

Career Challenges Musicians Face in the United States

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rh07UDGxtIs>

Abstract

To further our understanding of the music industry, the Music Industry Research Association (MIRA) and the Princeton University Survey Research Center, in partnership with MusiCares, conducted a survey of 1,227 musicians in the United States in 2018. This study summarizes and analyzes the challenges and opportunities that musicians face in the United States.

The median musician in the sample has 3 sources of income and an average of 3.71 sources. For all respondents, the largest three sources of income are income from live performances (non-religious), income from audio video recordings, and income from giving music lessons.

A higher fraction of male musicians report earning income as a session musician compared to female musicians (40.7 percent vs 26.9 percent), while female musicians are more likely to report earning income from church/religious performances (41.3 percent vs. 35.4 percent). Male musicians are more likely to have income from producing music (22.9 percent vs 8.2 percent). Female musicians also have slightly fewer sources of income on the intensive margin (3.64 vs 3.75).

White musicians are 10.5 percentage points more likely to have income from giving music lessons than non-whites, and non-whites are 4.3 percentage points more likely to report having income from session musician fees. White musicians also have slightly more sources of income on average (3.72 vs 3.63).

Income Sufficiency

61.1% of the musicians in the sample's music-related income is not sufficient to meet their living expenses. Such a share among male musicians is slightly lower than that of female musicians: 58.4% vs. 66.3%, respectively. However, such a share among white musicians is significantly lower

than that of non-white musicians: 57.0% vs. 75.5%, respectively.

36% of the musicians' total income from music and non-music sources is not sufficient to meet their living expenses. Such a share among male musicians is slightly lower than that of female musicians: 35% vs. 38%, respectively. However, such a share among white musicians is significantly lower than that of non-white musicians: 32% vs. 50%, respectively. This also reveals the surprising fact that half of non-white musicians' total income is not sufficient to meet their living expenses.

Important Factors Affecting Overall Income vs. Music-related Income

Interestingly, all else being equal, white musicians' individual pretax income in 2017 was 21.8%, significantly lower than that of non-white musicians. Other factors such as musicians' educational attainment, age, gender, whether attending a high school featuring music/performing arts education, whether being born in the United States are not important.

However, musicians' educational attainment, attending a high school featuring music/performing arts education, being born in the United States matter to the music-related individual pretax income in 2017. All else being equal, an additional year of education will increase a musician's music-related income by around 7%; attending a high school featuring music/performing arts education would increase a musician's music-related income by 27%. Surprisingly, being born in the United States resulted in a 39.5% drop in the music-related income.

Keywords: musicians, well-being, career challenges

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2012. Her major fields of specialization are labor economics and industrial organization. Specific research interests include economics of immigration and music business. It was Dr. Zhen's honor to work with Professor Alan B. Krueger of Princeton University on the Survey of Well-being of Musicians in the United States from December 2017 to June 2018. Zhen considers economics a universal science, which should be open to everyone. Her ultimate goal is to help students see the world through the eyes of an economist, making them appreciate the beauty of economics and become civilized world citizens.



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