

“Why women, only...?”

Frequently asked questions about
YSWN's work with women, girls and
people of minority genders



YSWN

“Isn’t gender discrimination illegal?”

It can be illegal to discriminate against someone because of their gender, sex or any other protected characteristic. However, projects that focus on a specific gender are not illegal where they address a situation of gender imbalance. This is called positive action. See this excerpt from the Equality and Human Rights Commission guidance:

A note about language: YSWN welcomes all people of marginalised genders: cis and trans women and girls, along with people of minority genders, namely non-binary, gender fluid, gender neutral and agender people as well as trans men.

The Equality Act has some exceptions that allow employers or organisations to discriminate because of your sex.

A difference in treatment may be lawful if: An organisation is taking positive action. Positive action might be used to encourage or develop people of a sex that is under-represented or disadvantaged in a role or activity. For example, an engineering firm places a job advert for a trainee engineer stating that applications from women are welcome.’

Here is the government guide to positive action in employment.

“Surely **inequality is over** and everyone has equal opportunities these days?”

Statistics support the need for positive action in audio.

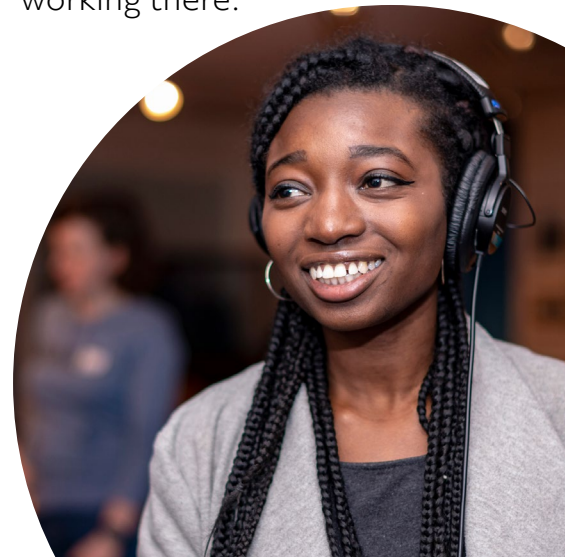
According to the USC Annenberg report: Inclusion in the Recording Studio? Gender and Race/Ethnicity of Artists, Songwriters & Producers across 1,000 Popular Songs from 2012-2021, just 2.8% of record producers are women.

The most recent (2022) edition of the female:pressure Facts Survey found that although numbers have risen in recent years, only 26.9% of acts at electronic music festivals are female and 1.3% are non-binary.

Research by Vick Bain, Counting the Music Industry: The Gender Gap (2019), found that 14.1% of writers signed to 106 music publishers identified as women, and 19.69% of artists signed to UK music publishers identified as women.

The Jaguar Foundation’s report Progressing Gender Representation in UK Dance Music (2022) found that men occupy 63% of senior roles in a representative sample of the UK live music industry.

YSWN’s own 2018 report *Volume Up! How you can support equality in the audio industry* found that around 7 in 10 of the Yorkshire recording studios and live music venues we surveyed had only men working there.



“What’s being done about this?”

Aside from YSWN’s own portfolio of projects there are many initiatives set up to address this issue. Here are just a few:

She Said So shesaid.so
Network aiming to connect and empower underrepresented communities in the music industry with a focus on women and gender minorities.

Women’s Audio Mission
womensaudiomission.org
The only professional recording studio in the world created and run by women. Work encompasses education, internships,

A few more:
Beatz By Girlz beatsbygirlz.org
• Female Frequency femalefrequency.com • Gender Amplified genderamplified.com
• Her Noise hernoise.org • The Jaguar Foundation thejaguarfoundation.net • Ladyz In Noyz facebook.com/ladyzinnoyz • Malta Sound Women Network facebook.com/MaltaSoundWomen • Polyphones facebook.com/polyphones75 • Saffron Music saffronmusic.co.uk • SONA sonawomen.co.uk • Sound Women South West Network facebook.com/groups/480143335366750 • WISWOS wiswos.com

jobs, online resources and industry relationships.

Girls Rock Camp Alliance
girlsrockcampalliance.org
International network of organisations providing resources and community building for girls.

SoundGirls.org soundgirls.org
Network providing employment and mentorship for women.

Keychange keychange.eu
A global network and movement working to eliminate the gender imbalance in the music industry.

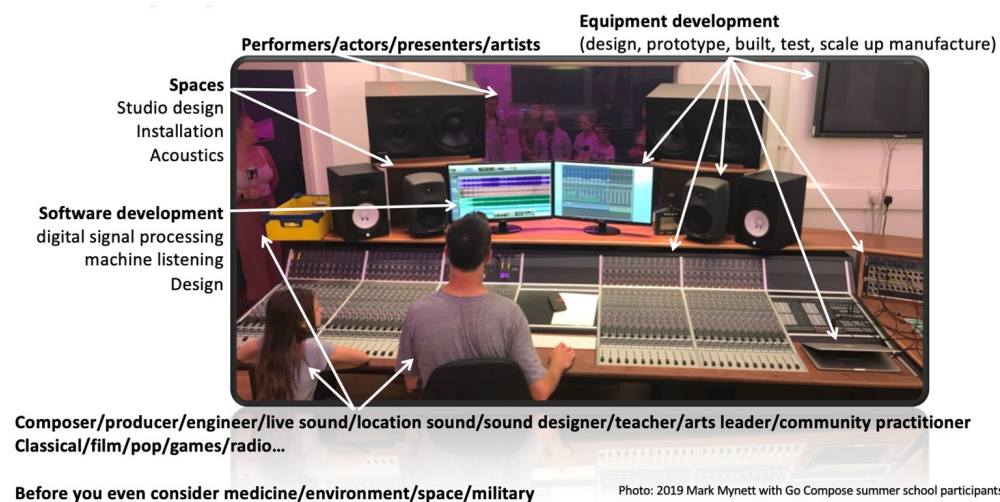
“Plenty of women make it in this career/industry so this isn’t necessary.”

There are always outliers, however an average performance from a man is considered to be good enough, but not for women. Equity in audio means opening the door for everyone rather than maintaining a status quo.

The value of UK creative services exports hit £32.7bn in 2017 (source: thecreativeindustries.co.uk) and the creative industries contributed £111.7bn of value to the UK economy in 2018.

These industries include gaming, film, TV, music, arts and culture, advertising, IT and software.

YSWN are not satisfied that this enormous workforce should remain predominantly male as there are so many careers to be enjoyed by everyone.



“Surely equal opportunity means providing workshops with a **50:50 gender split?**”

To see whether or not this is the best solution, it's useful to consider the difference between equality and equity.

Instead of treating everyone the same, to combat inequality we need to work to remove the disadvantages that may affect some people more than others.

For women and people of minority genders these can include:

- A society where, in general, men enjoy greater economic privilege of owning land and property and take positions of leadership and power, in contrast to women adopting domestic responsibilities
- Cultural bias that associates masculinity with technology
- Constant resistance to the idea that a woman can be an audio expert
- Explicit sexism and abuse towards women and people of minority genders in audio.

Once we have reached a 50:50 industry then offering 50:50 opportunities would be fair, but while the seesaw swings so heavily in one direction that would do very little to address the larger situation. We are also doing more than merely addressing the gender balance; all-women environments provide opportunities for low-risk engagement in audio practices, a chance to try out ideas, make mistakes and learn. These groups foster a sense of community, peer support and also a network for the future.

If you're interested in understanding the benefits of all-women environments in audio you might read: Dobson, E. (2018). 'Digital Audio Ecofeminism (DA'EF): The Glocal Impact of All-Female Communities on Learning and Sound Creativities'. In *Creativities in Arts Education, Research and Practice* (pp. 201-220). Brill Sense.

“If girls/women aren't already attending then maybe they're **just not interested.**”

Again, no. Various studies have shown that women and girls really are.

and many of those being fully booked with people on a waiting list.

When YSWN organised our first workshop for women all 20 places were full within two hours of going live.

Since then we have hosted more than 225 events – meetings, workshops, seminars and more – to around 1,000 attendees

female:pressure's
Visibility Tumblr
(femalepressure.tumblr.com) presents
many women working
in audio.



“Perhaps anyone struggling with a male dominated industry should find something else to do.”

There is a good argument for not encouraging girls, women and people of minority genders into an industry that normalises poor treatment of people who are not men. It can be exhausting. But without resistance, positive action,

conversation and investment this situation cannot change. YSWN has worked extremely hard to become established, attract funding and offer a large portfolio of initiatives to support as many girls and women as possible. Perhaps it is time to change the industry so that women and girls have the same rights and opportunities without resistance or discrimination.



VOLUME UP
YSWN'S
AUDIO
EQUITY
STANDARD

If you work within the industry and are interested in working with us to make your business more inclusive, visit our [YSWN For Industry](#) page to read more about what we offer and in particular our [Volume Up](#) standard.

Further reading

This situation in audio has been looked at closely by professionals. We recommend the following literature if you're interested in learning more about this situation and the social/education theory that is emerging from it.

Print publications

Armstrong, V. (2011). *Gender and Composition in the Music Technology Classroom*. Ashgate.

Bell, A. P. (2015). DAW democracy? The dearth of diversity in 'Playing the Studio'. *Journal of Music, Technology & Education*, 8(2), 129-146.

de Boise, S. (2019). Tackling gender inequalities in music: a comparative study of policy responses in the UK and Sweden. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 25(4), 486-499.

Born, G., & Devine, K. (2015). Music technology, gender, and class: Digitization, educational and social change in Britain. *Twentieth-Century Music*, 12(2), 135-172.

Colley, A., & Comber, C. (2003). Age and gender differences in computer

use and attitudes among secondary school students: What has changed? *Educational Research*, 45(2), 155-165.

Comber, C., Hargreaves, D. J., & Colley, A. (1993). Girls, boys and technology in music education. *British Journal of Music Education*, 10(2), 123-134.

Dobson, E. (2018). Digital Audio Ecofeminism (DA'EF): The Glocal Impact of All-Female Communities on Learning and Sound Creativities. In *Creativities in Arts Education, Research and Practice* (pp. 201-220). Brill Sense.

Gavanas, A., & Reitsamer, R. (2013). DJ technologies, social networks and gendered trajectories in European DJ cultures. In B. Attias, A. Gavanas, & H. Rietveld (Eds.), *DJ culture in the mix: Power, technology, and social change in electronic dance music* (pp. 51-77). London: Bloomsbury.

Gaston-Bird, L. (2019). *Women in Audio*. Routledge.

Mathew, M., Grossman, J., & Andreopoulou, A. (2016, September). Women in Audio: contributions and challenges in music

technology and production. In *Audio Engineering Society Convention 141*. Audio Engineering Society.

Sterne, J., & Rodgers, T. (2011). *The poetics of signal processing. differences*, 22(2-3), 31-53.

Wolfe, P. (2019). *Women in the Studio: Creativity, Control and Gender in Popular Music Sound Production*. Routledge.

Selected Digital Resources

Reports and surveys:

[female:pressure FACTS 2022](#)

[The Jaguar Foundation Report](#)

[Brighter Sound's All Things Equal manifesto](#)

[Women in Audio: Contributions and Challenges in Music Technology and Production](#)

Blogs:

[blog.pioneerdj.com/features/how-can-we-tackle-the-gender-imbalance-in-music-production/](#)

[thequietus.com/articles/22436-recording-studios-sexism-music-industry](#)

[soundonsound.com/people/sounding-why-so-few-women-audio](#)

Any more questions?

We hope you can see that we're not removing anything from men or boys by building an organisation designed for positive action on gender in audio. If this existed then we wouldn't and our ultimate goal is to become redundant.

If you remain concerned about this, or hope to find similar opportunities that are also open for boys and men, please [do get in touch](#). We may be able to answer your questions and forward information.

Version 1, published December 2022.
Latest version at buff.ly/3PdUqs1

