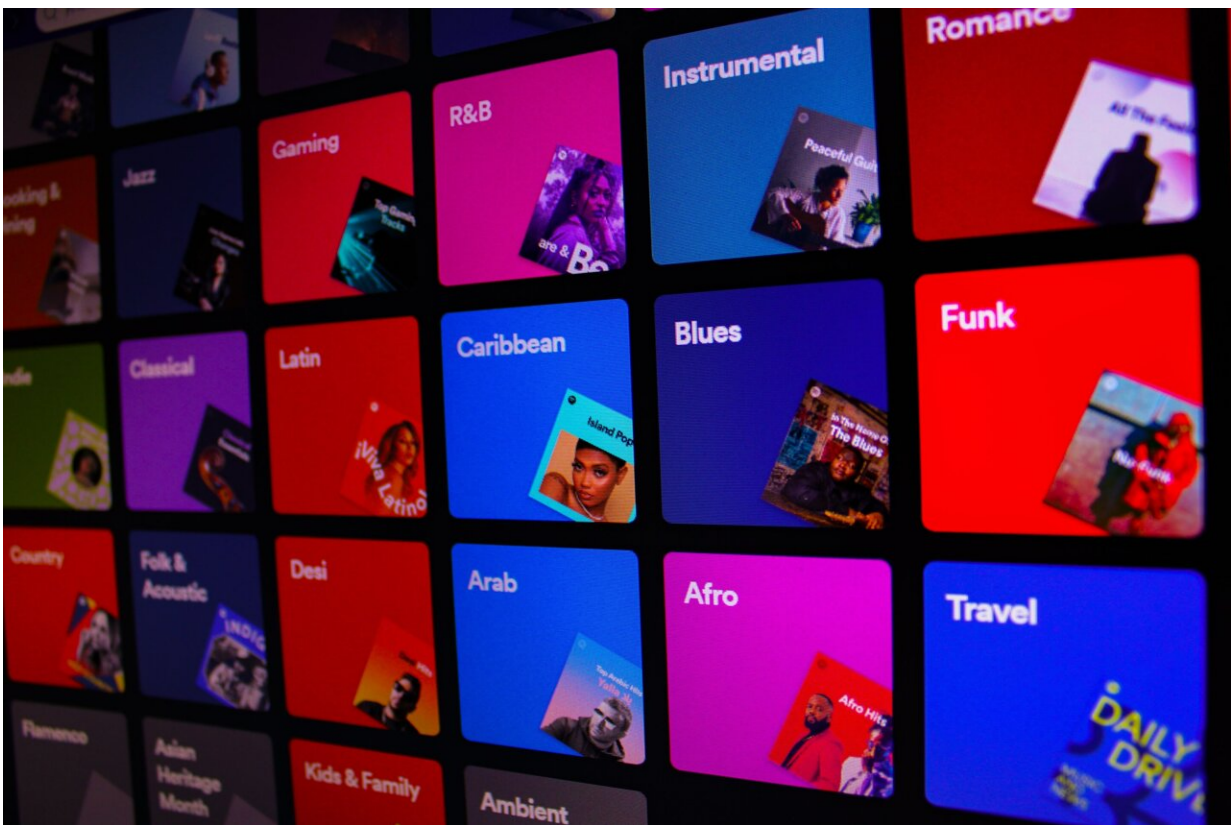


Research shows why our taste in music can't be siloed into catch-all genres

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Liking certain things or styles is an important aspect of peoples' identities and social lives. Tastes can influence the ways humans act and judge. How to best describe musical taste reliably is—due to the ever-

changing diversification and transformation of music—difficult and open to debate.

Using an approach which also considered sub-genres, researchers in Germany surveyed more than 2,000 people on their musical taste and took a closer look at the fans of five genres: European classical music, electronic dance music (EDM), metal, pop, and rock.

"Our analyses revealed that people who like the same [genre](#) can have very different tastes if asked which sub-genres they like," said Anne Siebrasse, a doctoral student at Max Planck Institute for Empirical Aesthetics and lead author of the study published in *Frontiers in Psychology*. "Accordingly, fans of certain genres should not be perceived as homogeneous groups with the same [tastes](#). Instead, we need to acknowledge differences within these groups that are also related to age, gender, [education level](#), lifestyle, or [personality traits](#)."

Subgroups with different preferences

"When people talk about their [musical tastes](#), they often use genre terms. However, on a genre level, fans of the Beatles and the Rolling Stones would all be rock fans, however they themselves would probably see huge differences," Siebrasse continued.

To represent these differences empirically, her co-author Melanie Wald-Fuhrmann designed a questionnaire through which participants indicated how much they liked sub-styles associated with the examined genres. By systematically recording liking at genre and sub-genre levels, the researchers obtained a more differentiated picture of musical taste.

As the researchers considered attitudes towards sub-genres, several taste classes emerged. Three of these classes liked all sub-genres to roughly the same degree—very much, moderately, or rather less, the authors

wrote. Two taste classes, however, differed in that they preferred sub-styles that were either more challenging or easier to process, respectively. Across all genres, subtypes that represented the mainstream variant were generally preferred over more challenging alternatives.

The researchers also found that sociodemographic and personality variables, including age, milieu-related attitude, and openness, could predict belonging to a genre group or within-genre taste class. For pop music, for example, the researchers found a clear age effect. It showed that peoples' preferred pop [music](#) correlates with subgroup age. The [pop music](#) people liked best was from the decade during which they were around 20 years old.

The wider picture

What Siebrasse and Wald-Fuhrmann achieved is a more accurate representation of the actual musical taste of the German resident population than previous studies produced. Some of their results, such as the identification of within-genre taste classes are likely applicable across countries and cultures. Other results, however, including genre-specific findings may be dependent on the history and role of a genre within its respective musical world.

"We have taken an important step towards enabling the further development of questionnaires for researching [musical taste](#)," Siebrasse said. "In the future, our approach should be extended to other genres and regions. A further step could also be to combine this type of survey with specific sound examples."

More information: You don't know a person('s taste) when you only know which genre they like: Taste differences within five popular music genres based on sub-genres and sub-styles, *Frontiers in Psychology* (2023). [DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1062146](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1062146) ,

[www.frontiersin.org/articles/1... yg.2023.1062146/full](https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/1062146/full)

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