

PIPED MUSIC

THE FACTS

Amid the many claims and counter-claims made about piped music (also called muzak, canned music or elevator music), objectively researched facts about piped music's effects and its real popularity can be very hard to find. This sheet presents the facts about people's real attitudes to piped music and its effects on human health.

MORE PEOPLE HATE PIPED MUSIC THAN LIKE IT

Contrary to what is often believed, objectors to piped music outnumber those who like it, as the following surveys reveal:

The Sunday Times

17%

said it is the single thing they most detested about modern life

January 1997 The Sunday Times

In January 1997, a poll for The Sunday Times asked people what was 'the single thing they most detested about modern life'. Third in the list of hated things came **pipéd music**, with 17% citing it. (The first two most hated things were other forms of noise).

April 1994, Gatwick Airport

In April 1994, Gatwick Airport Management carried out a survey of travellers' attitudes to the piped music then being played in the airport. Of the 68,077 who replied, 43% said they disliked the piped music, only 34% said they liked it, the remainder had no opinion. (Gatwick Airport has since discontinued its piped music). **This is the largest impartial survey ever carried out.**

Gatwick Airport Management

43% said they disliked it
34% said they liked it,
23% had no opinion.

BBC Poll

67%

Hated Piped tv in trains

February 2005 BBC & C2C Trains

In February 2005 a **BBC poll of travellers on c2c trains in Essex** found that 67% objected to the piped television then being introduced on the trains, some by barricading themselves in the toilets. The piped television was speedily dropped

University of Cardiff

Piped music **harmed** rather than helped productivity.

August 2010 University of Cardiff

In August 2010 a study by researchers from the University of Cardiff found the effects of piped music in the work place to be generally negative i.e. piped music harmed rather than helped productivity. People working in shops often find the repetition of the same limited selection of music highly irritating but they may feel powerless to protest.

November 1998 NOP

In November 1998 NOP carried out an opinion poll on the general public's attitudes to piped music. This showed that 34% of people disliked piped music and only 30% liked it (36% were indifferent). Among those aged over 45, a majority hated it, as did a majority of those in the 'A-B' social groups. Even among younger people (those aged under 25), 21% said they disliked piped music.

NOP Opinion Poll

34% disliked
30% liked
36% had no opinion.

Barclays Bank

61%

of older people alienated

November 2013 Barclays Bank

In November 2013 a survey commissioned by **Barclays Bank** showed that 61% of older people find piped music in shops and banks their biggest bugbear, one that makes them feel alienated.

LBC RADIO

50%

Would walk out of a shop

**M&S
and ASDA**

June 2016 Marks and Spencer stopped playing piped music in its stores in response to years of protests.

March 2017 ASDA agreed to trial Quiet Hours in response to protests

November 2011 LBC 97.3 Radio

On 6th November 2011 Petrie Hosken on LBC 97.3 Radio did an hour-long programme about piped music, following a survey by Immedia that had found at least 50% of people would walk out of shops with piped music. Callers-in generally supported the views of those in the survey.

There can now be no doubt about the widespread dislike of piped music.

THERE ARE ALSO IMPORTANT HEALTH ASPECTS TO PIPED MUSIC

- All unwanted noise raises the blood pressure and depresses the immune system, as has long been recognised.
- A survey of 215 blood donors at Nottingham University Medical School in January 1995 found that playing piped music made donors more nervous before giving blood and more depressed afterwards than silence.
- The NOP poll of 1998 found that among people with hearing problems (16% of the population), 86% hated piped music.
- Action on Hearing Loss (formerly the RNID) now backs the campaign against piped music.
- People with autism, ME, tinnitus and hyperacusis find that piped music can trigger or aggravate their condition. These disabled people are being excluded from public spaces in ways which break the Disability Discrimination (Equality) Act.
- Blind people (who rely on background sounds to help find their around) also find piped music upsetting. People with autism, asperger syndrome or ME also find that piped can make their condition worse.
- Recent research (2013) has shown that older people actually hear background music as louder than younger people because their hearing is impaired. This is known as presbycusis. Dr Anil Lalwani at Columbia University Medical Center, New York, writes: 'Any noise in the environment leads to even greater loss in clarity of hearing. Contrary to expectation, presbycusis is also associated with sensitivity to loud noise... due to a poorly understood phenomenon called recruitment.' See <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/05/science/why-at-70-is-it-harder-to-hear-conversations-yet-music-is-too-loud.html>
- Musicians of all sorts hate piped music because they find 'acoustic wallpaper' a pain in the ear.
- Music teachers find it increasingly difficult to get their students actually to listen to music, as it now comes at them non-stop from every wall.
- Piped music does not come free, but is an extra that must be paid for with every meal, drink, ticket, piece of clothing...
- Despite all the hype about piped music boosting sales, highly successful companies such as Aldi, Primark, John Lewis/Waitrose, Lidl, Lloyds Pharmacies and the Wetherspoon pub chain all thrive without it.

The facts on this sheet were collated by Pipedown, the Campaign for Freedom from Piped Music. Pipedown campaigns for the freedom not to have to listen to piped music in every public place: shops, pubs, restaurants, airports, hospitals, train and bus stations, swimming baths and doctors' surgeries.

Pipedown has helped persuade Marks and Spencer and Waterstones to drop their piped music and is now pushing for legislation to ban it in those places such as hospitals, where it is often literally impossible to escape. We are also collaborating actively with Action on Hearing Loss's SpeakEasy Campaign.



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