



CROSS-NATIONAL SURVEY AND INTERVIEW REPORT

Musicians at Work in the Platform and AI Era:

Evidence from Brazil, Chile, the Netherlands, Nigeria and South Korea

Femke de Rijk & Robert Prey

Part of the [PlatforMuse](#) project

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Introduction

Online streaming and social media platforms have profoundly reshaped the global music industries, transforming how music is produced, distributed, promoted, and consumed. While these platforms have created new opportunities for musicians to reach audiences and build careers, they have also created new challenges in the past years. More recently, the emergence of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) has added a new layer of change, presenting artists with additional creative, economic, and ethical challenges. Understanding these interconnected developments is essential for developing a nuanced picture of cultural production in the platform era.

This report is part of *PlatforMuse*, a five-year research project (2023–2028) funded by the European Research Council and based at the University of Groningen. The project investigates the impact of “platformisation” and the rise of GenAI on musicians’ working lives, asking how streaming and social media platforms shape artistic labour across different national and cultural contexts. *PlatforMuse* adopts a cross-national perspective by focusing on musicians in the Netherlands, Nigeria, and South Korea.

To-date, most empirical research—including surveys—has been conducted with musicians in Anglo-American centres of the music industries.¹ *PlatforMuse* asks: how can the everyday experiences of music artists in more diverse locations help generate a truly global understanding of cultural production in the platform and GenAI era? The survey we report on here expands the original sample of countries by also including musicians from Brazil and Chile, as well as the Netherlands, Nigeria, and South Korea (n = 1,198). These countries were selected to; a) provide a geographically diverse sample, b) investigate musicians’ experiences outside the often researched and discussed Anglo-American contexts, and c) compare two countries from the same continent with different linguistic and music industry dynamics (Chile and Brazil).

In March 2025, we invited musicians from these five countries to participate in an online survey exploring how they use digital platforms, how these platforms affect their income, creative work, and daily routines, and how they experience online engagement with fans. The survey was conducted in collaboration with Ipsos and constitutes a key empirical component of the *PlatforMuse* project. This report presents findings that reveal significant national differences and shared challenges, including divergent income outcomes, increasing promotional workloads, and growing demands to be creative in pursuing greater online visibility and engagement with fans.

To deepen and contextualise these survey insights, in-depth follow-up interviews were conducted in November 2025 with a smaller sample of survey participants (n = 27). These interviews provide richer accounts of musicians’ lived experiences. They allowed us to dive into musicians’ perceptions of GenAI in music, to explore how the rise of platformisation and GenAI is experienced in practice, and to find out how artists make sense of opportunities and constraints in their own words.

Together, the survey and interviews offer a global picture of how musicians navigate a rapidly evolving digital landscape. We are grateful to all participants who shared their time and experiences, and whose contributions are central to advancing our understanding of building a music career in the platform era.

¹ See, for example: Hesmondhalgh, David, et al. “Music creators’ earnings in the digital era.” *Intellectual property office research paper* (2021).

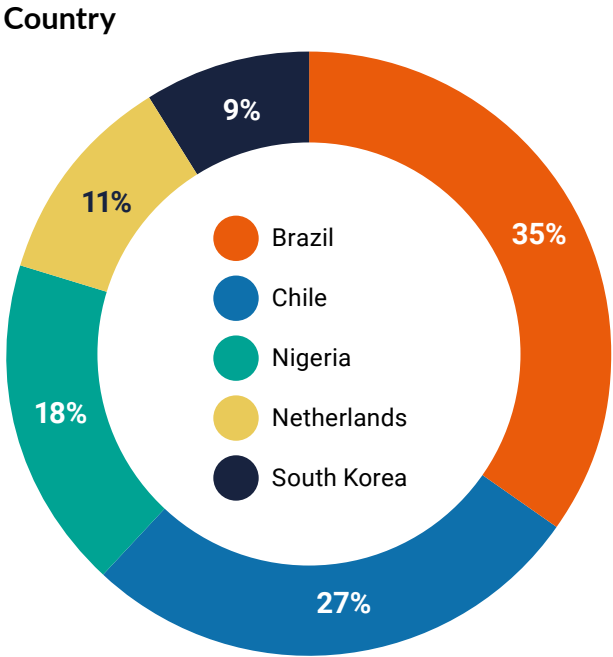
General demographics survey

The survey gathered responses from 1,198 musicians worldwide. Participation was voluntary, and responses were collected through social media advertising and local networks in each country.

The respondents are based in five countries:

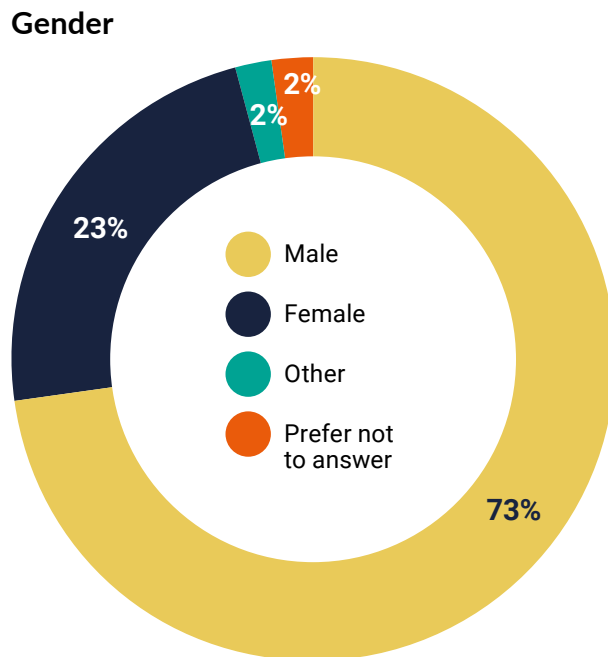
- Brazil, 417 respondents
- Chile, 327 respondents
- Nigeria, 213 respondents
- Netherlands, 137 respondents
- South Korea, 104 respondents

Together, these countries represent a diverse range of music industries and platform environments.



GENDER AND EDUCATION

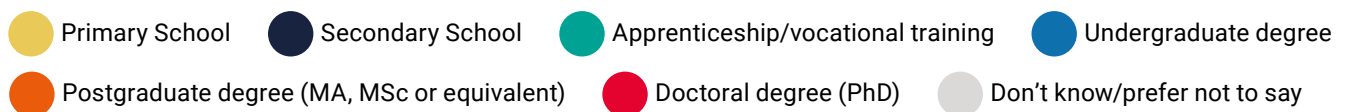
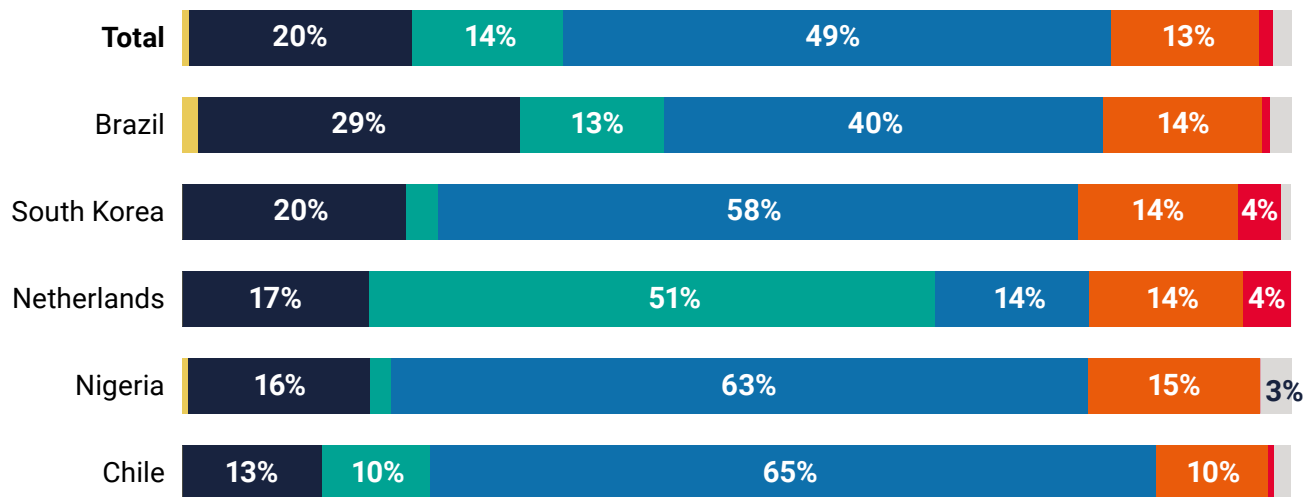
Most respondents identified as male (73%), followed by female (23%), while a small number identified as non-binary (2%) or preferred not to answer (2%). The gender distribution was similar across countries, except in Nigeria, where 83% of respondents identified as male. Due to the small number of non-binary respondents, gender-based analyses in the report focus on male and female respondents only.



In our survey, we did not find significant differences between genders for any topic, in any country. The one exception was Brazil, for the question: Compared to the period before streaming platforms, do you think having a career as a recording artist nowadays has gotten better, worse, or has it stayed about the same? **Brazilian female artists are more likely to say that it has gotten better.**

In terms of education, respondents were generally highly educated. Almost two-thirds hold an undergraduate or postgraduate degree, while smaller shares reported vocational training or high school education as their highest level of education. Overall educational patterns were similar across countries, though the Netherlands stood out, with 51% of respondents reporting apprenticeship or vocational training as their highest level of education. This is likely because many programmes classified as university-level in other countries – such as music education – are deemed vocational in the Netherlands.

Education - country



ARTIST PROFILES

Our respondents are either professional or professional-aspiring musicians.

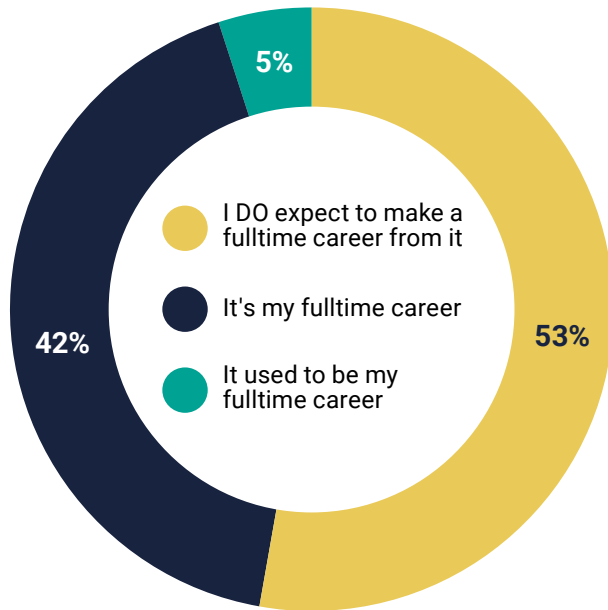
- 501 artists reported that music is currently their full-time career.
- 633 artists expect to make music their full-time career in the future.
- 74 artists reported that it used to be their full-time career.

Across all countries, the most common types of music artists in our survey are:

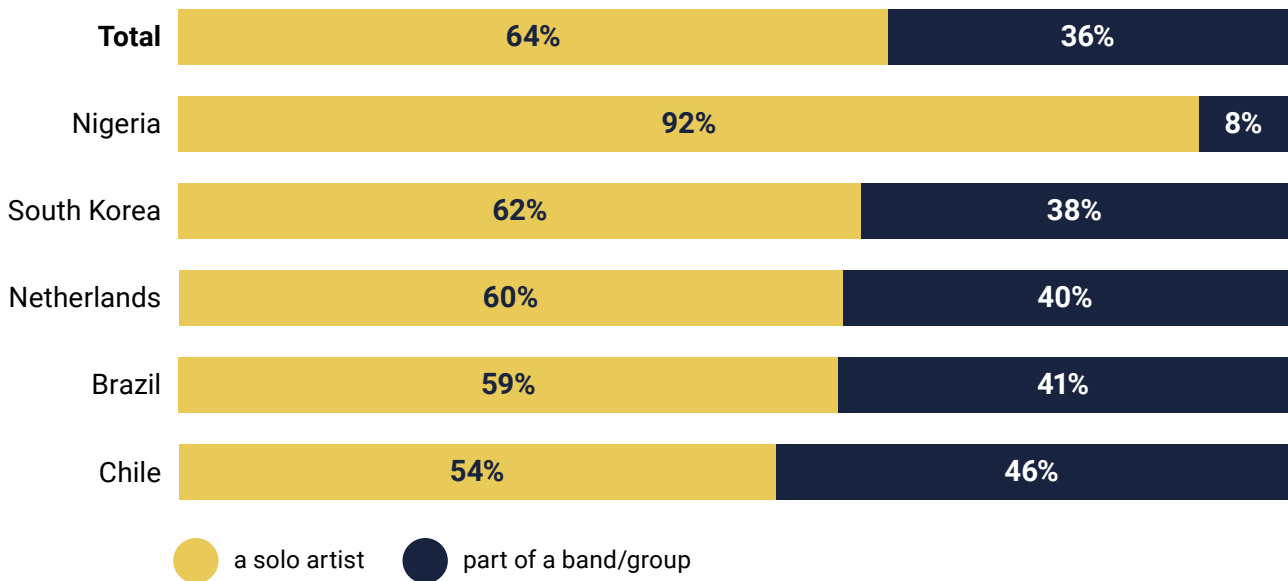
- Singer-songwriters (55%)
- Instrumentalists (53%)
- Singers/vocalists (40%)
- Producers (37%)

Most artists described themselves as solo artists (64%), while 36% of those surveyed were part of a band or group. Nigeria stands out strongly here, with 92% of respondents identifying as solo artists.

Music Career



Main music occupation - Country

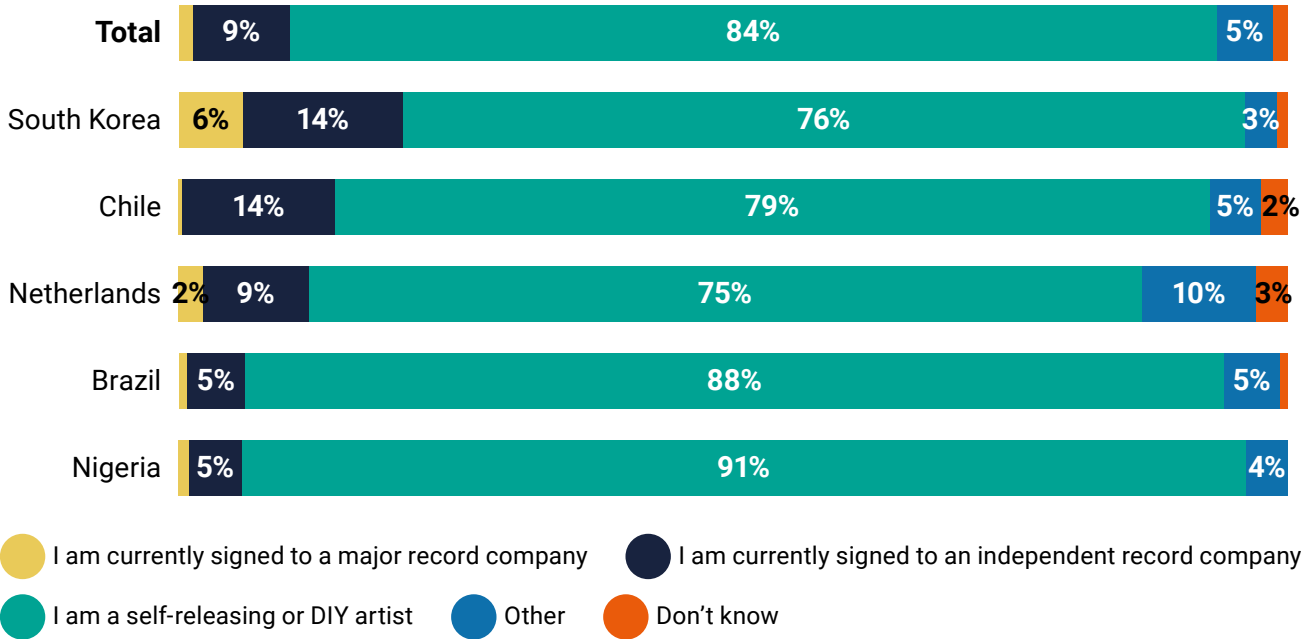


In terms of career stage, most respondents began their music careers after the mainstreaming of streaming platforms (which we marked as the year 2015):

- 56% started after streaming became mainstream.
- 40% started before streaming became mainstream.

Most artists are independent, defined in this report as not being signed to a record contract at the time of the survey. Fewer than 10% were signed to a label, while 84% described themselves as self-releasing or DIY artists. South Korea differs from the overall pattern, with 20% of respondents signed to a record label.

Signed or DIY artist - Country

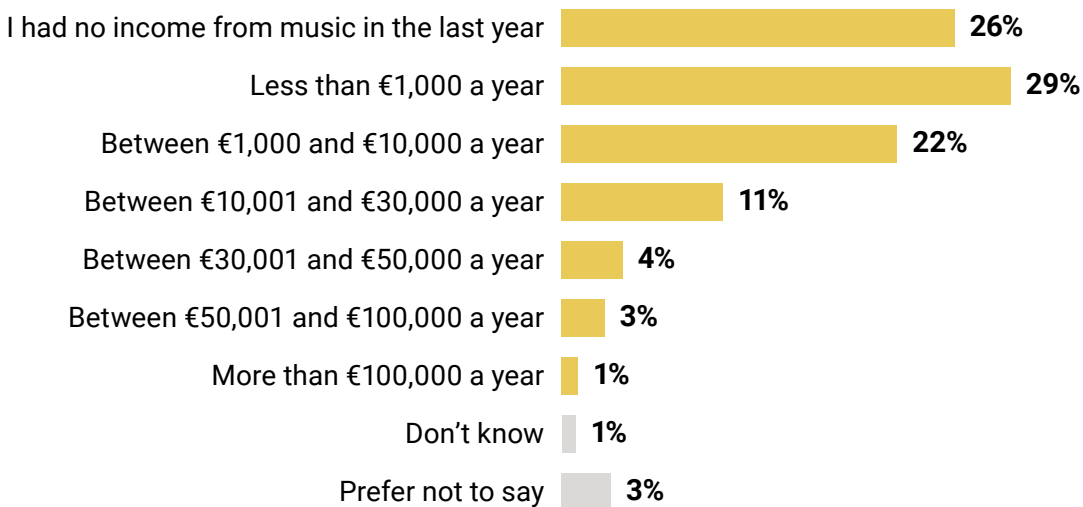


INCOME, STREAMING, AND VISIBILITY

Income from music remains limited for many respondents. Across all countries:

- 26% earned no income from music in the previous year.
- 29% earned less than €1,000.
- 22% earned between €1,001 and €10,000.
- 11% earned between €10,001 and €30,000.
- 8% earned more than €30,000.

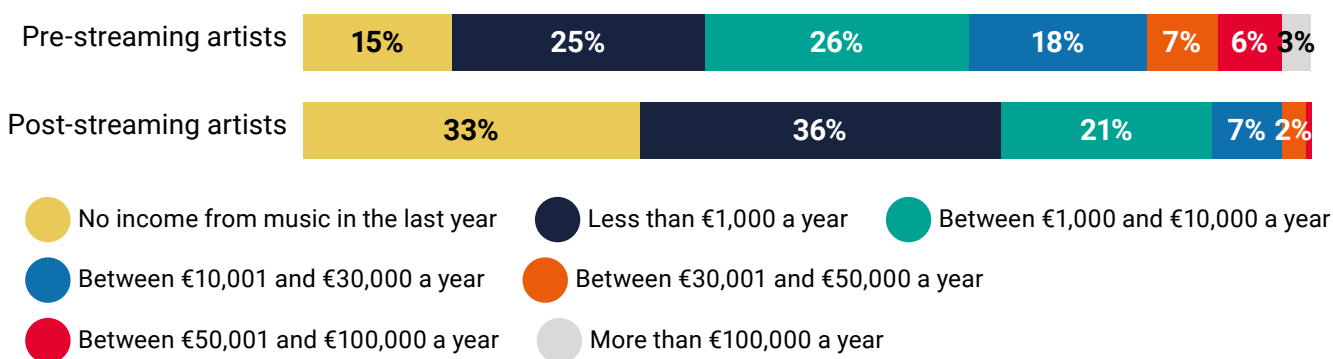
Total income earned from music in the last year - Total



Our sample is thus representative of “ordinary musicians”² which Pierre Bataille, and Marc Perrenoud describe as musicians who are neither rich nor famous, and make up the vast majority of music artists around the world.

Our survey results show that **artists who started their careers before streaming earn significantly more than those who started after streaming became dominant**. Moreover, the study found that **signed artists earn more than independent artists**. Artists signed to a major record company earn a median income between €30,000–€50,000 per year, those signed to an independent label have a median income between €10,000–€30,000 per year, and DIY or independent artists earn a median income between €1,000–€10,000 per year.

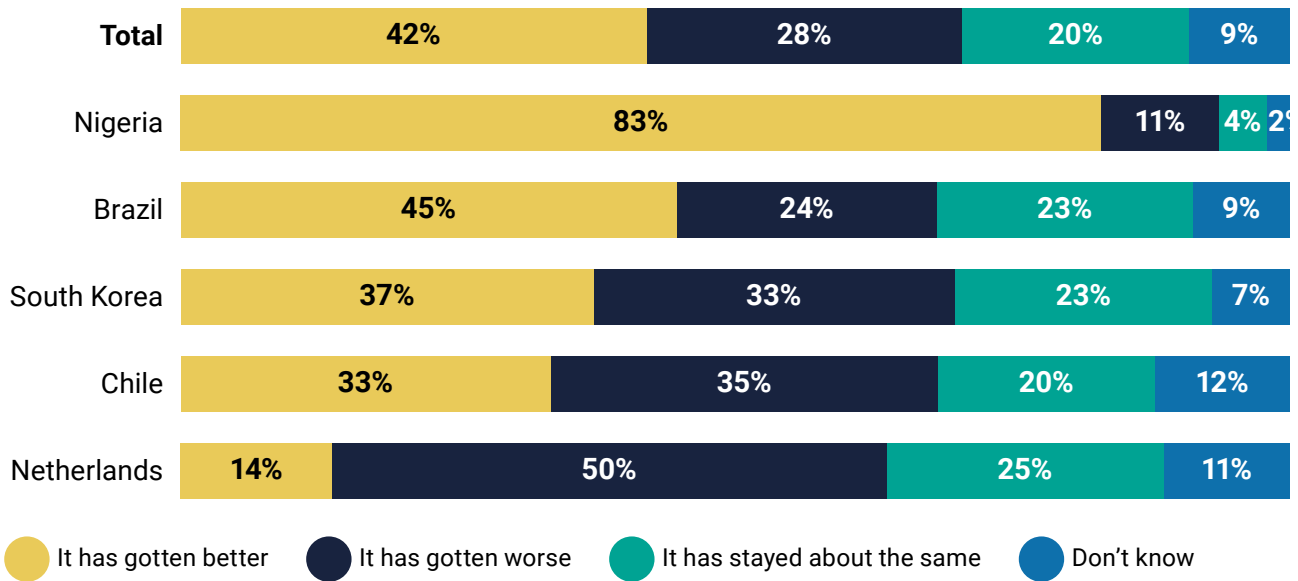
Income comparison between artists who started before and after the streaming era



Adding to this, when we asked artists whether their careers have gotten better, worse or stayed about the same compared to the period before streaming platforms, less than half of the survey respondents believed that things had “gotten better” since the rise of streaming. Nigerian artists diverged significantly from this average. Despite earning far less than artists we surveyed in the other four countries, Nigerian respondents were the most positive: **83% of Nigerian artists reported that their careers have gotten better since streaming. Dutch respondents were the most negative, with only 14% of Dutch artists agreeing that having a career as a musician had gotten better, and 50% reporting that streaming had made things worse.**

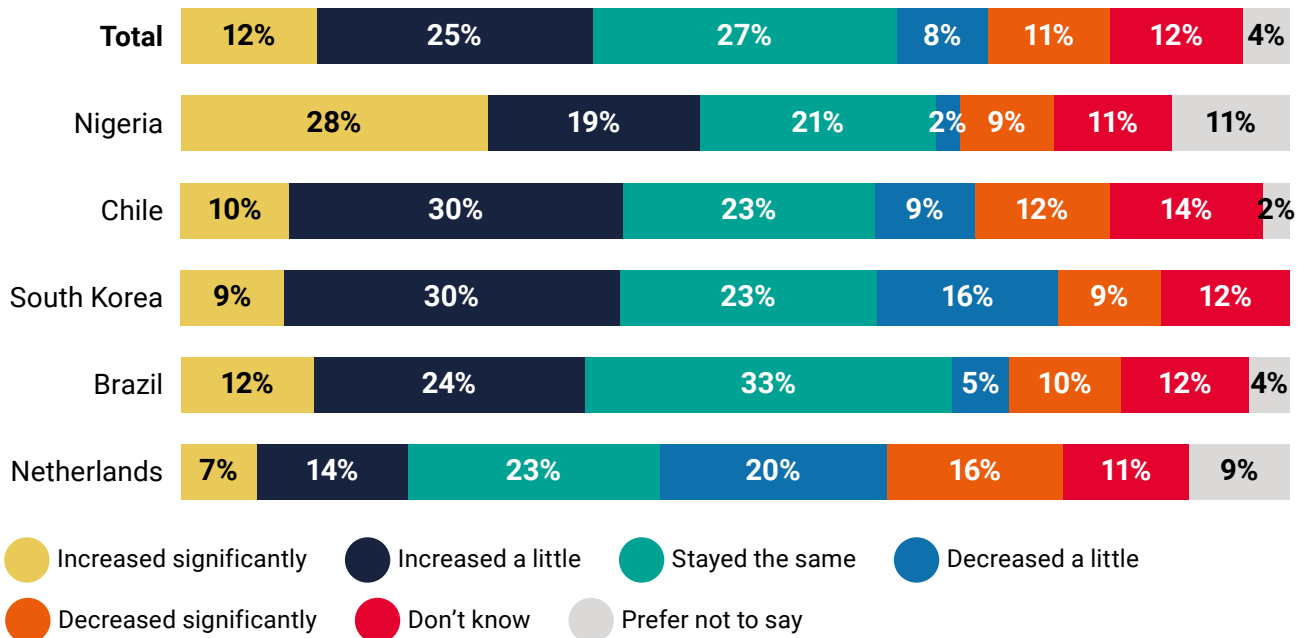
² Bataille, Pierre, and Marc Perrenoud. ““One for the money”? The impact of the “disk crisis” on “ordinary musicians” income: The case of French speaking Switzerland.” *Poetics* 86 (2021): 101552.

Compared to the period before streaming platforms, do you think having a career as a recording artist nowadays has gotten better, worse, or has it stayed about the same?



These results are also reflected in the income changes artists report since the rise of streaming. 47% of Nigerian pre-streaming artists' income "increased significantly" or "increased a little". While 36% of Dutch respondents reported that their income "decreased a little" or "decreased significantly".

Overall change in income from music since the growth of music streaming – Country

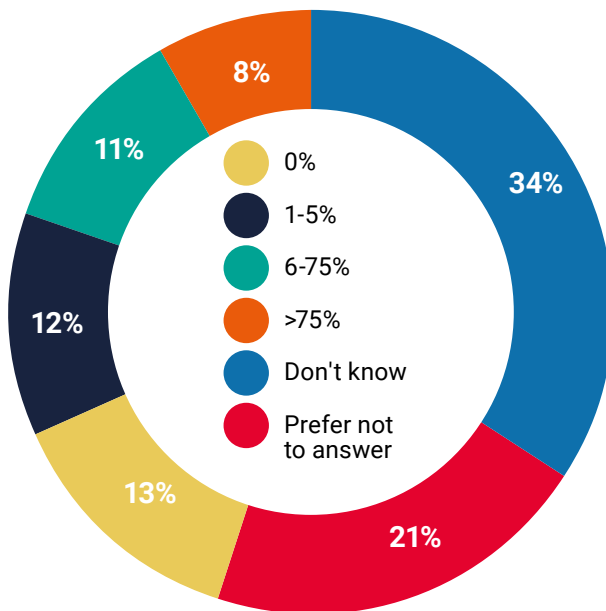


Streaming income plays a relatively small role for most artists.

- 25% earned 0–5% of their total income from streaming.
- 11% earned between 6%–75% from streaming.
- 8% earned more than 75% from streaming.

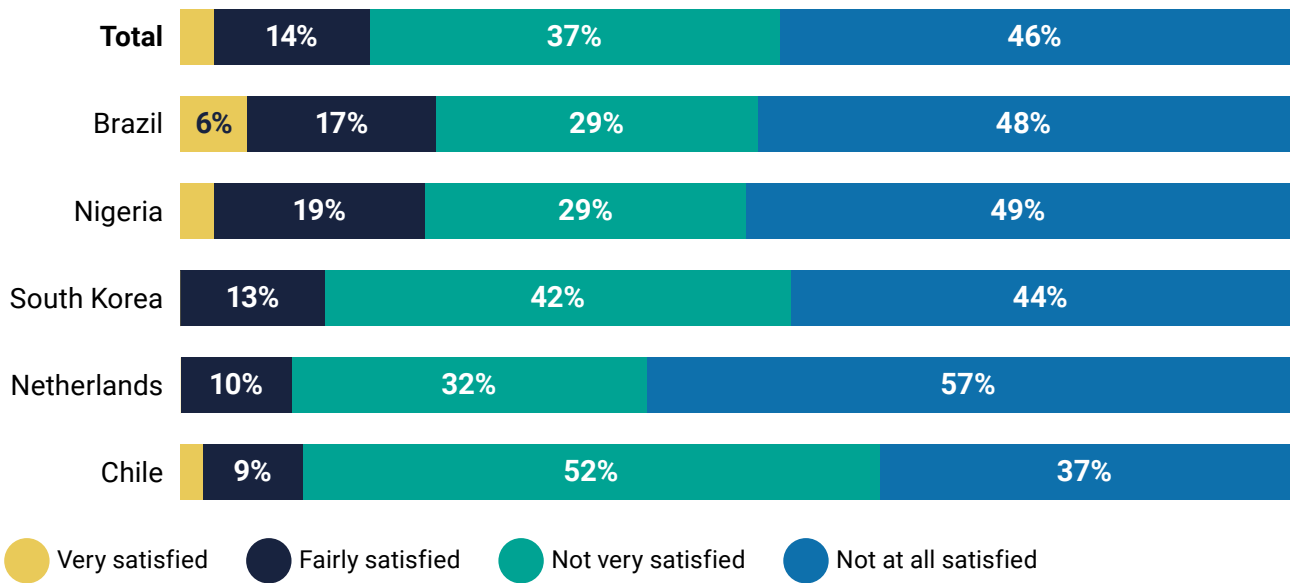
The remaining 56% either “do not know” (34%) or “prefer not to answer” (21%). A substantial share of respondents were therefore unable or unwilling to specify how much income they derived from streaming. This may indicate limited trust, low financial significance, or uncertainty surrounding streaming revenues. As a result, conclusions about the overall importance of streaming income should be interpreted with caution.

**% total music income in the last year from:
Streaming platforms**



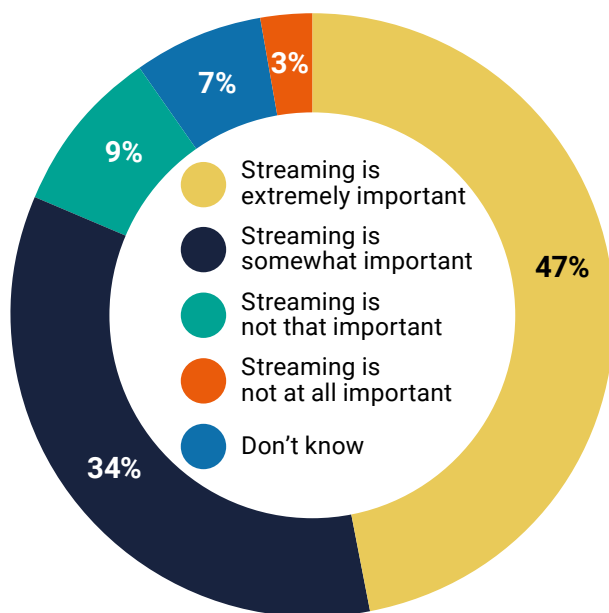
Satisfaction with streaming income is also very low. **Overall, 83% of respondents were dissatisfied with the royalties they receive from streaming, while only 17% reported being satisfied.**

Overall, to what extent are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the income you receive from music streaming and social media platforms? – Country



At the same time, **81% believe streaming is either “somewhat” or “extremely” important for their careers.** This reveals a clear paradox: artists depend heavily on streaming platforms for visibility, audience development, and professional relevance, yet the financial returns from these platforms are widely perceived as inadequate. In other words, for most artists, **streaming is structurally essential but economically insignificant.** This combination of high importance and low financial satisfaction highlights the imbalance between platforms’ central role in the music ecosystem and their limited capacity to provide sustainable earnings for most artists.

Importance of streaming to career

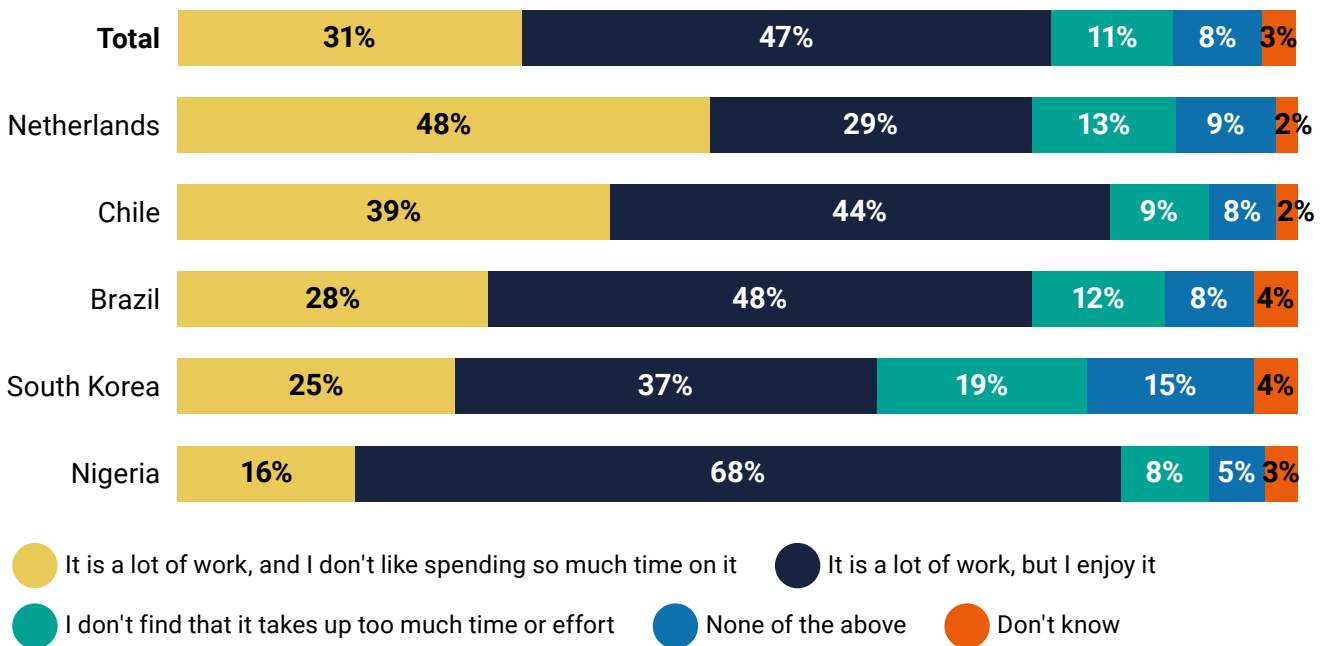


PLATFORM WORK

With the rise of streaming and social media, music artists appear to spend an increasing amount of time on online promotion and content distribution. Respondents were asked about the effort required to manage online promotion and distribution. Overall:

- 31% felt these tasks take a lot of work and they do not enjoy them.
- 47% said that it is a lot of work but that it is enjoyable.
- 11% felt these tasks do not require too much time or effort.

Which of the following statements best describes how you feel about promotion and distribution tasks that you need to do on streaming and social media platforms? - Country



There were significant differences in the responses across countries: **survey respondents from the Netherlands were the least enthusiastic about this type of work, while Nigerian musicians largely claimed to enjoy these tasks.**

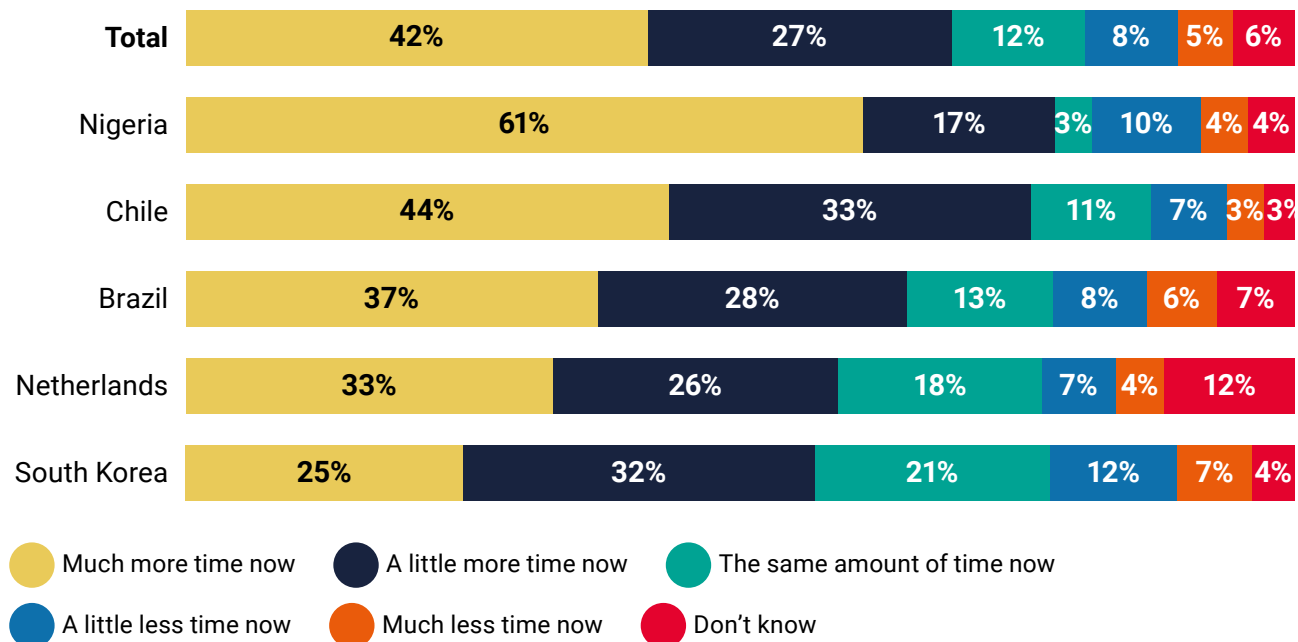
Our data suggests that age influences the feelings artists have towards promotional tasks. Younger artists are more positive about online promotion; post-2015 artists are more likely to accept or enjoy it, while pre-streaming artists are more likely to dislike it or find it burdensome.

In general, artists appear to spend an increasing amount of time on work that is not directly musical (i.e. does not involve writing, producing, or rehearsing music). 23% of our survey respondents spend over half of their total working time on tasks such as planning tours, updating social media profiles, or communicating with fans. Chilean artists stand out, with 30% reporting that they devote over half of their total working time on such non-musical activities.

Across all 5 countries, **musicians are spending more time now promoting their music online than they did a couple of years ago**: 69% responded that they are spending either “much more time now” or “a little more time now”. This

increase in time spent on online promotion was especially pronounced among Nigerian artists (78%) and Chilean artists (77%), and less so in the Netherlands (59%) and South Korea (57%).

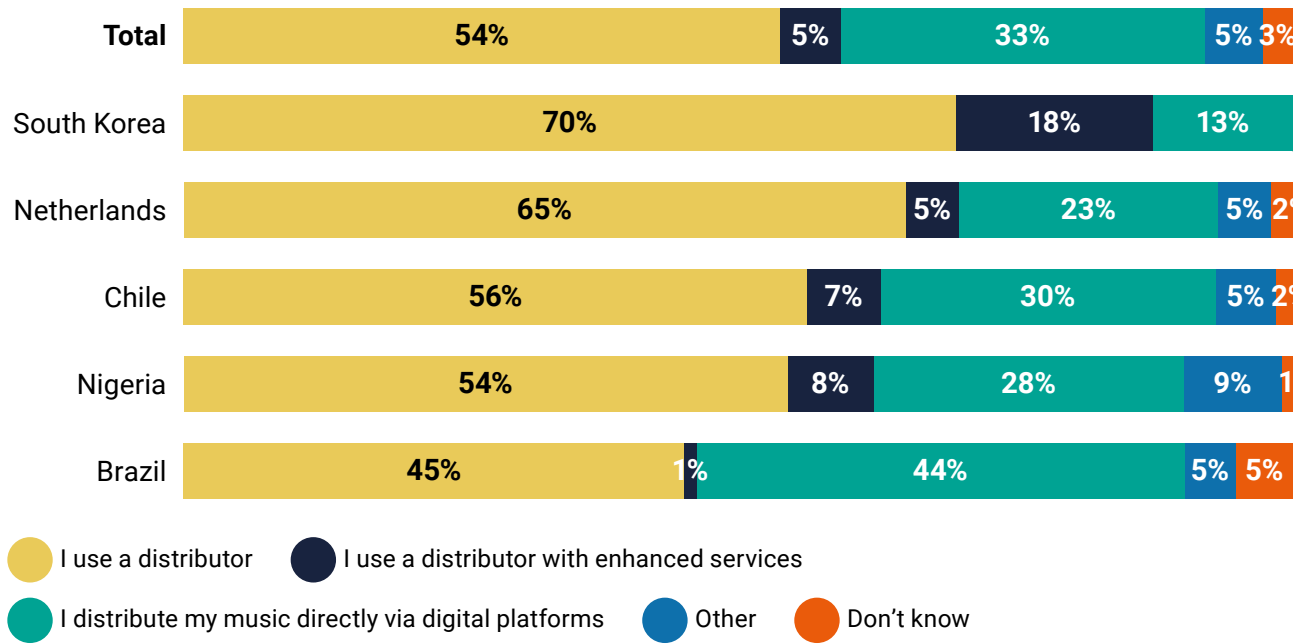
Time spent on streaming or social media platforms to promote your music compared to a couple of years ago – Country



YouTube is the service that artists in all countries most commonly use to distribute their music, except in Nigeria, where the US streaming platform Audiomack slightly surpasses YouTube in popularity. In South Korea, YouTube was tied with Korean streaming services such as Melon and Genie for the top spot.

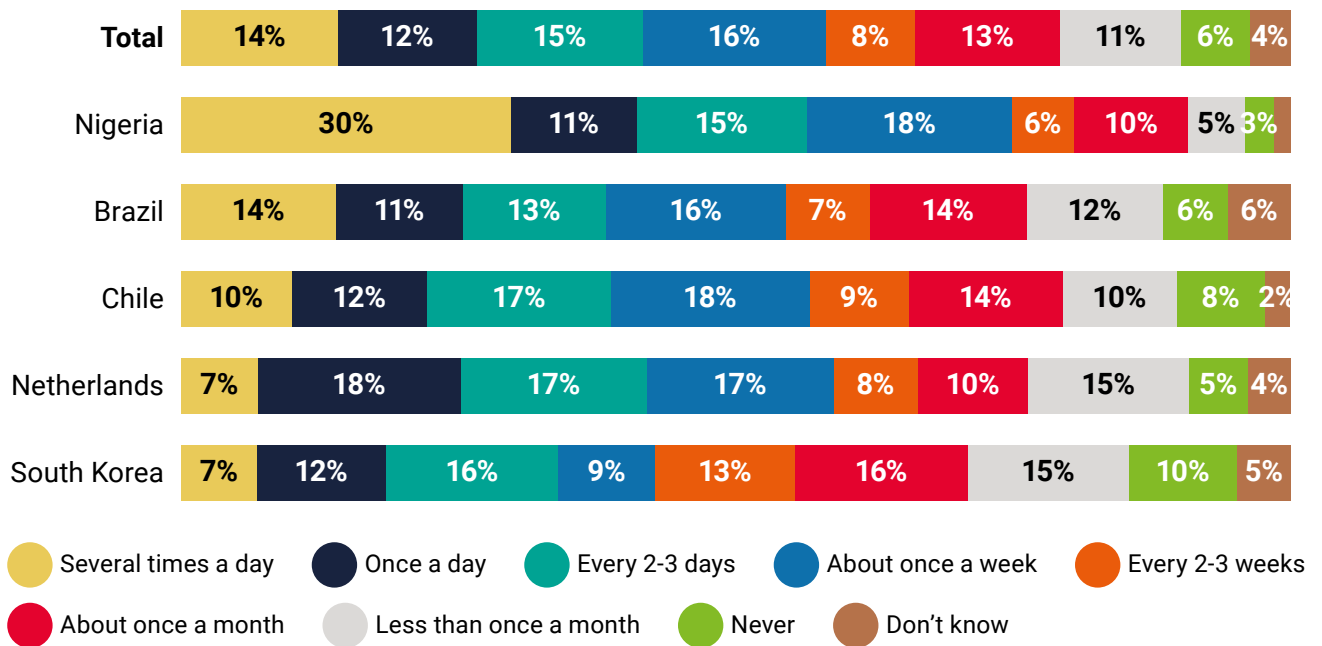
Just over half (59%) of the DIY artists we surveyed use a digital distributor, while 33% distribute their music directly via platforms. South Korean artists stand out in their use of distributors, with 88% using either a distributor or a distributor with enhanced services. Brazil is the only country in which fewer than half of the DIY artists surveyed use any type of distributor.

Distribution self-released recordings – Country



Tracking one’s online performance metrics can also be considered a relatively new form of platform work. Interestingly, how often artists say they check their metrics varies widely between countries. Nigeria stood out: **41% of Nigerian artists check their performance metrics at least once per day**. South Korean artists check the least, with 41% checking their metrics once a month or less.

How often do you personally check the performance metrics of your uploaded music or content on streaming / social media platforms. – Country



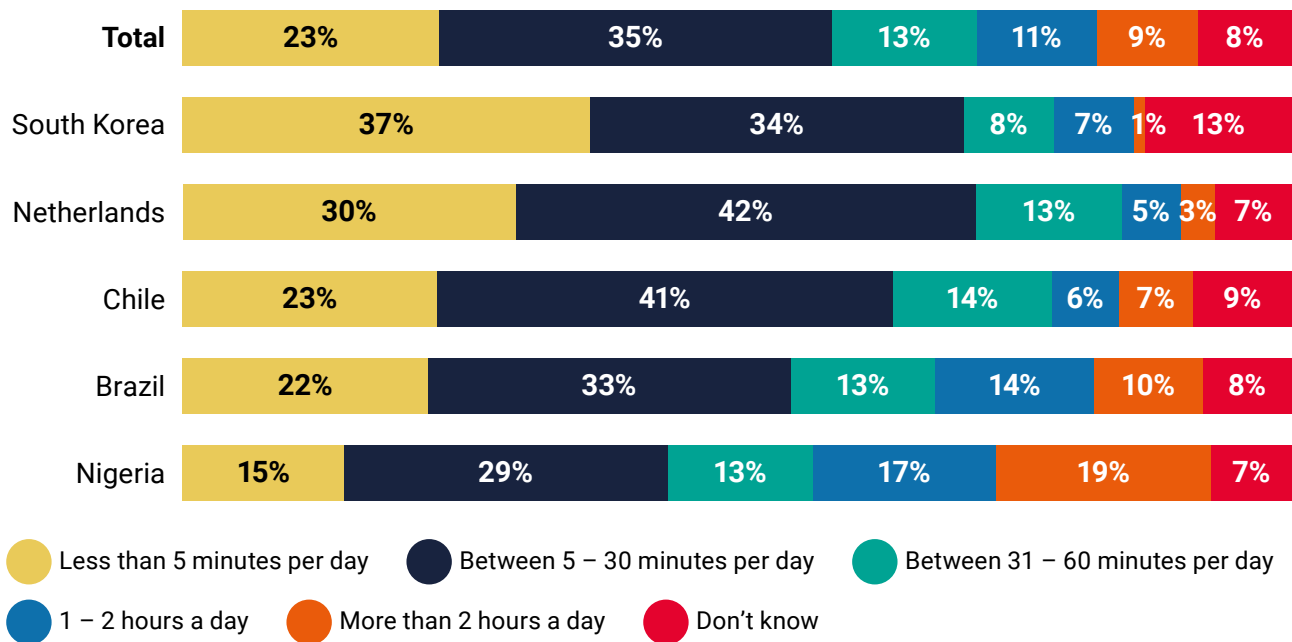
FAN COMMUNICATION

Communicating with online audiences or fans is a regular and time-consuming part of artists' daily routines. Across all countries:

- 23% of respondents spend less than 5 minutes a day on fan communication.
- 35% of respondents report between 5 and 30 minutes per day.
- 13% report spending 31–60 minutes.
- 11% report 1–2 hours.
- 9% report more than two hours per day communicating with fans.

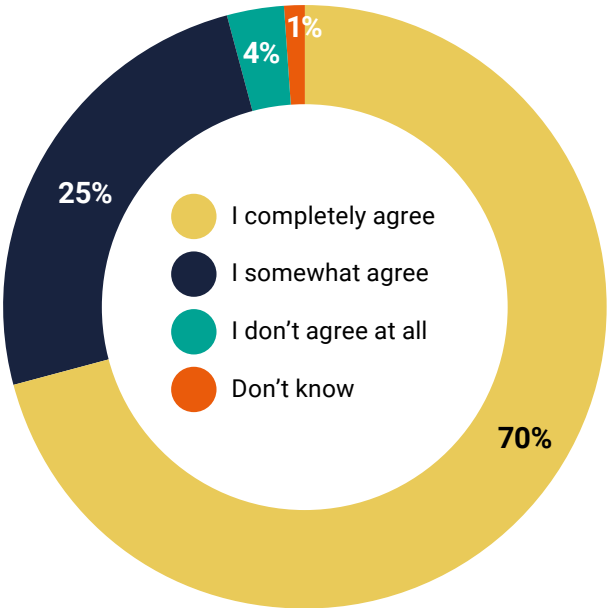
Artists in the Netherlands and South Korea tend to report spending less time communicating with fans online. Nigerian musicians report spending much more time communicating with their fans. Brazil and Chile fall in between these extremes, with Chilean artists leaning toward less communication and Brazilian artists displaying a more moderate range of responses.

Communicating with audiences – Country



There was strong agreement across all countries that creativity as a musician today is not limited to making or performing music: **95% of respondents believe that artists must also be creative in sharing content and communicating online.**

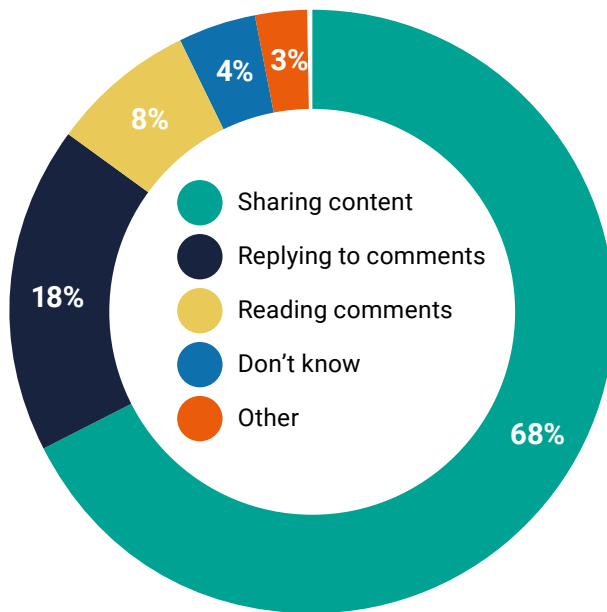
Recording artists today don't only need to be creative when making music, but they also need to be creative when communicating with fans and sharing content online.



Across all five countries, Instagram was uniformly identified as the platform on which artists had the most followers and the platform most often named for communication with fans. In every country, **over 80% of survey respondents identified Instagram as a platform they use to communicate with fans.** Most respondents reported relatively small online audiences: 84% had fewer than 10,000 followers on the platform where they had the highest follower count at the time of the survey.

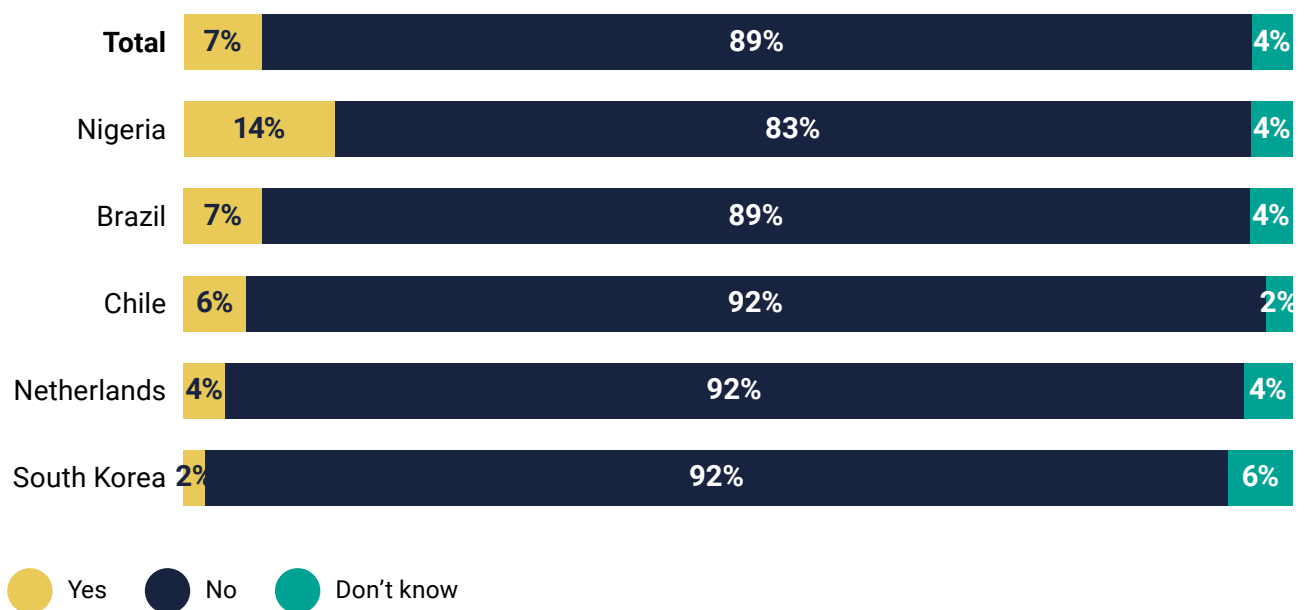
Most fan communication involves sharing content such as music, photos, or videos, which accounts for 68% of reported activity. Replying to comments makes up the second-largest share (18%).

When interacting with audiences online, what do you spend most of your time on?



Amongst our survey respondents, AI and automation tools are not being used for fan communication. Most artists felt uncomfortable with automating communication with their fans: **89% of artists reported that they do not use AI or automation tools when interacting with fans online.** This was a pattern largely consistent across all national contexts, although **Nigerian musicians used programs that automate communication with followers at double, or more than double the rate of artists in the other sample countries.**

Do you use any programs to automate communication with followers? – Country



General demographics of interviewees

In total, we conducted 27 interviews. Interviewees were survey respondents who indicated their willingness to take part in a follow-up interview. All interviews were voluntary and lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. 24 of the 27 interviews were conducted online.

Whenever possible, interviews were conducted in the language participants felt most comfortable using. Interviews were offered in English, Dutch, Spanish and Korean. Of the 27 interviews, 3 were conducted with musicians living in Brazil, 4 in Chile, 9 in the Netherlands, 7 in Nigeria, and 4 in South Korea.

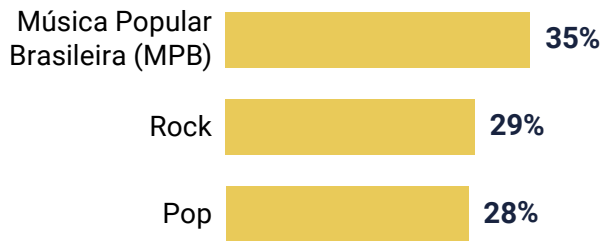
This overview offers a general picture of the artists who took part in this project, and their responses to our questions. In the following sections we combine both survey and interview results to examine these topics, and related questions, in more detail for each of the five countries involved in this research. We do this in order to explore how musicians' experiences with platforms compare across countries and career contexts.

Brazil



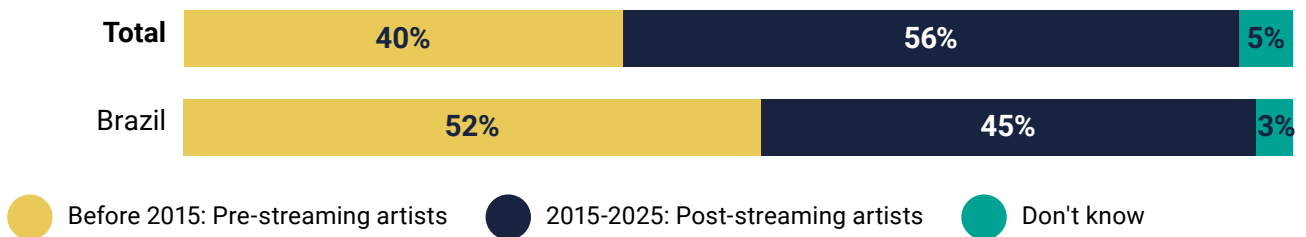
Brazil represents one of the most diverse and established music cultures among the countries studied, characterised by a strong domestic market, and a wide range of genres. The most popular genre represented in our sample of Brazilian music artists was Música Popular Brasileira (MPB), followed by rock and pop.

Top three genres - Brazil



Brazilian respondents were relatively more experienced than those in the other countries: a substantial share of Brazilian artists began their careers before the mainstream rise of streaming platforms. Just over half (52%) started before 2015, while 45% began their careers after streaming had become dominant.

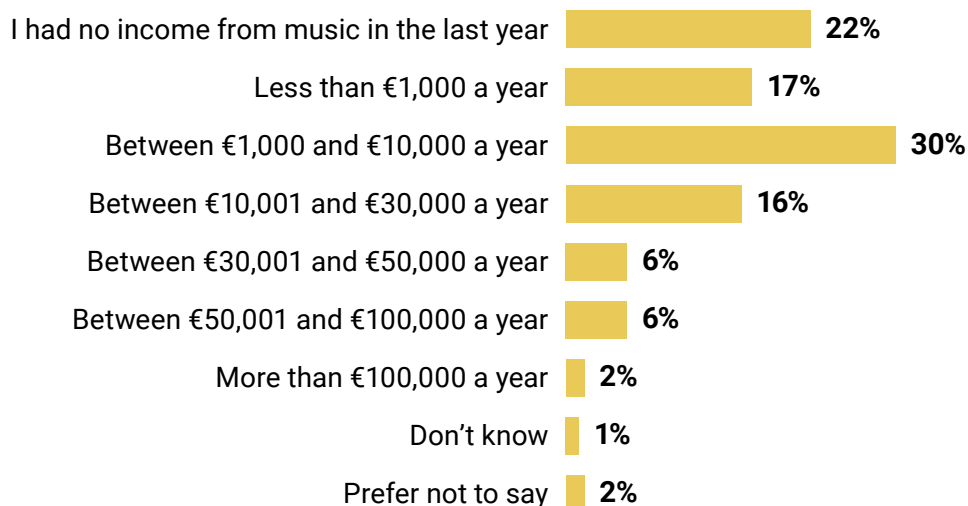
Start of career – Country



INCOME: EARNING A LIVING FROM MUSIC

Brazilian respondents reported relatively high-income levels compared to music artists from the other countries in the study. The median income category for Brazilian musicians who responded to this survey is between €1,000–€10,000 per year, matching the Netherlands and South Korea and representing the highest median income among all countries studied.

Total income earned from music in the last year - Brazil



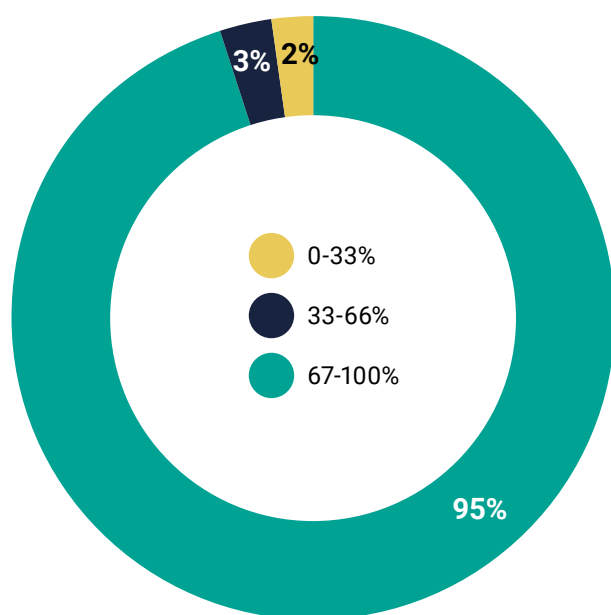
Brazilian musicians earn significantly more than Chilean artists ($p < 0.001$), a difference that may be partly explained by the higher proportion of pre-streaming artists from Brazil in our survey. Across the full survey, pre-streaming artists earn significantly more than those who started their careers after streaming became mainstream.

Brazil is also **the only country in which there is no significant income difference between signed and DIY artists**. Unlike in other countries, being signed in Brazil does not necessarily indicate higher earnings, according to our survey results.

WHERE INCOME IS GENERATED

Brazilian artists generate the vast majority of their income domestically. Nearly all respondents (95.3%) reported that between 66.7% and 100% of their income comes from within Brazil. This share is higher than all the other countries studied and differs significantly from all except Chile. This strong domestic orientation reflects the size and cultural centrality of Brazil's internal music market.

**% total music income from last year,
generated in: Your country**

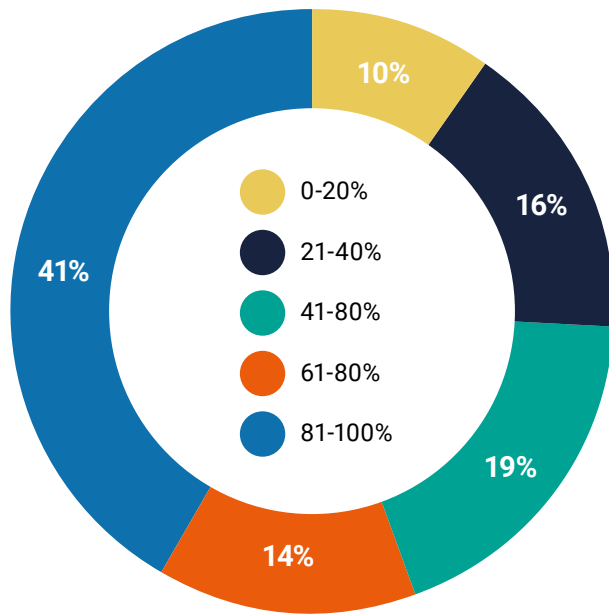


TIME INVESTMENT

The amount of time Brazilian artists spend on their music careers varies greatly according to our survey. 41% of surveyed artists spend 81–100% of their working time on music-related activities. This suggests that relatively many artists treat music as a (near) full-time career in Brazil. However, for 59% of Brazilian artists who took our survey, music is a part time career.

The way in which artists divide their time has changed over the past years, especially when we look at promotional labour. Compared to a couple of years ago, 37% of Brazilian artists report that they spend “much more time now”—and 28% say that they spend a “little more time now”—promoting their music on social media or streaming platforms. Brazil is only significantly different from Nigeria in this regard: 61% of Nigerian artists that they spend “much more time now” than two years ago.

Percentage of total working time spent on activities related to music career



STREAMING IMPORTANCE

Streaming is widely regarded as important for career development among Brazilian artists. Approximately 43% describe streaming as “extremely important,” while 35% consider it “somewhat important.” In this regard, Brazil differs significantly only from Nigeria ($p < 0.001$), where streaming is valued even more highly.

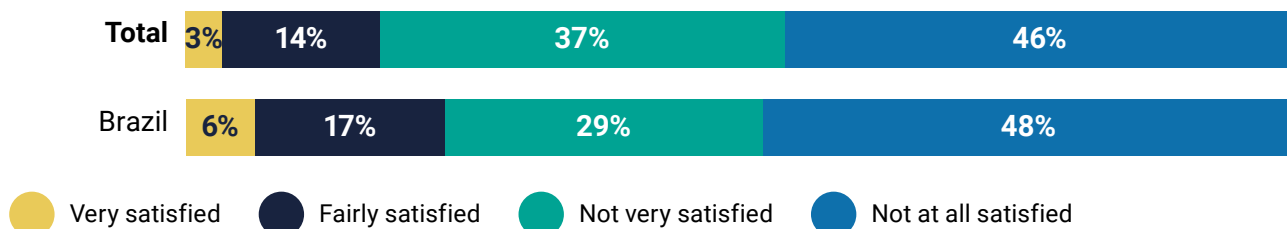
How important are streaming platforms for your career? – Country



- Streaming is extremely important - most people hear my music on streaming platforms
- Streaming is somewhat important - audiences listen to my music on streaming services but other formats are also important
- Streaming is not that important
- Streaming is not at all important
- Don't know

While streaming is considered important, this is not for financial reasons: 77% of Brazilian artists are not satisfied with their streaming income.

Overall, to what extent are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the income you receive from music streaming and social media platforms? – Country



One of our Brazilian interviewees highlighted the marginal role of streaming revenue in his overall income:

“I’d say I earn 70% from teaching. About 25% from production... 4.99% off of live performances and like 0.01% from streaming. That doesn’t really pay.”
Victor Castellan, 40, solo lo-fi/indie/blues artist

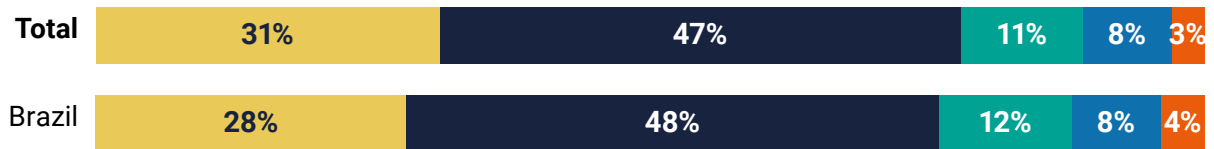
Streaming is, however, considered important for other aspects of musicians’ careers, such as finding an audience:

“When you have a new release, you can link your music with other artists on Spotify. I think that is a very important step you need to take. Because you can choose an artist who has your style. So, when people are looking for something new they can find your music. So, I feel like it’s a very important way for people who don’t know me or my social media to find me.”
Chico Macedo, 48, Jazz musician

COMMUNICATION AND PROMOTIONAL LABOUR

Brazilian artists express mixed feelings toward online communication and promotional work. Almost half (48%) describe promotion as “it is a lot of work, but I enjoy it”, while 28% report that it is “too much work and I don’t like spending so much time on it”. With these numbers, Brazil falls somewhere in the middle of our sample countries. Brazil differs significantly from the Netherlands ($p < 0.001$), where negative attitudes dominate, and from Nigeria ($p < 0.001$), where artists are far more enthusiastic about online promotional labour.

Feelings toward promotional labour



- It is a lot of work, and I don't like spending so much time on it
- It is a lot of work, but I enjoy it
- I don't find that it takes up too much time or effort
- None of the above
- Don't know

Our Brazilian interviewees however, expressed negative sentiments towards these tasks:

“It's boring. I used to record my performance, take some parts, and post it. But, man, it sucks. I'm so sorry for the word, but it's not... I don't enjoy it. I would prefer to ask someone or hire someone to post for me. But for now, I didn't find a very good place to do that.”

Chico Macedo, 48, Jazz musician

Another interviewee elaborated on his negative sentiments:

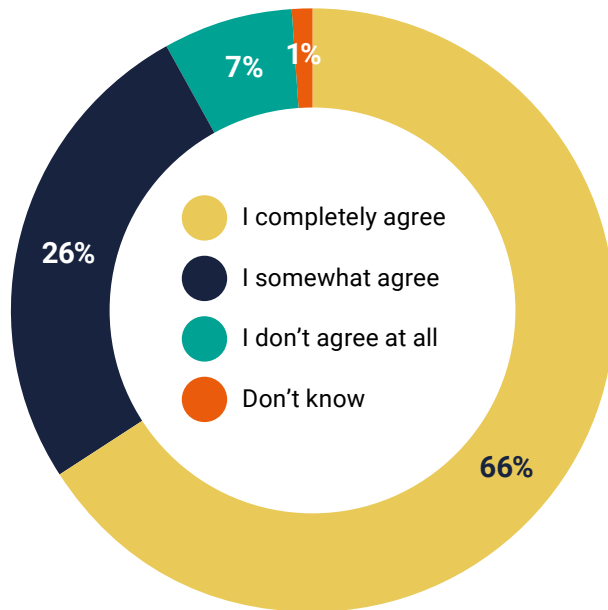
“We have to present our art in a way that the algorithm will deliver to the system so everybody can see our art. So it gets me frustrated. Because I can't just present my art. I have to fit my art into the mold so that it can be consumed. And it puts consumers into a box where they won't consume anything if it's not chewed up and spit it out. It's already pre-digested. If you don't communicate in the first three seconds, the people will swipe up and you're gone. You lost your chance.”

Victor Castellán, 40, solo lo-fi/indie/blues artist

NON-MUSICAL CREATIVITY

Brazilian artists widely agree that recording artists today don't only need to be creative when making music, but that they also need to be creative when communicating with fans and sharing content online. In total, 66% of Brazilian respondents completely agree with this statement, and an additional 26% somewhat agree.

Recording artists today don't only need to be creative when making music, but they also need to be creative when communicating with fans and sharing content online.



To have an effective social media strategy, Victor, a solo artist, expressed that it was a struggle to reconcile being an authentic and unique artist with the need to fit content into predetermined categories to ensure that it will be recommended to audiences online:

“ I don't have to be someone else. But I have to fit my personality into the mold that will deliver my videos to the algorithm. Which is kind of like, oh, everybody's unique, but everybody does the same thing. ... it doesn't make sense. I have to be unique, but I have to be unique in that specific way. Otherwise, nobody will see how unique I am. ”

Victor Castellan, 40, solo lo-fi/indie/blues artist

THE USE OF AI

In our survey, we asked artists if they use AI to automate communication with their fans online. 89% of Brazilian artists surveyed did not use AI to automate fan communication. This is similar to other countries we studied, except for Nigeria, where artists automate more of their communication.

In general, our Brazilian interviewees express cautious and nuanced attitudes toward AI. AI is seen as a useful tool for idea generation and technical assistance, but should not be used as a replacement for musicianship.

“ I’ve used AI more as a tool to help my creativity. I know what I like. I just don’t know how to make it sound like that... I have trouble taking the idea and making it into something. So if I can use another tool to get it as close as I want to help me, that’s the way that I found to create something new. So that’s how I use AI. However, I’ve been noticing that people have been using AI to make (music) entirely from scratch. I once almost got a gig for someone that asked me to remove the vocals from a song. It sounded off, like, what is going on with this song? Something strange. And then I noticed the entire song was entirely AI. The lyrics were AI, the instruments and the voice were AI. So I thought: wow, people are actually doing this.”

Antonio, guitarist in gospel-rock band

This same artist also expressed fears for the future of music and the music industry in an era of GenAI tools and features:

“ I sure hope this doesn’t break the industry. ... Because AI just uses what people have done before, so it’s not going to create anything new. It’s just a copy of a copy. And sadly, I believe that in the future, it’s going to affect how people themselves create music.”

Antonio, guitarist in gospel-rock band

However, our Brazilian interviewees also argued that AI cannot replace musicians because, in their view, AI lacks the ability to connect:

“ Something that I think AI lacks is exactly that: the connection. Because the person that wrote the song might have the feeling. But I don’t know, like there’s AI artists, but how do you go to an AI concert? How do you interview an AI artist? What is he going to say? What is the AI artist experience in living? You know, like what motivated the AI artist to write something romantic? ... it never had a heartbreak. So, I don’t think it’s a threat.”

Victor Castellán, 40, solo lo-fi/indie/blues artist

KEY TAKEAWAYS - BRAZIL

- The median Brazilian artist earns between €1,000 and €10,000 per year.
- In Brazil, pre-streaming artists earn significantly more than those who started their careers after streaming.
- Brazilian artists generate the vast majority of their income domestically. Nearly all respondents (95.3%) report that between 66.7% and 100% of their income comes from within Brazil.
- 78% of Brazilian respondents consider streaming to be either extremely or somewhat important for their careers. Yet 77% of Brazilian artists are not satisfied with their streaming income. For them, streaming is mainly important for promotion or finding an audience.
- Brazilian artists express mixed feelings toward online communication and promotional labour. 48% describe promotion as “it is a lot of work, but I enjoy it” while 28% report that it is “too much work and I don’t like spending so much time on it”. In our interviews, participants were mostly negative about this type of work.
- 92% of Brazilian respondents believe artists are also required to be creative in communication and engagement with fans today. In our interviews, artists expressed their struggles with this aspect of being a music artist.
- In general, our Brazilian interviewees express cautious and nuanced attitudes toward AI. While AI is often seen as a useful tool for creativity, idea generation, and technical assistance, it is not perceived as capable of replacing human musicianship.

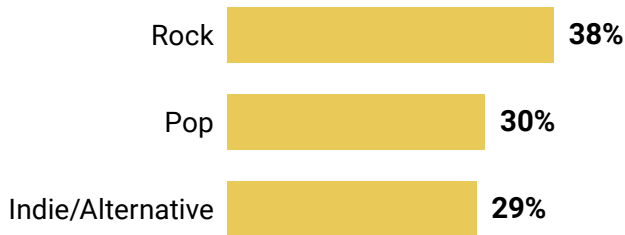
Chile



Adobe Stock

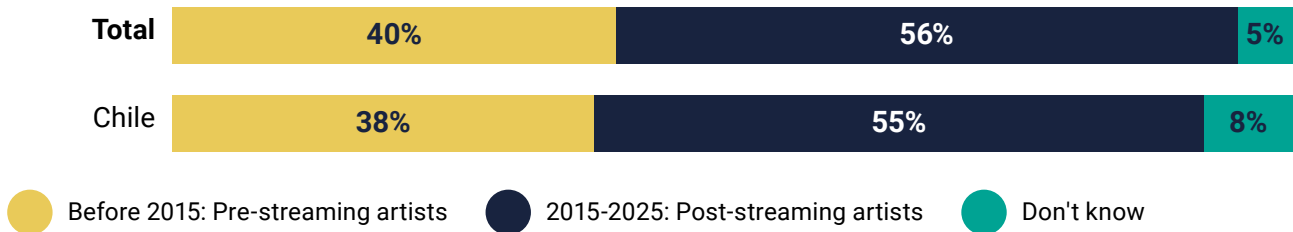
Chile has a diverse and resilient music scene, shaped by strong local traditions and periods of political repression. The Chilean music scene is active and creative, with the majority of surveyed artists working in rock, pop, and indie/alternative genres. Most Chilean artists distribute their music through global platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and streaming services like Spotify, rather than domestic platforms, like in South Korea.

Top three genres - Chile



Chilean artists in this study are almost evenly split between solo performers (54%) and bands (46%), with respondents primarily identifying as instrumentalists, singer-songwriters, or producers. More than half of surveyed Chilean artists (55%) started their careers after streaming became dominant.

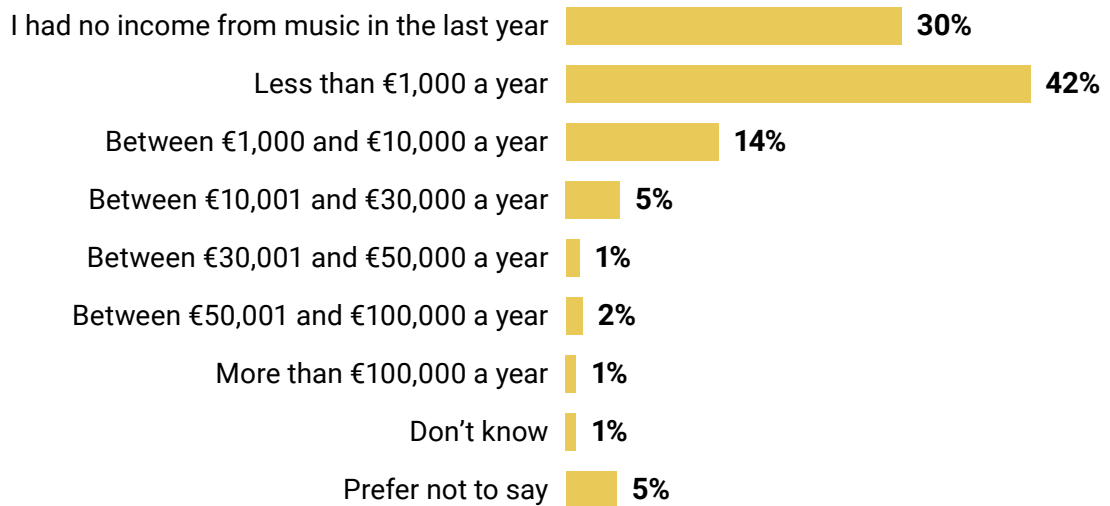
Start of career – Country



INCOME: EARNING A LIVING FROM MUSIC

Chilean artists report some of the lowest incomes in the study. The median income is less than €1,000 per year, which is significantly lower than in the Netherlands, South Korea, and Brazil (but more than artists in Nigeria). Artists who started before streaming earn more than those who started after streaming. Overall, income levels suggest that music alone is rarely enough to make a living in Chile.

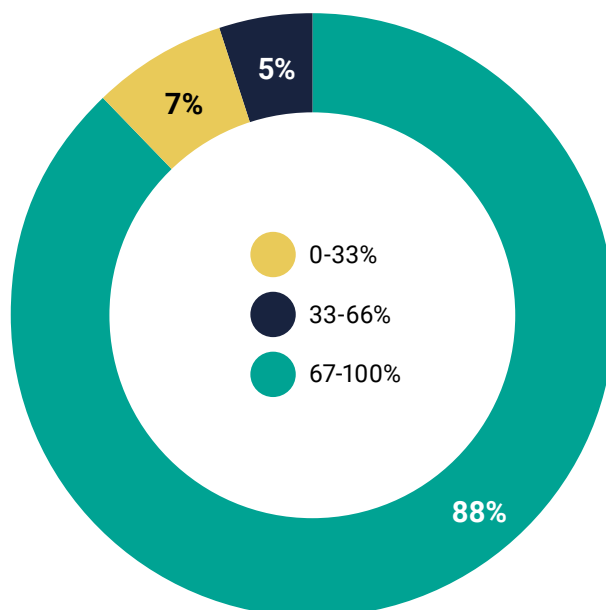
Total income earned from music in the last year - Chile



WHERE INCOME IS GENERATED

Chilean artists we surveyed focus primarily on the domestic market. Compared to those in the Netherlands and Nigeria, Chilean artists are significantly more likely to earn their income at home: 88% of Chileans earn over two-thirds of their income in Chile, making Chile the second most locally oriented country in the study. Only Brazil shows a higher level of domestic income reliance.

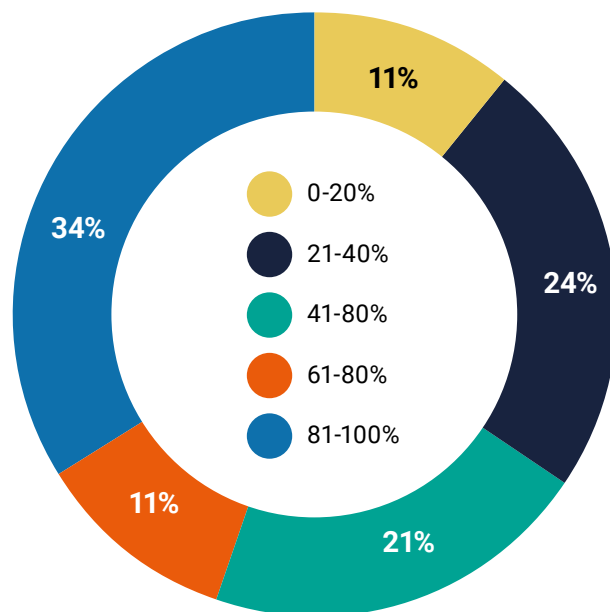
% total music income from last year, generated in: Your country



TIME INVESTMENT

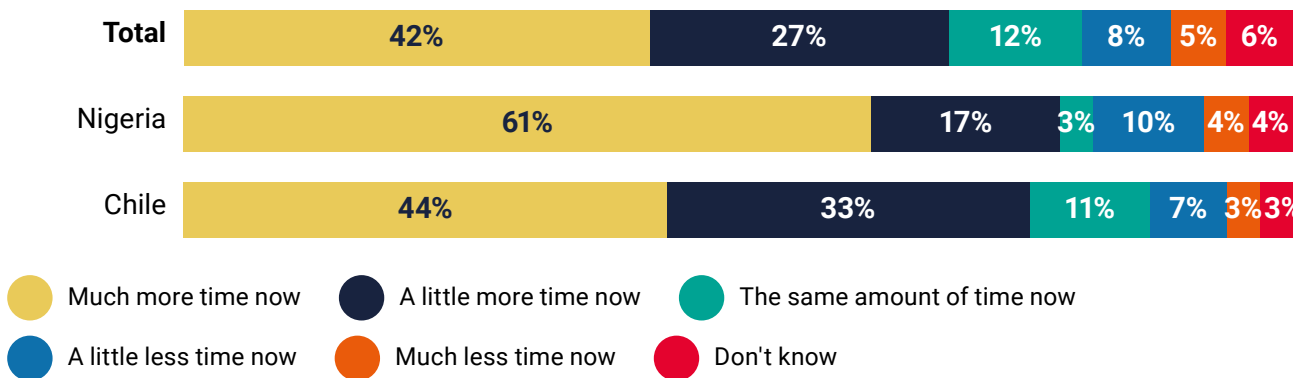
Chilean artists show large differences in how much time they can spend on their music careers. About 34% report spending 80–100% of their working time on music. The remainder of our Chilean respondents must divide their attention between music and other jobs: 24% spend 21–40% of their time on music, and 21% are able to devote 41–60% of their time to their music careers. Thus, for the majority of our Chilean respondents, music is a part-time career.

Percentage of total working time spent on activities related to music career



The way in which artists divide their time within their working hours has changed over the past years. This is especially clear when we look at promotional labour: 44% of Chilean artists report that they spend much more time, and 33% that they spend a little more time on social media or streaming platforms to promote themselves and their music compared to a couple of years ago. Therefore, 77% of artists report spending more time on promotion than a couple of years ago. This is similar to Nigeria, where 78% report spending more time. However, Nigerians are significantly more likely to report spending “much more time” than Chileans.

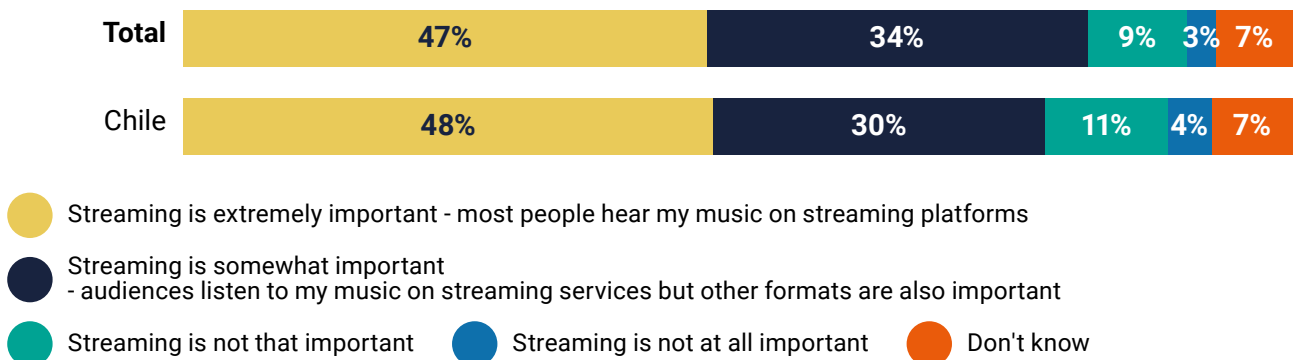
Time spent on streaming or social media platforms to promote your music compared to a couple of years ago - Country



STREAMING IMPORTANCE

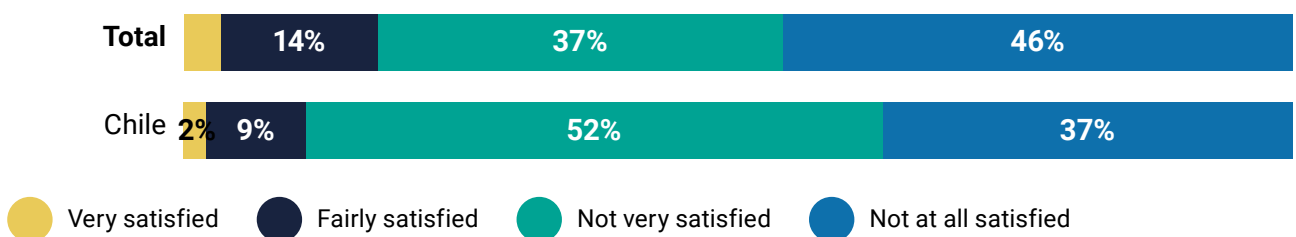
Streaming is viewed as important among Chilean artists: 78% consider streaming to be either extremely or somewhat important for their careers.

How important are streaming platforms for your career? - Country



Despite this importance, satisfaction with streaming income is low: 89% of Chilean artists report being not very, or not at all satisfied, with their streaming earnings.

Overall, to what extent are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the income you receive from music streaming and social media platforms? - Country



The perspectives shared by our interviewees matched our survey data. Delis Val, a Chilean artist who performs cumbia music, expressed the following views about Spotify:

“ I don't like Spotify. I mean, as a singer, as a composer, as a musician, as an artist. I don't like it because, of course, it has the worst of the payments of all platforms... But also, as an independent artist, I have to be there. I can't say, I'm not going to leave Spotify for my ideals. It is the platform that is most used in Chile. So, I can't leave it. ... Currently I'm not receiving anything. Nothing from Spotify, nothing from royalties.”

Delis Val, 34, solo cumbia artist

Araceli Cantora, a solo artist with almost 10,000 followers on Instagram reflected on streaming in comparison to the importance of live music in generating income:

“ It's a joke. The business is not made for us. The business for musicians, for artists, is not in streaming. And it is known. I think that with record companies in the past, it was not the sale of records either. The artist's business, at least in music, as the history of record companies says, is live shows. Live music is the one that has always left us more money. Concerts, even though it is also an important investment, is the one that gives us the most returns.”

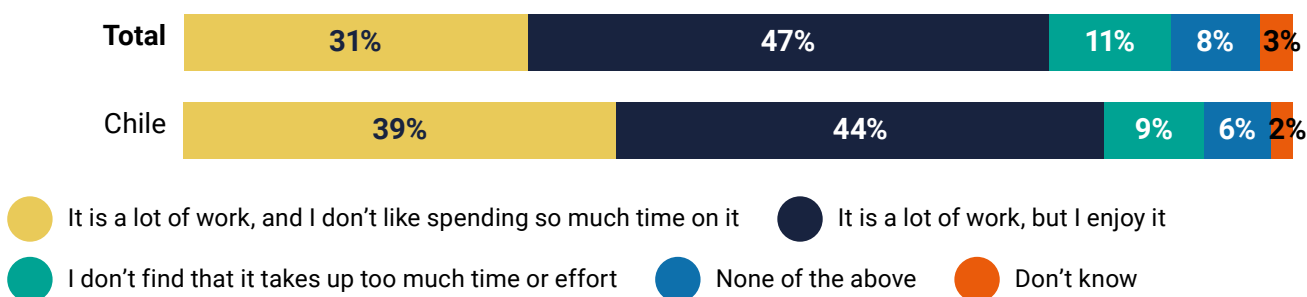
Araceli Cantora, 34, solo artist in Chilean cueca, hip hop, and jazz

COMMUNICATION AND PROMOTIONAL LABOUR

Chilean artists are divided when it comes to their feelings about online communication and promotional labour. 44% say “it is a lot of work, but I enjoy it”, 39% say “it is a lot of work, and I don’t like spending so much time on it”, and only 9% feel it does not take much time or effort. On this topic, Chilean artists are more negative than artists we surveyed in South Korea and Nigeria, but slightly more positive than artists in the Netherlands and slightly more negative than Brazilians.

In our interview, Mica, who has performed as a solo artist for the past ten years, expressed his critique of social media:

Feelings towards promotional labour



“It’s really tiring. I feel tired of social media. I would rather just focus on making music and writing and singing rather than having an online personality and show. Because you have to be attractive, you know. Not only in the sense of, like, physical attractiveness but you have to appeal to people so they start listening to your music. I think that’s why I feel weird about it. Because why would I have to ask people to listen to my music? Why would I have to reach for them? I don’t think that’s how it should work, but it does.”

Mica, 30, solo indie folk and Latin pop-rock artist

Other artists we interviewed complained that online promotional labour adds a further load on top of their other responsibilities:

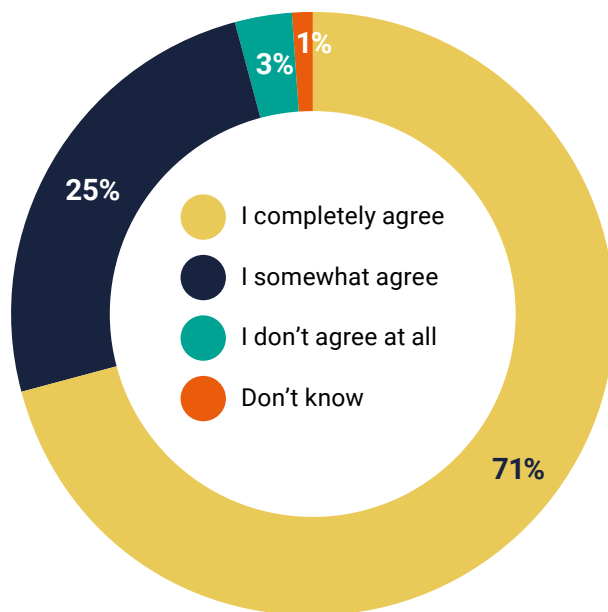
“You have to design different strategies. According to the budgets that are available. Because developing musical careers, as well as that vision of the great artist, is expensive. You have to invest. You have to invest money, you have to invest time, you have to study music, you have to compose the song, you have to produce the song, you have to record in the studio, you have to pay the designer to make the art, you have to make a video clip, you have to do the planning for the social networks, you have to run the campaign, you have to send the pitch to the aggregator and you have to pay many people in order to do so.”

Araceli Cantora, 34, solo artist in Chilean cueca, hip hop, and jazz

NON-MUSICAL CREATIVITY

Of the five countries in our sample, Chilean artists express the second strongest agreement to the statement that recording artists today don't only need to be creative when making music, but they also need to be creative when communicating with fans and sharing content online. 71% completely agree with this statement and another 25% somewhat agree.

Recording artists today don't only need to be creative when making music, but they also need to be creative when communicating with fans and sharing content online.



Several of our Chilean interviewees talked about their strategies for connecting with fans online. They also mentioned the need for in-person connections:

“ I use social media (but) I like to go to places and meet people there and present myself. Even if I'm not playing, just a little chat or getting to know people and saying, 'Hey, I like what you're doing. I also have a project. Maybe we can just get together some day.' I mean, that kind of spreading information about your project, I think it's more valuable for me at least than being completely present in social media. ”

Mica, 30, solo indie folk and Latin pop-rock artist

THE USE OF AI

92% of Chilean artists surveyed stated that they did not use AI to automate fan communication. This is similar to other countries we studied, except for Nigeria, where artists automate more of their communication.

In general, Chilean artists were not overly concerned about AI. Our interviewees tend to use AI mainly for practical purposes:

“ I work with ChatGPT, which helps me a little to plan, more than anything I use it for that, because I have so many tasks that I lose focus. ”

Delis Val, 34, solo cumbia artist

Similarly, Araceli Cantora shared the following:

“ I don't have any problem in using artificial intelligence, on the contrary, it is a tool that has served me a lot, because I have a lot of work to do, and it is cheap. ”

Araceli Cantora, 34, solo artist in Chilean cueca, hip hop, and jazz

Moreover, the Chilean artists we spoke to did not worry about AI taking over their job as music artists. This is because, in their opinion, AI lacks crucial human abilities:

“ With respect to the musical pieces created with artificial intelligence, it does not scare me. There are many people who are scared, but these are things created from music that already exists. So I feel like it's not that terrible. Because there is no innovation in it. Humans will always be needed to create and look beyond. So, as a creator, I don't feel like I will lose my job. ”

Delis Val, 34, solo cumbia artist

Moreover, the Chilean musician Araceli Cantora explicitly chooses to focus on the positives AI brings:

“ Today, thanks to artificial intelligence, we can be human again. And what does that mean? ... It's like embracing uncertainty, throwing yourself off the cliff. Seeing it in an optimistic way. ... (we can) learn to distinguish things. Look, I like this song, no problem, and it's made with artificial intelligence. It affects me like this. Look, I like this other song, and this is analogue music... Learning to make that difference, I think it will give us freedom. ”

Araceli Cantora, 34, solo artist in Chilean cueca, hip hop, and jazz

When we asked this artist if they use AI for any of their work, they responded:

“ Yes. My most recent video clip is mostly made with artificial intelligence, although there are also some photo sessions. Now, the editing process and the narrative is done by a human, me. So, we adopt artificial intelligence but in the end we (as humans) are still behind it. I think that is the opportunity we have to be able to identify where the human is and what the human is. What is the difference between the processing of millions and millions of data, right? ”

Araceli Cantora, 34, solo artist in Chilean cueca, hip hop, and jazz

KEY TAKEAWAYS – CHILE

- The median Chilean artist earns less than €1,000 per year.
- 88% of the Chilean artists we surveyed earn over two-thirds of their income within their own country. This makes the Chilean music industry a relatively nationally oriented market compared to other countries in our survey.
- Chilean artists show large differences in how much time they spend on their music careers. Many Chilean artists we surveyed must treat music as a part time job.
- Just over three-quarters (78%) of Chilean respondents consider streaming to be either extremely or somewhat important for their careers. However, 89% are not satisfied with their income from streaming. This is also reflected in our interviews.
- Chilean artists surveyed have mixed attitudes towards online promotional labour: 44% say promotion is “a lot of work, but I enjoy it”, 39% say “it is a lot of work, and I don’t like spending so much time on it”, and 9% feel it does not take much effort.
- 96% of Chilean respondents believe that as an artist you have to also be creative in communicating with fans today.
- Chilean artists were not concerned about AI. Our interviewees tend to use AI mainly for practical purposes and they do not feel like AI will ever replace them.

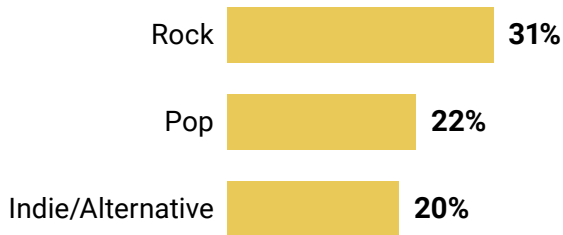
The Netherlands



The Netherlands is a small but highly internationalised music market with strong infrastructure, extensive platform access, and a long history of export-oriented music production. To distribute their music, Dutch artists primarily rely on global platforms such as YouTube, major streaming services, and SoundCloud.

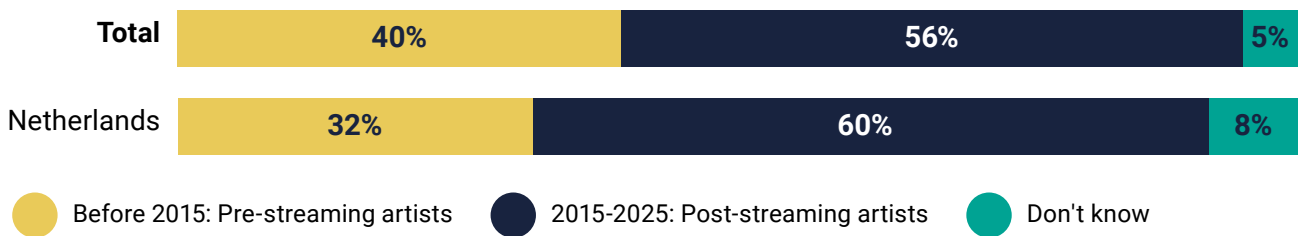
The Dutch sample is composed mainly of solo artists (60%), alongside a minority of bands (40%). Respondents most commonly identify as instrumentalists, singer-songwriters, or vocalists. Genre representation in our survey is led by pop, followed by folk and indie/alternative.

Top three genres - Netherlands



A majority of artists (60%) began their careers after the rise of streaming, while 32% entered the industry prior to the streaming era. 75% of the Dutch survey respondents described themselves as self-releasing or independent artists.

Start of career – Country

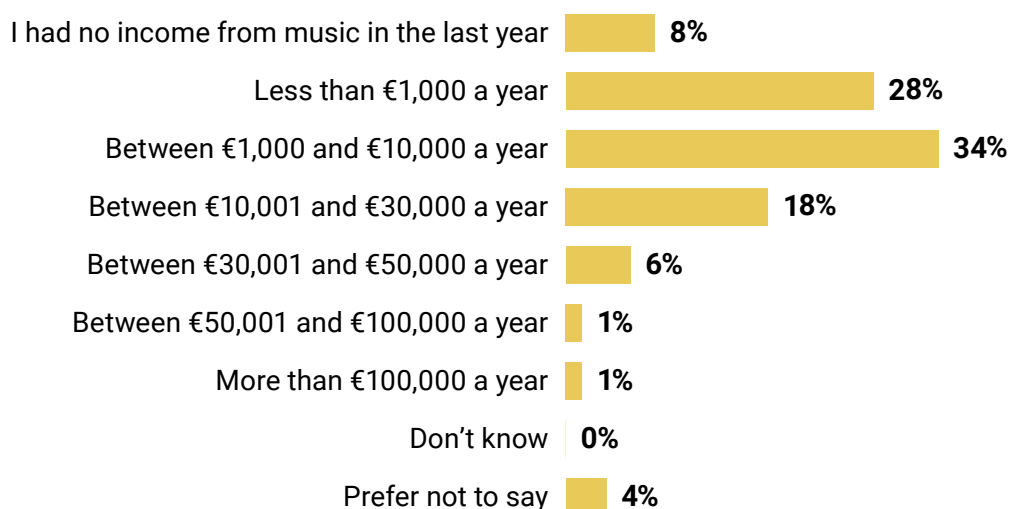


INCOME: EARNING A LIVING FROM MUSIC

The median income for Dutch artists is €1,000–€10,000 per year. This is comparable to South Korea and Brazil, and significantly higher than reported incomes in Nigeria and Chile.

Unlike all other countries in the study, the Netherlands does not show a strong income advantage for artists who began their careers before the streaming era. While pre-streaming artists earn slightly more than post-streaming artists, this difference is comparatively small.

Total income earned from music in the last year - Netherlands



Despite comparatively higher income levels, overall earnings remain modest, indicating that music income alone is insufficient for many Dutch artists. In our interviews, most artists mentioned having another job, next to music. Many teach, like Robert Buckert, who has been working in music for the last 20 years:

“I had to find some stability in my income so that’s why I decided to teach and use my free time, like summer holidays, to compose.”

Robert Buckert, 33, classical and pop musician

... and songwriter and producer, Luca Di Maio:

“Career-wise, I mean, I cannot make a living out of music, so I’m a teacher of Italian. I’ve always been a teacher of languages and a translator.”

Luca Di Maio, 45, songwriter and producer

We also spoke to musicians like Esat Ekincioglu who tour for the better part of the year, and earn some extra income when possible:

“When I’m home and I’m not touring, I’m doing moving jobs here and there. This can be some pocket change, but some bigger jobs can pay my whole month’s rent and expenses in one day.”

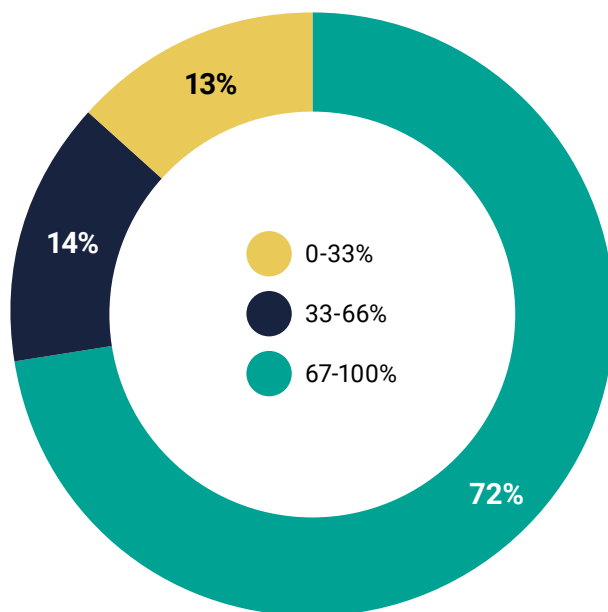
Esat Ekincioglu, 35, jazz bassist

Taken together, these findings suggest that while the Dutch music ecosystem offers relatively strong infrastructure and access, it does not provide sufficient economic returns to support full-time artistic careers for most musicians.

WHERE INCOME IS GENERATED

72% of the Dutch artists we surveyed earn over two-thirds of their income within their own country. While this represents a large majority, the Netherlands is (together with Nigeria), a more internationally oriented market than the other countries surveyed.

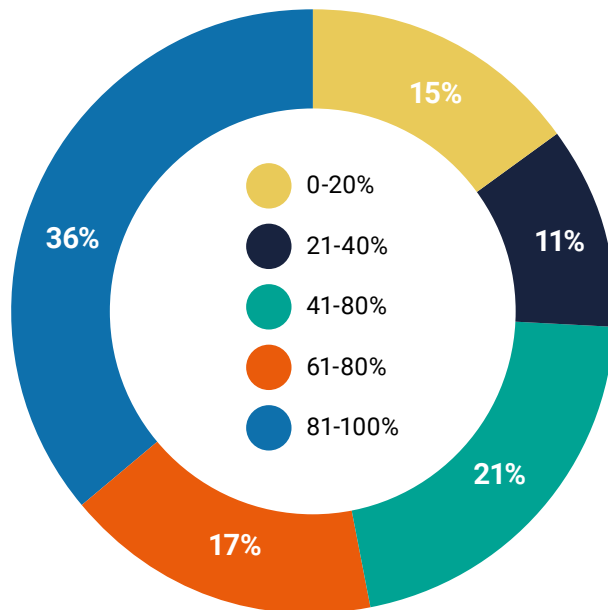
**% total music income from last year,
generated in: Your country**



TIME INVESTMENT

How much time Dutch artists spend on their music careers varies greatly according to our survey. 36% of Dutch artists spend 81–100% of their working time on music-related activities, and 21% spend 41–60% of their working time on music. This indicates that many Dutch artists treat music as a part time career.

Percentage of total working time spent on activities related to music career



The way in which artists divide their time within their working hours has changed over the past years—especially when we look at promotional labour. 33% of Dutch artists report that they spend “much more time”, and 26% report that they spend “a little more time” on social media or streaming platforms to promote their music compared to a couple of years ago. Relative to other countries in our studies, this is significantly different from Nigeria (where artists are more likely to report spending “much more time”) and very similar to South Korea. Interviews showed that many Dutch artists, like Jeremy, struggle with knowing how much time to spend communicating and engaging with their fans on social media:

“For me personally it’s a struggle to know how much to participate in that (social media) and whether it is really worth my time.”

Jeremy Bass, guitarist and lutenist

To build a fulltime music career, several Dutch interviewees mentioned that an artist must find their niche. As DJ Tim points out:

“If you want to be an international artist in electronic dance music, we think you have to centralise your music genre. So saying: “I want to be in house music”, is not enough. House is already really big. So you have to be more specific: “I want to produce house music, in a tempo of 130 BPM until 145 BPM”, for example, and “it has to be a little bit of deep house elements and a UK Garage bassline.””

Tim van der Lugt, 22, House DJ

This was echoed by Jorian Onrust, who lives in the northern part of the Netherlands, and has been a musician for over 20 years—11 years as part of a rock band and for the last 9 years as a solo DJ:

“Every idea I ever pitched in my town Groningen was rejected. It was never possible. Then I went online, went to Amsterdam and there was a whole Paradiso full of people screaming for this type of music. This is when I realised: it is possible.”

Jorian Onrust, 38, solo DJ

STREAMING IMPORTANCE

Streaming is widely viewed as important among Dutch artists, although, as we will see, less so than in Nigeria. Three-quarters of Dutch respondents consider streaming to be either extremely or somewhat important for their careers.

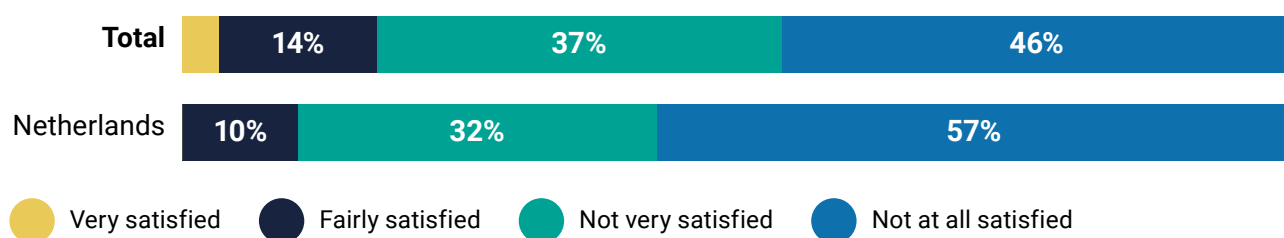
How important are streaming platforms for your career? – Country



- Streaming is extremely important - most people hear my music on streaming platforms
- Streaming is somewhat important - audiences listen to my music on streaming services but other formats are also important
- Streaming is not that important
- Streaming is not at all important
- Don't know

Despite this perceived importance, satisfaction with streaming income is particularly low. Nearly 90% of Dutch artists report being “not very” or “not at all satisfied” with their streaming earnings. This highlights a sharp disconnect between the perceived importance of streaming and the financial returns.

Overall, to what extent are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the income you receive from music streaming and social media platforms? – Country



While streaming doesn't pay, it is seen as an enabler of other opportunities that may offer some income. Jeremy Bass, a Renaissance and Baroque music instrumentalist, talked to us about the importance of streaming for his career:

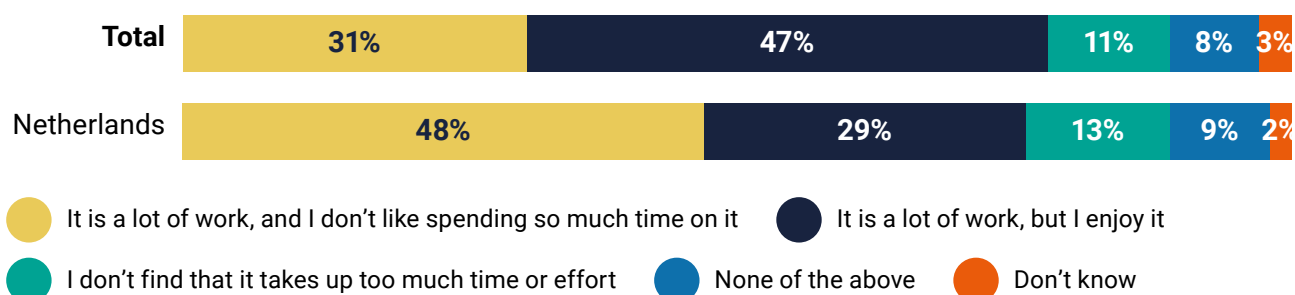
“The nice thing about being on these platforms is that they might open Spotify and see my name and then call me for a gig or call me for lessons or something like that. That's how you make money off of Spotify, I think.”

Jeremy Bass, guitarist and lutenist

COMMUNICATION AND PROMOTIONAL LABOUR

Across the countries surveyed, **Dutch artists express the most negative attitudes toward online communication and promotional labour**: tasks like updating profiles, making and uploading content, communicating with fans, etc. Most participants (48%) describe these tasks as “it is a lot of work, and I don't like spending so much time on it,” while only 29% report that it is “a lot of work, but I enjoy it.”

Feelings towards promotional labour



These attitudes differ significantly from those reported in South Korea ($p = 0.005$), Nigeria ($p < 0.001$), and Brazil ($p < 0.001$). Compared to artists in these countries, **Dutch artists are less likely to find promotional work rewarding and more likely to experience it as burdensome.**

These findings are also reflected in our interviews. Most of our interviewees

from the Netherlands are quite critical of this type of work:

“ If I had the means I would have somebody else do it for me. Because I’m not really good at it. It takes a lot of time and you need to keep up with a lot of stuff. It’s not really worth it for me in my position ... So, I actively decided not to use it really, but just to promote the releases when they’re out. It’s not because I’m lazy. It’s just an active decision.”

Luca Di Maio, 45, songwriter and producer

“ I do share stuff. There is this expectation as a musician these days that you need to maintain an online presence. So, I do try to put stuff up there occasionally, just so people know that I’m around, you know. But I often think about getting off of social media. I don’t think it’s good. And I think it’s addictive”

Jeremy Bass, guitarist and lutenist

Esat, who has been a musician for 14 years, also reflected on what has changed:

“ To be honest it gave us one more thing to kind of be stressed about...(Our) band has existed for 10 years. We did our 179th concert last month. Our fifth album is coming this month. We are going strong. But look at our Spotify numbers: on a good day, it’s 200 listeners. Right now it’s 100 or 90 something. And look at our Instagram numbers, a thousand followers maybe. So, it gives you the stress of: is my music being listened to?”

Esat Ekincioglu, 35, jazz bassist

But we also spoke to musicians, such as Jorian, that have a more positive attitude towards online promotional labour:

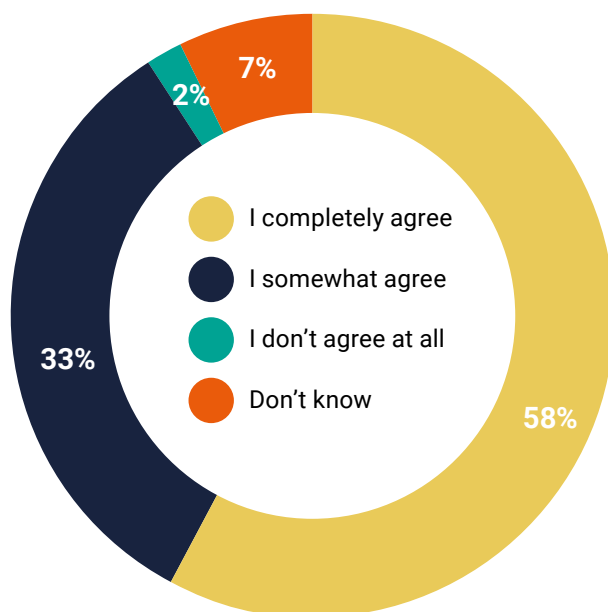
“ I come from the time where you leave your posters somewhere outside to promote. This is not the case anymore. For me, it was a complete shift in mindset: ‘okay, but how am I going to interact with the digital world?’... ‘How do I grab certain parts of the market?’ I came to the conclusion that I can work well with YouTube and that I also like TikTok. Because it feels a little less polished.”

Jorian Onrust, 38, solo DJ

NON-MUSICAL CREATIVITY

The majority of Dutch artists (58%) “completely agree” and 33% “somewhat agree”, with the statement that “Recording artists today don’t only need to be creative when making music, but they also need to be creative when communicating with fans and sharing content online”. Taken together, this is the lowest level of agreement in all countries studied.

Recording artists today don’t only need to be creative when making music, but they also need to be creative when communicating with fans and sharing content online.



During our interviews, we asked participants what they believe is required to develop an effective social media strategy. A common theme we found is the need for authenticity:

“ I think people like me because I’m authentic in everything I do. I’m not overproducing my videos. It’s actually quite simple. I set up my phone and sometimes I also put a little extra mic on it. But most of the time I don’t even do that. And I think people like that. ... I think that it’s maybe that it’s reachable for the people that watch me. It’s not, oh, wow, he’s producing this and overreacting. ”

Robert Buckert, 33, classical and pop musician

Another interviewee emphasised the need to know oneself:

“ My singing, personality and support of others is what hopefully makes me different. But I do find it difficult, especially because of the algorithm ... So, you really really have to know: who are you and what do you want to achieve? ”

Jorian Onrust, 38, solo DJ

THE USE OF AI

Although artists can use AI to automate communication with their fans online, 92% of Dutch artists we surveyed said that they did not use AI for this. This is similar to other countries we studied, except for Nigeria, where artists automate more of their communication.

The Dutch musicians we interviewed held mixed feelings towards AI. Several mentioned the importance of authenticity when reflecting on AI, and its ability to replace musicians:

“ I think eventually people want to have a certain feeling of belonging. With an AI artist, I think people cannot really feel belonging. You want to connect with real people. ... So yeah, I think it's only a threat if you don't focus on building a brand or on a human connection. If you don't, AI will be on the same level as you. Then it's a threat. ”

Tim van der Lugt, 22, house DJ

Some of the Dutch musicians we interviewed also expressed ethical, political, and environmental concerns about AI. Petra, who has been a musician for over 30 years, is more critical of AI:

“ (AI) already won. Because AI stole our songs. They have stolen it from all the real artists. They put it all together and it makes something of it. So, it's stolen music actually. All AI generated music is stolen. ”

Petra de Winter, pop/jazz composer and singer

There are also artists that feel like the heated debates surrounding AI use in music are often misguided. Luca Di Maio, a songwriter, producer, and composer for film soundtracks, reminds us that making music is, for many musicians, more a vocation than a job, and more about passion than it is about pay:

“ I don't get any money from this (making music), so why would I also kill the fun of doing this by having AI doing this instead of me? ... I feel like my opinion is missing from the discussion. It's always about copyright, it's always about earning... things like this. But it's not this. It's (about) why you do stuff. ”

Luca Di Maio, 45, songwriter and producer

KEY TAKEAWAYS – THE NETHERLANDS

- The median Dutch artist earns between €1,000 and €10,000 per year. Despite being better off financially than artists in Nigeria and Chile, Dutch artists still struggle.
- The Netherlands sample does not show a strong income advantage for artists who began their careers before the streaming era.
- 72% of the Dutch artists we surveyed earn the majority of their income within their own country. This makes the Netherlands relatively internationally oriented compared to other countries in our survey.
- Just over one third of Dutch artists surveyed spent between 80-100% of their working time on music. For Dutch artists, it is common to treat music as a part-time career. To be able to be a full-time musician, interviewees mentioned it is important to find your niche.
- Three-quarters of Dutch respondents consider streaming to be either “extremely” or “somewhat important” for their careers. Nearly 90% are, however, not satisfied with their income from streaming. Streaming, for Dutch artists, is mainly used for promotion.
- Dutch artists express the most negative attitudes across the countries studied toward online communication and promotional labour.
- 91% of Dutch respondents believe an artist today also must be creative in how they promote themselves and engage with fans online.
- Feelings about AI are mixed among the Dutch musicians we interviewed. Most artists interviewed do not feel like AI can replace musicians, because of what they see as a lack of authenticity. Our interviewees from the Netherlands feel that being “authentic” as an artist is extremely important. Dutch artists also expressed more ethical, environmental and political concerns about AI than artists in other countries.

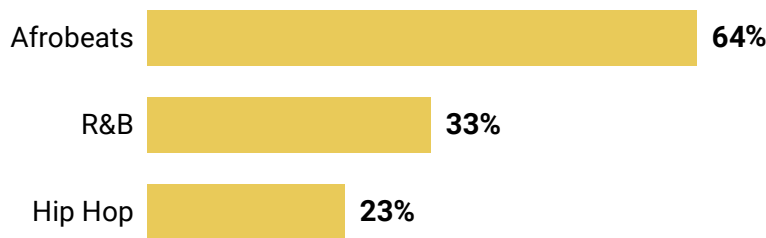
Nigeria



Nigeria represents one of the most dynamic and fastest growing music scenes in the world. The Nigerian music market is strongly shaped by digital platforms and global attention to genres such as Afrobeats. At the same time, Nigerian musicians face some of the most difficult economic conditions among all countries studied.

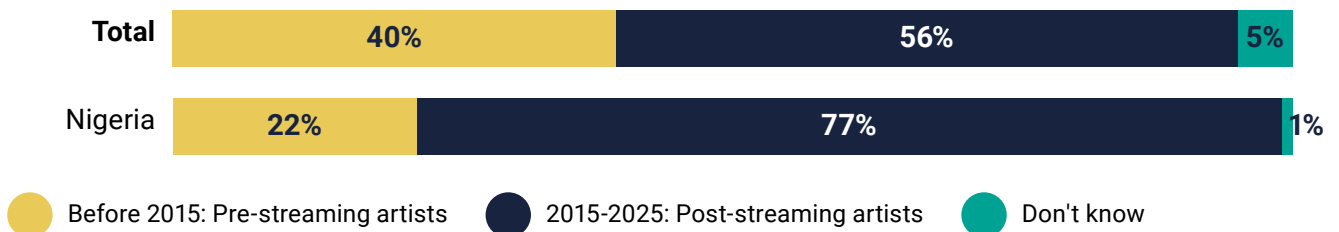
The Nigerian sample consists overwhelmingly of solo artists (92%), with only a small share of respondents being members of groups or bands (8%). Respondents most commonly identify as singer-songwriters, vocalists, or producers. Genre representation is led by Afrobeats, followed by R&B and hip-hop.

Top three genres - Nigeria



Most of the Nigerian artists we surveyed are relatively early in their careers: 77% began after the rise of streaming, while only 22% started before the streaming era.

Start of career - Country



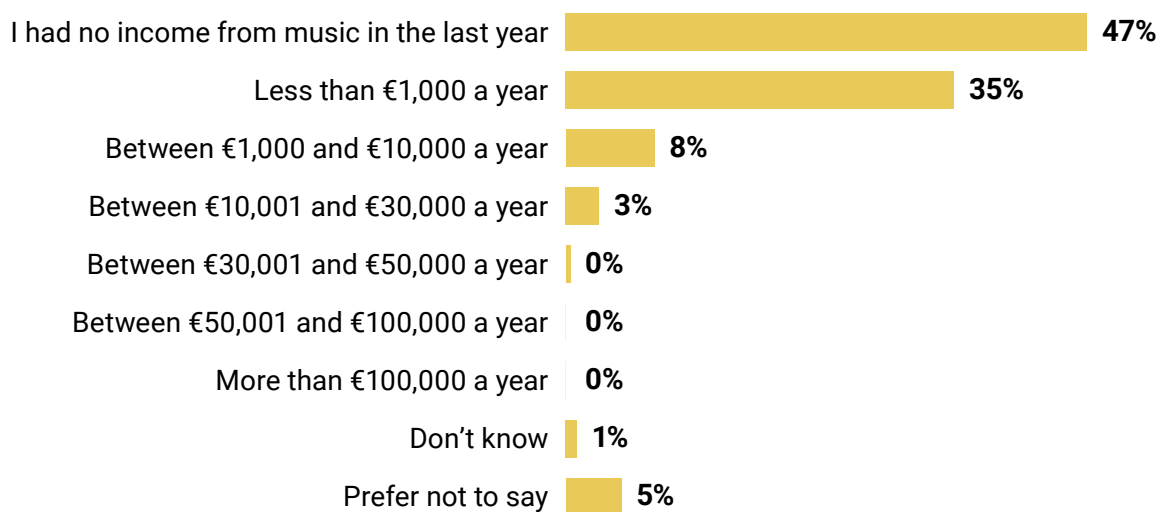
The most used platforms for distribution among those surveyed are Audiomack, YouTube, and TikTok. Nigeria is the only country we studied in which the US-based Audiomack ranks among the most popular streaming platforms.

INCOME: EARNING A LIVING FROM MUSIC

Nigerian artists report the lowest income levels in the study. The reported median income is less than €1,000 per year, which is significantly lower than musicians in the four other countries. **Almost half of the Nigerian artists surveyed did not earn any income from music in the past year.** This is also reflected in the most popular genre in Nigeria: Afrobeats. **Afrobeats artists report the lowest average income** among all genres we looked at that had a sufficient sample size.

Yet, **Afrobeats artists were paradoxically also the most satisfied with their income** in comparison to other high sample genres, such as pop, hip hop, rock and R&B.

Total income earned from music in the last year - Nigeria



Income was also often highlighted as a key struggle during our interviews. In part this is because, in Nigeria, it costs a lot of money to promote one's own music. When we asked Maneel, a solo Afrofusion producer, what the hardest part of being a musician in Nigeria is, he responded:

“Finance. I'm not going to lie. That is the first thing I tell anybody. It's finance because for example, there's this norm in Nigeria where, as a first born, you have to provide for your family. I don't have a dad anymore, God rest his soul, so it's just my mom right. She's turning 50 very soon. So, there's pressure: I'm supposed to drop the song this month. But if I drop the song, I have to promote the song with money, and I still have to spend money on her birthday. ... because music is very expensive nowadays. Very, very expensive. Imagine trying to promote your song and then you're paying over 150 000 Neira (90 Euros) for example. Just trying to put it online. Or let it trend on Tiktok. It's very difficult paying for ads too.”

Maneel, 27, solo Afrofusion artist

While many Nigerian artists struggle with money, they also identify opportunities in new technologies, which permit them artistic agency despite limited resources:

“ I don’t have much support. I get beats online then I produce my music on BandLab. I make my music, the covers and the songwriting myself and publish it myself. ”

P.mass, 20, solo gospel/Afrobeats artist

Later in the interview, P.mass added:

“ I see BandLab as something easy for me on the phone. Because I’m using my phone as my editing tool because I don’t have a laptop to use FL Studio for example. ”

P.mass, 20, solo gospel/Afrobeats artist

However, while technology provides new opportunities, some Nigerian interviewees pointed out that AI programs and tools are inaccessible because they first require one to have access to other technologies:

“ I believe in them (AI tools). But I don’t have the equipment ... Like a laptop or a phone. ”

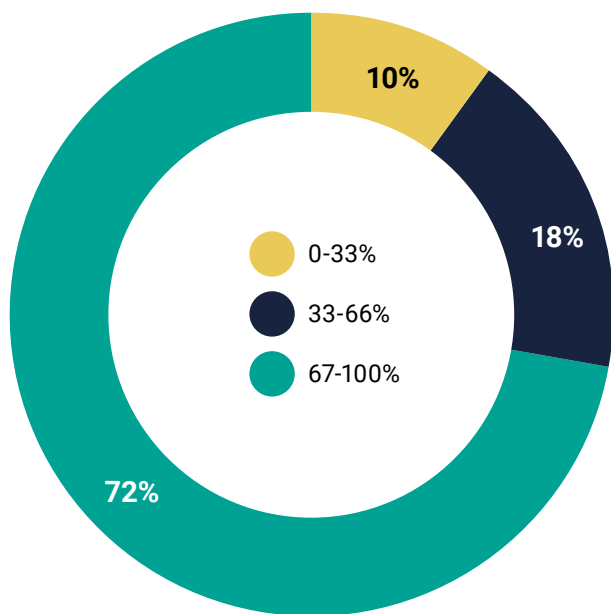
P.moses Abah, 34, solo Afrobeats artist

While all artists in our survey struggle with finances in some way, the Nigerian artists in our study reveal challenges that go beyond generating an income. These findings highlight a clear tension in the Nigerian music scene: while artists are hopeful about career prospects and growth, access to resources and key technology remains a struggle.

WHERE INCOME IS GENERATED

72% of Nigerian artists we surveyed earn over two-thirds of their income within their own country. While this is the large majority, Nigeria is, together with the Netherlands, a more internationally oriented market compared to other countries surveyed.

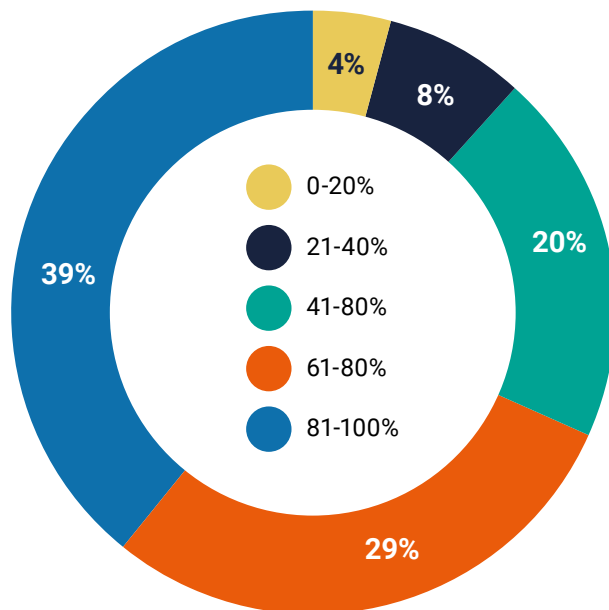
**% total music income from last year,
generated in: Your country**



TIME INVESTMENT

Even though Nigerian artists earn very little, they dedicate a substantial amount of time to their music careers. 68% report spending over 60% of their working time on music-related activities.

Percentage of total working time spent on activities related to music career



This is significantly higher than in all other countries studied, indicating that most Nigerian artists we surveyed treat music as a full-time pursuit, even when financial compensation remains low. Time investment appears to be driven by ambition and opportunity rather than immediate economic return.

P.mass—whose artist name means “massive promise”—articulated his goal as:

“...to make a massive impact in the world. To elevate my culture. To impact lives with my music.”

P.mass, 20, solo gospel /Afrobeats artist

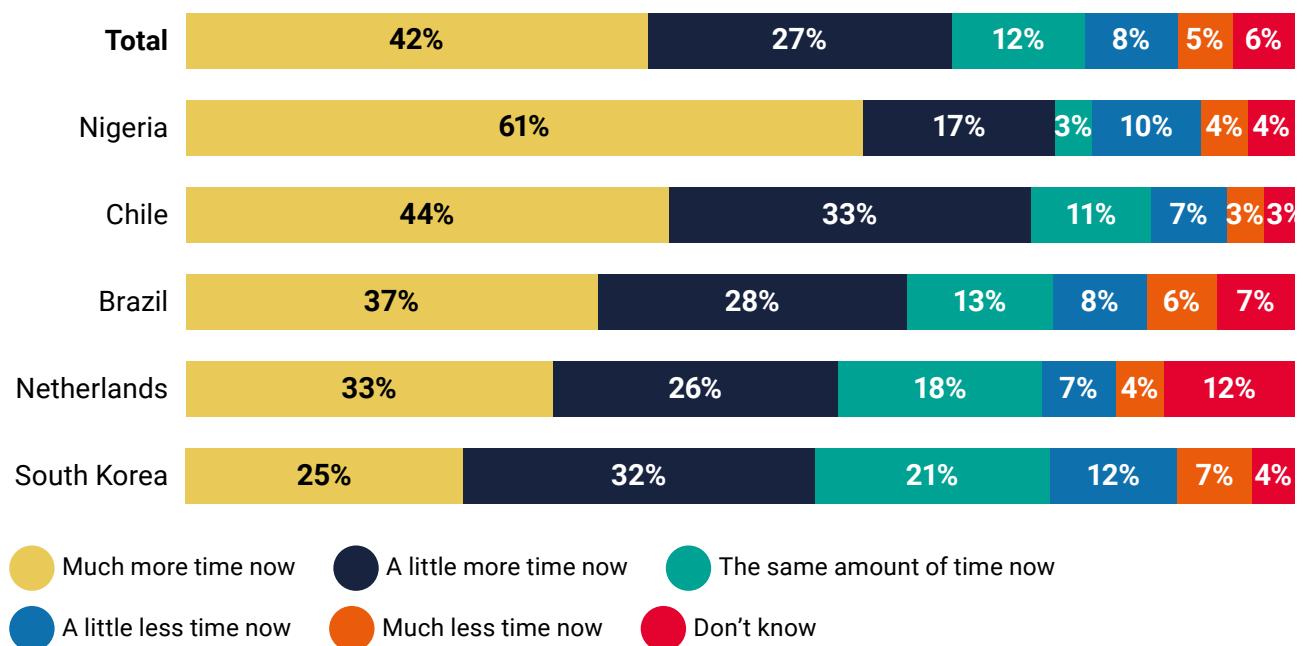
These ambitions drive Nigerian artists to work hard at their craft. One striking takeaway from our interviews was that Nigerian artists treat research and listening to other artist’s music for inspiration, as part of their job. Maneel explained that he spends:

“As much time as I can salvage. It may be 20 hours per day on average. By going online, trying to see what’s trending. See what we can write about. Watch interviews of people that I look up to like Jon Bellion, Johnny Drille, or Don Jazzy. I listen to them and I look for interviews to see what they have gone through. I just want to just learn from them, and then, when I learn from them, I can impact it in my own life. Then maybe inspire the next generation to reach it.”

Maneel, 27, solo Afrofusion artist

Adding to this, the way in which Nigerian artists spend their working hours has changed over the past years. This is especially clear when we look at online promotional labour. 61% of Nigerian artists report that they spend “much more time”, and 17% that they spend “a little more time” promoting themselves and their music on social media or streaming platforms, compared to a couple of years ago. **This suggests that artists in Nigeria have increased the amount of time they put into online communication and promotional work significantly more than artists in any of the other countries studied.**

Time spent on streaming or social media platforms to promote your music compared to a couple of years ago – Country

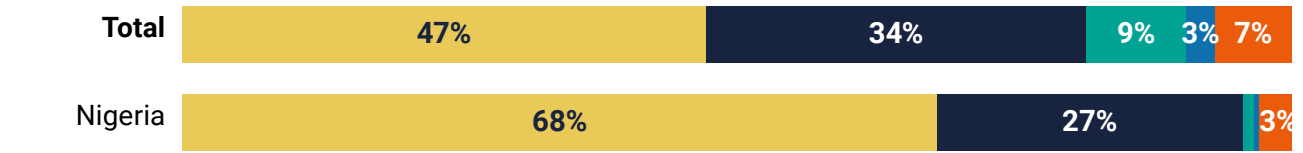


That Nigerian artists spent a lot of time promoting their music is also reflected in the time they spend communicating with fans. **Among all genres, Afrobeats artists report spending the most time communicating with fans**, with an average between 30–60 minutes a day. **Nigerian artists also reported checking their performance metrics at least once a day, which is the highest frequency in our survey.**

STREAMING IMPORTANCE

Streaming is widely viewed as important among Nigerian artists: 95% consider streaming to be either extremely or somewhat important for their careers.

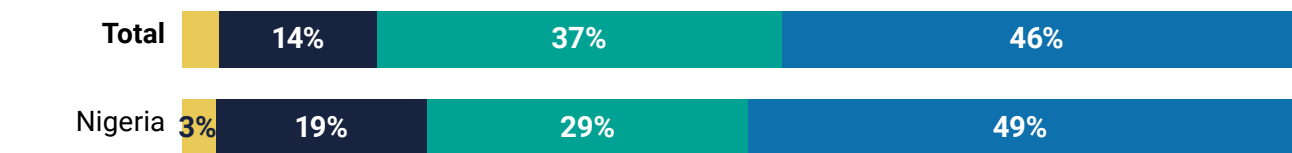
How important are streaming platforms for your career? – Country



- Streaming is extremely important - most people hear my music on streaming platforms
- Streaming is somewhat important - audiences listen to my music on streaming services but other formats are also important
- Streaming is not that important
- Streaming is not at all important
- Don't know

Despite this importance, satisfaction with streaming income is low: 78% of Nigerian artists report being “not very” or “not at all satisfied” with their streaming earnings, highlighting a sharp disconnect between platform dependence and financial reward. **While Nigerian artists’ satisfaction with streaming is low, it is still higher than in all other countries studied.**

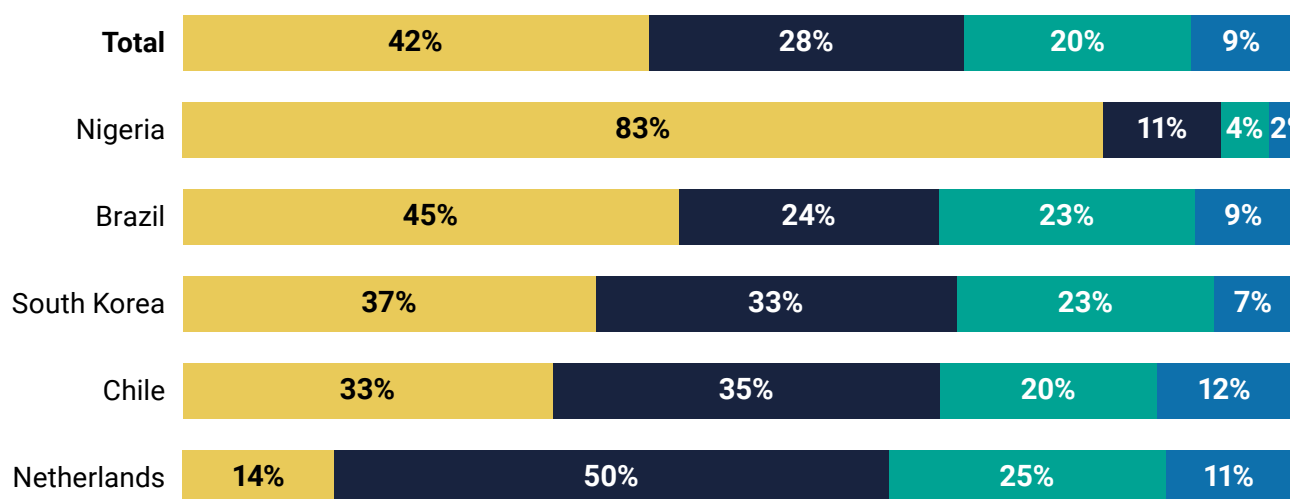
Overall, to what extent are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the income you receive from music streaming and social media platforms? – Country



- Very satisfied
- Fairly satisfied
- Not very satisfied
- Not at all satisfied

Compared to artists in the other four countries studied, **Nigerian respondents are the most positive about how their careers have developed since the rise of streaming.** Nigerian artists are significantly more likely to report that their career has “gotten better” rather than worsened in the streaming era.

Compared to the period before streaming platforms, do you think having a career as a recording artist nowadays has gotten better, worse, or has it stayed about the same?



● It has gotten better
 ● It has gotten worse
 ● It has stayed about the same
 ● Don't know

This optimism suggests that streaming platforms and social media are widely perceived by artists in Nigeria as opening new opportunities, particularly in terms of visibility, audience reach, and international access. Online platforms apparently allow Nigerian musicians to be relatively independent from the often-exploitative record industry and music distribution networks. This is also something that was reflected in our interviews, such as with artist manager Charity:

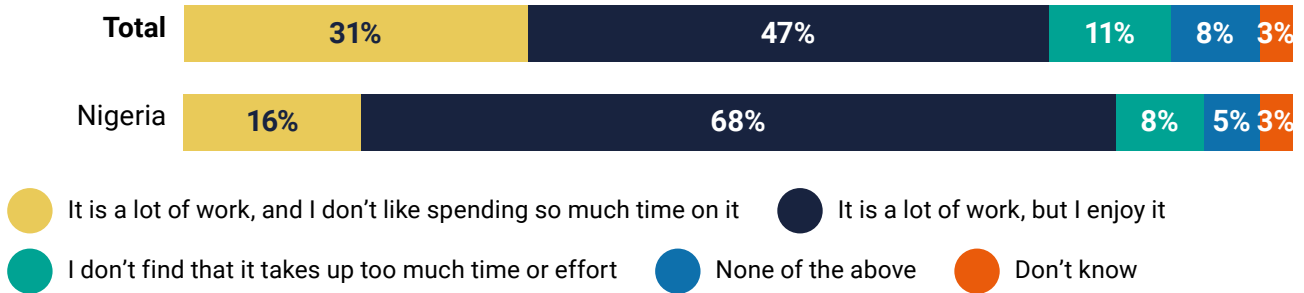
“ For us here in Nigeria, I think streaming platforms have made it very easy to have back-end information as to how well the music is doing. The music space right now is saturated. Everybody’s doing music in Nigeria. But then we’re able to get statistics of how well the music is performing (and) people’s reaction to the music. Are they here for the lyrics? Are they here for the beats? We have that with the help of streaming platforms. So, it’s really good, especially now that we can upload our songs ourselves. We don’t necessarily have to depend on record labels and stuff. It’s been a game changer for us.”

Charity, artist manager

COMMUNICATION AND PROMOTIONAL LABOUR

Among all countries studied, Nigerian artists are the most positive about online communication and promotional work. Just over two-thirds (68%) describe these tasks as “a lot of work, but I enjoy it.”

Feelings towards promotional labour

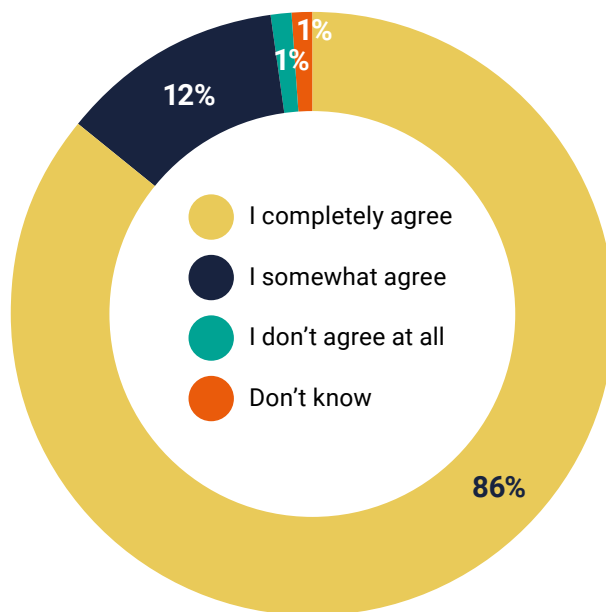


Nigeria differs significantly from all other countries in this respect ($p < 0.001$). This positive attitude aligns with the high levels of time spent on promotion: **Nigerian artists are far more likely than artists in other countries to report spending “much more time” on promotion now compared to the past.**

NON-MUSICAL CREATIVITY

Nigerian artists express the strongest agreement found in our sample to the statement that musicians today don't only need to be creative when making music, but they also need to be creative when communicating with fans and sharing content online. 86% "completely agree" with this statement, and another 12% "somewhat agree" with it; a significantly higher share than in all other countries studied.

Recording artists today don't only need to be creative when making music, but they also need to be creative when communicating with fans and sharing content online.



Some effective social media strategies mentioned during our interviews with Nigerian artists were storytelling and "showing more than just the music". As P.mass explained:

“(I make) behind the scenes of whatever I do and content of me telling a story. Because these days fans around the world are interested not only in your music as a musician; they're interested in your story, your struggles and yeah, they're interested in everything about you.”

P.mass, 20, solo gospel/Afrobeats artist

Nigerians we interviewed also preached the virtues of being yourself. Charity, a manager of two upcoming Nigerian artists said the following:

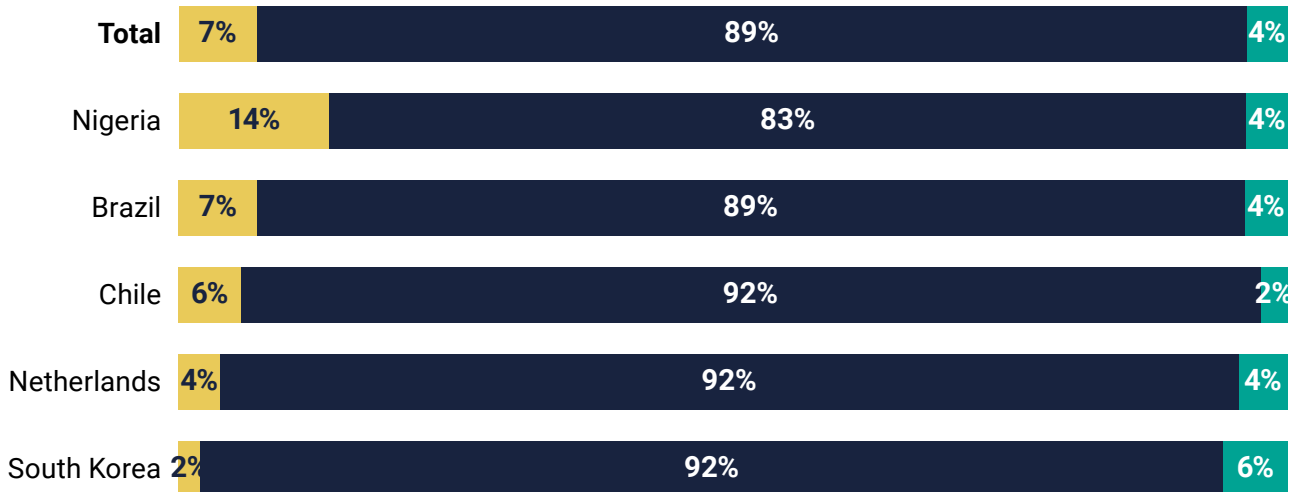
“One of the things we use as a strategy to get our music noticed is we are also trying to sell the lifestyle of this artist alongside their music. So, they live similar lives. Their music is not different from who they are as a person.”

Charity, artist manager

THE USE OF AI

83% of the Nigerian artists surveyed claimed they never use AI to automate fan communication. While this is a large majority, **14% of Nigerian artists say that they automate fan communication, which is much higher than in all other countries studied.**

Recording artists today don't only need to be creative when making music, but they also need to be creative when communicating with fans and sharing content online.



Most Nigerian interviewees were positive about AI. The consensus seems to be that some use of AI is okay, however:

“AI that makes music (like Suno) where you just have to write the lyrics and they will just make the sound and everything for you, is way too overbought I feel.”
Lady B., 30, solo Afrobeats artist

In other words, Lady B. thinks that it is okay to use AI, but not to let it take over the entire process. When this happens, in her opinion, AI use has gone too far.

The Nigerians we spoke to are not afraid that AI will replace artists, because:

“AI is just AI. AI does not have emotions. What I do is love and love is an emotion. I do love songs and you can't tell an AI to give you a love song with emotions. It's not possible. If someone does not feel the emotion in your song then there is no point in that song even being released in the first place.”
Maneel, 27, solo Afrofusion artist

According to Naashak, who has worked as a guitarist in the Nigerian music scene for the past 18 years, even if an AI-generated song were to succeed online:

“In the long run. Relying on AI becomes detrimental because this person (as a performer) cannot meet up with the expectation of those who see his content online and want the same thing live.”
Naashak, 34, solo guitarist

KEY TAKEAWAYS – NIGERIA

- Nigerian artists earn very little to nothing from their music careers. While their financial opportunities are extremely limited, Nigerian artists are for the most part optimistic about their career prospects.
- 72% of Nigerian artists earn over two-thirds of their income domestically. This makes the Nigerian music market relatively internationally oriented compared to other countries in our survey.
- Even though Nigerian artists earn very little from their music careers, Nigerian artists dedicate a substantial amount of time to it. 68% report spending between 60% and 100% of their working time on music-related activities.
- 95% of Nigerian artists consider streaming to be either extremely or somewhat important for their careers. 78% of Nigerian artists report being “not very” or “not at all” satisfied with their streaming earnings. While satisfaction with streaming is low, it is higher than in all other countries studied.
- Nigerian artists are the most positive about online communication and promotional work among all countries studied: 68% describes promotion as “a lot of work, but I enjoy it”
- Nigerian artists express the strongest agreement that “musicians today don’t only need to be creative when making music, but they also need to be creative when communicating with fans and sharing content online.” 86% completely agree with this statement. Commonly named social media strategies in our interviews were “showing more than just the music” and “being yourself”.
- Nigerian interviewees were positive about AI. They automate communication with fans more often than artists from other countries. The consensus seems to be that some use of AI is okay, but that AI should not take over the entire process. Moreover, Nigerians feel like AI cannot replace musicians because it lacks emotions and live performance abilities.

South Korea



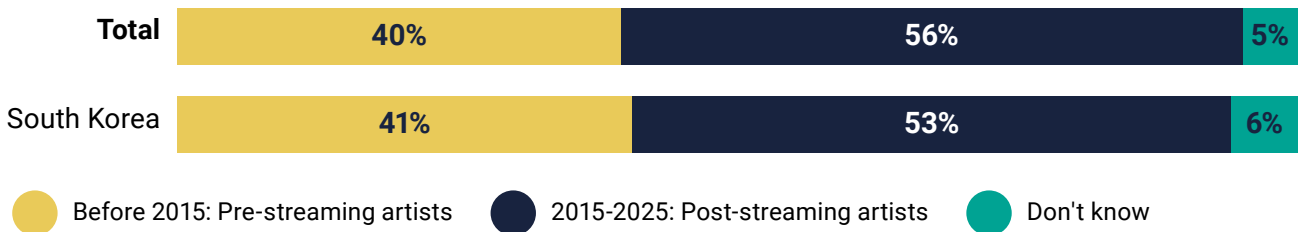
South Korea is a highly developed music market with a strong domestic infrastructure, including nationally dominant streaming platforms such as Melon and Genie, alongside global platforms like YouTube. The Korean music industry is often associated with K-pop, though our survey respondents represent a broader range of genres and career paths. Respectively, the top 3 genres in our sample of Korean artists are indie/alternative, pop, and rock. The top three types of Korean artists who responded to our survey were producers, singer/songwriters, and instrumentalists.

Top three genres - South Korea



Most of our Korean respondents are solo artists (62%), with 38% performing as part of a band or group. Respondents are relatively split between those who started their careers before the rise of streaming (41%) and those who started after streaming became dominant (53%).

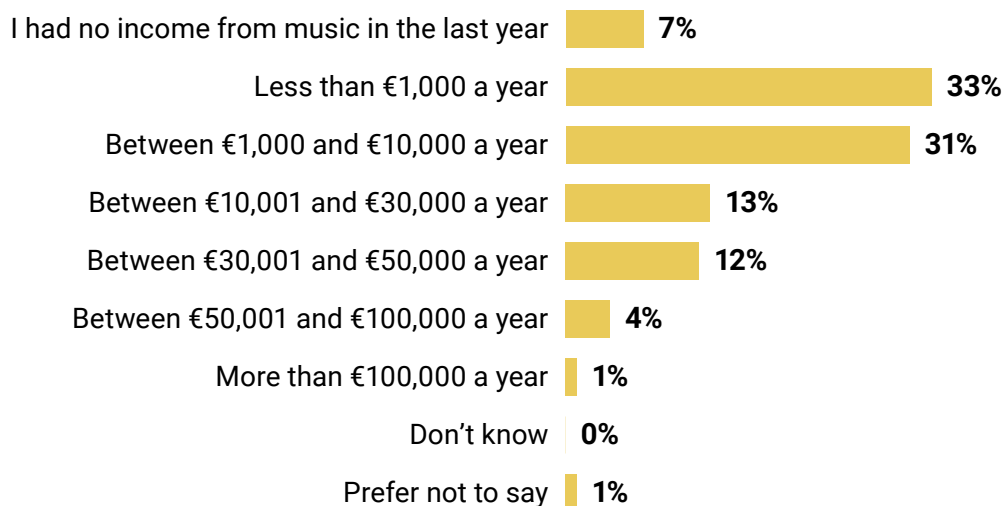
Start of career - Country



INCOME: EARNING A LIVING FROM MUSIC

The median Korean survey respondent earns between €1,000 and €10,000 per year from music. This puts South Korea in the middle-income bracket, compared to the other countries in the study. Artists in South Korea generally earn more than artists in Nigeria and Chile, but about the same as artists in the Netherlands and Brazil. While the median income falls into this category, 33% of our Korean respondents make less than €1,000 per year.

Total income earned from music in the last year - South Korea



A clear pattern emerges when we look at income in comparison to when artists started their careers. Artists who began before streaming earn significantly more than those who started their careers after.

Despite being better off economically than artists in Nigeria and Chile, Korean artists still struggle financially. One Korean interviewee mentioned that even though there are funds available for artists to improve their situation, it is not easy to access these sources:

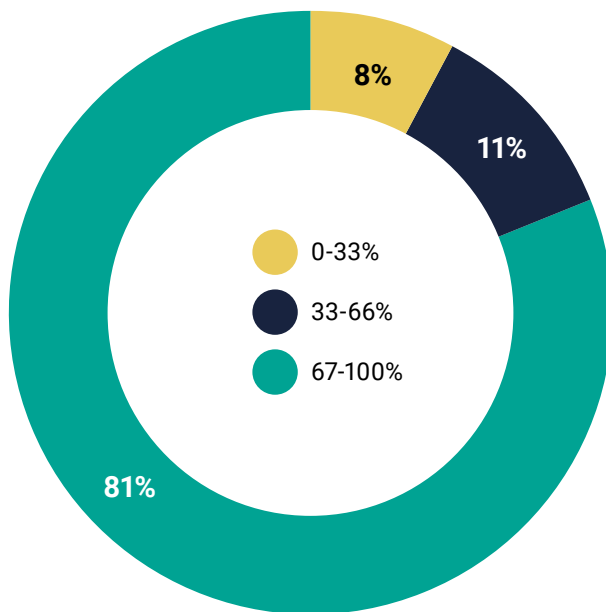
“I am aware that there are a lot of funds that are open to artists, however it's too competitive. It's for a small number of people. Let's say there are 20,000 artists in Seoul and then the budget is for 50 people.”

CHICKA dee, 30, solo indie singer songwriter

WHERE INCOME IS GENERATED

Most Korean survey respondents earn the majority of their income from within their own country. Specifically, 81% earn over two-thirds of their income domestically.

**% total music income from last year,
generated in: Your country**

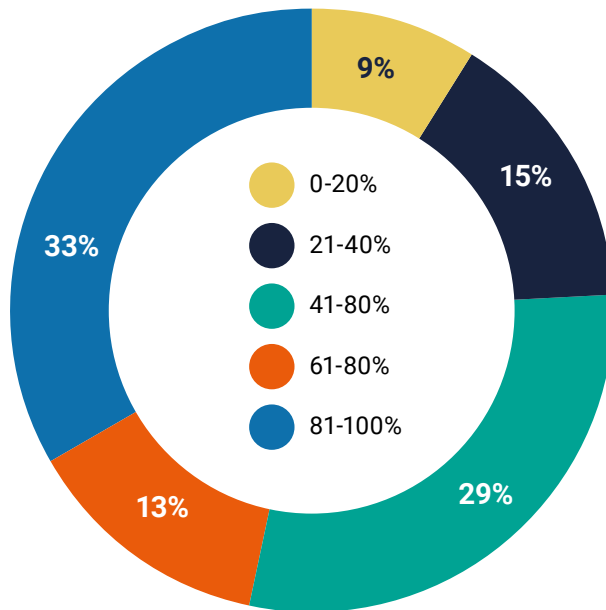


When compared to the other countries in our survey, South Korea sits between highly domestic-focused markets like Brazil and Chile, and more internationally oriented markets such as the Netherlands and Nigeria. Korean artists are significantly less likely than Brazilian artists to primarily rely on domestic income ($p < 0.001$).

TIME INVESTMENT

Korean artists show considerable variation in how much time they dedicate to their music careers. Almost half (46%) report spending over 60% of their working time on music-related activities.

Percentage of total working time spent on activities related to music career



In this regard, South Korea only differs significantly from Nigeria ($p = 0.002$), where artists report spending more time on their careers. This suggests that while Korean artists are highly committed, they may combine music with other work more often than their Nigerian counterparts.

For many Korean artists, this is not a choice but a necessity. CHICKA dee, who has been a musician for the past 10 years, described how financial pressure forces musicians to take on additional jobs:

“The only way to survive as a musician is to get another job, which makes it harder to focus and create music.”

CHICKA dee, 30, solo indie singer songwriter

Like many other musicians, these additional jobs often involve teaching:

“Back in Jeju (an island off the south coast of South Korea), I was teaching piano one-on-one, and now here in Seoul I work as an international school music teacher.”

CHICKA dee, 30, solo indie singer songwriter

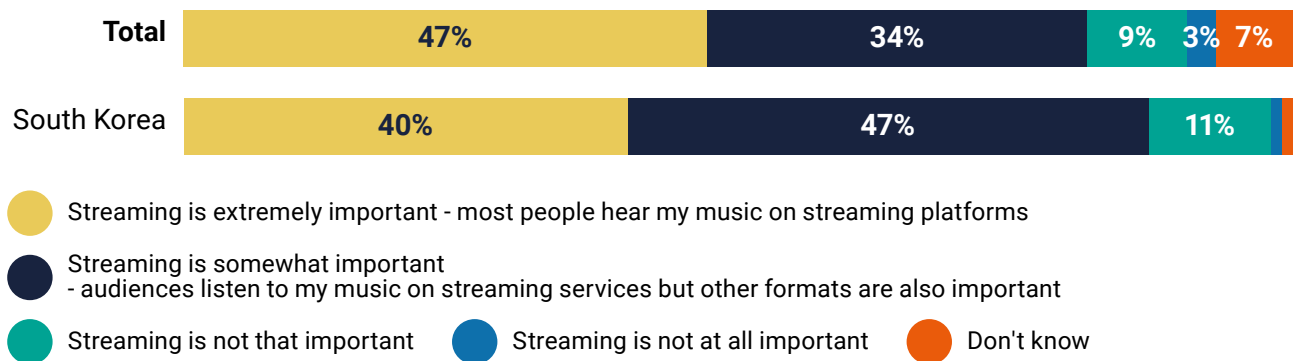
The precise ways in which artists divide their time within their total working hours has changed over the past years. 25% of South Korean artists report that they spend “much more time”, and 32% that they spend “a little more time” on

social media or streaming platforms to promote their music compared to a couple of years ago. Relative to the other countries in our sample, this is the lowest percentage of artists that answered “much more time”. Indeed, nearly one out of five Korean artists said that they spend less time promoting their music online nowadays. This is significantly different from Nigeria (where 61% of artists report spending much more time on online promotion compared to two years ago).

STREAMING IMPORTANCE

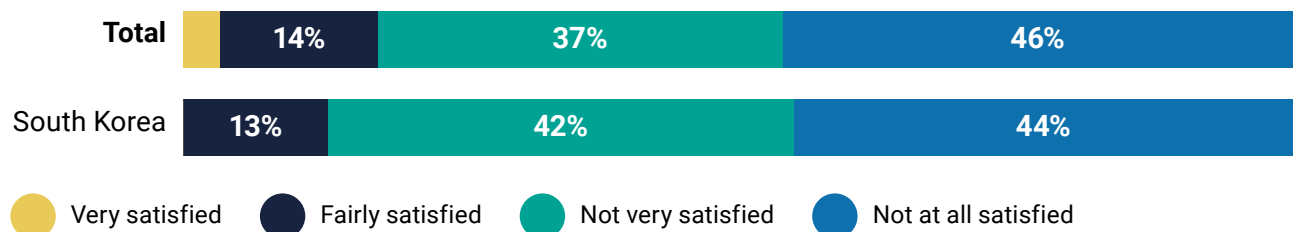
Streaming is viewed as important among almost all South Korean artists: 87% of respondents consider streaming to be either extremely or somewhat important for their careers.

How important are streaming platforms for your career? – Country



Even though streaming is considered to be important, most Korean artists are unhappy with how much money it brings in. 86% Korean artists say they are “not satisfied”, or “not at all satisfied” with their streaming income.

Overall, to what extent are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the income you receive from music streaming and social media platforms? – Country



This frustration is also reflected in the experiences of newer, self-releasing artists. As one Korean indie musician, who began her career after streaming became mainstream, explained:

“I think the biggest challenge is financial. As an indie musician, you make almost no money. Even when you perform, it’s often for free. You can spend hours creating videos and months making music, and in the end you might get paid just one dollar in copyright fees.”

CHICKA dee, 30, solo indie singer songwriter

Hye-rin, another solo indie artist explained that she cannot live from streaming royalties:

“Streaming alone doesn’t yet provide enough income to make a living, but with physical album sales, since I don’t have a company, the profits come directly to me. (When I released my first EP) it was the first time I experienced immediate revenue like that.”

Hye-rin, solo indie artist

But she also admitted that streaming platforms are useful for understanding your audience:

“I mostly look at changes in streaming numbers and then try to understand the source of those streams. Are people searching for my songs, or is it because they’re included in a playlist? Or perhaps it’s just randomly picked up by a radio algorithm, and that’s driving the numbers. I try to figure out the reasons behind my music being played. After that, I look at the geographical data, like which countries are streaming the most. ... Honestly, the numbers or the sources of streams haven’t really influenced my creative process or how I post content. However, the geographical data has been a bit surprising. ... Since I love writing lyrics in Korean, I used to think it didn’t matter if English-speaking listeners couldn’t understand my songs. However, the data from platforms showed me unexpected results regarding the countries where my music was being streamed.”

Hye-rin, solo indie artist

Because of the data and insights, she received from streaming platforms about who is listening to her music, Hye-rin said that she decided to learn English and write songs in English in order to expand her market.

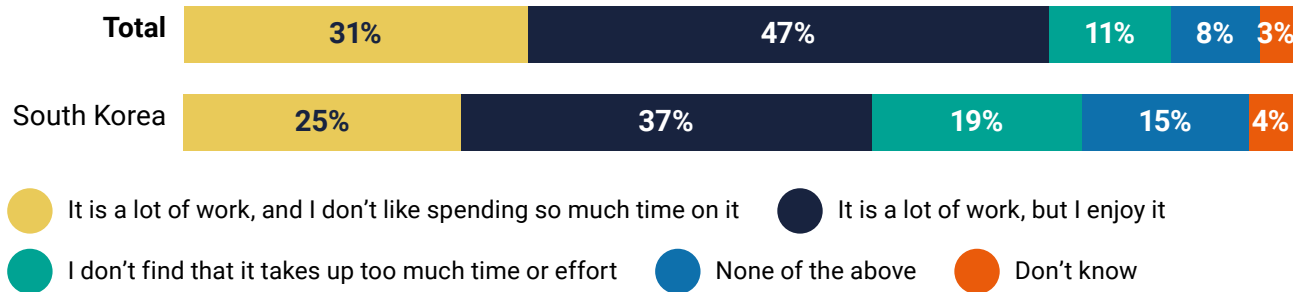
COMMUNICATION AND PROMOTIONAL WORK

Korean artists express mixed feelings about online communication and promotional tasks: 37% responded that “it is a lot of work, but I enjoy it”; 25% expressed that “it is a lot of work, and I don’t like spending so much time on it”; and 19% find that it does not require too much time or effort. Opinions among Korean artists on this topic are thus relatively evenly split. Compared to other countries, Korean artists sit somewhere in the middle. They are less negative than artists in the Netherlands about online promotional labour, but less enthusiastic than artists in Nigeria and Chile.

There are clear differences between indie and K-pop artists, however, with the latter tending to spend more time sharing content through fan platforms. Joobin, member of the popular K-pop girl group *tripleS*, told us that she spends “at least

3 hours each day” sharing content across various social media platforms. She usually does this after finishing daily practice and group activities. Though this schedule is flexible, she made it clear that online promotion and distribution tasks constitute a fundamental – and “enjoyable” – part of her daily work routines.

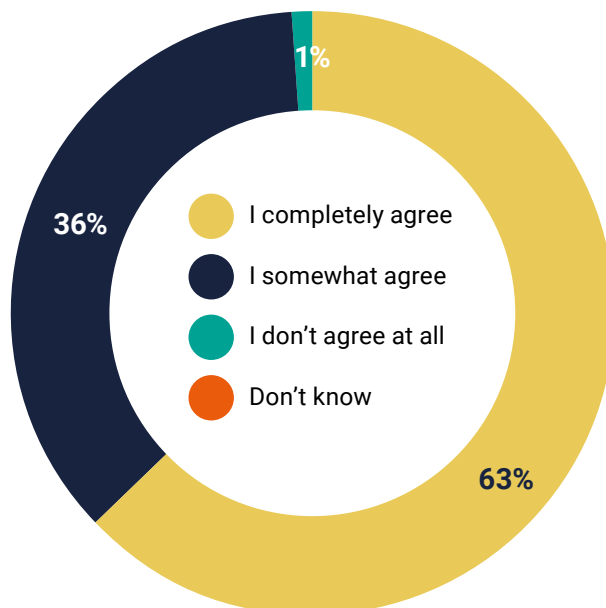
Feelings towards promotional labour



NON-MUSICAL CREATIVITY

The majority of Korean artists (63%) “completely agree” with the statement that “recording artists today don’t only need to be creative when making music, but they also need to be creative when communicating with fans and sharing content online,” with an additional 36% somewhat agreeing. Taken together, this is the highest level of agreement in all countries studied, with Nigeria as a close second (though more Nigerians “completely agree” with this statement).

Recording artists today don’t only need to be creative when making music, but they also need to be creative when communicating with fans and sharing content online.



When it comes to social media marketing, the indie musician CHICKA dee said the following:

“Artists around me use different strategies. Of course they engage with their audience via Instagram. However, they don’t seem to be uploading a lot of reels. Rather they are posting updates on their album release or, like, their concerts or gigs.”

CHICKA dee, solo indie singer songwriter

However, as mentioned above, there are clear differences depending on genre: K-pop artists are much more active in engaging with fans. *TripleS* member Joobin frequently uses voice notes to share funny stories and mentions fan nicknames as a way of creating emotional proximity. We asked her if she sees this type of work as integral to her role as a creative artist and she agreed:

“Of course, practicing singing and dancing is important, but I think communication is equally important. Our fans are interested in us, so we want to reciprocate by actively engaging with them.”

Joobin, K-pop artist

Another Korean artist mentioned the importance of understanding that different platforms require different tactics:

“For YouTube, I think it’s more of a video-centric, music-focused platform, while Instagram seems to focus on photo-based posts. From what I’ve heard from other artists, posts about daily life or casual photos tend to get better reactions than release-related posts on Instagram. I’ve noticed this as well. Because Instagram is a platform widely used by everyone, not just artists, it feels more approachable and easier to engage with. I use Instagram Stories to casually share glimpses of myself outside of being an artist and to show parts of my life unrelated to music in an appealing way. For YouTube, it’s more of an official platform for videos and music. While everyone has access to YouTube channels, the ones actively uploading content are typically artists or creators.”

Hye-rin, solo indie artist

THE USE OF AI

Automated features on K-pop fan platforms (such as Bubble, Weverse or Fromm) help artists to personalise their communication with fans. However, 92% of the Korean artists we surveyed said that they did not automate fan communication. Hye-rin, a rising indie artist we spoke to, said the following about automating communication with fans:

“ I don't feel like I have a large enough fan base to justify using those platforms for communication. Right now, interacting through Instagram comments, messages, or YouTube comments feels sufficient. ... When my fan base grows, I would want to find easier ways to communicate. Platforms like Instagram and YouTube require one-on-one interaction, which is very time-consuming. For example, if a post gets a lot of comments, I might choose not to reply to any because I can't respond to just one or two without leaving others out. I sometimes decide not to engage to avoid anyone feeling left out. If there were a platform that allowed me to communicate with many people at once without taking up so much time, I think I would actively use it when the time comes. ”

Hye-rin, solo indie artist

The use of AI for generating music, however, provoked concern in some interviewees. Another Korean interviewee responded as follows when asked about how she feels about AI-generated songs:

“ I feel like there is no more room for new artists. (With AI) there will be less chances for artists to create their own music; spending months trying to discover the sound or get the sound that they want. If AI is doing that job in one second, then I am feeling more discouraged. And I totally feel like there is no room for me as an artist. ”

CHICKA dee, solo indie singer songwriter

KEY TAKEAWAYS – SOUTH KOREA

- The median Korean artist earns between €1,000 and €10,000 per year. While this is more than the artists we surveyed in Nigeria and Chile, Korean artists still struggle financially.
- Korean artists who debuted before 2015 earn significantly more than “post streaming” artists.
- 81% of Korean survey respondents earn over two-thirds of their income domestically, in South Korea.
- 87% of Korean respondents consider streaming to be important for their careers, but 86% of respondents are not satisfied with their streaming income.
- Unlike the four other countries in our sample, who primarily distribute their music through US-based streaming platforms, Korean artists tend to use domestic streaming services such as Melon or Genie just as much as YouTube, and more often than Spotify, Apple, etc.
- Korean artists have mixed feelings about online communication and promotional labour. They are less negative than artists in the Netherlands, but less enthusiastic than artists in Nigeria and Chile.
- 99% of Korean artists agree that you have to be just as creative in communicating with fans nowadays as you do in making or performing music.
- Korean musicians are cautious and concerned about AI but interested in its potential for automating communication with fans.

Summary and Conclusion

This report highlights both shared challenges and significant national differences in the experiences and perceptions of music artists across Brazil, Chile, the Netherlands, Nigeria, and South Korea. Below we attempt to summarise some of the key findings.

INCOME

Across all countries, median incomes are low, with most artists earning between €1,000 and €10,000 per year or less. Even in comparatively wealthier countries such as the Netherlands and South Korea, financial insecurity persists. Limited economic sustainability is clearly a global characteristic of artistic labour rather than a country-specific problem.

Income is strongly influenced by label status. Major-label artists cluster in the higher income categories, independent artists in the middle range, and DIY artists in the lowest. **Despite the expansion of distribution and promotional opportunities through platforms, DIY artists still earn significantly less than their label-signed counterparts.** Furthermore, in all countries, except for the Netherlands, artists who began their career after 2015 earn significantly less than those who started earlier. There is a clear explanation for this: it would be difficult to maintain music as a profession for over a decade without any degree of financial success. Nevertheless, we should see if this earnings discrepancy holds as the careers of streaming-native musicians mature.

Given these low earnings, part-time musicianship remains common across all countries we studied, but less so in Nigeria, where artists dedicate more time to their music careers. This may indicate a lack of options for employment outside of music, rather than greater success or dedication amongst the Nigerian artists surveyed.

Where artists earn their income also differs by country. Although the majority of the artists we surveyed earn most of their income domestically, artists from some countries earned a proportionately greater share of their income from beyond their borders. Below, we rank the countries in order of “international orientation”:

- 1 Nigeria
- 2 The Netherlands
- 3 South Korea
- 4 Chile
- 5 Brazil

STREAMING: ESSENTIAL BUT RARELY SATISFYING

Streaming is widely perceived as important by the artists we surveyed. This is especially pronounced in Nigeria, where 68% of participants consider streaming “extremely important” for their career. Respondents in the other four countries were more likely to describe streaming as “somewhat important”. Interestingly, low-income artists are most likely to call streaming “extremely important” (55.4%), while higher earners are more comfortable saying it’s “not that important.” This is likely because the latter have managed to diversify their income sources (live performances etc.) and are thus not as heavily dependent on streaming.

At the same time, satisfaction with streaming income is low across all countries. Interviews further suggest that, across all countries, **streaming’s importance lies primarily in its promotional function**. This combination of high importance and low satisfaction reveals a clear paradox. Artists depend heavily on streaming platforms for visibility, promotion, audience interaction, and professional relevance, yet the financial returns from these platforms remain limited and unsatisfactory.

Our survey makes a concerted effort to understand the perceptions of music artists around the world. We asked all respondents who began their career before 2015 (which we identified as the year streaming became mainstream) whether their career has gotten better or worse. There were significant differences between countries. Perhaps surprisingly, Nigerian artists—despite earning far less than artists we surveyed in other countries—were most positive: **83% of Nigerian artists report that their careers have gotten better since streaming**. In every other country, less than half of survey respondents believed that things had “gotten better”. **Dutch respondents are the most negative, with only 14% of Dutch artists agreeing that having a career as a musician had gotten better, and 50% of Dutch artists reporting that streaming had made things worse**. The other countries show more mixed distributions.

Overall, there are few statistically significant gender differences within the countries we examined. Brazil, however, provides us with one interesting and significant gender distinction: **Brazilian women were more likely to say that a career as a musician has gotten better (56.8%) or stayed about the same (37.8%) since the rise of music streaming, while Brazilian men were substantially more likely to say it has gotten worse (29.7%)**.

PROMOTION AND COMMUNICATION: CULTURAL AND GENERATIONAL DIVIDE

Across all countries, artists agree that online promotion and fan communication have become central to their work. However, attitudes toward this labour differ significantly. Younger, post-2015 artists are more likely to accept or enjoy promotional tasks, while pre-streaming artists are more likely to find them burdensome. This suggests a generational divide in how platform-related labour is experienced.

Feelings towards online communication and promotional labour are also country dependent. **Nigerian artists are by far the most positive about promotional labour:** 68% report enjoying it despite the effort. Nigeria is a clear outlier here: in none of the other four countries surveyed did even half of respondents claim to enjoy these tasks. **Dutch artists are the most negative, with 48% disliking online promotional labour and describing it as too much work.** Brazilian artists are generally positive but more divided, while Chilean and South Korean responses are more evenly split.

Time investment in fan communication also varies. **Nigerian artists spend the most time communicating with fans and show the highest levels of automating this communication.** In general, however, most artists report that they do not automate their communication with fans.

Genre differences intersect with these patterns. **Afrobeats artists report the highest average time spent communicating with fans and, despite comparatively low incomes, express the highest income satisfaction among genres.** In order, based on our survey sample, the genres spending from most to least time communicating with fans on average:

- 1 Afrobeats
- 2 R&B
- 3 Música popular Brasileira
- 4 Pop
- 5 Hip hop
- 6 Jazz
- 7 Rock
- 8 Indie/alternative
- 9 Folk

NON-MUSICAL CREATIVITY AND AI

Across all countries, artists strongly agree that being a successful musician today requires more than musical talent alone. Promotional labour, audience engagement, and personal branding are widely seen as essential. Our interviews with artists from all countries consistently emphasise authenticity and connection with audiences as key strategies for effective promotion strategies.

Attitudes toward artificial intelligence are generally cautious but not alarmist. Artists across all five countries largely agree that AI cannot replace human musicians. What is remarkable is how similar their arguments are. **Many artists seem convinced that AI poses little threat to their careers due to its lack of 1) authenticity, 2) emotional expressiveness, and 3) live performance capabilities.** Some artists, particularly in Brazil, Chile, and Nigeria, view AI as a useful tool for assistance or inspiration. Other artists express more concerns about topics such as ethics, and broader societal or environmental implications. Of all the countries we looked at, Dutch artists appear to be the most worried about AI.

COMPARING NATIONAL PATTERNS

Several shared patterns emerge across countries: low incomes, low satisfaction with streaming income, high perceived importance of streaming, and broad agreement that promotional creativity is essential. At the same time, there are clear national differences.

Brazil's music industry is strongly domestically oriented, and artists report comparatively higher incomes. Relatively many treat music as a full-time career. Survey responses toward promotional labour are generally positive, although interviewees expressed more negative attitudes. Brazilian artists articulate cautious, nuanced but also positive attitudes toward AI.

Chilean musicians are primarily domestically oriented and earn less than artists in most other countries, though more than Nigerians. Many treat music as a part-time career. Their attitudes toward promotional labour are mixed, and they are not overly concerned about AI.

Nigerian artists stood out in our survey. While they earn the least, Nigerian artists spend more time on both making and promoting music. They check their online metrics the most, are more optimistic, more likely to use automated communication, more fan-interactive, more reliant on international income, and more satisfied with streaming than other countries.

Dutch artists are also relatively internationally oriented and earn comparatively more, yet report high dissatisfaction with (streaming) income and promotional labour. They are also the most concerned about AI.

South Korean musicians we surveyed generate some international income, but most of their income is earned domestically with national platforms playing a dominant role. They are among the higher earners in the study but still experience financial strain. South Korean artists stand out for their dissatisfaction with streaming income. Our Korean survey participants display mixed attitudes toward online promotional labour. They are cautious about AI but interested in its potential for automating communication with fans.

This report provides insight into the working lives of "ordinary musicians" from a diverse selection of countries and cultures. While most attention in the music and other creative sectors focuses on stars, the artists we have assembled are far more representative of the vast majority of musicians who, neither rich nor famous, are attempting to build a career in music.

Our findings demonstrate that national contexts shape specific experiences, perceptions, and differences in how artists navigate their careers. However, the pressure to make a living, to promote and share content online, and to adapt to rapid technological changes in the music sector are widely shared by artists around the world. This underscores both the need for further comparative research into how musicians and other creative workers adapt to evolving conditions. It also speaks to the urgency of developing policy frameworks that provide sustainable support and promote thriving music scenes. "Ordinary musicians" across all countries have much to gain by learning from each other in these extraordinary times.



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