

Psychosocial exposures among performing musicians, by type of work arrangement

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Abstract [201 words]

Background: Professional musicians experience multiple psychosocial stressors, some resulting from inherent features of the work, such as high performance expectations, and others related to dearth and instability of paid employment. We assessed a wide range of psychosocial factors among musicians in a variety of work arrangements.

Methods: A questionnaire was mailed to members of two U.S. musicians' unions about health, demographics, and features of their musical and non-music work. Exposures were summarized (1) for all music work (any instrument); (2) within primary instrument only, and (3) for non-music jobs. Mean values of psychosocial exposures were compared among job groups with the Student t-test.

Results: Of 319 respondents, most were classically trained instrumentalists with orchestral positions; about one-third were non-orchestral and/or freelance musicians with varied work arrangements. Forty-nine had additional non-music work, ranging from clerical to construction. Orchestral musicians, especially those also working freelance, reported higher psychosocial stressors than non-orchestral instrumentalists.

Conclusions: Psychosocial features of musicians' work varied in accordance with their employment options, which are diverse and not mutually exclusive. Potential selection and information bias may limit generalizability of these findings. Nonetheless, this study is distinctive in the broad characterization of professional musicians' work and the variety of work arrangements studied.