2020 AARP MUSIC AND BRAIN HEALTH SURVEY

June 2020
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KEY FINDINGS
Key Findings
Survey among adults ages 18 and older:

❖ Adults who engage in music are more likely to self-report their overall health, brain health, and cognitive function as excellent or very good.

❖ Listening to music shows a small, positive effect on mental well-being, depression, and anxiety. This includes listening to music in the background, attending musical performances, and focused listening to recorded music.

❖ Most adults have engaged in some type of music. This includes singing, dancing, playing a musical instrument, or composing music either alone or with a group, either currently or in the past.

❖ Early childhood exposure to music is related to musical engagement in adulthood.

❖ A higher percentage of adults who reported more frequent music exposure in childhood say their quality of life and their ability to learn new things in general is excellent or very good.

❖ Current engagement in music makes up for a lack of early childhood exposure as reflected in higher-than-average mental well-being scores.
One-third listen to background music half the time or more often

About one-third of adults ages 18 and older spend half the time or more listening to background music during everyday activities. Younger adults are more likely than older adults to listen to background music for half the time or more.

Q10: What percentage of your day are you passively listening to music (i.e., have music on in the background) while you are engaged in everyday activities? For example, when you are in the car, at home, while you are reading or studying, while exercising, while you are falling asleep, etc. Never, Rarely (up to about 25% of the time), Sometimes (25% to 50% of the time), Often (more than 25% of the time up to about 50% of the time), Most of the time (more than 50% of the time up to about 75% of the time), Most of the time (over 75% to 100% of the time).

- Most of the time (over 75% to 100%): 35%
- Often (over 50% to 75%): 23%
- Sometimes (25% to 50%): 34%
- Rarely (up to 25%): 28%
- Never: 12%

Older adults report lower levels of listening to background music compared to younger adults (% most of the time/often):
- Gen Z – 42%
- Millennials – 41%
- Gen X – 34%
- Boomers – 30%
- Silent/Greatest – 24%

Two age groups:
- Ages 18 to 49 – 39%
- Ages 50-plus – 30%
Listening to music while engaged in everyday activities has a small, positive effect on mental well-being,¹ anxiety, and depression

Adults ages 18 and older who listen to music while engaging in routine activities have slightly higher average mental well-being scores and slightly lower anxiety and depression scores compared to adults who never have music on in the background.

Average scores for well-being, anxiety, and depression by listening to background music

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Listening Frequency</th>
<th>Mental Well-being</th>
<th>Anxiety</th>
<th>Depression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than half the time</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half the time or more</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q10: What percentage of your day are you passively listening to music (i.e., have music on in the background) while you are engaged in everyday activities? For example, when you are in the car, at home, while you are reading or studying, while exercising, while you are falling asleep, etc. Never, Rarely (up to about 25% of the time), Sometimes (more than 25% of the time up to about 50% of the time), Often (more than 50% of the time up to about 75% of the time), Most of the time (more than 75% of the time to 100% of the time)

Adults who report listening to background music more often have higher ratings for some cognitive functions and self-reported brain health.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The ability to...</th>
<th>Percent who said each feature of their cognitive function was excellent or very good by frequency of listening to background music</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remember names</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn new things in general</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finish what you start</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How would you describe your...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brain health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even when controlling for age, the more frequently adults ages 18 and older listen to background music while engaging in ordinary activities, the more likely they are to rate their ability to remember names, learn new things, and finish what they start as excellent or very good. This same relationship was also noted for brain health.

Q10: What percentage of your day are you passively listening to music (i.e., have music on in the background) while you are engaged in everyday activities? For example, when you are in the car, at home, while you are reading or studying, while exercising, while you are falling asleep, etc. Never, Rarely (up to about 25% of the time), Sometimes (more than 25% of the time up to about 50% of the time), Often (more than 50% of the time up to about 75% of the time), Most of the time (more than 75% of the time to 100% of the time)
One-third currently attend musical or dance performances, but more did so when they were younger

Nearly eight in 10 (79%) adults ages 18 and older currently attend musical performances or have done so in the past.

Q9m: Do you currently engage in any of the following activities or was your engagement only in the past? Attending a musical performance or concert? (i.e., ballet, opera, rock concert, musical theater, etc.)? I have never done this, I currently engage in this activity, My engagement was only in the past
Attending musical performances has a small, positive effect on mental well-being, anxiety, and depression

Adults ages 18 and older who attend musical performances or concerts have slightly higher average mental well-being scores and slightly lower anxiety and depression scores compared to adults overall, adults who have never engaged, and adults who only engaged in the past.


Q9m: Do you currently engage in any of the following activities or was your engagement only in the past? Attending a musical performance or concert? (i.e., ballet, opera, rock concert, musical theater, etc.)? I have never done this, I currently engage in this activity. My engagement was only in the past
Adults who attend musical performances are somewhat more likely to self-rate their cognitive function highly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The ability to...</th>
<th>Percent who said each feature of their cognitive function was excellent or very good by attendance at musical performances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remember names</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remember bills/medication</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make decisions</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solve problems</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn new things in general</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finish what you start</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How would you describe your...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall health</th>
<th>Brain health</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even when controlling for age, adults ages 18 and older who say they currently attend musical performances (i.e., ballet, opera, concerts, musical theater, etc.) are more likely to self-rate aspects of their cognitive function as excellent or very good compared to all adults combined and especially adults who have never engaged in this activity.

Q9m: Do you currently engage in any of the following activities or was your engagement only in the past? Attending a musical performance or concert? (i.e., ballet, opera, rock concert, musical theater, etc.)? I have never done this, I currently engage in this activity, My engagement was only in the past.
Majority listen to recorded music in a focused way

More than eight in 10 adults ages 18 and older have ever listened to recorded music in a deliberate and focused way and two-thirds say they currently engage in this activity. **More older adults than younger adults currently engage in this activity.**

Current engagement in focused listening to recorded music, overall and by age

Q9n: Do you currently engage in any of the following activities or was your engagement only in the past? Focused listening to recorded music? I have never done this, I currently engage in this activity, My engagement was only in the past.
Focused listening to recorded music has a small, positive effect on mental well-being,\(^3\) anxiety, and depression

Adults ages 18 and older who listen to recorded music in a focused way have slightly higher average mental well-being scores and slightly lower anxiety and depression scores compared to adults overall, adults who have never engaged, and adults who only engaged in the past.

Average scores for well-being, anxiety, and depression by focused listening to recorded music

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never engaged</th>
<th>Past engagement</th>
<th>Currently engaged</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mental well-being (average)</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>49.1</td>
<td>51.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety (average)</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression (average)</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adults who currently listen to recorded music in a focused way are more likely to self-rate their cognitive function highly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The ability to...</th>
<th>Percent who said each feature of their cognitive function was excellent or very good by focused listening to recorded music</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remember bills/medication</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make decisions</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solve problems</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn new things in general</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finish what you start</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How would you describe your...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How would you describe your...</th>
<th>Overall health</th>
<th>Brain health</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall health</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brain health</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q9n: Do you currently engage in any of the following activities or was your engagement only in the past? Focused listening to recorded music? I have never done this, I currently engage in this activity, My engagement was only in the past.
Majority of adults have actively engaged in music or dance, either by themselves, with a group, or both

Two-thirds of adults ages 18 and older currently participate in some form of music or dance. Singing is the most common form of active musical engagement.

Q9: Do you currently engage in any of the following activities or was your engagement only in the past? I have never done this, I currently engage in this activity, my engagement was only in the past
Women more likely than men to have ever participated in dancing and singing, younger adults more likely to have ever played an instrument.

Demographic differences by type of active musical engagement ever:

- **Sing**
  - More women than men (83% vs 71%)
  - Fewer Hispanic/Latino adults than adults overall (61% vs 77%)

- **Dance**
  - More women than men (76% vs 55%)
  - More African American/Black adults compared to adults overall (77% vs 66%)

- **Instrumental music**
  - More Gen Z and Millennials than adults overall (60%, 54% vs 48%)
  - More adults ages 18–49 compared to adults ages 50+ (51% vs 44%)
  - More Asian American adults compared to adults overall (61% vs 48%)

- **Compose**
  - More Gen Z compared to adults overall (30% vs 15%)
  - More adults ages 18–49 compared to adults ages 50+ (20% vs 10%)

Q9: Do you currently engage in any of the following activities or was your engagement only in the past? I have never done this, I currently engage in this activity, my engagement was only in the past.
Majority currently engage in singing by themselves

More than three-quarters of adults ages 18 and older have engaged in singing at some point in their lives. Adults who have engaged in singing with a vocal group have primarily engaged in the past.

Q9: Do you currently engage in any of the following activities or was your engagement only in the past? I have never done this, I currently engage in this activity, my engagement was only in the past.
Two-thirds have ever engaged in dance

Nearly four in 10 adults ages 18 and older say they currently engage in dancing by themselves without singing. Other forms of dance engagement were in the past.

Q9: Do you currently engage in any of the following activities or was your engagement only in the past? I have never done this, I currently engage in this activity, my engagement was only in the past

- Alone, no singing: 38% currently engage, 19% past engagement
- With a group, no singing: 10% currently engage, 30% past engagement
- Dancing and singing at the same time, alone or with a group: 14% currently engage, 18% past engagement

66% have ever engaged in dancing (41% currently)
Nearly half of adults have played an instrument in their lives

Relatively few adults ages 18 and older are currently playing a musical instrument alone or as part of a group. The piano or keyboard is the most common instrument played at a satisfactory level.

The top 10 musical instruments are:

- Piano/keyboard (42%)
- Acoustic guitar (23%)
- Drums (13%)
- Electric guitar (12%)
- Flute (12%)
- Violin (11%)
- Clarinet (11%)
- Recorder (11%)
- Trumpet (9%)
- Saxophone (7%)

48% have ever played a musical instrument (13% currently)

Q9: Do you currently engage in any of the following activities or was your engagement only in the past? I have never done this, I currently engage in this activity, my engagement was only in the past

Q9c: Which of the following musical instruments have you played in the past or do you currently play satisfactorily? (Check all that apply)
Few adults are likely to take music lessons in the future

A large majority of adults ages 18 and older say they are not likely to take music lessons in the future. However, Hispanic/Latino and Asian American adults are slightly more likely to say they will take music lessons in the future as are younger adults.

Q9b: How likely are you to take music lessons in the future?

- Not at all likely: 9%
- Not very likely: 2%
- Somewhat likely: 2%
- Very likely: 13%
- Extremely likely: 88%

Adults who are more likely to take music lessons in the future:
- Adults ages 18–49 (18%) compared to adults ages 50+ (8%).
- Gen Z (23%) and Millennials (19%) compared to Gen X (12%), Boomers (8%), and Silent/Greatest (2%).
- Hispanic/Latino (21%) and Asian American (21%) compared to White (9%) and African American/Black (14%).
Adults ages 18 and older who have ever actively engaged in music are slightly more likely to self-rate their cognitive function highly

Adults ages 18 and older who reported engaging in any of 12 musical activities (beyond attending a concert and focused listening) are slightly more likely to self-rate selected features of their cognitive function as excellent or very good. Additionally, those who have engaged in music are slightly more likely to rate their overall health and brain health as excellent or very good.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The ability to...</th>
<th>Percent of adults ages 18+ who said each feature of their cognitive function was excellent or very good by active musical engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remember bills/medication</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn new things in general</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of life</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How would you describe your...</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall health</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brain health</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Represents a computed variable that includes the percent of their lives that individuals engaged actively in music.

Q9: Do you currently engage in any of the following activities or was your engagement only in the past? I have never done this, I currently engage in this activity, My engagement was only in the past
Q9a: Approximately, for how many years have you engaged in the following activities at least one time per year? (note: if you took a break from the activity, exclude those years in your overall count)
The subset of adults ages 50 and older who have actively engaged in music are also slightly more likely to self-rate their cognitive function highly

Adults ages 50 and older who reported engaging in any of 12 musical activities (beyond attending a concert and focused listening) are slightly more likely to self-rate selected features of their cognitive function as excellent or very good including their overall health and brain health.

Percent of adults ages 50+ who said each feature of their cognitive function was excellent or very good by active musical engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>All adults ages 50+</th>
<th>No music engagement</th>
<th>Active music engagement, ever*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Remember names</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remember bills/medication</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn new things</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall health</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brain health</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Represents a computed variable that includes the percent of their lives that individuals engaged actively in music.

Q9: Do you currently engage in any of the following activities or was your engagement only in the past? I have never done this, I currently engage in this activity, My engagement was only in the past
Q9a: Approximately, for how many years have you engaged in the following activities at least one time per year? (note: if you took a break from the activity, exclude those years in your overall count)
The subset of adults ages 50 and older who have actively engaged in music self-rate their happiness and quality of life slightly higher.

Those who reported engaging in any of 12 musical activities (beyond attending a concert and focused listening) are slightly more likely to rate their happiness and quality of life as excellent or very good compared to adults who have not.

Percent of adults ages 50+ who said their happiness and quality of life was excellent or very good by active musical engagement:

- Happiness:
  - All adults ages 50-plus: 59%
  - No music engagement: 57%
  - Active music engagement, ever*: 62%

- Quality of life:
  - All adults ages 50-plus: 60%
  - No music engagement: 57%
  - Active music engagement, ever*: 64%

* Represents a computed variable that includes the percent of their lives that individuals engaged actively in music.

Q9: Do you currently engage in any of the following activities or was your engagement only in the past? I have never done this, I currently engage in this activity, My engagement was only in the past
Q9a: Approximately, for how many years have you engaged in the following activities at least one time per year? (note: if you took a break from the activity, exclude those years in your overall count)
MUSIC PREFERENCES AND LISTENING BEHAVIOR
Most adults embrace music from different generations

It may come as a surprise to some that adults ages 18 and older like music from a variety of generations, not simply their own generation. Very few only like music from their own generation.

Q32: Do you enjoy music from generations other than your own? Yes, I like music from before my generation; Yes, I like music from after my generation; No, I only enjoy music from my generation

Preference for music from generations other than their own

- 81% I like music from before my generation
- 49% I like music from after my generation
- 9% I only like music from my generation
Music listening is most common on a car radio and a smart phone

Significant differences were seen between two age groups for the devices commonly used to listen to music. Significantly more adults ages 50-plus listen on a car radio, a stereo system, and an electric/battery operated radio. Significantly more adults ages 18 to 49 listen on a smart phone and a computer.

Q33: On what type of device do you consume music?

* Not statistically significant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Device</th>
<th>All adults</th>
<th>Age 18 to 49</th>
<th>Age 50+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Car radio</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart phone</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laptop or desktop computer</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereo system</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iPad or tablet*</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric or battery operated radio</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MP3 player*</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q33: On what type of device do you consume music?

* Not statistically significant
The devices used for music listening vary greatly by generation

The most noteworthy differences are for the car radio and the stereo system where use is much greater for older generations and for the smartphone and the computer that are much more likely to be used by younger generations. Additionally, Hispanic/Latino and African American/Black adults are more likely to listen on a smart phone.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Device</th>
<th>Gen Z (up to age 23)</th>
<th>Millennials (ages 24 to 39)</th>
<th>Gen X (ages 40 to 55)</th>
<th>Boomers (age 56 to 74)</th>
<th>Silent/Greatest (ages 75-plus)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Car radio</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart phone</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereo system</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iPad or tablet*</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric/battery operated radio</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MP3 player</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q33: On what type of device do you consume music?

* Not statistically significant

Hispanic/Latino (73%) and African American/Black (70%) adults ages 18 and older are significantly more likely to listen to music on a smart phone compared to Asian American (66%) and White (58%) adults.
Some adults listen to music while praying or meditating

Just over one-quarter of adults ages 18 and older meditate with music playing and nearly one in five pray with music playing. Demographic differences were noted for those who meditate with music playing: Adults under age 50, Millennials, and Hispanic/Latino and African American/Black adults are all somewhat more likely to meditate with music.

Percent who meditate with music playing by age, generation, race/ethnicity

- **Adults under age 50** are slightly more likely to meditate with music playing compared to those ages 50 and older (30% vs. 24%)
- **Millennials (35%)** are more likely to meditate with music playing than other generations (Gen Z, 27%; Gen X through Silent/Greatest, 24% each).
- **Hispanic/Latino (36%) and African American/Black (33%)** adults are slightly more likely to meditate with music compared to Asian American (28%) and White adults (23%).

Q13a: Do you pray with music playing? No, yes, not applicable (among those who say they pray, not applicable excluded)
Q13b: Do you meditate with music playing? No, yes, not applicable (among those who say they meditate, not applicable excluded)
Country music among favorite genres for adults of all ages

Additionally, popular music is a favorite genre for adults ages 18 to 49, rock music is favored among adults ages 50 to 64, and classical music is favored by adults ages 65 and older.

Q30: What are the top two styles of music that you enjoy listening to (i.e., musical genres/styles)?
Among adults ages 18 and older, Hispanic/Latino adults favor Latin and popular music, African American/Black adults prefer R & B and Gospel music, Asian American adults prefer popular music and country music, and White adults prefer country and rock music.

Q30: What are the top two styles of music that you enjoy listening to (i.e., musical genres/styles)?
Most adults experienced music in elementary school

Two-thirds of adults ages 18-plus were exposed to music in elementary school classrooms at least some of the time. Significantly fewer (51%) Hispanic/Latino adults said they were exposed at this frequency.

Q11: How often were you exposed to music in your elementary school classrooms? Often, sometimes, rarely, never

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>% often</th>
<th>% sometimes</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Frequency of exposure to music in elementary classrooms among adults ages 18-plus
Early music exposure related to self-reported ability to learn new things and self-reported quality of life

Significantly more adults ages 18-plus who had frequent elementary school exposure to music rate their ability to learn new things and their quality of life highly compared to those who were never exposed (68% vs. 50%, 60% vs 50%).

Q1g: How would you describe each of the following at this point in time? Would you say it is excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor (ability to learn new things in general, quality of life)
Q11: How often were you exposed to music in your elementary school classrooms? Often, sometimes, rarely, never
Most adults began enjoying music by age 11

One-third of adults ages 18-plus said they recall appreciating/enjoying music as a very young child and another third recalled this in elementary school. Fewer older adults said they remember appreciating music as a young child.

Q24: What is the earliest period in your life you can remember enjoying/appreciating music? A very young child (up to kindergarten age), elementary school (approximately ages 4 to 11), middle school/junior high school (approximately ages 11 to 14), high school (approximately ages 14 to 18), an adult younger than you are now (approximately ages 18 and older)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation/Age</th>
<th>% very young child</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gen Z (up to age 23)</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millennials (ages 24–39)</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen X (ages 40 to 55)</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boomers (ages 56 to 74)</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silent/Greatest (age 75-plus)</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 18 to 49</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 50-plus</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
African American/Black adults and young adults come from musical families

Significantly more African American/Black adults said they come from a musical family compared to all other racial/ethnic groups. Members of Gen Z are also significantly more likely to come from a musical family compared to other generations, especially the Silent/Greatest generations.

Q31: As you see it, would you say that you come from a musical family? Yes, no
Frequent exposure to music in elementary school related to more engagement in music listening in adulthood

Significantly more adults ages 18 and older who say they were often exposed to music in their elementary classroom have ever attended a musical performance, have ever listened to music in a focused way, and listen to background music half the time or more.

Q9: Do you currently engage in any of the following activities or what your engagement only in the past? I have never done this, I currently engage in this activity, my engagement was only in the past.

Q10: What percentage of your day are you passively listening to music (i.e., have music on in the background) while you are engaged in everyday activities? Never, Rarely (up to about 25% of the time), Sometimes (more than 25% of the time up to about 50% of the time), Often (more than 50% of the time up to about 75% of the time), Most of the time (more than 75% of the time to 100% of the time).

Q11: How often were you exposed to music in your elementary school classrooms? Often, sometimes, rarely, never.

Percent who have ever engaged in each type of music, by exposure to music in elementary school:

Attending musical performances (currently or in the past)
- Never: 88%
- Rarely: 80%
- Sometimes: 75%
- Often: 57%

Focused listening to recorded music (currently or in the past)
- Never: 87%
- Rarely: 82%
- Sometimes: 80%
- Often: 67%

Passive listening, half the time or more
- Never: 42%
- Rarely: 35%
- Sometimes: 29%
- Often: 27%
Adults who come from a musical family are somewhat more likely to engage in music listening

A small but significant percentage of adults who say they come from a musical family have ever attended a musical performance, have ever engaged in focused listening to recorded music, and listen to music while doing everyday things.

Q9: Do you currently engage in any of the following activities or what your engagement only in the past? I have never done this, I currently engage in this activity, my engagement was only in the past

Q10: What percentage of your day are you passively listening to music (i.e., have music on in the background) while you are engaged in everyday activities? For example, when you are in the car, at home, while you are reading or studying, while exercising, while you are falling asleep, etc. Never, Rarely (up to about 25% of the time), Sometimes (more than 25% of the time up to about 50% of the time), Often (more than 50% of the time up to about 75% of the time), Most of the time (more than 75% of the time to 100% of the time)

Q31: As you see it, would you say that you come from a musical family? Yes, no
Exposure to music in elementary school related to active musical engagement

Significantly more adults ages 18 and older who say they were often exposed to music in their elementary classroom activity engage in music compared to those adults who say they were never exposed to music.

Percent who have ever engaged in each type of music, by exposure to music in elementary school

- **Any music**: 93% Often, 88% Sometimes, 82% Rarely, 67% Never
- **Singing**: 87% Often, 79% Sometimes, 72% Rarely, 56% Never
- **Dancing**: 75% Often, 66% Sometimes, 62% Rarely, 47% Never
- **Instrumental**: 64% Often, 50% Sometimes, 37% Rarely, 25% Never
- **Composing**: 21% Often, 14% Sometimes, 12% Rarely, 11% Never

Q9: Do you currently engage in any of the following activities or what your engagement only in the past? I have never done this, I currently engage in this activity, my engagement was only in the past

Q11: How often were you exposed to music in your elementary school classrooms? Often, sometimes, rarely, never
Adults who come from a musical family are more likely to actively engage in music

Significantly more adults who say they come from a musical family have ever actively engaged in music.

Percent who have ever engaged in any type of music, by musical family

Q9: Do you currently engage in any of the following activities or was your engagement only in the past? I have never done this, I currently engage in this activity, my engagement was only in the past
Q31: As you see it, would you say that you come from a musical family? Yes, no
It is never too late to reap the benefits of music appreciation

Among adults ages 65 and older, current engagement in music amplifies the mental well-being effects of early music exposure or “makes up for” a lack of initial musical exposure. Adults with no early exposure to music but who currently engage in some music appreciation show above average mental well-being scores (54.4) thus “making up for” this lack of early exposure.

Mental well-being scores by segments based on musical exposure in elementary school and later musical appreciation activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No early exposure to music, no music appreciation</td>
<td>50.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early music exposure, no music appreciation</td>
<td>53.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No early exposure to music, some music appreciation</td>
<td>54.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early music exposure, music appreciation</td>
<td>56.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average = 53.7
(adults ages 65+)

**Early music exposure measure**: How often were you exposed to music in your elementary school classrooms? Often, sometimes, rarely, never

**Appreciation measure** is the mean of two items—1. Do you currently engage in any of the following activities or was your engagement only in the past? Attending a musical performance or concert? (i.e., ballet, opera, rock concert, musical theater, etc.)? and 2) Focused listening to recorded music? With response options 1) I have never done this, my engagement was only in the past, and 3) I currently engage in this activity.
Implications

A variety of different types of musical engagement show some benefits to adults ages 18 and older. Higher percentages of adults who engage in music self-rate aspects of their cognitive function, brain health, quality of life, and happiness as excellent or very good. Adults who engage in music also report lower average levels of anxiety and depression.

Music participation is an easily accessible way to engage the brain. The benefits of music participation are not limited to those who perform in a professional capacity. Anyone can add music to their daily lives simply by listening to music during everyday activities, attending a musical performance, or listening to recorded music.

Early exposure to music has long-term benefits into adulthood. Exposure to music in elementary school is related to engagement in music in adulthood.
Methodology

- **Objectives**: The study examines U.S. adults’ exposure and participation in music throughout their lives.
- **Methodology**: Online probability-based survey via Ipsos KnowledgePanel®.
- **Qualifications**: Ages 18 and older
- **Sample**: Ipsos KnowledgePanel®, n=3,185.
- **Interviewing Dates**: April 1–14, 2020.
- **Weighting**: The data were weighted according to CPS benchmarks including gender, age, race/ethnicity, education, census region, income, home ownership, and metropolitan area.
- **Questionnaire length**: 20 minutes
- **Confidence Interval**: Total sample: ± 1.86 percentage points.
About AARP

AARP is the nation’s largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Americans 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With nearly 38 million members and offices in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, AARP works to strengthen communities and advocate for what matters most to families with a focus on health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment. AARP also works for individuals in the marketplace by sparking new solutions and allowing carefully chosen, high-quality products and services to carry the AARP name. As a trusted source for news and information, AARP produces the nation’s largest circulation publications, AARP The Magazine and AARP Bulletin. To learn more, visit www.aarp.org or follow @AARP and @AARPadvoaetes on social media.
The Warwick-Edinburgh mental well-being scale

The validated mental well-being scale consists of 14 positively worded items. The score is calculated by assigning a value of 1 to 5 for the response to each item. The score ranges from a low of 14 to a high of 70.

Below are some statements about feelings and thoughts. Please select what best describes your experience over the last two weeks.

Statement in rows:
1. I've been feeling optimistic about the future
2. I've been feeling useful
3. I've been feeling relaxed
4. I've been feeling interested in other people
5. I've had energy to spare
6. I've been dealing with problems well
7. I've been thinking clearly
8. I've been feeling good about myself
9. I've been feeling close to other people
10. I've been feeling confident
11. I've been able to make up my own mind about things
12. I've been feeling loved
13. I've been interested in new things
14. I've been feeling cheerful

Answers in columns:
1. None of the time
2. Rarely
3. Some of the time
4. Often
5. All of the time
