

PULSAR\*



## Untangling the Airpod conversation

The behaviors, audiences and memes behind the wireless revolution

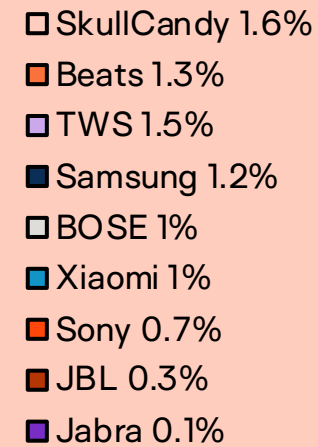
# Untangling the AirPods conversation

The behaviors, audiences and cultural trends behind the wireless revolution

In this report, generated using Pulsar TRENDS and TRAC, we untangle the online AirPods conversation, to explore behaviours, audiences, trends, moments, sentiment, memes and opinions across a range of social and online media.

If you're a marketer, researcher, planner or communications professional, this research highlights the extent to which AirPods have impacted consumer attitudes. And the same online signals occur across different products and brands, revealing insights that can be interrogated and visualized on Pulsar.

Here, we examined over 933k global posts authored in January and February 2021, made across TikTok, Twitter, Facebook and beyond, in addition to both News and Google Search data.



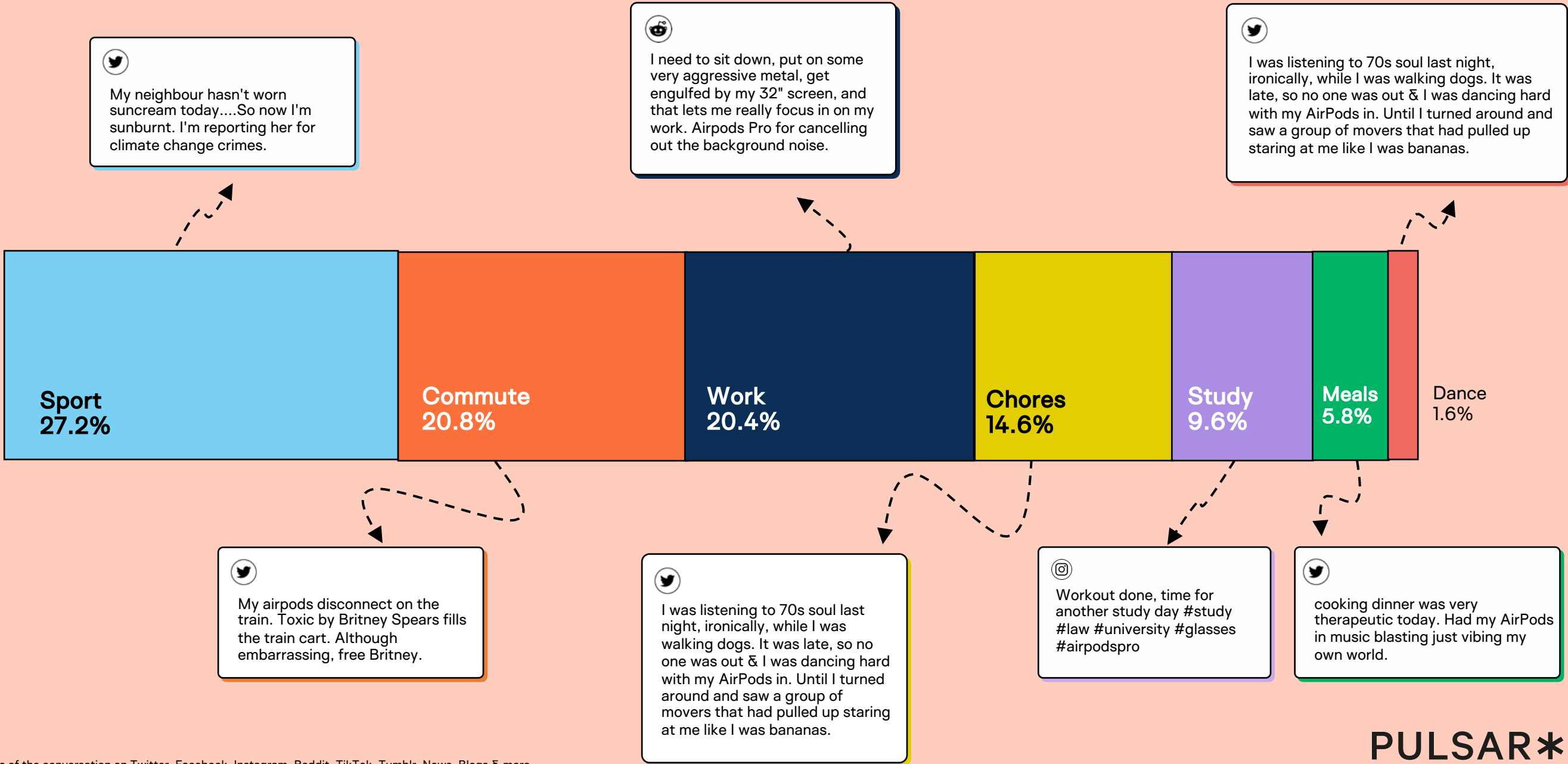
## Airpods are by far the loudest in the hearables market

Not only are AirPods the best selling hearables on the market, they also dominate the online conversation, with over 90% share of voice: competitors like Skullcandy, TWS and other Apple-owned brands like Beats by Dre don't reach 2%

Global Twitter share of voice for top hearable brands, Mar 2020–Mar 2021. Source: Pulsar TRENDS

# AirPods Moments

The key activities shared by Airpods users across social media

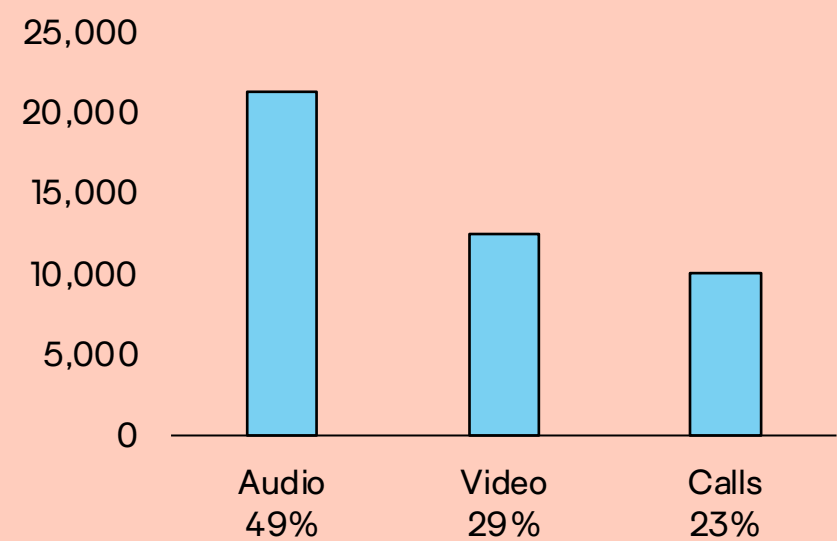


# AirPods: the Mediums and Platforms

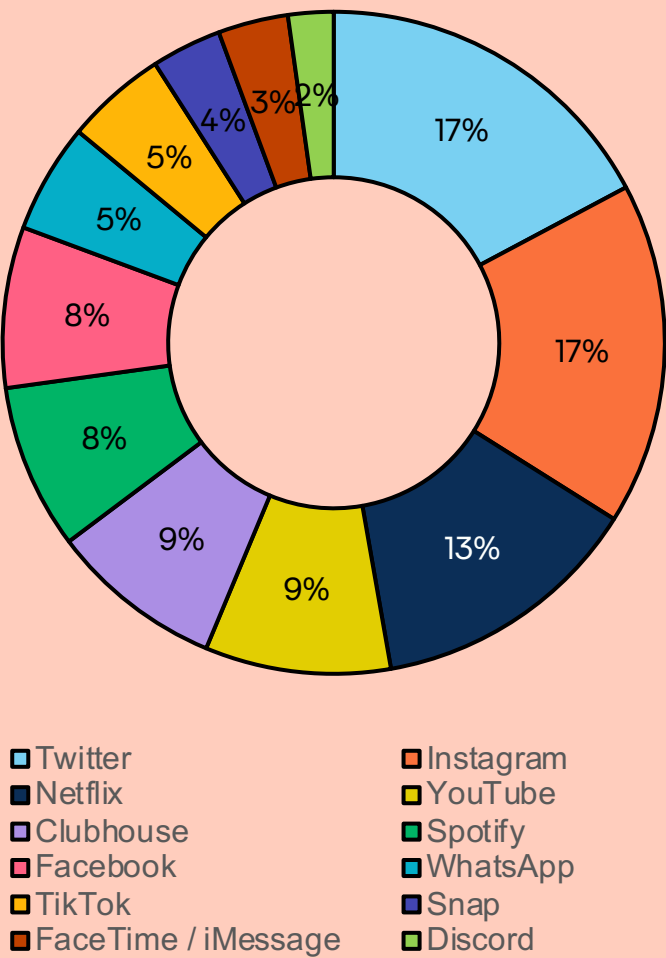
AirPods power all kinds of media and interaction happening on phones and computers, and over the course of 2020, they have become a key component of many people’s work from home setup. But in the AirPods conversation, while both calls and video are both important kinds of “content” that is consumed through AirPods, audio remains the dominant form of content consumption discussed (more detail on audio consumption in the next section).

In terms of general (non-work) platforms that are associated to AirPods social networking apps like Twitter and Instagram top the chart around 17% each, followed by mostly video platforms (Netflix, Youtube) and by audio ones like Clubhouse and Spotify. Functional platforms for calls like WhatsApp and Apple’s own FaceTime/iMessage show up further down.

The Mediums consumed via AirPods



The leisure platforms in the AirPods conversation



Mediums mentioned in conjunciton with AirPods (left) and The top platforms mentioned alongside Airpods (right) across Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Reddit, TikTok, Tumblr, News, Blogs & more between Jan 25-Feb 25 2021. Source: Pulsar TRAC.

# What's being listened to on AirPods?

By zooming in on declared listening habits in AirPods owners, we see just how dominant music still is when talking about hearables. While podcasts have exploded in popularity, they still represent only 10% of the AirPods conversation while music makes up a whopping 80% of it. Lectures and audiobooks make up the remaining 10%.

But what exactly are AirPods owners listening to? Using Pulsar TRAC, we can see that conversation skews towards listening to K-pop bands – and just how dominant those artists have become in mainstream culture and social media mentions.

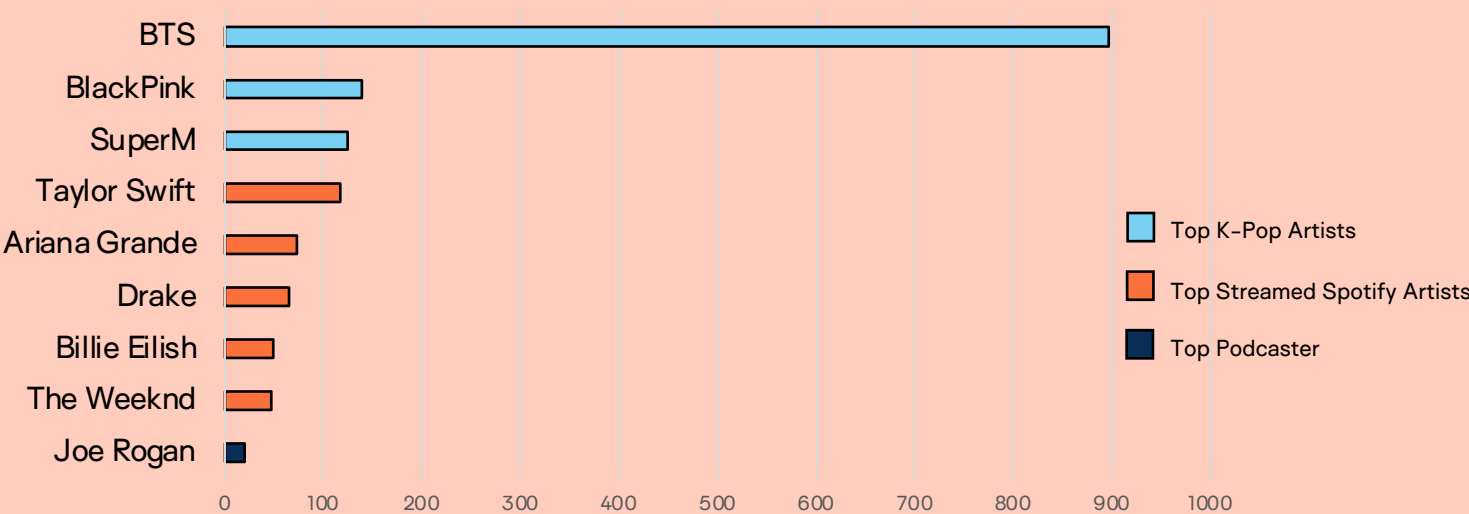
The three K-pop bands with the largest social media followings have a significantly larger number of mentions in the AirPods conversation than even the most streamed, and talked about North American artists including Taylor Swift, Ariana Grande, Drake, Billie Eilish, and The Weeknd.

We can also see that podcasts have significant room for growth. Joe Rogan, host of the most popular podcast on Spotify, is the most mentioned podcaster by Airpods owners.

## Music dominates AirPods conversation



## How the top AirPods artists stack up





# The Audiences Behind the AirPods Conversation

Who are the audiences and communities behind AirPods conversations? Utilizing Pulsar's Communities integration, we can cluster the specific audience segments who talk about wearing and using AirPods by affinity and online behavior.

**LGBTQ Culture**

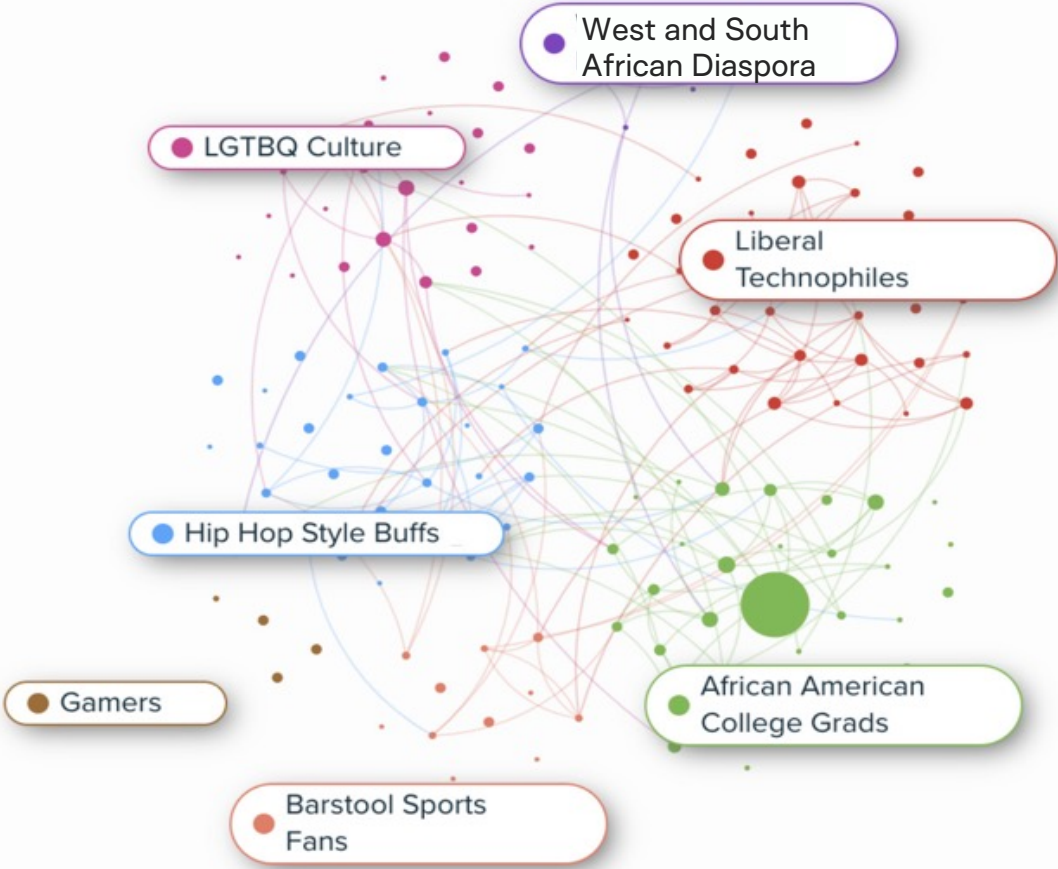
Almost half of Progressive Pop Culture Fans (12.7%) fall within the 25–34 age group. Hailing from Los Angeles, Chicago & Dallas, they are vocal about their support for Black Lives Matter and have very high affinity for TV shows on both Netflix (RuPaul's Drag Race, Stranger Things, Queer Eye) and FX (American Horror Story, Pose).

**Hip-Hop Style Buffs**

Hip Hop Style Buffs have an almost even male/female split and make up 14.7% of the total US AirPods conversation. They follow Sneaker deals accounts, and have high affinity for the NBA fashion and culture online mag Complex.

**Gamers**

The smallest of these groups at 2.4% of this audience, this segment is mostly made up by very young males with a passion for gaming and a very high affinity for Pokémon, Rick and Morty, and MrBeast.



**West and South African Diaspora**

The most international of these US audiences, the West & South Africa Diaspora segment makes up 4.3% of the audience. It skews male, has high interest in Nigerian artists Burna Boy and Davido as well as in European

**Liberal Technophiles**

The dominant segment in this conversation, Liberal Technophiles (18.6%) live in US coastal cities. This is a male-majority community in the 24–35 age range with a high affinity for tech personalities like Tim Cook or Bill Gates and news outlets like the NYT and WSJ.

**African-American College Grads**

Making up 17.3% of the US AirPods conversation, the African-American College Grads community skews female. This group tends to reside in Atlanta, Chicago and Baltimore and Texas and identify strongly with their alma maters. They often link up their Instagram to their Twitter.

**Barstool Sports Fans**

Making up 7.3% of the US AirPods audience, this community skew younger than other segments, with more than half of them under 24. They are often based out of Texas and the city of Saint Louis, and besides a super high affinity with the media company Barstool Sports and its founder, this group also has high interest in TMZ and the NFL

# AirPods Behaviour, by Community

There are some interesting behavioural trends around the 3 largest communities of Airpod owner audience segments making up the US AirPod conversation. They all use AirPods slightly differently, but one significant trend stands out.

Liberal Technophiles is the largest US community in this conversation. They over index for using AirPods during sports practice and are much less likely to talk about using them for work, or whilst doing chores.

The other two largest communities, African-American College Grads and Hip-Hop Style Buffs appear to have a more balanced routine. Conversation analysis at this audience segment level shows that they are using their AirPods almost equally across sport, work, and chores.

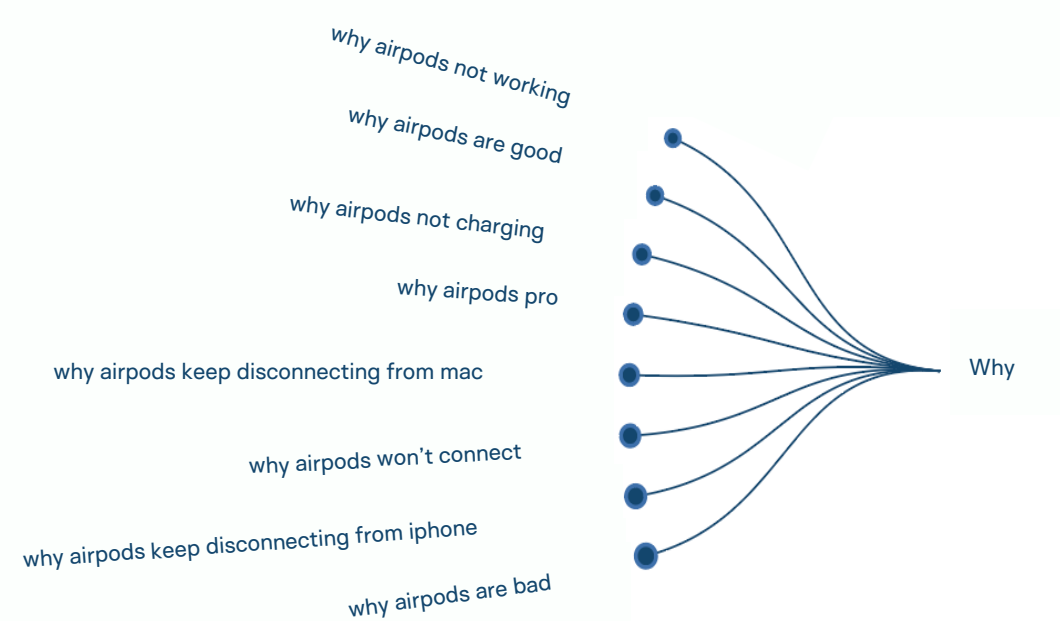
The differing use patterns of the largest AirPods audience segments



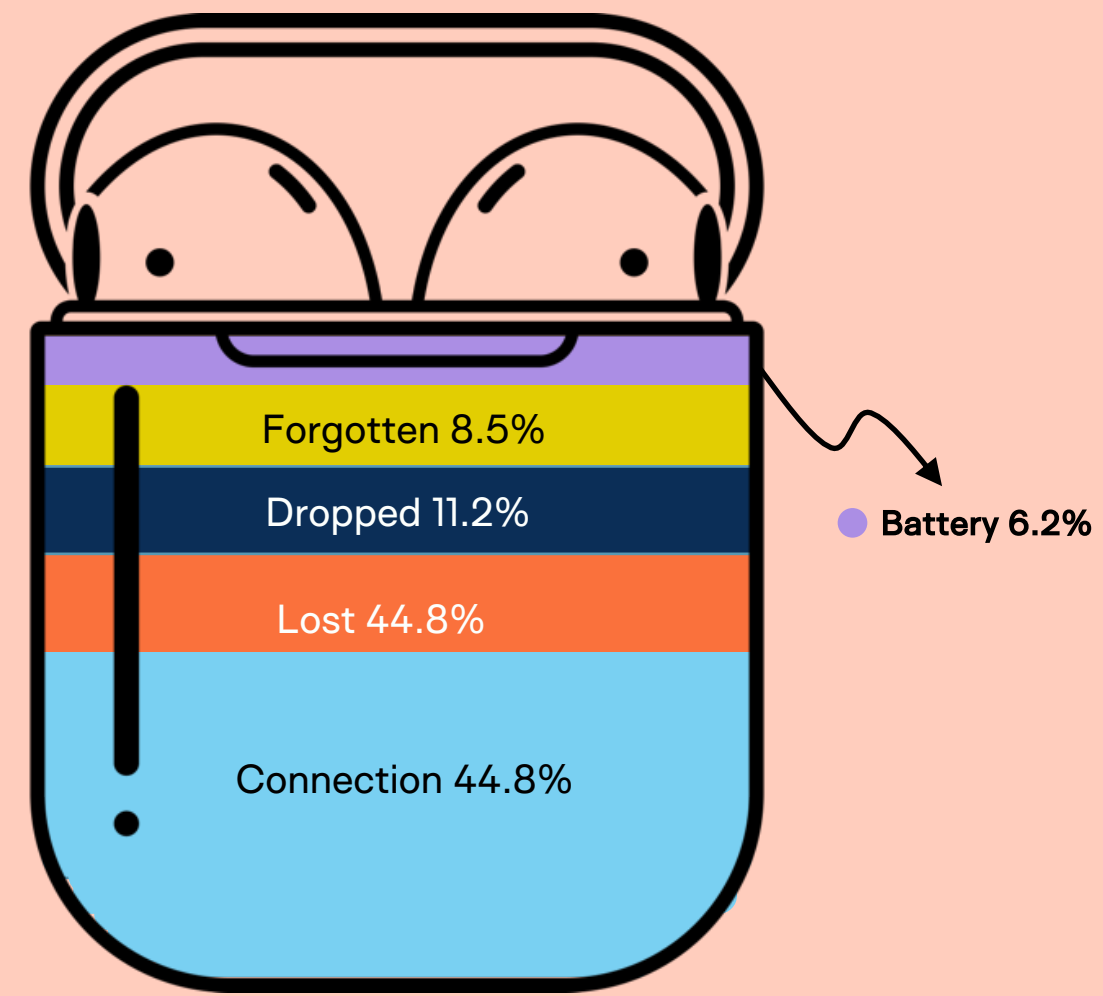
# Common AirPods Customer Experience issues

So what are the key Customer Experience (CX) issues and ‘pain points’ for AirPods owners? A significant CX issue for AirPods owners unearthed in the research, is disconnection from the devices they are being used to stream audio. Owners voiced both fears and experiences of compromising content suddenly becoming broadcast.

## On search: most common AirPods ‘whys’



## Most Discussed AirPods Issues



The most searched for 'Why' queries on Google Search relating to AirPods (left) and the most-discussed issues (right) in the AirPods conversation across Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Reddit, TikTok, Tumblr, News, Blogs & more, Jan 25-Feb 25 2021. Source: Pulsar TRAC.



# Where AirPods are lost (and found)

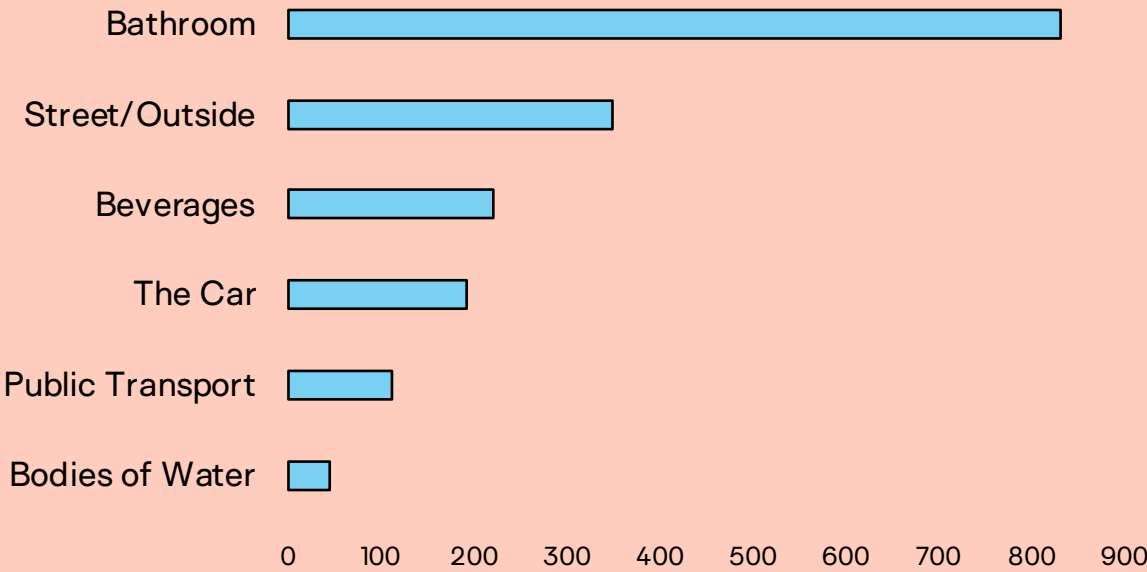
The AirPods conversation is far from being all positive. AirPods are lost (and found) all the time and people report they fall off very easily: AirPods end up under furniture, in the laundry, in bodies of water, in the sink, and in beverages, among many other places.

Where dropped AirPods end up provides a useful study into wearable behaviours, but also could power ‘loss aversion’ campaigns and messaging. The research using Pulsar highlighted Airpods are lost and damaged both indoors and outdoors. They are dropped in bodies of water – in restrooms, the bathroom sink and in beverages – among many other places.

## Lost or Found



## ...so where do AirPods get dropped?



Mentions of Lost or Found (left) and mentions of locations AirPods dropped (right) in the Airpods conversation across Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Reddit, TikTok, Tumblr, News, Blogs & more, Jan 25-Feb 25 2021. Source: Pulsar TRAC.

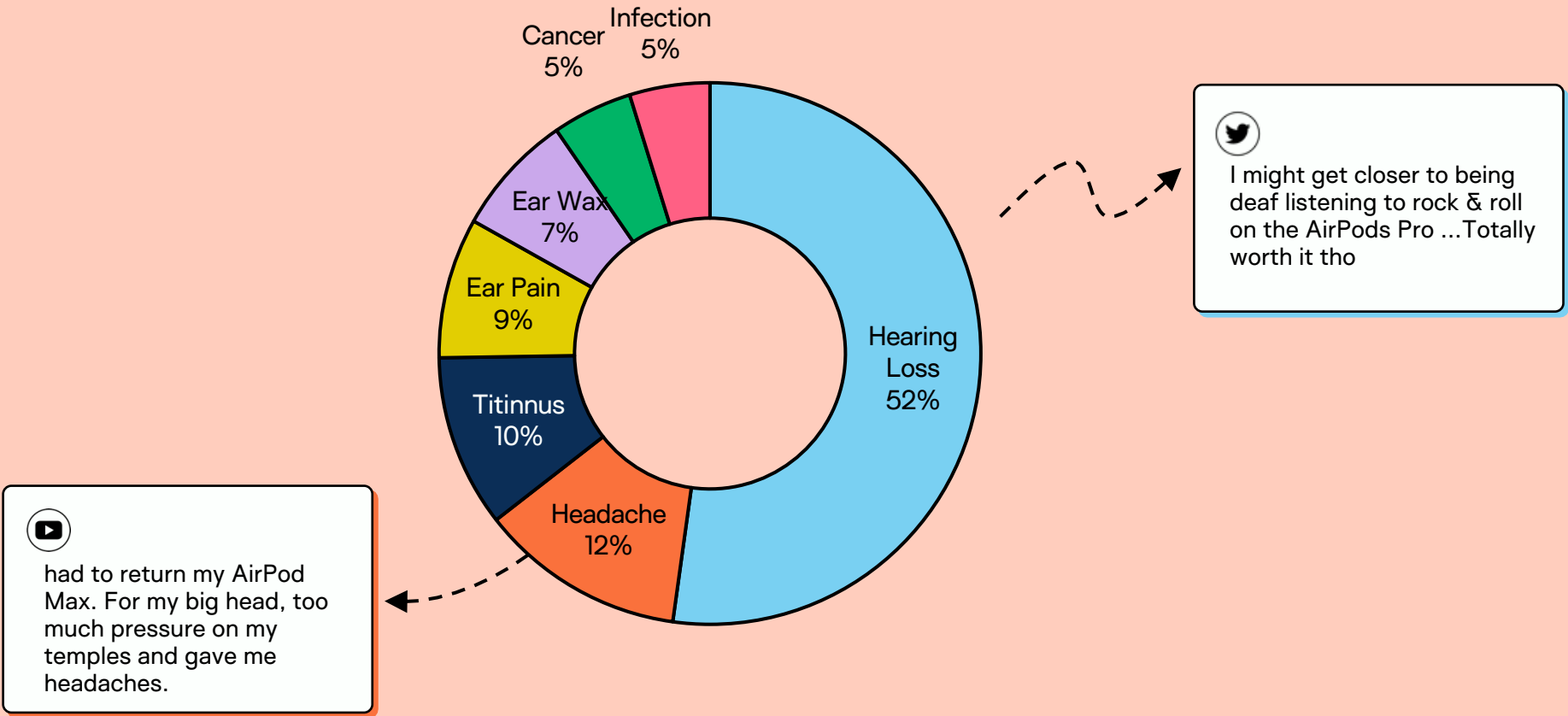
# AirPods Health & Hygiene

AirPods are the most personal device many people own. Understanding conversations from wearable technology owners in relation to integration with the physical body and their health fears is revealing for many industries, not solely consumer technology.

Hearing loss tops list of health concerns around Airpods in social media discussions since they come into contact with owner's body so intimately and for so long.

Fear of hearing loss makes up more than half of all health-related mentions, followed by headaches, tinnitus, general ear pain and build up of earwax. 4.8% of the conversation related to health concerns and Airpods centres around the topic of cancer.

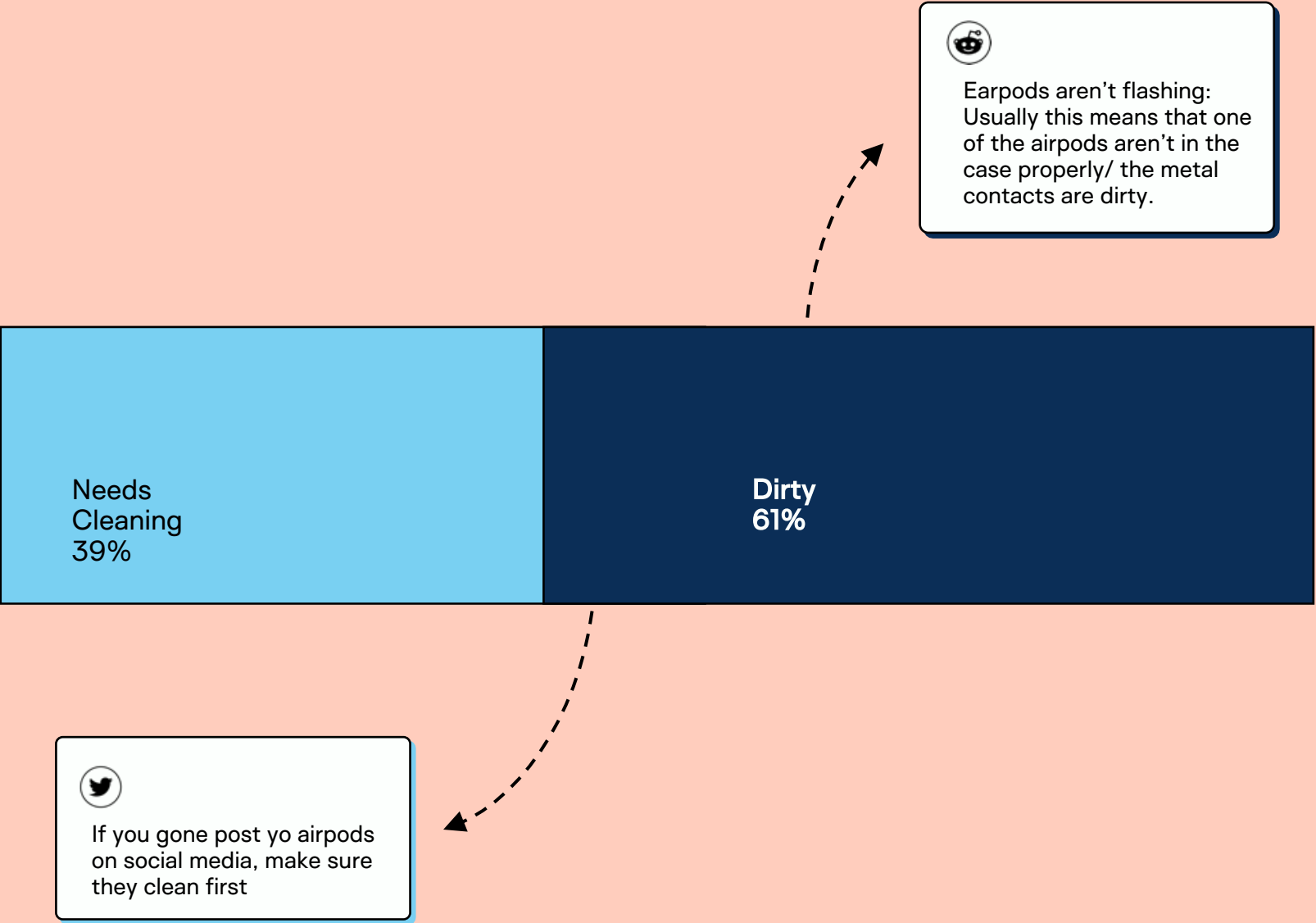
Hearing loss tops list of AirPod health concerns



# AirPods Cleanliness Front of Mind

There is also constant chatter around cleaning the bright white devices, and while health and hygiene is front of mind, a large share of AirPods conversation seems more concerned towards the devices looking “fresh”. Social media posts consist of those making fun of those whose AirPods are less than immaculate and PSA-style reminders for owners to clean them regularly.

There’s an active conversation about AirPod cleanliness taking place online, which touches on both dirt detracting from their status signalling and its negative impact on functionality.



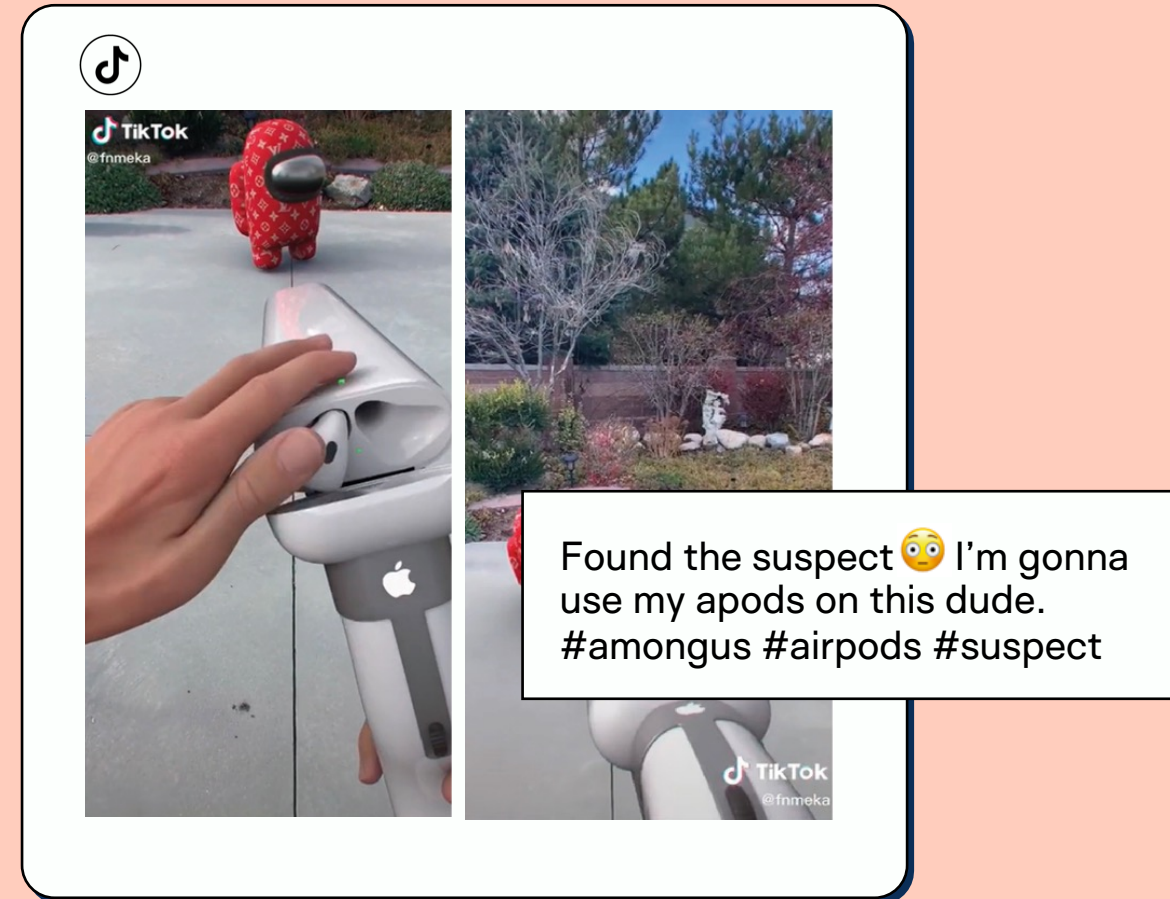
Mentions of AirPods cleanliness in the AirPods conversation across Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Reddit, TikTok, Tumblr, News, Blogs & more in January and February 2021. Source: Pulsar TRAC.

# The AirPods Shotty Phenomenon

Just how deeply objects like AirPods have influenced our collective consciousness is evident in memes, which often mirror our collective subconscious. In the case of AirPods, the most popular meme is a cultural remix sitting at the intersection of TikTok, virtual influencers, gaming, luxury brand advertising, and Apple's itself: the Airpod Shotty

Virtual influencer @fnmeka created the mixed reality video in which he shoots with an Apple-like shotgun – loaded with large airpods as bullets– a Louis-Vuitton laden survivor from the wildly popular game Among Us.

On TikTok, the video has racked up over 98 million views, 8.9 million likes, and 62 thousands comments to this day since being uploaded on November 18th, 2020. Pulsar's ability to identify breakout memes in real time across platforms such as TikTok and Reddit can help identify not only interesting product uses but highlight potential influencer partnerships and creative campaign messaging.

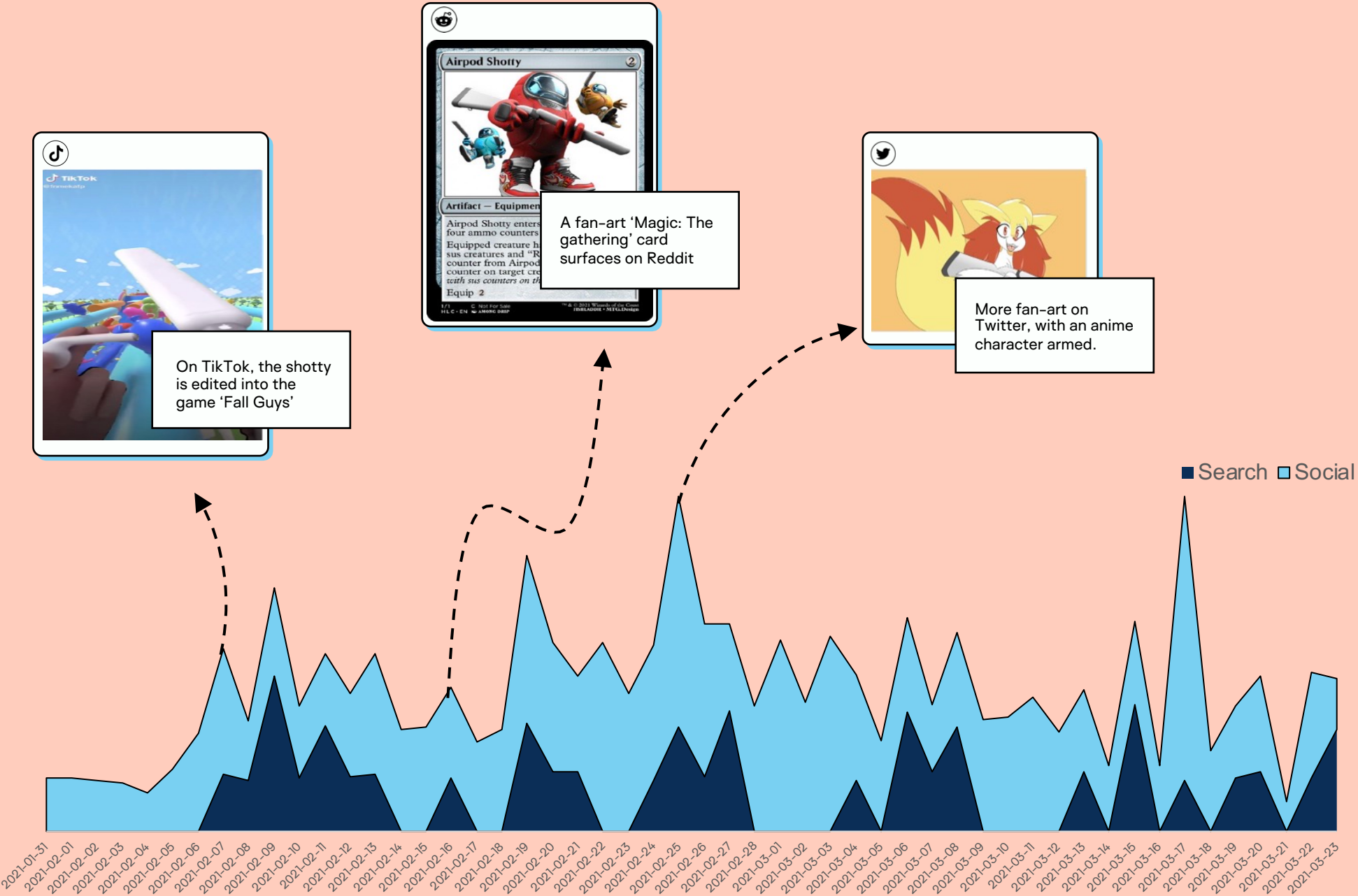


Screenshots from @fnmeka's Airpod Shotty TikTok video.

# AirPods Shotty: Mutating Across Platforms

Hit memes don't just spread: they mutate and take on lives of their own. A remix meme bringing together different parts of the culture like AirPods Shotty is a natural fit for these kinds of evolutions – especially since it's native to TikTok, where the Duet functionality encourages users to build on viral videos by weaving them into their own reposts.

While audience interest on search and social for the topic is still limited, it is sustained, and likely to continue over the coming months. The way AirPods Shotty has mutated and penetrated different layers of the culture in just a few months shows how deeply it has resonated with certain communities: on different platforms, users are inserting the meme into different subcultures and media types.



Audience interest in 'AirPod Shotty' between Nov 2020 – March 2021.  
Source: Pulsar TRENDS, Google Trends.

# PULSAR\*

Pulsar is the leading AI-powered audience intelligence platform, combining conversational and behavioral signals from the world's leading digital sources to help organizations understand their audiences and create messages that matter to them.

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