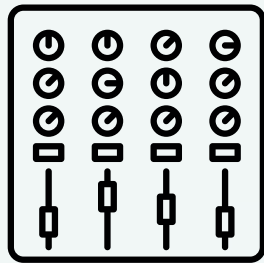


YSWN

**Yorkshire Sound
Women Network**

ALL-WOMEN SOUND NETWORKS

– are we making a difference?



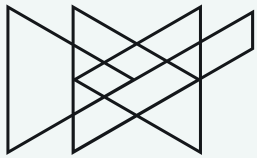
The findings of YSWN's first impact survey

Introduction

Since the first meeting of the group that became Yorkshire Sound Women Network took place in Huddersfield in summer 2015, a key part of our mission has been to support women's greater involvement with sound technology through local groups. In 2019 there are several groups both within and beyond Yorkshire affiliated to YSWN. These share core values and the benefits of being in a network but can self-organise in ways that best match their members' aims. This growth reflects a larger flourishing worldwide of all-women and feminist sound collectives set up to challenge gender inequality, share skills and promote creativity.

YSWN is an independent, non-profit Community Interest Company that originally emerged from Dr Liz Dobson's research on collaborative creativity, and community in music technology, at the University of Huddersfield. In June and July 2019 we invited members of YSWN-affiliated regional groups and attendees of previous YSWN events to take part in a survey asking for their experiences of participating in all-women* sound networks, to find how this had affected them and how such networks might best serve their needs.

*Although the survey asked about 'all-women' sound networks in general, YSWN's own events are open to women, non-binary people and other marginalised genders.



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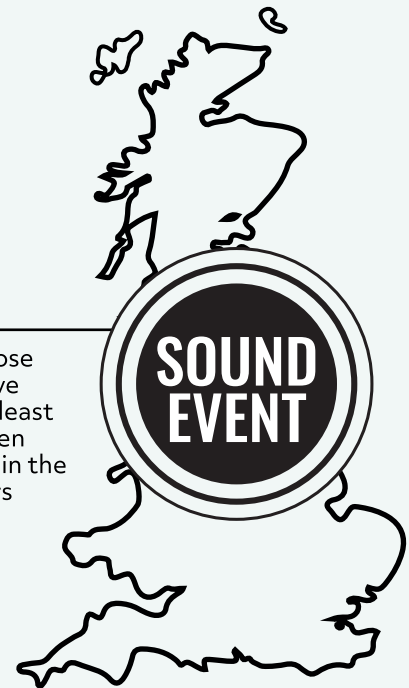
Who are we reaching?

The majority of the survey's 21 respondents¹ currently live in Yorkshire but several other cities across the UK were also represented. Nearly all of those surveyed had attended at least one all-women event in the last two years and half had been to three or more. Most had been to an event hosted by Calderdale Sound Women Network, YSWN Huddersfield Makers, SONA (Sheffield), YSWN York or YSWN's core organising group, with some attending events held by non-YSWN organisations such as SoundGirls, Sonic Cyberfeminisms, Frauen. Kultur.Labor. and Bitches Brew.

Around half of those who responded described themselves as professional practitioners in sound, and the other half as amateurs, ranging from novice to expert. Of the 16 who gave their employment status, half were self-employed (not necessarily in the audio field) with the rest spread across study, full- and part-time employment, caring and not working.

There was a wide spread of ages, with 56 percent of those choosing an age bracket aged 35 or over. When asked to self-define their ethnicity, 62 percent said 'white' (including white British and white European), 5 percent 'mostly white' and 33 percent didn't disclose. Six respondents identified as having a disability and seven as not having a disability with the rest not specifying. And while 71 percent identified as women, non-binary people and other identities may be among the 29 percent who didn't include a gender in their response.

Nearly all those surveyed have attended at least one all-women sound event in the last two years



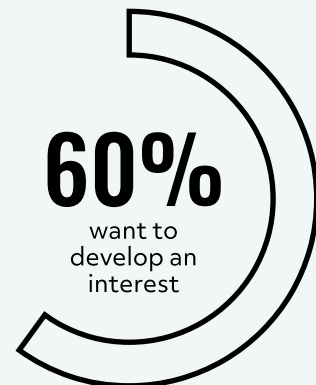
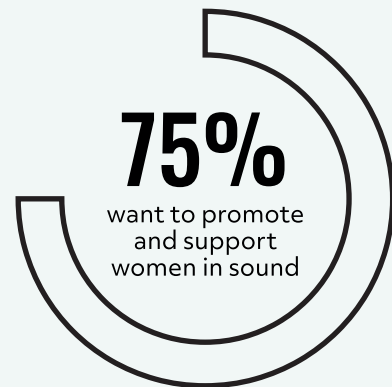
the other half are amateur practitioners in sound



1. Twenty-one people completed the survey; we are aware that there are many others connecting with the network in various ways, so these responses are not necessarily representative of that full demographic. This information does however point us towards particular areas of interest for future development.

Sound communities

When asked why they had joined YSWN or similar networks, 80 percent of respondents said they wanted to meet like-minded people and/or be part of a community. Three quarters wanted to promote and support women in sound, with significant majorities also citing being in an all-women environment and sharing skills as motivations. Individual ambitions also featured, with 60 percent wanting to further develop an interest and half looking to gain support and expertise.



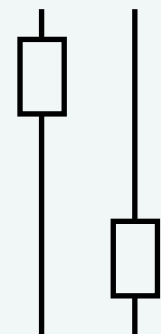
Confident and creative

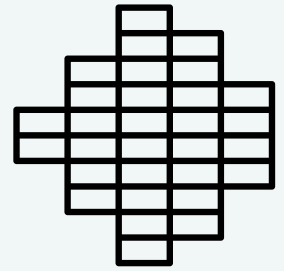
From novices to professionals, the main impact of all-women sound networks was increased confidence. Respondents reported feeling more comfortable discussing their own work with others and taking creative risks. Self-identified amateurs and newcomers to sound technology enjoyed improved self-confidence and learned new skills, while experts and professionals felt less isolated in their field of interest and have attended a wider range of events than previously.

Beyond hands-on learning

Many respondents gave examples of new practical skills they had learned at network events, including soldering contact microphones, recording sound and using audio production software, with 65 percent having gained at least two new skills. Less tangible learning was equally valued, with respondents saying they had enjoyed meeting others like them and appreciated having a space where they could share previous negative and discriminatory experiences.

Overall the most widely reported benefits of network participation were new contacts, work or training opportunities and a better understanding of how to develop a career in audio, while across the spectrum from novice to professional, respondents reported feelings of increased comradeship and greater inspiration.





Missed connections

We also wanted to know why some people don't go to events. The reasons given by the six respondents who said they no longer participate in all-women sound networks were relocation away from or the disbanding of an existing group, or personal circumstances making it hard to attend events. Two respondents with a disability said they were currently prevented from accessing events by difficulty travelling and/or fluctuating health conditions.

Caring responsibilities also have an impact upon participation in networks. Difficulties listed by respondents included the travel and financial commitments of caring for a parent, difficulty in coordinating childcare and a general lack of time to develop individual practice and pursue opportunities. These responses indicate a potential for YSWN and similar networks to both widen geographical reach and increase access within existing locations, perhaps through creating more opportunities for people to join communities online.

What else could we offer?

We asked what all-women sound networks could do to provide additional support in the future.

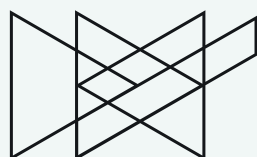
Suggestions included:

- **Tailored, flexible advice and mentoring for beginners**
- **Opportunities for women over 25 who may be returning to the field after a break**
- **Outreach and connecting with wider networks and other professionals**
- **Small-scale, fast-response funding**
- **Open call opportunities to help attract new participants**
- **More consistent recognition of non-binary identities.**



Conclusion

Across a range of ages and experience levels, people told us that participating in YSWN and similar networks helps build a sense of community, increases confidence and provides valuable skills and opportunities. At the same time, responses highlighted several barriers to participation that provide direction for further growth and innovation in order to make sound technology accessible to all.



YSWN