

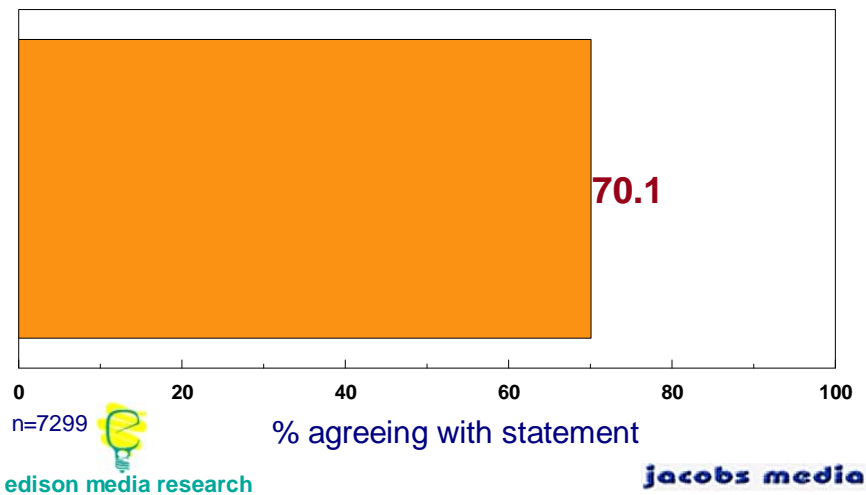
## It may be “Shocking” – but it’s what Rock listeners want

By Larry Rosin, President, Edison Media Research &  
Fred Jacobs, President, Jacobs Media

An overwhelming majority of Rock radio listeners believe that “radio personalities should be able to say whatever they please, and that if people don’t want to listen, they can change stations” according to a new Web Poll from Jacobs Media and Edison Media Research.

**"Radio personalities should be able to say whatever they please; if people don't want to listen, they can change stations."**

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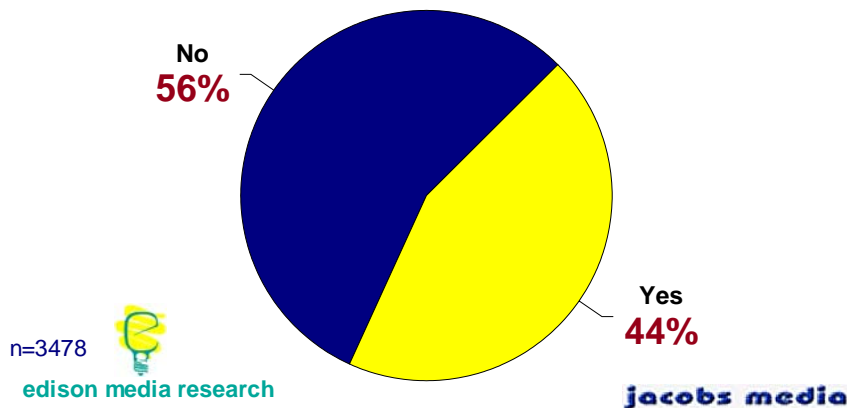


While radio personalities and “shock jocks” have always received a lot of attention, various incidents in the last few months such as Opie & Anthony’s “cancellation” over their St. Patrick’s Cathedral sex stunt and the firing of KUPD’s Beau Duran after his crass phone call to the widow of Darryl Kile have put the behavior of radio personalities in sharper focus than ever. Our companies funded a Web Poll that garnered more than 7300 responses from visitors to the Web sites of Rock radio stations all over the country in order to learn what *listeners* think about what they are hearing.

In question after question, listeners to Rock radio stations across the country told us that they believe in a generally “libertarian” approach to radio. For instance, while many people in the “mainstream” media were horrified by Opie & Anthony’s arranging for people to have sex in a pew in a Cathedral, a strong majority of those in our survey who knew about the stunt said O&A did *not* deserve to be fired.

## **"Do you think Opie & Anthony deserved to be taken off the air because of this contest?"**

Among those familiar with Opie & Anthony AND familiar with contest



Our Web Poll was performed from October 14-22. The poll appeared on the Web sites of more than 20 Rock radio stations across the country. There was solid representation from Classic Rock/Mainstream Rock, Active Rock, and Alternative Rock stations. Data is available by format. Additionally, participating stations feature a variety of kinds of morning shows, ranging from traditional “shock jocks” (e.g. Howard Stern, Mancow) to more moderate programs, and shows that are deemed to be completely inoffensive. Consequently, we were able to analyze the data by the “degree of shock” each station typically presents in the morning. Even people who choose to listen to morning shows without any particularly harsh content generally feel that radio content should not be controlled – that listeners are more than capable of exerting the control themselves.

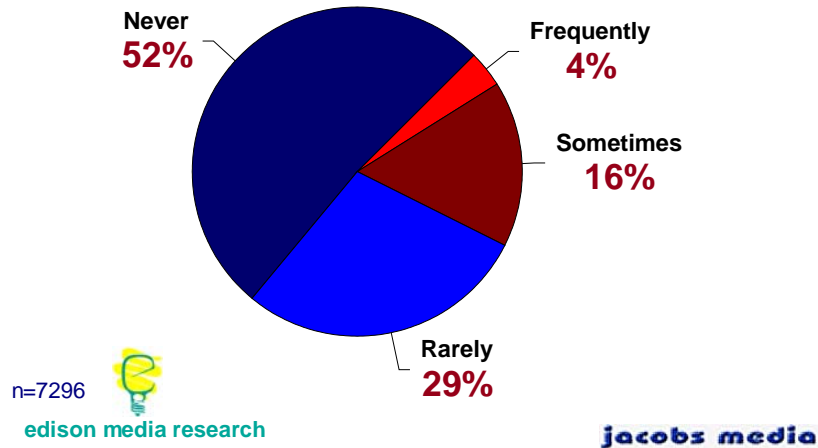
Here’s a sample comment from one 45-year-old male: “Censorship rests with the individual. It’s called the ON/OFF button.” A 25 year old said, “If people are offended by what radio personalities say, just change the station. There are nine radio stations that wouldn’t offend the Pope for every one that would.”

We attempted to look at a variety of issues in our poll. Here is a summary of some of the other key findings:

- Radio is no more “dirty and explicit” than either network television or cable television. While radio’s edgiest content seems to get the most attention, Rock radio listeners seem to see almost no difference between radio and either kind of television. Only 20% of our respondents said that today’s radio shows are either “frequently” or “sometimes” too dirty and explicit for their tastes (only 3.6% said “frequently”!) By comparison, the numbers are 18% for the seemingly well-scrubbed network television and 21% for cable television. *Fully 52% of these respondents told us the radio shows they hear are never too dirty and explicit for their tastes*

## How often are today's radio shows too dirty and explicit for your taste?

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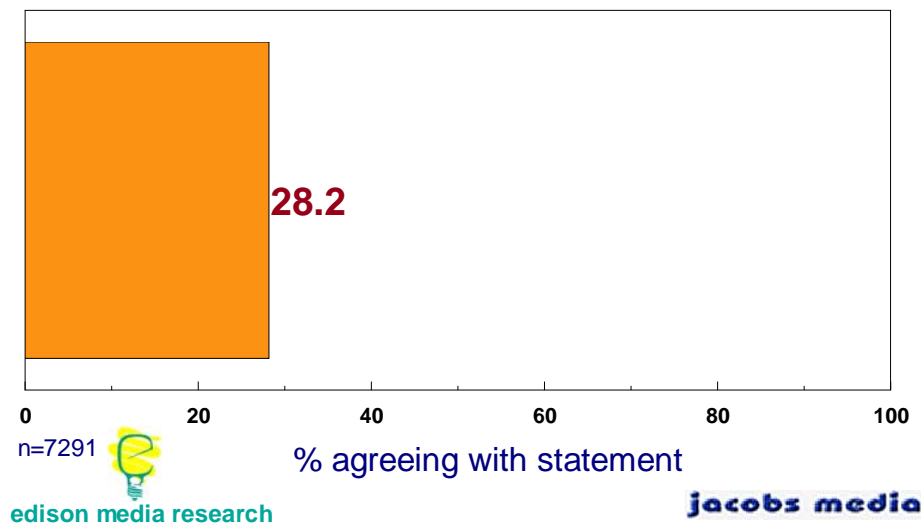


- Many Rock radio stations worry about the content on their Web sites – which regularly includes pictures of naked or nearly naked women. The data argue that Rock stations needn't worry too much. Fully 84% of respondents told us that they are rarely or never offended by this type of content. Even 60% of the *women* in our sample said that they are never offended by such content. Further, 39% of the men in the sample said that they visit radio stations more often because of the pictures, and only 5% said they visit less.
- The way in which many radio personalities “push the limits” seems to be an attraction for many respondents. Respondents were more than 2 ½ times more likely to say they agreed that they “prefer radio personalities that push the limits” than disagree. Only those people who were on the sites of stations with the mildest morning shows tended to disagree – that is to say that they don't prefer a show that “pushes the limits.”

Finally, we asked respondents if they agree or disagree that “Shock Jock radio personalities have gone too far.” As the nearby graph shows, less than one-third of respondents agree with that statement.

## "Shock jock radio personalities have gone too far."

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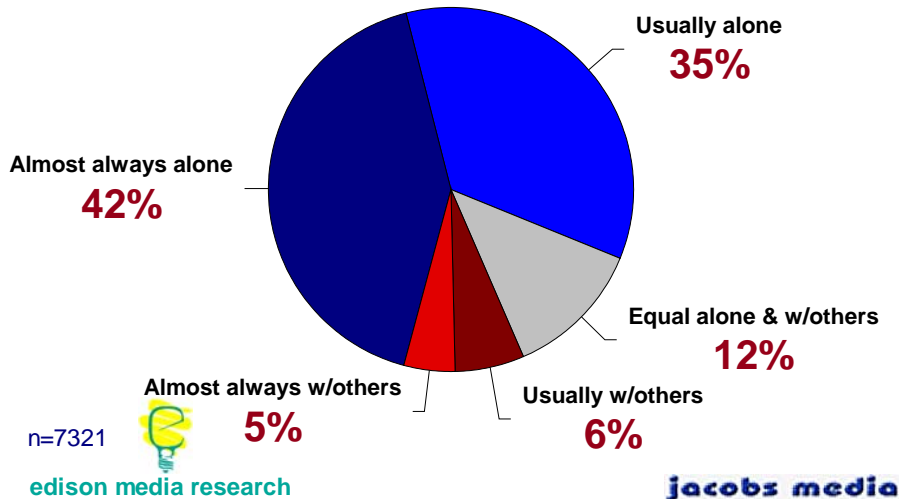
Even after Opie & Anthony, even after Beau Duran, less than one in three Rock listeners say that the behavior of today’s radio personalities has “crossed the line.”

Here’s a sample comment from a 20-year-old male: “I believe that great radio personalities and people in society always have to push limits that are acceptable in their social time in order to make advances in the human intellect, even if they offend or seem not to have any meaning.” A 24-year-old female said, “It’s true that some DJ’s have pushed the limits really far--but as long as it is entertaining and intelligent, go ahead and push the limits!” And a 20-year-old male remarks, “You need more radio personalities that will push the limits!”

So clearly, while some of the ruder and more high profile actions of various radio personalities make the news and sometimes get them fired, they are not passing the thresholds of most Rock radio listeners. Why?

Well, one strong explanation comes from *how* people listen to radio morning shows. As the nearby graph shows more than 70% of our respondents told us they usually or always listen to the radio *alone*. This is a crucial, key finding. First, people are far less likely to suffer any embarrassment when listening to a radio show, regardless of the content, when they are listening alone. Further, when one is alone he or she has total control of the situation. If what is being heard is too raunchy or discomforting in any way, the radio dial is always there to tune away.

## "Which of the following best describes how you personally listen to radio morning shows?"



Over the years each of us has performed dozens of focus groups where we attempt to determine where the mythical "line" is drawn – that is, how far is too far. Invariably, someone will mention that they "were driving their eight year-old" and heard "something that made me tune the station." This has led many stations – even Rock stations – to advertise that they are a station that can be listened to along with your children. Our research indicates one big problem with this strategy: The adults in our sample and children *rarely are listening to the radio together!* Only one-third of respondents told us that they drive children in their cars and listen to the radio even once a week. Further, only 5.5% of our respondents told us that they frequently are forced to change stations to keep children from hearing offensive material. By comparison, fully 79% of respondents say this "rarely or never" happens to them.

Again, bear in mind that the people in our survey were visiting Rock station sites. Given the programming on many of these stations and the content of the Web sites, perhaps we have a sample that is more sympathetic to these issues. But still, this is what Rockers are telling us about what they are hearing on the radio. Overwhelmingly, these 7300+ men and women want to decide for themselves what content is "over the line".

To learn more about the study, or for a complete report, please contact Larry Rosin ([lrosin@edisonresearch.com](mailto:lrosin@edisonresearch.com)) or Fred Jacobs ([fredjacobs@jacobsmedia.com](mailto:fredjacobs@jacobsmedia.com)).