

## So what exactly makes Taylor Swift so great?



Taylor Swift performs during the “Eras” tour.

*AP Photo/George Walker IV*

Christina Pazzanese, The Harvard Gazette, August 2, 2023

Experts weigh in on her fanbase loyalty, skills as songwriter, businesswoman as her albums, tours break financial, popularity records

Whether you’re a fan of Taylor Swift or not, it’s hard to deny the cultural and financial juggernaut the pop superstar has become this year. Her album “Midnights,” released in late 2022, was the year’s top-seller at 1.8 million copies, twice that of the second-biggest by Harry Styles. Her latest, “Speak Now (Taylor’s Version),” debuted in July at No. 1, giving Swift her 12th in the top spot, surpassing Barbra Streisand for the most No. 1 albums by a woman artist.

Swift’s 131-date “Eras” world tour, currently packing stadiums across the U.S., is on track to be the highest-grossing concert tour of all time, at \$1.4 billion, when it ends next year. Analysts estimate the tour will also have a total economic impact from tour-related spending of \$5 billion on host cities. Even the Federal Reserve [noted](#) the effect her tour is having on regional economies.

To better understand the Swift phenomenon, the Gazette asked some Harvard and Berklee College of Music faculty to assess her artistry, fan base, the tour’s economic impact, and her place in the industry. Interviews have been edited for clarity and length.

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### ‘Very few people have her songwriting talent’

Stephanie Burt, poet and Donald P. and Katherine B. Loker Professor of English

**Gazette:** How good is Swift as a songwriter?

**Burt:** She has a terrific ear in terms of how words fit together. She has a sense both of writing songs that convey a feeling that can make you imagine this is the songwriter’s own feelings, like in “We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together,” and a way of telling stories and creating characters. She can write songs that take place at one moment, and she can write songs where the successive verses give you a series of events, like in “Betty” or “Fifteen.”

She has a lot of different gifts as a songwriter, both at the macro level, how the song tells a story or presents an attitude, and at the micro level, how the vowels and consonants fit together, and she's able to exercise that range, along with quite a lot of melodic gifts, and in a way that does not make her seem highbrow or alienate potential audience members. I would not be surprised to discover that her body of songwriting altogether had a larger number of words than any body of comparable hit songs by a comparable songwriter, except for someone like Bob Dylan.

One of the things that's really remarkable for me about her is that harmonically, she's not usually that interesting. It's pretty normal pop chord progressions and pretty standard varieties of pop arrangement. Her great genius and her innovations and her brilliance as a songwriter is melodic and verbal. And, of course, she's also very good at singing, which is not to be sneezed at. But she's able to do that within the fairly tight constraints of existing, easily recognizable chord progressions and rhythmic setups.

She's able to create verbal hooks, "I'm only 17. I don't know anything, but I know I miss you." They stick in your mind, and you spin stories out from them. That's just being a good writer. She's a celebrity with a complicated personal life that has been lived in the public eye for quite some time, and so, people speculate about the meanings of her songs, both because they are complex and meaningful works of art, and because some of them do speak to public facts about her life outside the songs.

"Fifteen," which is a terrific song, gains resonance if you know that it's about a real person and they're still friends. But no one would care if it weren't a brilliantly constructed song. Take something from "Speak Now": It's nice to know that "Dear John" is about John Mayer, who really had no business dating a 19-year-old, but it's also a song about a pattern [of behavior], and it works in itself.

There's all kinds of celebrity gossip about pop stars who maybe have her level of vocal talent and performing talent but happen not to have her level of songwriting talent. Very few people have her songwriting talent.

**Gazette:** Which songs would you count among your very favorites?

**Burt:** There's so many good songs. I find the ones that speak to me the most are the ones whose topics are closest to my own life. I'm a queer lady. She writes wonderful songs about falling in love or falling out of love with various guys. Those are not, by and large, my favorites even though they're some of her biggest hits. "Fifteen," "Betty," "seven," "It's Nice to Have a Friend."

I actually really like "The Last Great American Dynasty." The two indie folk albums ["Folklore" and "Evermore"], almost everything on them is amazing. It's so hard to sustain that level of success artistically while changing that much. Few can do it. "Nothing New" is amazing. "Anti-Hero," which is the big hit from "Midnights," is an absolutely fantastic and extraordinarily self-conscious song about being the kind of celebrity that she's become.

#### 4 albums in Billboard top 10



Taylor Swift is the only living artist to have four albums in the Billboard top 10 at the same time since Herb Alpert in 1966. Following his death in 2016, Prince had five albums in the top 10. (Swift is the only woman with four albums in the top 10 at the same time since the Billboard 200 was combined from its previously separate mono and stereo album charts into one all-encompassing list in August of 1963.)

Source: *Billboard*

#### 'Strong social and emotional bond that people feel with her'

[Alexandra Gold](#), clinical fellow in psychology at MGH and Harvard Medical School

**Gazette:** Swift appears to have a devoted fan base who feel intensely connected to her and her music. Why is that?

**GOLD:** There is a strong social and emotional bond that people feel with her. And in general, when people become super fans or part of the fandom, it's often because there's something about the object of that fandom, the public figure or celebrity, that does connect back to their identity in some way. That's often the link.

In the case of Taylor, there's a couple of things going on. The first piece is relatability. Even though there's aspects of her that maybe don't feel very relatable — she's a celebrity and lives a very different life from her fans — what she is singing about — the lyrical content as well as the emotions that underlie the lyrical content — are very relatable to a lot of people. There's something that is very common to the human experience.

Another piece is a lot of Millennials, as well as Gen Z now, are fans of Taylor Swift. With the Millennials, a lot of people grew up alongside her. When they were having some of these first experiences, maybe with relationships or entering adulthood, she was doing that at the same time and singing about that. Her life story mapped onto their life story, in some way.

For Gen Z, during the pandemic, there was a lot of TikTok content about her, she was putting out many albums, so a new generation discovered her, and they're also having similar experiences. Overall, she's been really important for identity development and growth for a lot of people.

A third piece is aspirational. She is a role model. She is a great example of someone who sticks to their values and shows their fan base that they can reach their goals, whatever those might be. For instance, she's claiming ownership of her work and has been successful in putting out re-recordings [of her older albums] and doing that despite barriers or obstacles that might be in the way. Seeing someone do something like that could be inspiring for a lot of young people.

And then, lastly, the fan community is a big part of this. People often form their identity around relationships not just with a celebrity, but also with other fans. The fan community that Taylor has around her, people meet their friends through it and people become part of something bigger than themselves. That is really important for them as they grow up and as they go through life.

**Gazette:** Swift has had to tell some fans to stop harassing people she once dated. Where's the line between fan and fanatic?

**GOLD:** I think fandoms are, overall, very positive. That is an important message, that being a fan is a very positive thing. It's important to be aware of when it's interfering in other aspects of one's life — not engaging in other areas that might be important, other relationships, whether time spent online is causing anxiety or stress or negative feelings for people. Trying to defend Taylor against other celebrities, for instance, that's when it maybe goes into a category of "OK, let's take a step back and think about what we can do to bring this back to a place where it feels more positive." Recognize while this is a relationship that's important to you, it's not a friendship. And so, if someone starts to feel like there's a two-way relationship when there's no evidence that's happening, that's also something to be aware of.

## 'The kinds of gains you see in an event like a Super Bowl'

[Matthew Andrews](#), Edward S. Mason Senior Lecturer in International Development at Harvard Kennedy School

**GAZETTE:** You and some colleagues examined the effects on cities and regions hosting [mega events](#). The total economic impact to host cities of Swift concerts on her current tour is expected to hit \$5 billion. Does that sound plausible?

**ANDREWS:** Those numbers, I think, are completely accurate. I would be in agreement with those numbers because those are the kinds of gains you see in an event like a Super Bowl. The thing that is so amazing about the Taylor Swift concert, in particular, is that it goes from city to city, and you see the same kind of impact in city after city. You do see it with some other musicians, as well. But this is something that's on a scale and a consistency that we haven't really seen before.



Swift's 131-date "Eras" world tour, currently packing stadiums across the U.S., is on track to be the highest-grossing concert tour of all time. Pictured is a June show at Acrisure Stadium in Pittsburgh.

*Benjamin B. Braun/Pittsburgh Post-Gazette via AP*

**Gazette:** Which industries typically benefit when a major concert tour or sporting event takes place?

**ANDREWS:** The main beneficiaries in the private sector are people involved in tourism and the support network around the entertainment industry, so it is going to be hotels, restaurants, tourism agencies. It's going to be anything to do with transportation hubs. They are going to be the primary beneficiaries.

More like this

sector can be quite significant. And the cost for people in these areas who are not directly benefiting can be quite significant in terms of congestion, use of roads, just wear and tear, in terms of policing. This is a really



important one — the cost of public order. Unless the government really thinks this through and charges for this as part of its permitting process, the government can end up on the short end after these kinds of events.

The other thing about these events that is increasingly attracting attention, from a public policy perspective, are climate change concerns. You have many, many people transporting themselves to a small area and a lot [are] coming through the air and through vehicles. This is something we worry about a lot more with prolonged mega events like a World Cup than with something like a Taylor Swift concert, but you do need to think about what those costs are.

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### **‘Standing up for ... rights and doing good business’**

**Ralph Jaccodine**, assistant professor of music business/management, Berklee College of Music

**GAZETTE:** What are the factors that make Swift a successful performer from an industry perspective?

**Jaccodine:** First of all, if you’re going to talk about Taylor Swift, you’ve got to talk about the power of great songs. It all starts with the power of great songs. That’s why we’re still listening to The Beatles, and Bob Dylan, and Frank Sinatra. And like Bowie and Gaga and Dylan, she’s not afraid to stretch. She’s not afraid to bring her audience for a ride. We’ve seen her grow up in real life, from a young girl to a woman with power, and she’s owning it.

Number two, and this is really important: You’ve got to be great live. My students come to me and say, “We have 53 likes on this video, and we’re not selling tickets.” They don’t understand the power of going in front of people and blowing them away. In my business, as a manager, 80 percent of the income comes from live performances, so I want them to change lives live. I’m

a massive Springsteen fan. I’m going to be seeing Springsteen at Gillette. I’ve seen him 12 times. I don’t need to see Bruce anymore. I’m an old guy, but I’m still going to rock concerts for artists to change my life. Taylor Swift’s songs, combined with how great she is live, is a powerful combination.

She’s always had a good team around her, smart people around her, good publicists, and good management. When you’re that good, you have the best in the industry. Her team is great: They build anticipation; they create a buzz about things. She’s imprinted her fans in such a way that they want everything about her. The day before a big stadium show, the T-shirt stand is open and there’s thousands of people in line. They hang on to every word of her social media posting, look at all the pictures. They share it; they talk about it; they have groups. That’s really hard to pull off.

**GAZETTE:** Has her advocacy for better artist compensation from streaming platforms and record labels and her fight to reclaim control of her back catalog made a difference?

**Jaccodine:** Absolutely. First, in the awareness of these topics. The general music fan isn’t aware of streaming revenues or master rights or re-recording rights. They don’t know or really care, but she shines a light on all these things. She shines a light on management contracts and what labels are or what labels aren’t. The whole master recordings topic has been spotlighted by Taylor. She had the budget and the resources and the talent to re-record things. The whole exercise was done in public; the whole exercise was reported on. So now, students are studying that, and they’re questioning that for the first time.

I do know she’s empowered and imprinted serious numbers of people that are fans of music or musicians themselves because of her influence. I look at Rihanna; I look at Beyoncé; I look at Taylor Swift. These are the biggest artists on the planet. They’re all women that are empowering girls and standing up for their rights and doing good business. I love it; I love it.

## Visions of power in 'Barbie,' Beyoncé, Taylor Swift



AP photos

***Women entertainers are smashing records this summer. Their female fans love to see it.***

THE HARVARD GAZETTE, August 23, 2023

Women are filling stadiums across the country this summer, clad in sequins and cowboy hats, for Beyoncé's "Renaissance" world tour. They are convening in Facebook groups to design friendship bracelets to trade on Taylor Swift's "Eras" tour. They are flocking to movie theaters dressed in pink to see Greta Gerwig's "Barbie." And they are wearing their favorite team jerseys while watching the FIFA Women's World Cup, which has attracted 22 million broadcast viewers and sold over 1.7 million tickets.

The cultural phenomenon has been called the "Barbie-Taylor-Beyoncé summer," the "girl's girl summer," and the #BillionGirlSummer.

"They're all offering visions of power as writeable within women's worlds, which is incredibly appealing to audiences," said Phyllis Thompson, lecturer in Studies of Women, Gender, and Sexuality. "Of course empowerment feels good because women as a group still are not actually getting that much real power. It seems like a feel-good response to that lack, which I think there's some desperation for."

"Eras," which launched in March, is on track to earn more than \$2 billion in sales, making it the highest-grossing concert tour of all time. "Renaissance," which launched in May, may also surpass \$2 billion by the time it ends. Gerwig's "Barbie," which opened in theaters less than a month ago, is on track to become the highest-grossing movie of the year and has made \$574 million domestically and more than \$1.2 billion worldwide. On its opening weekend — the biggest ever for a movie directed by a woman — the audience was 65 percent women.

These events, Thompson said, share a "neoliberal feminist vision of empowerment" that is attractive to women in the aftermath of the #MeToo movement and the rolling back of reproductive rights in the U.S. since the overturn of *Roe v. Wade*.

"These artists are people who've broken through so many barriers and are so powerful and prolific and long-standing, so there's also something incredibly appealing about identifying with them," Thompson said. "Their force of creative output is just massive. There's deep meaning in becoming the kind of powerhouse that changes the industry."

Although the U.S. women's national soccer team ultimately lost to Sweden in the Round of 16, the team previously had won the World Cup four times. Beyoncé holds the record for most Grammy wins of all time, while Swift holds the record for most No. 1 albums by a female artist.

“What’s fascinating about this cultural phenomenon is that it’s explicitly including or reaching out to women who are not 25 and under,” Thompson said. “We have genuine adults creating this work and also being hailed as the appropriate audience, as well as 20-somethings.”

But even as women spanning generations are devouring female empowerment messaging as it appears on TV screens and jumbotrons, Thompson cautioned that at the end of the day, a show is a show. Consuming empowerment-themed media doesn’t automatically make the consumer empowered in the world they inhabit.

“There’s a tension,” Thompson said. “It’s entertainment that is woman-centered, but none of them are rewriting terms. The people who are actually getting power from it are the ones who are making the works, not the ones consuming the works.”

Swifties are spending an average of \$1,300 on tickets, travel, and clothing to attend the “Eras” tour, according to a survey from research company QuestionPro, while Beyoncé fans are spending an average of \$1,800.

But Thompson says the fashion trends — of women documenting the outfits they are wearing — have been an example of community-building, making fans feel like they are part of a supporting, like-minded cast.

“One thing I think is really beautiful is the degree to which there has been space to interpret,” Thompson said. “You’re not just supposed to buy the single concert T-shirt, there are a whole palette of options for identification ... there are many different roles and stories on offer.”

Is this hype for female-led entertainment likely to continue past this summer? Thompson said it’s hard to say, as there is generally a “staircase pattern” to change and inclusion — an initial spike in interest that soon subsides.

“Certainly it’s going to make it appear possible, and it’s enormously powerful for young women and girls to see as plausible this kind of mass sparkle and scale for a female story,” Thompson said. “But I don’t think that necessarily means next summer will be the same.”

[The Economist explains](#)

### Can superstars like Beyoncé or Taylor Swift spur inflation?

Some economists think that tours by big acts drive up the consumer-price index

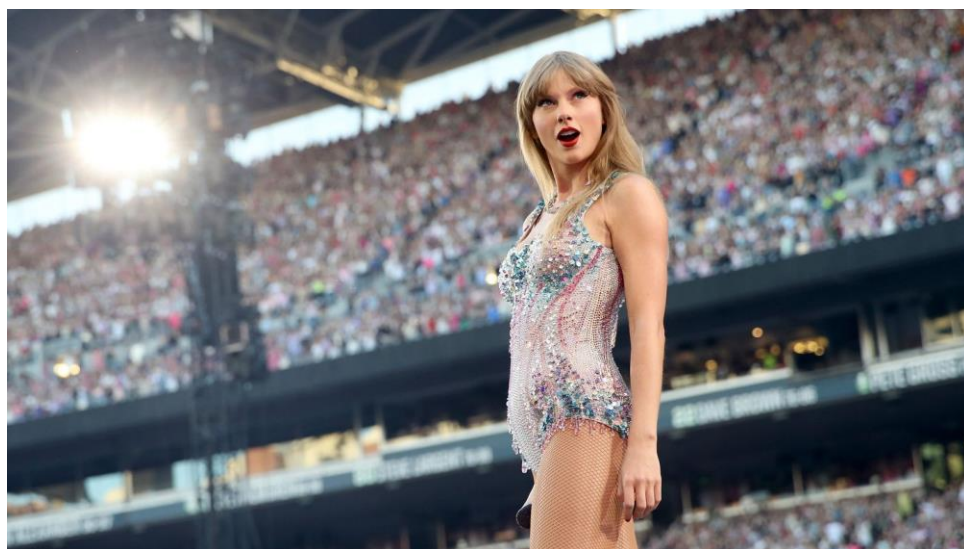


image: getty images

**The Economist**, Jul 25th 2023

The sworn enemies of Europe’s central bankers include Vladimir Putin, covid-19 and, apparently, Beyoncé. All three have recently been blamed for hot inflation, but the American singer seems an unlikely macroeconomic force. Hotel prices surged in Sweden when 46,000 fans flocked to the capital, Stockholm, for the pop star’s tour in May. The country’s consumer-price index hit 9.7% that month, higher than expected. “Beyoncé is responsible,” declared one local economist, as though he had caught her red-handed. Do superstar tours really spur inflation?

In most cases, probably not. Inflation is calculated by comparing the prices of a basket of goods, rather than measuring sudden price rises in one sector, such as hotels. Britain's consumer-price index, for example, includes almost 750 goods and services. Concerts, theatre and cinema have a weight of less than 0.8% in the basket. Countrywide inflation therefore rarely jumps as a result of a single event, unless it is on an enormous scale. Fans of Taylor Swift, another pop giant, are projected to spend around \$600m on tickets for her current tour of America—but the country's consumers spent almost \$7trn over an equivalent period last year. Tours are big business, but not that big.

Nor should price rises in entertainment contaminate other goods or services and make them more expensive. Pricier hotels may even be offset by falling costs elsewhere. To afford eye-wateringly expensive tickets (up to \$899 for Ms Swift's American tour), some fans will skimp on other treats, bringing down demand—and in theory prices—for those goods for a short time.

For small countries, things may be different. They could see a small, temporary bump in inflation as a result of a huge tour, reckons Tony Yates, an economist formerly at the Bank of England. In Singapore, a city state of around 5.6m people, Ms Swift is putting on six shows—her only dates in South-East Asia. In theory around 6% of the population could attend. (The country's education minister recently refused to grant children an ad hoc school holiday for the tour, in case it "fuelled further inflation".) In reality, thousands of Swifties are flying in from across the region, bringing a jolt of new demand and cash. That could throttle the supply of hotels, pushing up prices enough to cause a small bump in inflation. Locals may dip into savings, too, spending money intended for the future. That could also push up prices.

Even then, any effect would be short lived. When die-hard fans depart, prices will fall; hotels cannot charge Swiftian rates year-round. The inflation rate may look correspondingly lower the following month. This means tours are probably not something central bankers should bother responding to, says Mr Yates.

The price of seeing big acts perform has always been high. Jenny Lind, a soprano who toured America in the 1850s, flogged tickets at \$6 a pop. Adjusting for inflation, that is around \$230 today. The average cost to see Ms Swift is \$254. But today acts visit fewer small venues and play to bigger crowds. One reason is the competition to stage bigger and better shows. Perhaps that is why Ms Swift has opted to perform her only South-East Asia dates in Singapore. Carting sets around is riskier and more expensive than playing multiple times at the same venue, if the demand is there. Coldplay and Harry Styles, two other big pop acts, are taking a similar approach. The economics of touring may be changing—but that need not worry most central bankers.

## Taylor Swift, 'Barbie' and Beyoncé are unleashing the spending power of women

By Vanessa Yurkevich, CNN, Wed August 9, 2023

**New YorkCNN —**

It's the summer of girl power, fueled by Beyoncé, Taylor Swift and "Barbie."

Millions of people across generations are paying through the nose for these experiences, providing a women-powered boost to the economy.

"I loved going with my family" to Taylor Swift and "Barbie," said 15-year-old Chelsea Deutsch. "I don't think I would have rather had it any other way."

"Barbie" has so far raked in over \$1 billion and counting at the box office. Beyoncé's tour has been such a success, she was blamed for boosting inflation in Stockholm. And the final six nights of Taylor Swift's Eras tour in Los Angeles are expected to bring \$320 million to the city, according to the California Center for Jobs and the Economy.

"Barbie" was distributed by Warner Bros., which is owned by CNN's parent company Warner Bros. Discovery.

"I think what we're seeing right now is that women are not to be underestimated. They lift up economies and that impact is not to be overlooked," said Kristina Chiappetta, executive strategy director at Landor & Fitch. "But brands haven't been talking to them in their language for a really long time."

That oft-unspoken language: authenticity and empowerment.

### **A positive message**

Eleven women and girls from Chelsea's extended family – spanning ages 12 to 54 – went to see Taylor

Swift at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey. At least seven have seen “Barbie.”

“I think it was nice to be a part of things that had such a girl positive message, which is definitely not the norm. So hopefully, maybe this sparks the turn, and maybe we get to see some more of that,” said Jennifer Deutsch, Chelsea’s mom.

Women control or influence over 80% of consumer spending, Chiappetta says. The secret is how to tap into that.

There are more women than ever in their prime working age in the United States, earning – and spending – a paycheck.

Women’s labor force participation rates have rebounded from the pandemic “she-cession” and returned to pre-pandemic form.

In June, the labor force participation rate for women in their prime working age of 25 to 54 years old hit an all-time high of 77.8%, according to Bureau of Labor Statistics data. The rate retreated slightly in July to 77.5% but still remained historically high.

### **‘I made it happen’**

Helen Polise was not going to let two canceled flights stop her from seeing the last Taylor Swift concert in Los Angeles with her daughter Juli.

“Come hell or high water, I was going today. So I made it happen,” said Polise.

Their plans to see Taylor Swift’s Eras tour have been in the works since May: a girl-power weekend, filled with the concert, dinners, outfits, beads, a last-minute first-class ticket and “Barbie.” That all adds up.

“This was so different than anything that we’ve ever done together. So I think I was willing to do whatever it took,” said Polise.

The relatability factor to the women on screen and on stage is part of what makes these women-powered experiences this summer so special, Chiappetta said.

“I think what’s really powerful when you watch the ‘Barbie’ movie or read or listen to Taylor Swift lyrics is it expresses the full multi-dimensional experience of being a woman today. And that’s something that we haven’t seen a lot of when you look at traditional marketing. The way a lot of brands talk to women is in this very one-dimensional way,” said Chiappetta.

### **Big spending**

Some tickets to Swift and Beyoncé are going for over \$1,000. That priced some people out and forced others to pony up big bucks.

“Men go to a lot of sporting games and spend a lot of money on sporting tickets, and that’s never considered absurd or over the top. For us, this is like my Super Bowl,” said 27 year-old Juli Polise, Helen’s daughter.

Juli and the other young girls from the family of 11 who all saw Taylor Swift walked away from the “Barbie” movie with their moms in mind.

“We’re trying to get our mom to see it because I think she’d love it. Because my mom’s always loving the girl power,” said Dylan Ritcher, 12, who is part of the family of 11.

And as many moms may relate to, when your daughter wants to share the biggest moment of the summer with you, you say yes and find a way to make it happen – because that memory will be priceless.

“When your girls get older and they’re 23 and 20 and they want to go to a concert with you, are you kidding me?” said Lisa Van Strat, who saw Taylor Swift with her two girls and family. “Who doesn’t say sign me up? Yes, yes! How much? Whatever – I’ll eat rice, I’m going to see this concert.”



## Why the idea of Taylor Swift's Super Bowl jet trip is sparking controversy

*Flying on a private jet is one of the most carbon-polluting ways to travel. Legal scholars and lawmakers are calling for taxes to address the environmental cost.*

By [Nicolás Rivero](#) *The Washington Post*, January 31, 2024

Few celebrities have had their jet travel come under as intense scrutiny in recent months as Taylor Swift, who has crisscrossed the country in a private plane to watch her boyfriend Travis Kelce play for the Kansas City Chiefs. Fox News blasted her on Sunday as she arrived in Baltimore to attend the AFC championship game, tweeting that her jet was “belching tons of CO2 emissions.”

Private jet trips rank as the most carbon-intensive ways to travel, generating nine times as much carbon per passenger as flying commercial, according to a 2023 paper from University College London. And now that the Chiefs have made it to the Super Bowl, many are wondering whether Swift will fly the roughly 14,000 miles it would take to get from a concert in Tokyo on Feb. 10 to the game in Las Vegas on Feb. 11 and then to Melbourne in time for her next show on Feb. 16, reigniting the debate over whether owners of private planes should be held responsible for the planet-warming emissions they generate.

Some environmentalists are pushing for an outright ban on private jets, including Greta Thunberg and the climate activist group Extinction Rebellion, who called for a ban while protesting at a private jet airport near London on Jan. 27. Others, such as Bill Gates, have touted carbon offsets as a way to counteract emissions from private jet travel, particularly if the trips they make are to promote good causes.

Swift's publicist has said she buys carbon offsets to compensate for her jet travel, but didn't respond to a request for more detail about what kind or how many offsets the artist has bought. There's a wide range in quality and oversight in the offset market, and many offsets are meaningless.

But legal scholars and Congress members are pushing for another way to make private jet owners such as Swift pay for their emissions: taxes.

### **Taxing private jet fuel**

Last year, Sen. Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.) and Rep. Nydia M. Velázquez (D-N.Y.) introduced the Fueling Alternative Transportation with a Carbon Aviation Tax (FATCAT) Act, which would raise the tax on private jet fuel from \$0.22 per gallon to \$1.95. The extra money would go toward expanding railroads, improving public transit and monitoring air quality near airports.

If Swift flew from Tokyo to Las Vegas to Melbourne in her Dassault Falcon 900 jet, the roughly 29-hour round trip might burn about 8,800 gallons of fuel and create about 90 tons of carbon emissions. That's more than all the carbon emissions that six average Americans will produce this year.

At the current tax rate, Swift would pay about \$1,900 in taxes on the fuel for the flight. Under the FATCAT Act, she would pay about \$17,000.

Since Markey and Velázquez introduced the bill on July 19, it has not advanced and shows no sign of passing.

### **Taxing private jet sales**

Some countries, including Canada, have taken a different approach: taxing the sale of private jets. The United States once taxed private jets. Between 1991 and 1993, Americans paid an extra 10 percent for planes, boats, cars, furs and jewelry above a certain price.

As a result, sales for U.S. luxury goods dropped, and some Americans avoided the tax by buying their luxuries abroad. Congress repealed most of the law within two years of passing it.

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“It's sort of held up as an example of a tax disaster,” said Victoria Haneman, a law professor and Associate Dean of Research and Innovation at Creighton University School of Law. The perceived failure of the 1991 law helped kill then-president Barack Obama's proposal for tighter taxes on private jets in 2011, Haneman said.

Swift's Dassault Falcon 900 typically sells for about \$29 million, according to an estimate from the private jet brokerage Guardian Jet. She also has a second plane, a Dassault Falcon 7X, which sells for about \$25 million. A 10 percent tax on both of these sales would net \$5.4 million.

### **Close business tax loopholes**

Private jet owners often count the cost of flying as a business expense, meaning they subtract the price of the jet, fuel, pilots, maintenance and so on from their income when they pay taxes, according to Haneman.

“We could do something as simple as denying business deductions for private jet travel,” she said. “If you decide to travel by private jet, you bear the expense of it.”

The annual cost of operating Swift’s Falcon 900 jet is about \$13.9 million per year, according to Guardian Jet. The Falcon 7X costs a mere \$5.3 million per year. Combined, Swift might potentially deduct something like \$19 million per year from her taxable income — although that wouldn’t make much of a dent in the roughly \$2 billion Swift made last year, according to Billboard estimates.

But even the 1991 luxury tax made an exception for business jets, and Haneman said she isn’t holding her breath for U.S. lawmakers to exclude private jets from business tax deductions. “That would be extraordinarily controversial,” she said.

Of course, there are alternatives to flying private jets in the first place: Celebrities could fly first class — or stay home and watch the Super Bowl on TV.

## Quake it off: Taylor Swift fans generate seismic activity during Seattle shows

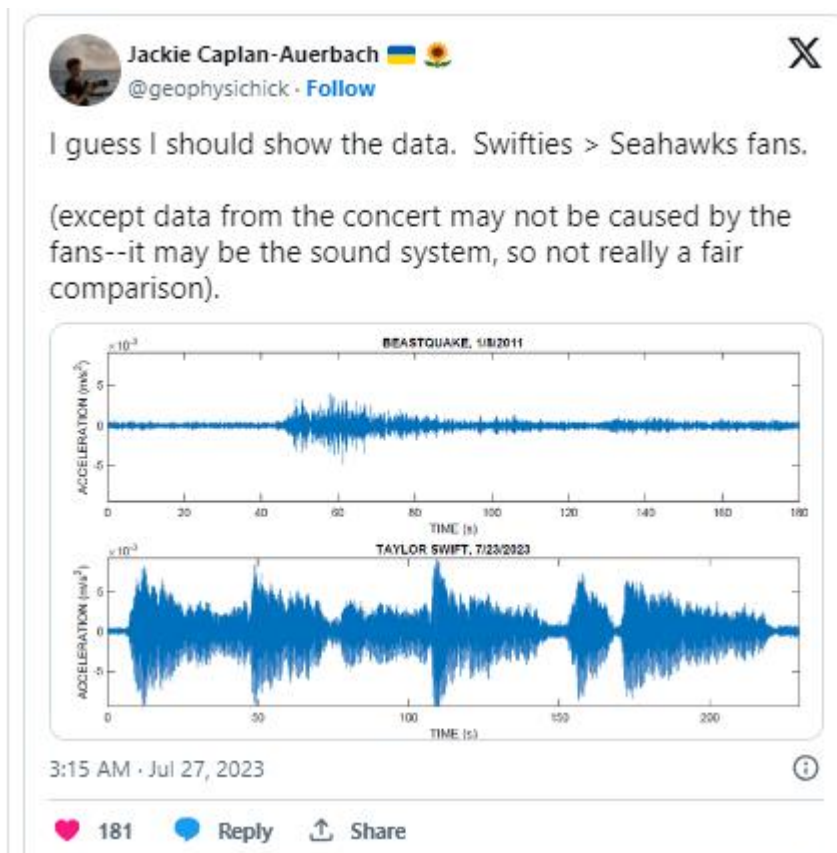
**Local seismometer detects activity equivalent of 2.3 magnitude earthquake, comparable to 2011 ‘Beast Quake’**

**Michael Sainato**

**The Guardian**, Fri 28 Jul 2023

Taylor Swift’s Eras tour performances at Lumen Field in Seattle on 22 and 23 July generated seismic activity equivalent of a 2.3 magnitude earthquake, according to seismologist Jackie Caplan-Auerbach.

A local seismometer detected activity generated by dancing fans comparable to the famous 2011 “Beast Quake”, when Seattle Seahawks fans erupted in response to running back Marshawn “Beast Mode” Lynch scoring a touchdown in an NFC wild card game against the New Orleans Saints.



Swift sold out both nights in Seattle, with 72,171 fans at the Saturday show breaking a venue record of 70,000 set by U2 in 2011. Swift’s Eras Tour is one of the most expensive ever, costing an estimated \$100m or more.

Concerts have been known on occasion to register seismic activity, such as a 2011 Foo Fighters concert in New Zealand attended by 50,000 fans and a 2022 Garth Brooks concert at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. But seismic magnitudes were not provided from those concerts.

Caplan-Auerbach, a geology professor at Western Washington University, told CNN she saw the Swift comparison in a Pacific north-west earthquake group she moderates, so compared seismic data from both concerts and the 2011 NFL event.

"I grabbed the data from both nights of the concert and quickly noticed they were clearly the same pattern of signals," she told CNN. "If I overlay them on top of each other, they're nearly identical."

She noted the difference between the NFL event and the Swifties dancing was just 0.3, but said the Swift fans still beat out Beast Quake.

"The shaking was twice as strong as 'Beast Quake'. It absolutely doubled it," she said.

The earth-shaking cheer after the Seahawks touchdown lasted for just a moment, Caplan-Auerbach said, while the dancing and cheering at the concert, and music from both nights, comprising about 10 hours of data, massive energy driven into the ground, generating the seismic activity.

Swift's Seattle concerts came toward the end of the US leg of the Eras Tour, her first in five years. Shows in California are lined up next, with the international part of the tour beginning on 24 August in Mexico City.

**This is the scientific piece that Basile found for you! (I uploaded the Pdf version on Cahier de prépa)**

**<https://www.researchsquare.com/article/rs-3401209/v1>**

### **Anyone could be a victim of 'deepfakes'. But there's a reason Taylor Swift is a target**

[Jill Filipovic](#) *The Guardian*, Wed 31 Jan 2024

Taylor Swift is having quite a month. The singer-songwriter saw her image in disgusting deepfake porn images that were circulated online, prompting a necessary and overdue conversation on how AI and deepfake porn is used to harass, humiliate, degrade, threaten, extort and punish (mostly) women. And then her boyfriend, the football player Travis Kelce, saw his team make it to the Super Bowl, which set off a wave of rightwing anti-Swift hysteria and conspiracy theorizing. The most powerful pop star in the world has everything going for her – and has also become an avatar for widespread anxieties about female power, sexuality and gender politics.

Deepfake porn brings up a whole host of moral, ethical, philosophical and legal questions. Those questions grow even more complicated when applied to celebrities. (...) It's not parody, and the whole point is that it's extremely realistic, difficult or impossible to differentiate from the real thing. And faked, nonconsensual porn videos aren't the only deepfakes to be worried about. If anyone's likeness can be digitally manipulated to say or do anything in a highly realistic video, the consequences are wide-ranging and unsettling to consider: imagine everything from world leaders on video making dangerous pronouncements to average citizens engaged in shocking and offensive behavior that could cost them their livelihoods or even lives, to someone who believes you've wronged them getting revenge by, say, making an explicit video featuring your young child.

Even if you're not a hugely famous female celebrity, and even if you're someone who generally plays by the rules and lives conservatively, deepfakes could come for you. And right now, there are troublingly few protections, and no federal legislation against deepfake porn, though some members of Congress have introduced bills to ban the sharing of deepfakes without consent of those depicted.

Some legal observers still argue that deepfake porn, and other deepfake videos, are generally protected by the first amendment. That is, to put it mildly, up for debate, and our laws are notoriously slow in evolving to address rapid technological change.

I won't pretend to possess the legal expertise or individual wisdom to craft the kind of legislation that would both protect first amendment freedom of expression interests and crack down on dangerous and abusive deepfakes. But it is very obviously long past time that robust discussions on how to do just that were at the fore of public debate and discussion, including in Congress, in every state legislature and on the pages of every newspaper. (...)

Animating the current discussion of deepfake porn, though, is the growing and frankly bizarre rightwing hostility to Taylor Swift. The right is rife with Swift conspiracy theories, including that she's a Pentagon asset, that she's part of an election interference psy-op, that the Super Bowl is rigged, and that the Swift-Kelce relationship and his team's recent victories are all a part of a broad plan to reinstate Joe Biden in office.

And many of these conspiracy theories aren't coming from the lunatic fringe, at least insofar as many mainstream conservatives are lunatics but are not on the fringes – some of them have been disseminated by the former Republican presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy, Fox News hosts and other influential conservative figures.

The rightwing problem with Swift is part of a greater conservative hostility to a culture that conservatives feel has left them behind. While conservatives have in many ways captured American politics – dominating the US supreme court, taking over state legislatures and governorships, passing vastly unpopular far-right legislation including broad abortion bans – rightwing gender traditionalism, misogyny, homophobia, xenophobia, authoritarianism and religiosity have been generally rejected in the way people actually live and in the media Americans consume.

Swift is in many ways a uniquely potent embodiment of this dynamic. She's an attractive Caucasian woman whose blond hair, blue eyes and country music roots once led white supremacists to turn her into an icon of Aryan womanhood (through no action of her own, to be clear), but who now is unmarried in her mid-30s – normal for many highly educated, successful and financially secure women living in large cities, but the sources of great consternation for conservatives who believe a woman's chief duty in life is to submit to a man and start having babies in her teens or 20s.

There's more: she uses her music to speak to the complex feelings of women and girls, and tells those same women and girls that she understands their confusion and longing but also sees their power. She clearly has the pretty normie liberal politics that are standard for women her age (pro-abortion-rights, pro-voting, anti-Trump, probably pro-Biden), but is also dating a man who is thriving in a sport that is particularly revered in conservative circles.

In contrast to a megastar like, say, Beyoncé, the conspiratorial right seems particularly incensed at Swift because she does exemplify at least some markers of "their" culture: she spent much of her early years in Tennessee, got her start in country music, initially sang about her longing for love and a traditional relationship, and is currently dating a white football player who also reads on first look as the golden boy of a Republican family. (...)

And so too many conservatives who simply cannot accept that their views and values are wildly out of step with the American norm are trawling around for some alternate explanation. Those same conservatives are angry that the only way they can impose their unpopular views and values is by minority authoritarian rule, and seek to punish anyone whose liberalism has wider appeal. (...)

Now is the time to call on Congress and state legislators to act – not just on deepfake porn and not just for Taylor Swift, but on the perils of AI more broadly, and for a more secure future for every person on the planet.

**And more here!**

**<https://time.com/6342806/person-of-the-year-2023-taylor-swift/>**

<https://www.npr.org/2023/08/11/1193283472/barbie-taylor-swift-beyonce>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2023/08/03/barbie-beyonce-taylor-swift-summer-pandemic/>

<https://wapo.st/3Sjt0o5> (this is the link so that you can read the article "as a gift")

<https://www.theguardian.com/music/2023/may/29/taylor-swift-eras-tour-america-takeover>

<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2023/08/so-what-exactly-makes-taylor-swift-so-great/>

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/taylor-swift-tickets-tour-economy-armstrong-1.6879449>