

Digital radio switchover 'should be delayed by at least five years because audiences are not ready'

By [Daily Mail Reporter](#)

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- **The current drive to switch off FM broadcasts by 2015 is 'industry led', Which? report finds**

The public needs at least another five years to prepare for the switchover of radio broadcasts from FM to digital, according to a consumer group.

Which? today published a report claiming that the current drive to switch off FM broadcasts by 2015 is 'industry led' and that the government needs to pay more attention to the needs of audiences.

The report says that the switch to digital should only be scheduled once the benefits are understood by consumers - but a recent opinion poll showed that 94 per cent of listeners were happy with the service they already receive.



Digital takeover on hold: A Which? survey found that 94 per cent of listeners are happy with their analogue radios

The government has set a target of 50 per cent take up on digital radio before it will announce a firm switchover to digital. Which?'s report says that target should be increased to 70 per cent.

'Bearing in mind the terribly slow progress towards the present 50 per cent listening target set by the government to

trigger some services being switched over, it would be 2020 at the very earliest before any switchover could be initiated if Which?'s 70 per cent target were to be accepted,' a senior radio industry source told the Daily Telegraph.

In March, the government took the controversial decision to plough a further £16million into building the digital radio masts needed to transmit the frequencies, taking the burden from the BBC and commercial radio companies.

The BBC has already paid out tens of millions of pounds to extend digital coverage nationwide, as well as on a high-profile publicity campaign to try to convince the public of the benefits of the switch.

The corporation has also tried to woo consumers with a range of digital-only stations showcasing unique content.

But the new technology has failed to capture the public's imagination - levels of digital listening have been disappointing compared with the rapid take-up of digital TV.

Just 1.94million digital radio sets were sold in 2010 compared with 1.99million in 2009 and 2.08million in 2008.

Ford Ennals, the chief executive of the switchover body Digital Radio UK, said: 'We all recognise that, while progress has been made on content and coverage, the switchover is some years away.'

The switchover needs both national and local stations to be available on DAB, which is the government's preferred digital radio broadcast platform.

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Just another way of making money! And what's going to happen to all the surplus radios? Millions of car radios, all the personal radios and I don't know how many 2nd and 3rd sets? It's a wonder that all the greenies have not moaned! I suppose some might be given to the 3rd world countries, although at the rate we are going, they will be returned to us! As for better quality sound, do we need it with the " Music" today? If it ain't broken, don't fix it, springs to mind!

- RON THE GRUMP, PETERBOROUGH, 03/5/2011 12:41

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Nobody wants it. Nobody needs it. It cannot work. By that I mean that though it 'technically' works, it cannot have the range of existing radio transmissions. That is one of the virtues of the exiting system - it reaches further than any ground based communication system with the simplest of devices that every household and car has. What happens when disaster strikes? Radio is the only communication method that has the ability to reach the majority of the population. DAB can never do that. Just dump it. We have digital radio by satellite if we want it. Complete waste of time and money. However the government will make millions selling off the wavebands so guess what - we will just have to accept it.... Where is our democracy ?

- Shaun, Mid Wales, 03/5/2011 12:37