

WOMEN IN MUSIC



THE GENDER GAP IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES FEMALE ARTISTS FACE?

Hello. my name is Elin Brimheim Heinesen, and I am an old-timer on the Faroese music scene. I was born in 1958. I started performing publicly from I was 16 years old in 1972.

I will be speaking to you today about women in music, about the gender gap in the music industry, and about the challenges female artists face.

And finally about what can be done about it.

This Presentation is Based on These Studies

US Study: [Inclusion in the Recording Studio? Gender & Race/Ethnicity of Artists, Songwriters & Producers across 1,100 Popular Songs from 2012 to 2022 - USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative](#)

UK Study: [Musicians' Census Women Musicians Insight Report - March 2024](#)

UK Study: [Counting the Music Industry: The Gender Gap - October 2029](#)

UK Study: [Both Sides Now: A Practice-Based Enquiry into Gender Equality in the Music Industry - Thesis by Kate Lowes 2021](#)

UK Study: [Women and Equalities Committee Misogyny in music Second Report of Session 2023–24](#)

German Study: [On Gender Diversity in the Music Industry and in Music Usage - Keychange 2021](#)

Danish Study: [Kvinderne i musikken - 2022](#)

Danish Study: [Hvorfor er der så få kvinder i musikken? En undersøgelse af køns betydning for udøvende og skabende musikere Marts 2022](#)

Danish Study: [Diversitet i musikbranchen - Mod en bedre kønsbalance \(Dansk Musiker Forbund, Dansk Artist Forbund, Gramex, JazzDanmark, Dansk Live\) Maj 2017](#)

US Study

INCLUSION IN THE RECORDING STUDIO? EXAMINING 1,100 POPULAR SONGS FROM 2012 TO 2022

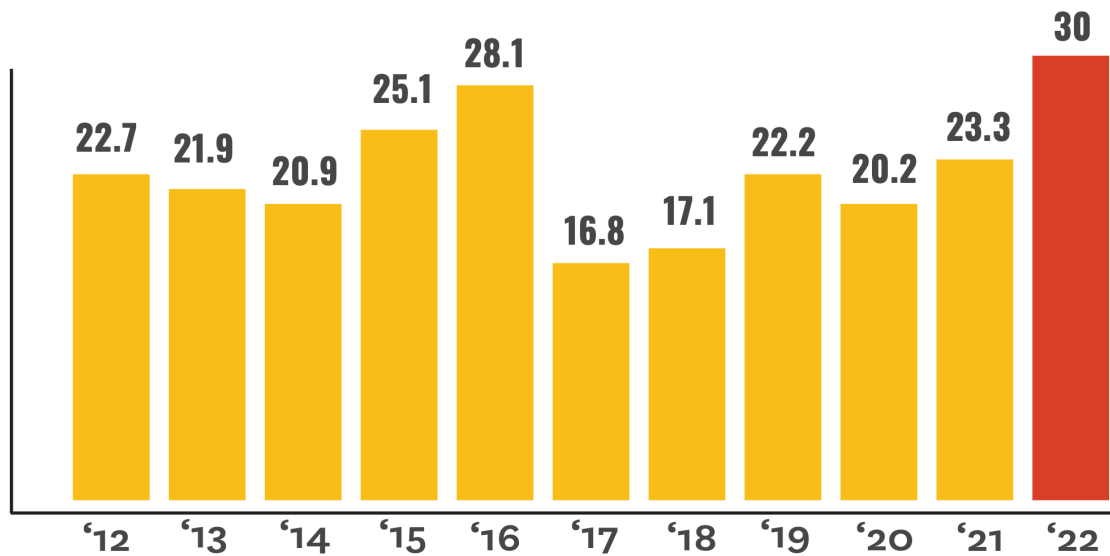
USC ANNENBERG INCLUSION INITIATIVE



@Inclusionists

WOMEN ARE MISSING IN POPULAR MUSIC

Percentage of women out of all artists across 1,100 songs



TOTAL NUMBER
OF ARTISTS

2,139

RATIO OF MEN TO WOMEN

3.5:1



WOMEN ARE PUSHED ASIDE AS PRODUCERS



THE RATIO OF MEN TO WOMEN PRODUCERS
ACROSS 800 POPULAR SONGS WAS

34.1 to 1

The prevalence of women producers was evaluated out of 800 songs reflecting the Billboard Hot 100 Year-End Charts from 2012, 2015 & 2017-2022.

WRITTEN OFF: FEW WOMEN WORK AS SONGWRITERS

Songwriter gender by year...

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	TOTAL
	11%	11.7%	12.7%	13.7%	13.3%	11.5%	11.6%	14.4%	12.9%	14.3%	14%	12.8%
	89%	88.3%	87.3%	85.9%	85.9%	87.9%	87.9%	85.2%	86.9%	85.7%	85.7%	86.8%

LINER NOTES LACK WOMEN SONGWRITERS

Women songwriters across 1,100 popular songs...

<1%

OF 1,100 POPULAR
SONGS HAVE
ONLY
WOMEN
WRITERS

43%

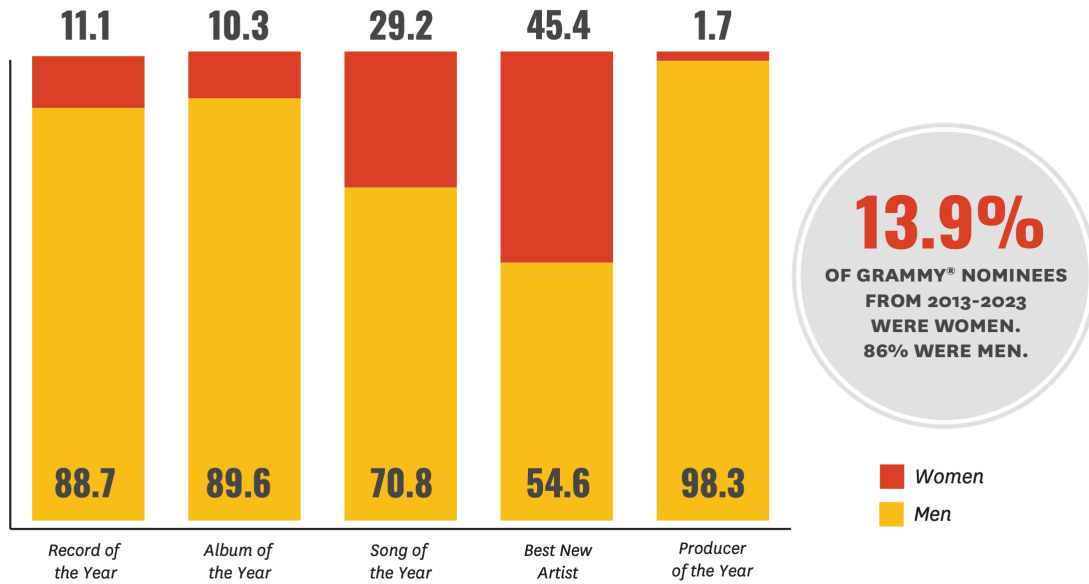
OF 1,100 POPULAR
SONGS HAVE
1 OR MORE
WOMEN
WRITERS

57%

OF 1,110 POPULAR
SONGS HAVE
NO
WOMEN
WRITERS

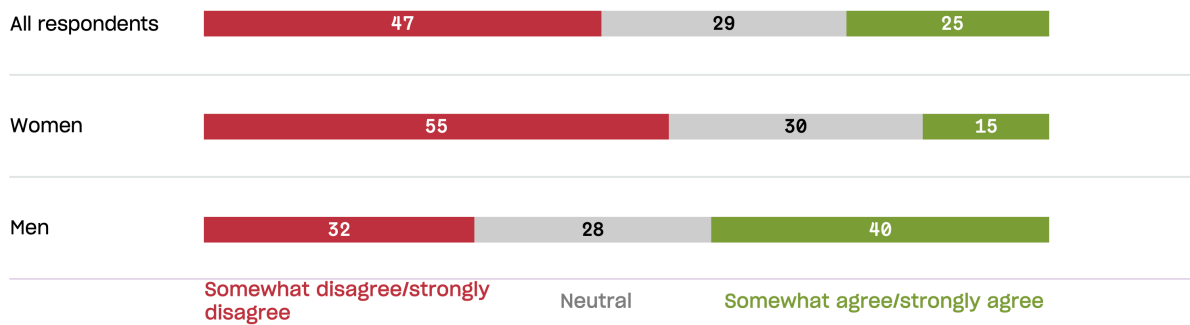
THE GENDER GAP AT THE GRAMMYS® IS REAL

Percentage of Women Nominees by Category, 2013-2023

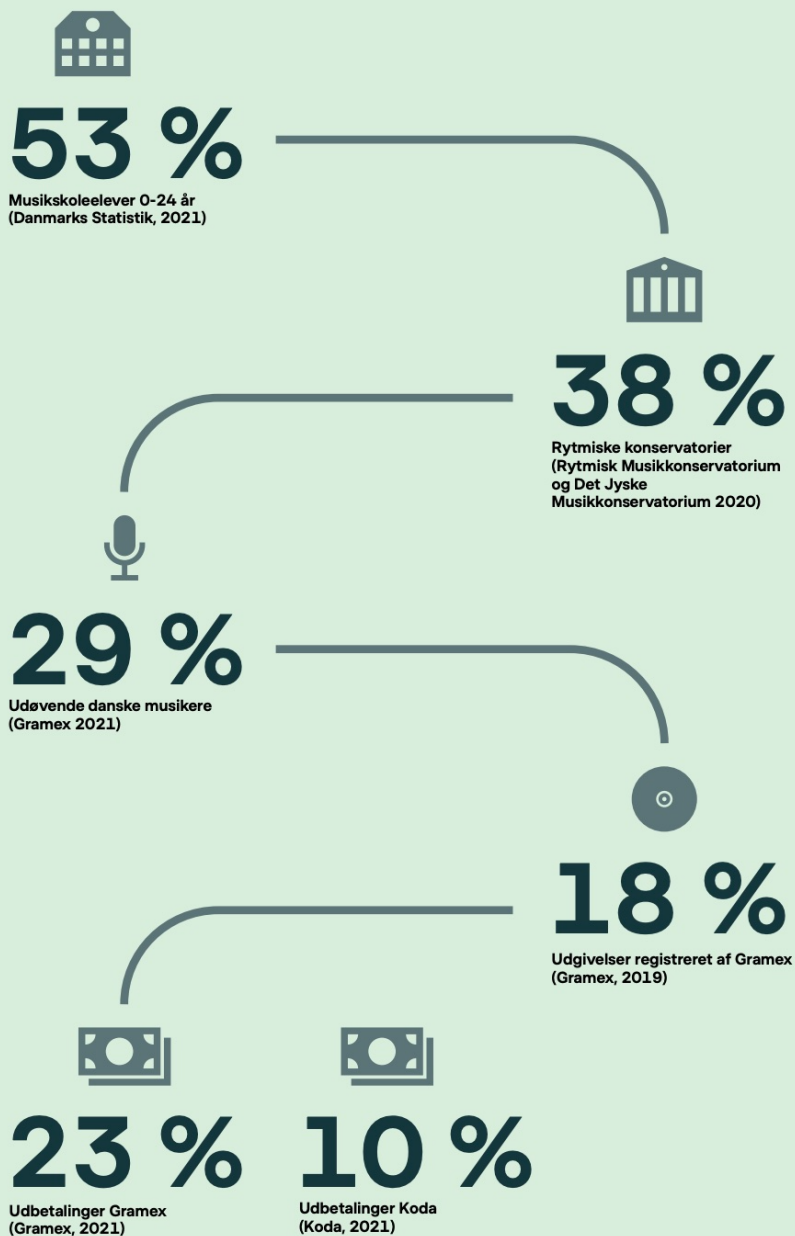


German Study

"Men and woman in Germany have the same opportunities in the music industry."



Kvindelig repræsentation i 'musikfødekæden' i Danmark



Kilde: Danmarks Statistik (2021), Rytmisk Musikkonservatorium og Det Jyske Musikkonservatorium (2020), Gramex (2019 + 2021) og KODA & Gramex (2021).

What do the Studies Show?



These and other studies have explored the pervasive double standards in the music industry, highlighting how women often are judged more harshly, both personally and professionally, compared to their male counterparts.

Here are some of the key challenges women face:

Cultural and Societal Norms



In many cultures, traditional gender roles and norms discourage women from pursuing careers in music. This cultural resistance can, more or less, limit their participation and success in the industry.

Women often face additional societal pressures to balance career and family responsibilities, which can limit the time and energy they can devote to their careers.

These societal norms and cultural expectations about gender roles often discourage women from pursuing careers in music - like music production and songwriting, which are traditionally seen as male-dominated fields.

Gender Biases, Stereotyping and Objectification



Women in the music industry often face pressure to conform to sexualized images and personas. This can place undue emphasis on their appearance rather than their talent, which detracts from their artistic contributions and undermines their professional credibility and marketability.

Public perception of women in music is influenced by these gender biases in the industry and in media, which again affects career opportunities of female artists.

Differences Between Men's and Women's Perception



Societal norms often equate emotional expression with weakness, which is traditionally seen as a feminine trait. As a result, men may fear being judged or ridiculed by peers for listening to music by female artists, as it can be seen as a deviation from traditional “strong” and “stoic” masculine behavior.

Music genres that emphasize aggression, assertiveness, and dominance, such as certain types of rap, rock, and heavy metal, are often more socially acceptable for men to enjoy.

Songs that objectify women or focus on hyper-masculine themes (e.g., wealth, power, and sexual conquest) are often more readily accepted among male listeners, reinforcing traditional gender roles.

The avoidance of female artists by male listeners contributes to reduced exposure and recognition for female musicians, impacting their career opportunities and earnings. Female artists may also be unfairly categorized into niche genres or “female-only” spaces, limiting their reach and audience diversity.

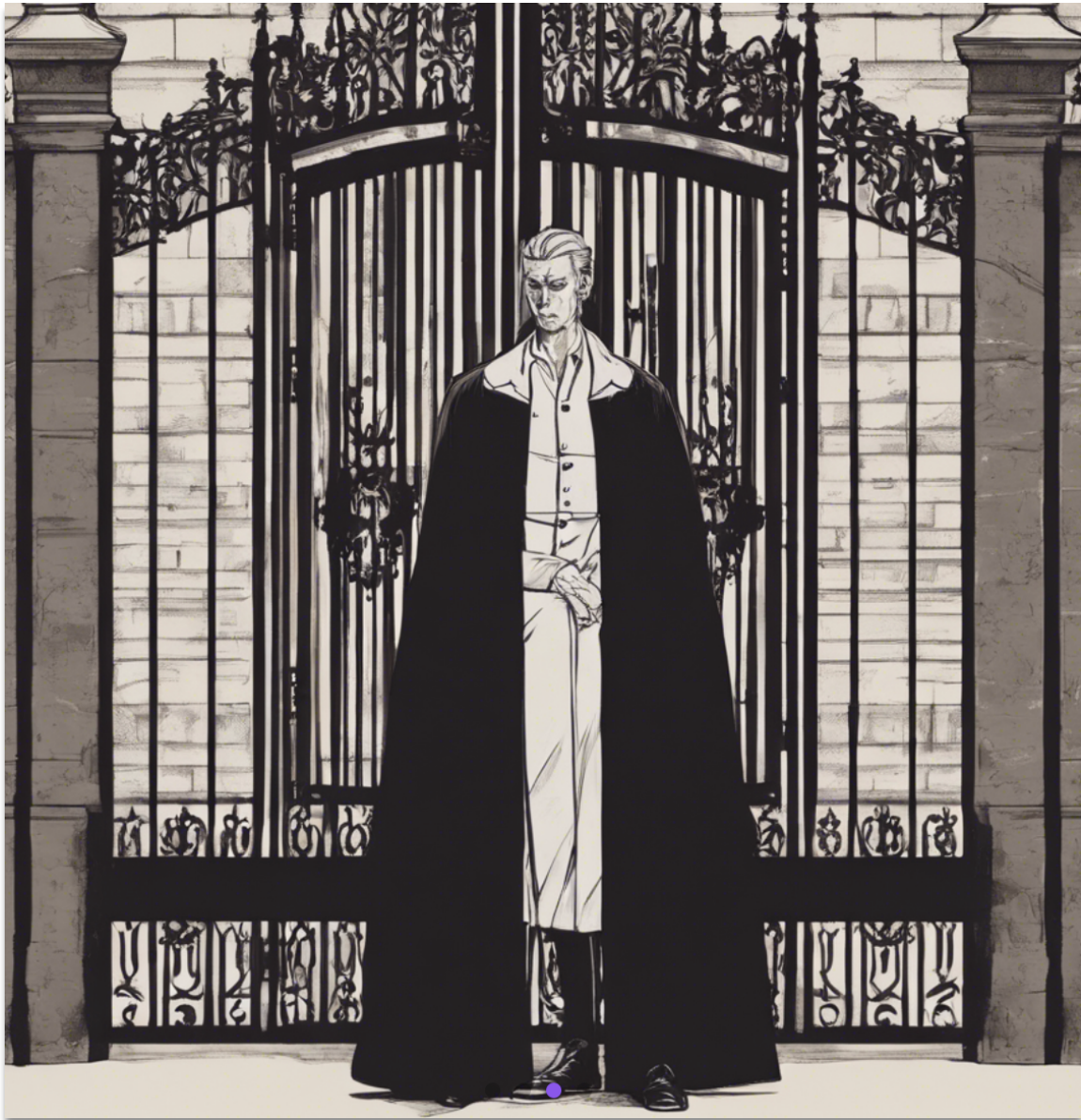
Reduced Exposure and Airplay



Female artists often receive less airplay on radio stations and are less frequently featured on popular playlists on streaming services, which limits their ability to reach wider audiences and affects their overall popularity.

Media outlets tend to give male artists more opportunities for interviews, features, and reviews, which further diminishes the visibility of female artists.

Perception of skills



Women are often perceived as less competent in technical and creative roles, and they are frequently pigeonholed into roles that align with traditional gender stereotypes, such as vocalists or performers, rather than being seen as capable producers or songwriters.

Industry gatekeepers, such as record label executives and talent scouts, may therefore overlook female artists because of their unconscious biases that favor male artists. This can result in less recognition for female artists and in fewer opportunities for them to be signed, promoted, or included in major projects.

Lack of Representation and Role Models



The underrepresentation of women in prominent positions within the industry and the scarcity of successful female producers and songwriters means fewer role models for aspiring female musicians. This lack of visible success stories can discourage young women from pursuing careers in music.

Barriers in Networking and Industry Connections



The music industry is often described as a “boys’ club,” where male-dominated networks and informal mentorships can exclude women from important opportunities and collaborations, making it difficult for women to access the same opportunities and resources. Women may have less access to industry resources, such as high-quality studios, equipment, and funding, which are often distributed through these male-dominated networks. This can hinder twomen's ability to advance their music careers and gain recognition.

The lack of female mentors in these fields can also make it more challenging for women to receive guidance and support in their career development.

Recognition and Credit



Women often struggle to receive proper credit for their contributions. In collaborative projects, their work may be overshadowed by male colleagues or attributed to them. This lack of recognition can impact female artists' credibility and career advancement.

Female songwriters and producers are less likely to be nominated for and win industry awards, which also are important for career recognition and advancement.

Industry honors and accolades, such as being inducted into halls of fame or receiving lifetime achievement awards, are also less frequently bestowed upon female artists.

Economic Disparities and Barriers



Women in the music industry often face pay disparities and fewer financial opportunities compared to men. For instance, female artists often receive lower performance fees compared to their male counterparts, even when they have similar levels of popularity and draw similar-sized audiences.

With less exposure and airplay, female artists typically earn lower royalties from their music. This includes earnings from album sales, streaming, and radio play.

Gender bias also affects the types and amounts of sponsorship and endorsement deals female artists can secure. Brands may be less likely to invest in female artists due to perceived lower marketability.

This economic inequality can make it more challenging for women to sustain their careers.

Touring Opportunities



Female artists are less likely to be offered headlining spots on major tours and festivals.

When they do perform, they are often placed in less favorable time slots.

The support and resources provided for touring, such as marketing and production budgets, are often less substantial for female artists compared to male artists.

Contractual Inequities



Female artists may face inequities in record deals, including less favorable contract terms and lower advance payments. This can limit their financial stability and creative freedom.

Gender bias can also affect the quality of management and representation female artists receive, impacting their career opportunities and earnings.

Mental Health and Well-being



Women in the music industry frequently face harassment and discrimination, which can create a hostile work environment and hinder their career progression, which manifests in various ways, from being overlooked for projects to receiving less pay for the same work as their male counterparts.

The lack of adequate support systems and mentorship opportunities for female artists can exacerbate these challenges, making it harder for them to navigate the industry.

This and the societal stereotypes undermines women's confidence in their abilities and legitimacy as artists. This can lead to self-doubt and a higher likelihood of abandoning their musical aspirations.

The constant battle against gender bias can take a toll on the mental health and well-being of female artists. Stress, anxiety, and burnout are common issues that can affect their productivity and career longevity.

Steps to Close The Gender Gap



So what should we do about this?

Here are some suggestions:

Advocacy & Awareness Campaigns & Community Engagement



- It is important to form or at least support advocacy groups that focus on gender equality in the music industry, so they can provide resources, mentorship, and support for female artists, as well as better platforms and opportunities for female creators to produce and share their work, to make sure their voices and perspectives are represented.
- Initiatives could be taken by these groups to host public discussions, panels, and webinars that focus on gender biases in music. These events can engage the community and foster a more inclusive music culture.

Media Representation & Critical Examination



- Media outlets should strive to provide more balanced coverage of male and female artists. This includes equal opportunities for interviews, features, and reviews, avoiding stereotypical and objectifying portrayals of female artists. Instead, media should focus more on female artists' musical talents, achievements, and contributions to the industry, and represent women as complex, multi-dimensional characters with agency and autonomy.
- Streaming services and radio stations should create more equitable playlists that feature a balanced mix of male and female artists.
- Algorithms can be adjusted to promote gender diversity.

Industry Reforms



- The music industry must ensure that female artists receive fair compensation for their work, including equitable performance fees, royalties, and contract terms.
- The industry can be better at ensuring that female songwriters and producers receive proper recognition and credit for their work.
- The industry can develop marketing strategies that promote music by female artists to a diverse audience, breaking down the notion of “girl music” and “guy music.”
- The industry should encourage consumers to explore music by female artists and diversify their listening habits. This can be done through curated playlists, recommendations, and social media challenges. And by providing platforms for consumers to give feedback on their music preferences and experiences. This can help identify areas where gender biases may be influencing listening habits.

Authorities & Music Organisations



- Authorities – that is government and municipalities - should work together with music organisations to provide better opportunities for musicians to present their music for a wider audience by for instance, supporting venues across the country. Furthermore, local initiatives and grassroots movements that promote gender equality in music could be supported. This can include community concerts, festivals, and workshops that feature diverse lineups.
- Authorities could help make access better to education and training programs specifically designed to support women in music production and songwriting.
- Authorities should help encourage transparency in reporting gender-related data within the industry. This includes airplay statistics, streaming numbers, and financial earnings.

Research and Data Collection



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- Universities could do more to conduct research to understand the extent of the gender gap, including the gender listening gap, and its impact on the music industry.
- These data can be used to inform policies and initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality.
- Gender studies and discussions about gender biases in music should also be incorporated into educational curricula at all levels. This can help students understand the historical and social contexts that contribute to these biases.

Finally...



By taking these steps, we can work towards a more equitable and realistic representation of women, fostering a culture that values diversity and inclusivity, where women have the opportunity to succeed and be recognized for their contributions as songwriters and producers just as much as men, so we can work towards closing the gender gap.

Thank you for listening! 😊



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