

In times of increasing isolation, more and more people have been reporting feelings of loneliness and deterioration in mental health. Music platforms can act as an escape out of the daily routine and a site for solo listeners to collectivize. Our personal experiences engaging with music throughout the pandemic showed us that our listening habits and taste in music are shaped by factors beyond our personal preferences. This is particularly relevant for young people.

In response to this query, our analysis delved into the effects of COVID-19 incidence (troughs vs peaks) on a number of song audio attributes generated by Spotify. Our analysis outlines some anticipated external stakeholder groups:

- Spotify and other existing music streaming platforms: Our analysis may generate a negative reaction across these different platforms. The monopolization of the music streaming industry implies that any explicitly ‘negative’ outcome will be received with backlash from the corporate world.
- Music experts, avid lovers, and creators: Our analysis may come across as reductionist towards the process of music creation and production. Many factors go into producing a track that may have nothing to do with the physical alterations in our built environments. The strong potential for confounding in our analysis may repel those strongly passionate about the meaning and influence of music in our lives.

In addition, our analysis is rife with assumptions. These include assumptions of no copyright or legal conflicts. We also did not question normative standards, including the role of major streaming platforms in society, human connections to music and continued availability of adequately powerful data.

We expect unfair outcomes in some scenarios. The features we used to assess variation in tracks may not be representative of many important aspects beyond audio features. We expect no significant negative impact on community wellbeing. We did not address environmental harm resulting from data collection and storage.