

Survey shows audiences rise for RTE and western radio stations

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Survey shows audiences rise for RTE and western radio stations

By Michael Foley

RTE ONE has increased its audience in the Dublin area by five percentage points, while in seven provincial areas, local radio stations are the most popular, according to the latest MRBI joint listenership research survey.

The survey, carried out between July 1990 and June 1991, shows a decrease nationally of two percentage points for the combined RTE stations. In Dublin, however, FM2 had a 19 per cent share, the same as in the last survey, while RTE One recorded an increase of five points, to reach 51 per cent of listeners in the area.

In the national survey, Century FM has seven per cent of listeners, compared with eight in the last survey. Local stations have a 27 per cent share, compared to 24 per cent in March.

In Dublin, Century FM has fallen to seven per cent, from nine per cent, while Rock 104 FM, which changed its name from

Capital and revamped its format during the survey period, has fallen to nine per cent from 11 per cent. 98 FM Classic Hits has held its market share at 14 per cent.

The survey found that 45 per cent of radio listeners tune in at some stage to independent stations. Highland Radio, Mid West Radio and Clare FM have held their position as the number one stations in their franchise areas and have been joined by North West Radio, WLR in Waterford, South East Radio and Radio Kerry.

One trend which emerges from the survey is that local stations are, in the main, strongest in the west.

RTE's director of radio programming, Mr Kevin Healy, said he was extremely pleased that RTE had maintained its strong position in a period when more stations had started broadcasting.

"These figures are extremely encouraging. After two years the market has begun to rise and RTE has emerged as the leader

and the first choice for over two-thirds of Irish listeners," he said.

Rock 104 was quick to claim to be the only station to show an increase in the Dublin area under the heading "yesterday listenership", which indicates that those surveyed turned to a particular station at some time the previous day.

However, on the more important figure, the share of listening, Rock 104 showed a drop of two per centage points. The new Rock 104 format has been in use for only the past five weeks.

98 FM Classic Hits, the other Dublin local station was able to claim to be the leader of the 23 local stations currently broadcasting. Both Dublin local stations provide music only.

Century FM claimed to be the only national radio station to show an overall increase in audience, despite its percentage market share dropping nationally by one point. The national independent station also claimed it

"now has an audience substantially greater than that of 98 FM and Rock 104 combined." Both broadcast in the Dublin area only.

All three Dublin-based independent stations also claim audience increases in particular socio-economic and age groups.

The chief executive of the Independent Radio and Television Commission (IRTC), Mr Michael O'Keefe, said yesterday that the IRTC was encouraged by the upward trend in audience for the local independent stations. These stations had increased their combined listenership by three percentage points to 38 per cent.

This continued the gradual upward trend in local radio which was evident since the surveys commenced in April of last year.

RTE said that the most popular RTE programme was "Morning Ireland", with 777,000 listeners, followed by the "Gay Byrne Show", with 727,000 and "News at One", with 523,000.

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