

The background of the cover is a vibrant red color. Overlaid on this are several thick, curved lines in a lighter red and a muted blue color. These lines sweep across the page from the top left towards the bottom right, creating a sense of motion and depth. The lines are layered, with some appearing closer to the viewer than others.

**A Decade of Discovery:
Swedish artists on Spotify
2015–2025**

Daniel Johansson
2026

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1. Introduction

The music industry is currently undergoing one of the biggest shifts in the history of recorded music. The shift from tangible media to streaming has made it possible for millions of new artists to release music and reach new audiences on a global scale. Numerous artists from countries that previously lacked international visibility are now experiencing an expansion of their audience, as digital connectivity enables their music to reach once inaccessible markets.

At the same time, the reduction of barriers to entry for releasing music has resulted in a digital landscape characterized by an unprecedented surge in the total volume of available artists and tracks. This development is driven by new digital production tools for music creation, more efficient and cheaper distribution opportunities, while a growing number of stakeholders must share the revenues emanating from streaming subscriptions.

In 2015, global revenues from digital formats surpassed physical formats for the first time¹. Streaming was yet to see its full global breakthrough, accounting for only 19% of total revenues that year, while paid downloads remained the leading digital format worldwide.

However, several markets had already transitioned, most notably the Nordic markets of Sweden and Norway, while it would take a few more years for streaming to achieve global dominance. By 2025 streaming accounted for nearly 70% of global recorded music revenues².

Being a company of Swedish origin, Spotify quickly became the dominant platform on the domestic market. As early as 2011, reve-

nues from streaming had already surpassed both paid downloads and physical formats. In 2025, Spotify's payouts for music catalogs by Swedish artists reached nearly 2 billion SEK, effectively doubling the amount paid out in the year 2018.

By the end of 2015, Spotify reported 91 million Monthly Active Users on a global scale, including 28 million premium subscribers. A decade later, by the end of 2025, these figures had scaled significantly to 751 million users, including 290 million premium subscribers.

The year 2015 can be viewed as a pivotal turning point. Digital formats surpassed physical formats, as listeners in major markets, including the United States, United Kingdom, France, South Korea, Mexico, Brazil and Australia, began transitioning to streaming on a larger scale.

Furthermore, 2015 marks an increase in revenues within the Swedish market. Although Sweden transitioned to streaming earlier than most, 2015 represented a definitive turning point regarding revenues paid to rights holders. It was around that time that Swedish labels and other rights holders began to feel confident that streaming was a sustainable format. The total turnover for recorded music in Sweden grew by 13% in 2015 relative to 2014³.

¹ IFPI Global Music Report, 2016

² IFPI Global Music Report, 2026

³ Musikbranschen i siffror 2009–2024

(Musiksverige). <https://www.musiksverige.org/>

In 2015, a few million uploaders were present on Spotify globally; by 2025, that figure had grown to 12 million. The exponential increase in the number of creators now able to express themselves through music represents a significant creative explosion. This growth, however, introduces challenges, as millions of new artists enter an increasingly crowded market where competition for listener attention is more intense than ever before.

The dynamic has further changed due to the rise of short-video platforms in recent years. They have redefined the conditions for interaction between artist and audience, which in turn directly correlates with popularity and engagement on streaming platforms. In parallel, there is also a clear trend where catalog listening, the consumption of older music, is increasing.

Against this background, artists today face a changed reality in order to break through the noise and establish lasting relationships with fans and listeners. This report focuses on how these changes have affected Swedish artists, specifically during the years 2015–2025⁴. Through an analysis of unique Spotify data, a mapping of how artists' fundamental conditions have changed is presented.

What does the competition look like today compared to ten years ago? Is it more difficult to be discovered today than just a few years back? How many new Swedish artists have started to release music during this time period? How many new releases have been published? How has listening changed in Sweden during these years? And what does all this say about new artists' opportunities to be discovered and build an economically sustainable career in today's music landscape?

The report begins with a general overview of the trends for all Swedish artists, followed by a specific analysis focused on data for emerging new artists, and concludes with a discussion on the implications of these figures and how they represent shifting prerequisites for Swedish artists.

⁴ The data analysis and report were commissioned to Daniel Johansson, an independent researcher at Inland Norway University and analyst at the Swedish music industry news outlet Musikindustrin.se. The data presented in this report was provided to the researcher by the data team at Spotify. The researcher wishes to express gratitude for the high level of transparency Spotify maintained throughout this project, with a specific note of thanks to Julia Levander. Any errors or omissions in this report are the sole responsibility of the author.

2. The increase of Swedish artists on Spotify 2015–2025

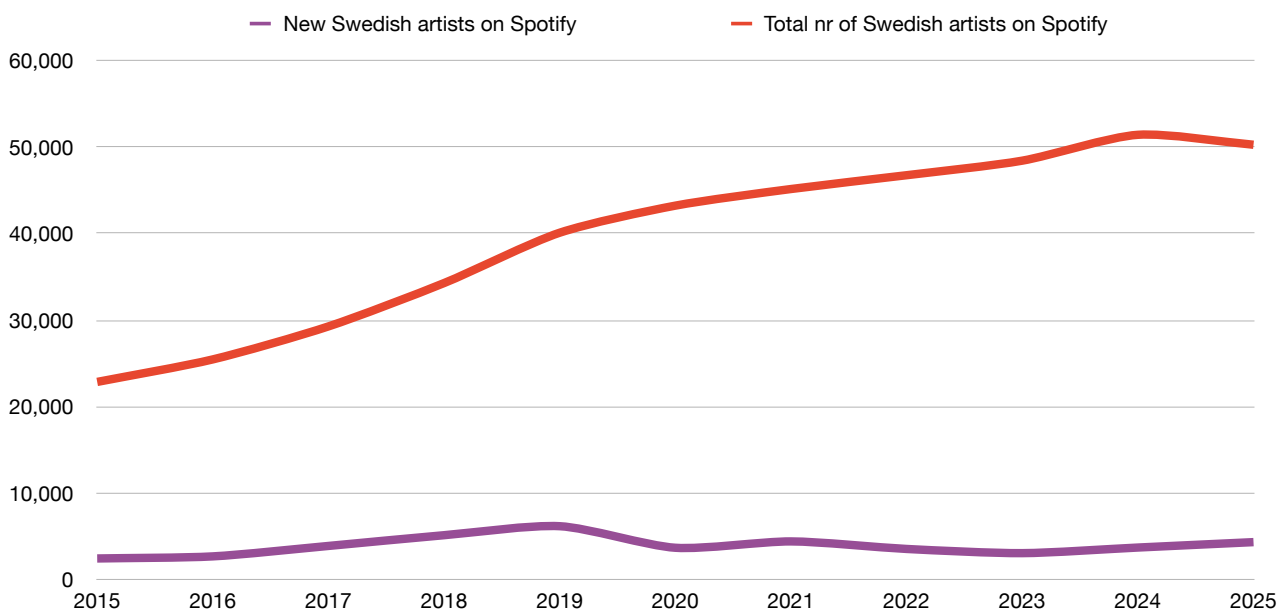
In 2015, there were 22,837 active Swedish artists on Spotify, with 'active' defined as maintaining an artist account with at least one stream during the year⁵. By 2025, the number had risen to 50,266, representing an increase of 120%. Between 2015 and 2025, the number of new Swedish artists on Spotify grew by an average of 3,976 each year. In total, 23,856 new artists started to release music on Spotify during the period.

It is important to highlight that the definition of an 'active' artist remains subjective. Given the lowered barriers to entry on streaming platforms, one could argue that simply uploading a track does not automatically make

someone an artist, just as posting a piece of content on Instagram or TikTok does not inherently make someone an influencer.

For the purpose of this particular analysis, the aforementioned definition was chosen to illustrate the broad trends regarding new Swedish artist accounts on Spotify. However, a large portion of these are not 'active' in a professional sense, as many do not aspire to become part-time artists or earn a living from their music. For the main part of this report, however, the focus remains on aspiring artists who are actively seeking to build an audience and generate interest in their music.

Figure 1: The increase of Swedish artists on Spotify 2015-2025



Spotify saw a notable surge in the number of new Swedish artists in 2018 and 2019. This trend is likely linked to the introduction of more accessible distribution services, such as the Swedish company Amuse. Launched in 2017, the platform gained significant traction in Sweden during 2018 and 2019 due to its free tier. As one of the first distributors to offer some distribution

services at no cost, it is plausible that this shift is reflected in the increased number of new artists during those years.

⁵ In this report, "artist" refers to any featured performer, including solo acts, bands, or other human ensembles. Spam, slop, karaoke artists and soundalikes have been filtered out for the purpose of this report.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the addition of new artists remained steady as many turned to releasing music when other opportunities were restricted. In 2021 alone, 4,390 new Swedish artists launched their streaming careers. Although this rate of entry stabilized slightly in the post-pandemic years, the influx of new artists has remained consistently high. In 2025, the number of new Swedish artists joining the platform reached 4,308, well over the average increase per year during the time period.

Given this rapid expansion, it is beneficial to compare the surge in artist numbers with the development of streaming revenues in the Swedish market during the same period. According to Musiksverige⁶, which compiles annual revenue data for the Swedish music industry, total streaming revenues for master owners stood at just over 1 billion SEK in 2015 (nominal value). By 2025, these revenues had grown to 2.2 billion SEK, an increase of 69% when adjusted for inflation⁷.

In recent years, however, Musiksverige reports that revenue growth has begun to flatten (in real value, adjusted for inflation). As Sweden is a mature streaming market, their analysis suggests that future growth is increasingly tied to price adjustments by streaming platforms intended to keep pace with inflation, rather than a large increase in paying subscribers on the Swedish market. At the same time, streaming revenues from abroad have increased rapidly, specifically after 2017, when the big shift to streaming started to happen in the United States and other large markets.

⁶ www.musiksverige.org

⁷ It is noteworthy that these figures represent total streaming revenues for all master owners, including international artists whose music is streamed within Sweden. Consequently, these revenues do not flow solely to Swedish rights holders.

Case study 1: Nea

Nea is a Swedish artist and songwriter who built a world-class reputation behind the scenes before launching her solo career. Born in South Africa and raised in Alingsås, Sweden, her professional breakthrough came as a co-writer for Zara Larsson's "Lush Life" (2015).

*She officially became a solo artist in late 2019 with her debut single, "Some Say." The track reached #1 on airplay charts in seven countries and became the 9th most-played track on European radio that year. She released her debut EP in 2020 and her full-length debut album, *Transparent*, in late 2023.*

As of April 2026, Nea maintains a stable listener base of 1.2 million Monthly Listeners. Her career is characterized by an export-first approach, with her largest audiences located in Germany, the USA, Poland, France, the UK, and Spain.

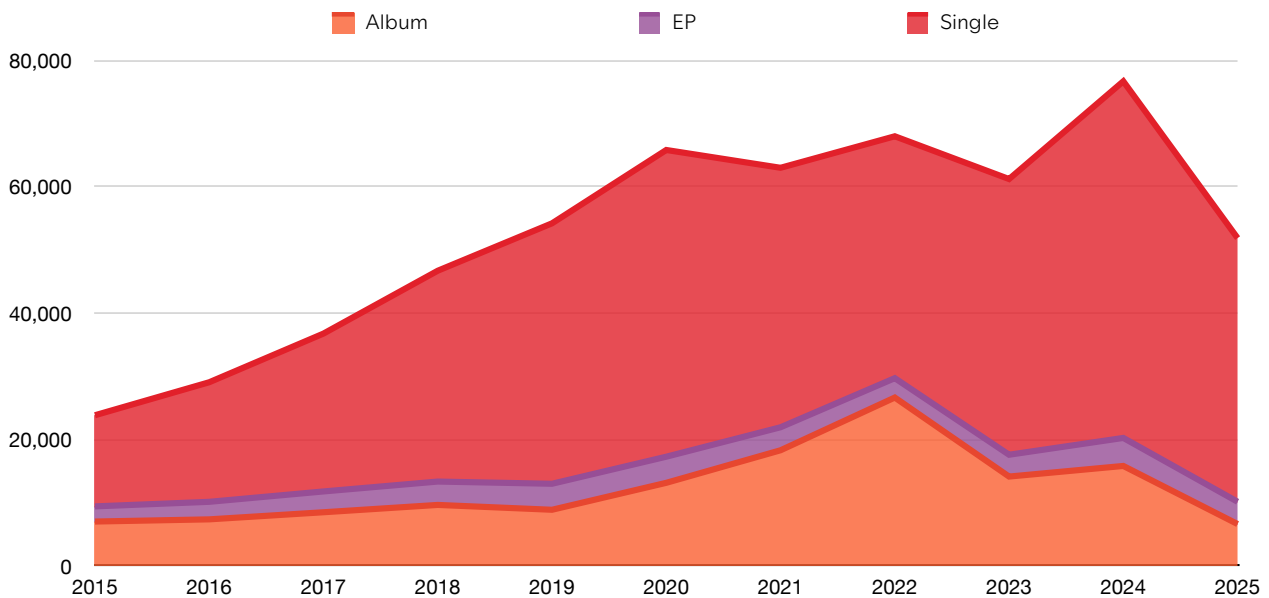
Her streaming success is primarily driven by her ability to craft English-language pop that resonates in the global dance-pop ecosystem. By April 2026, she had generated close to 1 billion streams on Spotify as a featured artist, not including the billions of streams related to tracks she has written for other artists.

3. The increase of new releases from Swedish artists 2015–2025

Concurrently, the volume of new releases from Swedish artists on Spotify expanded throughout this period. In 2015, there were 23,844 releases across singles, EPs, and full albums from Swedish artists; by 2025, this figure had risen to 51,234. The average annual release rate over the decade was 52,395. In total, Swedish artists published 576,343 releases on Spotify during the period.

Single releases per year have been by far the most dominant format in terms of growth, surging by 185% between 2015 and 2025, with an average annual increase of 17%. The vast majority of this growth stems from the independent sector according to the data, specifically DIY artists. In contrast, the number of releases on Spotify from Swedish artists signed to major record labels has somewhat declined throughout the period.

Figure 2: Releases by format – Swedish artists 2015-2025



In the fall of 2025, Spotify announced it had purged 75 million "slop" or spam tracks from its platform, including AI-generated content⁸. In their announcement, Spotify stated: *"Left unchecked, these behaviors can dilute the royalty pool and impact attention for artists playing by the rules. Our new music spam filter will protect against this behavior and help prevent spammers from generating royalties that could otherwise be distributed to professional artists and songwriters."*

It is plausible that the 33.2% decrease in new releases from artist accounts tagged as Swedish in 2025 can be related to this. It is important to note that the spam deleted in 2025 included tracks published prior to that year. The figures presented here represent the aggregate total of releases from artists tagged as Swedish for each year, unadjust-

⁸ <https://newsroom.spotify.com/2025-09-25/spotify-strengthens-ai-protections/>

ed for subsequent takedowns. Because generative AI music platforms surged in popularity following their releases in late 2023 and early 2024, it is possible that a portion of the 2024 peak consisted of spam content that has since been removed. The surge of album releases seen in 2021 and 2022 can in part be attributed to the "deluxe" album phenomenon, where existing projects are repackaged with additional tracks.

The sharp rise in single releases during the early part of this period can in part be attributed to the so-called waterfall release strategy. This method involves releasing singles every 3–4 weeks rather than a full album, sometimes accompanied by the popular trend of "sped up" versions.

When combining data on the growth of new artists on Spotify with the volume of new releases, it becomes evident that over the investigated decade, Sweden has experienced an expansion that is likely unprecedented in the history of the Swedish music industry.

The lowered barriers to producing high-quality music with digital tools, combined with effortless digital distribution, have significantly compressed the timeline between creation, recording and release. In the former physical paradigm, the journey from creating and recording music, to releasing it, typically took months, if not years.

Today, an artist can record a song at home and have it available globally within a week or two. The rise of affordable, and sometimes entirely free, distributors has democratized the process, making it possible for almost anyone to release music.

Notably, the average number of releases per year aligns closely with the total number of Swedish artists on Spotify. In 2015, 22,837 artists accounted for 23,844 releases; by 2025, 50,266 artists accounted for 51,864 releases. Since professional and semi-professional artists typically put out multiple releases annually, these figures suggest that the vast majority of artist accounts on Spotify maintain a low release frequency.

Case Study 2: Jubël

Jubël serves as an example of how artists have adapted to the surge in release volumes on Spotify. Their career is characterized by a high-output strategy, utilizing frequent releases to stay relevant. Since their first release of "Home" in 2017, they have published well over 50 releases on Spotify.

The duo demonstrates a strategy of re-releasing and diversifying a single piece of content to maximize visibility. A definitive moment in their career was the 2018 cover of King Harvest's "Dancing in the Moonlight." Rather than relying on a single upload, Jubël have released various versions, radio edits, remixes, and acoustic takes, to maintain a presence. This strategy has proved highly effective; as of April 2026, the duo have generated more than 1.2 billion streams on Spotify.

Jubël's success highlights the transition from a traditional "album cycle" to a "single-led" model. By maintaining a consistent stream of new music and collaborations (such as with NEIMY and Christopher), they ensure they remain relevant. As of April 2026, Jubël maintains approximately 2.7 million Monthly Listeners on Spotify.

4. Releases by Swedish artists in the native language

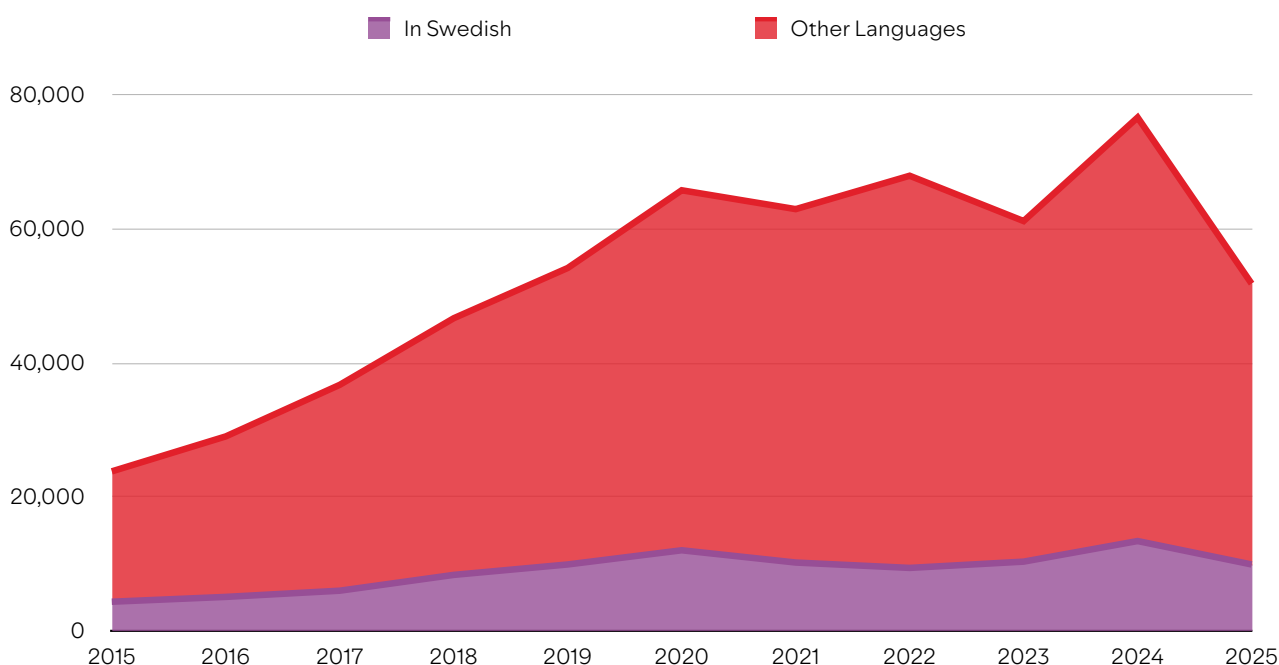
As Spotify is a global platform and the Swedish music industry has a decades-long history as a prominent source of writing, producing and performing music on a global scale, it is valuable to investigate the trends of releases by Swedish artists in their native language.

In 2015, there were 4,389 releases in the Swedish language on Spotify, across the formats mentioned earlier. By 2025, this

figure had risen to 9,950, representing an increase of 127%. Music performed in Swedish saw a 5% year-on-year increase in royalties on Spotify in 2025, and an 11% increase since 2023.

This aligns closely with the overall market development in Sweden, where genres like Swedish hip-hop and the genre epadunk gained significant traction during those years.

Figure 3: Releases in Swedish vs Other Languages 2015-2025



In 2015, 19,455 releases were made by Swedish artists in languages other than their native language, with English presumably being the dominant language. By 2025, this number had increased to 41,914, an increase by 115%.

Overall, the ratio between new releases by Swedish artists in Swedish and other languages, has remained consistent over the years. In 2015, Swedish-language accounted for 18.4% of releases; by 2025, this remained stable at 19.2%, with the proportion

staying broadly the same throughout the entire time period.

Considering this data, it stands to reason that although releases in other languages are predominant from a volume perspective, many artists continue the tradition of writing and performing lyrics in Swedish. While the ratio between native and other languages has remained relatively stable throughout the period, it remains to be seen whether this trend will persist, given the fundamental changes in the streaming market over the most recent years.

Case Study 3: Jireel

Jireel represents a shift in the Swedish music landscape during the period of 2015–2025. Primarily performing in Swedish, Jireel, born in 2000, gained attention by the record label Nivy already when he was 15 years old, in 2015. He released his debut single "Här & Nu" in late 2015, but his definitive breakthrough occurred in 2016 with the song "Cataleya," followed by the release of the album "Jettad" in 2017.

Jireel's career illustrates how emerging artists can leverage digital platforms to bypass traditional media gatekeepers and build a large audience. As of April 2026, he maintains approximately 866,000 Monthly Listeners, and his music has generated a total of 840 million streams on Spotify.

Jireel has utilized strategic collaborations with artists across genres, such as Victor Leksell and Estraden, to transition from a niche hip-hop artist into a mainstream pop icon. His success serves as a prime example of an artist-led focus on audience engagement. Rather than utilizing platforms solely for promotion, Jireel leverages social media and short-video platforms to project a lifestyle and brand that resonates with his followers.

This approach creates a spillover effect, where high levels of social engagement fuel his monthly streaming metrics. Jireel was an early adopter of high-quality visual content, utilizing Spotify Canvas, YouTube, and stylized social media posts to establish a personal aesthetic.

Furthermore, he strategically uses TikTok to preview unreleased tracks and participate in cultural trends, ensuring that his music remains prominent during the discovery phase for Gen Z fans. Jireel remains a vital example of how an artist can transition from a viral newcomer into a sustainable, catalog-rich household name.

5. The rise of catalog consumption

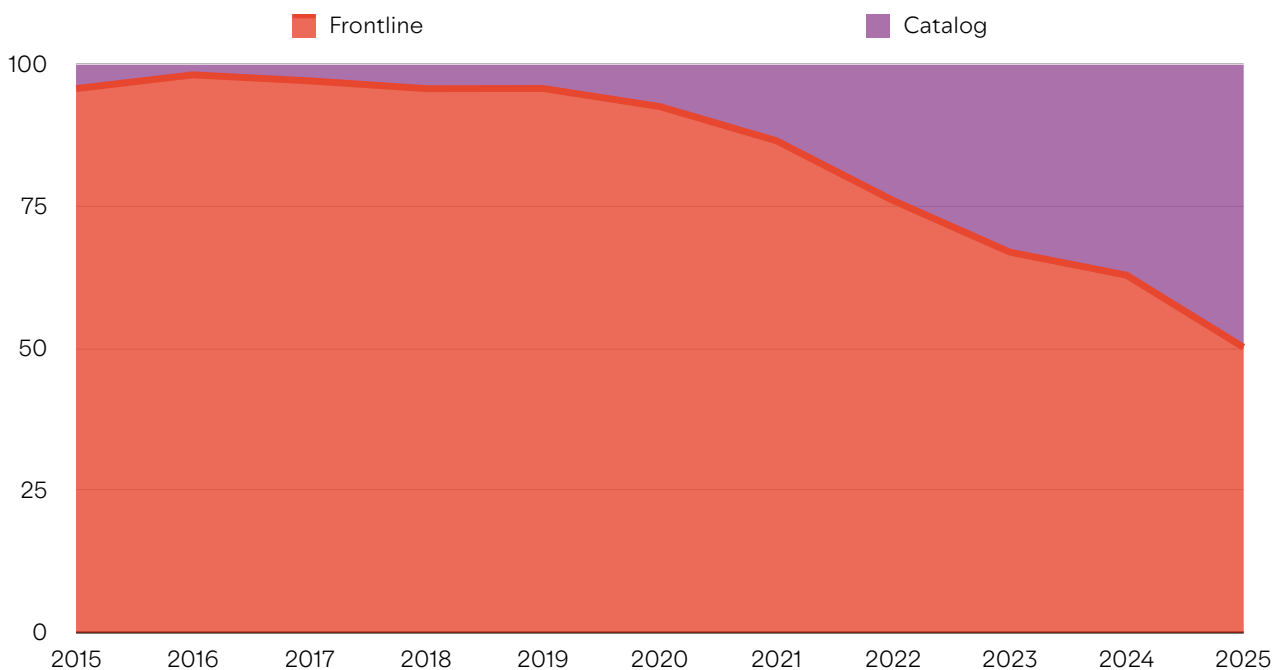
Numerous reports around the world have confirmed that in recent years, streaming platform users have increasingly gravitated toward older music, or catalog music. In this report, "catalog" is defined as music released more than 18 months ago, while newer tracks released within that 18-month window are referred to as "frontline."

The Luminate Year-End Report confirms this long-standing trend in the United States; in their latest report, catalog music accounted for 73% of total listening⁹. A similar pattern can be seen in other markets, such as the UK, where catalog consumption rose from

approximately 55% in 2015 to over 70% in the most recent BPI report¹⁰.

For the first time, this study presents data on how Swedish listening patterns on Spotify have evolved over the past decade. Specifically, the focus is on the top 200 tracks streamed in Sweden each year. The data reveals a dramatic shift: in 2015, Swedes primarily consumed frontline music among top tracks, which accounted for a staggering 95.7%, leaving only 4.3% for catalog content among the top 200 streamed tracks. By 2025, the ratio had shifted to roughly 50/50.

Figure 4: Catalog tracks vs frontline tracks 2015-2025



Even though this data focuses on the top 200 streamed tracks in Sweden each year, it reveals an overall trend that fundamentally alters the landscape and the prerequisites for new artists. Between 2015 and 2020, the increase in catalog listening was relatively modest, moving from 4% to 7.5%, but between 2021 and 2025 we have seen an immense surge. At the same time as the

number of artists and releases continues to grow, the Swedish audience tends to move backward in their listening patterns, leaving less room for newly released music.

⁹ <https://luminatedata.com/reports/yearend-music-industry-report-2025/>

¹⁰ <https://www.bpi.co.uk/news/13097053>

What is particularly interesting, however, is that when analyzing all the tracks on the Spotify Top 50 Sweden (the weekly chart) between 2015–2025, the diversification of tracks has actually increased. In 2015, there were 231 distinct tracks on the chart over the year, while in 2025, that number had risen to 699 different tracks, among them being a large portion of catalog music.

The shift toward catalog listening is driven by several factors. For younger generations, specifically Gen Z and Gen Alpha, older tracks are effectively 'new' discoveries. To someone born in the 2000s, music from the 80s or 90s is a fresh experience, just as hits from the early 2000s are new to those born in the 2010s.

As streaming approaches its 20th anniversary, the line between 'new' and 'catalog' shifts gradually. While Swedish artists like Victor Leksell, Hooja, or Olivia Lobato are viewed as contemporary, many of their biggest hits are now technically classified as catalog, older than 18 months.

Before the digital paradigm shift, access to deep catalog music, releases that were not necessarily mainstream hits, was limited. Today, the entirety of music history is available at one's fingertips, allowing new generations to explore and discover decades of great music. This trend is further accelerated by social media and short-form video platforms, which frequently turn legacy songs into viral trends.

Furthermore, Sweden boasts a powerful roster of artists who emerged in the 2000s and 2010s, and while they remain active, and probably will for many decades, the bulk of their most successful releases now falls into the catalog category.

Such a significant shift in consumer behavior, moving to catalog music listening, has impacted the ability of emerging artists to be discovered and achieve a breakthrough on the Swedish market. This transition has also influenced the investment strategies of some record labels, as confirmed through research conducted by the author during 2025 and 2026.

Even though this analysis is focusing on the development of top 200 streamed tracks for each year, it is notable that the 50/50 ratio is considerably lower than what has been reported in other countries, for example in the UK and USA. Nevertheless, the clear shift in consumption patterns means that emerging artists now face intense competition from a vast catalog of high quality legacy music. Given that consumer time is finite, users cannot increase their total listening indefinitely. Whether this trend will persist in the coming years remains to be seen.

Case Study 4: Albin Lee Meldau

Albin Lee Meldau serves as a case study for how an artist can utilize a diverse back catalog to bridge different markets and secure long-term relevance. Meldau began his solo career in 2016 with the release of the EP “Lovers” and the single “Lou Lou.” As of April 2026, Albin Lee Meldau maintains approximately 740,000 Monthly Listeners on Spotify.

During the 2020–2022 period, Meldau’s career underwent a significant transformation. While the pandemic limited international touring, he deepened his domestic presence by shifting focus to Swedish-language lyrics. The release of the EP “På svenska” (2020) and the album “Epistlar” (2021) created a new, emotionally resonant catalog that proved exceptionally durable. The single “Josefin” (2021) gained momentum two years after the release, and spread to Norway.

Meldau’s success is partly attributed to his strategic use of interpretive catalog building. By covering iconic Swedish songs, he effectively inherited the emotional weight of those songs and artists. This created a bridge for his audience, they came for the familiar covers but stayed for his original songwriting.

Unlike social-first artists, who rely on high-frequency TikTok trends and influencer-style content to drive engagement, Meldau maintains a large, dedicated audience through a more “musician-first” approach. He does not operate as an influencer; his social media presence is focused almost entirely on the music itself, raw acoustic performances, studio snippets, and live clips.

6. Monthly Listeners – Trends and development

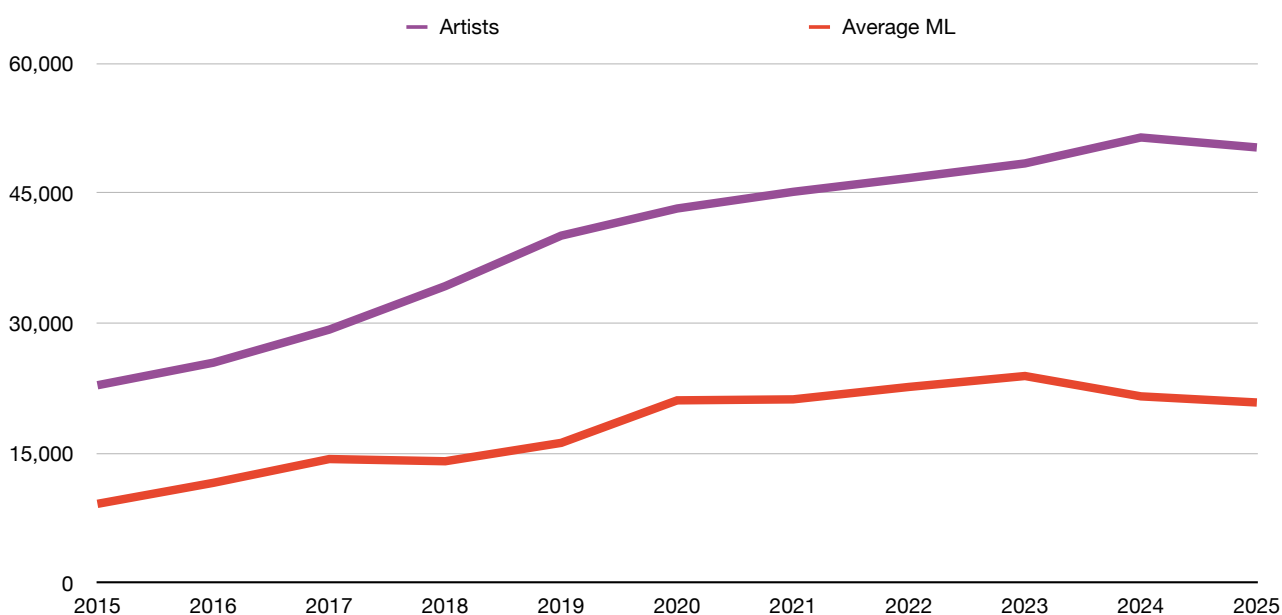
Between 2015 and 2025, Spotify underwent a massive global expansion. As previously noted, the platform grew from 91 million Monthly Active Users (MAU) in 2015 to 751 million by the end of 2025.

This growth had a direct and visible impact on the Monthly Listeners (ML) for Swedish artists, particularly during the surge between 2015 and 2020. The Monthly Listener metric represents the number of unique Spotify users who have streamed an artist's music within a rolling 28-day window, and

should not be confused with the number of streams. Regardless of whether a user streams tracks from an artist 10 times or 100 times during this 28-day period, they are accounted for as a single Monthly Listener.

Despite the surge of new Swedish artists on Spotify during this period, the average number of Monthly Listeners increased and has remained virtually stable in recent years. This suggests that Spotify's expanding user base has largely kept pace with the high influx of artists.

Figure 5: Average Monthly Listeners per Artist 2015-2025



To analyze the development of listening engagement for Swedish artists over time, we have used a tier-based model. This approach allows for a clearer understanding of which artist categories have experienced the most significant growth in Monthly Listeners. The analysis shows that the largest increase between 2015 and 2025 can be seen in the middle and high tiers.

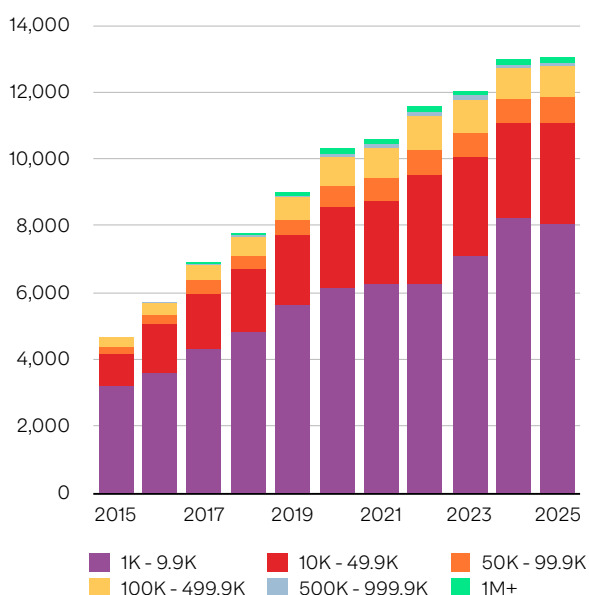
Artists with over 1 million ML:	+396%
Artists with 500,000 to 1 million ML:	+424%
Artists with 100,000 to 500,000 ML:	+258%
Artists with 50,000 to 100,000 ML:	+246%
Artists with 10,000 to 50,000 ML:	+201%
Artists with 1,000 to 10,000 ML:	+155%

Table 1: Increase of Swedish artists per ML tier 2015–2025

The number of Swedish artists with over 100,000 Monthly Listeners grew from 294 in 2015 to 1,180 in 2025. Remarkably, 82% of these artists are newcomers who have emerged and established their streaming presence since 2015.

The data shows that almost all tiers significantly outperformed the total growth rate of artists. This serves as a clear indication that, on an aggregate level, Swedish artists have successfully tapped into Spotify's global expansion.

Figure 6: Swedish Artist on Spotify by Monthly Listener Tiers 2015-2025



The bar chart above highlights a significant surge in the average Monthly Listeners per artist between 2015 and 2020. This growth continued through 2021–2025, but at a more moderate pace. This trend is also reflected in the aggregated streaming data for Swedish artists, where we observe a slight deceleration in the growth of total streams during the later years of the time period.

As global streaming markets mature, they tend to exhibit stronger local preferenc-

es; this is evident when analyzing charts in various countries, which are increasingly dominated by domestic artists. The fastest-growing markets in recent years are not "importing" music at the same rate as other markets, as subscribers in these countries increasingly favor local artists over international acts.

Despite this trend toward localization, music from Swedish artists, including both established catalogs and frontline releases from emerging artists, continues to gain significant traction among Spotify users around the world.

The 'Monthly Listeners' metric provides a good indication of how many unique Spotify users are engaging with an artist's catalog. While a significant portion of these might be casual listeners, Spotify has introduced a segmentation model to categorize fans based on their level of engagement: Super Listeners, Moderate Listeners, and Light Listeners.

For new emerging artists striving to build a loyal fanbase, growing the Super Listener segment is crucial, as these fans represent the most dedicated core of their audience. These metrics are available via Spotify for Artists, and an expanded analysis of these engagement levels is available in section 8 of this report.

Case Study 5: A7S

A7S is an example of a Swedish artist who successfully transitioned from a behind-the-scenes songwriter to a global artist in the post-pandemic era. He grew up in Ulricehamn and spent years developing his craft, first gaining professional traction around 2015 on Vigiland's "Addicted".

His major global breakthrough arrived in late 2019 with the release of "Breaking Me" (together with German producer Topic). A7S not only co-wrote the track but also provided the vocals that fueled its explosion during the Covid-19 pandemic. The song reached the top 10 in over 24 countries, and has streamed more than 1.2 billion times on Spotify.

A7S maintains 6 million Monthly Listeners as of April 2026, and approximately 90% of these are from outside of Sweden. The largest markets are Germany, USA, Italy, United Kingdom, and Brazil. A7S has generated nearly 3 billion streams on Spotify since 2019.

Beyond his initial hits, A7S has solidified his standing by consistently delivering new music and new collaborations. Following the success of "Breaking Me," he released several successful singles, including "Your Love (9PM)" and "Kernkraft 400 (A Better Day)." By transitioning to a lead artist with his own solo releases, he has successfully built a catalog that thrives in the global streaming ecosystem.

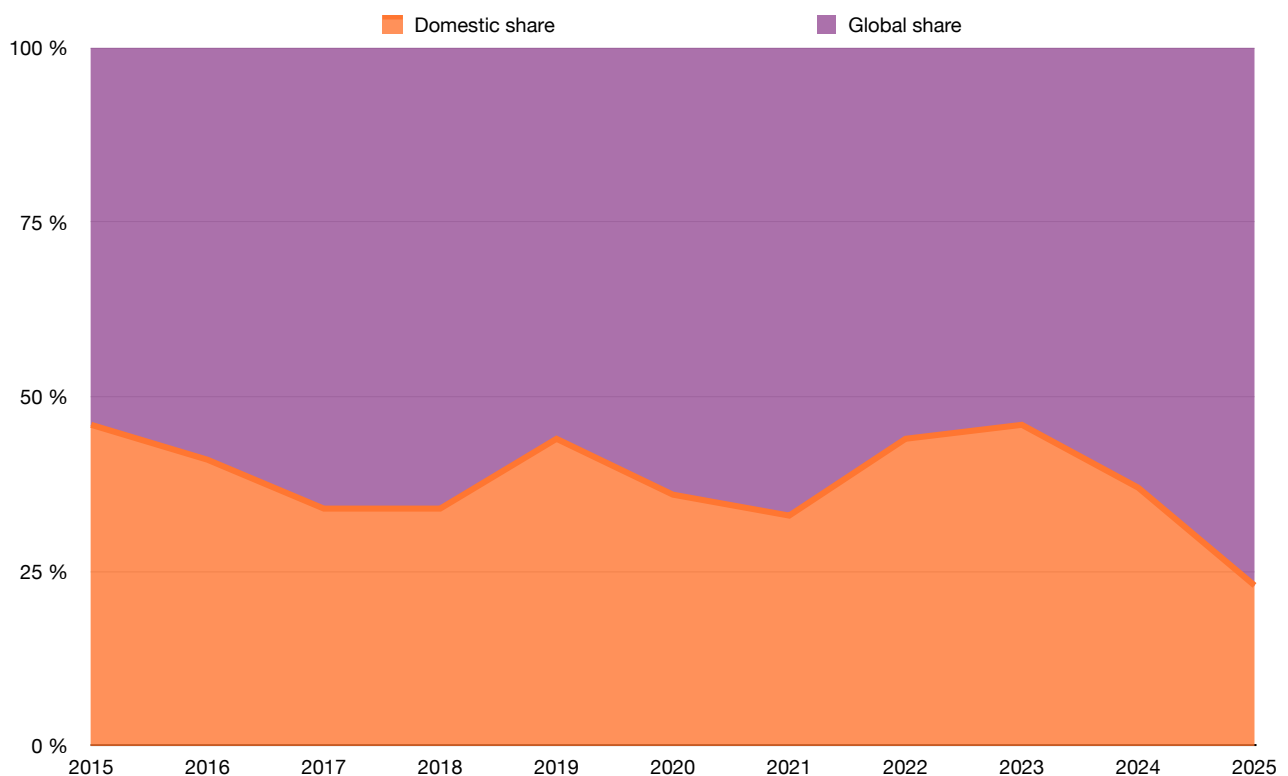
7. An analysis of new emerging artists on Spotify

At the same time as the rest of the world has transitioned to streaming, a significant change has unfolded regarding new Swedish artists. For the majority of the period, the ratio between domestic and international streaming remained largely stable; however, a distinct shift has emerged, especially over the last two years. The share of inter-

national streams has increased dramatically relative to the volume of domestic streams.

This trend is further reflected in Spotify's payout data, which reveals that 66% of all royalties generated by all Swedish artists in 2025 originated from streams outside of Sweden.

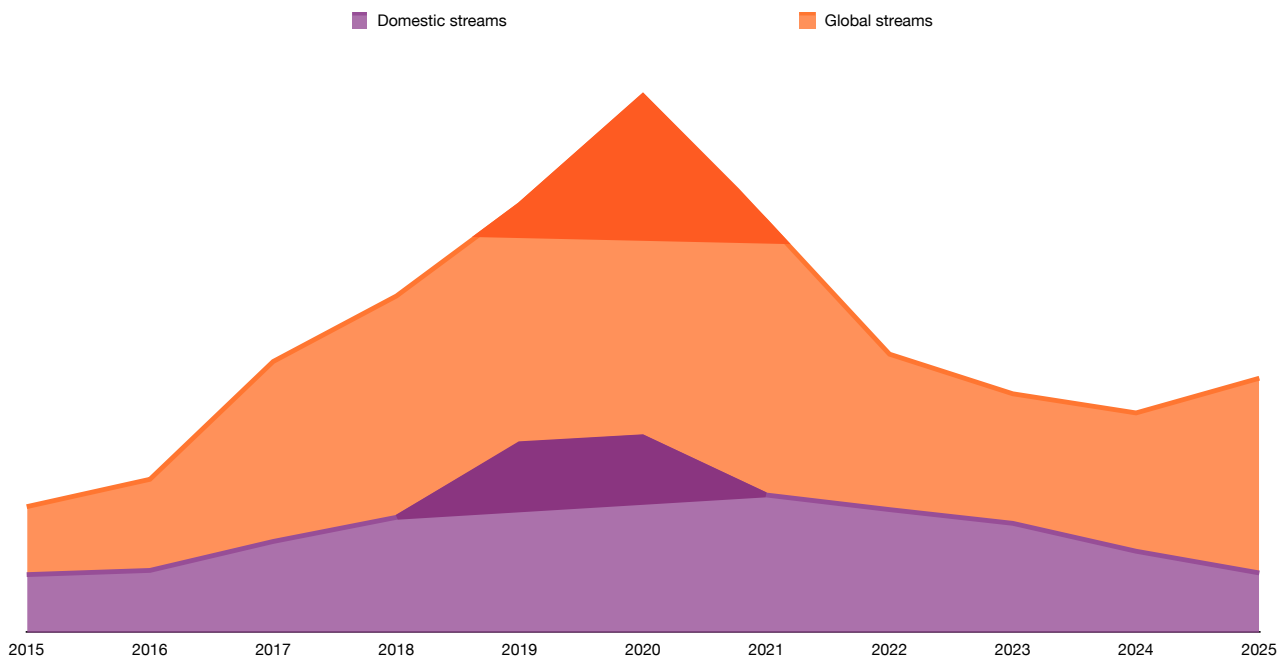
Figure 7: New emerging artists – streamshare domestic vs globally



As the global market has become increasingly vital for new emerging Swedish artists, many have adopted a global-first strategy, focusing on major markets with high streaming populations such as the US, Germany, and the UK. While Sweden might serve as a breeding ground for new artists, the data suggests that looking beyond national borders is often essential for artists striving to build a large and engaged audience.

Between 2015 and 2020, there was a substantial increase in the consumption of music from new emerging Swedish artists across both domestic and international markets. As described earlier, many of the new emerging artists reaching over 100,000 Monthly Listeners, started to release music during that period. However, the subsequent period has seen a decline.

Figure 8: New emerging artists – streamcount domestic and globally



It is important to emphasize that this part of the data analysis focuses exclusively on the prerequisites for new artists during the specific year of their debut on Spotify, not including established Swedish artists who already command large audiences. If an artist began releasing music on Spotify in 2021, they are categorized as a new emerging artist exclusively for that year; consequently, they would not be included as a new artist for 2022.

The decline in the total streaming volume for new emerging artists since 2020 is in part correlated with the fact that, on the Swedish market, the consumption of catalog music increased, as described earlier, rising from 4% in 2015 to 50% in 2025 for top 200 streamed tracks. As the number of new artists continues to grow, the level of competition is significantly higher from catalog music today than it was only a few years ago.

Sweden has become a mature streaming market, with 95% of Swedes streaming music on at least one platform in 2024 (Polaris, Digital Music in the Nordics). Among

the Nordic countries, Swedes also listen the most, with an average listening time of 4 hours per day.

It is likely that the peak in the above diagram was a direct result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Global streaming increased significantly during this time as many people were in lockdown; therefore, these years should be viewed as an anomaly. Additionally, Spotify underwent a significant market expansion in 2019, which likely influenced the stream counts for new Swedish artists releasing music during that year.

Nevertheless, even if the years 2019-2021 are excluded, there was a decline in both domestic and international listening for new Swedish artists in the subsequent years, 2022–2024. This effect is not observed among established Swedish artists during the same years; rather, it is concentrated exclusively on new emerging artists. The total aggregated streamcount for all Swedish artists, including catalog music, has continued to grow annually in an almost linear fashion.

The diagram above indicates that emerging Swedish artists who began releasing music on the platform during 2022–2024 have likely faced a more challenging situation than those who debuted earlier in the period. But, the fact that 2025 shows a substantial international increase in interest for new emerging artists, +31% compared to 2024, may signal a shift. While it is still too early to draw definitive conclusions, the sharp rise in international streaming of emerging Swedish artists throughout 2025 represents an interesting trend to follow.

The downturn in streaming volume for new artists on the local market, driven by Swedish Spotify users moving toward catalog listening, has been supported by qualitative dialogues with artists and selected Swedish record labels by the author. Some stakeholders confirm that it has become significantly more difficult to break new artists within the Swedish market.

Consequently, the new strategy for some labels is also to avoid focusing solely on the Swedish market, aiming instead to enter international markets directly. Since the data suggests that international streaming largely offsets the catalog-listening effect in Sweden, it also implies that music performed in English has a greater potential for discovery. The increase in global streaming volume for new emerging artists during 2025 demonstrates that there is a significant interest, particularly within international markets.

But, because catalog consumption and the total number of artists have increased simultaneously, the domestic Swedish market prerequisites have changed for emerging artists. This development is not a consequence of any specific streaming platform's policies, it is simply the reality of how streaming consumption has transformed in Sweden during recent years.

Case Study 6: Olga Myko

Olga Myko represents a new wave of artists entering the Swedish music scene toward the latter part of the 2015–2025 period. Born in 1999, she belongs to a generation that has grown up entirely within the streaming-driven music landscape. Rather than emerging from social media as a personality, her rise was rooted in her music, which subsequently gained strong traction across digital platforms. She officially debuted with her first EP in early 2025.

Her trajectory highlights how music itself can act as the catalyst for building a large online following. By April 2026, she has established a notable presence in the market, with more than 2.2 million monthly listeners on Spotify. In parallel with her solo career, Olga Myko has also made a mark as a songwriter for other artists, including co-writing “Tusen Spänn” with Tjuvjakt & Fanny Avonne, one of Sweden’s most streamed songs in 2025.

Olga Myko operates with a high degree of independence, maintaining control over her creative direction and digital presence. Her success reflects a “music-first” pathway where audience growth follows strong releases rather than preceding them. This case illustrates a broader shift toward community-driven engagement, where social media amplifies momentum that originates from the music itself. She stands as a clear example of a modern artist who combines songwriting, artistry, and digital fluency to build sustained streaming success.

8. An analysis of new emerging artists on Spotify

The streaming economy has been a subject of significant debate for a long time. This study focuses on explaining the changing conditions for Swedish artists, specifically new Swedish emerging artists, rather than detailing the mechanics of the streaming economy itself. Numerous reports already exist explaining how the payouts are calculated based on the streamshare methodology¹¹.

As previously noted, Spotify has no visibility into the final distribution of payouts once they are issued to the various stakeholders, such as record labels, distributors, collecting societies, and music publishers. Because Spotify does not pay artists or songwriters directly, the platform cannot track the specific amount any individual party receives.

Nevertheless, the data on gross payout sizes provides a clear indication of how the landscape has developed over time. This evolution is directly linked to the ability for emerging artists to break through and turn streaming revenue into a part of a sustainable career. Loud & Clear data¹² shows that with each passing year, a growing number of artists are increasing the generated payouts from Spotify.

In 2025, music from approximately 300 Swedish artists generated over 1 million SEK in gross payouts from the platform, a 3% increase over the previous year, and an increase by more than 100% since the year 2018.

Another trend in recent years is that new female artists from Sweden have increasingly succeeded internationally. Over 50% of the Swedish artists generating more than \$1 million in gross payout from Spotify are

either female soloists or women performing in mixed-gender bands.

Nearly 560 Swedish artists generated over 500,000 SEK in gross payouts from Spotify during 2025, including all rights connected to the music, representing a 5% increase compared to 2024, and an 11% increase compared to 2023.

Spotify represents just one of many revenue streams for artists, particularly those with a significant international presence. In most global markets, Spotify does not hold the same level of dominance as it does in Sweden, making platforms like Apple Music, YouTube Music, Amazon Music, among others, important. For a Swedish artist with an international audience, a gross payout exceeding 500,000 SEK from Spotify likely translates to double or even triple that amount when revenues from all streaming platforms are combined.

Some artists may receive a relatively limited portion of these total payouts depending on their specific contractual arrangements and career setup; however, such an analysis falls outside the scope of this study.

As previously described, the growing volume of artists and catalogs on Spotify, combined with shifting listening behaviors, has created a challenging environment for new emerging artists in recent years. However,

¹¹ See for example <https://artists.spotify.com/royalties-guide> or Johansson D. (2023) Revenue Distribution From Music Streaming - A Quantitative Analysis of Swedish Artists on Spotify, as well as Dissecting the Digital Dollar by the Music Managers Forum.

¹² <https://loudandclear.byspotify.com/>

those who have found success increasingly view streaming platforms as just one element of a broader digital ecosystem, or an online "scene". For a new artist to build a sustainable career today, streaming is only one part of the story.

In the earlier years of this period, discovery was often tethered to playlists and the streaming platform itself. Today, however, discovery frequently happens elsewhere, particularly for younger generations. The primary challenge has shifted toward effectively converting that initial spark of discovery into an engaged following on Spotify.

Recently, the music industry has pivoted its focus toward what is sometimes called "superfans." As mentioned earlier, Spotify for Artists now identifies specific audience segments which makes it possible for artists and their teams to better understand the audience setup.

Spotify distinguishes between Monthly Listeners, anyone who hears the music regardless of the source, and Monthly *Active* Listeners, which consists of listeners who intentionally seek out an artist by visiting their profile, a release page, or playing the music from their own library and playlists. This active audience is further segmented into Super, Moderate, and Light listeners:

Super listeners: Those who intentionally streamed an artist's music 15 or more times during the 28-day window.

Moderate listeners: Those who intentionally streamed an artist 3 to 14 times during the same period.

Light listeners: Those who streamed an artist intentionally 1 or 2 times.

Understanding the audience in this segmented way is vital, because the size of the Super and Moderate listener groups largely determines whether an emerging artist can build an economically sustainable career. Since the streaming economy operates on a streamshare model, where a total royalty pool is divided based on a track's share of total streams, these dedicated fans have a large impact on how much of that pool is allocated to a specific artist's catalog.

Of course, there are artist careers that to a large extent are built on more passive listening behaviors, for example artists creating relaxing piano music, or music to help children, as well as adults, go to sleep. In these cases, where the music serves a functional or contextual purpose, the artist is often not the focus of the listening behavior. In this study, the focus is on those artists seeking to build a brand with dedicated fans, and how the landscape for them has shifted throughout this period.

Although the data shows that the surge of new music has made the landscape more competitive for Swedish artists since 2020, payouts for mid-tier artists have actually seen the strongest growth. To a large extent, this group consists of artists who began their careers on Spotify after 2015.

These artists have also successfully leveraged Spotify's global expansion, building dedicated international audiences that fall into the Super and Moderate listener categories, rather than focusing solely on the Swedish market.

Building that kind of international audience often takes time. In the earlier years of the investigated period, simply landing on a few curated playlists could be enough to get the ball rolling and generate significant

streams. Today, with the streaming market so saturated, it is more crucial than ever to focus on the individuals behind the streams, rather than just the number. Building such a fanbase now often requires a great deal of work outside of the streaming platforms themselves.

Nevertheless, due to the constant influx of new artists, a large portion of those who release music never reach the streaming volumes necessary to sustain a full-time career solely based on streaming. Many Swedish artists and musicians are of course able to have careers without large amounts of Monthly Listeners as most of their revenues do not come from streaming, but rather from performing live and other sources. However, from a strict streaming point of view, the majority of the almost 50,000 active Swedish artists on Spotify in 2025 do not yet possess large audiences within the "Super" and "Moderate" listener categories; 90% of the artists had fewer than 10,000 Monthly Listeners in 2025.

This phenomenon is often referred to as the Pareto Principle¹³, the 80/20 rule, or the dilution effect. It describes a mathematical distribution where a minority accounts for the majority of results, while the remaining majority share a fraction of the total. This distribution is observable across a wide array of sectors and is by no means exclusive to music and streaming.

With the continuous surge of new artists entering the market, we may be witnessing a "Pareto Widening" in recent years. This trend persists even though a growing number of Swedish artists have successfully built engaged audiences and reached higher payout levels during this period.

This situation is not unique to Spotify, the same scenario exists across most digital platforms, and it is a rather natural evolution. It is essential to view this development within a broader context: no market, regardless of the product or service, can sustain a situation where supply vastly exceeds demand. The lowered barriers to entry have created a landscape where nearly anyone can launch an artistic career, and we are now seeing the systemic effects of that reality.

Simultaneously, some Swedish artists who established themselves on the local market during the 90s, 00s, and 10s maintain active careers with high listener engagement. When so many established artists have loyal fanbases that listen for decades, the space for new emerging artists shrinks in the local market, and Sweden is, to some extent, a saturated market when it comes to streaming. At the same time, new Swedish artists like Ida-Lova, FELICIA, Fanny Avonne, Saga Faye, Olga Myko, among others, show that it is by no means impossible to find a dedicated audience also within the Swedish borders.

The fact that many emerging Swedish artists also have managed to succeed, especially in the later years of this period, by building dedicated fanbases outside of Sweden, proves that it is still possible. However, market dynamics have shifted; to build a sustainable career today, new artists must both understand these changes and adapt to an audience that is more fragmented than ever before.

¹³ Pareto, V. (1896). *Cours d'économie politique*. Université de Lausanne

Case Study 7: Alfons

Alfons is a Swedish music producer and DJ who achieved viral success with his track "Ganja-man". Originally produced for the Norwegian so called "russe" culture, it became a club and streaming anthem in numerous countries.

Alfons has maintained a high output of music over the time period, with more than 250 tracks published on Spotify as of April 2026. He currently has over 2.8 million Monthly Listeners and has generated a total of 770 million streams on Spotify.

His career is a prime example of the viral export model; while he may not be a household name on the Swedish domestic scene, his music generates massive engagement in international markets such as the USA, Germany, Poland and France.

Case study 8: Henry Smith

Henry Smith is a Swedish pianist and composer who mainly represents the sector for relaxing music. Emerging on the global scene around 2020, Smith focused on the high-volume streaming demand for solo piano music, and records and releases high quality covers of major hits from music history, among other music.

As of April 2026, Henry Smith has 527,000 Monthly Listeners, and his catalog has generated more than 860 million streams on Spotify. His piano covers have enormous popularity in Mexico, Australia, Spain, and the UK, and well over 95% of the streams are of international origin.

9. Conclusions and discussion

This report has examined the evolving landscape for Swedish artists on Spotify between 2015 and 2025. Summarizing the findings, it stands clear that the situation for new emerging Swedish artists have changed significantly in just ten years. The decade can be categorized into three distinct eras, each defined by unique market dynamics:

2015–2019: The Expansion Era

2020–2021: The Pandemic Era

2022–2025: The Saturation Era

For many Swedish artists, 2015–2025 will be remembered as the time period when streaming became an important engine for discovery and success. Hundreds of new Swedish artists who launched their streaming careers during The Expansion Era continue to benefit from Spotify's global expansion.

This momentum accelerated during The Pandemic Era, as streaming volumes surged domestically and internationally, providing a positive boost for both emerging artists and established acts. However, given the low barriers to entry for both music production and distribution, the market was bound to reach a saturation point.

Recent years may also have been shaped by shifting consumer patterns among younger music fans. Listeners aged 13–18 have to some extent moved away from traditional streaming habits due to the rise of short-form video platforms. Although the integration between Spotify and apps like TikTok and Instagram has improved, making it easier to go from a video clip to a full track, it appears that this new generation increasingly prefers music as short-form

content rather than through full-length recordings.

At the same time, this shift has proven successful for a new generation of emerging Swedish artists who connect with fans through TikTok and other social media. But, because Gen Z, particularly its younger members, spends more time within these other apps rather than streaming through traditional platforms, a large and engaged social media audience does not always translate into streams and Monthly Active Listeners in the Super and Moderate listener categories.

Converting social media and short-form video followers into dedicated streaming listeners has become one of the most critical challenges for new emerging artists. While this was a non-issue in 2015, before short-form video dominated the landscape, it has become a central concern by 2025.

Historically, the gap between discovery and consumption, or an actual purchase, has always challenged the music industry. Whether discovery happened via radio, TV, or the early internet, there was a significant hurdle for a fan to move from hearing a song to buying a record, downloading a track, or initiating a stream. In 2025, however, the volume of daily “discoveries” for users on social media and short-video platforms is so high that many in the younger generations rarely commit to a full three or four-minute song. TikTok is a massive discovery engine, but the question remains: what happens after that initial exposure? Consequently, the shifting market requires emerging artists and their teams to develop specific strategies to bridge the gap “discovery → followers → listeners.”

Another notable shift during the investigated decade is the steady growth of the independent sector's market share. On a global scale, major label streamshare declined from 87% in 2017 to 72% in 2025¹⁴. In Sweden, the independent sector accounted for the largest influx of new artists and releases on Spotify during this period. Nearly half of all royalties generated by Swedish artists on Spotify in 2025 were generated by independent artists or labels.

One significant outcome of these market shifts is the evolving relationship between artists and record labels. A decade ago, the industry was dominated by traditional record deals, where artists signed over their exclusive rights in exchange for the label financing production, marketing, promotion, distribution etc.

In recent years, however, it has become increasingly common for artists to self-finance their recordings and approach labels for specific services or collaborations. Consequently, the prevalence of licensing and distribution deals has grown, while traditional agreements have declined.

This shift grants Swedish artists greater autonomy but also requires them to assume more financial risk. This trend is not unique to Sweden; other markets, such as Germany, have seen a similar transition toward these more flexible, service-oriented partnerships¹⁵.

The shift in consumption patterns on the Swedish market shows that Swedes are now listening considerably less to frontline music, and instead have pivoted towards catalog music. This means that international markets have become far more important for new emerging Swedish artists in recent years than it was previously. While domestic

listening to new Swedish music declined following the pandemic, the share of international streams increased sharply, particularly throughout 2025.

Although the number of releases from Swedish artists in languages other than their native Swedish has soared during this period, the ratio between Swedish and other languages has remained roughly the same. This suggests that even though the greatest growth potential now lies in international markets, the Swedish language remains resilient, carrying on the long-standing tradition of creating music in Swedish. Concluding the overall changes during the time period 2015–2025, the new prerequisites can be described as follows:

The Shift to Engagement

Focus is no longer primarily directed toward "sales," in the traditional sense, or simply generating the highest possible number of streams. Instead, the focus needs to be on creating maximum engagement from dedicated followers, often on platforms outside of the streaming platforms themselves.

Global First Strategy

Since the pandemic, international markets have become the most significant arenas for many new emerging Swedish artists. This is a result of Spotify's global expansion as well as shifting consumption behaviors among listeners on the domestic market. International markets now provide the majority of royalties for Swedish artists and

¹⁴ <https://www.musicbusinessworldwide.com/the-empire-strikes-back-the-majors-and-merlin-gained-a-bit-of-market-share-on-spotify-last-year/>

¹⁵ https://www.musikindustrie.de/fileadmin/bvmi/upload/06_Publikationen/Oxford-Studie/BVMI_Investments_German_Music_Industry_Study_EN_v2.0.pdf

represent the key frontier for new talent to bypass the saturated local market.

The Digital Discovery Paradox

Social media and short-form content, and the resulting viral discovery, have become crucial for emerging artists, yet this visibility does not always translate into sustainable streaming numbers. Consequently, this requires conversion strategies to build long-term followers, especially among the younger members of Gen Z.

The Rise of the Indies

As mentioned earlier, during this time period there has been a realignment, with the independent sector now accounting for nearly half of all royalties generated by Swedish artists on Spotify. It is important to note, however, that many of the new generation of independent artists that are running their own businesses are collaborating with both major labels and large indie labels for distribution, marketing, and other supporting activities.

Quality versus spam

Considering the recent advancements in generative AI, within an already saturated streaming market, it is plausible that the coming years will see audiences, as well as streaming platforms, shifting their focus toward high-quality new music, rather than volume. The significant trend among Swedish consumers toward catalog music, rather than frontline releases, may serve as an indicator of this demand. Ultimately, what constitutes "quality" will be defined by the new generation of artists and their respective audiences.

The New Artist

For artists born after the turn of the millennium, social media, short-form video, and streaming represent the natural landscape

for creative output. This new generation is not burdened by the legacy of earlier music industry paradigms; they prioritize building an audience on digital platforms rather than following the traditional path of touring extensively for years to establish a foothold.

The Growth of Catalog Listening

During this period, Swedish consumers have shifted from mainly listening to frontline releases to older catalog music. This shift poses challenges for emerging artists in the Swedish market, while simultaneously creating opportunities for those who own catalog rights.

Although some of the data in this report could be interpreted negatively, for instance, the data suggests that emerging artists might have faced greater challenges in discovery and breakthrough following the pandemic, the sharp upturn observed in 2025 for new emerging artists may signal the beginning of a new era.

Throughout the history of the Swedish music industry, several distinct paradigms for international success have emerged, often characterized as "wonders."

Between the 1970s and 1990s, these were primarily associated with artists such as ABBA, Europe, Roxette, Ace of Base, The Cardigans, among others. Following the turn of the millennium, a second "wonder" was largely defined by the global influence of Swedish songwriters and producers¹⁶. This success has endured through a new generation of composers who achieved

¹⁶ Det svenska musikundret (Entreprenörskapsforum, 2021). https://entreprenorskapsforum.se/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Rapport_Musikbranschen_Web.pdf

significant acclaim during the period, many of whom are women.

Is it possible that we are now transitioning into a "third" Swedish music wonder? A generation of new artists connecting directly with global audiences through a high understanding of short-form video platforms and social media dynamics, and which is not bound by the traditional structures of the established music industry?

Parallel to this, we observe an industry in transition, where emerging music companies no longer define themselves strictly as "record labels" or "music publishers." Instead, they work with artists in a more holistic manner.

Regardless of how the coming years unfold, for many Swedish artists who launched their careers between 2015 and 2025, streaming has become an integral component of their success. For others, the significant breakthrough many hope for remains a future goal.

Given the continuous influx of new artists and music on Spotify, alongside changing consumption behaviors, artists and their teams must remain adaptable to a constantly evolving environment.

When we look back ten years from now at how the streaming market, and the music industry as a whole, developed over the coming decade, we will likely find that the landscape has changed profoundly once again. New technologies and practices will inevitably emerge, altering how new artists and music are discovered.

Ultimately though, we will continue to be floored by new music and new forms of expression, as will those who are born today. Technology and methodologies may change, but the experience of discovering the "best song you've ever heard" will never disappear.