

In the US and UK, Audio Streaming Has Diverted to Video During Coronavirus Lockdown

ARTICLE | APRIL 24, 2020

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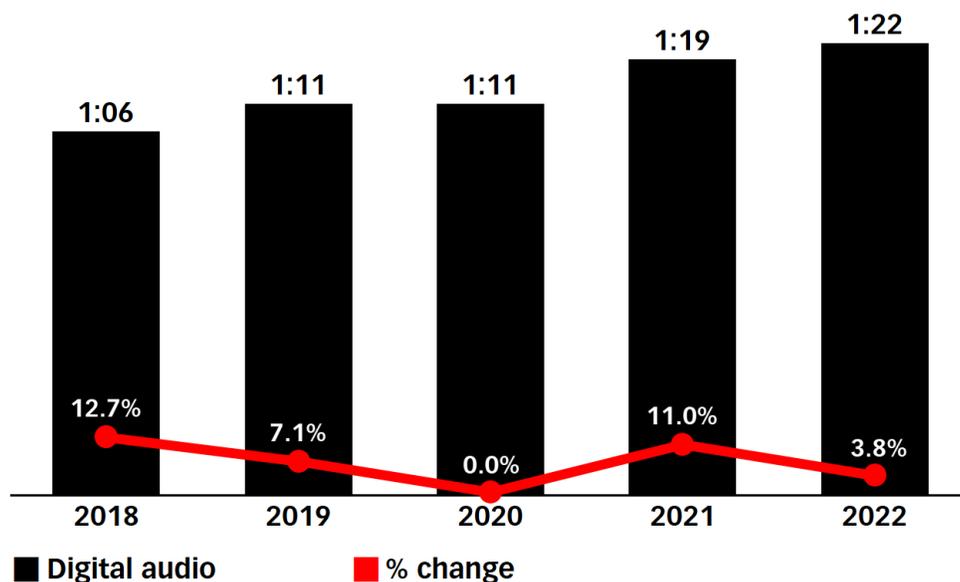
Listening habits have been steadily moving online in recent years. From music streaming to podcasts, there's been a growing appetite for digital audio. While the assumption might be that the coronavirus pandemic has increased audio streaming, the picture is less straightforward. Pure music streaming via platforms like Spotify and Pandora is being eschewed in favor of music videos.

Our latest 2020 time spent forecasts indicate substantial bumps across media due to the coronavirus pandemic. While the time people spend with TV, social media and digital video will see a boost, the picture for digital audio isn't as positive.

In the UK, where steady gains have been recently made in digital audio consumption, we expect that to flatline among the adult population in 2020. The picture in the US is broadly similar, though with time spent among adults declining slightly by a single percentage point.

Digital Audio: Average Time Spent in the UK, 2018-2022

hrs:mins per day among population and % change



Note: ages 18+; time spent with each medium includes all time spent with that medium, regardless of multitasking; includes radio stations with professional or amateur/DJs editors selecting playlists; automated (i.e., without human editors/DJs) playlists; streamed services that create playlists based on user preferences of artists, tracks or genres; personally configured (i.e., set by the listener) playlists; music or other audio content delivered within a website or app (e.g., AM/FM online streams); or audio podcasts (streamed or downloaded); excludes other downloaded audio files (e.g., music MP3s) and digital terrestrial and satellite radio services that are delivered over the air (i.e., DAB)

Source: eMarketer, April 2020

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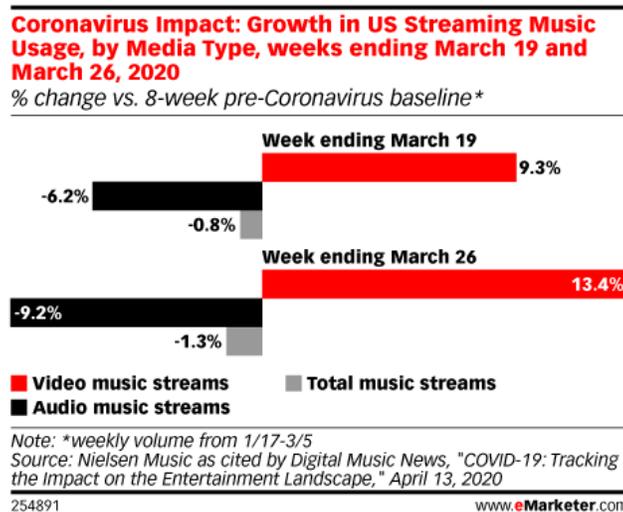
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These downward revisions to our forecasts come off the back of several years of strong growth in digital audio listener numbers for podcasts and music streaming. So, why the drop in attention? According to April 2020 research from media insights firm **MIDiA Research**, the lockdown may have subtly altered listeners' consumption habits.

In a blog post, the firm's managing director, Mark Mulligan, stated, "streaming volumes were almost universally down across all regions. In most cases consumption was only down modestly and generally speaking the impact was more modest in regions of the world where

COVID-19 had so far had less impact. Most labels, though, pointed to a strong rise in YouTube and Vevo streams, indicating that when stationary at home, many consumers prefer a visual music experience.”

This thirst for a visual element to music streaming was evident in some April 2020 data from Nielsen Music as cited by Digital Music News. It found that audio music streaming volumes in the US were down by 6.2% in the week ending March 19 (vs. an eight-week pre-coronavirus baseline) and by 9.2% in the week ending March 26. Meanwhile, music video streaming volumes increased 9.3% and 13.4%, respectively.



April research from Channel Factory, a global technology platform and official YouTube partner, found that consumers were heading to YouTube for “uplifting” content, and that usually meant music videos. The study covered the US and the UK, and found that more respondents said they’d been watching music videos and performances on the platform than any other category in the past two weeks—56% in the UK and 48% in the US.

A lot of audio streaming occurs on daily commutes, where the visual element is certainly less desirable. With that listening environment essentially nixed, the current preference appears to be for a melding of audio and visual into one.