

# Changing patterns of musical tastes

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This research was conducted by **Omar Lizardo and Sara Skiles** at the **University of Notre Dame, USA**

## Summary

This paper looked at differences in people's music taste across age groups and over time in the USA. The researchers concentrated on the phenomenon of 'symbolic exclusion': namely, the propensity of people to express dislike for certain cultural styles. Researchers found that compared to participants in a 1993 study, participants in 2012 were less likely to express dislike across most musical categories, with the most notable declines observed for Rap and Heavy Metal. This indicates a change in the patterns of taste-making for cultural consumers over the last 20 years.

## Studies rarely consider the role of age and generational dynamics on people's musical taste

Researchers compared records of musical 'dislikes' from the 1993 General Social Survey to data from a similar study in 2012. Surveys recorded respondents' likes and dislikes for 18 musical styles. They found that, overall, Americans in 2012 were less likely to express dislikes across most musical categories, with the most substantial declines observed for Rap and Heavy Metal, especially among college-educated young adults.

# The probability of 'disliking' also decreased for Classical music, Opera, Jazz, Latin and Rock. It increased for Country, Bluegrass, Folk and Religious music, and did not shift significantly for Broadway, Blues and R&B, or Reggae

The researchers argued that the number of people disliking folk genres such as Country has probably increased because these musical styles have become associated with intolerance and xenophobia. Comparing the responses of younger and older participants, they also suggest that the increase in symbolic exclusion (or 'dislike') of Rock music among younger participants signals a replacement of Rock as the preferred genre of young people in favour of Rap and 'harder' Rock styles. The substantial decrease in 'disliking' of Rock among older participants, on the other hand, establishes Rock music as the genre of an older generation.

This summary is by **Paula Serafini, King's Knowledge Exchange Associate**

## Keywords

**music** **taste** **USA** **survey** **population**

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