

Surveying Immigrant Radio Listeners: A Case Study

As part of a project funded by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, IMPRINT worked with AudioNow to survey more than 5,500 immigrant radio listeners. We asked the project partners to tell us more about their use of this innovative survey technique.



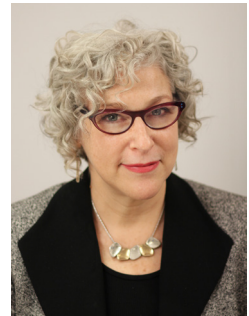
Director's Note

IMPRINT, a national coalition of nonprofit organizations active in the emerging field of immigrant professional integration, and our host organization, World Education Services, led a team of partners in a unique research project. The study examined factors that influence immigrants' professional success and potential barriers to professional integration, and helped us gain a deeper understanding of immigrant professionals' needs, assets, and characteristics.

AudioNow's innovative call-to-listen technology provided a unique and valuable contribution to the study. This telephonic survey of radio listeners helped gather detailed data from a diverse, hard-to-reach audience, including many limited English-speaking individuals who are often not represented in traditional surveys.

Findings from the AudioNow survey, combined with a simultaneous online survey, paint a complex picture. The research provides a new perspective on workers who are employed and civically engaged, but often face significant barriers in using their international credentials and experience to achieve professional success in the U.S.

We thank Knight Foundation for their support and hope that you gain valuable insight from this case study. Please also read the full report, available on the IMPRINT website (imprintproject.org/stepstosuccess).



Stacey Simon

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Stacey Simon



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First things first! Can you introduce yourselves?

Natalie White, AudioNow: I lead Research Services and Business Development in the Americas at AudioNow in Washington D.C. We are the world's largest mobile platform connecting radio broadcasters to immigrant and diaspora listeners around the world through call-to-listen technology and interactive mobile applications. Through our partnerships with more than 2,600 broadcast partners, including the BBC, Radio France International, Deutsche Welle, the United Nations and Radio Free Asia, we connect listeners representing 130 different nationality and ethnic groups to audio programming in 97 languages.

Stacey Simon & Amanda Bergson-Shilcock, IMPRINT

Stacey: I'm the director of IMPRINT, which is a coalition of non-profit organizations working on the issue of immigrant professional integration. We advocate for policies and practices that help skilled immigrants move up from low-wage "survival jobs" and get back to contributing their skills as professionals. One of the founding organizations, WES Global Talent Bridge, hosts the multi-partner initiative.

Amanda: Until recently I served as the policy and communications director for IMPRINT. I also serve as an advisory

board member for AudioNow. I have been working with immigrant communities for more than a decade. My background is in public libraries, and I've always had a keen interest in how people access reliable information.

James Witte, Institute for Immigration Research, George Mason University: I'm a sociologist by training, and I have more than 20 years of experience doing survey research. I am director of the Center for Social Science Research at Mason. For the past two years I have also run the Institute for Immigration Research, a partnership between Mason and the Immigrant Learning Center in Malden, MA.

All of you recently came together to work on a research project. Can you tell us a bit about the project?

Stacey: We surveyed college-educated immigrants in six US cities to learn more about their career trajectories. The goal was to identify common barriers and areas of opportunity, and then make recommendations about how cities can fully utilize the immigrant talent in their midst.



AudioNow is the world's largest mobile platform connecting radio broadcasters to immigrant and diaspora listeners through call-to-listen technology and interactive mobile applications.

What cities did you survey? Why did you choose them?

Stacey: The cities were Boston, Detroit, Miami, Philadelphia, Seattle, and San Jose. We selected them for two reasons: First, each city had a critical mass of college-educated immigrants, including thousands who were underemployed. Second, the research was funded by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, and Knight has a presence in four of those cities.

How did the research project work?

Jim: Well, it had two components. The first was an online survey. You can read more about the methodology of that in our full report. The second was quite innovative. It was a pre-recorded interactive voice response (IVR) survey of immigrant radio listeners. IVR surveys have been used before, particularly for election polls, but tying such a survey to “call-to-listen” technology is novel.

Sounds intriguing! How did that actually work?

Amanda: Many radio stations that are trying to reach immigrant audiences use something called “call-to-listen” technology. It's basically the same thing as Free

Conference Call services: a dedicated phone number that listeners can call into.

It means that instead of manually tuning into a radio station, you're actually calling a phone number to listen to your favorite show. And because that's the mechanism, AudioNow is able to insert a little pre-recorded question when the listener calls in, asking them if they are willing to participate in a survey. Then they just press a button on their phones to say yes or no.

Natalie, can you tell us more about this tool? Is this the first time AudioNow has used it?

Natalie: The survey tool was especially designed for our radio-by-phone platform with the help of Hart Research, in 2013. Multiple-choice surveys of up to 12 questions are recorded by a DJ or program host, in-language, in partnership with a radio station serving the target community. The survey questions and answers are installed on the radio station's unique call-to-listen access number. Listeners dialing the access number to hear the station's programming are prompted by a familiar radio personality to take the survey. Afterwards they are connected to the regular broadcast. This survey capability is unique because it reaches respondents



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on any type of phone, including mobile phones, and when listeners actively call in to hear the survey prompt.

Because it's pre-recorded, it can run on demand any time a listener calls in. Because it's multiple-choice, the listener can select the answers simply by pressing the buttons on their phone. We can also program the software never to offer the survey twice to the same listener.

Recent surveys have investigated the opinions of immigrant and diaspora audiences regarding immigration reform, gun control and climate change. One of our studies surveyed Somali and Haitian listeners about their remittance behaviors for the first time. We got a terrific response, even though asking about money can be a really sensitive topic, and that told us that we were on to something with this approach.

Why did you decide to use this method?

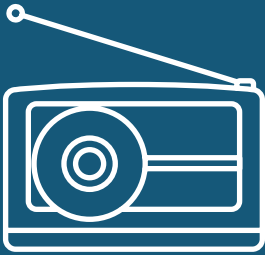
Amanda: It was an outstanding way to reach people whom we might never talk with otherwise. For example, it would

have been prohibitively expensive to have live operators doing a random-digit-dial telephone survey trying to reach a certain number of Swahili speakers in the US. But with the radio survey, in just five days we got responses from 300 Swahili speakers. We were glad that Knight was willing to support our use of this technology, and thrilled that it really paid off in terms of the wealth of data that was collected quite inexpensively.

Jim: In traditional survey research the big issue has been how best to select a random sample from a well-defined population. Today, the landscape is radically different. The target population is often difficult to define—think about

the U.S. immigrant population, where there isn't a list to randomly sample from—and survey response rates are at an all-time low. In addition, different response rates between sub-populations introduce new sources of non-randomness. The key question now is to look at the survey sample data you get and then define the population to which it can best be generalized.

I was excited about the audio component of this project because it gave us a way to access a whole universe of



Call-to-listen means calling a regular phone number to hear your favorite radio station live. AudioNow has the ability to ask listeners who call if they are willing to participate in a survey. Past surveys with immigrant and diaspora audiences have included immigration reform, gun control and climate change.

respondents who might never have come across our online survey. And, as Amanda said, we didn't have the budget to do a large-scale telephone survey. Once we collected the data, drilling down into what we could decipher about the respondents reached with this novel approach might sound like a challenge, but it was actually a fun puzzle.

Let's talk nuts and bolts. Who took on which pieces of the project?

Stacey: IMPRINT had responsibility for the big picture of what we were trying to learn and who we were trying to reach. We developed an initial list of survey questions, and then went back and forth with Jim and his team to settle on both the content and the format.

Jim: On some level, a good survey question is a good survey question. It doesn't really matter if you're asking about politics, or education, or immigration. You want to be as rigorous as possible in framing your questions in a way that respondents can understand so that you end up with the most relevant data.

Natalie: Once Stacey and Jim sent us the draft questions, I sat down with our lead engineer to go over exactly how he would program each question and answer into the system.

We identified a few potential glitches, so then we came back to the team and hammered those out.

Can you give us an example?

Natalie: This survey was relatively long compared to others we have done. In order to minimize the burden on respondents, who are eager to hear their radio program following the survey, we engineered the survey to employ a more sophisticated skip pattern, and included an option in the survey prompt for the respondent to take the survey at a later time. We were pleased with the response rate as a result of these optimizations.

You mentioned Swahili above. How many languages did you use for the survey, and how did you decide on them?

Stacey: Five! Amharic, Haitian Kreyol, English, Punjabi, and Swahili. AudioNow helped us to identify the languages, as Natalie can describe.

Natalie: When the IMPRINT team first came to us about the project, they told us which cities they were focusing on. I ran an analysis of our listener data to see how many people were calling in from the relevant area codes, and which stations



The purpose of the study was to survey college-educated immigrants using the “call to listen” technology to identify common barriers, areas of opportunity, and recommendations on how cities can fully utilize the immigrant talent in their midst.

they were calling to listen to. It’s not a perfect test, because a person might be calling from a cell phone but not be living in the city that their area code shows. So we had to make sure that the survey itself included a check question about whether they lived in one of the six cities.

Amanda: Once we had the English version of the survey finalized, we contracted a vendor to do the written translations. Then we sent the translated documents to Natalie. She worked with AudioNow’s broadcast partners to record the question prompts and answer options.

Did each survey run on a single radio station?

Natalie: No, we identified a total of 23 broadcast partners who were working in one of the five target languages. For each language we worked with one broadcaster closely to record the survey script in-language. For example, the Haitian Kreyol version was recorded by Radio Kiskeya located in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, but was also hosted by leading Haitian radio broadcasters Radio Lumiere Inter and Radio Caraibes. For Amharic we worked with Ethiopian Satellite Television of Ethiopia to record the survey, and conducted the survey with the additional help of the popular broadcasters Sheger 102.2 FM, Admas Radio, DireTube Radio and BBN Our Voice. For

the Punjabi survey we worked closely with Punjabi Radio USA in San Jose, California to record, and ran the survey with their help and that of leading stations such as Radio Chardi Kala, Chann Pardesi and Dhol Radio. The Swahili survey was recorded and hosted by Jambo Boston Radio in Massachusetts, and also hosted by Kenyan based stations Inooro FM, Ramogi FM and Radio Egesa. Finally we ran a survey in English for African immigrants with seven broadcasters serving the African diaspora across the U.S. including Highlife Radio, Brocktonheat, Tmz Radio International, Radio Uganda Boston, K-Hitz Radio, Divine Word FM and Sankofa FM.

How did you test for accuracy?

Jim: Good question! This is where it helps to have an international team. Stacey and Amanda had colleagues who spoke each of the target languages. There were two stages of review – first they looked at the written translation of the survey, and then later they listened to the recorded audio prompts.

What happened once the survey was in the field?

Stacey: The response was almost instantaneous. Within the first few days, we had had more than 4,000 respondents, including 2,300 who lived in one of the target cities.



Hoo

The audio component of this project gave us access to a whole universe of respondents who might never have come across our online survey.

Jim: That goes back to the point I mentioned earlier – the wealth of data that you can gather. In the end we had over 2,700 respondents who lived *outside* of our target cities. We did not view their responses as junk data or throw it away. Of course we were primarily interested in the data from the six cities, but because we had decided to allow a seventh answer option on the “Where do you live now?” question, we were able to also gather information from listeners who lived outside the target areas. We saw different patterns of responses from one target city to the next on certain questions. When we combined them, however, the responses matched well with those from the 2,700 or so respondents from outside our target cities. As a result, when we wanted to look at the overall U.S. immigrant experience these additional responses improved the accuracy of our study.

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Jim: In some ways, respondents were relatively similar to the American public. For example, among those who were eligible to vote, 61% were registered. These numbers are somewhat below the U.S. electorate as a whole, where 2010 Census data shows 65% were registered to vote. However, in Miami (69%) and San Jose (70%) our respondents were more likely to be registered to vote than in the U.S. population as a whole.

In contrast, our respondents were much more likely to be in the labor force (89%) compared to the overall U.S. average for those age 18 to 65 (75%). There were some interesting differences among the cities. Detroit had the highest number of respondents who reported experiencing discrimination – one out of every three people. Respondents in Miami reported a higher degree of social capital (meaning friends and family that

they could rely on) compared to those in Seattle. Things like that. You’ll have to read the report to get the full story!

📍 Tell us about what you found. Did anything surprise you?

Natalie: As far as surprises, we had hoped for a good response, but even we were surprised at how quickly we got a large number of respondents. Our listeners were very willing to participate.

📍 What are your biggest takeaways?

Amanda: For me the biggest takeaway was not to make assumptions. We knew going into this that there were a lot

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The AudioNow survey was conducted in five languages: Amharic, Haitian Kreyol, English, Punjabi, and Swahili.

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of unknowns, and so we deliberately structured the project to allow us to make changes as we went along. Fortunately, Knight was very supportive of this somewhat iterative research approach. For example, we were originally going to do four languages, but several of the East African stations told us that their listeners might feel more comfortable taking the survey in Swahili rather than English, so we added it.

📍 Any advice for others who want to use this survey approach?

Stacey: My advice is to make sure to build in extra time, especially for multilingual surveys! Translations always take longer than you think. We also considered whether to delay implementation to avoid fielding the survey during the winter holidays when people's listening patterns might be different.

Natalie: We'd love to see more community members working with broadcasters serving immigrant communities. AudioNow pioneered this technique, conscious of the atmosphere of trust our platform creates between listeners and their broadcaster. This survey tool is uniquely powerful not only because of the technology that reaches mobile audiences, but because surveys are launched in partnership with broadcasters. At the same time, broadcasters appreciate the opportunity to develop original programming around

survey topics of interest to their listeners. They inspire audiences to respond and have their voices heard.

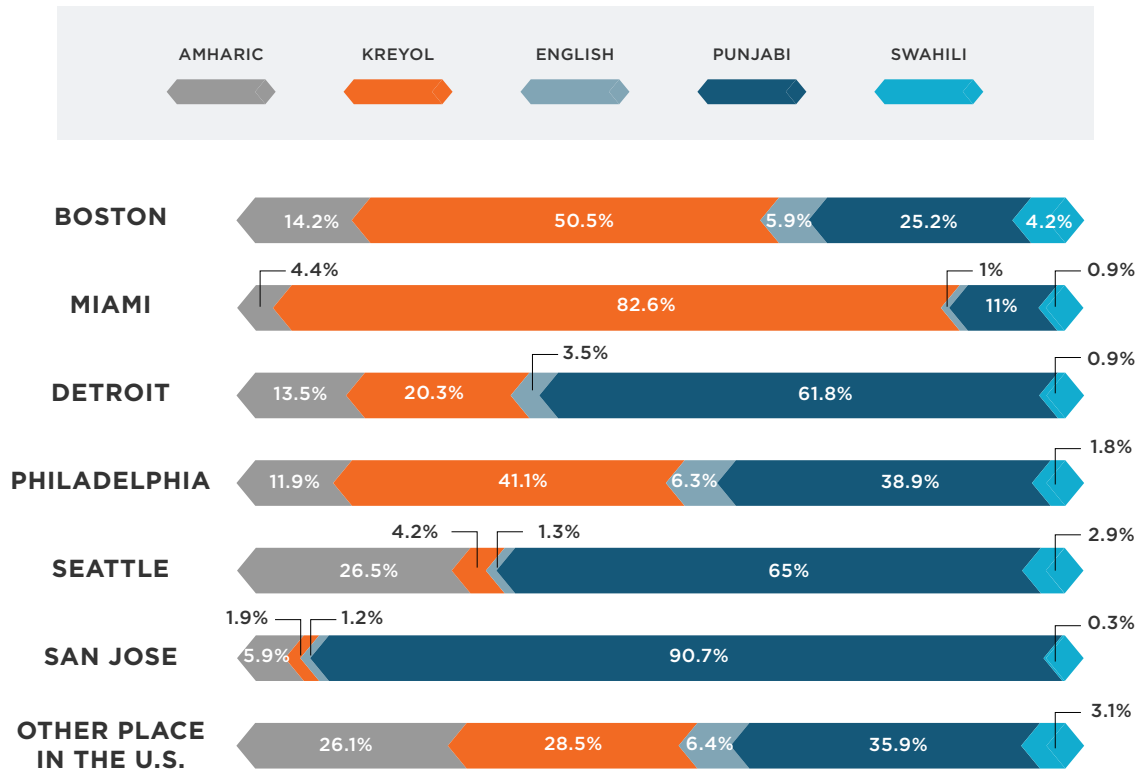
It's a way to survey these communities in a trusted, friendly way. It's not like a stranger calling you to interrupt you during dinner. For that reason, I think this tool holds a lot of promise for industries and researchers, particularly in fields where trust is key. You get better data, because you're reaching people in an intimate setting, where they're already comfortable.

Jim: I absolutely agree with what Stacey and Natalie have to say. Survey research involves much more than simply thinking up a few good questions. Translation and timing are two good examples of how complex it can be to collect good survey data. Also, survey researchers increasingly need to look more closely at the quality of the data they are gathering using traditional survey methods. Survey researchers need to step outside their comfort zone and try new approaches to collecting survey data.

Read the full report at imprintproject.org/stepstosuccess.

Appendix A

Geographical Breakdown of Respondents



With Appreciation

IMPRINT recognizes the following radio stations for their assistance with this research project:



Radio Kiskeya
Port-au-Prince, Haiti



Caraibes
Les Cayes, Haiti



Radio Lumiere Inter
Cap-Haitien, Haiti



Chann Pardesi
Bolingbrook, United States



Dhol Radio
Barnala, India



Punjabi Radio USA
San Jose, United States



Radio Chardi Kala
Union City, United States



Jambo Boston Radio
Dracut, United States



Inooro FM
Nairobi, Kenya



Ramogi FM
Nairobi, Kenya



Egesa FM
Nairobi, Kenya



Highlife Radio
Manassas, United States



Tmz Radio International
Brooklyn Center, United States



Brocktonheat
Brockton, United States



Radio Uganda Boston
Waltham, United States



DivineWord FM
Virginia, United States



K-Hitz Radio
Paterson, United States



Sankofa FM - Stuttgart
Accra, Ghana



**Ethiopian Satellite
Television Service (ESAT)**
Alexandria, United States



Sheger 102.1 FM
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



BBN Our Voice
Lawrenceville, United States



Admas Radio
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