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## **‘Generation C’ and audio media: A cross-cultural analysis of differences in media consumption in four European countries**

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### **Abstract:**

Despite common circumspection often attaching to technological determinism, academic paradigms which identify elements of cause and effect between the implementation of technological innovation and changes in patterns of audience consumption of media content, suggest audience behaviour among early adopters of such new technology to be worthy of at least cautious analysis. Within this framework, the present comparative study focuses on four European countries to analyse audio media consumption patterns among young people. The age group of young adults between 18-34 is often located within that psychographic group characterized as ‘Generation C’ because of their higher propensity to include ‘early adopters’ of new communication technologies, *and* the established medium of radio. This paper aims to contribute to the academic discussion regarding the use of audio media, with emphasis on the radio, by young and heavy media users who are daily using interactive media and networks to communicate, interact, work or entertain themselves. It further situates its conclusions within wider contexts of technological innovation and audience interaction.

**Keywords:** Audio Media, Radio, Early Adopters, 'Generation C'.

## Introduction

The relationship between technology and society has often been studied within two contrasting paradigms. Firstly, social shaping of technology explores the social factors that interfere with technology, considering that technology helps to shape society, in an interrelation of influence. Secondly, technological determinism establishes technology as the driving force in social change, envisaging a media technologies-effects relationship. In this second paradigm, from the development of media technology ensue cultural effects, transforming society at every level and impacting upon society, institutions and individuals independently of other human intervention. Paradoxically, McLuhan, Innis, Postman and Toffler developed a unidirectional perspective isolating society from technology.

Nevertheless, the idea that technology can reshape the uses and effects of media forms has inevitably to be reconsidered because of the impact of digital information technologies and social networking. The relationship between technology and society can easily be seen as an interactive process, in a complex interrelation of causes and effects: humans and technology are both agents of change. The nature of this interaction has in essence become continuous, drawing influences from historical contexts and with an interdependence with social and technological transformations. As Potts (2008) defined it, the ramifications of digital networking in media, communication and entertainment require a theoretical model which adheres more closely to the intrinsic properties of new technologies. His purpose concerns both the socio-economic context of new media technologies and the properties of those technologies as we understand them.

Modern capitalism, convergence and digitalisation have together realigned the distribution, reception and regulation of the mass media into a system that is simultaneously decentralised, global, interactive and multimedia in character and deploys new paradigms in workflows, production practices and social relations, as well as offering new products, services, consumption and transaction patterns for an evolving virtual community. If we consider what is to some commentators a radical concept, that media technology affects those who use it, certainly then our cognitive functions, perceptions and values may change depending on the dominant medium of each historical period. To pursue the McLuhan hypothesis, we have moved on from the electronic media that produced a global village and we are now living in a *virtual* global village with digital networks defining who we are and how we communicate. Clearly, more recent research has demonstrated that media content, ideology, ownership and regulation, together with the economic, political and social factors inherent to this historical process, are relevant to the understanding of this relationship. Of great importance now is to analyse the way, in the digital age, increasingly fragmented audiences - particularly among those early adopters of new technologies often identified as 'Generation C' - relate with mass media in general and each specific medium in particular

from a technological perspective, in order to identify key social effects of the usage and adoption of new communication technologies. The principal concern of this article is what we have termed 'audio media', which remains an essentially generic term but encompasses the established and still popular medium of radio broadcasting and some relatively recent developments in the distribution and consumption of discrete, recorded sound - namely music video television, individual audio files accessible via the Internet and a particular hybrid of radio and audio files, the podcast.

### **Society and technology: from passive users to active producers**

Rogers (1985) characterises the dynamics of technology adoption, relating it to innovation. He states that innovation is an idea, practice or object that is perceived as new. The dissemination of innovation is the process of communicating these developments to society, using specific channels throughout the period of dissemination. Rogers (1985) also defines several profiles of reactive behaviour when confronted by innovation. Innovators are those who readily adopt new technologies and behaviours in their first stages of development, even if to do so involves taking risks. In most cases innovators are also opinion leaders, presenting and promoting new trends. Early adopters follow innovators, because this is a larger group, less available to take risks, but showing some proximity to innovation. The majority of early adopters represent a considerable proportion of wider society embracing innovation by the time it is clearly taking hold. Greater in number, though, are the late majority who adopt innovation when it has demonstrated the advantages of doing so. This group reveals some resistance towards innovation. Finally, laggards are those who adopt innovation only when it is no longer really new. That is, when innovation is widely implemented and consolidated, when its adoption no longer presents risks, this group adopt it as if it is still innovation. This group are among the slowest in our sample to embrace newer technology.

The process of dissemination of innovation is highly dependent on the social context. Perceptions of the importance of the innovation and the potential advantages stemming from its implementation also influence this process, as well as the communication channels used. Although dependent on subjective evaluations, interpersonal communication is the most effective communication channel, connecting people with similar ideas and interests. Time affects the process of dissemination within the limits of social systems. Social boundaries and rules establish acceptable behaviours and conduct, guiding individuals in this process. Informal opinion leaders have an important role, acting as role models in the establishment of a consensus around implementation. In the digital age, the process of diffusion of innovation is faster and involves those who use interactive platforms. We still can characterise the traditional profiles of reaction when facing innovation, though, and relate them to differing levels of experience with technology. Therefore, innovators have high levels of experience with technology and are heavy users of the Internet, in some extreme cases even establishing online trends by developing open source software and online applications via commonly-used websites, a phenomenon explored in detail by Berry

(2014: 3-16).

The degree of experience with technology diminishes as we turn our attention back down through the hierarchy of different profiles of reactive behaviour, since early adopters are less intense Internet users and are less experienced with technology, simply *using* the software and applications that innovators create. The early majority are those who start using technology through professional applications, integrating this usage into the rest of their lives, using technology and online tools by the time they are growing in popularity. The late majority rarely uses the Internet and they adopt technology in their daily lives as a result of social applications, often through the substitution of analogue with digital practices, routines or devices. Laggards can be those who avoid technology, who try to keep their social life separate from the digital environment, for example by not using cell phones, the Internet or any other digital devices. They know about it, but they continue to deploy traditional communicative practices. These profiles can also be related to different generations, but within each generation we can find innovator or late majority profiles. What does differ from generation to generation is the *proportion* of the whole generation which may be characterised by each profile from innovator to laggard. The most difficult to find are laggards, since even within elderly generations there are those who use technology and the Internet because it makes their lives simpler, entertains them or allows them to interact and relate with younger generations, as we will see later.

### **Interactivity as a catalyst for the development of community**

Castells (2000) described the interactive society as a new social process, and as a phenomenon of both community interaction and social isolation. Following Rheingold (1993), Castells argued that virtual communities can be seen as structures which follow the dynamics of the Internet, but still respect traditional sociability. On the other hand, Rheingold stated that the Internet allows people to reunite online in order to share interests, common values and beliefs. The Internet establishes social interactions, as a virtual community. He extends this perspective to mobile communication devices, which can now have almost the same social effects as the use of the computer and Internet use (Rheingold, 2003). The Berger and Luckman (1966) social construction of reality perspective can be related to contemporary mediation from traditional and new media, since our online activity connects us with others in the same logic that traditional media do Berry (2014: 3-16). Today, not to participate in online experiences is in many ways to be disconnected from a new 'reality', in the way that 'hyper-reality' integrates our offline activities within a wider online interaction.

Communication practices are today highly influenced by Internet use and the incorporation of online activities into our everyday life. Taberero, Navarro & Tubella (2008) analysed these processes and their impact on media usage and consumption to conclude that the Internet is now the key technology, a multimodal means of communication, especially for younger generations. They said: "the higher level of use of the Internet on the part of the young as a source of entertainment implies not necessarily a substitution, but a

certain degree of modification of their elders' previously established information and content consumption habits" (2008: 287). Different generations use technology differently and relate with media in ways that combine early and modern approaches to the same old activities: communication, work, relating to each other and getting information. Email and the Internet can expand the social ties that people maintain in the offline world. Today people socialise online and use the Internet as a source of information, and as a helpful tool with which to work and communicate. Virtual social ties contribute to social identification since most individuals are both online and offline, trading experiences, communicating and relating with others. Bastani & Zarandi (2008) investigated the influence of the Internet on social connections, and stated: "far from alienating people from their richer relations, the Internet has not changed the relationships significantly (...) it has increased their social contacts" (2008: 305).

### **A generation of early adopters: 'Generation C'**

Vorderer (2009: 20) argued that there are at least two different effects concerning technological development for digitising and compressing data. Firstly, there is more content available in more programmes on more channels. Entertainment programs are now accessible anytime, everywhere. And with this have developed new audience segments. The idea of a single mass audience doesn't exist anymore. People are getting into smaller groups, focused on specific content, that correspond to their particular thoughts and attitudes. Furthermore, the way media users are exposed to programmes has changed and it will continue to change. The users as audiences are no longer passive.

Similarly, new media are responsible for the role of new users; they are now more participative and independent, and are able to select specific content and respond to it, but also to modify it. Fiore (2008: 180) argued that digital consumers are more than shoppers; they are digital content creators because they use technology to create content. Users have become important actors and they are often characterized as being innovative and active. Slot and Frissen (2007) defended this active role, arguing that users actively consume content; they take distribution roles, by sharing information and content. Furthermore, they rate and tag content, they comment on it and communicate about it as well as sharing agendas and bookmarking websites, photos and videos. Such interaction represents user empowerment, the ability of individuals to curate and to take control of their content according to their personal tastes, having also the possibility of sharing it with other people if they want to. The role of content users is evolving and they can now be seen as the "key drivers of technological change" (Slot and Frissen, 2007). Perez (2002) analyzed the new and innovative user roles, defining the idea of "societal re-engineering". These new roles are characterised by new practices. Media are still used in conventional ways but users are changing, in the sense of being themselves producers of virtual elements, creating and sharing their own content.

Audiences have themselves disrupted the social boundaries of time and space and we have been witnessing a transformation from the age of the passive user to a new, more

participatory one, followed by a cooperative age and finally a collaborative one. Among such audiences are individuals with a developed knowledge of information technology, who know how better than others how to use emerging and now already-established tools for digital content consumption and creation. They are becoming known as 'Generation C', a psychographic group, as opposed to a specific age group, consisting of a new generation of users "who have the skills, abilities, and above all the interest and enthusiasm to use them", according to Bruns (2007). They have otherwise unique attributes, including powers over content and the ability to express creativity, which establish the model of content creation and content sharing. This is an important achievement, because it represents an evolution "from a static to dynamic content, from hierarchically managed to collaboratively and continuously developed material, and from user-as-consumer to user-as-contributor" (Bruns, 2007). Furthermore, 'Generation C' engage with new virtual spaces, where they communicate and interact with others. Individuals have become important actors, because now they have a chance to participate in the elaboration of democratic discourse and therefore to claim for themselves a greater share of participation. They develop their literacy skills in technology and discourse in ways based on creativity, collaboration, and communication - but while adopting a critical stance (Bruns, 2007). Bruns continues by defending the proposition that the online word is shifting from industrial production to an informational produsage model, one based on the collaborative engagement of communities and participants in a shared project. In summary: users are active participants, creators, producers and distributors. They act as gatekeepers and rate and tag content (Slot - Frissen, 2007).

### **Radio in the digital age**

We now turn our attention to one specific medium: radio. It is one which is well-established among the traditional media, but one which has in many ways enthusiastically embraced many new production and distribution technologies, as well as a number of decidedly digitally-interactive practices. This is both because of an institutional will for it to survive and because of its natural capacity to adapt and evolve as the context within which it operates also changes. There were widespread predictions in the 1950s of the death of radio because of the arrival of television, but they proved as unfounded as those early this century which suggested that few people would still have time for radio today, now that the Internet provides a range of different alternatives.

Radio audience behaviour has been changing for some time, as Berry noted (2014: 3-16), and the medium has succeeded in developing its own multimedia forms of communication that give the individual listener the sense of participating in a continual discourse, addressing topics ranging from news and current affairs through health and well-being to entertainment and showbiz gossip. Of course, much content that is broadcasted on radio is commercially-available music, intended only for entertainment or as an accompaniment to everyday life, but to varying degrees different radio stations use speech in its various genres to communicate information and ideas to its audiences. In many



countries, radio audiences are as robust today as ever, and show no sign of diminishing due to increased competition from other media, with, for example, a weekly reach of 90% in the United Kingdom (Starkey 2014: 385-88). The wide range of, (at some time,) innovatory practices which have altered many common aspects of radio production, distribution and consumption are explored more fully elsewhere (for example in Starkey and Crisell, 2009, 123-130). However, many such relatively recent technological developments have endowed the traditionally merely auditory radio broadcast with a wide range of accompanying parallel digital content offerings. It is worth noting here that audience behaviour towards established and newer media, even where new approaches to engaging with them have only recently emerged, may be rationalised according to 'traditional' uses and gratifications theory (Blumler & Katz, 1974, Severin & Tankard, 2000). Specifically, audience behaviour towards the various forms of content generated by what might be termed the radio industry seems defined through two stages of web technology which are implicated in communication with and between radio listeners. Through radio station web sites, Web 1.0 consisted of e-mail access, open forums, online chat, SMS texting information, extended content online including unedited interviews, online surveys and the timeshifting of previously linear-only audio content. Later, the development of Web 2.0 introduced highly interactive platforms, such as blogs, wikis, content voting systems, social networks and peer-to-peer content recommendations.

We now intend, as suggested in our introduction, to now raise some pertinent issues about the actual use Generation C – predominantly young people – make of radio and of the different possibilities for interaction now commonly offered by radio stations. New communication technologies that enable dialogue within radio listener communities are widely available, but they are not yet being energetically studied within academic paradigms for their potential to contribute to the dissemination of information and other media content and, perhaps, to facilitate social change. Radio now faces unprecedented challenges and opportunities, in terms of competition and new potential, and the implications of recent and further technological advance may be considerable for cultural diversity and citizenship in the future.

One major tendency in the post-McLuhan *virtual* global village of our world today is to retreat behind ethnic and community lines, so it is important to investigate the interface between popular culture and the digitalisation of radio – and, simultaneously, between its audiences and other media, both traditional and 'new'. Despite the general resilience of radio since the 1950s and the relatively robust current industry audience data indicating levels of listening to be generally buoyant in many countries in the face of increased competition from other, newer, media (Starkey 2014: 385-88), several important issues remain unresolved concerning radio digitalisation and the nature of audience participation. Some of them are to be found in the ways listeners may now exercise control over the content they consume, as we have discussed more generally earlier in this article, and some concern the ways in which listening relates to new, previously unimportant factors. These include the use of computers and mobile devices, training in information technology and



differing levels of Internet access, which have altered many familiar patterns of mass communication activity and affected the pre-established norms and models of communication which have long been mediated through the use of competing media-specific technologies, such as print, television and film (Gazi, Starkey, Jedrzejewski, 2011).

In the specific case of radio listening, we can find some established and some relatively new practices existing side-by-side, as well as traditional and newer audience experiences of radio content consumption in relation to them. The accumulated meanings of established media forms developed in the past are now influencing the way audiences use new media forms. Similarly, these other established media forms are also being produced using cross-media practices, in the way that television, for example, uses red-button technology to provide access to content that is parallel to the main programme being broadcast on the main channel. In this way, it is now common for established media to relate their current media products to past and emerging production practices and audience experiences.

Online music playlists or web-based music services, for instance, are common examples of the way consumers are increasingly becoming enabled to customise music platforms to better suit their individual needs, in direct competition to radio. Listeners wanting music are now not only listening to the radio, but also downloading individual tracks and assembling their own sequences of songs, using dedicated hardware or software, according to their own selection and scheduling criteria. This process is often most evident with the creation of playlists through such interactive Internet platforms as Last FM, which can be configured to post on Facebook reports of what its subscribers are currently listening to, and how. Interestingly, in appropriating the acronym FM (frequency modulation), the service is evoking audience experiences of the established medium of radio for its own purposes of brand promotion and brand recognition, while also contributing to the reinforcement of audience understandings of radio itself (Cordeiro, 2011). Because of the larger proportion of early adopters among what we have previously identified as Generation C, then, it seems reasonable that any discussion about radio digitalisation, changes in audience behaviour and any concomitant potential for consequences implicating any form of social change should begin with a clear focus on that generation.

While all countries experience a drop in the number of younger people listening to radio over the past few years, according to a 2011 comparative study of EBU, the popularity of music streaming services is evident in Europe and is also probably one of the key reasons for the drop in traditional radio listening among the younger generation. Among the EU27 though, radio is still the most trusted media and the second most widely used (Standard Eurobarometer 78).

### **Research questions and sampling methodology**

Terrestrial radio and online radio are part of our everyday lives, contributing to the construction of generational identities, contributing to the framing of young people's worldviews and other symbolic meanings. As four academic researchers working in four

different European countries, we set out to observe media consumption among samples of mainly European nationals belonging to Generation C born between 1990 and 1977 as heavy media users, using an online questionnaire survey to determine their usage of different traditional and online or mobile media. They were predominantly students in higher education with little disposable income. The survey took place during the period 2011-12, a period during which media markets and audiences were still undergoing a process of change. Time spent on terrestrial radio listening was relatively stable as online radio audiences were rapidly growing and competing for users' attention within other forms of audio and music listening. Radio was, and is now, no longer confined to linear analogue audio broadcasts available only through a traditional wireless radio receiver, but also through radio stations' web sites, through those of radio service aggregators such as TuneIn and as online music services and podcasts. Mobile phones were becoming more multi-purpose in nature, although listening to online radio services through them, as opposed to through an on-board FM receiver, was less common. Established media were no longer the only propositions available to young people, and a wide range of competing alternatives were available to them, including such music downloading, playlisting and purchasing sites as YouTube, Spotify and iTunes, as well as other forms of online entertainment, most of them found in social networks.

Our key concerns were this young generation of early adopters of technological innovation, their access to new technology and their usage of new and established media. We wished to examine their usage of computer-mediated communication processes, focusing both on quantitative and qualitative approaches reflecting all relevant socio-demographic features of the sample groups and their experiences of communication technology. This meant taking account of gender, income and educational achievement, in order to evaluate aspects of their media consumption, practices and attitudes pertaining to online and other media within different levels of technological literacy and experience, recognising the duration, frequency and intensity of their Internet usage. While recognising some potential influences of demographic parameters, their media usage was our main concern, distinguishing where possible between different kinds of Internet users, technological profiles and generational identities. The relationship between this generation and technology usage was explored in order to contribute to a better understanding, and also to explore the idea that within generations, users' experience isn't directly related to age but to the way the integration of technology in everyday lives can establish patterns of different levels of experience with technology. As Taberero, Navarro & Tubella (2008) wrote, the widespread deployment of information and communication technologies in modern societies and individuals' differing levels of experience with technology leads to more intensity and complexity in communication practices, enhancing self-management of information and communication at both international and local levels.

The four countries surveyed were Cyprus, Greece, Portugal and the UK, although we have combined data from Greece and Cyprus to produce a larger data set for the two countries combined. Responses were solicited through a number of means, including

academic networks and groups of university students. The Portuguese sample was the largest, with 259 respondents in total, of whom 71% were female and 29% were male. The UK sample of 190 respondents was 60% male and although they may have included some overseas students they were mainly born in the UK (80.5%) between 1977 and 1990 (88.9%). The Greece and Cyprus sample of 224 respondents they have included many Cypriot people (especially students) live in Greece and vice versa (Greeks living, working or studying in Cyprus). As a result Greece and Cyprus collected data so far appeared to be mixed when we tried to distinguish between nationality and place of living.

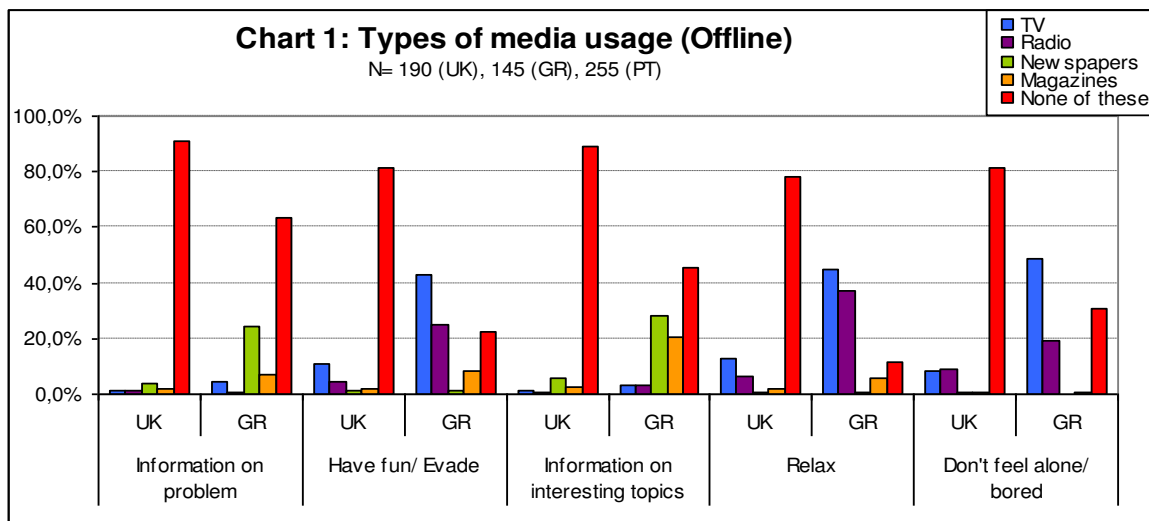
Preliminary results of the questionnaire research are shown in the table below, although further results will be analysed in future papers. The purpose of this analysis, however, is to explore how younger generations continue to listen to audio media, through which platforms, and what they are doing while listening to it. We also compare online music and other online audio content preferences among those respondents born between 1977 and 1990, in relation to their social networking consumption habits. Where possible we compare the data from the different territories of Greece and Cyprus, Portugal and the UK and draw conclusions about respondents' behaviour, framed as they are as digital natives (Palfrey and Gasser, 2008). In addition, we explore the relevance of online content to radio and some implications of social networking to the changing nature of the concept of radio. We focus on the way media approach these audiences in relation to their social consumption of online radio station content to explore the idea that audiences engage more with media if they have a strong social approach, as is demonstrably the case for social media - blogs, and social networks, particularly Facebook.

### **Results: Generation C and established media**

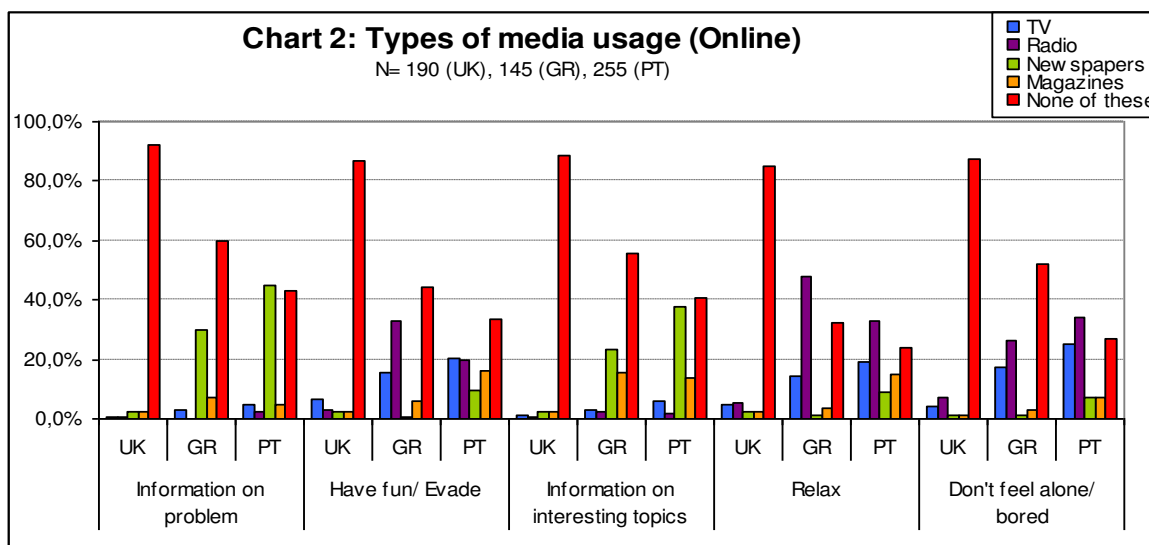
Consumption of established media appeared at first to be very low in all four countries, especially while online. This might not be surprising, though, if being online is, in practice, an absorbing activity or one, which does not require accompaniment from any other medium.

**Charts 1 and 2<sup>1</sup>** show little variation across the different established media between Greece/Cyprus and the UK, but a much higher mean response in the UK of 'none of these' across the different motives for using them of 82.9% (while offline) and 86.2% (while online) and a much greater tendency to read newspapers in Greece/Cyprus and Portugal. By contrast, TV was the most used of the traditional media in the UK and radio was the second most used, while newspapers came third there and magazines were the least used. Radio and TV usage was greater in the southern countries than in the UK.

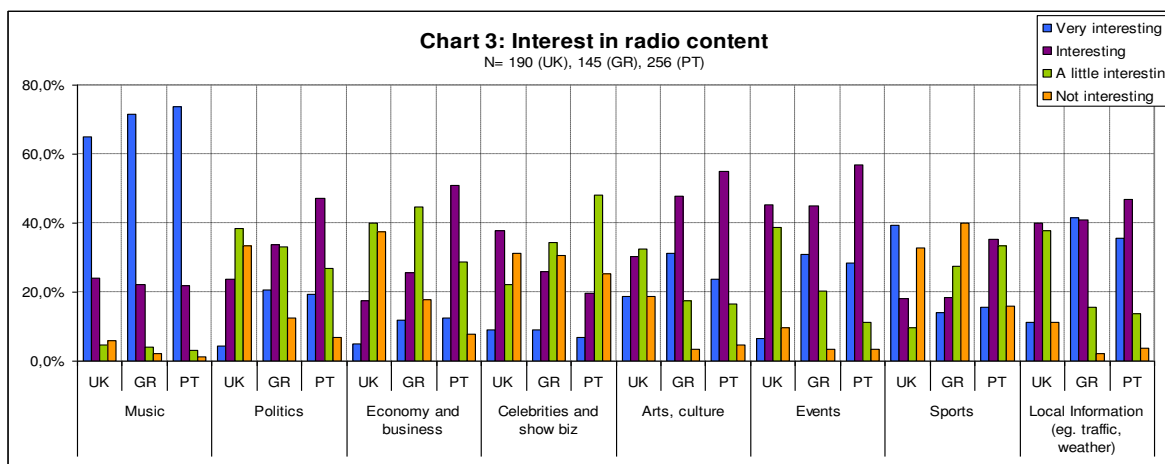
Surprisingly, though, close analysis of the data revealed that many respondents who had declared that they didn't listen to the radio either did not notice that in question 10 they were being asked about radio content or they were prepared to express preferences over different types of radio content nonetheless. The results are shown in **Chart 3**, which shows that in all four countries their preferred radio content was overwhelmingly music, as in the UK, for example, 56.8% found music 'very interesting', compared with sports (12.6%), arts and culture (4.2%), 'celebrities and showbiz' (3.7%) and politics (3.2%). There was



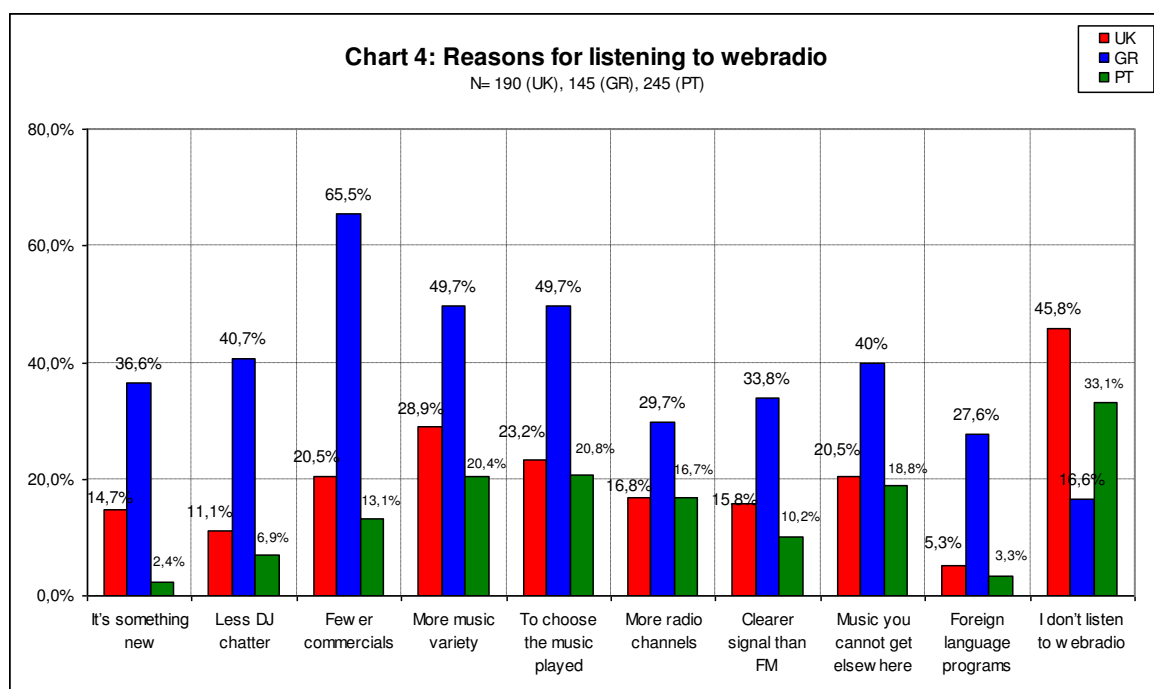
noticeably greater interest in politics, the economy and ‘events’ in Greece/Cyprus and Portugal than in the UK, and it is likely that emerging economic and political turbulence in the south, compared to a more stable environment in the UK, contributed to the apparent relative reticence among that respondent group.



Again, seemingly contradicting their own initial responses, only a minority in each country declared that they did not like web radio, (as opposed to a stream from a traditional broadcast station). **Chart 4** shows that the most popular reasons for listening were ‘fewer commercials’ (65.5% in Greece/Cyprus), being able to access ‘more music variety’ (28.9% in the UK; 49.7% in Greece/Cyprus), and control over the music played (49.7% in Greece/Cyprus). Everywhere, being able to access foreign language programs were the least commonly cited reasons for listening to web radio.

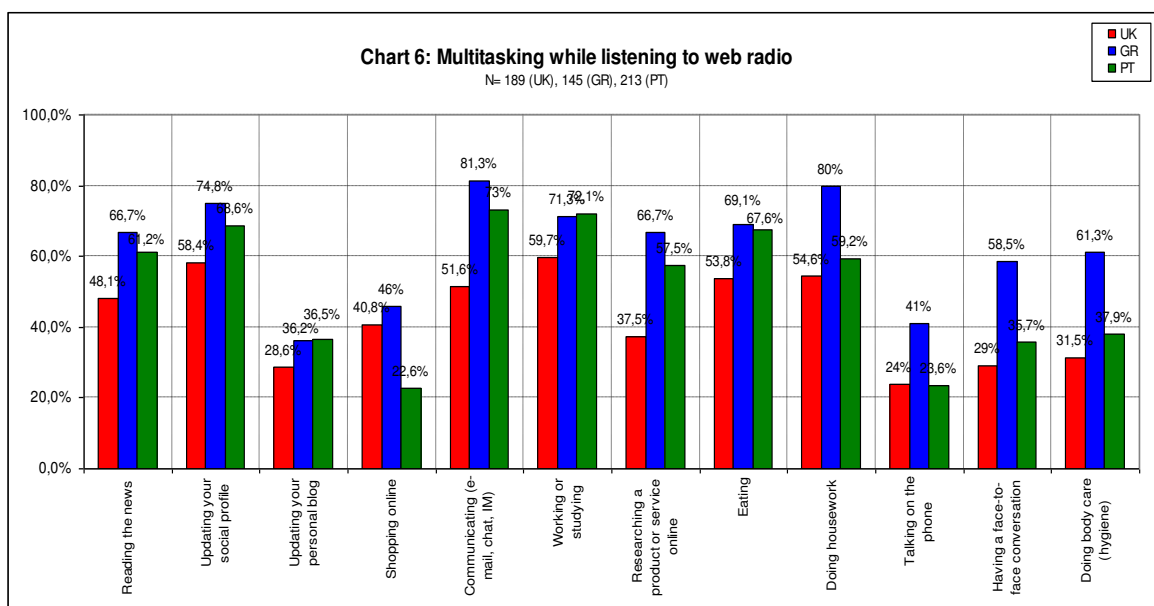
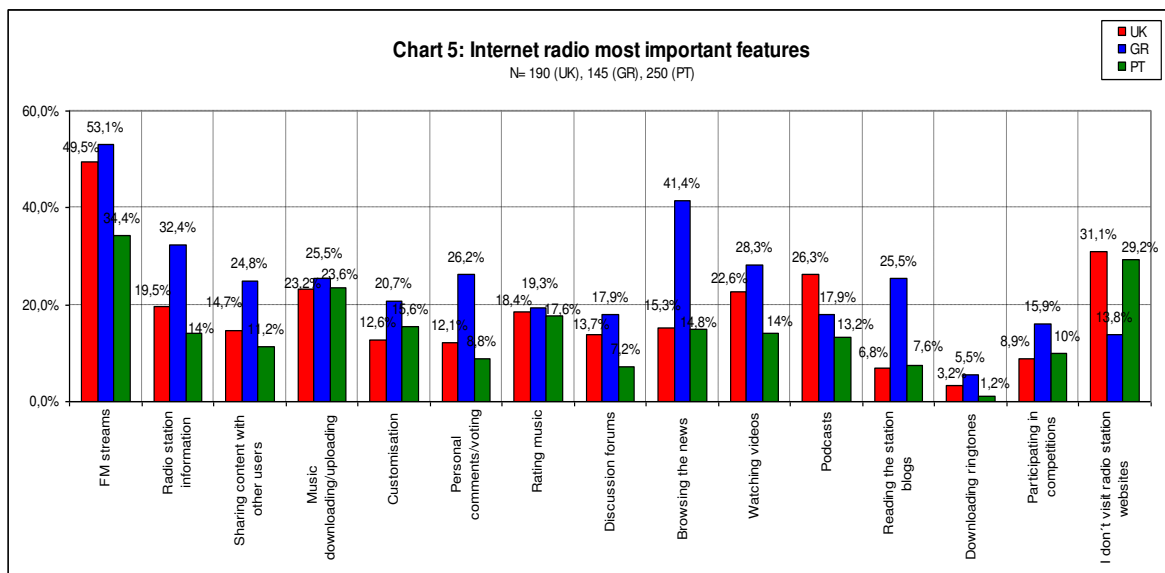


**Chart 5** shows that in all four countries the most popular features of such sites were ‘listen live’ streams (53.1% in Greece/Cyprus; 49.5% in the UK; 34.4% in Portugal), podcasts (26.3% in the UK), music downloading/uploading (25.5% in Greece/Cyprus; 23.6% in Portugal; 23.2% in the UK) and watching videos (28.3% Greece/Cyprus; 22.6% in the UK). Information about the stations (32.4% in Greece/Cyprus), rating music (19.3% in the UK), sharing content (24.8% in Greece/Cyprus), and browsing the news (41.4% in Greece/Cyprus) were the next most popular features.



The most readily-recalled instances of performing activities while listening to radio online (**Chart 6**) were similar across all four countries: communicating (81,3% in Greece/Cyprus; 73% in Portugal), updating social network profiles (74,8% in Greece/Cyprus; 68,8% in Portugal), working or studying (79,1% in Portugal; 71,3% in Greece/Cyprus), doing

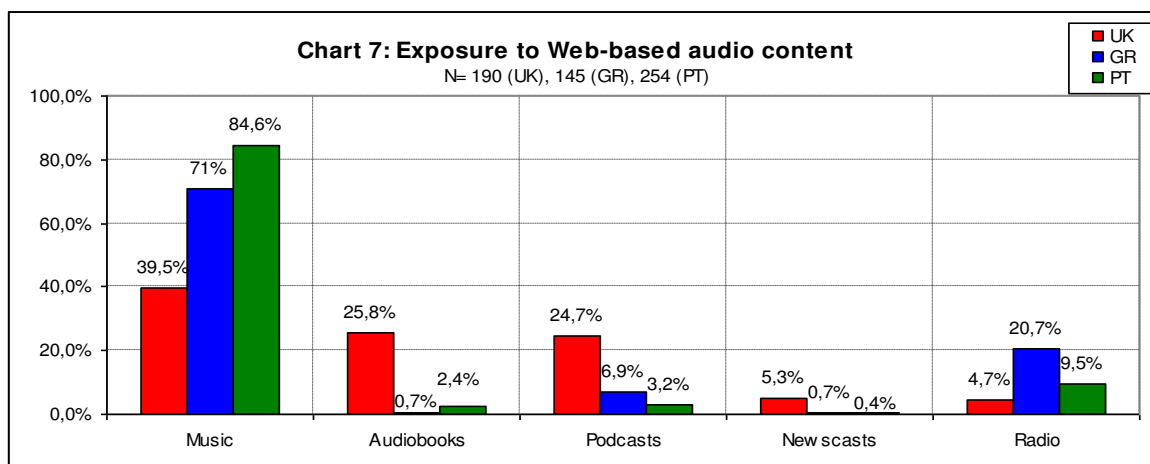
housework (80% in Greece/Cyprus) and eating (69,1 in the UK; 67,6% in Portugal), while reading the news, reading magazines or newspapers, downloading multimedia content and researching a product or service online followed behind.



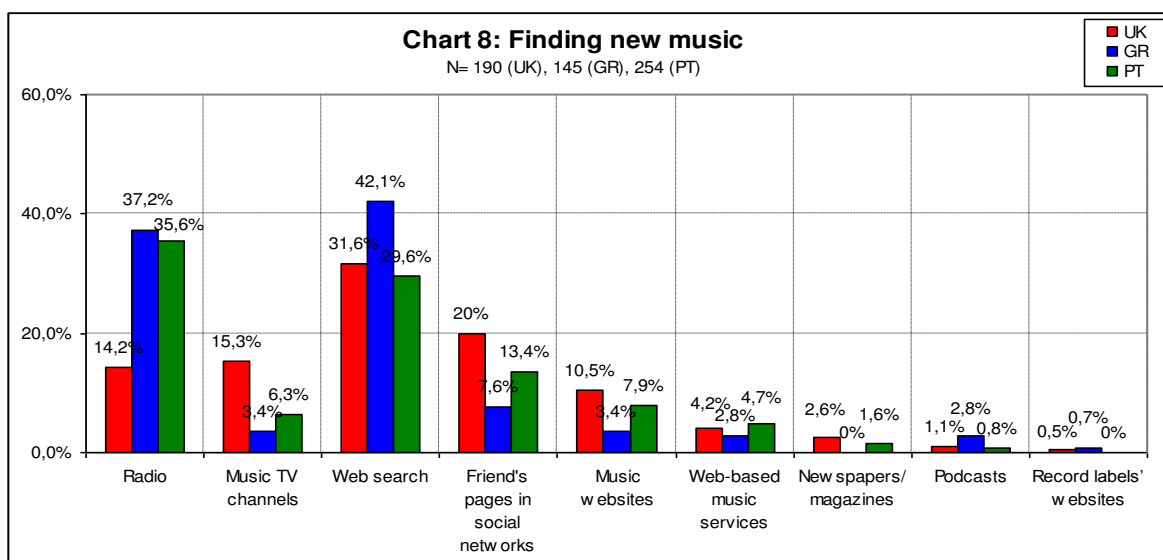
As shown in **Chart 7**, the most popular web-based audio content in all four countries was music (71% in Greece/Cyprus; 84.6% in Portugal), while audiobooks (25.8% in the UK) and podcasts (24.7% in the UK), then newscasts and radio were the least popular, with the number of respondents identifying these less popular forms of audio content in Greece/Cyprus and Portugal being negligible.

When respondents were asked how they find new music, across the four countries their answers were again broadly similar. Their responses (shown in **Chart 8**) are of

considerable significance, because they indicate continuing high levels of dependence on radio as a discovery medium.

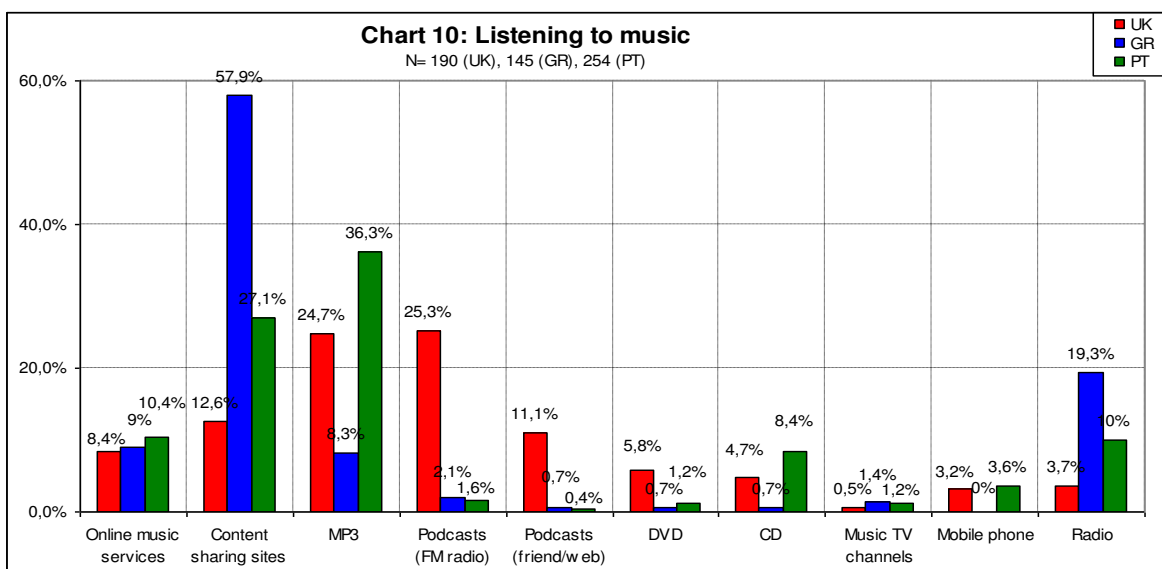
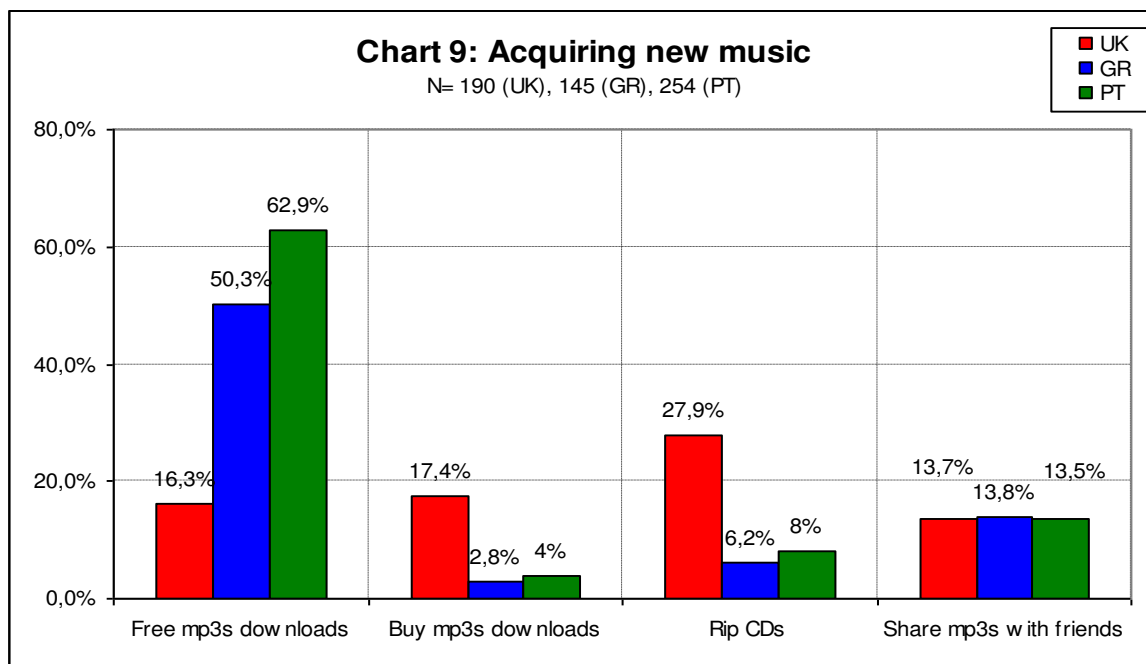


One of the great fears in the radio industry in the UK in the previous decade had been that this was an 'iPod generation', isolated from the mainstream public sphere of new artists being discovered, gaining radio airplay and rising then falling in popularity in the model which first emerged in the 1950s with the rock and roll revolution and had since become traditional. Over-dependence on the iPod, would, it was feared at that time, seriously reduce levels of radio listening and reduce the medium's potential to affect music sales. Our sample groups, especially in Greece/Cyprus and Portugal, all reported that radio remained a significant source of discovering new music, ahead in all countries of music web sites, web-based music services such as Last FM, print media and the record companies' own web sites. In Greece/Cyprus and in Portugal, radio was second only to searching the web in this respect.





Another divergence between the northern and southern territories emerged over respondents' methods of accessing music recordings, as opposed to just listening to it in real time, as is the case with broadcasting or streaming (**Chart 9**). In the UK, getting new music was mainly by ripping CDs (27.9%), sharing .mp3 files with friends (18.9%), buying it in stores (18.9%), or on buying it online, such as from iTunes (17.4%) and free downloads (16.3%). In Greece/Cyprus and Portugal, by contrast, free .mp3 downloads were far more popular (50.3% and 62.9% respectively).



Finally for this current analysis, we asked respondents the relatively vague question, how do they listen, offering a number of alternatives the responses to which, as shown in **Chart 10**, might suggest a bias in the answers towards accessing music. This contrasted sharply with

the wider range of audio content indicated earlier on in the survey and reported on in **Chart 3**. In the southern countries, radio was of greater importance than in the UK, while content-sharing sites were clearly the most popular sources everywhere (57.9% in Greece/Cyprus).

## **Conclusions**

Despite clear differences between more prominently early-adopter Generation C respondents across the four countries in this survey, particularly between those in the UK and the southern countries, there are also many commonalities among their responses. Where such commonalities have emerged through the survey, such data is by definition more robust, with greater potential for generalisation to wider populations, than would otherwise be the case. Perhaps due to faster data transmission speeds in online experiences in the UK than in Greece, Portugal and Cyprus, or perhaps as a result of cultural differences, the young UK audience appears to be less reliant on the established medium of radio than the others, and more likely to use online sources to access content that until relatively recently might have been the preserve of the radio industry. Radio remains, however, significant even among individuals within this challenging generation in all four countries, and it may be the many ways in which radio is now accessible through multiple platforms, as well as the different ways in parallel radio content is now available, that has contributed to this. There is, though, despite the many ways in which radio and other established media may have reinvented and re-presented themselves to existing and emerging audiences, an inevitability to the challenges they face in attracting and retaining younger, more digitally aware and connected audiences, such as Generation C.

The media landscape of this digital age is a result of relatively recent convergence between a number of electronic, digital and multimedia elements, including established and new media forms and platforms. Together they create an elaborate global platform of real-time communication and social interaction. The geography of the world has also been reorganised, as an almost worldwide audience now has access to a greater variety of cultural products and media content, provided by a plethora of competing sources emanating from different locations which are implicated in a variety of on-line and off-line influences on our lives. As a communication and interaction platform, the Internet integrates numerous public and private spheres, social and interpersonal contexts, and interactive information and entertainment content, and therefore it has a role to play as an instrument of socio-cultural change. The Internet, with its various social networks and social media, represents contemporary Internet usage as a virtual space for the worldwide publication of all kinds of mediated content. Varying levels of Internet penetration in different parts of the world, with differential growth in the intensity of use, access to broadband, wifi networks and fibre optic connectivity, inevitably conspire to produce different levels of engagement with that content in terms of the frequency and duration of connected experiences. Online social networks are, nonetheless, drawing in individuals from different generations, increasing freelance home working and flexible working patterns among employees. They also enhance the user-generated-content experience by associating individual creativity with online tools,

consolidating the horizontal flow of communication in which it is established between a community of individuals sharing many-to-many, peer-to-peer experiences, while promoting self-expression without the mediation of traditional and often regulated media institutions.

The proliferation of online participatory networks brings together a wide range of abilities and interactions, also consolidating collective production and intelligence. Nevertheless, as suggested by our research into the behaviour of some of the most connected groups in society across four different European countries, many individuals within the audience remain faithful to institutional mediators, such as broadcasters. However, and almost inevitably, they also use online platforms, combining news coverage from traditional media with a large number of sources and citizen media – editing, sharing, reproducing and also assembling content in online networks using digital software and devices. To quote Tabernero, Navarro & Tubella again, “the Internet may be considered not merely as a competitor to established media organizations, as an alternative source of information and entertainment and a means of access to new and incessantly renewing channels and platforms, some of them provided yet again by those same traditional media, but just as well as a tool, available for multimodal usage not only by administrations and business including once more the same media corporations and organizations, but also individuals” (2008: 275).

Although this research, as is common with such methodological approaches, has been conducted amongst a self-selecting sample of willing volunteer participants, we can say that – in the absence of evidence to the contrary – there is a strong likelihood that they broadly reflect their peer group. We now propose to conduct further research which tackles this problem more extensively, in order, but not only to, establish its veracity and generalisability.

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**Note:**

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<sup>1</sup> Where GR, results from respondents from both Greece and Cyprus are presented.