Ceol na mBan
ar an Raidió

Women and Music in Sound Broadcasting
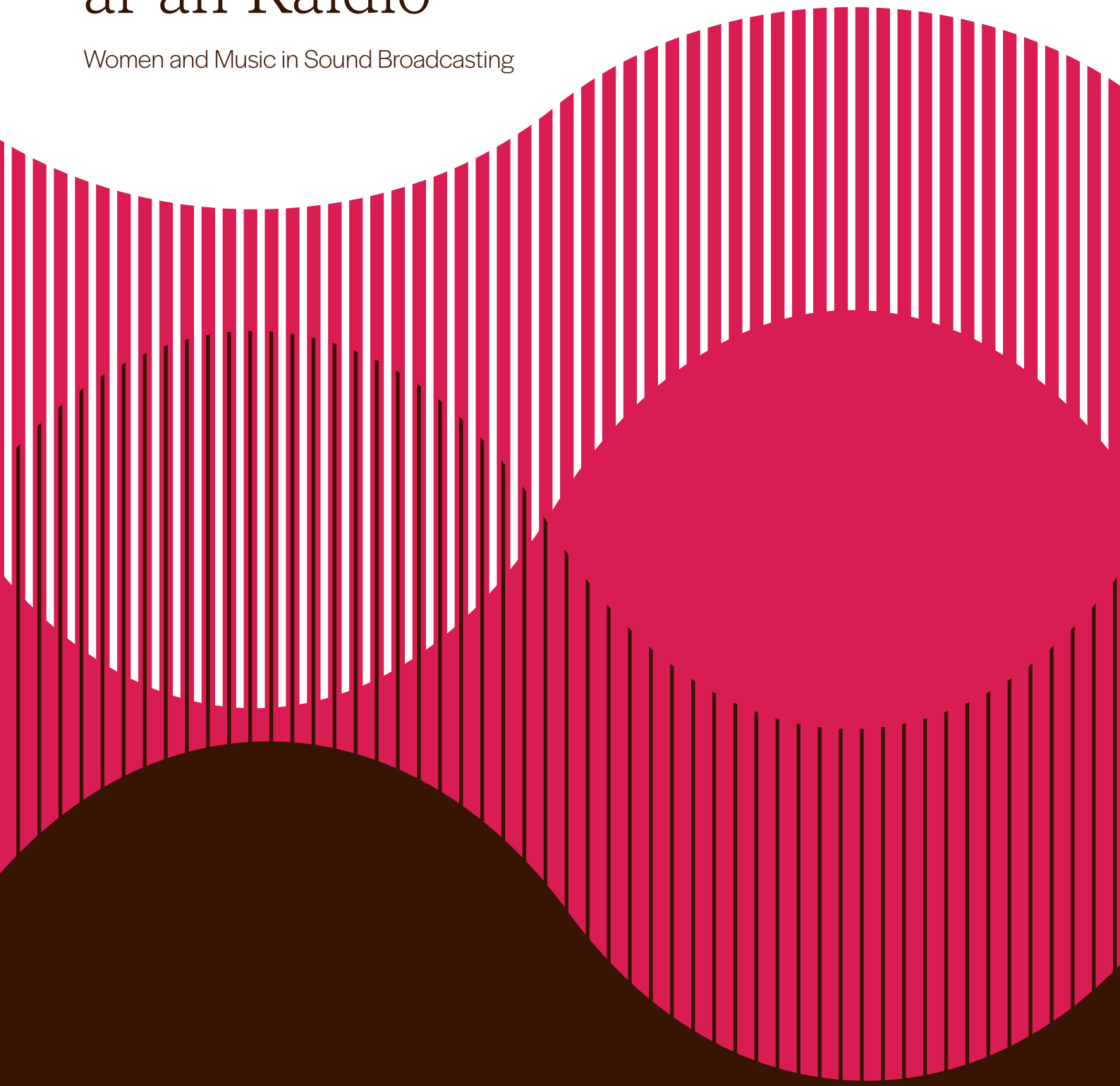
Contents

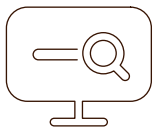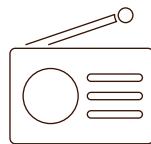# Executive Summary

About the research

The Ceol na mBan research aimed to support Coimisiún na Meán's understanding of the broadcast of music by women on Irish radio, and of approaches which may support gender balance on radio.
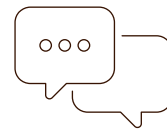
Methods

Desk-based review

Programme content analysis (4 stations)

Interviews with 32 stakeholders

Ceol na mBan in numbers:

26.7% of music was performed by solo female artists

34.3% of music was performed by solo male artists

36.2% of music involved female artists (solo or in collaborations)

51% of music involved female composers/ authors (solo or in collaborations)

Of the top 20 most played artists, **55%** were women

7am to 7pm is the timeslot with the highest percentage of plays by solo female artists

7pm to midnight at weekends is the timeslot with the lowest percentage of plays by solo female artists

77.1% of music performed by solo female artists was pop

Key conclusions:

There is a gender imbalance in the music played on radio. However, the context is complex and there are many factors influencing the broadcast of music on the radio. Any measures to support greater gender balance in music airtime should therefore be appropriately nuanced.

Collaboration across the wider media and music landscape is important in addressing bias, supporting artist development and encouraging greater diversity, equity and inclusion. An Coimisiún could play a role in facilitating and encouraging collaboration, but other media and music industry actors must actively engage in efforts to address wider gender biases and support the broadcast of music by women.

The need for guidance and clear expectations, as well as for accountability, is highlighted through the research. This could be done in a flexible manner and in consultation with stations, having regard to their type, sound broadcasting contract, format and editorial independence of stations.

Action is needed to support gender balance in music airtime, but ongoing improvements in this area should be acknowledged and encouraged to further incentivise progress.

Engagement between a range of actors is important for raising awareness, encouraging ownership and making progress regarding the broadcasting of music by women on radio.

Monitoring, assessing and reporting progress towards greater gender balance in music on radio will be important in delivering a comprehensive national picture, and ensuring that effort and progress are appropriately recognised. This will require better and more uniform data, but should avoid imposing an undue reporting burden on stations or artists. It is suggested that a progress report at national level could be published by An Coimisiún within a specified period.

Introduction

Section 46N(4)(b) of the Online Safety and Media Regulation Act 2022 (OSMRA) provides that media service codes may provide for "standards and practices to promote the broadcast in programmes broadcast on sound broadcasting services of music composed or performed by women".

This is intended to "allow Coimisiún na Meán the flexibility to identify appropriate measures to promote gender equality that are consistent with our legal framework" and to ensure compatibility between "gender balance measures with the right to freedom of expression and with competition law" (Houses of the Oireachtas 2022). Section 7(3)(h) of the Act also provides that Coimisiún na Meán may "engage in evidence-based decision-making in the exercise of its functions…".

In that context, Coimisiún na Meán (An Coimisiún) included in its Gender, Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (GEDI) Strategy for the audio and audiovisual media sector (2024) a commitment to conduct research on women, music, and sound broadcasting. This report sets out the findings of that research.

Research Aims

The research aims to enhance An Coimisiún's understanding of:

1. the nature and extent to which music composed or performed by women is aired on sound broadcasting services in Ireland

2. the standards and practices that may be appropriate to promote the broadcast of music composed or performed by women on sound broadcasting services, while not imposing an undue regulatory or administrative burden

3. the types of policies and measures that might be needed to support the industry in complying with such standards and practices.

Contextualising the research

The provisions set out in the OSMRA are intended to support greater gender balance in Irish media broadcasting, and to ensure "better representation of women in music on our airwaves" (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2020). This research is underpinned by an inclusive understanding that recognises women in all their diversity (European Commission, 2020).

Reference to "music" in this report can be understood to include music with instrumental or vocal/lyrical components, either separately or in combination. It encompasses a variety of genres, includes live studio performances of music and pre-recorded content, and relates to Irish and international music.

"Music performed by women" may refer to a solo performance by a woman, or a performance by a woman in collaboration with other people. Similarly, "music composed/authored by women" may refer to any element of a musical performance that is composed or contributed to (e.g. lyricist, arranger, writer, etc.) by a woman individually or in collaboration with other people. "Music composed or performed by women" is also referred to as "music by women" or "music by female artists" throughout the report.

The radio landscape in Ireland comprises national, regional, multi-city, and local radio stations[1], which are typically either public (four stations), commercial (33 stations) or community broadcasting services (21 stations). There are also a range of institutional[2], community interest, and temporary stations. These are licensed by An Coimisiún, and subject to specific policies and requirements by virtue of their contracts and format type. Music accounts for a significant portion of the content aired on many sound broadcasting services, while talk-based programming is more prominent on others. The terms "sound broadcasting services", "radio", "radio stations" and "stations" are used interchangeably throughout the report.

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1   This report reviews stations located in the Republic of Ireland only as they fall under the remit of the relevant legislation and licensing by Coimisiún na Meán, where stations in Northern Ireland do not.
2   Institutional stations typically include stations in colleges, hospitals, and other institutions.

The term "group" is used in this report to encompass a group of musical artists who normally perform together such as musical bands, choirs and orchestras. This is distinct from a group of two or more performers who collaborate for a once-off (or infrequent) performance or recording, and this is referred to in this research as a "collaboration". Collaborations may also include a band, orchestra, choir or group collaborating with one or more individual artists or, less commonly, two bands, choirs, orchestras or groups collaborating.

The term "play" is used in this report to refer to a piece of music being played on radio. It is noteworthy that, when analysing programme content over an extended period, most individual pieces of music are played more than once and, as such, the number of plays is greater than the number of individual pieces of music aired.

At a glance: The sound broadcasting landscape in Ireland

4 Public Service Broadcasters	**33** Commercial Broadcasters

21 Community Broadcasters	Institutional & Temporary Broadcasters

Acknowledgements

Methodology

Given the scope of the research and the complex broadcast media landscape in Ireland, it was important for the research to provide data that are illustrative, but which allowed for context and nuance. Therefore, a mixed methods approach was undertaken which utilised both quantitative and qualitative methods, incorporating a desk-based review, programme content analysis and participant interviews.

Desk-based Review

The desk-based strand involved a literature review to identify and explore the existing evidence base regarding the broadcast of music composed or performed by women, and a review of existing standards and practices to advance gender equality.

On air programme content analysis

Analysis of selected programme content from radio stations supported understanding of the current situation regarding the broadcast of music by women on radio.

Selecting content for analysis

The quantitative strand of the research reviewed music content in programming across a sample of sound broadcasting services. Stations were chosen with a view to ensuring there was a spread across geographic reach (national, regional, local), format (music-driven, non-music-driven) and type (PSB, commercial) in the selection.

Content was analysed for the first full week of each of March, April and May 2024. Music played on each station during those three weeks was analysed on a 24-hour basis to provide robustness. This timeframe included two bank holidays, during which programme scheduling may differ from regular programming. Content analysed had already aired prior to selecting these timeframes and receiving the data, and no prior notification was provided to the sample stations.

Data collection

In determining the most appropriate data collection tools to use, consideration was given to a range of sources. It was determined that a primary data source was required which:

- Presented all music played on Irish radio stations
- Included both live/in-studio performances and radio air plays
- Included all artists, including those who are signed and independent
- Included information on both performers and composers/authors.

Following engagement with IMRO (the Irish Music Rights Organisation), it was determined that programme content analysis would be carried out through an analysis of music returns made to IMRO by radio stations. Station returns allow full visibility on all music played on Irish airwaves and meet the criteria set out above.

It is important to note that, while many stations collect data on the gender of artists played, there is no uniformly used tool for collecting and analysing data on gender and artist type across all radio airplay in Ireland. As returns made to IMRO also do not specifically set out gender breakdowns, a secondary coding process was required to categorise artists and composers, and/or confirm gender where it was possible to do so. MusicBrainz was used as a secondary data source and RadioMonitor was used to provide a comparison to the primary data for numbers of plays[3]. Significant manual intervention or analysis was also necessary to supplement gaps in airtime reporting formats.

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3   While RadioMonitor is a useful tool, it does not specifically record live music or capture all unsigned artists, and it does not capture gender data. These limitations meant it was not used as the primary data source for this research.

Participant interviews

Given the scope of the research, the research team sought to interview a range of stakeholders relevant to the topic of women, music and sound broadcasting. In total, 32 participants were interviewed.

Selecting interview participants

Participants were drawn from four broad categories:

- Artists (n = 7): including those who perform or compose individually, as well as those who perform as part of a group. This category included signed and independent artists.
- Music industry stakeholders (n = 10): including representatives of advocacy organisations and collectives focused on women and music, record labels, and music industry organisations.
- Representatives of sound broadcasting services (n = 8): including representatives from stations that are music-driven and non-music-driven; national, regional and local; public service, commercial and independent.
- An Coimisiún staff with expertise in media development, media licensing and media regulation (n = 7).

Nineteen participants were female and 13 were male.

Participation by interviewees with diverse perspectives and lived experience was encouraged, and account was taken of factors such as socioeconomic status, location, ethnicity, and disability. However, it should be noted that participants were not requested to self-identify, therefore it is not possible to provide an analysis of intersectional representation.

Presenting findings

Given the proximity of some interview participants to the music and media industries and the potentially sensitive nature of the data collected for programme content analysis, efforts were made to provide anonymity as far as practically possible.

Limitations

While the research sought to be as comprehensive as possible, there were inevitably some limitations. Significant data cleaning and manual coding were required for the quantitative strand, due to gaps in the data provided to IMRO and inconsistencies in the way it was presented. The main genre of music played on one of the selected stations required a prohibitive amount of cleaning and coding and resulted in that station being removed from the shortlist, resulting in a final sample of four stations. Considering this, more uniform and complete datasets would enhance future research.

Desk-based review

The first strand of the research was desk-based and included:

- a literature review to identify and explore the existing evidence base regarding the broadcast of music composed or performed by women
- a review of the standards and practices currently in place to advance gender equality in the broadcasting of music on radio.

Findings from the literature review

The literature review explored the concepts of gender, gendered representation and gender equality in the Irish music and media sectors, with a particular focus on sound broadcasting in Ireland. The findings that emerged from the review are categorised under four broad headings below:

Gender and the music industry
Findings highlight the prevalence of gender bias in the music industry:

- The way in which the music industry functions is influenced by both conscious and unconscious biases (Hanlon, 2023; Monaghan, 2021) and is linked to patterns of gender and power in culture and society (Werner, 2019). In their study of gender biases in the music industry, Hanlon (2023) notes that a significant number of women musicians felt that gender was a barrier to their music being broadcast in Ireland because of gender bias, industry culture and value judgements. Findings point to gendered biases present throughout the music production process, and not just in the broadcast of music. For example, Hanlon (2023) found that 58% of women and 37% of non-binary respondents reported having received different treatment because of their gender "occasionally" or "often".
- In a study on the gender balance of publicly funded composer opportunities in Ireland, Lydon (2023) found that women were commissioned 244 times out of 784 opportunities (31%) between 2004 and 2019. In addition, there was just one commission for a composer/author that identified as non-binary during that period.
- The presence of gender biases in music production could affect the availability of music by women and other gender identities.

The role of the media

The media has a key role to play in sharing music and in shaping and reshaping attitudes and beliefs on gender:

- Media play a key role in the production, distribution, and popularity of music (Kong, 2020) and have been central to the development of the Irish music industry for decades (RTÉ, 2016).

- Media also play a role in shaping individual and collective attitudes and beliefs on gender (Nasruddin, 2021). By deciding which voices are heard – "who gets to talk, what shapes the debate, what is important enough to report" (NWCI & DCU, 2015, p10) – broadcasters can reinforce existing gender biases or work to reshape attitudes towards and representations of women, gender equality and gender diversity in the sector.

- National and international policy reaffirms the role of media in advancing gender equality and advancing the voice and participation of women and girls in and through the media (see, for example, UN Women, 1995; Council of Europe, 2013; Department of Justice and Equality, 2017; Broadcasting Authority, 2021).

Gendered representation on radio

A mixed picture emerged in relation to women and music on radio. There is evidence of some positive change in recent years, against a backdrop of the underrepresentation of women, including women from minority groups:

- Research suggests that there has been some progress in Ireland in terms of the movement of women into more senior roles in radio, with greater emphasis being placed on the need for gender equality in the media, as well as notable equality initiatives in the music industry (Hanlon 2023).

- Why Not Her?'s annual reporting (2024) showed that RTÉ (Raidió Teilifís Éireann) Radio 1 played Irish female artists across 50% of their top 20 most popular songs from June 2023 to June 2024, while Today FM demonstrated improvement from 10% to 20% in terms of the proportion of Irish female artists present in their top 20 most popular songs across the same 12-month period.

- Despite this progress, findings suggest that gender disparities continue to exist across music airtime, and women remain underrepresented on radio (NWCI & DCU, 2015) and across streaming platforms (Skoove, 2024). Why Not Her? (2024) reported that the proportion of music performed by female artists was at times as low as 5% based on their review of the top 20 songs across national and regional radio stations between June 2023 and June 2024.

- Gender disparities in music airtime are not limited to Ireland. International research (such as that from the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) (2022) and USC Annenberg (2022)) indicated that music by women continues to receive a lower proportion of airtime on radio in Europe and the US.

- The representation on radio of women from minority groups continues to be low, and academics suggest that a focus on intersectionality is needed to progress gender equality in the sector (Murphy et al .2024; Watson 2021).

- The ability and readiness of sound broadcasting services to effectively put in place gender equality initiatives emerged as a theme. From a commercial perspective, broadcasters shape programmes not just by their content, but also by assumptions made about the scope and purpose of their broadcasting and about their audiences (Liston, Hellstrand and O'Leary 2021). Broadcasters will often air content that is perceived as "customer-led" and commercially beneficial (MaLisa, 2021). In addition, broadcasters are required to comply with specific commitments around their music airtime, as part of their Programme Policy Statements (Coimisiún na Meán, no date), which shape their programming and the music they play. For example, smaller broadcasters and broadcasters that play specific types of music (as per their sound broadcasting contracts) may face challenges in implementing gender equality measures, or require supports to do so.

Drivers of gender equality in the music and media industries

Stakeholder engagement, collaboration and data are posited as the key enablers of gender equality in the music and media industries:

- *Stakeholder engagement:* The 2021 "Auditing Gender and Diversity Change in Irish Media Sectors" report recommended that efforts are needed to include the voices of those most affected by inequalities in the media industry (BAI, 2021), through engagement with relevant organisations and NGOs and through further research.

- *Collaboration:* Feminist collectives, such as Fair Plé, Sounding the Feminists, Why Not Her? and Irish Women in Harmony, have influenced and supported gender equality interventions in the Irish music industry since 2016. They have challenged structural inequalities in Irish music (Watson, 2021), and harnessed media engagement, research, and policy to support greater gender equality in the sector.

- *Data:* Comprehensive and up-to-date data play a key role in progressing gender equality in the media. Without programme content monitoring, the implementation of gender equality and diversity interventions and targets have a minimal effect (BAI, 2021).

Findings from the review of policies, standards and practices

As well as a review of academic and other literature, the desk-based research incorporated a review of existing policies, standards and practices to support and monitor gender equality on radio.

Regulatory and policy context in Ireland

- A report of the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality recommended that public funding to media organisations be contingent on organisations publishing plans to advance gender equality and annual reporting on progress in this area (2021).

- The Report of the Future of Media Commission stated that EDI (equality, diversity and inclusion) in media should be considered and treated as a priority across and within media organisations and noted the underrepresentation of women in media in the Irish context (2022).

- In 2024, An Coimisiún published its Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (GEDI) Strategy. This was part of a long-standing and ongoing engagement of Coimisiún na Meán in the advancing of gender, equality, diversity and inclusion in the sector and further activities will follow in 2025 and beyond. The Strategy has built on the work of An Coimisiún's predecessor, the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI), including the BAI Gender Action Plan (GAP) (2018). A stakeholder review of the BAI's Gender Action Plan (BAI, 2020) found that initiatives taken in the context of that plan had supported the increased participation of women in key roles, as well as giving greater visibility to the inclusion of women in key creative roles. The review also found the BAI's work and progress around gender equality had been broadly welcomed by stakeholders.

- The BAI-commissioned report, "Hearing Women's Voices" (NWCI & DCU, 2015) suggested that the Regulator (then the BAI) has the capacity to raise awareness of gender equality across all stations. The report recommended that all stations be required to report on gender equality performance, and that the Regulator challenge broadcasters and programmes which do not improve gender ratios over time.

- There is strong evidence of a range of activities by the Regulator aimed at enhancing the representation of women on radio:

  - The BAI, promoted a sectoral development and learning programme, including training for on-air participation as well as gender awareness training for funding assessors, board members and external stakeholders (BAI, 2020). An Coimisiún continues this sectoral development work and funds organisations such as Women on Air, which provides seminars, events and workshops to encourage more women onto radio and television (Women on Air, no date).

  - The strategic assessment phase of the Sound & Vision Funding Scheme awards points to applications based on the extent to which the creative team includes women in leadership roles (BAI, 2021). In addition, "special" rounds of the scheme, such as the live music round operated in 2022, required that at least 50% of the performers and 50% of the creative team were women.

  - An Coimisiún provides funding to "Irish Music Month", an initiative of Hot Press and the Independent Broadcasters of Ireland (IBI). Irish Music Month promotes Irish music and musicians on independent radio (Hotpress, 2024) and seeks to increase airplay of Irish music. It includes a 50/50 gender requirement.

  - Broadcasting contracts require broadcasters to adhere to agreed programming policies, which vary depending on programme and audience type (Coimisiún na Meán, no date). While agreements do include requirements regarding the proportion of Irish music played and opportunities for Irish talent, they do not currently specify gender as a required parameter for programming. Contracts are issued based on whether a station is music-driven or non-music-driven[4], which in turn influences how much music they play across their scheduling.

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4   Radio stations receive sound broadcasting contracts from An Coimisiún, determined by whether they are 'news/speech-driven, music-driven, niche-music-driven, and local non-music-driven services' (Coimisiún na Meán, no date). For the purposes of this report, stations which are not music-driven are distinguished as 'non-music-driven' (i.e., stations which are news-, speech- and local content-driven).

These and other BAI/Coimisiún na Meán activities related to gender action are summarised in the table below:

Programme	Purpose	Example of gender action activity
Sound & Vision 4 Funding Scheme	To facilitate the production of programming that reflects Irish culture, heritage, and experience for broadcast on a range of community, commercial and public service broadcasters.	• Representation of women in lead creative roles is considered and additional points awarded during the strategic assessment phase of Scheme Rounds • "Women's Stories" round 2019 • Irish music round 2022, which required that at least 50% of the performers and 50% of the creative team should be women to qualify for funding
Sectoral Learning and Development Programme	To assist organisations to undertake training, learning and development activities that support the broadcasting and audiovisual industries, and help realise An Coimisiún's aim of ensuring a thriving, diverse, safe, creative and trusted media landscape.	• Women on Air's "New Voices" and Camera Skills training • X-pollinator workshops* • Women in Film and Television activities
Sponsorship Scheme	To promote the development of the wider media sector by providing support for media related events and activities that align with An Coimisiún's work.	• GORM Media "Wideshot Programme"* • Catalyst Film Festival • Choice Music Prize

* These activities relate to Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (GEDI) objectives more broadly, which includes gender diversity.

Programme	Purpose	Example of gender action activity
Future of the Media Commission (FOMC) Report recommendations on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	To progress the treatment of EDI in media as a priority across and within media organisations.	• An Coimisiún's Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (GEDI) strategy*
Broadcast Licensing	To advance diversity, equity and inclusion within licensed broadcasters.	EDI included in sound broadcasting contracts (introduced in 2024)*

• BAI published an 'Activities 2018-2022' review report (2023), which assessed projects implemented under its 2018 Gender Action Plan. The report suggested that sustained, sector-wide collaboration is required to progress gender equality, diversity, and inclusion (GEDI) in the Irish audio and audiovisual sector (BAI, 2023), and this has since been reflected in An Coimisiún's GEDI Strategy (2024).

Activities led by the media and music industries in Ireland
The literature pointed to various commitments to gender equality across both the media and music industries in Ireland:

• *Public Service Media:* RTÉ's Statement of Strategy 2025-2029 outlines a goal of "embedding good practice on diversity and inclusion" (2024, p6), but with no specific reference to gender or women. The Strategy commits to "ensuring that there is inclusive and respectful representation of the diversity of the country" (p15), and that RTÉ's audio content (including music) will showcase new stories and voices.

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* These activities relate to Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (GEDI) objectives more broadly, which includes gender diversity.

- *Other broadcasters:* While there is limited information available on the measures that commercial and community broadcasters have put in place to support gender equality regarding music on the airwaves, it appears that informal practices are in place and that stations often aim to have a gender balance in their music programming, in the absence of formal internal policies (Irish Independent 2024; The Journal of Music, 2020).

- *Music industry:* In 2018, the Irish Music Rights Organisation (IMRO) announced its sponsorship of PRS Foundation's Keychange initiative, which focused on achieving gender balance across music festivals. IMRO has also worked alongside the Sounding the Feminists collective to provide "Pitch Perfect" professional development workshops for female (cis and trans) and non-binary artists, with the aim of addressing a lack of representation across the music sector (IMRO, no date).

- *Collectives:* Many organisations and collectives working in the music and broadcasting industries in Ireland take an inclusive and diversity-informed approach to supporting women's voices on radio. Engagement with grassroots and industry-based collectives has the potential to provide valuable insights and feedback on the development of gender equality initiatives.

Findings: Programme Content Analysis

## Reviewing the selected programme content

The quantitative strand of this research involved an analysis of programme content aired on a sample of Irish radio stations during the first weeks of March, April and May 2024, respectively.

Stations were selected for analysis to provide a mix of national and regional, commercial and PSB stations, as well as a mix of music-driven and non-music-driven formats. Throughout the report, the stations selected for analysis are anonymised, but are labelled to provide insight into the broadcast of music by women across different station types:

Label	Description
Station A	National, music-driven, PSB
Station B	Local, non-music-driven, commercial
Station C	Regional, music-driven, commercial
Station D	Local, music-driven, commercial

The data used for analysis were music returns made by the selected stations to IMRO across the identified timeframe. This involved 98,143 data items regarding composers/authors and 24,256 data items regarding performers. The datasets were therefore extensive, and the process of data analysis was complex because:

- There is no formal requirement for radio stations to report on gender in music airtime and, where gender data are provided as part of the reporting process, this is done on a voluntary basis. As a result, there were significant gaps in the data available. This meant that substantial manual input and validation was required. Some manual input involved the researchers attributing gender based on experience and industry knowledge, and it would be preferable that gender be attributed at source.
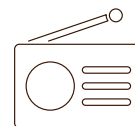
- As there are no readily available data on the gender of individual group members, the analysis of programme content by gender was confined to solo artists and collaborations.
- It appears that PSB and commercial stations are utilising different systems for making their music returns to IMRO. This was evident, for example, in the way in which stations allocate timecodes to airplay, with some stations assigning each play a specific time stamp, and others simply recording the start and end time of a programme.
- Pieces of music may be composed/authored by an individual or by multiple people working in collaboration. It is not uncommon, for example, for more than a dozen people to compose/author a piece of music and, in cases where women were involved in such collaborative arrangements, it was not possible for the researchers to analyse the number of women involved, or the extent to which they played a lead role or otherwise.

In considering the findings below, the following should be borne in mind:
- Many nuanced descriptions of genre are used in content reporting. To facilitate analysis, music was categorised into ten broad genres. These are: pop, rock, dance, hip hop, R&B, Irish traditional, folk, country, alternative, and other.
- To facilitate content analysis, music performers were categorised as: solo female artist, solo male artist, solo non-binary artist, groups, and collaborations.

Analysis of Programme Content

The analysis of programme content is presented under six key headings:

1. All sample stations
2. Individual stations
3. Music-driven versus non-music-driven stations
4. Gender balance of performers (by country)
5. Gender balance of performers (by genre)
6. Gender balance of composers/authors

1. All sample stations

Music performed by solo female artists made up 26.7% of plays in total. Collaborations made up 17.3% of all content analysed. Female artists featured in 55% of these collaborations. This represents 9.5% of the overall content analysed.

This means, in total across all sample stations, female artists were represented in 36.2%[5] of content analysed. See Figure 1.

It is noteworthy that there was a diversity of identities represented in the analysed data, with music by artists who were identified as 'non-binary' making up 1% of plays across all stations. Music performed by male solo artists made up 34.3% of music aired, and music by groups made up 20.7% of music aired.
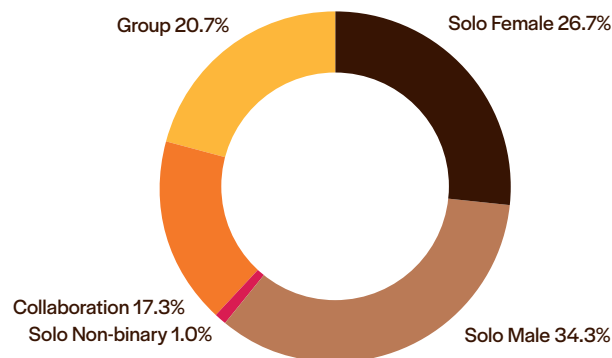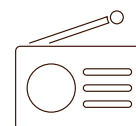

Figure 1: Music aired across all sample stations (by gender and artist type)

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5   Reference to 'music by women' or 'female artists' collectively represents a combined figure of solo female artists and collaborations where at least one female artist is present.

There is some variation in the proportion of music by women played across different times of day:

- Weekday Prime Time (Monday-Friday 7am-7pm) and Weekend Prime Time (Saturday-Sunday 7am-7pm) had the highest proportion of plays by solo female artists at 27.7% and 27.8%, respectively.
- Weekday Post-Prime Time 1 (Monday-Friday 7pm-10pm) had the highest proportion of plays of collaborations featuring female artists (12.1%).
- Weekend Post-Prime (Saturday-Sunday 7pm-midnight) had the lowest proportion of plays by solo women artists (20.3%).
- Weekday Overnight (Monday-Friday midnight-7am) had the lowest proportion of plays by collaborations featuring female artists. (7.5%) See Table 1.

These findings suggest that, contrary to the view of a number of interview participants, music performed by women is not more likely to be featured in the "graveyard shift" after 10pm and before 7am. The proportion of music by solo male artists across the different time slots is included in the table below for contextual purposes.

Time Slot	Solo Female Artists	Solo Male Artists	Collaborations featuring female artists
Weekday Prime (Mon-Fri 7am-7pm)	27.7%	34.6%	10.5%
Weekday Post-Prime 1 (Mon- Fri 7pm-10pm)	27.6%	37.0%	12.1%
Weekday Post-Prime 2 (Mon-Fri 10pm-midnight)	24.1%	31.9%	7.8%
Weekday Overnight (Mon-Fri midnight-7am)	27.5%	33.5%	7.5%
Weekend Prime (Sat-Sun 7am-7pm)	27.8%	33.0%	11.4%
Weekend Post-Prime (Sat- Sun 7pm-midnight)	20.3%	37.7%	11.4%
Weekend Overnight (Sat- Sun midnight-7am)	23.9%	33.8%	8.7%

Table 1: Proportion of music by solo female artists, solo male artists and collaborations featuring female artists
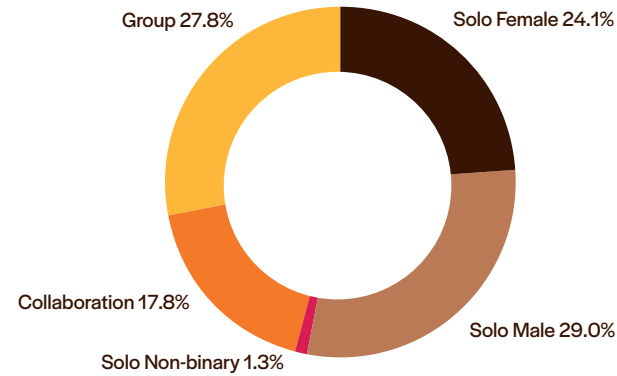
2. Individual stations

Figure 2: Music aired on Station A (by gender and artist type)

2.1 Station A

Music performed by solo female artists represented 24.1% of content analysed for Station A, which is a music-driven, national PSB. Collaborations made up 17.8% of all content analysed. Female artists featured in 37.1% of these collaborations. This represents 6.6% of the overall content for Station A. **This means that 30.7% of content on Station A involved female artists**. See Figure 2.

Music performed by solo male artists made up 29% of music aired on Station A, and music by groups made up 27.8% of content analysed.

2.2 Station B

Music performed by solo female artists represented 24.8% of content analysed for Station B a local, non-music-driven, commercial station. Collaborations made up 6.8% of all content analysed. Female artists were represented in 38% of the collaborations. This represents 2.6% of the overall content for Station B. **This means that 27.4% of content on Station B involved female artists**. See Figure 3.

Music performed by solo male artists made up 32.3% of music aired, and music by groups made up 35.8% of music aired.
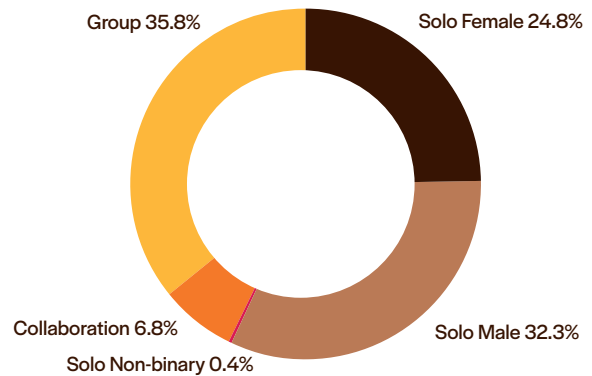

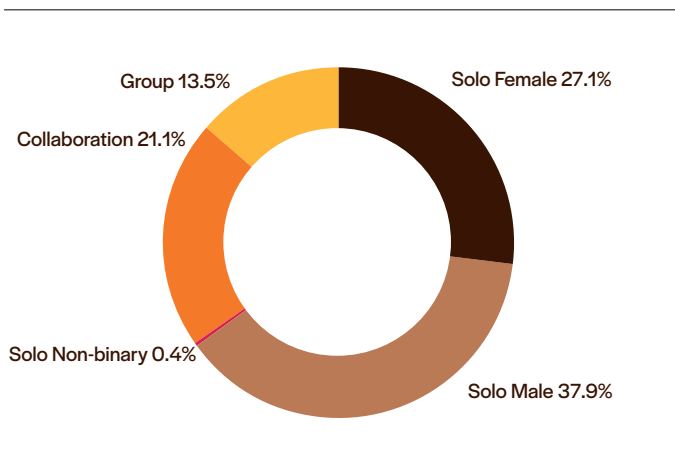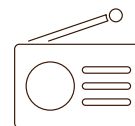Figure 3: Music aired on Station B (by gender and artist type)

Figure 4: Music aired on Station C (by gender and artist type)

2.3 Station C

Music performed by solo female artists represented 27.1% of content analysed for Station C, which is a regional, music-driven, commercial station. Collaborations made up 21.1% of all content analysed. Female artists were represented in almost 63% of the collaborations. This represents 13.2% overall content on Station C. **This means that 40.3% of content on Station C involved female artists**. See Figure 4.

Music performed by solo male artists made up 37.9% of music aired, and music by groups made up 13.5% of music aired.

2.4 Station D

Music performed by solo female artists represented 29.8% of content analysed for Station D, which is a local, music-driven, commercial station. Collaborations made up 21.9% of all content analysed. Female artists were represented in 66% of the collaborations. This represents 14.4% of the overall content for Station D. **This means that 44.2% of content on Station D involved female artists.** See Figure 5.

Music performed by solo male artists made up 36.5% of music aired, and music by groups made up 10.4% of content analysed.
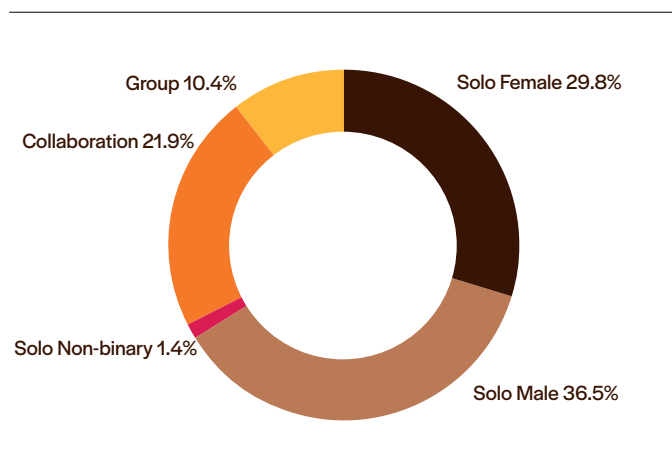

Figure 5: Music aired and Station D (by gender and artist type)

2.5 Individual stations: Comparison across time slots

There is considerable variation in the proportion of music by women played on individual stations across different time slots:

- The highest percentage of plays of music by solo female artists was 33.3% and it was on Station A, the PSB station, and during the Weekday Post-Prime 1 (Monday-Friday 7pm - 10pm) timeslot.

- The highest percentage of plays of music by collaborations featuring female artists was 18% and it was on Station D, a commercial station, and during the same timeslot, Weekday Post-Prime 1 (Monday-Friday 7pm - 10pm).

- The lowest percentage of plays by solo female artists across all timeslots was on Station A, the PSB station, and during the Weekend Overnight timeslot (Saturday-Sunday midnight-7am), with just 9.3% of plays.

- The lowest percentage of plays by collaborations featuring female artists, across all timeslots, was on Station B, a commercial station, and during the Weekday Overnight (Monday-Friday midnight-7am) timeslot, with just 1.9% of plays.

The Post-Prime 1 timeslot (7pm-10pm), therefore, is the one when the highest number of plays of music by women was recorded on any station, while the Overnight timeslot (midnight to 7am) is the one where the lowest number of plays by women on any station was recorded. See Table 2.
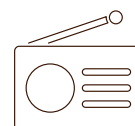
PSB versus Commercial	Solo female artists				Collaborations featuring female artists			
	PSB	Commercial			PSB	Commercial		
Station	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D
Weekday Prime (Mon-Fri 7am-7pm)	25.8%	24.0%	30.1%	29.6%	8.6%	2.7%	13.5%	14.6%
Weekday Post-Prime 1 (Mon-Fri 7-10pm)	33.3%	20.1%	26.6%	31.1%	3.5%	3.4%	13.0%	18.0%
Weekday Post-Prime 2 (Mon-Fri 10pm-midnight)	16.1%	23.0%	26.3%	33.1%	2.9%	2.3%	14.1%	15.3%
Weekday Overnight (Mon-Fri midnight-7am)	28.9%	26.8%	24.9%	29.5%	4.3%	1.9%	12.9%	11.2%
Weekend Prime (Sat-Sun 7am-7pm)	26.0%	24.6%	29.4%	29.2%	9.8%	4.5%	11.0%	15.8%
Weekend Post-Prime (Sat-Sun 7pm-midnight)	11.2%	20.1%	18.3%	29.4%	5.1%	2.5%	17.4%	17.5%
Weekend Overnight (Sat-Sun midnight- 7am)	9.3%	26.5%	28.7%	29.1%	7.9%	3.1%	13.9%	14.5%

Table 2: Cross-station comparison of plays by timecode

3. Music-driven versus non-music-driven stations

There were some variations in the proportion of music by female artists that was played when the data for music-driven and non-music-driven stations were compared. The three **music-driven stations** (Stations A, C and D) had higher combined percentages of music by female artists (solo and in collaborations), ranging between 30.7% and 44.2%. The non-music-driven station in the sample, Station B, had the lowest combined percentage of music by women (solo and in collaboration), at 27.4%. See Figure 6.
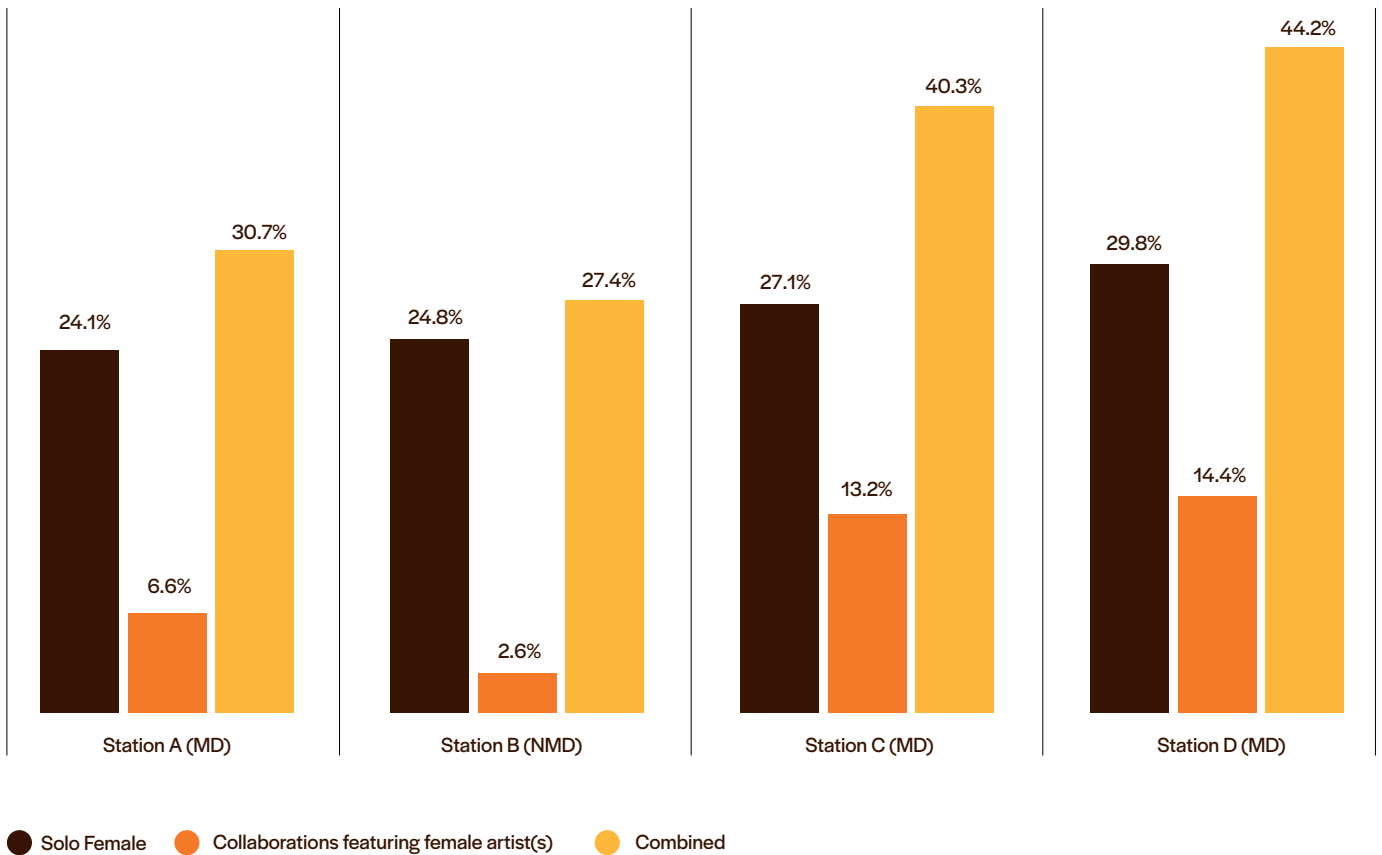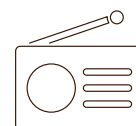

Figure 6: Music by women aired on music-driven and non-music-driven stations
Note: MD = music-driven, NMD = non-music-driven

3.1 Music-driven versus non-music-driven: Comparison across time slots

Across all but one of the timeslots, the music-driven stations had higher proportions of music by solo female artists than the non-music-driven station. While this difference was minimal for some slots (such as Weekend Post-Prime, with 20.4% versus 20.1%), the difference was relatively pronounced for other slots (such as Weekday Post-Prime 1, with 29.5% versus 20.1%). See Table 3.

Time Slot	Music-driven			Non-music-driven		
	Artist Type			Artist Type		
	Female Solo	Male Solo	Collaborations Featuring Female Artists	Female Solo	Male Solo	Collaborations Featuring Female Artists
Weekday Prime (Mon-Fri 7am-7pm)	28.7%	35.5%	12.5%	24%	31.0%	2.7%
Weekday Post-Prime 1 (Mon-Fri 7pm-10pm)	29.5%	36.8%	14.3%	20.1%	37.8%	3.4%
Weekday Post-Prime 2 (Mon-Fri 10pm-midnight)	24.7%	30.2%	10.4%	23%	35.3%	2.3%
Weekday Overnight (Mon-Fri midnight-7am)	27.7%	35.0%	9.5%	26.8%	29.2%	1.9%
Weekend Prime (Sat-Sun 7am-7pm)	28.2%	33.4%	12.3%	24.6%	30.2%	4.5%
Weekend Post-Prime (Sat-Sun 7pm-midnight)	20.4%	36.1%	14.1%	20.1%	43.2%	2.5%
Weekend Overnight (Sat-Sun midnight-7am)	22.2%	33.6%	12.1%	26.5%	34.1%	3.1%

Table 3: Plays by timecode for music-driven and non-music-driven stations

4. Gender balance across genre

Across all four stations, pop music was the genre most likely to be performed by female artists, with 77.1% of music performed by solo female artists categorised as pop. By comparison, only 5.7% of the music performed by solo female artists was categorised as hip hop, only 5.4% was categorised as rock and 4.2% was categorised as dance. Pop was also the genre most likely to be performed by collaborations featuring female artists, with 39.3% of the plays performed by such collaborations categorised as such.

Music by solo male artists was represented more evenly across genres, including pop (37.9%), hip hop (22%), rock (15.2%), with dance being somewhat lower at 8.9%.

Pop was the genre most likely to be performed across all artist types, with the exception of groups. 37.2% of music performed by groups was categorised as rock, while 31.6% was categorised as pop, 10.4% was dance, and 8.9% was hip hop.

Music performed by non-binary artists was almost exclusively categorised as pop (91.9%). In considering these data, it should be noted that the numbers of plays by artists who identified as non-binary was low in absolute terms, so caution is urged in considering this finding.
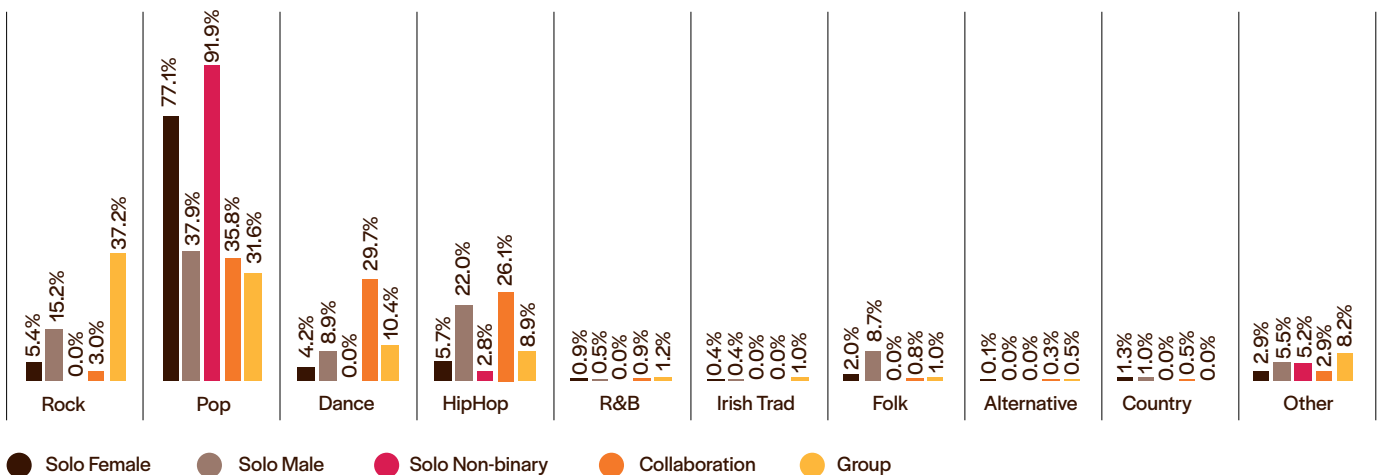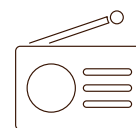

Figure 7: Genre breakdown by gender and artist type (all sample stations)

5. Gender balance by country

Across all stations in our sample, 17.9% of performers were categorised as Irish (number of performers) and 21.5% of plays (number of plays) were by Irish artists. Music by Irish female solo artists made up 4.18% of music aired. For comparison, music by Irish male solo artists made up 8.9% of music aired.

As shown in Table 4, there were eleven female artists represented in the top twenty most-played artists, representing 55%.

Within the top 20, the majority of artists were from the USA (55%), with 20% originating in the UK and 20% in Ireland. Of the Irish artists in the top 20, half are female and half are male.

	Performer	Gender	Country
1	Dua Lipa	F	UK
2	Teddy Swims	M	USA
3	Beyonce	F	USA
4	Noah Kahan	M	USA
5	Benson Boone	M	USA
6	Ariana Grande	F	USA
7	Hozier	M	Ireland
8	Ed Sheeran	M	UK
9	Dermot Kennedy	M	Ireland
10	Taylor Swift	F	USA
11	Jack Harlow	M	USA
12	Olivia Rodrigo	F	USA
13	Tate McRae	F	Canada
14	Michael Marcagi	M	USA
15	Jazzy	F	Ireland
16	Lewis Capaldi	M	UK
17	Kenya Grace	F	UK
18	Doja Cat	F	USA
19	Sabrina Carpenter	F	USA
20	Lyra	F	Ireland

Table 4: Top 20 most-played solo artists across all content selected for analysis (by gender and country)

6.Gender balance of composers/authors

Of the content analysed, more than half (51%) was composed/authored either by individual female composers/authors or by groups of composers/authors involving one or more women. Some 49% was composed/authored by men and non-binary composers/authors, or groups of composers/authors that did not involve women. See Figure 8.

Women composed/authored content across a range of genres, but some genres had higher proportions of female composers or authors than others, as shown in Figure 9 below. It is important to note that, of the 98,143 items in the composer/author dataset, gender data were available for the vast majority (94%) of them. A smaller proportion (68%) of songs had a genre assigned to them, and this should be borne in mind in considering the analysis below.

The genres with the highest proportion of female composers/authors were alternative (78.8%), pop (61.1%) and R & B (60.7%).
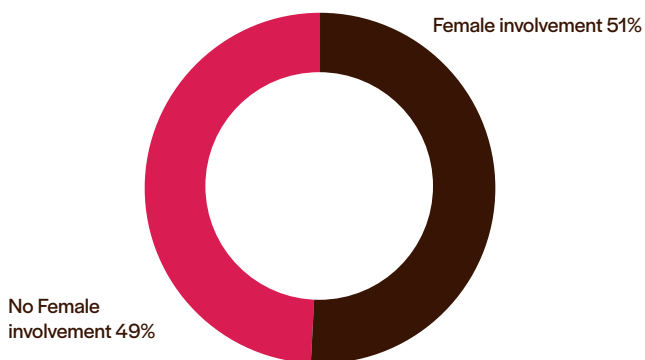

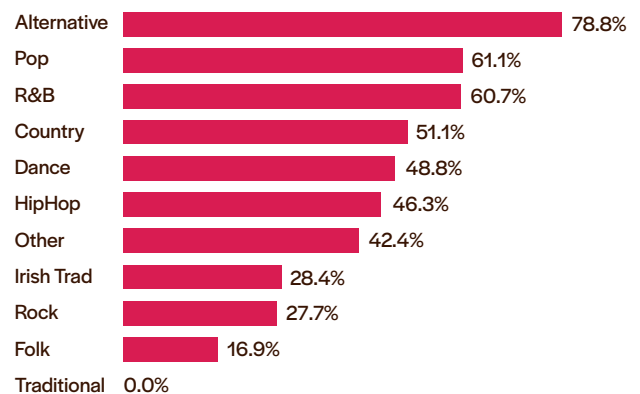Figure 8: Female involvement in composition/authoring of music

Figure 9: Proportion of plays with female composers/authors across different genres

Findings: Stakeholder interviews

Interview findings can be categorised under seven broad headings:

1. Gender balance and music airtime
2. The importance of inclusivity
3. How radio programming decisions are made
4. The availability of music by Irish female artists
5. The position of radio in the media landscape
6. Key actors and their roles
7. Key enablers

Taken together, the first two of these relate to the concepts of gender balance and inclusivity, and the extent to which they exist in relation to music on radio in Ireland.

The next two headings capture feedback regarding the availability of music by women and the practicalities regarding radio music programming.

The fifth heading relates to key actors who have a potential role to play in relation to women and music on radio, namely, An Coimisiún as the Regulator, radio stations, and the music industry more broadly (including record labels, music PR and music production entities).

The final heading relates to potential enablers of greater gender equity, namely, supports for artists and the media, collaboration and activism, and a reliable evidence base.

In terms of the quantifiers used below, the following key applies: 'several' refers to less than five participants, 'some' refers to between five and 10 participants, 'many' refers to between 11 and 20 participants, and 'most' refers to 21 participants or more.

1. Gender balance and music airtime

"...I know there's dissatisfaction across the board [with airtime allocated to music by women] and there's dissatisfaction from songwriters as well..." – Participant no. 24, female, artist

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"I think it [gender balance in airtime] is getting much better. There was definitely a while where...there were very little women featured on Irish radio...it's improving, slowly but surely." – Participant no. 21, male, music industry stakeholder

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"...It's [gender balance in music airtime] a guiding principle. We do it, it's not written down anywhere... but all the people that do music here know that." – Participant no. 27, male, public service radio station representative

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"...Music performed by women not from Ireland definitely gets representation on Irish radio, but I think that domestic artists don't get representation..." – Participant no. 18, female, artist

- Most participants considered that gender balance in music airtime had improved in recent years, but that further progress is needed in this area. Only one participant (a radio station representative) suggested that there is gender parity across the music that is played on radio.

- Some participants noted that it was encouraging to see greater recognition of the need for change in the proportion of music by women on radio. Several participants also stated that it is necessary to acknowledge that there has been change in this area, and suggested that efforts to advance gender balance on radio airtime should be highlighted.

- While none of station representatives interviewed said their station had a formal gender balance policy in place regarding music programming, several representatives stated that they aimed to achieve a balance.

- Many participants considered that a high proportion of music in the charts is performed and/or composed/authored by female artists. Some participants referred to local or domestic female artists and female-led groups and suggested that there are now more popular Irish female artists than in the past. However, it was acknowledged by many participants that many of the most-played women artists on radio are international artists rather than Irish artists.

- A range of participants suggested that the airtime allocated to music performed by women was more evident than the airtime allocated to music composed/authored by women. It was suggested that this may be because it is easier to clearly distinguish female voices, or because there are fewer female composers/authors, or perhaps because information on the composers/authors is less readily available.

- Several participants mentioned that the amount of airtime allocated to music by women often varied from station to station, with some radio stations performing better than others in this area. A range of participants stated that PSBs generally performed better in achieving gender parity in music airtime and broadcasting a diversity of voices more generally.

"…Decisions being made that have a latent gender bias… that doesn't necessarily come from the individual saying 'I really want to only have 10% of women on my playlist'. Instead, what they say is 'Oh, well everybody loves this act and this act, and I know they'll get people listening and staying listening…'" – Participant no. 10, female, music industry stakeholder

"…They [radio stations] don't want to playlist them [Irish female artists], because they don't feel that Irish women have anything to say that's worth listening to. There's a complete bias, yes." – Participant no. 20, female, music industry stakeholder

"The guidelines given to me… would be to have a 50:50 balance. Now, some days I achieve that balance…My main priority is always to play the best music and some days that balance won't work." – Participant no. 28, female, public service radio station representative

- Many participants considered that there is gender bias present in music programming, albeit to varying degrees. Almost all of these participants considered that gender biases were unconscious and not a deliberate choice. Rather, they result from other factors, such as a fear among stations to diverge from what works for them commercially. This is discussed further in Section 3.

- Some participants considered there are fewer gender biases present in music programming now than in the past, but noted that they continue to prevail. One participant suggested that acknowledging this prevalence is required to break patterns of bias. Another participant stated that gender biases in music programming decisions are not always obvious, but that structural, sectoral and societal biases are still present.

- However, some participants (predominantly artists and representatives of music advocacy organisations) suggested that intentional gender biases continued to underpin music programming decisions.

- Other participants, predominantly from radio stations, record labels or music industry organisations, stated that while some stations (such as PSBs) may have more of a focus on gender balance, gender is generally not a consideration for how music is chosen. Instead, reference was made to other factors influencing music selection, including genre, audience and time of day. These and other factors influencing programming decisions are discussed more in Section 3.

2. The importance of inclusivity

"It's important for us to also look at the...significantly underserved voices...and how they're represented" – Participant no. 8, male, An Coimisiún staff

"It's privilege and race and class and we have to break down those walls because... we're missing out on so much talent that's out there..." – Participant no. 20, female, music industry stakeholder

"It's how the songs sound and how they fit for our license, for each of the stations...we play the correct music for our brands and not necessarily whether they be male or female..." – Participant no. 17, male, national group radio station representative

- Many participants referred to the need for greater inclusivity, in its broadest sense, across the music and media industries, in order to advance music by women on radio.

- Several participants raised issues of intersectionality and stated that there is a need to encourage greater diversity of voices in the industry including, but not limited to, a focus on gender. One participant, for example, stated that gender was important, but that diversity and inclusion more broadly are crucial, including in terms of socio-economic status, ethnicity, location and disability, amongst other factors.

- In a similar vein, some participants stated that care should be taken to avoid promoting music by Irish women artists to the detriment of achieving greater diversity and inclusion in relation to the broadcasting of music on radio.

- Reference was made by several participants to the need for a more diverse representation of Irish female artists, not just on radio but also across the Irish music landscape.

- Some participants urged that care be taken to avoid the tokenisation of Irish female artists through activities aimed at advancing music by women on radio.

3. How radio programming decisions are made

"We do music research, based on the audience – what they like, what they don't like, it's really based that way and gender wouldn't come into play at all…A good song is a good song, you know? – Participant no. 14, male, radio station representative

"…It's down to the quality of the songs…I don't think women should be played on the radio because they're women – I think they should be played because their music is good." – Participant no. 13, female, music industry stakeholder

"…We wouldn't necessarily be making a decision on a song based on who produced it. We're making a decision based on how good it is, is that artist a good fit for our station, and will the song resonate with our audience." – Participant no. 22, male, public service radio station representative

- Participants from radio stations outlined a range of approaches to music programming decisions.
  - *Data-driven approach:* Some noted that their selection of music is based on audience testing, such as online surveys or market research.
  - *Quality-driven approach:* Some noted that the quality of music and consideration of whether a song is the 'right fit' for their show or station is a more influential factor than the gender of an artist.
  - *Diversity-driven approach:* Others referred to collective decision making with colleagues, with the intention of bringing a diversity of voices into music programming decisions, resulting in a 'mix' of music.
  - *Commercially-driven approach:* The commercial reality facing radio stations was raised in almost all interviews, and it was outlined that radio stations make programming decisions based on the music that will hold an audience. Several participants mentioned a fear amongst stations that the audience will 'switch off'. Commercial factors were specifically noted as being among the most important considerations for commercial stations when it comes to choosing the music that they play, and their tendency to avoid perceived 'risk' in this area was noted. Several participants considered that commercially-driven approaches serve to limit the extent to which gender is a factor in that decision making.
  - *Centralised approach:* Several participants stated that they believed centralised music programming decisions made by a Radio Group in respect of all constituent stations had a significant impact on gender balance. Others referred to one person (such as a music director) having oversight for meeting various requirements and then consulting with colleagues as a quality check.
  - *Localised approach:* Presenters of specialist shows, particularly in regional and independent stations, often had editorial discretion, ranging from full control over music played to shared decision-making with their respective music directors.

"…There's plenty of female artists making…music that is of a standard of anything else that's on the playlist. They need to be played at prime times of the day…" – Participant no. 24, female, artist

"…Our job is to try and keep as many listeners as we can… it's constantly a balancing act" - Participant no. 26, female, local independent radio station representative

"It's important to recognise that it isn't always as straight-forward as a decision, 'oh, well I'm choosing a male-led performer over a female-led performer' – there's often a lot of other things in play." – Participant no. 19, male, music industry stakeholder

"The specialist shows… I think they've fallen away a bit, and from what I can see a lot of the stations have gotten rid of their shows, which is a loss…That's the first-place new people are going to get airplay." – Participant no. 31, male, national radio station representative

- Moreover, a range of factors emerged as being influential in programming choices:

  - *Time of day:* This was referenced by many participants as influencing the type of music played. For example, some participants stated that 7am-7pm is viewed as "prime time" by most stations, and so programming was likely to focus on music that was popular. Some female artists referred to their music only being played during the "graveyard shift" after 10pm and before 7am, when audience numbers are typically lower. Some other participants indirectly suggested that music from Irish female artists is played less by stations because it tends to be more "experimental" or "niche", which may result in it being played less or not being played at prime times during the day.

  - *Playlisting:* Some participants stated that commercial stations that are part of a Radio Group are likely to have curated playlisting, which may mean they are less likely to air music by emerging or less established female artists. Alternatively, some participants suggested that having a centralised, "across the board" approach to music programming from Radio Groups meant that there was scope to increase the proportion of music by women aired across those stations collectively.

  - *Role of specialist programmes:* Several participants referred to the role that specialist programmes and their presenters make to the airtime allocated to music by women, and particularly emerging artists. Participants suggested that specialist programmes are more likely to be curated by their presenters and that there is more of a focus on "breaking" artists and/or featuring different types of music. One participant stated that there are fewer specialist programmes now or that they are now featured at later times, as radio stations move away from being "tastemakers" and tend to favour more reliable commercial outputs.

"We're [Ireland] a smaller market, we're a smaller talent pool and…. we can't compete with the big international acts." – Participant no. 15, male, music industry representative

"…Some kind of better resource for stations… currently it seems like the onus is entirely on the artists to get their music out and, really, it's in the radio's best interest" – Participant no. 7, female, artist

"…Unless you are already an established female artist in Ireland, breaking new female artists is going to be very tough." – Participant no. 21, male, music industry stakeholder

– *Genre and music trends:* Some participants stated that genre, and music trends at a given time, will affect the extent to which music by women is allocated airtime on radio and that this will vary from station to station. For example, some stations are positioned to play specific genres, while others feel the need to tailor the genre or tempo of music depending on time of day and the audience.

– *International versus Irish artists:* Many participants (mostly radio station and music industry representatives) stated that Irish female artists are now competing in a more globalised arena, where international artists often have high-quality, high-profile music that is suitable for the Irish market.

– *Record labels and PR:* The role of record labels and agents was raised by several participants. Some participants considered that record labels influenced the music that radio stations played. Others stated that record labels tended to understand how to effectively present artists and their music to radio stations, which resulted in more airtime for those artists.

– *Profile of artists:* There was a suggestion from several participants that artists now must be relatively high profile to be played on Irish radio (except for specialist shows or slots dedicated to emerging artists), and that radio now generally showcases music that is already popular, rather than "breaking" new music. This is discussed further in Section 5. In that context, some radio station representatives stated that they do not have capacity to do research and, for this reason, it is important that emerging artists appropriately present and "package" themselves so as to gain exposure or enhance their profile.

4. The availability of music by Irish female artists

"It's a chicken and egg thing, there wasn't enough good female artists at a high-enough level of production… But that is changing now… it's not that the artists weren't there, there wasn't enough investment in them." – Participant no. 21, male, music industry stakeholder

"…[Radio] still is a major player, but we're not the sources where people are finding new music now." – Participant no. 17, male, national group radio station representative

"…[Gender parity in airtime] is definitely a lot easier to achieve now than it was 20 years ago. In that, there's a huge upsurge in the number of female artists…" – Participant no. 19, male, music industry stakeholder

• Many participants made reference to the availability of music by Irish female artists, with some suggesting that there is not sufficient availability of high-quality, high-production-value music by Irish female artists that would allow stations to advance music by women. Several radio station or music industry representatives stated that they want to play more music by Irish female artists, but that this was not available or that the quality of what was available limited their ability to do so.

• A contrary view was also expressed by some other participants, (mostly artists or representatives of advocacy and music industry organisations), who suggested that a wide range of high-quality music from Irish female artists is available, and that stations are not limited in the choice they have.

• Some participants suggested that the high quality of music available from international artists meant that Irish artists are at a disadvantage, which in turn impacted their airtime. This disadvantage was seen to be because of many international artists being from countries which have a bigger "talent pool" (such as Britian, USA and France) and greater access to recording and production infrastructure. In a similar vein, some participants made reference to other parts of the music production ecosystem as playing a role in shaping the availability of music by women in Ireland. One participant, for example, stated that the there was a lack of recording and production infrastructure for artists to produce the high-quality music required to compete in Ireland and internationally. While it was noted that this applied to all Irish artists, the participant suggested that better infrastructure would directly support the broadcast of music by women on radio.

- The representation of women in other areas of music and media was also mentioned by several participants, with some suggesting that more women in music production would support female artists in creating music. Others suggested that the gender of radio presenters and decision makers in radio stations influenced programming choices, and that more female music presenters and decision makers would result in greater promotion of music by Irish female artists.

- The role of the live music sector in supporting engagement between artists and audiences was mentioned many times during interviews, and some participants viewed radio airtime and live shows as linked or synergistic in broadcasting music by women in Ireland.

5. The position of radio in the media landscape

"Radio is a small part in the wider music industry, and representation, whether it's female, diversity, representing minorities, etc, that needs to be considered at macro level across the [media] community." – Participant no. 22, male, public service radio station representative

"It's [radio] huge as a promotor...perhaps the most important medium, as a composer, because it's the one medium that prioritises the ears and not the eyes" – Participant no. 9, female, artist

- Many participants considered that the role of radio is not what it was in the past. Rather, they suggest that it is one part of the broader media landscape, and while it plays a role in the promotion of music, it is not the only influencing factor in promoting Irish music and/or music performed by women. Instead, radio was noted as existing in an ecosystem in which streaming services (such as Spotify) are prevalent, and the live music sector and other media all influence the availability of music by women artists.

- Several participants stated that radio does not or no longer acts as a "tastemaker" with regard to promoting new or emerging music, as it did in the past. One participant described radio as being "reactive" and playing music that is already popular, rather than breaking new music.

- A contrary view was also expressed, with several participants stating that radio can or does play a role in introducing audiences to music, and that stations can provide a "discovery element" regarding music. It was suggested that radio can curate and present new and diverse music to audiences in a way that streaming services may not. In this context, some participants made reference to efforts in Britain to achieve gender balance in music played on radio. Participants referenced, in particular, efforts by the BBC's radio stations to broadcast new and emerging music, such as BBC Sounds. Specific reference was made by some participants to an uploader database utilised by the BBC (whereby artists can upload their music) and this was considered to be a support for emerging and independent artists wishing to share their music. Many artists also stated that they had had their music aired on BBC stations, yet had not received comparative airtime on Irish stations.

6. Key actors and their roles

"...The willingness of some radio stations to have that conversation at all...it's an encouragement to join hands, to collectively make this different" – Participant no. 11, female, music industry representative

"...Cutting your cloth to suit the radio station is important, but I don't think stations should 'get away' with not having to comply..." – Participant no. 10, female, music industry stakeholder

"I think you have to formalise it if you need the commitment – because unless it's formal, they'll [radio stations] just come up with a way of not doing it." – Participant no. 13, female, music industry stakeholder

The role of radio stations

- Some participants suggested that PSB stations are making a specific effort to achieve gender balance in their music programming and other areas.

- Most participants recognised that all radio stations are subject to commercial considerations or are driven by audience preferences, but it was noted that this is particularly relevant to Radio Groups and independent stations.

- Many participants referred to challenges that radio stations may face should additional regulatory requirements be imposed on them, and several stated that any additional measures or requirements regarding the broadcast of music by women on radio should consider commercial factors and the many regulatory requirements stations are already required to comply with.

- Some participants suggested that stations' ability to comply with additional requirements could vary, and that smaller and independent stations may struggle should additional resources (such as staff) be needed.

- However, several participants also stated that, while consideration should be given to the context in which radio stations operate, this was not a good enough reason to let stations 'off the hook' when it comes to broadcasting music by women.

- Some participants highlighted the importance of raising the awareness of radio stations of the need for gender balance in music airtime, and of their role in developing or leading the development of solutions to advance music by women on radio. Suggestions for doing so included direct engagement by An Coimisiún with radio stations and the provision of training around unconscious bias.

- Several participants also mentioned the pace of progress expected of radio stations and noted that this should be borne in mind when considering potential measures or requirements. Some participants noted that gradual or incremental change may be required to allow radio stations to better promote music by women whilst also ensuring they can continue to meet various practical, fiscal or policy-related requirements.

> *"What we should be doing is putting in place infrastructure for…female Irish artists across Irish music that allows them to grow, develop, and professionalise their sound that gets them into a better place [so] that when they [are] pitching to radio, their songs are strong enough, they're well produced… and gives them much more opportunity to get their songs on radio."*
> *– Participant no. 22, male, public service radio station representative*

> *"I think having a collaborative sit-down with Irish radio and saying 'hey guys, what's going on the figures aren't great'"*
> *– Participant no. 26, female, local independent radio station representative*

> *"…I think that maybe if we don't get our house in order that the threat of [further] regulation should be there… there are often unintended consequences with these things." – Participant no. 27, male, public service radio station representative*

- Some participants mentioned that stations may already be making efforts to broadcast music by women, and that they should showcase or emphasise this.
- Several participants across different categories referred to the role of radio in promoting Irish music, and some stated that stations have a cultural 'responsibility' to promote Irish music (including music by women).

The role of industry

- Some participants stated female Irish artists need support from the music and media industries with developing their profiles and strengthening the quality of their music, to enhance the likelihood of their music being played on the radio.
- Some participants referred to 2FM Rising (an initiative by 2FM), and Irish Music Month (an initiative by Hotpress, Independent Broadcasters of Ireland and An Coimisiún, with engagement from radio stations), as exemplars of good practice in terms of the promotion of music by female and emerging artists. Several participants also referenced Ireland Music Week as an example of an initiative that achieves gender parity and showcases emerging Irish artists.

The role of the Regulator

- Many participants indicated that they were not aware of previous or existing regulatory supports for the broadcast of music by women on air. However, several participants were aware, and referred to examples of, gender equality initiatives or activities by Coimisiún na Meán or its predecessor, the BAI. For example, the Sound & Vision scheme was cited by several participants as being an example of a successful initiative in this area.
- Many participants considered that, as the Regulator, Coimisiún na Meán has a responsibility to set expectations and provide guidance regarding the broadcast of music by women on radio. However, participant views varied regarding the role of Coimisiún na Meán in setting and/or enforcing such expectations.

"There has to be both expectation and encouragement…[An Coimisiún] don't have an editorial role in telling them what to broadcast, but what we can do is encourage them to broadcast programmes with more diversity" - Participant no. 6, female, An Coimisiún staff

"…To secure enthusiasm from the sector, you would probably need to be cognisant of the different level playing fields some stations are at, compared to others." – Participant no. 25, female, An Coimisiún staff

"…The radio industry in general needs to…come up with a solution [to achieving gender balance], or they need to be involved in a solution…" – Participant no. 23, female, music industry representative

"I think if we were to introduce something as crude as a quota you might just get more of the same…it doesn't necessarily bring a wider range of music composed and performed by women to audiences" – Participant no. 5, female, An Coimisiún staff

"I think that there needs to be either some incentive or some kind of quota to encourage…" -Participant no. 24, female, artist

- Some participants suggested that An Coimisiún should set requirements around the proportion of music by women that radio stations should air. Others suggested that An Coimisiún should encourage and support the broadcast of music by women on the air, whilst allowing radio stations to retain their editorial independence.
- Many participants referred to the need for regulatory focuses to be guided by an equality, diversity and inclusion approach.
- Several participants made reference to An Coimisiún's recently published Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (GEDI) strategy and noted that this should act as guidance for radio stations in advancing gender balance in music airtime.
- Many participants referred to the potential development of regulatory measures to promote the broadcast of music by women on radio. However, views on the form these measures might take differed significantly, and notably between stakeholder groups.
- Several participants suggested that stricter gender balance requirements were needed to ensure that a greater proportion of music by women was played on the radio. These participants were mainly from the artists and advocacy organisation representative categories.
- While several participants referred to formal gender quotas which are in place in France, it was notable that most participants interviewed stated that they did not think that gender quotas or similar measures would be beneficial for broadcasting music by women on Irish radio. Many stated that they believed that introducing a gender quota for music on radio would result in unintended consequences (such as a greater proportion of repeats from international and established/legacy female artists), rather than broadcasting a more diverse range of music from a greater variety of Irish female artists.
- Yet, many participants across all stakeholder categories agreed that regulatory measures are needed to support the promotion of music by women.
- Several participants made reference to existing programme policies which place requirements on music airtime, and which vary from station to station. Those participants noted that such policies must be considered as part of any further measures or requirements.

7. Key enablers

"…It might be that there needs to be more conversation between people who do my job, and people who actually make the music." – Participant no. 26, female, local independent radio station representative

"…From an Irish point of view, [for] both male and female [artists], there's a bit of a lack of knowledge or understanding of how to get yourself out there." – Participant no. 17, male, national group radio station representative

"…The bigger piece is about going 'okay, is there something structurally going to help foster Irish recording, Irish female artists, do better overall' – and then that helps radio stations play them." – Participants no. 19, male, music industry stakeholder

"Studio spaces for women, there are many things that can be done there…studio spaces are predominantly run by men and it can be a difficult space to enter as a woman." -Participant no. 18, female, artist

Supports for artists and the media

- Many participants considered that further supports are needed in order to advance music by women on radio, with some suggesting that supports should be focused on assisting Irish female artists (and artists from a range of backgrounds) in having their music played on radio. Suggestions included the provision of workshops to assist artists with developing their profile and "packaging" themselves for presentation to radio stations, as well as investment in music production to allow Irish female artists to compete with other more successful or international acts.

Collaboration

- Many participants across all stakeholder categories made reference to the importance of collaboration across the sector to better promote the broadcast of music by women on air, as well as to support equality, diversity and inclusion more broadly.
- Some participants considered that it is "unfair" to expect that radio stations alone should shoulder the responsibility of promoting music by women and that, because they make up part of the wider media landscape in Ireland, other stakeholders in the sector should also be involved in supporting this focus.
- Some participants also made reference to the benefits that cross-sector collaboration can have in sharing best practices and encouraging wider engagement with audiences.
- Several participants referred to the role of activism in progressing gender equality in music in Ireland. Participants referred to feminist music collectives, such as Why Not Her?, Fair Plé and Sounding the Feminists, which are maintaining pressure on the music industry in Ireland, resulting in greater awareness of the need for gender equality in the industry.
- One participant also referred to global activism such as the "Me Too" movement as playing a role in highlighting gender equality and encouraging change across a range of sectors.
- Some participants noted that while collectives and activism have played a role in raising awareness and promoting gender equality in the music and media industries, further and more formalised efforts are required to ensure longer-lasting change.

"I'm very wary of efforts to just do a headcount, I think that doesn't give the entire picture…" – Participant no. 11, female, music industry representative

"We need the hard data…Need to know what the cultural or financial or systemic reasons are for an under-representation of female artists, including Irish female artists." – Participant no. 12, male, An Coimisiún staff

Data

- Data availability was raised by several participants as important for progressing gender equality in the music and media industries, as well as for benchmarking and comparing progress in this area. Some participants referred to anecdotal evidence of the representation of music by women, while others pointed to research published by organisations such as Why Not Her? as demonstrating the low proportion of airtime allocated to music by women across radio. Yet, several participants noted that, while useful for providing an overview, most existing published data is not "official" and might not reflect the full extent of music by women on radio.

- Some participants suggested that further analysis could be carried out on the proportion of music by women on radio, in order to monitor progress in this area. However, opinions diverged on who would be responsible for implementing such a system.

- Some participants referred to record returns, such as those returned to the Irish Music Rights Organisation (IMRO) or Recorded Artists Actors Performers (RAAP), as presenting a possible avenue for monitoring the proportion of music by women on radio. It was noted that inclusion of data on gender is not a requirement and, therefore, there may be gaps in the information that is currently provided to those bodies.

- In addition, some participants raised concerns about the resources required should radio stations be required to report on their gender balance in music programming. Some participants also suggested that consideration should be given to the range of reporting requirements already made of stations.

Conclusions

Gender balance on the radio and the importance of context

There is a gender imbalance in the music played on radio. However, the context is complex and there are many factors which influence the broadcast of music on the radio.

- Across all content analysed, music performed by solo female artists made up 26.7% and collaborations where women were represented made up 9.5% of airtime. Comparatively, music performed by solo male artists made up 34.3% across all content analysed. Music involving female composers/authors made up 51% of airtime.
- It is important to note, however, there appears to be considerable variation in airtime allocated to music by women from station to station, depending on station type, time of day and factors such as music genre.

Station format and type:

- Some stations are music-driven and therefore dedicate more of their airtime to playing music, while others are non-music-driven and include a greater percentage of other types of content in their daily programming (such as talk, sport, phone-ins, current affairs, entertainment, news and features, etc.). Stations also differ in terms of the requirements resulting from their broadcasting contracts, their target audience, and the genres of music they focus on. This suggests that is it may not be straightforward to impose uniform requirements and, while progress can and should be made, there will be differences in the levels of progress that are feasible for different stations.

Timeslots:

- Some interview participants suggested that music by women is not played as much during daytime slots as during nighttime slots, and recommended that music by women be aired to a greater extent at 'peak' times of day, when audiences would be most likely to be exposed to it. However, programme content analysis showed that music by women was played relatively evenly across radio time slots, with a somewhat higher proportion of plays during daytime slots.

- Studies to date have focused on airtime as an indicator of performance in terms of the advancement of music by women on radio. This research suggests, however, that this is just one measure of performance, and that other indicators such as time of broadcast, and the context in which it is broadcast should also be considered. With regard to context, the findings highlighted, for example, that a programme presenter speaking about an artist's music and/ or interviewing an artist and playing their music in such a context can be very impactful.

Genre:

- The research findings highlight that female artists are featured more across some genres (e.g. pop), which can have implications for gender balance on stations which focus on specific or niche music types. The research does not explore why there are more women in some genres than others, but the findings do point to the issue of gender balance in music being one which extends beyond radio airtime alone.

Irish versus international artists:

- Findings demonstrate that international female artists featured more prominently than Irish female artists, and it was suggested during participant interviews that this might be due to their commercial popularity, access to resources and support from other actors in the music industry (usually outside of Ireland), and profile with audiences in Ireland and beyond.

Collaboration across the media and music landscape

Collaboration across the wider media and music landscape is important in addressing bias, supporting artist development and encouraging greater diversity, equity and inclusion.

- Interview findings suggest that bias may influence the extent to which music by women is played on radio, but that this is not peculiar to radio, as bias appears to be pervasive in the wider media and music industries, both in Ireland and internationally. Some radio stations, and the music and media industries more broadly, are making direct efforts to address bias but greater collaboration is required to make more progress in this area.

- It was suggested during interviews that radio stations can only play music that is available to them and that the media and music industries (such as different media platforms, record labels, PR companies, and others) also have a responsibility to better promote the broadcast of music performed or composed by women. This would include assisting emerging female artists with producing high-quality music that is suitably packaged for radio, assisting female artists to develop their profile or promote their music, and providing avenues of support for emerging artists, beyond radio airtime.

- Greater cross-sector collaboration may involve scaling up existing initiatives or developing new initiatives which forge impactful connections between artists, radio stations, and actors in the music and media industries.

- An Coimisiún could play a role in facilitating and encouraging collaboration, but other media and music industry actors must actively engage in efforts to address wider gender biases and support the broadcast of music by women.

Establishing an approach: guidance and clear expectations

The research highlighted the need for guidance and clear expectations, as well as for accountability.

- It is evident that Coimisiún na Meán has a role to play in supporting and encouraging greater gender balance in music airtime. An Coimisiún's recently launched Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (GEDI) strategy should serve as a "north star" guiding efforts in this area.

- The findings from the participant interviews suggest that the context in which stations select music for airtime is complex, with a range of factors influencing their programming decisions. Any measures to support greater gender balance in music airtime should therefore be appropriately nuanced.

- An Coimisiún should clarify its expectations of stations regarding the broadcast of music by women. This could be done in a flexible manner and in consultation with stations, having regard to their type, sound broadcasting contract, format and editorial independence of stations.

- Care should be taken not to create a regulatory environment which further compounds current issues or encourages practices which do not substantively promote the broadcast of music by women on radio.

- The findings from participant interviews suggest that specific gender quotas in music airtime may not be beneficial because:
  - airtime alone is just one measure of performance that does not consider the wider context and may not be an appropriately nuanced indicator of progress towards the desired outcome
  - they could impose an undue administrative burden on some stations.

- Instead, the introduction of a process whereby radio stations would report on their activities and efforts in line with guidance could establish pathways towards greater gender balance in music airtime. Following a review of progress, consideration could be given to establishing a regulatory framework that may involve the development of a Code which places obligations on radio stations.

Acknowledging efforts and progress made

Action is needed to support gender balance in music airtime, but ongoing improvements in this area should be acknowledged and encouraged to further incentivise progress.

- Findings from both content analysis and participant interviews suggest that there is room for improvement regarding gender balance on radio, but also highlight that there are ongoing efforts to advance music by women on radio, and an appetite to make further progress.

- The interviews suggested that gender is a factor that is considered by some radio stations, although music programming is often informed by other considerations and factors. No radio station representatives referred to formal music policies on gender during interviews, but several referenced efforts to achieve gender balance in their radio programming.

- There were also examples of actions and initiatives to better promote gender balance in music airtime, including actions by stations, advocacy from collectives and individuals, and the influence of social shifts with respect to expectations about diversity and inclusion.

- While the need for greater gender balance in music airtime is evident in the findings from both the quantitative and qualitative strands of this research, interviews underlined the importance of inclusivity, diversity and intersectionality in music airtime overall. Diversity in music programming was highlighted by some radio station representatives as something that they strive to reflect in music they select for radio airtime.

- Existing formal and informal efforts by stations to support gender balance in music airtime could be integrated into a reporting process thereby allowing for greater recognition for existing and ongoing efforts, as well as future progress in this area.

Fostering engagement and ownership

Engagement between a range of actors is important for raising awareness, encouraging ownership and making progress regarding the broadcasting of music by women on radio.

- Engagement between Irish female artists (and their management or representation, where relevant) and radio stations appears to be an area which requires attention. Interview participants highlighted challenges related to the sharing and discovery of music - for stations in finding music by female artists to include in their programming, and for artists (particularly new and emerging female artists) in understanding how to promote themselves and 'package' their music for stations. The following are some steps that could be taken to address these challenges:
  - The provision of workshops could assist artists with developing their profiles and with music production.
  - The development by radio stations of a music uploader database to facilitate new artists in uploading their music. Some stations have taken this approach previously, and there is potential for it to be adopted more widely.
  - Stations could provide more detailed guidance on how artists can best share updates with their music programming team.
- In addition, it is suggested that radio stations could afford greater priority to the broadcasting of music by new and emerging Irish (female) artists. Specialist shows, in particular, were cited during interviews as being important for informing audiences about emerging artists and "breaking" new music.
- An Coimisiún does not play a role in advising on radio programming content or editorial decisions but could facilitate discussion with radio stations to support engagement and ownership in this area.

Monitoring, assessing and reporting progress

Monitoring, assessing and reporting progress towards greater gender balance in music on radio will be important in delivering a comprehensive national picture, and ensuring that effort and progress are appropriately recognised.

- The research findings highlight that reliable and up-to-date data underpins the assessment of progress regarding the promotion of music by women on radio.

- Comprehensive reporting is important, and the programme content analysis strand of this research identified potential gaps and inconsistencies in the available data.

- Better and more uniform reporting on gender is needed to accurately assess the extent to which music by women features on radio. This should include data on performances by individuals, groups, and collaborations, to understand the contribution that female artists make across different types of music and different types of stations.

- In order to enhance the completeness and accuracy of data, radio stations should, ideally, be equipped with information from source, i.e., via music labels, agents and managers, or artists and groups self-reporting on variables such as gender and genre.

- While improved monitoring, assessment and reporting is important, care should be taken not to overburden stations and artists with reporting requirements. Given the existing gaps in data reporting and collection, it is likely that sector-wide efforts would be required in this area.

- Ongoing monitoring at national level should be carried out by An Coimisiún and it is suggested that a progress report could be published within a specified period. Widening the scope of future research to include all PSB and commercial Irish radio stations and a longer period for content analysis would provide a more complete overview.

- While this research was framed by the underpinning legislation, further research could usefully explore in more depth some of the contextual factors which influence the way in which music by women is featured on radio. This could include, for example, audience perspectives and expectations, and adopt a diversity and inclusion-informed lens.

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