

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a red jacket and headphones, is DJing at a club. She has her right arm raised and is adjusting a knob on the DJ mixer with her left hand. The background shows a stage with scaffolding and stage lights. The entire image is overlaid with a purple tint and geometric orange lines.

# BE THE CHANGE

*women in music 2022*

**MIDIA** tuneCORE **believe**®

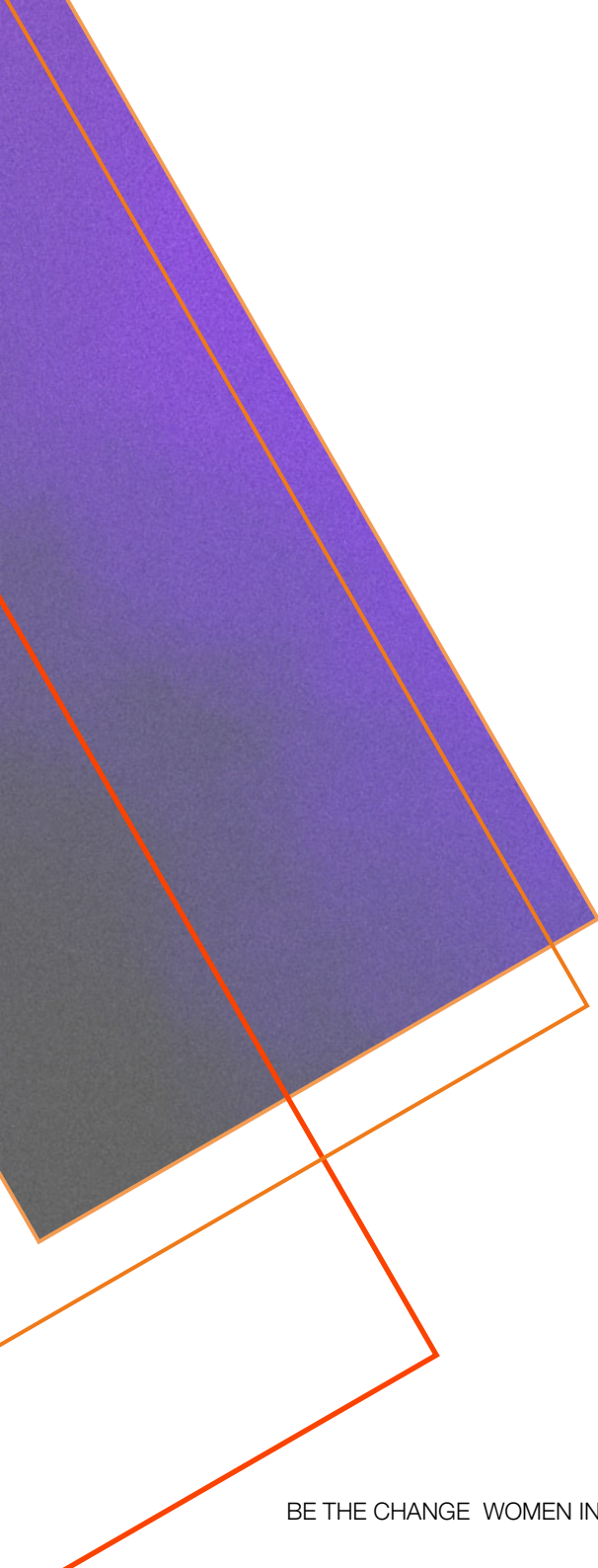


# Foreword

Andreea Gleeson, CEO, TuneCore

In 2021, I wondered, why were women music creators still only around 28% of all TuneCore's self-releasing artists, especially when the barriers to entry are so low? This question sparked a further discussion and from there, last year's inaugural women's study was born. At the time, the industry only indexed women artists at around 11-12%, and even though TuneCore measured higher, we knew we should, and could do better.

Other studies talked about "what" the diversity gap was between men, women and other under-represented groups in the music industry, but none of them provided insights into the "why." We engaged MIDiA to find the underlying reasons and help us identify areas of opportunity to bridge the gap. Last year's study revealed the reasons behind the disparity, which ranged from being obvious (harassment, sexualization) to very subtle (access to resources and opportunities), even invisible (confidence, unconscious bias). These are all issues that have no place in the music industry – or any industry for that matter.



Over the last year TuneCore implemented several key initiatives directly driven from the insights of last year's study and as a result, the percentage of TuneCore artists who are women rose from 28% at the end of 2020 to 42% at the end of 2021. The initiatives we implemented ranged from small updates to longer term commitments. We signed the Keychange pledge to publicly commit to gender equality. We partnered with organizations across different sectors of the music industry to provide more access to resources and opportunities for women and gender minorities. TuneCore also made sure that all company marketing materials equally represented both women and men. Additionally, I personally began to speak more publicly about the challenges under-represented groups face and encouraged women to not give-up and continue participating in the industry. The increase in women creators using TuneCore shows us that higher participation is possible if we put concerted efforts in place to fuel that change.

On behalf of TuneCore and Believe, I challenge the music industry collectively and all women, men, and non-gender specific executives and creators individually, to accept their roles to BE THE CHANGE we want to see in the music industry and the world. Read the study and take on the calls to action – if each of us commits to change, we will succeed. Outside of my role at TuneCore, I'm mother to a 1-year-old son and a 3-year-old daughter. I want my daughter to grow up in a world where she has the same opportunities as my son. Let's get it done.

# Contents

- 2 Foreword
- 5 About
- 7 Introduction
- 8 Section 1: Women making music – what has changed?
- 10 Section 2: Sexualization remains the root of many challenges
- 12 Section 3: The confidence gap – addressing the invisible challenge for women across music
- 16 Section 4: Global nuance – understanding differences across regions, gender and genre
- 20 Section 5: The perception gap – making men allies in the fight for equality
- 23 Section 6: What comes next?
- 25 Call to action
- 29 Appendix: The survey sample





# About

## MIDiA Research

MIDiA Research is a market intelligence and consulting firm with long-standing expertise in the business of entertainment and digital media. We are the definitive source for cross-entertainment business analysis, providing a deep understanding of trends and innovations shaping the entertainment market and audience behaviours, which help businesses formulate commercially actionable strategy to navigate the evolving digital content and consumption landscape. Our clients leverage our expertise and insight, proprietary multi-country consumer data and market forecasts to help them make smarter decisions faster. For more details visit our website: [www.midiaresearch.com](http://www.midiaresearch.com)

## TuneCore

TuneCore is the global platform for independent musicians to build audiences and careers – with technology and services across distribution, publishing administration and a range of promotional services. TuneCore Music Distribution services help artists, labels and managers sell their music through Spotify, Apple Music, Amazon Music, Deezer, TikTok, Tencent and more than 150 download and streaming stores worldwide, while retaining 100 percent of their sales revenue and rights for a low annual flat fee. TuneCore Music Publishing Administration assists songwriters by administering their compositions through licensing, registration, worldwide royalty collections, and placement opportunities in film, TV, commercials, video,

games and more. The TuneCore Artist Services portal offers a suite of tools and services that enable artists to promote their craft, connect with fans, and get their music heard. TuneCore, part of Believe, is headquartered in Brooklyn, NY, with offices in Los Angeles, Nashville, Atlanta, and Austin, and operates globally through local teams based in the UK, Germany, France, Belgium, Italy, Russia, Brazil, Mexico, Nigeria, South Africa, India, Japan and Singapore across 5 continents. [www.tunecore.com](http://www.tunecore.com)

## Believe

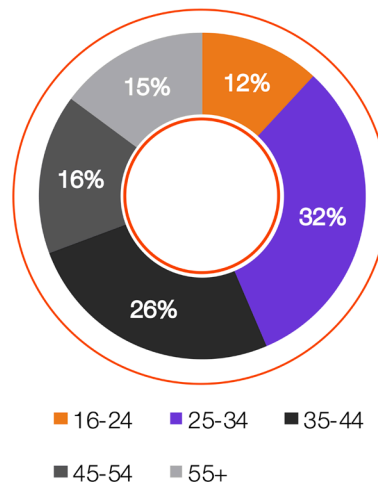
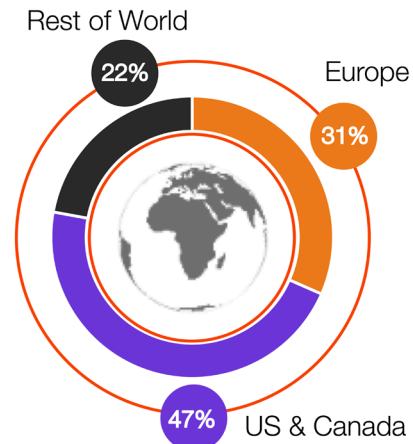
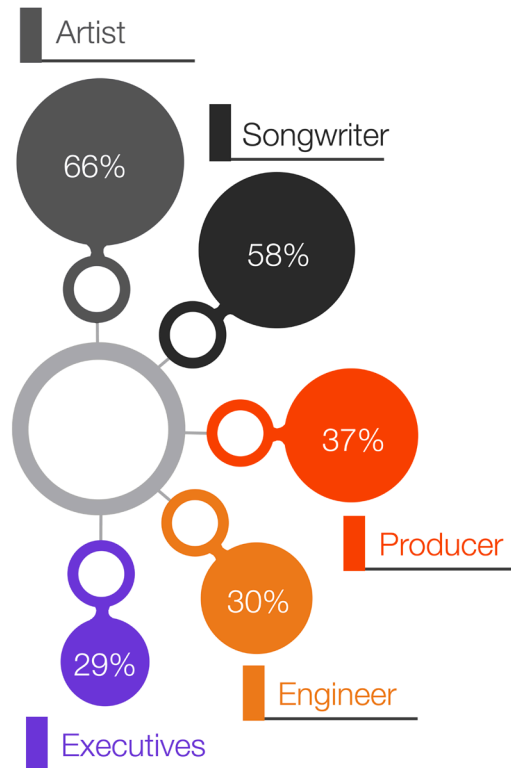
Believe is one of the world's leading digital music companies. Believe's mission is to develop independent artists and labels in the digital world by providing them the solutions they need to grow their audience at each stage of their career and development. Believe's passionate team of digital music experts around the world leverages the Group's global technology platform to advise artists and labels, distribute and promote their music. Its 1,430 employees in more than 50 countries aim to support independent artists and labels with a unique digital expertise, respect, fairness and transparency. Believe offers its various solutions through a portfolio of brands including TuneCore, Nuclear Blast, Naïve. Groove Attack and AllPoints. Believe is listed on compartment A of the regulated market of Euronext Paris (Ticker: BLV. ISIN: FR0014003FE9). [www.believe.com](http://www.believe.com)

## Women in music 2022 survey sample

631 Women respondents  
(creators & executives)

267 Men respondents  
(creators & executives)

54 Other gender identities



70% "I use a digital distributor to get my music to streaming services"

## About the survey

*This survey was done in February 2022, with a carefully designed survey that was distributed on the web, assisted by a variety of music industry associations, networks and influencers who are working directly on issues faced by women creators. For more details on the survey and the composition of its respondents, see the appendix.*

*As this study is about gender, identity, and social roles as self-identified by respondents, all references to male / female, men / women, etc. qualitatively refer to gender, not biological sex. Women and other non-male genders refers to the group inclusive of women, non-binary, gender fluid, and other identities that are not exclusively male. LGBTQ+ was an additional minority segment that some respondents self-identified, which is not linked directly with gender identity for the purposes of this report.*



# Introduction



**40%**  
of women saw  
improvement  
in visibility



**57%**  
saw no change  
in sexual  
harassment

The last two years of pandemic-driven disruption in the music industry may just have created a window of opportunity for real change in the fight for gender equality. The next generation of women music creators and executives have begun to make room for themselves, laying the groundwork for the industry of tomorrow – not simply fighting an uphill battle against the industry of yesterday. However, the journey to equality for all is a long one. Challenges still abound, and while some progress has been made, it is still far from enough.

This is demonstrated through insights from the 2022 edition of *Be The Change: Women In Music*. This year, we broadened the scope of our study, collating the views of 1003 respondents globally, including 631 women, of whom 486 were creators (those who write songs, record, perform, etc.) and 223 executives (some were both). Alongside the survey, we also conducted in-depth 1:1 conversations with independent artists from around the world, including India, Nigeria, Thailand, France, Mexico, the UK, Lebanon, and Armenia.

As awareness of the challenges faced by women in music grows, it becomes even more essential for the industry to work as a cohesive force for a better future. This is why, in addition to listening to the experiences of women and other non-male gender identities, we also asked men (a sample of 267 creatives and / or executives) to share their perceptions of gender discrimination and their role as allies. Because it is essential to understand the diversity of experiences for non-males in the music industry, we also identified nuances for individuals across regions, music genres, gender identities, and more.

## Key insights

- Overall, there has been little change — perceived or material — over the last year, in the challenges faced by women and non-male gender identities
- Visibility and diversity of women in the music industry are among the few challenges perceived as improving, with 40% of

women creators seeing improvement in the visibility of women, and 36% seeing improvement in diversity of women in executive positions. Alongside this, just over a quarter of women creators feel that the exclusion of women from technical areas, like production, engineering, music tech, etc., has also improved

- Sexualization remains the root of many problems for women, 57% of whom reported no change in sexual harassment over the past year
- Experiences in the music industry vary greatly by genre, gender identity, region and more, reflecting a need for flexibility and nuance in the fight for equity
- Allyship for men starts with listening, but many men lack awareness of the full spectrum of women's challenges, creating a 'perception gap' that makes real change more difficult. Men must feel empowered to go beyond empathy to more proactive support
- Most women struggle with confidence issues, but women executives more so than women creators, with two-thirds of women executives and 52% of women creators reporting feelings of imposter syndrome
- Role models are more important for women executives because, unlike with creators, role models have not always been either numerous or high-profile. On the other hand, women executives are more aware of resources than women creators. These observations suggest an opportunity for cross-collaboration — executives supporting creators and sharing resources, and creators supporting executives as role models and trail-blazers
- All of this needs to happen within an industry where a zero-tolerance approach to sexism and harassment remains a top priority for all genders and industry roles



# Section 1: Women making music – what has changed?

In this section we focus on the insights from women creators, 486 people from the overall survey sample.



Broadly, women music creators perceived little change over the past year in the challenges they face, though there are pockets of improvement. The majority of women creators said that sexual harassment / objectification, sexualization, and ageism have stayed the same over the past year. The perception of criticism and abuse on social media is that it has gotten worse, according to 29% of women creators.

Visibility of women in the music industry at live events and conferences is among the few challenges perceived by women creators as substantially improving, with 40% of them

seeing improvement. In addition to this, 36% saw an improvement in the diversity of women in executive roles or positions of power. Proactively creating opportunities for women in leadership roles that have been so far male-dominated is a key first step to improving gender issues in the industry top-down. Even so, as we see in the following section, 37% of women creators frequently witness tokenism — implying that some ‘improvements’ may merely be an appearance of diversity and visibility rather than true recognition of hard work and talent.

Furthermore, even if more women are in positions of power, they are not necessarily compensated fairly, as 42% of women creators have “frequently” witnessed a pay gap (figure 2, below). Several striking industry markers place this into context. Nine out of the Rolling Stone 10 highest-paid musicians of 2021 are men, and women comprise just 10% of the top 25 executives on

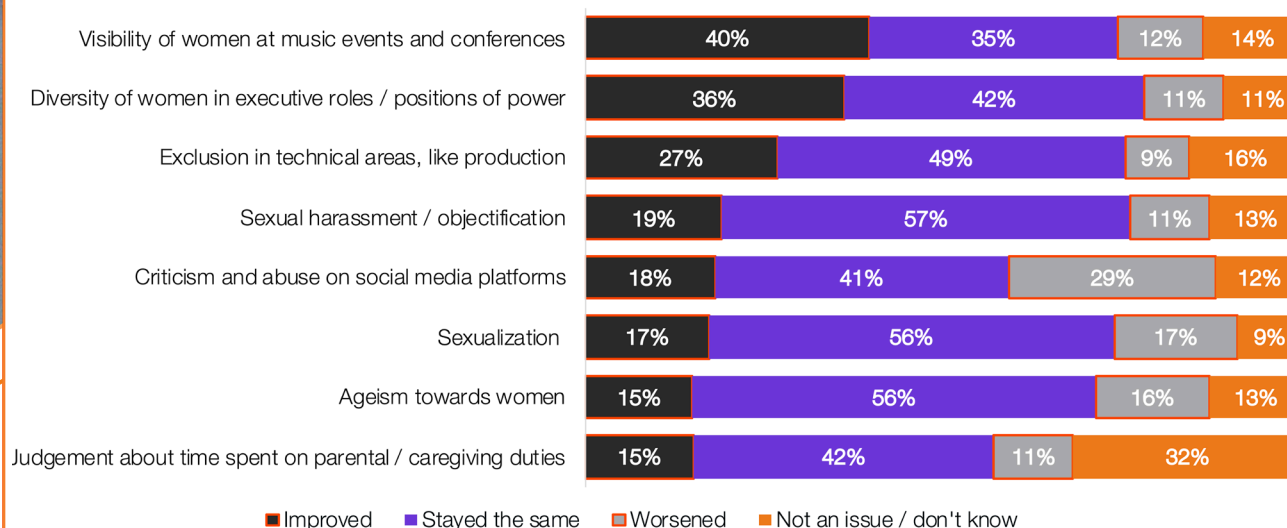
Billboard's 2022 Power list. One thing is clear: it is not enough to create token opportunities for women in pre-defined, limited roles. There is an additional need to promote them, compensate them equally, and, more generally, treat them as equals.

Just over a quarter of women creators perceived improvement in issues surrounding the exclusion of women in technical areas, like sound engineering and production.

From our in-depth interviews, we learned that, while studios and in-person resources were inaccessible during pandemic lockdowns, women creators turned to the internet to teach themselves new skills. For example, a female, Grammy-winning, mixing engineer spoke about a new era of women producers and engineers:

Figure 1: Women continue to face gender discrimination, but there has been some improvement across diversity and visibility of women in power

Question: Thinking back to 2021, how would you assess changes to the following issues related to your gender / identity?




Source: Women in Music 2022 Survey, Women creators, n = 486



*“I guarantee you will see that a lot of the women who are releasing music are doing more than just singing or playing an instrument. They know they can hone whatever skill they want to and now they write, perform, produce, everything by themselves. It’s so easy to learn something on YouTube and find your own feet with the newfound knowledge”.*

Another creator from the UK echoed the sentiment: “Women are respected much more in some cases, even more than men when they take on technical roles and excel in them”. This implies greater acceptance of women who find their feet in male-dominated spaces, such as production and engineering, because women are not expected to excel in these spaces — a mindset that will only change when opportunities are actively created in these arenas for women to grow.



## Section 2: Sexualization remains the root of many challenges

Many of the biggest challenges for women — including ageism, pay discrepancies, the pressure to “look good”, and sexual harassment — stem from the music industry’s long-standing focus on women’s appearance.



## Sexual harassment remains the music industry's ugly truth

Even though 19% of women creatives reported an improvement in sexual harassment (see Figure 2), two in five women still witnessed it frequently. Sexual harassment potentially discourages women from taking in-person opportunities: nearly 40% of women creators agreed that women consciously decide to make music at home, rather than in a studio, to avoid potential gender-based harassment.

Another 56% agreed that working from home / remote recording can help create a safer environment for women and other non-male gender identities. A female, Nigerian producer in our 1:1s explained the disadvantage of being the only woman in a male-dominated studio:

*"I'm usually the only girl in the average session I'm in. There will be, like, 15 men, smoking, drinking, under the influence. A lot of the time, I feel very uncomfortable. I was in survival mode. You can't be the only girl in the room and not feel uncomfortable."*

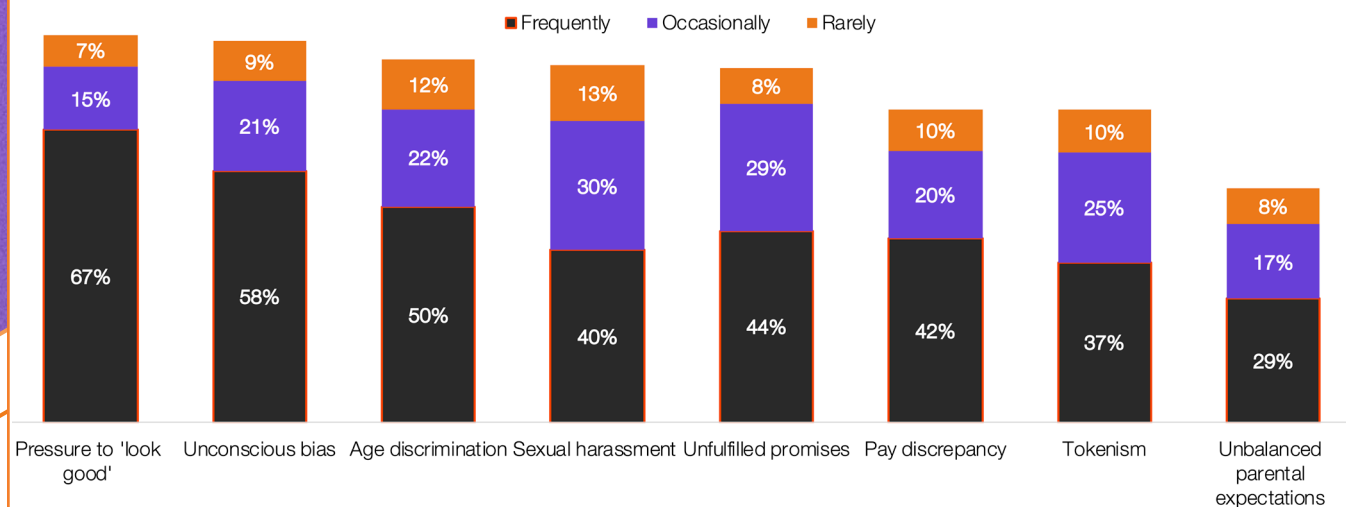
While remote working can be a useful tool for women creators, they should not feel forced to work online to avoid discomfort. Furthermore, working virtually only prevents in-person harassment, while online abuse appears to be worsening (see figure 1). A Lebanese creator, who started her career on YouTube, described how "people can be judgemental...people would comment about my eyebrows," and said she knew women creators who withdrew from music due to the anxiety of constant judgment online.

## Ageism is still a problem but parenthood is more understood

Stars like Halsey and Adele have spoken up about the challenges of bearing children while working in the music industry, contributing to more common, constructive discourse around motherhood in the industry. Yet 29% of women creators frequently witness unbalanced parental expectations and leave allowances. This is directly related to broader ageism in the industry. Half of women creators 'strongly agree' that they will no longer be valued in the industry as they grow older. 15% of women creators believe ageism issues have improved, while 56% say they have stayed the same.


Figure 2: Appearance and age are still the big problems for women creators

Question: Have you witnessed any of the following with respect to women and other non-male gender identities?



Source: Women in Music 2022 Survey, women creators, n = 486

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A woman with a large afro hairstyle is singing into a vintage microphone. The image is partially obscured by a dark blue background with orange geometric lines forming a large triangle. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

# Section 3: The confidence gap – addressing the invisible challenge for women across music

In this section about confidence, we examine the responses  
of women creators and women executives.

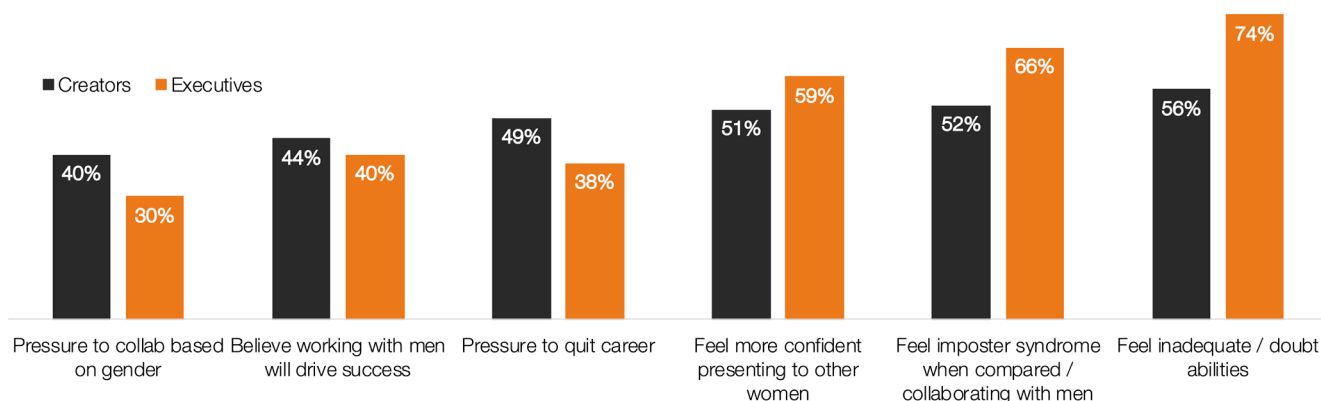


Confidence issues affect all women in music, but executives especially so. Imposter syndrome — feelings of inadequacy, despite evident success — is prevalent, showing that confidence issues run deep and do not necessarily correlate with achievement. Two-thirds of women executives and 52% of women creators feel imposter syndrome when compared to or collaborating with men. In addition, 37% of women (both creators and executives) feel inadequate or doubt their abilities “frequently”; another 31% “occasionally”.

A range of gender-related challenges contribute to this lack of confidence. In the previous sections, we have seen the effects of harassment on social media. Either frequently or occasionally, 35% of women experience criticism / abuse on social media platforms, and a whopping 61% experience sexual harassment (only 14% of women said they have “never” experienced sexual harassment). One in five women frequently feel pressured to quit a career in music, and a quarter occasionally feel this way — a statistic that is backed up by countless stories of women who have left the business due to feeling that they simply cannot carry on “fighting the fight”.

Figure 3: Most women in music have confidence issues, with executives faring worse than creators

Question: How strongly do you agree with / have personally experienced the following?  
(Respondents who replied “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” / “frequently or “occasionally”)



Source: Women In Music 2022 Survey, all-women segment, n = 631

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68%  
of women doubt  
their own abilities

61%  
experience  
sexual harass-  
ment

35%  
experience criticism  
/ abuse on social  
media

45%  
feel pressure to  
quit their musical  
career

Confidence issues are not static, but, rather, grow and lessen throughout stages of women creators' careers. Generally, it appears that confidence issues worsen between the third and 20th years of women creators' careers, but those who persevere regain confidence in the years following. For example, 66% of women creators who are less than three years into their careers feel inadequate or doubt their abilities (either frequently or occasionally). This figure jumps to 76% for women who have spent between eight and 12 years in the music industry, before falling to 65% for 13 to 20 years, and then 47% for 20-plus years. This means when we look at confidence issues segmented by years in the music industry, we see that women creators start out their

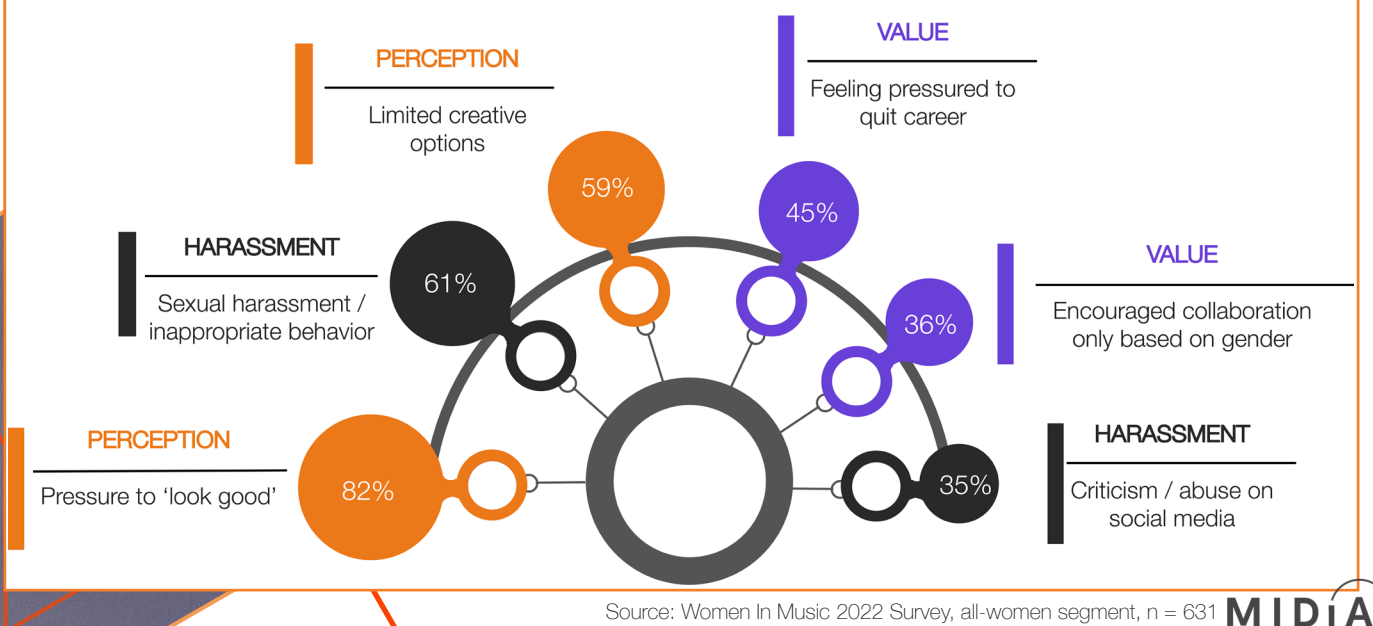
careers fairly confident (>3 years in the industry) but then confidence issues kick-in at 3-7 years, and worsen until after 13-20 years, at which point they level off. The challenges that hold women back — from sexual harassment to being dismissed due to their gender — follow a similar pattern, getting worse in the middle of women creators' careers and then levelling off.

However, even women who are confident in their work cannot escape gender bias when presenting it to others. Just over two-thirds of women executives (and 64% of women creators) are confident about their creative processes, but worry what others will think of their work.

**Figure 4: Gender-related challenges hold women in music back from the careers they want to have**

*Question: Throughout your career in the music industry, have you personally experienced any of the following challenges because of your gender?*

*(Respondents who replied "strongly agree" or "somewhat agree" / "frequently" or "occasionally")*



An overwhelming majority of both women executives (86%) and creators (79%) feel they have to work harder than male counterparts to prove their skill / value. Gender bias also limits women's options: 36% of all women are encouraged to collaborate with artists based exclusively on gender, and 59% have felt pigeon-holed into limited or restricted creative options based on gender norms. For example, women are often boxed into genres that are traditionally perceived as feminine, such as pop, while other genres, like metal and rock, are less welcoming.

*"If I were a guy, I would feel a lot more confident and free making [creative] decisions..."*

noted one Armenian singer-songwriter, who added that she was dropped from her position as lead singer of a rock band because "they imagined this [as a] guy band."

## Music creators and executives face different sides of the same industry

Although they may work in the same industry, women, as well as other non-males, face different day-to-day challenges depending on their role – be it as songwriters, performers, managers, engineers, or executives.

A key challenge for women creators is avoiding ‘pigeonholes’ (being stereotyped in historically predefined gendered roles). Creators were more likely to report being pressured to conform to a certain sound or image than executives. This makes sense as it is a pressure that is largely directed towards those in the public eye. They also reported higher rates of having been encouraged to collaborate with other artists exclusively based on gender (such as women creators linked with women producers, etc., declared as a “perfect fit”), and were more likely than executives to report having been pressured to quit a career in music.

Executives were more likely than creators to report having to work harder than their male counterparts to prove their skill / value. This may stem from executives working in the corporate space, where institutional sexism and gender norms are arguably harder to break down than in the creative world, which tends to be more fluid. Executives and creators alike reported sexual harassment and gender bias (“are men treated differently than other gender identities?”) at similar rates, ultimately underpinning the finding that, while the challenges they face may take different forms, they share the same causes.


There were two bright spots when it comes to confidence — each with caveats. More than half of women (creators and executives) reported feeling more confident when presenting their ideas to other women or other non-male genders, yet two in five believe they will have more success in the music industry if they work with men, highlighting the need to diversify the music industry workforce.

Half of women creators feel most confident when performing live, but half of the women creators surveyed worry about being marginalized or unsafe at live events. Despite these challenges, the vast majority of women in music would encourage women and other non-male gender identities to become part of the industry: 55% are very likely to do so, and another 23% are likely to.

There is an opportunity for creators and executives to work together and complement each other’s strengths. Confidence is crucial for women and other non-male gender identities navigating the industry, so there is a strong argument for resources that build confidence, including both music education and networking. Yet women executives are far more aware of existing resources than women creators, especially when it comes to networking. Nearly half of women creators are aware of coaching and mentorship, compared to 65% of women executives, and 60% of women creators are aware of networking resources, compared to 82% of women executives. Awareness levels are lowest around sexual harassment reporting resources for both women creators (49%) and executives (59%). The difference may stem partly from the fact that executives at least have human resources (HR) departments to turn to, while artists do not.

Record labels and publishers can make a difference by extending the same HR-like resources to their artists as to their employees. Additionally, women executives and creators can work together to fill the gaps in their respective sides of the industry, through sharing resources, bringing each other into conferences and other events, and collaborating on projects.





Here is a big positive: women creators have more tools than ever to choose their own paths in music. However, ‘women’ are not a single cohesive group, facing the same challenges in the same ways all over the world. There are some critical differences. This year’s sample of 1003 global creators and executives allowed us to hone in on the specific needs and experiences of different groups of women, non-male gender creators, and people from different regions and genres. The key takeaway is nuanced: no two people, much less groups, share the exact same experiences, and so making effective solutions requires the flexibility to account for these differences.

## Section 4: Global nuance – understanding differences across regions, gender and genre

Throughout this section we examine the responses of non-male creators and executives: a sample of 685, which includes the 631 respondents who identify as women.

While the women and other non-males surveyed had broadly similar experiences, specific regional trends have emerged in the issues they found most important or had experienced most frequently.

## Gender issues differ by region

Respondents from Latin America and Rest of World (RoW) were slightly less likely to be as concerned about industry issues of professional bias, pigeonholing, and ageism than those from Europe, Canada and the USA.

The RoW group were less likely to believe they would have more success in the industry if they worked with men, or that they were dismissed often due to gender identity regardless of their work. They were also less likely to believe that they had limited or restricted creative options based on gender norms.

This attitude was reflected in MIDiA's interviews with creators from these regions. A producer from Nigeria expressed that:

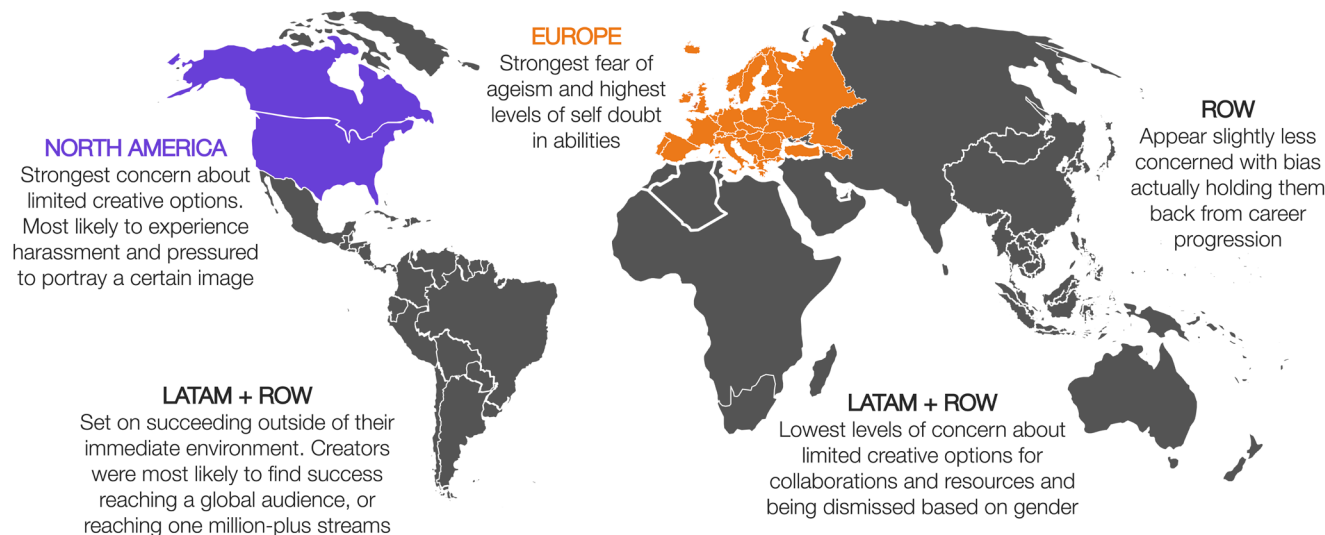
*"there's no facet of life where you will not have challenges. It's just that challenges are customized. The idea is to not let the challenges deter you from going after your dreams... what is going to keep you in the room is how good a job you do."*

A singer from Lebanon advised other aspiring artists to "work hard," saying that any adversity she has faced **"only made me unstoppable."**

The results do suggest that music industry professionals in RoW (both creators and executives) appear slightly less concerned with bias actually holding them back from career progression, perhaps because their mindset is already set on succeeding outside of their immediate environment.

## Figure 5: Music industry gender issues are mostly pronounced in Europe and North America

*Question: How strongly do you agree with / have you personally experienced the following?  
(Respondents who replied "strongly agree" or "strongly disagree" / "frequently" or "occasionally")*



Rest of World and Latin American creators were most likely to say their key markers of success were reaching a global audience, or reaching one million-plus streams.

Respondents in the USA and Canada were most likely to say they felt encouraged to portray a certain image on stage, catering to a highly sexualized or male gaze. Of the three regions, the US and Canada also reported more frequent experiences of sexual harassment (63%, compared to 56% for Europe, 56% for Latin and South America and 51% for RoW). The issues of passive sexualization or objectification in image, and active sexual harassment are inherently linked – and this finding proves how crucial it is to address the one before it escalates to the other.

Source: Women In Music 2022 Survey, all non-male segment, n = 685

**MIDiA.**



## Beyond female

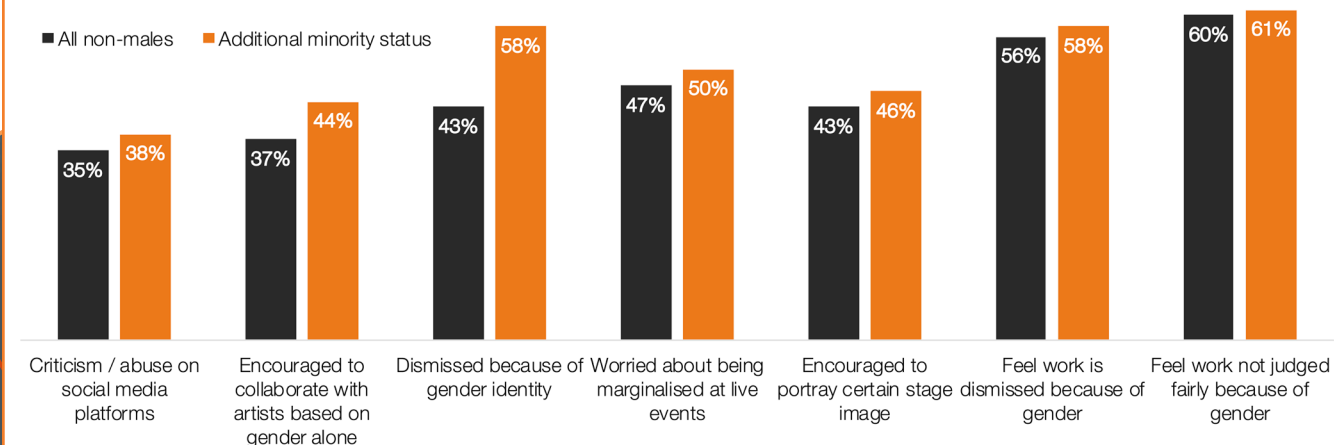
While our sample size of other gender identities was small, their responses were revealing. Creators who identified outside the traditional gender binary were more than 10 percentage points more likely to experience tokenism, at 73%, than women creators overall, and 93% experienced unconscious bias: 73% “frequently”, compared with 58% of women creators. Again, 76% of non-binary and other gender minority respondents agreed that music production and technologies typically excluded women and other femme-presenting gender identities (54% “strongly agree”), compared to 60% of women creator respondents who believed this to be the case.

Finally, 41% strongly agreed that live performances are often venues for sexism and harassment, compared to only 21% of women creators who thought the same. While this study cannot cover the full scope of their experiences, it is clear that at every instance, they face the same issues to a more significant or frequent degree.

We additionally asked our non-male respondents to optionally self-identify any other aspect of their lives that might impact their experiences in the industry in addition to gender: racial or ethnic minority status, religious minority status, or whether they were part of the LGBTQ+ community.

Figure 6: Challenges differ for minorities beyond gender

*Question: How strongly do you agree with / have you personally experienced the following?  
(Respondents who replied “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” / “frequently” or “occasionally”)*



These minority groups collectively did not report any comparatively outstanding rates of bias or negative experience compared to women overall (as related specifically to our questions on gender bias – this is not a comprehensive review of all the issues that minorities may face). However, when breaking out “frequently” versus “occasionally”, minority creators across the board were slightly more likely than overall non-male respondents to report “frequently” being dismissed due to gender / minority status, feeling their work is judged to a higher standard than male creators, being worried about marginalization or safety at live events, and having experienced criticism or abuse on social media platforms. While the margins are not high, this does illustrate how an additional layer of ‘untraditional difference’ can often single individuals out, making their career paths just that extra bit more difficult.

Source: Women In Music 2022 Survey, all non-male segment, n = 685





## The culture of genre

The study asked creators specifically to identify the genre in which they worked, thus revealing the different challenges faced within the music industry's different cultures.

Non-males working in pop scored slightly higher across many challenges, over-indexing the most for issues of confidence. They also were most likely to feel encouraged to portray a certain image or aesthetic. This was reflected in our interviews; while all of the artists we spoke to had felt some sort of pressure regarding aesthetics, only one in pop relayed that an executive had outright rejected her because she "didn't have the right look".

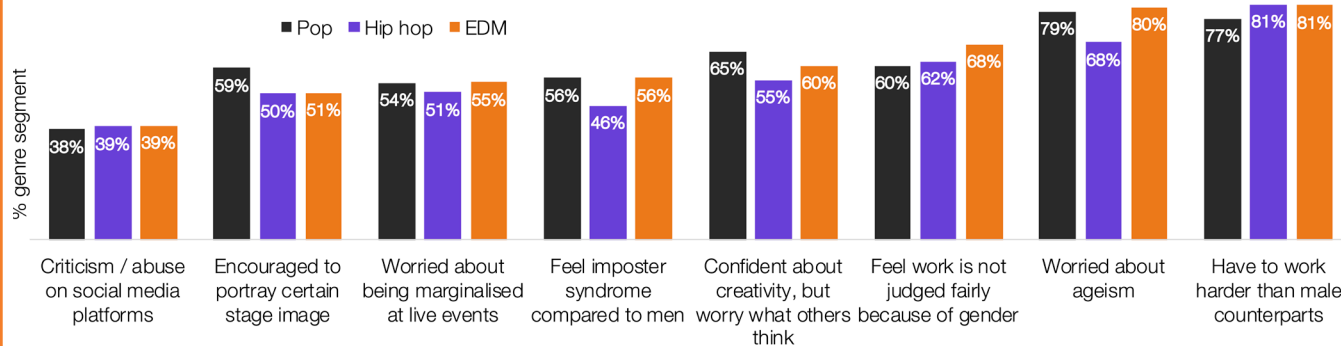
EDM creators scored slightly higher for issues of industry treatment; specifically, concern about being valued in the industry as they aged, and feeling that they had to work harder than male counterparts to prove their skill / value. This is likely linked to the way these creators progress in the industry. For example, one creator we spoke to described how it can be difficult to get gigs as a DJ because the first thing an event coordinator will ask for is experience. But with fewer opportunities to perform in the first place, they have less live-show experience compared with male DJs.

Hip hop creators scored slightly lower than other genres in most categories, except for their perception of having to work harder than male counterparts to prove their skill / value. As a male-dominated genre, with a respect-driven social culture associated with it, it is clearly most difficult for these creators to earn names for themselves initially. However, they were least likely to be worried about being respected in the industry as they aged, meaning that once the initial work was accomplished, they were more confident in their long-term prospects.

Figure 7: Women and other non-male gender identities in pop face most gender pressure, but those in EDM have to work harder

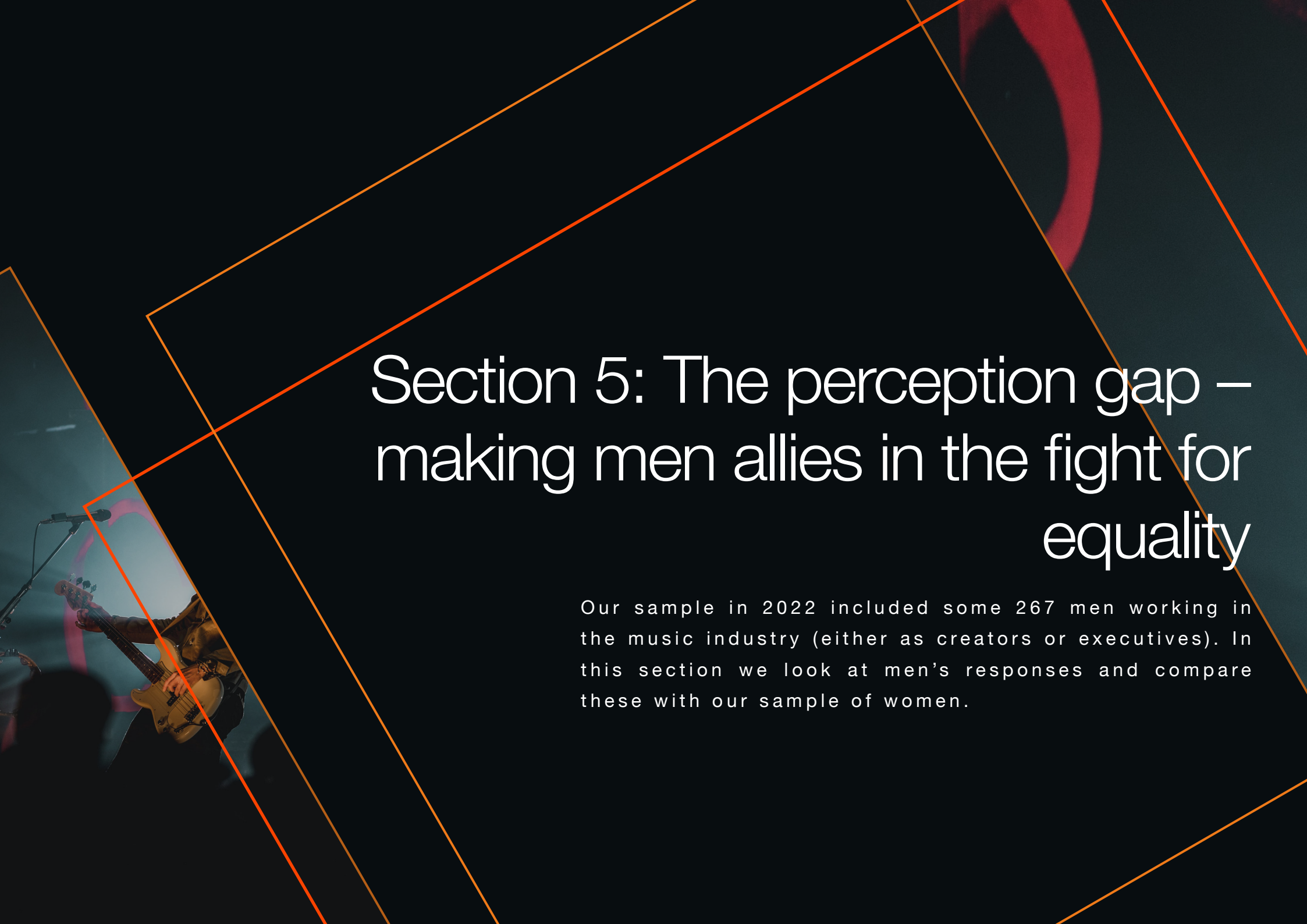
Question: How strongly do you agree with / have you personally experienced the following?

(Respondents who replied "strongly agree" or "somewhat agree" / "frequently" or "often")



Source: Women In Music 2022 Survey, all non-male segment, n = 685

MIDIA.



# Section 5: The perception gap – making men allies in the fight for equality

Our sample in 2022 included some 267 men working in the music industry (either as creators or executives). In this section we look at men's responses and compare these with our sample of women.

The fight for equality does not have to mean women and other non-male gender identities battling through a male-dominated business by themselves. Instead, it is a cause that men must take up as well. To become allies, men must first recognize and understand the challenges that women and non-male gender identities face. Yet, while we have seen some improvements, our survey indicates that men still lack awareness of the full spectrum of these challenges.

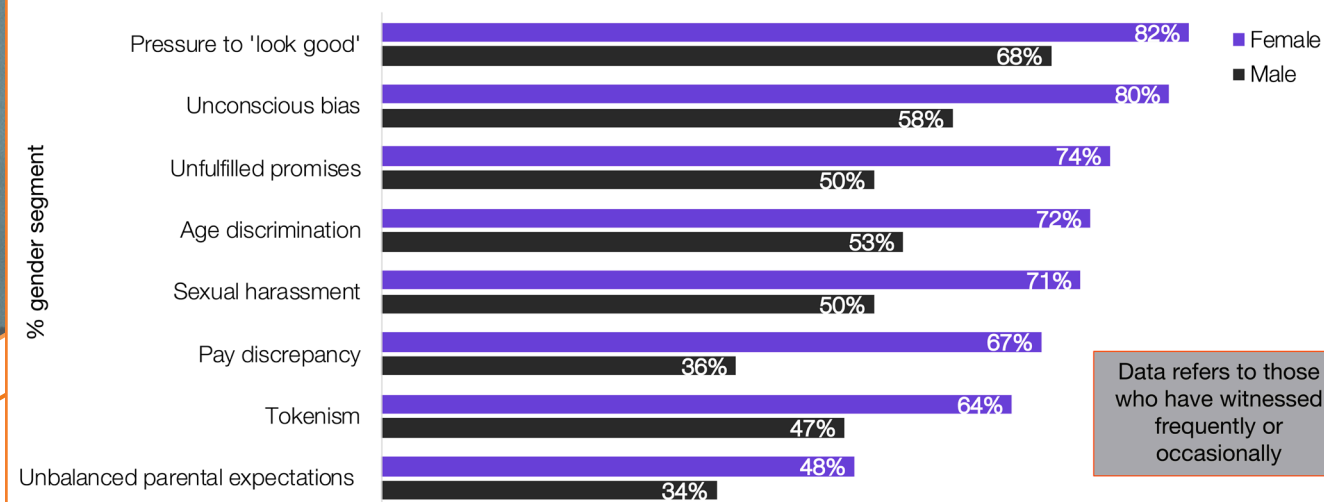
When asked simply whether men are treated differently than women and other non-male gender identities in the music industry, 71% of women responded “frequently”, while only 39% of men said the same. When asked how often they witness a range of inequalities affecting women and other non-male gender identities, women witnessed inequalities far more frequently.

More subtly, men were more likely to reflect awareness of obvious, “on the surface” issues than insidious ones. This is the true perception gap. For example, men reflected the most awareness of the pressure to “look good”, which 46% of men witnessed frequently (compared to 65% of women). Yet men reflected the lowest level of awareness around unbalanced parental / caregiver expectations and allowance of parental leave, which 13% of men witness frequently, compared to 30% of women. Adding to the perception gap is the relatively high percentage of men who responded “I’d rather not say / I don’t know” when asked if they have witnessed various inequalities, such as pay discrepancy (29%), unbalanced parental expectations (31%), and tokenism (23%).

The perception gap signals an urgency to make men aware of the issues faced by women, as well as how these issues may indirectly impact them (such as the many studies that have shown that companies with more diverse teams are typically more successful). When men were asked about what they have done to help women in the industry, most indicated that they have listened consciously, encouraged women to be part of the music business, and actively involved women in projects. However, few men engaged in more specific acts of support. Only 16% say that they hired women as part of more gender-diverse teams. Again, 16% created safe spaces for women, or specifically recognized care-giving imbalances. Just over one quarter of men called out specific instances of gender bias or inequality.

Figure 8: There is a perception gap in how men and women witness gender-related challenges, which widens the more insidious challenges

*Question: Have you witnessed any of the following inequalities with respect to women or other non-male gender identities in the music industry?*



Source: Women in Music 2022 Survey, all men and women, n = 898

MIDIA.



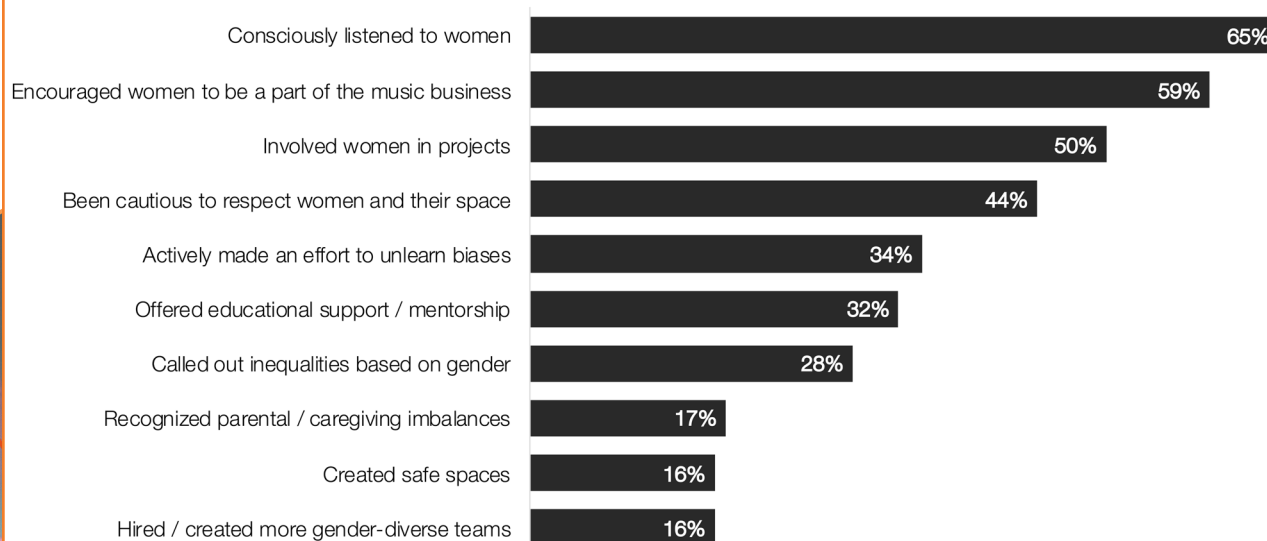
While it is critical for women to call on supportive men, one challenge will be for men to feel responsible and comfortable expressing such support. It is likely that men will want to help, but more proactive and specific actions are needed, beyond the passive support of listening better.

This should take the form of preliminary awareness of issues that women and other minorities face, through discussions, speaker events, or training courses. These must focus not just on the obvious issues that men already show relatively high awareness for, but more subtle ones too, such as parenting expectations, ageism, the pay gap, and other resource / opportunity inequalities.

An open discourse will encourage men to continue learning about these issues, making them feel comfortable playing a role in the solution, rather than viewing it as a 'women's problem' or not something they have a stake in.

Figure 9: For men, participation starts with listening and being encouraging

Question: Which of the following have you done in the last year? Select all that apply.



Source: Women in Music 2022 Survey, all-male segment, n = 267

MIDIA

The background image shows a DJ's hands on a Pioneer mixer. The image is heavily stylized with a purple overlay and several intersecting orange and white geometric lines that create a dynamic, abstract pattern. The DJ is wearing a red top and a white wristband. The Pioneer logo is visible on the mixer.

# Section 6: What comes next?

When it comes to welcoming more women into the music industry, women creators and women executives are aligned on the priorities: zero tolerance for harassment, mentoring and coaching opportunities, and diverse ownership / management within the industry.



Role models are more important for women executives – perhaps because, unlike with creators, role models have not always been either numerous or high-profile. On the other hand, more women-centric and gender-minority-focused resources (i.e., recording studios, rehearsal rooms, labels / publishers, and even basic networking resources) are more important to women creators – since these allow them greater direct access to the resources they need to become successful.

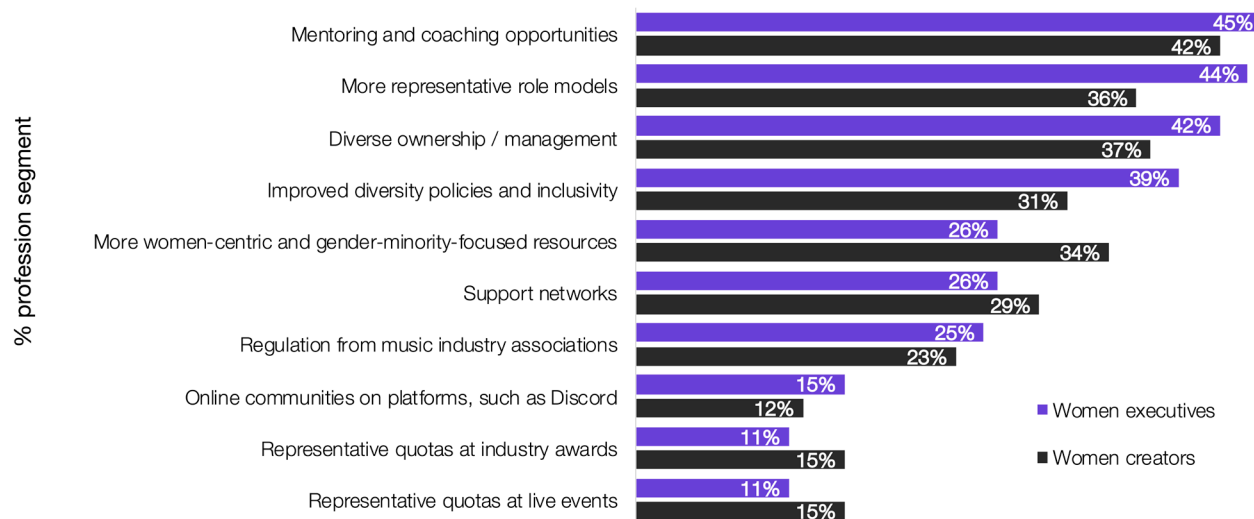
Earlier in the study, we observed the growing perception that diversity is more visible across the industry. This illuminates an important opportunity: women can work together from their different positions on opposite sides of the industry to improve it collectively. Executives can shift company policies and improve industry operations from

within, while creators can utilize their role to support, bring awareness, and take advantage of these changes, proving and developing the need for these internal shifts. Improved diversity policies and inclusivity, mentoring and coaching, policies around zero tolerance for harassment, pay gap, etc. in the music industry are important for facilitating access for women executives and creators alike – but women executives have more power to influence these policies from within. Women creators, on the other hand, have no access to HR departments and there is little obvious gain from improvements to company policies, meaning better transparency is needed. Extending HR-like initiatives for creators could empower creators to be nurtured and help in their growth and safety.

These differences raise the idea that women creators and women executives can work more closely in alliance, recognizing and working towards improving access for each other. The more women executives in key positions, the more they can provide access to women creators, for example. This was witnessed in our creator interviews, where the younger, digital-first artists who emerged during the pandemic had largely chosen to sign to labels or join teams that were diverse, with high-ranking women executives who had fostered an inclusive, supportive atmosphere. As a result, they said they did not experience many of the challenges that they were aware other women in the industry faced. One Lebanese singer, who is signed to a woman-led label, said her success is the “product of the changes women had been working for”, and that the industry needed “more labels like mine”.

Figure 10: Women creators and executives are aligned on the priorities to welcome more women

Question: What would encourage women and other non-male gender identities to enter the music industry? Select up to three.



Women in Music 2022 Survey, women creators, n = 486, women executives, n = 223

MIDIA.



# Call to action

Despite the slow pace of change and the myriad of ongoing challenges, there is a real sense of women proactively carving out opportunities for themselves. Key to this are gradually shifting industry attitudes, along with better, more widely-available resources for women in the industry. However, these early, green shoots of optimism and improvement must be cultivated by the industry. Doing so requires giving women what they want and need: focused resources, diversity, and representation at every level across the industry. On top of the list is a zero-tolerance approach to the sexism and harassment that can – and do – drive women away from music.

With creators and executives on different sides of the industry, collaboration is critical: one side cannot thrive without the other. To this end, men must play a critical role in fostering participation for women, their right to respect, and further contributions to the industry all across the chain – from creators through to the highest executive level. There are actions that every part of the industry can take. There are small steps that can also be taken as a music consumer, for example, prioritizing diversity-balanced playlists and sharing them with friends. Taking the initiative to attend festivals and concert houses that have committed to diversity, and encouraging friends and communities to do the same.

## Harassment

Despite being the challenge with the highest level of mainstream awareness, it remains one of the top challenges that women continue to face. In addition, the transition of music creation and management to digital-first spaces has given rise to harassment on social media.

## Perception gap

The perception gap is largely characterized by the issues that men are less likely to perceive at all: parental expectations and unconscious biases, like considering sound engineering to be a male role, for example.

## Value gap

The value gap is characterized by challenges like the pay gap, the observed issue of men being rewarded more for doing the same jobs, and age discrimination – as with the number of women afraid that the industry will no longer value them as they age.

## Confidence gap

Lack of confidence is one of the most subtle issues that women face: that of battling themselves for respect, as well as the industry.

# For companies

## Countering harassment

- Instigate zero-tolerance policies and back this up with HR departments empowered with intervention, sensitivity training and preventative education
- Put measures in place for creators (who do not have access to HR departments) as well as executives (who do), to report negative behavior and feel confident that action will be taken
- Record labels and publishers can make a difference by extending the same HR-like resources to their artists as to their employees

## Countering the perception gap

- Foster internal discourse by inviting speakers, holding events, and engaging relevant organizations (DEI training)
- Review and adjust practices of hiring, signing, and promotion, to broaden diversity across gender identities and racial backgrounds. This may include hiring goals, adjusting required qualifications to account for differing backgrounds and education, or even instituting 'blind' auditions / interviews to ameliorate unconscious bias

## Countering the value gap

- Institute policies of equal pay for equal work across all gender identities and racial backgrounds
- Conduct outreach to prospective candidates – meet them in an environment in which they are most comfortable, rather than a potentially intimidating setting
- Utilize 'blind' hiring / promoting practices with employees, or 'first listen' techniques with artists to ensure that the industry is rewarding effort, quality of work and talent, while avoiding bias altogether

## Countering the confidence gap

- Seek the support and guidance of organizations and networks that specialize in confidence issues and train executives in how to approach women and gender minorities without bias
- Ensure a strong roster of diverse gender-identifying role models in your organization – allowing more junior artists and executives alike to develop ambitions and envision themselves as going the distance

A close-up photograph of a hand with light-colored nail polish adjusting a black knob on a DJ mixer. The background is a solid purple color with orange geometric lines. The text 'For men' is written in white in the top left corner.

# For men

## Countering harassment

- ❑ Institute zero tolerance, call out bad and negative behavior. Create an environment where there is no fear of recrimination for speaking out
- ❑ De-normalize objectification, for example, during marketing campaigns or productions
- ❑ Get involved in online spaces and encourage positive discussions, while condemning negative comments or reporting them
- ❑ Ensure zero tolerance applies to everyone. No exceptions, no matter how important a perpetrator may be. Act particularly decisively when men with power and influence attempt to bully women victims into silence

## Countering the perception gap

- ❑ Work with women to understand what they need to build pathways to success and proactively include or hire women in teams. Accept that your view of how well your organization and / or you are set up for women's success may fall short of reality
- ❑ Reach out to women and support what they are working on. Bolster their projects. Make introductions to expand their networks
- ❑ Encourage and advocate for women in typically male dominated sectors, i.e., tech, engineering, DJing etc.
- ❑ Read up and understand why minorities face barriers in the music industry and get to know the music business from their perspective. Become aware of internalized, unconscious biases. Equality is quality, and better representation equals better music

- ❑ Find like-minded peers across the industry to collaborate with to support diversity. Offer expertise or provide mentoring to organizations that support under-represented groups (i.e., Keychange, Women In Music, She Is The Music, SheSaid.So, etc.

## Countering the value gap

- ❑ Support and recognize hard work and talent where it is due. Look to correct tokenistic activity and behaviors, and challenge 'the way things are'
- ❑ Identify high-potential women and support their training in order to help them continue to progress in their career
- ❑ Continually ensure women get every merit-based opportunity for promotion as male peers. Understand that pay gaps are about the roles women are in just as much as how their pay measures against peers

## Countering the confidence gap

- ❑ Proactively identify where communication is lacking. Often issues of communication, and the feeling of 'not being listened to / understood', is what drives lower confidence to begin with
- ❑ Ask 'what can I do here to change the way things are?'. Be fair and supportive. Encourage women individually, but be more vocal about diversity in general
- ❑ Be aware that you may be part of the problem – think about how your approach, support, and tone can be improved



# For women executives and creators

## Countering harassment

- Call out or bring to light any harassment through HR or support groups. Continue to support one another and join relevant organizations
- Introduce relevant resources and groups to music companies and organizations, to help them instigate change

## Countering the perception gap

- Build a support system that will link like-minded peers for networking, access to resources, and opportunities. Keychange, HyperTribe, Color of Change, SheSaid.So, She Is The Music and Women In Music are all organizations that are actively working to bridge the gap for under-represented groups in the music industry. Join one or more of them
- Encourage other women to do the same. Support each other through networking and sharing resources and success stories

## Countering the value gap

- Use a top-down approach, with higher executives supporting women in more junior positions, and with all executives supporting creators
- Higher profile creators should consult with executives on how and where change is best suited to their company or institution, and support and extend networks and opportunities for more junior creators

## Countering the confidence gap

- Support other women who have long been pushed by the industry into competing with each other for token places, rather than for overall recognition
- Women executives and creators work together through sharing resources, bringing each other into conferences and other events, and collaborating on projects to create more opportunities and support for each other
- Take the time to assess strengths and weaknesses. When women know themselves, they can better advocate for themselves
- Don't second guess – women should not hesitate to apply for that job or submit the application for that showcase. Women should remember that they belong in this industry and should own their space!



# APPENDIX: THE SURVEY SAMPLE

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BE THE CHANGE: Women in Music 2022 survey was distributed globally via the networks of a score of organizations and influencers across the music industry value chain. There were 1003 respondents, of which 486 were women creators and 223 were women executives. We had a sizable number of 267 men taking the survey this year, and a small sample of non binary and other gender identities. The sample of male creators allowed us to test differences of perception, awareness and necessary steps to actively bring them into the conversation around gender equality. Additionally, men and women were asked to complete separate sections of the survey to capture the perception gap.

47% of respondents were from the US and Canada, followed by 31% from Europe, of which a majority of responses were from France or the UK. This year, for the first time, we have responses from all over the world, with a 22% Rest of World share, including respondents from India, Nigeria, South Africa and Brazil.

One third were 25-34 years old, with a further quarter aged 35-44, 12% aged 16-24, 16% aged 45-54, and 15% aged 55 and over. This means that the majority are in the middle stages of their careers, with representation from veterans of the industry as well as a few new entrants. They mostly identified as artists, songwriters, and producers, and 70% were independent artists who release music on streaming services through digital distributors.

Many organizations and individuals provided us with valuable contributions and support:

### Artist 1:1

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Association for Electronic  
Music (AFEM)  
Color of Change  
Featured Artists Coalition  
Groover  
Indie Music Diaries (India)  
Music Plus (India)  
Musicians' Union  
Music Ally

Rolling Stone India  
WAVE (We Are All Equal)  
Women in Vinyl  
Leo Morel  
Gillian Ezra



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