



# Digital Music attitudes and behaviour report

For UK Music

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## The Leading Question



music :) ally



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## BACKGROUND TO RESEARCH

The Leading Question (TLQ) and Music Ally were commissioned by UK Music to carry out qualitative, focus group research into digital music behaviour and attitudes among 14-24 year olds in the UK, to accompany its own survey research.

The objectives for this project were to both validate data from the quantitative research, and also to explore key research areas in more depth, providing greater attitudinal insight.

### **Research Approach**

Four focus groups were conducted. UK Music recruited respondents, using best practice guidelines provided by TLQ/Music Ally and The Market Research Society ([mrs.org.uk](http://mrs.org.uk)).

The recruitment objective was to focus research efforts on the more mainstream majority of 14-24 year olds who are neither diehard pirates who will never buy music nor diehard music buyers who would never consider file sharing. Attitudinal statements were used to obtain a balance of behaviour among respondents.

The groups were split across two locations (London and Manchester) and by age (14-18 year olds and 19-24 year olds). The older groups included both students and working respondents.

## 1 CURRENT MUSIC CONSUMPTION AND PURCHASING HABITS

### Devices used and listening habits

- Portable MP3 players (most notably iPods) and laptops most popular playback devices
- Still lots of listening on CD players – particularly in car
- Use of phones more prevalent amongst younger groups but very little OTA downloads
- Most of music on phones is sideloaded via computer or bluetoothed
- Vinyl making something of a comeback

The most popular music listening devices are portable MP3 players, dominated largely by Apple's iPod range of devices and laptops. Other devices used included phones, hi-fis and games consoles. When prompted respondents also cited traditional radio, ie stand alone radio devices including DAB radios but not so much internet radio) as a key source of discovering new music.

There were noticeable differences between the two age groups in terms of the relative popularity of different devices. Amongst the younger groups, laptops and mobile phone listening were both much more prevalent. Laptops were being used to access online services such as YouTube and MySpace, for downloaded digital music (from file sharing and some bought downloads) but very frequently also for listening to and ripping CDs. While listening to music on phones is also much more popular amongst this demographic, it's important to note that very little of this is coming from tracks purchased directly to the phone, over the air. The vast majority of the music on mobile phones is either sideloaded from a computer or bluetoothed from a friend's phone. The older groups were very much dominated by listening to music on iPods.

Emerging trends included listening to music from games consoles such as the X-box, particularly by linking the device to a hi-fi, the use of portable players in cars (always more prevalent outside of the London area) and a resurgence of interest in vinyl. Whereas vinyl has been particularly closely associated with the dance music scene, in this case the interest in vinyl appeared to be more closely linked to the lack of availability of certain titles in digital formats. It also carries a certain amount of retro-appeal kudos as a format.

*"I use my phone to listen to music anywhere and everywhere I can. The way I get music onto my phone is the same as Tom, from my laptop, downloading, getting people to send me songs and stuff." Manchester, Younger*

*"I don't know the model. It's like a Sony MP3 player, like 20 gig. Generally I listen to most of the songs I have on that, and have that to play in my car...I connect it by leads to my stereo because we put in a new stereo; I did it myself, a new system and everything in my car. I play it through an aux lead into my stereo; it just plays through the stereo." Manchester, Younger*

*"You can't find old stuff from like torrent websites usually, but you can usually find it second hand in the shops, so I go and get something that I can't find on torrent on vinyl. Some stuff sounds better on vinyl so that is why I use it." Manchester, Younger*

## Legal Services used

- iTunes dominates legal digital purchases but most download buyers are digital dabblers
- Growing interest in Spotify (and to a lesser extent Last.fm) in older groups
- Google, MySpace and YouTube most popular online destinations for sampling new music

Very few legal paid for digital stores were mentioned beyond Apple's iTunes store. The only other download stores cited from all of the groups were Amazon's MP3 store, and Tesco Digital. It is likely that iTunes' domination as a source of legal paid for digital downloads derives mainly from its close association to the iPod, but also the fact that it is generally perceived to be a very user friendly and highly trusted service. This also helps iTunes to compete with free file sharing services.

*"I did check up Amazon for downloads, but for some reason, and I know it's a really stupid one, because iTunes is more talked about and everyone I know uses it, I'm more inclined to go with that one, because the Amazon downloads don't really have the same level, as you said in the marketing or people knowing about it." Manchester, Older*

*"If you're buying it from iTunes you know that you've got the protection, the file isn't infected, whereas if you're file sharing someone could have tampered with the file and infected it with a virus etc, etc, so if that's the case, once you've opened the file, that's it, your computer's gone." London, Younger*

*"iTunes for me is much easier to use than Limewire, they've got so much crap on there that you have to sift through to get the genuine article, like you type in the band's name and the song, and about 3,000 things come up and because I use it so often now, I know you can tell if they've capitalised it or you right click, you can tell the legit ones from the non, but iTunes is easier." Manchester, Older*

Streaming services are clearly gaining in popularity with YouTube leading the pack. MySpace is still a popular online destination for discovering new music, as is, to a lesser degree, Last.fm. The viral appeal of Spotify certainly seems to have reached the older groups.

Whereas the growth in popularity of licensed services like YouTube may well be denting the appeal of file sharing as a means of sampling new music, the easy availability of stream ripping tools means that YouTube is also now being used as a free alternative source for obtaining downloads, particularly amongst the younger groups. Indeed one younger respondent in the London group claimed that he obtained all of his music from ripping and converting YouTube video streams for his iPod and would consequently never buy any music at all. Equally YouTube can also be a source for alternative mixes of tracks.

*"It's roughly the same, but I just use it for my own personal use. I've got a thing called YouTube downloader, and it downloads the video in a Flash format, because the videos on YouTube are in Flash. To be able to get that onto audio you have to convert it, so I've converted that from Flash into MP3, so it gets the track off it and then I just put it onto my MP3 player or phone." Manchester, Younger*

*“There are quite a lot of re-mixes that people do of songs on YouTube that you can’t get off torrents, so you could just get a remix and have that one instead.” Manchester, Younger*

*“...Every song is on YouTube, so you can get anything on YouTube, but LimeWire, some things you can’t get.” London, Younger*

The potential impact of younger music fans accessing more music via streaming services such as Spotify, Last.fm and We7 is unclear presently. But right now, it seems clear that, for the majority of younger music fans, such services are not being considered as a replacement for owning or purchasing music.

*[On the impact of using Spotify] “I think I'd end up buying more. I'd end up buying a lot of CDs. If I download, then I download. I don't care about legality. I wouldn't ever pay for a download.” London, Older*

*“...It's just made me want more music, because it's got loads of stuff that I didn't know was there before so then I just kind of find it.” London, Younger*

However, this may change as services like Spotify offer mobile based applications which also allow for caching on the device. One of the main drawbacks currently of streaming services is the fact that they simply cannot be accessed reliably on the move. This is a restriction which was more commonly cited by the teenage groups. Neither the teenagers nor the older groups expressed much of an interest in paying for streaming services with most fans reasonably happy to put up with adverts in order to continue getting the music for free. However, some fans also suggested that they might use such ad-funded services less if the number of adverts became too intrusive on the listening experience.

When quizzed about the sources which most respondents used in order to find out about new music, the most commonly cited online destinations were Google and MySpace. YouTube was more popular with the teenagers. Fans in both groups would also use file sharing services as a means of sampling new music.

### **Paying for music**

- Limited engagement with legal paid for music beyond CDs
- CDs are seen as having much greater value than digital albums
- Music is generally perceived to be too expensive with digital albums seen to be particularly expensive compared to CDs

The principal reason cited by most music fans for not buying more music is a lack of available funds. However, further conversations reveal that this is just one of a number of factors that mitigate against regular purchases of music.

It's clear that the ease of access to 'free' sources of music – from file sharing services, from friends and from other online destinations – has meant that music fans feel less compelled to need to buy music. There is less spur of the moment buying of music without knowing whether or not the respondent would actually like the music. Album purchasing is often restricted to only those artists who are most valued by the respondents.

Paying for music was generally considered to be something of a luxury for most respondents. Digital album purchasing remains very rare. The purchasing of individual digital tracks is more common but this is very rarely a regular activity with many respondents opting to buy the occasional track on a very irregular basis and often

as a result of having been given iTunes vouchers. For some of the younger respondents the vouchers were given to the children by their parents as a means of persuading them to use legally licensed services rather than file share.

*"I've been really poor for the past year, so buying music seems a bit of a luxury...Yeah. If I had more disposable income, then I don't think I would have ever stopped paying and I probably would have paid for downloads as well, if I would prefer that way of purchasing. But yeah, it's the financial circumstances, I think, more than anything." London, Older*

*"If I had the money, I would buy a CD every time. I always feel a bit that I don't have enough money, I could use that to buy food, but if I had the money, I would buy it every single time, because I want to see myself in my 25 years with a massive wall of music and just showing my kids, look, this is what I collected. It's what my dad did and I look at his record collection and I think it's amazing." Manchester, Older*

CDs still dominate as the most popular legal format, amongst both the teenagers and the older groups. There was a widespread consensus that CDs represented better value for money than paid for digital albums. CDs are a physical product which are inherently perceived as having greater value than digital. They are seen as longer lasting (you run the risk of losing digital downloads due to computer crashes and losing portable players), they don't tend to carry any anti-copying restrictions (like digital rights management on some downloads), they have physical packaging which is more highly valued and they also carry a digital version which can be easily ripped and put onto portable players. The combination of using file sharing for obtaining most digital music combined with the occasional CD purchase of respondents' most beloved artists was particularly popular amongst the younger groups.

*"Say if you downloaded something and then if you lose that piece of music, sometimes you get the option to download again but sometimes it might not work and then you have to have the hassle of trying to get it back and paying for it again. Whereas if you get a CD it's there. You've got the choice of not just your PC, you've got music, iPod whatever you can put it on." London, Younger*

*"I've been in a few situations where I've had stuff ...and the computer crashes or I lose data and it becomes corrupt, or I have to reinstall Windows and you lose all your data. So, I used to just get CDs as kind of like a hard copy, so if I do lose my music I can just stick it back on. But I tend nowadays, if I download an album and I like it, I'll just buy the album. I find it a bit of a risk to pay for an album and then if you don't like it then you've just wasted a lot of money on something you don't like." Manchester, Younger*

Some of the more complex digital services may also have helped to contribute negatively to the perception that digital music generally lacks permanence if the downloads can be kept forever.

*“If you go out and buy a CD you get what you see, basically. If you download a track there may be a hidden agreement or something where you’re not sure what you’re signing up for. Like with Napster, that went through and you didn’t know that as soon as you cancel your subscription you can’t play the tracks again. It might be something like that, you just don’t know; whereas if you go and buy a CD you will be able to play that whenever you want.” Manchester, Younger*

Though the lack of access to credit cards for under 18s is a rather obvious problem when it comes to the option of buying legal digital music, the buying process is also seen as a rather cumbersome process compared to walking into a physical shop and buying a CD.

*“It seems like quite a hassle to kind of set up something to pay to download something when you can do it so simply... when you go in to buy a CD you know what you’re doing.” Manchester, Younger*

Owning the digital product is just not seen as equating to owning the physical product. As one younger respondent described it, owning a digital copy is just not as ‘exciting’ as owning a CD. It is much less of an experience than buying the CD. Digital has also failed to engender the same sense of collectibility as CDs amongst music fans.

*“I prefer to have an actual CD. It feels a lot more special. But given the alternative, I would always prefer to have the actual CD...it’s the sense of ownership of having the CD, because to download something, illegally or legally, you end up with the same thing. But actually going to the store, or buying it online, and having the actual CD, it’s a collection. It’s something that I treasure. Even some albums I downloaded from artists I didn’t really know, and I really like them, maybe three years after I downloaded them I’ll go and buy them, because I want it as part of my collection.” London, Older*

*“Nothing, I think, can beat the excitement of going to the store, picking up the CD, paying for it, and having it, and opening the cover. Looking through the booklet. It’s just special.” London, Older*



Music is still perceived to be too expensive by many music fans, particularly the teenagers. And digital albums are seen to be too expensive compared with CDs. Most younger music fans believe that digital albums should be priced some way below their physical counterparts. While many would still not be tempted to pay for digital music however low it is priced.

*“They make the CDs so expensive, especially at HMV and stuff. And if it’s a less popular artist I’m going to download it because I’m not going to pay like £16 for a CD because I haven’t got that kind of money. Well, most people our age don’t have that kind of money so obviously are going to download it.” London, Younger*

*“If you weren’t going to have the CD anyway I don’t see why you would pay anything when you could get it for free anyway. So, unless you were actually going to have a CD I don’t see why anybody would pay any amount of money when you could download it for free.” Manchester, Younger*

## 2 HOW MUSIC FANS ARE SHARING MUSIC

### Different ways of sharing music

- File sharing commonplace amongst both the teenage and older groups
- Limewire is the most popular source for single tracks and “torrent” sites (the most commonly mentioned sites being Pirate Bay and Mininova) often used for downloading albums
- But there were plenty of other ways of accessing and sharing music for free:
  - Borrowing CDs from friends, Bluetoothing, email and instant messaging services (such as MSN) popular amongst the teenage groups.
  - Use of online lockers such as Rapidshare and Megaupload and USB sticks also cited as sources for free music.
  - YouTube fast becoming a source of free downloads when used with stream ripping conversion tools.

File sharing was extremely commonplace amongst both the teenage and the older groups with Limewire far and away the most popular source for single tracks and “torrent” sites (the most commonly mentioned sites being Pirate Bay and Mininova) often used for downloading albums.

But there were plenty of other ways of accessing and sharing music for free. One of the most common sources of ‘free’ music for most respondents was simply borrowing CDs from friends. Bluetoothing and email and instant messaging services (such as MSN) were more popular amongst the teenage groups. And the use of online lockers such as Rapidshare and Megaupload and USB sticks were also cited as sources for free music. As discussed earlier, for some teenagers YouTube is fast becoming a good source of free downloads when used with stream ripping conversion tools.

### Attitudes to file sharing

- Main attraction of file sharing is (unsurprisingly) that music can be obtained for free - also something of a fact of life for many music fans
- Many music fans cite file sharing as a source for music which they could not find anywhere else
- Some claim they use file sharing to sample new music which they may go on to buy
- Few expressed much concern at being caught file sharing and there is widespread confusion over who gets caught and how they might get caught
- Widespread view amongst teenage groups that there were simply too many people doing it for there to be a realistic chance of getting caught
- Many think that it was only those who were downloading large amounts of music who are being ‘caught’

- When quizzed about the moralities of file sharing, most respondents felt that file sharing did not feel particularly bad
- Most music fans felt that the industry should concentrate its efforts on targeting the unlicensed file sharing services themselves or those who made music available illegally, such as those who leaked pre-release material
- Parental pressure could clearly act as something of a deterrent to younger file sharers but such pressure cannot be relied upon
- A common comparison, particularly amongst the older groups, was to view file sharing as the equivalent of not paying for a TV licence.
- Large degree of confusion as to how file sharing is being policed
- Little understanding of the differences between uploading and downloading music

It's clear that the main attraction of file sharing is simply the fact that the music can be obtained for free. It's also something of a fact of life for many music fans. For some, particularly the teenagers, it's the fact that file sharing is so easy to do and so widespread which makes them feel so comfortable doing it. The use of file sharing services is now so commonplace that music fans are almost too embarrassed to admit if they don't know how to use them.

*"Quite embarrassingly I didn't know how to use file sharing sites for a while, until my Dad showed me how to use it, so I use Mininova a lot because it's really easy to use and I use Pirate Bay as well, and also on Facebook..." Manchester, Older*

Some music fans cited file sharing as a source for music which they could not find anywhere else, while others justified it on the basis that they felt they were already spending enough on music in other ways such as going to gigs.

*"I would download entire albums but generally a song or two and if that album is too difficult to find in stores or in iTunes or anything like that, then I'll go back and grab the album for free, why not?" Manchester, Older*

*"I feel like that's how I give back to the music industry for all the things I steal from them, I go to gigs, spending between about £30-60 a week on gigs." Manchester, Older*

Some users claim that they use file sharing to sample new music, some of which they may then go on to buy, invariably on CD. But many also use the services to find something which they know they already want to have.

What is abundantly clear is that there is near unanimous awareness that file sharing is not legal. But this is not putting many file sharers off. The following excerpt typifies the feeling of most file sharers about its legalities.

*[Does it feel wrong?]*

*"It used to, more, for me, but now I'm used to it, so I don't think about it." London, Older*

Few respondents expressed much concern at being caught file sharing and there is widespread confusion over who gets caught and how they might get caught. There was a widespread view amongst the teenage groups that there were simply too many people doing it for there to be a realistic chance of getting caught. And a view which was common to both the older and younger groups was that it was only those who were downloading large amounts of music who were being caught.

When quizzed about the moralities of file sharing, most respondents felt that file sharing did not feel particularly bad. Most music fans felt that the industry should concentrate its efforts on targeting the unlicensed file sharing services themselves or those who made music available illegally, such as those who leaked pre-release material.

*“Well, I know it’s illegal and stuff, but I don’t see a huge problem with the people who are downloading it. I think if they really want to stop it they should get it at the people who are putting it on, the people who are leaking the music before it’s come out. Because you can get a lot of songs before they’ve been released on say iTunes and stuff because DJs and people who have got the music before it’s come out have been leaking it on.” London, Younger*

*“I think I’d feel worse about doing it if everybody didn’t do it, but I don’t know anyone who buys all their music. Because if you were buying everything you listened to you’d spend so much money on music that you wouldn’t buy anything else. And music, you stop listening to it, well I do, after a month of listening to it I won’t listen to it anymore. There’s hardly any songs that I listen to for ages.” London, Younger*

*“I know a lot of people that do it, and I don’t know anybody that has ever been caught, or anybody close to them that has ever been caught. If that many people are doing it I don’t know why they would target me specifically.” Manchester, Younger*

*“The people who have created these sites, like the bigger people, are the people that they’re more worried about. Because they’re getting the music to us and they’re creating these sites and we’re going to use them. Like if they stop us using them and fine us, everyone’s still probably going to do it.” London, Younger*

Parental pressure could clearly act as something of a deterrent to younger file sharers but such pressure cannot be relied upon to dissuade the more determined sharers.

*“My Mum and Dad don’t mind. To them music is everything to me, so they just go okay; as long as no one comes knocking on the door after you carry on doing it.” Manchester, Younger*

*“My Mum used to make threats when I was younger. Before I found this other site me and my brother used to use Limewire, and she was always like the police will come and find your computers, I’ve heard about this and that, like heard of it happening to other people. But it still didn’t really stop us. She didn’t like it, but we still continued to use it because it was just easy.” Manchester, Younger*

A common comparison made, particularly amongst the older groups, was to view file sharing as the equivalent of not paying for a TV licence.

*“Because, I mean, they're stricter with TV and film or whatever, if you download movies and stuff. A friend of mine was downloading movies and stuff, and then someone came up, like the TV licence or something, I can't remember exactly, and then they told him, we know you've been downloading things, and we have evidence, or whatever. You should stop downloading movies. But I've never heard of anyone being chased.” London, Older*

But whereas there is generally widespread awareness of how TV licensing is policed, there is a large degree of confusion as to how file sharing is being policed and the consequences of being caught file sharing. The earlier legal actions against file sharers which were widely reported in the media some years ago are still referred to and are generally seen as ongoing despite the fact that no actions have been taken over the last few years. Many respondents believed that many downloaders had been forced to pay big fines. These were sometimes seen as being linked to the amount of music which they had downloaded.

*“I think the fines would be more about how much you've downloaded and who the artist is, so depending on the prices. And how much music you've bought, so if you've downloaded £1000 worth of music you're going to pay for that, £1000, no more.” London, Younger*

But overall most respondents felt confident that it was unlikely that they would be caught.

*“There was an example case a couple of years ago, some girl, who, police turned up on her doorstep, and said that's very naughty, and that's about it. Or at least I think that's what the public perception is, that no one gets caught.” London, Older*

*“What should happen and what does happen are two very different things, but I think that in extremist cases, you would probably be cautioned or maybe I've seen cases reported in the media where people have been prosecuted, because it's been such a vast amount of music that they've got, but essentially, because it's such a widespread problem and the police or whoever actually go about prosecuting you, cannot go to every single house. So, I think most people think, oh well, you've got as much as you, and so have you, so it's security in numbers.” London, Older*

There was generally little understanding of the differences between uploading and downloading music, with many respondents unaware that they might be making lots of their music available for sharing simply by using file sharing services. However, some torrent users were more aware that these kinds of services made it much harder simply to download from others and to block uploads.

When quizzed about uploading music via file sharing services many respondents seemed more concerned about the potential impact this might have on other users of the same internet connection within the same household rather than any fear of getting caught.

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*"I think if I ran downloads 24/7, then I'd worry about it. As it is, to be honest, if I'm doing just normal p2p, then I just reduce the upload bandwidth. Because my Dad uses the connection as well. And I'm not that download spirited that I think I'd be making a contribution. Obviously if I'm downloading a torrent then I'm fine with seeding." London, Older*

*"It really depends on what I'm downloading, if it's something that I feel that if I keep seeding it will grow, then I'll seed for a little bit, but if I really need the bandwidth then I'm going to be like, sorry, can't help you out today, bye, and then delete it, because I use it quite a lot, so I need as much speed as I can get, I don't want people seeding from me and slowing down my internet." London, Younger*

### 3 CONTACT DETAILS

For further information please see [www.theleadingquestion.com](http://www.theleadingquestion.com) or [www.musically.com](http://www.musically.com) or contact:

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