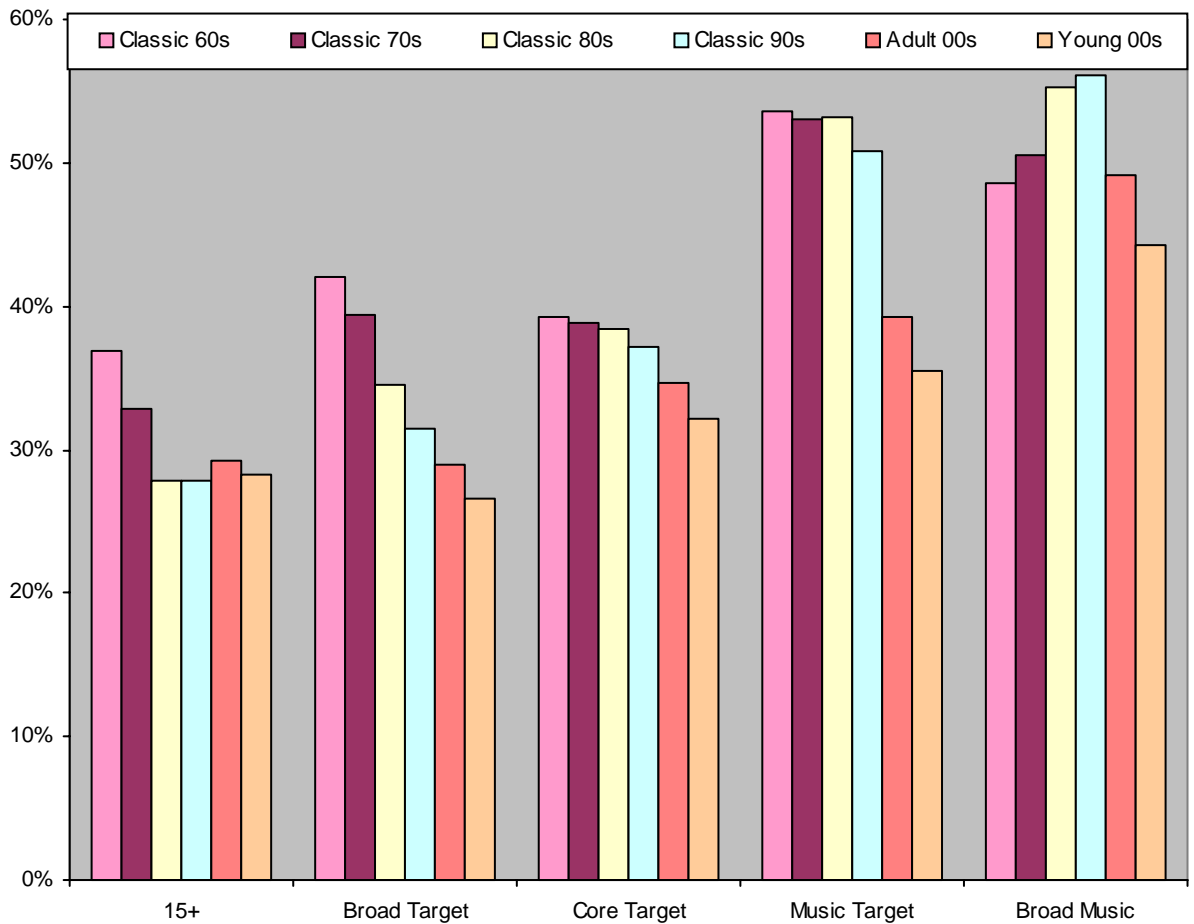
Most Important Speech Features for a New Station



There is very little difference in the response rates of the target listener groups, other than the music groups showed a generally higher interest in speech features than the age targets, particularly coverage of local events, provincial and world news and social action broadcasting information.

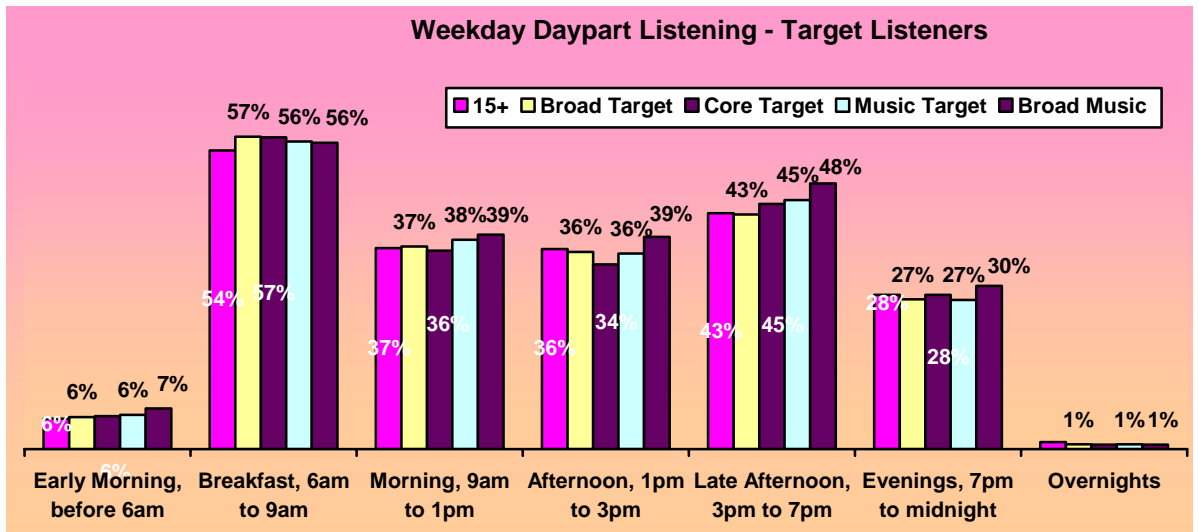
Music Tastes

Combined Love It and Like It A Lot - Target Listeners



Our target audience, other than the broad music target, ranks Classic 60s and Classic 70s as the best music styles. The broad music target ranks Classic 80s and 90s as their best. The music tastes of 25-54s are not dissimilar to those of 25-64s. 25-64s show a higher degree of interest in older music and less or younger music but not dramatically so.

Weekday Daypart Listeners



The target audience displays a greater enthusiasm to listen to Mid FM (Ballymena) at breakfast.

It can be seen that there is very little difference in the tastes & interests and propensity to listen between 25-54 year olds and 25-64 year olds. We, therefore, chose 25-64s as our target audience, because as the town's truly local station we wanted to appeal to as broad an audience as possible. Our research shows that 63% of all radio listeners in Ballymena are aged between 25 and 64 and will listen to the station.

2. Can you confirm whether or not Mid FM (Ballymena) will – in its locally produced/presented programming – follow the same music policy and log as Citybeat?

No, Mid FM (Ballymena) will not have the same music policy as Citybeat. Belfast Citybeat has an Adult Contemporary music policy whilst we are proposing a classic hit music policy for Mid FM (Ballymena). Mid FM (Ballymena) will reflect the results of the research which showed a preference for slightly older tracks than Citybeat plays. To ignore the research would mean that Mid FM (Ballymena) will not be as successful as we propose.

When formulating our programming plans, we specifically chose to share programming with Citybeat at the times of day shown in our application (12.00-14.00) because this is a request show and it is up to the audience across both Belfast and Ballymena to choose the music they most enjoy.

The following table shows the number of tracks on average played in an hour on Belfast Citybeat and what is proposed on Mid FM (Ballymena) in

Tracks per hour	Belfast Citybeat	Mid FM (Ballymena)
60s/70s	1	3
80s	3	2
90s	2	2
00s	2	2
Recurrent	2	2

Current	2	1
Total	12	12

3. Can you confirm that the weekday 12.00-14.00 programme, networked from Citybeat, forms part of the eight hours per weekday networking described in your Format document (p30). At present, this document only lists the 19.00-01.00 evening show as being networked.

Yes, I can confirm that the 8 hours networked during weekdays includes the 2 hour lunchtime show (12.00-14.00). The Format should read "8 hours networked (12.00-14.00 & 19.00-01.00)".

4. Can you confirm that the time of the proposed three hours of networked programming on Sundays, and whether this is likely to be a national chart show.

Yes, I can confirm that the networked programming from 16.00-19.00 is likely to be the Smash Hits Chart Show that is taken across CN Radio at the moment (as detailed on p28).

5. Will the automated output proposed in the Format be locally-produced and exclusively for Mid FM (Ballymena) or will this programming be sourced from outside the licence area? (i.e. what will be the total number of locally-originated hours – live plus automated – per day?).

The automated output will be locally produced and voice-tracked exclusively for Mid FM (Ballymena) and will include repeated daytime features relevant to the residents of Ballymena.

The schedule of locally-originated hours (live) vs networked vs automated is as follows:

Show	Local & Live	Networked	Locally Originated Automation
07.00-12.00	5 hours		
12.00-14.00		2 hours	
14.00-19.00	5 hours		
19.00-01.00		6 hours	
01.00-07.00			6 hours
Total	10 hours	8 hours	6 hours

Therefore, the total number of hours originating locally from the studios in Ballymena will be 16 hours.

6. For the purposes of the Format document, can you provide a definition for current/recurrent hits.

Current hits will be tracks up to 2 months old. Recurrent hits will be tracks from 2 months to 18 months old.

7. Regarding the proposed networked programming on Mid FM (Ballymena), why was it decided to share programming with Belfast Citybeat rather than Mid 106 in Cookstown during these hours?

We decided to share programming with Belfast Citybeat rather than Mid FM (Cookstown) for two main reasons:

(i) As described in the application (p23) we will be looking to our award-winning news team at Citybeat to provide news services so would need to be technically linked to the Belfast station. We would be looking, at some point in the future, for Citybeat to be a news hub to service Cookstown as well as Ballymena which will allow local reporters from the three stations more flexibility to cover stories in more depth and more of them, with the ability to report live from the scene straight into the news bulletins of all three stations. This will enhance the news service provision across all stations. We would also hope to add Newry to this news hub provision at some point in the future should we be successful in winning the licence which is due to be advertised at the end of the year.

(ii) We could see little point in linking with Cookstown when we needed to link with the regional centre in Belfast. From a technical point of view, the fact that Citybeat's MCA is contiguous with Mid FM (Ballymena)'s MCA and it would be more cost effective than to link with Belfast in keeping with our editorial plans than to link with Cookstown (a landline from our Cookstown station would need to cover 40 miles). Mid FM (Cookstown) is able to take Belfast Citybeat from a DAB feed whereas Ballymena has no DAB coverage at the moment.