

The Girls At The Rock Shows
**Women working behind-the-scenes at live music events, the treatment they experience, and
how to improve this treatment**

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The Girls At The Rock Show

“All women in our industry understand the battles we've faced to get to where we are.” - Meg Dougherty

I've been attending concerts for as long as I can remember. The first concert I went to was Aly & AJ in 2005. I remember being in awe of everyone on stage, doing something they loved to do. As the years went on I started going to every concert I could get tickets for. Pop artists, pop-punk bands, rappers, it didn't matter. Once I started to figure out my main music taste, and my favorite bands I was willing to do anything to make it to those shows. Once I got my license and a job, there was no stopping me. When I go to concerts, it almost feels euphoric. I'm at my happiest when I am in that crowd singing along with my favorite bands and other fans. Over time, I started to pay attention to the crew and how they were setting up for the different bands between sets. I was fascinated. I wanted to be behind the scenes at these shows, making sure everything was going as planned. I realized that this is what I want to do with my life.

During my time at concerts, I started to notice that women on the crew were few and far between. As someone who wants to work in this field, it is definitely a concern that I will be the odd one out in my career, and that should not be the case. In 2023, Believe, Tunecore, and Luminate conducted the third annual *BE THE CHANGE: Gender Equality in the Music Industry* study, in which 1,656 music industry professionals and creators from 109 countries around the world were surveyed. Of those surveyed, it was found that 73% of women and 83% of non-

binary individuals believe that there is gender discrimination in the music industry, but only 39% of men surveyed agree with this statement (Believe et al.).

There is an opportunity for improvement in the music industry with respect to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Diversity is when the people in your organization have a range of different characteristics and experiences. Equity is when everyone in the workplace is given the tools and resources that will help them succeed individually. Inclusion is when everyone in a company feels they are included in the work being done.

While women work in the live touring world, there needs to be more gender diversion, equity, and inclusion in the live music industry because the live music industry is male-dominated from lack of gender diversity, equity, and inclusion. Many women working on tours have found they are the only woman working on the tour. This research targets managerial professionals in the live music industry and aims to increase knowledge and provide potential strategies for expanding gender diversity, equity, and inclusion in the live music world. This research was conducted because women deserve an equal opportunity for access and success in the live music industry.

This research was conducted by finding evidence and data in industry reports and music business articles. The information provided in this project will provide evidence of this important issue, contributing factors, as well as existing and potential strategies for generating a more welcoming environment for women, like me, who aspire to a long-lasting and meaningful career in music management.

The Live Music Industry in the United States

The music industry consists of those who create music, sell music, and present concerts. This includes musicians, managers, entertainment lawyers, audio engineers, booking agents, and tour managers among other professionals in the music industry (“Music Industry”). Although it may seem to be a small part of everyday life for the average American, the music industry has a significant effect on our economy. In 2019, “the concerts and live entertainment industry’s direct spending impact of \$55.2 billion (which included venue operational spending and off-site spending by out-of-town event attendees) generated a total economic impact of \$132.6 billion in the national economy”, according to a study done by Oxford Economics (Oxford Economics). The music industry, including the touring industry, was booming in the year of this report (2019). The top tour of the year was [Ed Sheeran’s ÷ Tour](#) selling 2,455,718 tickets and earning \$211,712,647 in ticket sales (Pollstar). All tours that made it on Pollstar’s *2019 Worldwide Ticket Sales Top 100 Tours* chart made at least \$5 million in ticket sales (Pollstar).

How Artists Make Money

When it comes to making money in the music industry as an artist there are a few different ways; appearances, licensing, streaming, merchandise sales, and the most lucrative: touring. Artists such as [Amaarae](#) state, “The largest source of revenue, at roughly 50 percent, is money earned from live shows, in person and online. About 35 percent comes from licensing deals for using her songs, such as in the soundtrack of the hit Netflix television series *Top Boy*... The last 15 percent derives from streaming revenue” (Hunter-Tilney). In 2020, Business Insider found that “Spotify paid artists as little as \$.0033 per stream with other sites reporting upwards

of \$.0054. Translated, you'll need about 250 streams to earn a dollar.” (Jacob). With most artists making the majority of their income from touring, they have to put on the best shows possible in order to keep fans entertained and coming back for more shows.

How COVID-19 Affected Touring

“We make 90% of our money from touring,” said Kelcey Ayer of indie rock band [Local Natives](#). “But we’re very fortunate to at least be big enough to weather the storm. There are so many other artists who may not survive.” (Brown). In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic hit. The COVID-19 pandemic, also known as the coronavirus pandemic, “is an ongoing global [pandemic](#) of [coronavirus disease 2019](#) (COVID-19) caused by [severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2](#) (SARS-CoV-2)” (“Covid-19 Pandemic.”). Many countries started to enforce lockdowns and prohibited the gathering of large crowds, the world seemed to stop, the touring world included. In March 2020, “Live Nation Entertainment and AEG Presents, the two biggest powers in the industry, put all their shows on hiatus” following the rapid rise of the coronavirus (Sisario). The thousands of workers performing the labor that allowed shows to go on were left with their livelihoods in the air. Most “crews that go on tour with artists are mostly not unionized and bounce from job to job with often little more than a few months’ notice” (Sisario). Before the pandemic, there was an abundance of these jobs, including sound, lighting, transportation, merchandise sales, and tour management. But once the shows started shutting down, the crew members were left with no income and no employment protections. Some artists such as the rock band [All Time Low](#) put on virtual concerts, which they announced via their social media accounts in May 2020, “On May 22, we’re throwing a special livestream

acoustic performance to benefit our crew impacted by the pandemic. Tickets are \$10 and every dollar goes to them."(All Time Low).

Touring Post-COVID

At the start of 2021, the music industry wasn't sure when concerts would come back, or how they would look. "Before most bigger shows can start up again, executives say there must be a vaccine or testing, tracing, and treatment procedures to help public health officials and concertgoers feel that huge crowds are safe. Even once big concerts return, they are likely to be different: Temperature checks, touchless ordering, and hand sanitizer stations could be the new norm." (Shah). About a quarter of the way through 2021, concerts began to come back as the world was opening up thanks to the rise of testing and people getting the COVID-19 vaccines. According to the Recording Industry Association of America, in 2021 the music industry "contribute(d) \$170 billion to US GDP annually and support(d) 2.5 million jobs nationwide in core music activities like recording, streaming, and live performance," (Atterbury). In February 2022, *Luminate*, an entertainment data and insights company formerly known as Nielsen Music and MRC Data, conducted a study in which they reported that 15% of US consumers attended one concert in 2021, showing that live concerts were making a comeback, and 36% of US consumers planned on attending a concert in the following year (Dalugdug).

The Live Touring Industry is Back!

In 2022, Pollstar found that the Top 100 Worldwide ticket sales reached 59.2 million, surpassing 2019’s 57.7 million by 2.6% (Gensler). The final figures for 2022 show that “overall ticket sales reported around the globe in 2022 also set an all-time gross record with an astounding grand total of \$11.7 billion — just over a 5% increase compared to 2019’s \$11.1 billion.” (Gensler).

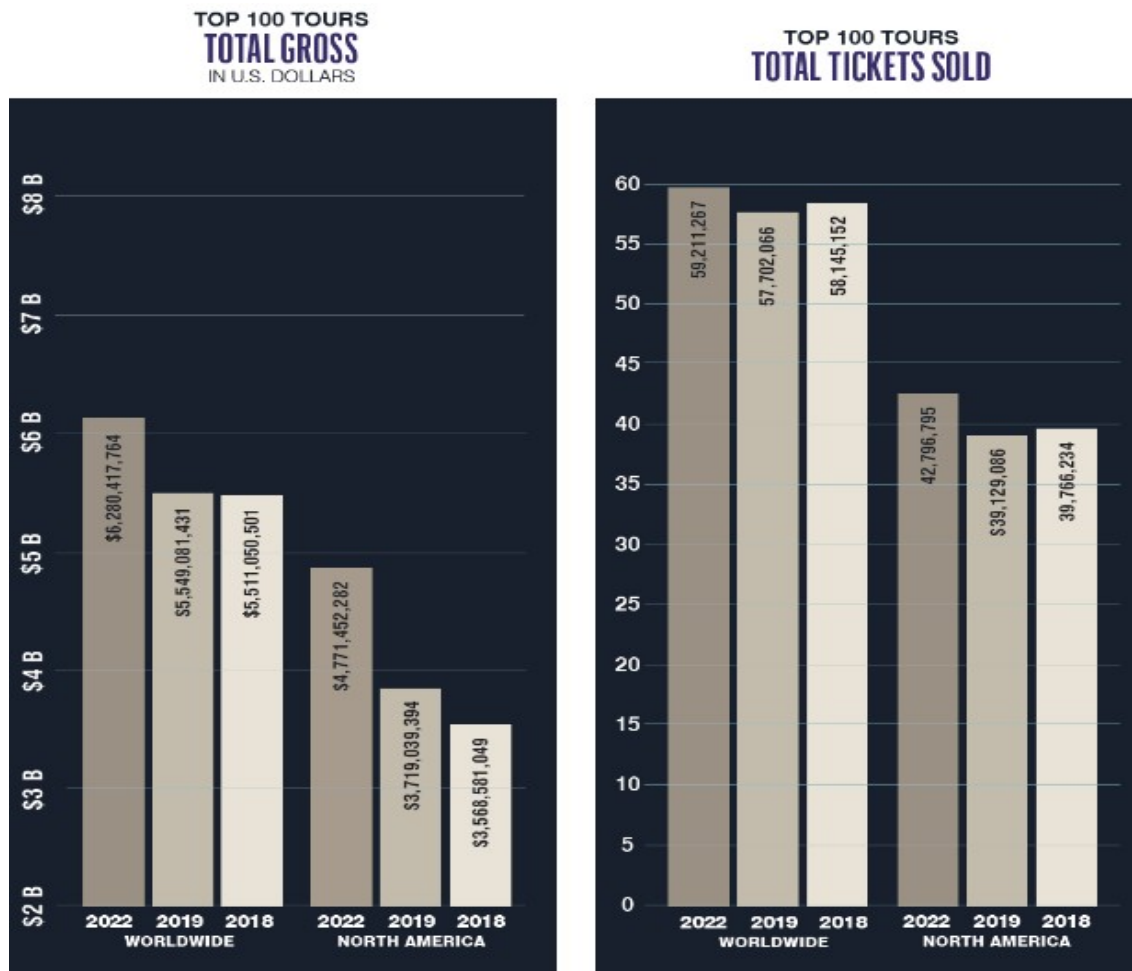


Fig. 1 - Gensler, Andy. 2022 Year-End Biz Analysis: Record-Setting Year Marked By Bad

Bunny, Ed Sheeran & Stadiums. Pollstar, 12 Dec. 2022.

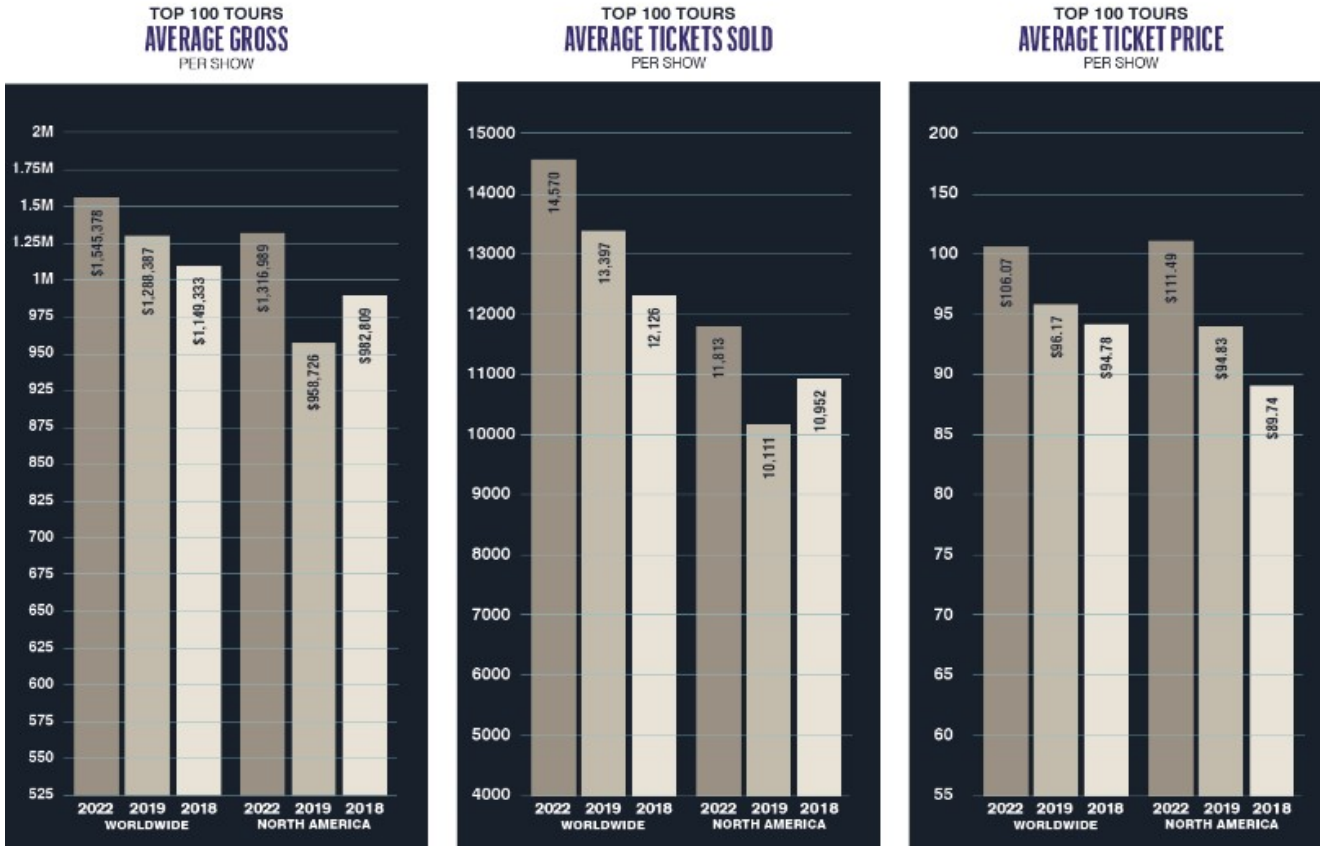


Fig. 2 - Gensler, Andy. 2022 Year-End Biz Analysis: Record-Setting Year Marked By Bad Bunny, Ed Sheeran & Stadiums. Pollstar, 12 Dec. 2022.

Live Nation Entertainment’s 2022 second-quarter report that showed “concert attendance, ticket sales, quarterly revenue, and other core business metrics far exceeded pre-pandemic metrics from the same period.” (“Live Nation Entertainment...”). Live Nation Entertainment (Live Nation) is the world’s leading live entertainment company involved in the organization and promotion of live music events, sponsorship, ticketing services, and artist management in over 40 countries. According to the report, in 2022 ticket sales rose 38%, and on-site spending rose 30% compared to Quarter 2 in 2019. In the end, the number of shows promoted by Live Nation rose 20% in the second quarter of 2022 to 12,500 from 10,000 in the

same period in 2019. Live Nation ended up generating “\$4.4 billion in revenue across all divisions including concerts, ticketing, and advertising & sponsorships.” (“Live Nation Entertainment...”). This was a 40% increase from concert revenues reported by Live Nation in 2019 (“Live Nation Entertainment...”).

Managerial Roles in Concert Touring

With the concert industry starting to boom again, the many jobs supported through live concerts and touring are also coming back. While many may think the music industry primarily supports those who are center stage, in fact, there are a wide variety of both artistic and non-artistic roles and tasks associated with producing and servicing live events. The artistic roles include collaborators (opening acts, backing band), costume designers, lighting designers, and set designers. Non-artistic roles on music production and touring include stage crew, stage technicians (audio, visuals, equipment), publicists, and promoters.

Artists who are just starting out in their touring careers, usually have to do most of the work themselves without much formal training or support adopting a “do-it-yourself” approach. More established artists with a large fan base and financial backing, who are in demand on the touring circuit can employ teams to help ensure their tours run smoothly. These artists have people behind the scenes, in managerial positions to support and coordinate the others providing production and promotional assistance throughout the tour. These managerial jobs include artist manager, tour manager, and tour presenter. Job responsibilities are outlined in Figure 3 below;

Job Title	Job Description
Manager	Managers build and coordinate the artist’s team on all sides of the music industry. They usually take part in the initial route planning, help the artist pick the touring team, and serve as a bridge between the live entertainment and all other sides of the artist’s career.
Booking Agent	The Booking Agent represents the artist across the live industry. They book the tour and sell the shows to the local talent buyers, find the venue, and negotiate the price.
Local Promoter	The Local Promoter is affiliated or at least connected with local venues and performance spaces, they buy gigs from the agents and/or tour promoters to own the ticket sales.
Tour Promoter	The Tour Promoter contracts musicians to perform a series of concerts, paying for rehearsals, audiovisual production, covering travel expenses, and so on.
Tour Manager	The Tour Manager stays on the road with the artists and gets them from point A to point B. They are also in charge of the technician crew.

Fig. 3 - Pastukhov, Dmitry. *“The Mechanics of Touring: How The Live Music Industry Works.”*

SoundCharts, 2019.

Gender Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion In Live Music

There is an opportunity for improvement in the music industry to improve gender equity. The music industry is a male-dominated field, both on stage and behind the scenes. DEI stands for diversity, equity, and inclusion. Each of these areas is very important, though there isn't a lot of research on how we are moving forward in these areas. Following is a summary of current research exploring issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion as relevant to women and those identifying as women pursuing successful and meaningful employment in the live music touring industry.

Gender Diversity in Live Touring

Diversity is when the people in your organization have a range of different characteristics and experiences ("What Is Workplace Diversity?"). In March 2019, the Berklee Institute of Creative Entrepreneurship in partnership with Women In Music and Berklee's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment released a study on women in music called *Women In The U.S. Music Industry: Obstacles and Observations*. In this study, nearly 2,000 women of all races, ages, and ethnicities, working in all areas of the music industry were surveyed. The survey was used to build upon existing research on inclusion in the music industry and asked questions about employment, demographics, career challenges, and job satisfaction among women (Prior et al.). In this report, it was found that only 5% of women working in music are working on the road, and only 10% of women in the study stated that working in live event production, management, and promotion is their primary occupation (Prior et al.). This is shown in Figure 4-5 below.

Primary and Secondary Music Industry Occupations

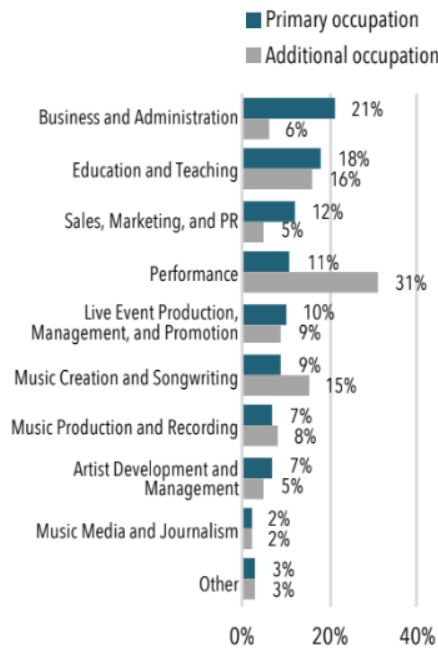


Figure 5. Distribution of primary and secondary occupations in the music industry for those who responded to each question.

Fig. 4-5 - Prior, Becky, et al. *Women in the U.S. Music Industry: Obstacles and Opportunities*.

Berklee Institute of Creative Entrepreneurship, Mar. 2019, p.10-10.

In June 2021, The USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative released its report entitled *Inclusion in the Music Business: Gender & Race/Ethnicity Across Executives, Artists, & Talent Teams*. The report resulted from a study mapping the diversity of the U.S. music industry professionals across different positions of authority. USC Annenberg evaluated nine major music companies (SME, UMG, WMG, Spotify, iHeart Radio, Cumulus, Audacy, Live Nation, and AEG Present) when conducting this study (Smith et al.). The report showed data including people who identified as underrepresented ethnicities, black, and women who are on senior management teams at these companies. The results are categorized according to three types of music industries; “Music Groups” (Sony Music Entertainment, Universal Music Group, and

Warner Music Group), “Radio & Streaming” (Audacy, iHeart Radio, and Spotify), and “Live Music & Concert Production” (AEG Presents and Live Nation). In the “Music Groups” 31.6% of their senior management teams are women, while in “Radio & Streaming” it is 23.4%, and in “Live Music & Concert Promotion” 40.6% of their senior management teams are women (Smith et al.). This data is shown in Figure 5 below.

COMPANY TYPE	SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM		
	% UR	% BLACK	% WOMEN
MUSIC GROUPS	26.3%	23.7%	31.6%
RADIO & STREAMING	17%	2.1%	23.4%
LIVE MUSIC & CONCERT PROMOTION	12.5%	0%	40.6%
TOTAL	18.8%	8.5%	30.8%

Fig. 5 - Smith, Stacy, et al. *Inclusion in the Music Business: Gender & Race/Ethnicity Across Executives, Artists & Talent Teams*. USC Annenberg, June 2021, p. 6-6.

In 2021, FestivalPro published an article by Andy Robertson on their website, reiterating the data shown in the report from USC Annenberg. FestivalPro is an advanced event management system, focusing on festivals, conferences, and events. In this article, entitled *Diversity in the Live Music Events Industry*, Robertson found that women make up around 40% of all occupations working in the events sector. However, management roles are still predominantly male with 80% of music and event producer roles being performed by men and management roles in events companies being 72% male. When looking at more technical roles like audio and light engineers or anything to do with stage backlines and power supply technical roles are 97% male (Robertson). In USC Annenberg’s 2021 *Inclusion in the Music Business* study,

of the 4,060 music executives that participated in the study it was found that only 39.1% of executives in live music and concert promotion are women (Smith et al.).

With so many of the roles in live events being predominantly male, it can be difficult for women to get their start in the industry, especially when it appears there are more leadership opportunities for men.

Gender Equity & Inclusion in Live Music Touring

Equity is when everyone in the workplace is given the tools and resources that will help them individually succeed (Harris). Inclusion is when a mix of people can come to work, feel comfortable and confident to be themselves and work in a way that suits them and delivers your business or service needs (“What Is Inclusion?”).

Berklee College found in their previously mentioned report (page 16 of the report) that 78% of women in music reported experiencing different treatment in the workplace, and 52% felt that their gender has affected their employment in the music industry (Prior et al.). This data is shown in Figure 6 below.

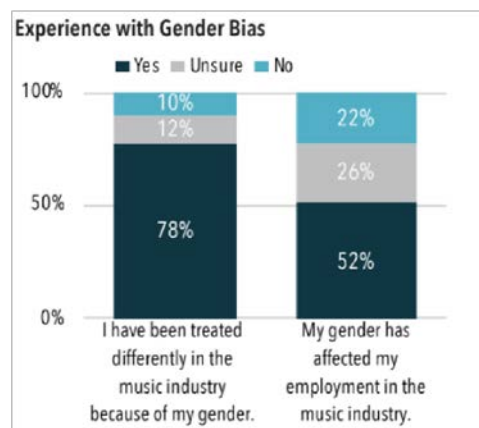


Fig. 6 - Prior, Becky, et al. *Women in the U.S. Music Industry: Obstacles and Opportunities*.

Berklee Institute of Creative Entrepreneurship, Mar. 2019, p. 16-16.

When asked if she thinks men and women are treated equally in the music industry, Jess Hannam, Artist Representative at [Identity Music](#), a digital music distribution company, said, “I think that when it comes to the music industry, it has always been an inherently male-dominated space.

Women within the industry have to work harder to make a name for themselves.” (Identity Music). The “Indie Professor”, Wendy Fonarow who is a professor of anthropology and writes the *Ask The Indie Professor* column for The Guardian, says that this causes challenges for women working in this male-dominated field. According to Professor Fonarow:

Masculine cultural norms are constantly displayed in vans, tour buses, and venues. Thus, to avoid criticism, women keep the female stuff to themselves... Female professionals are vigilant about not reinforcing gender stereotypes. This means women often conform their behavior to masculine stereotypes and circumscribe "feminine" behavior. If a female professional does anything that conforms to a female stereotype, she is pilloried. (Fonarow)

There is also a gap in pay between men and women working in the music industry. Andre Paine at Music Week Magazine found that Universal Music UK had an average gender pay gap of 31% in 2021 with a 59.3% gap in bonus pay and Sony Music UK had an average gender pay gap of 27.9% in 2021 with a 57.8% gap in bonus pay (Paine). A participant in the *Women in the U.S. Music Industry: Obstacles and Opportunities* study stated that “I’ve had to pass on two “dream job” opportunities [because] I simply could not live off of 35k a year in LA/NY and didn’t have a 2nd source of income.” (Prior et al.).

How Did This Happen?

There are several factors contributing to this lack of gender diversity, equality, and inclusion in the music industry. These include societal gender bias and norms and lack of access to mentorships and training. One of these factors is long-standing social norms around work and the impact on achieving work/life balance.

In the previously mentioned study, *Women in the U.S. Music Industry: Obstacles and Opportunities*, research showed that 33% of those participating in the study cited work/life balance as their explanation for their decision on whether or not to have children (Prior et al.). The 2023 *BE THE CHANGE: Gender Equality in the Music Industry* study, research showed that women who are parents reported increased pressures and stress in balancing their roles. They are more likely than parents of all genders, to report difficulties in maintaining a work-life balance. It was also found that 1-in-4 women who are parents reported that their compensation has not allowed their families to keep up with their needs, 40% have the additional expense of childcare so that they can continue their careers, and 33% of working parents who participated in the study agree with the statement “Discrimination based on familial status is a major issue” (Believe et al.). According to research from The American Association of University Women’s *The Simple Truth About The Gender Pay Gap* study from 2020, women in business who are mothers experience the “motherhood penalty” where they are offered lower salaries, fewer promotions, and fewer job offers while working fathers reap the benefits of a “fatherhood boost”, earning 119% of what men without children earn (The American Association of University Women).

Social bias is another contributing factor to the lack of gender DEI in the music industry.

In March 2022 Unclear Magazine interviewed Olivia from Girls Behind The Rock Show; a nonprofit organization that focuses on creating an equal opportunity environment for women in the music industry. When asked about what problems women face in the music industry, Olivia responded:

There's often the issue that women and marginalized genders are not in the room when decisions are being made, and this is an issue across every industry. They often face stereotypical prejudice, some in positions of power believing that they cannot hold leadership positions the same way cisgender men can. Sexism also runs deep in the music industry — whether it's the pay gap, not booking marginalized genders for music gigs, sexual harassment, and unfortunately so many more issues that can't just be covered within a matter of one question. There's no good reason why this is happening, but rather it's the patriarchal society that we live in that allows these issues to happen and we are just supposed to accept the way things are. (Crabill)

Lack of Mentors/Role Models for Women in Music

Women are not being given the opportunity to move up the ladder in the world of business the same way men are. Part of this is because, without role models already in positions of power, women don't see themselves as being able to achieve those roles. The lack of opportunity for women in business to network is a part of this problem. 54% of the women participating in the *Women in the U.S. Music Industry: Obstacles and Opportunities* study felt that access to networking connections had a positive impact on their careers (Prior et al.). Networking is an essential part of advancing careers in business, through supportive connections. Anna, a financial services executive had the following to say about this issue;

My problem is getting to know the guys two levels above, my boss’s boss, and his peers. We just don’t have many occasions to meet and when we do, we just focus on the task at hand. I’m not really getting to know him, and he certainly isn’t getting to know me. But, to break through to the next level, I have the sense that they have to know and like me. (*Why Strategic Networking...*)

The lack of mentorships specifically for women in the music industry contributes to the issue of women not moving forward in their careers. Without a mentor to help you make connections and learn, it can be difficult to see yourself moving up the ladder. In the *Women in the U.S. Music Industry: Obstacles and Opportunities* study, 47% of those participating from across all job levels felt that they should be further ahead in their careers than they currently are. In addition, 41% of those in the study who had a mentorship feel they should be further ahead in their career, 37% feel that they are where they should be in their career and 10% feel they are further ahead in their career than they thought. This is compared to those who did not have a mentor with 56% feeling they are behind in their career, 26% feeling they are where they should be in their career and 6% feeling they are ahead in their career (Prior et al.). This is shown in Figure 7 below.

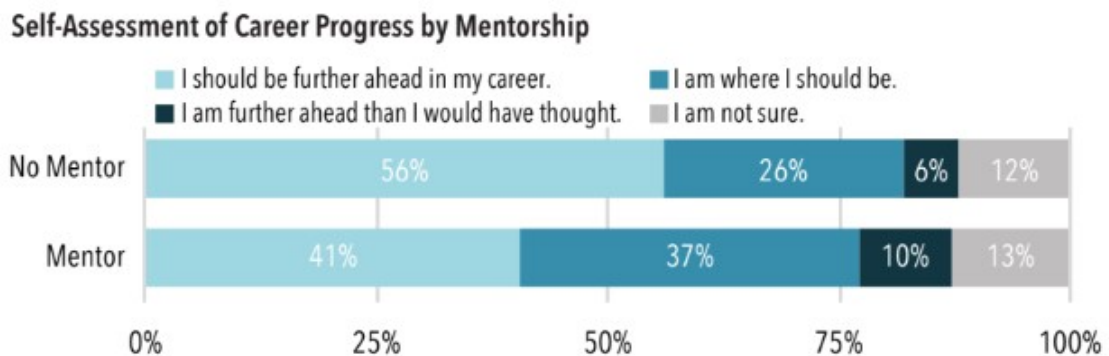


Fig. 7 - Prior, Becky, et al. *Women in the U.S. Music Industry: Obstacles and Opportunities*.

Berklee Institute of Creative Entrepreneurship, Mar. 2019, p. 22-22.

How The Industry Is Addressing These Problems

Though all the previously mentioned data appears that a career in live music management for women is daunting, there are many who have begun to do more than just take notice of the issue but actually consider strategies intended to provide more opportunity and leverage for women in music management. There are some artists that are taking the lead and are making it a priority to hire women on their teams. There are also many non-profits that are working to help women in the music industry.

The top international touring band [U2](#) is among those finding ways to make a difference. During U2's 2018 Experience + Innocence Tour, it was brought to light that The majority of the band's management was female. In an interview for Vogue, Sarah O'Herlihy, who has managed the management and logistics for U2 for over a decade said; "The majority of the band's international management—in L.A., Dublin, London—is women...It's still a male-dominated field, but we're changing that. Some of my very good friends are females who are out on tours with Guns N' Roses, Madonna. The needle is moving in the right direction." (Seymour).

[Lizzo's](#) *Special* tour is also breaking barriers. On the core production team, 15 out of 44 members are women, with many traditionally male roles being filled by women. This includes tour manager Carlina Gugliotta, lighting director Katherine "Kat" Borderud, video director Colleen Wittenberg, and accountant Ashley Joshi. There is also Lizzo's Full Stop Management day-to-day manager Alana Balden and a business management team of four women: Joshi, Cat Marcasciano, Michelle Cope, Lauren Lee, and B-Party tour manager Molly Gordon (Speer).

There are also non-profits that are working to help women climb the ladder throughout the music industry. Women In Music is a 501(c)3 non-profit whose mission is to advance

equality, visibility, and opportunities for women in the music industry through education, support, recognition, and empowerment. As part of the previously mentioned *Women in the U.S. Music Industry: Obstacles and Opportunities* study, Women In Music helped find solutions to the obstacles mentioned throughout the study. 61% of the women surveyed had a mentor at some point in their careers, and 92% of those women believe that these mentorships contributed to their careers. It was also reported that 54% of the women surveyed had held a music-related internship, with 79% feeling that their internship contributed to their careers (Prior et al.). More opportunities for women to have mentors and internships would be a good start in helping women move further in their careers in the music industry.

What Can Still Be Done

There are many difficult conversations that need to be had in order to make a change. In the previously mentioned 2023 *BE THE CHANGE: Gender Equality in the Music Industry* study, research showed that 70% of music industry professionals are open to and feel comfortable having open conversations about social inequality in the workplace. 73% feel they have a role to play in making the music industry more equitable for all genders. When the participants of the study were asked “Who do you think has the ability to effect changed to gender equality in the music industry?”, half of music industry professionals and creators felt that companies and executives in the industry are the most capable of implementing change in gender equality in the music industry (Believe et al.). This data is shown in Figure 8 below.

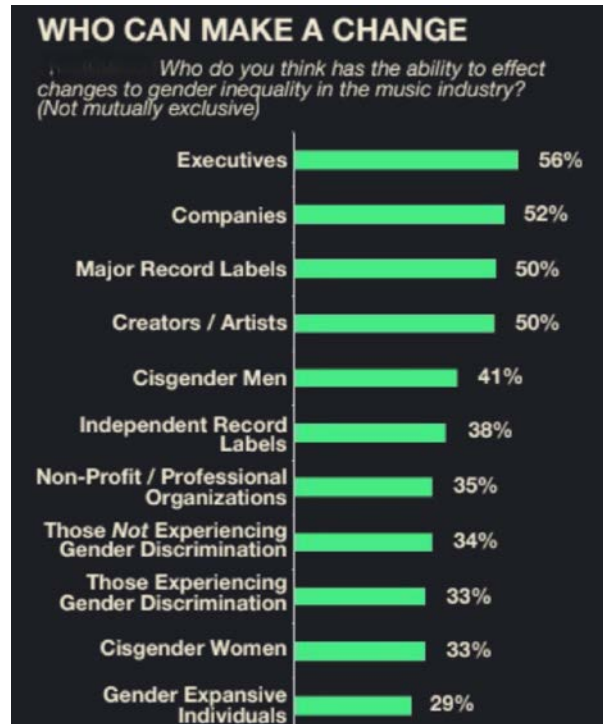


Fig. 8 - Believe, et al. *BE THE CHANGE: Gender Equality In The Music Industry*.

2023, p. 25-25.

There are multiple things the music industry can better do to begin addressing lack of equity and inclusion impacting women aspiring to leadership positions. To start, music industry executives need to face the reality that there is a problem, and they are the ones who need to solve it. Breaking down the bureaucratic barriers and outdated procedures that impact individuals' access and positive experiences in advancing careers in live music.

One of these barriers is the job interview. 57% of those who participated in the *BE THE CHANGE* study are in favor of removing demographic information (gender, race/ethnicity, age, etc.) from hiring decisions. Two-thirds of those in the industry also support the creation of diverse hiring committees. Those in power can also help create change by using their influence

to help change their teams. 80% of executives want to ensure more women are in positions of power and are willing to help make changes to accomplish this goal (Believe et al.).

In terms of the gender pay gap, there are also things those in power in the music industry can consider. It is important to provide fair pay to women in the music industry. 53% of those in the music industry feel that cisgender men are paid more than others in the music industry. For parents who are working in the music industry, this is an important issue. 1-in-4 women who are parents that work in the music industry stated that their pay does not keep up with their family's needs. When it comes to promotions, executives need to promote intentionally. Promotions usually go hand-in-hand with a pay raise, yet women are 30% more likely to be passed up for a promotion than a man is (Believe et al.).

In conclusion, the music industry has work to do in order to even the playing field for women, particularly those aspiring to leadership roles in live performance and touring. While performing my research for this project, it was difficult to find the data supporting my claims because this issue is just now coming to light. The evidence is mostly being shown by data pertaining to artists, but very few are conducting research on what is happening to the women behind the scenes who are essential to the success of producing impactful events. We still need to strive for more gender diversion, equity, and inclusion in the live music industry so that people who are just starting to join the music industry, like me, know there is a place for them and that the industry wants them to succeed.

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