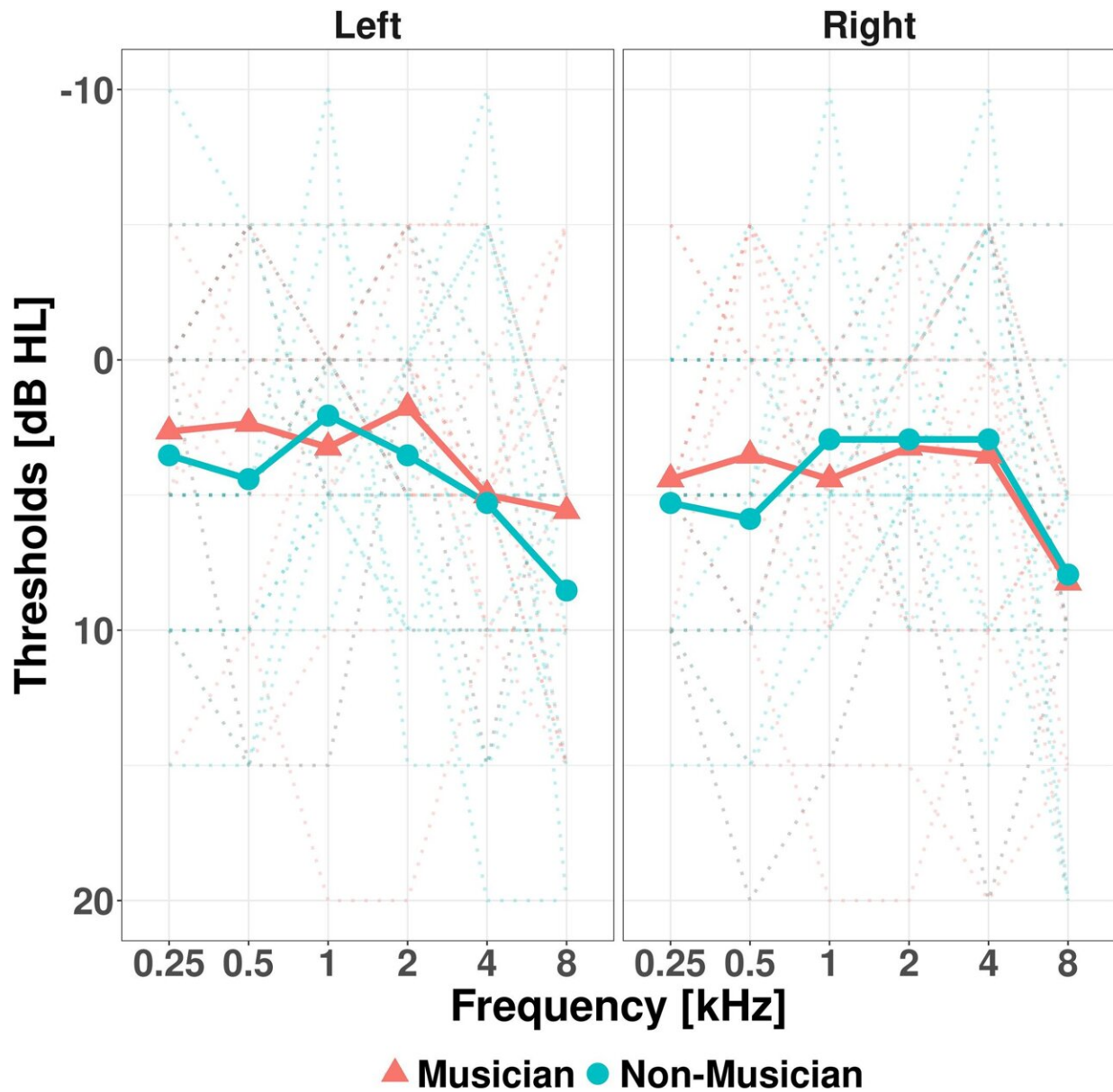


Musicians found to listen to and enjoy louder music than non-musicians

December 28 2022, by Bob Yirka



Individual (dotted lines) and mean (solid lines) pure tone audiometry results.
Credit: *PLOS ONE* (2022). DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0278845

A team of researchers at the University of Manchester's Centre for Audiology and Deafness, has found that musicians tend to listen to music at louder volume than non-musicians. Antonia Olivia Dolan, Emanuele Perugia and Karolina Kluk asked volunteers to listen to music at sound levels they found enjoyable and then noted the difference in volume levels between musicians and non-musicians. The findings are published in the journal *PLOS ONE*.

Rock stars are very well known for playing loud music and many who listen to such music are known to turn up it up to ear splitting levels as well. But do [musicians](#) (besides just rock stars) prefer to listen to music at a higher volume than most other people? That was the question the research trio asked themselves. To find out, they asked 34 people—half of whom were musicians—to listen to samples of music.

Each of the volunteers was asked to set the volume at a level they preferred as they listened to six different songs. As they did so, the researchers noted and recorded the volume levels. The researchers then repeated the whole exercise two more times. The researchers also asked each of the volunteers to fill out a questionnaire designed to elicit data regarding lifetime noise exposure—all the volunteers also underwent a hearing test and were found to have normal hearing levels.

In looking at their data, the researchers found that the musicians tended to listen at a higher volume than the non-musicians (on average 11 dB higher), particularly when listening to a song they liked. They also noted, that unsurprisingly, the musicians had more lifetime exposure to [loud noises](#).

The researchers did not ask the musicians why they turned their music louder, but suggest it may be due to a difference in the parts of the brain that register what is enjoyable with music. It is also quite likely that the musicians would have pointed out that listening to music at louder levels allows the ears and brain to hear more of what is going on in a given song. Some guitar notes, for example, or the voices of background singers, cannot be heard unless the [music](#) is turned louder. Musicians as a collective, tend to want to hear everything that is going on—a habit formed through playing and listening as part of an ensemble.

More information: Antonia Olivia Dolan et al, Preferred music-listening level in musicians and non-musicians, *PLOS ONE* (2022). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0278845](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0278845)

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