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Gender and Racial Discrimination in the U.S. Music Industry

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Abstract

This study summarizes and analyzes the gender and racial discrimination that musicians may face in the music labor market of the United States, with a focus on exploring gender and race interactions' effects on the economic return of musicians. This study is based on a survey of 1,227 musicians in the United States in 2018, which was conducted by the Music Industry Research Association (MIRA) and the Princeton University Survey Research Center (SRC), in partnership with MusiCares. The survey reveals that females, who make up about one-third of the population of musicians, report experiencing high rates of discrimination and sexual harassment. When considering female musicians, 72% report that they have been discriminated against because of their gender, and 67% report that they have been the victim of sexual harassment; corresponding figures for U.S. women more generally are 28% and 42%, respectively. For non-White musicians, 63% said they faced racial discrimination, as compared to 36% of on-White self-employed workers nationwide who said the same. Although the descriptive statistics suggest that musicians are suffering from both gender and racial discrimination, no initial empirical evidence has been found that this would have a negative impact on musicians' music-related earnings. The interaction effects between gender and race in both general and specific forms on music-related earnings

are studied to further explore the possible effect of gender/racial discrimination on the economic return to musicians' music-related activities; however, although some race-associated differences have been found, the evidence of racial discrimination on the economic return is not strong.

JEL Classifications: J15, J16, J44, J49

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Biographies

Ying Zhen is an Associate Professor of Business and Economics at Wesleyan College in Macon, Georgia, where she serves as the Economics Program Director. Her major fields of specialization are Labor Economics, Cultural Economics and Industrial Organization. Specific research interests include Music Business and Economics of Immigration.