Limitations

We are trusting a third party to appropriately model popularity without actually looking at their methodology.

Probable that Spotify has certain biases, including its userbase demographic not fully representing the US’ population.

Qualify the study by presenting it as an analysis of Spotify as a rough proxy (convenient) for describing American preference in music.

Just the US

Just this century

The relationship between popularity and the technology available at the time (may be easier to become popular now, with a greater diversity of channels through which to achieve success.)

The playlists of the past were not created contemporarily as were current playlists.

Are playlists of the past informed by the respective decade’s preferences (as measured in the respective decade) or by the current userbase’s preferences? Does the “top songs of the 70s” playlist consist of the songs that were most popular in the seventies or the songs written in the 70s that are most popular with Spotify’s current userbase? Either situation presents further issues to consider. If popularity is measured contemporarily, then we open ourselves up to methodological inconsistencies depending on the source of that measure. If popularity is measured by the current userbase’s preferences, then we can more safely assume that the methodology for measuring popularity is consistent among playlists. However, our data would not describe contemporary popularity, which affects what questions we ask about the data.