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Spotify said it paid out \$7 billion in royalties last year to rights holders, in a transparency report released Thursday, following critiques from within the music industry that the streaming service pays artists minuscule amounts. Spotify logo displayed on a phone screen and headphones are seen in this illustration photo taken in Poland on October 18, 2020.

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NurPhoto via Getty Images

As of 2021, Spotify said it had paid \$30 billion in royalties to the music industry, and the \$7 billion paid out last year was more than double the amount paid out in 2017.

Big Number

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Spotify has 406 million active monthly users and is one of the most popular streaming platforms. Despite its popularity with listeners, Spotify has long been criticized by artists who believe they should earn more from streams on it. Last year, a group of independent artists held a series of protests in front of Spotify artists demanding 1 cent per stream be doled out to rights holders, according to the Los Angeles Times. Several mainstream and big-name artists have spoken out against low payments. In 2014, three years after Spotify launched in the U.S., Taylor Swift removed her music from the platform because of how it paid artists, though she later returned and still remains on it. Paul McCartney, Kate Bush and Sting were among the musicians who signed a letter to U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson last year urging reforms in the streaming industry, including increased payouts. Last month, Kanye West opted to release his latest album Donda 2 on his own device, rather than streaming services, because of how artists have been "hurt" by the platforms, he said. When joining a growing chorus of creators who removed their work from Spotify last month in protest of comments made by Joe Rogan, singer India.Arie called out the streaming service for paying artists "a fraction of a penny" but paying over \$100 million to exclusively distribute Rogan's show.

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And we need to

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