Since 1999, the year when both physical music revenue and total revenue peaked at over $20 billion, the amount of physical sales has declined every year. This is due to the emergence of digital platforms. The question is, what effect has the switch from physical to digital had?

Digital platforms began to gain traction in 2004, and have quickly became the most popular way to listen to music. However, while digital platforms are the biggest money makers, the revenue these platforms have brought in is no where near the amount that physical sales were bringing in at their peak.

The numbers show a steep drop off in total revenue in the music industry since the start of this century. There seems to be a correlation between the emergence of digital platforms and decline in revenue. In 1999, the industry peaked $20.8 billion. The industry hit it's lowest mark in 2015 at just $5.8 billion, just under 28% of the $20.8 billion mark in 1999. With greater accessibility for the consumer thanks to new digital formats, one would think that business would boom; that hasn’t been the case. Since 2015, however, the industry has seen an uptick. In 2018 the total hit out at $8.6 billion. Even with this increase, the numbers are still showing that the move to digital platforms have not had a postive impact on the music industry as a whole.

SOURCE: Recording Industry Association of America

GRAPHIC BY: Jackie White and Tristan Jackson