

What people really think about Christmas music in shops

About Soundtrack Your Brand.

Soundtrack Your Brand is a Spotify-backed company founded in 2013, headquartered in downtown Stockholm. We built the best, most creative, and without comparison most fun product for background music. Since we had to learn everything about how music and emotions connect, we poured a ton of money into research. And we reformed the licensing landscape, by introducing direct deals with publishers and labels and pioneering a per-stream-based compensation model. To make sure artists and composers get paid accurately.



Mere minutes after Thanksgiving, stores and restaurants across the western world will begin to pipe Christmas music, and it won't let up for six long weeks.

But what do retail staff and customers really think about the Christmassy carols emanating from the tinny speakers of winter-themed display windows?

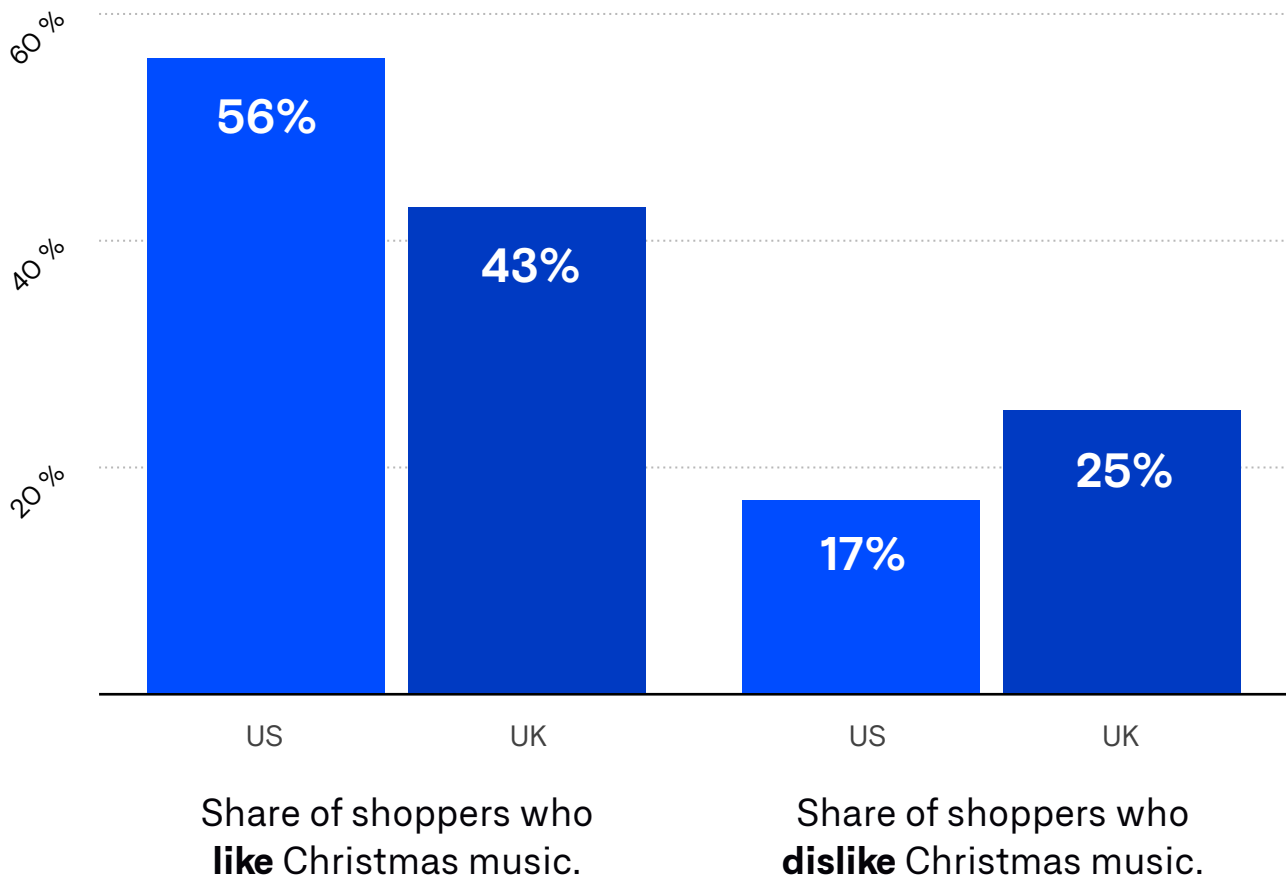
Will hearing Wham's "Last Christmas" on repeat calm wild-eyed tantrum-throwing customers jostling for last-minute Christmas gifts? Or will it send them running for the doors?

As a follow-up to the most prominent academic study ever on restaurant music, Soundtrack Your Brand presents the ultimate research guide to Christmas music and what customers and staff really think about it.

In collaboration with Retail Action Project, we have surveyed over 2,000 customers and retail staff in the UK and the US about their feelings towards Christmas music in shops. We also take a look at which songs and artists that are ruling the Holiday Season.

What shoppers think about Christmas music in shops.

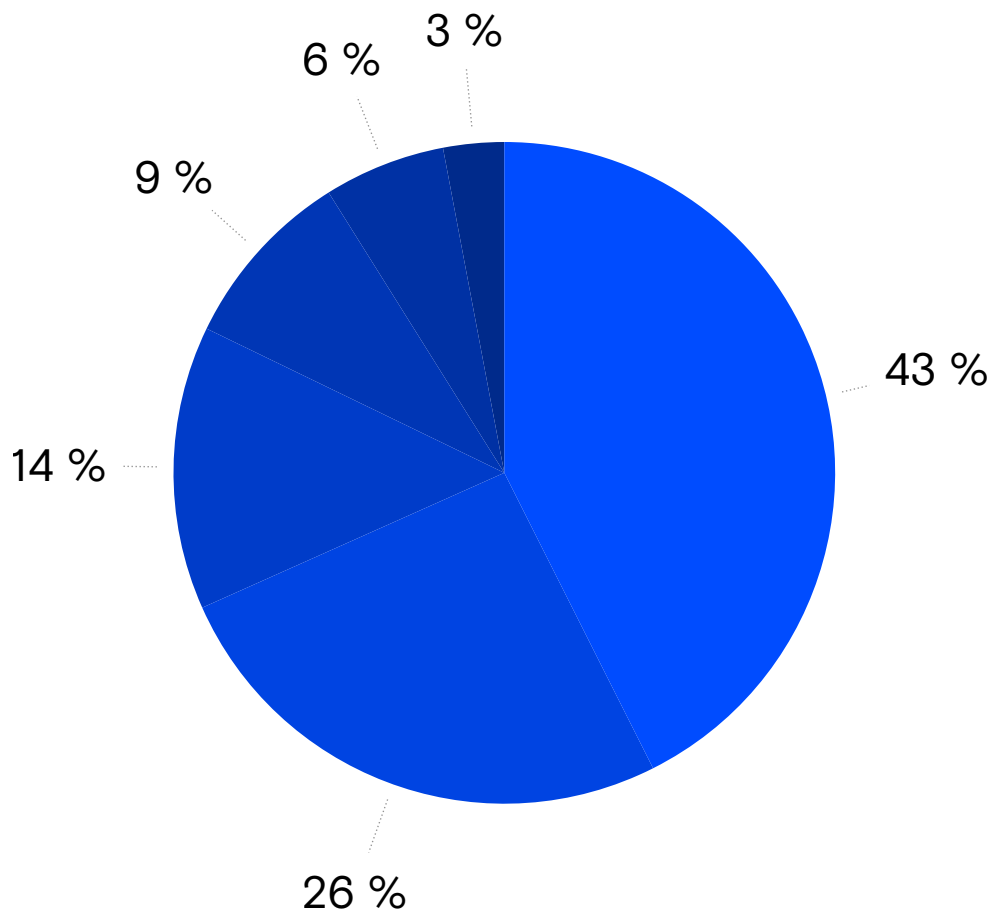
A quarter of British shoppers actively dislike Christmas music in retail.



Around half of the surveyed shoppers are in favour of in-store Christmas music. However, American shoppers are significantly more fond of Christmas music in stores than British shoppers are. In fact, British shoppers are considerably more likely to take an active dislike of Christmas music than American shoppers are, and many cite piped seasonal tunes as a reason for leaving the business locale.

Reasons why shoppers dislike Christmas music.

It's not that people dislike Christmas music overall. It's just too repetitive.



43% Too repetitive.

26% Dislike materialism of Christmas music.

14% Volume is too loud.

9% Generally disliking the genre.

6% Too many old songs.

3% Not a fan of Christmas.

Clearly, any annoyance that shoppers feel toward piped Christmas music doesn't have to do with any dislike with the Holiday season or with the Yuletide genre in general. People are quite simply of the opinion that Christmas music, while piped into a commercial setting, is far too repetitive. The survey shows that retailers should refrain from having a limited selection of Christmas songs and think about introducing more variety.

What retail staff think about Christmas music.

While shoppers are exposed to their fair share of Christmas music when jostling for holiday gifts, retail staff get full time exposure to Christmas music for up to six weeks every year. What do they think?

While a majority of retail staff in the survey say they are positive toward Christmas music in stores, it is interesting to note that an overall lack of variety may pose a problem.

One-quarter of surveyed retail employees say too much Christmas music makes them feel “less festive.” And one in six employees say Christmas music dampens their emotional well-being. This adverse effect may hurt service quality, since emotionally damaged staff may not deliver top notch service.

These findings reinforce the importance of variety in retailers’ Christmas music playlists.

25%

of retail staff say too much Christmas music makes them less festive.

16%

of retail staff say Christmas music impacts their work environment negatively.

How retailers should think about the results.

1.

Retailers should play only one Christmas song per ten minutes, which roughly equals one out of three songs. More Christmas music than that may annoy shoppers.

2.

Match your Christmas tunes with music that reflects your brand's values. There's an incredible amount of Christmas music available, so play Christmas music that matches your regular music choice. Put a Christmas spin on your brand sound, don't replace it.

3.

Explore alternative versions of Christmas classics. Explore new versions of old classics or explore different music to find unexpected Christmas treats. Your music will stand out from the competition and offer a welcome break for shoppers.

The artists and songs that rule Christmas in retail.

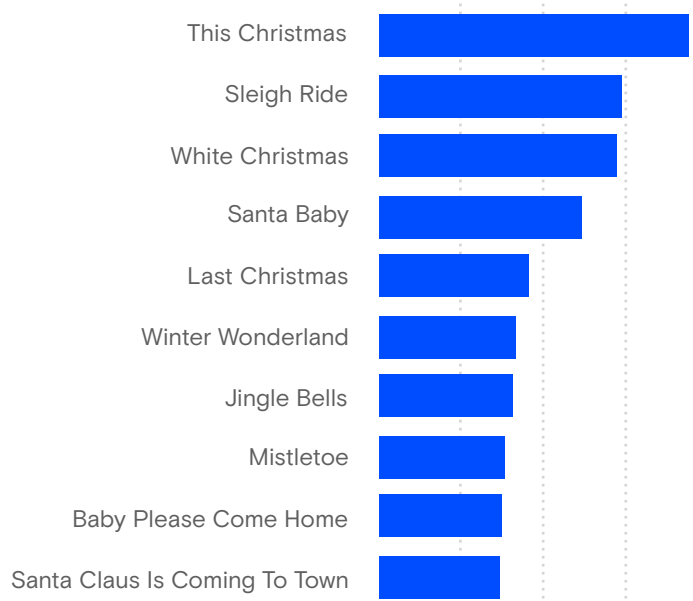
With his now classic 2011 album 'Christmas,' singer songwriter Michael Bublé is by far our most streamed Christmas artist in retail, ahead of Ariana Grande and Justin Bieber.

Our single most streamed Christmas tune is 'This Christmas,' the classic 1970s hit written by Donny Hathaway. 'This Christmas' is one of the most covered Christmas hits ever written, with notable versions including those of Christina Aguilera and Destiny's Child.

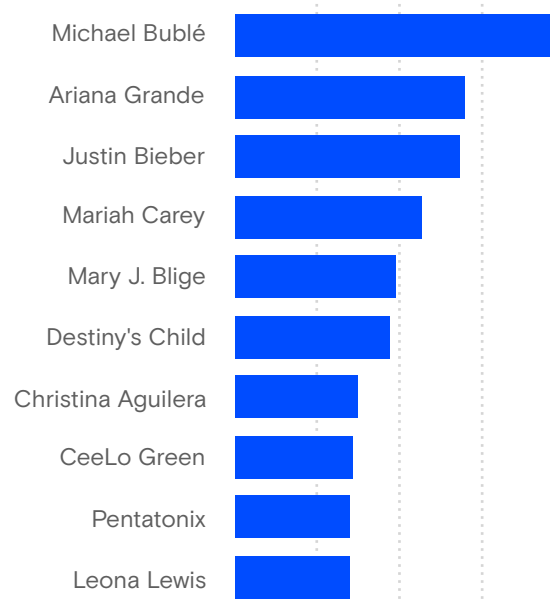
Some of Soundtrack Your Brand's retail clients start playing Christmas music already in early November, but the majority starts to play Christmas music during the Thanksgiving holiday.

Christmas music peaks in the week leading up to Christmas Eve, when one in three songs played on our platform is a Christmas tune.

Top 10 Christmas tunes



Top 10 Christmas artists



Get in touch

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