

# Australian Women Screen Composers: Career Barriers and Pathways

Research Report

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# Foreword

While the music industry in Australia is healthy and vibrant, women continue to be underrepresented in key roles in this sector and make up only a small proportion of those making money from their musical endeavours. This imbalance represents not only an inability of women to access the social, psychological and economic benefits of music making, but a loss of potential talent to the industry and audiences. As an organisation committed to redressing this situation, APRA AMCOS has commissioned this research on screen composers - a group that is more highly imbalanced in terms of gender than other parts of their membership - as a preliminary exploration of what factors are limiting or enabling the development of women's careers in music. This type of industry-focused research on music and gender has not been undertaken in Australia previously, and the findings will be useful in determining strategies for moving towards greater gender equity in music.

This research was funded in a large part by APRA AMCOS, with additional funds contributed by RMIT University. The research would have not been possible without the willingness of APRA AMCOS members to contribute their time and knowledge. The members who took part in interviews in particular were extremely generous with the information they proffered, and their honesty in answering questions, which were difficult at times, was greatly appreciated. Staff at higher education institutions who also gave their time to talk to researchers were also very important to this research, and we are grateful for their input.

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# Executive Summary

## Survey Overview

APRA AMCOS membership data shows that only 21.7% of their members identify as female. The percentage of royalty payments the organisation made to female members has fluctuated between 15% and 21% between 2007 and 2016, with no clear trend apparent. Given this ongoing underrepresentation of women in music making demonstrated by these numbers, a subset of APRA AMCOS members was chosen to form the basis of a preliminary study on why this is the case, and what strategies could be developed to increase women's participation in the music industry. Screen composers were identified as a sub-group among the APRA AMCOS membership that was even more polarised in terms of gender representation than the wider membership, with only 13% of registered screen composers being female.

As such, the aims of this research are:

- To gain an understanding of the pathways to participation available to women who work in film and television music composition in Australia, including the barriers to their inclusion in this field; and
- To develop an overview of educational institutions that provide training in this area and understand the role these institutions play in the development of women's careers.

To achieve these aims, a survey was sent to all 2279 screen composers registered with APRA AMCOS. One hundred and fifty-nine usable surveys were completed, representing 7% of the population. Thirteen percent of female composers and 6% of male composers responded. In addition to this, interviews were conducted with 11 female and 17 male screen composers. Interviews were also conducted with teachers in eight higher education institutions, from a range of providers including universities, for-profit institutions and vocational education providers.

Survey participants were older on average than the Australian workforce as a whole, with 76% older than 40, and female respondents being slightly older overall than the males. Respondents were most likely to live in New South Wales or Victoria. Almost 70% of respondents identified themselves as 'established' composers (73% of males and 53% of females), suggesting findings are skewed towards successful composers.

## Findings

The main findings from the research are summarised thematically here, with indications as to how each theme constituted a career **barrier** or **pathway** for participants.

### Gender

Women who participated in this study indicated through a range of measures that they considered their gender to be a **barrier** to their career in screen composition. While both men and women believed the industry was dominated by men, women were more likely to agree it was almost all male (75%), whereas men were more likely to think it was somewhat more

male (50%). Sixty-seven percent of women agreed that 'gender discrimination is common in the industry', compared with 32% of men.

Women were far more likely than men to believe that their gender had a negative effect on their careers (50% of women vs 1% of men). Women were also far more likely to agree that they took longer to establish their career because of their gender (30% vs 1%), that they find it harder to get jobs because of their gender (31% vs 1%) and that they are treated differently because of their gender (48% vs 7%). While more than half of both male and female respondents were neutral on the question of whether sexual harassment was common in the industry, 36% of women agreed that it was, compared to 36% of men who disagreed. Some women shared stories of harassment they had experienced and although this was a minority of respondents the existence of the behaviours described is concerning.

Overall, men perceived the industry as being much less gender-biased than women did. Only 14% of men said they knew of any instances of gender discrimination against people other than themselves in the industry, compared to 40% of women. This division between the perceptions of men and women was reiterated in open-ended comments and interviews. Men tended to characterise the industry as a meritocracy, whereas women were more likely to discuss the industry as a 'boys' club', and to be able to identify instances where this had prevented them from achieving their career goals, or to point to examples such as women's extremely low representation among Screen Music Awards winners as evidence of bias in the industry.

Data collected for this report revealed various ways in which social expectations around what men and women are capable of, and how they should behave, created further **barriers** for female screen composers. The main themes that emerged along these lines were:

- *Confidence*: while both men and women overwhelmingly felt that they were talented enough to succeed in the industry (93% of men and 89% of women agreed with this statement), in interviews men were much more likely to make unequivocally positive claims about their own talents and abilities. Men were more likely to 'self-teach', and to take on jobs requiring a skill-set they did not currently have, suggesting a level of self-confidence and willingness to take risks that women did not display to nearly the same degree. Women also felt less confident that they understood how to succeed in the industry (60% of women agreed with this statement compared to 84% of males).
- *Gendered music*: The idea that women compose different types of music to men was prevalent, and may act as a **pathway** to certain types of work. Some male and female respondents suggested that women were more likely to be hired by other women as they were thought to have a greater ability to translate the storytelling of women, or to be hired to compose feminine sounding music, and so to have an advantage in certain situations. In other ways, however, this could be characterised as a **barrier**, in that it suggests the separating out of 'women's music' from other types of music, thus limiting women's options for composing. This is particularly likely to be a barrier while the film industry continues to also be male-dominated.
- *Technology and composition*: Survey and interview data (and data from education institutions) suggest 'composition' is gendered as male in the same way as 'technology' is, and is more closely associated with technology than other forms of music making. This association requires more research to fully understand, but is another type of **barrier** to women's participation in this area.

It must be noted, however, that there were ways in which gender was considered a **pathway** by some female respondents. In every question regarding gender there were women who did not see their gender as being a hindrance, as illustrated by the 40% of women who said they had not experienced gender-based discrimination, and the 15% who thought their gender had a positive effect on their career. A small number of interviewees noted ways in which they had used their gender to their advantage; for example, through using it as a point of distinction when marketing themselves.

### **State of the Industry**

Male and female respondents identified the current state of the screen industry in Australasia as being a **barrier** to career progression. A majority of respondents disagreed that they found it easy to get as much work as they wanted (78% males, 75% females), and interviewees reported that work has been harder to find and has been less well-paid in recent years, particularly since the Global Financial Crisis (GFC). The industry was described as extremely precarious, with 'feast or famine' work schedules and with most practitioners having little control over the type of work they did or deadlines. This had a differential effect on men and women: female respondents were less likely to be earning more than 20% of their income from screen composition, and were less likely to be doing their preferred type of composing than males. Women interviewees reported that the downturn in the industry had exacerbated other barriers they faced, through, for example, increasing risk aversion that meant pre-existing networks became more closed (i.e. the reinforcement of the 'boys' club').

### **Education**

Female respondents were more highly educated than males, in terms of general education (62% held a qualification higher than a bachelor degree, compared to 34% of males), formal music education (76% held a higher education qualification compared to 65% of males), and formal screen composition education (of those who had music qualifications, 42% of females held a qualification in screen composition, compared to 15% of males). Women were more likely to see education as being useful or necessary in establishing a career in screen composition. It also enabled women to make connections to others in the industry, and for some women these went on to form the basis of ongoing professional relationships. While women then perceive education as a **pathway**, the ways in which it can also be a **barrier** should be considered, in that spending longer gaining credentials can delay women's entry into the field in comparison to men, and women may need more formal qualifications than men to be hired for the same jobs.

### **Networks and Partnerships**

Respondents reported that information about the industry and employment opportunities flows through informal channels to a large extent. Only 18% of males and 13% of females reported gaining their first job through an advertisement, with all other respondents gaining their first job through personal or industry connections, or because of other musical work they had done. This suggests that having strong networks is an important **pathway** to industry success. The majority of respondents (54% of males and 58% of females) did feel they had strong networks. However, a large minority (17%) of both male and female respondents did not feel that they had a strong network, and interviews revealed that for some composers an inability to break into existing networks was a **barrier**. The establishment and maintenance of these networks was characterised as something that was done as an individual (the majority of respondents

disagreed that it was easy to find a mentor). The work composers do was also discussed as often being isolated and individualised, meaning composers had to actively work on maintaining networks.

Some composers established partnerships that constituted **pathways** in that they enabled them to increase their networking abilities, and negate some of the more difficult aspects of the industry such as isolation and lack of flexibility. These were sometimes purely business based, and sometimes romantic partnerships where couples worked together. The establishment of a team gave composers greater control over their schedules, increased the amount and type of work they could take on, and was reported as being particularly useful for women trying to balance work with childcare responsibilities.

### **Child Rearing**

Female respondents reported that child-care responsibilities constituted a **barrier** to career progression. Fifty-seven percent of respondents reported that they had children (61% of males vs 41% of females). Eighty percent of women who had children had taken time out from their career to care for them, compared to 60% of males. However, the type of care and length of the break differed greatly: women reported an average of a five and a half year career break, whereas men took on average one and a half years. Men were also far more likely to say that their time out involved working shorter hours rather than stopping work altogether. Over 70% of female respondents who had taken time out of their career to care for children thought this impacted on their career, compared to 25% of men. In interviews and open-ended comments some women identified having children as the point at which their career ended, and others as the point where it went backwards or stagnated, whereas no men reported these types of outcomes. In interviews, having children was a significant career event discussed in detail by women, whereas men mentioned children in passing or not at all.

## **Education Institutions**

Data from the Australian Government on music enrolments in higher education institutions reveals that the proportion of males studying music in higher education institutions in Australia has overtaken females over the last 10 years. In 2016, higher education music students were 54% male and 46% female. Given the existing imbalance between males and females in the music industry, this trend is concerning and should be monitored.

Interviews with lecturers in composition (screen-specific and otherwise) revealed that females make up a quarter to a third of students in their courses across the board, a proportion which reflects numbers applying also. This suggests women are being discouraged from pursuing composing before reaching higher education. This is in contrast with other music courses, such as performance or courses labelled as 'songwriting', where female students were enrolling in equal numbers to males. Most, but not all, institutions that were consulted consider this imbalance to be a problem and are trying to find ways to encourage female students. This includes through making entry into courses easier for female students and making certain opportunities (such as scholarships or internships) open only to females.

Recommendations for APRA AMCOS have been included at the end of this report.



# 1. Introduction

Gender inequality in the music industry as a whole has been the subject of much discussion in Australia in the mid-2010s. Industry bodies such as APRA AMCOS, Music Australia, and Music Victoria, in addition to community-based activist groups and musicians themselves<sup>1</sup>, have engaged in public discussions highlighting the continued disparity between men and women in the industry. APRA AMCOS has been forthcoming in openly providing statistics that demonstrate this inequity: their membership data shows that only 21.7% of their overall membership identifies as female. The percentage of royalty payments APRA AMCOS made to female members has fluctuated between 15% and 21% between 2007 and 2016, with no clear trend apparent.

Given this ongoing underrepresentation of women, a subsection of APRA AMCOS members was chosen to form the basis of a preliminary study on why this is the case, and what strategies could be developed to increase women's participation in the music industry. Screen composers were identified as a sub-group among the APRA AMCOS membership that was even more polarised in terms of gender representation than the wider membership, with only 13% of registered screen composers being female. As such, this group was seen as ideal for a small-scale, short-term study that would uncover issues specific to this group, but also begin to unpack factors that would apply to female musicians more broadly.

## 2. Objectives

This research aims to provide a comprehensive qualitative and quantitative analysis of the experiences of screen composers, and the development of careers in this field. This was done through the lens of gender analysis, in which gender is foregrounded as a factor in questions asked. Identifying the extent to which higher education institutions might exacerbate or ameliorate barriers to women's entry to the field was also seen as important.

As such, the aims of this research are:

- To gain an understanding of the pathways to participation available to women who work in film and television music composition in Australia, including the barriers to their inclusion in this field
- To develop an overview of educational institutions that provide training in this area, and to understand the role these institutions play in the development of women's careers.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, see the LISTEN collective's activities in Melbourne, or Camp Cope's 'It Takes One' campaign

### 3. Background

Despite the recent interest in the careers of female musicians, this is not an area that has been the subject of substantial research in Australia. While some documentaries and museum exhibitions have focused on women's contribution to the Australian music scene (Barrand, 2010; Clarke, 2003), large scale, industry-wide studies or significant academic research projects are yet to be done (see Strong, 2014; 2016). In an important step in this direction, Music Victoria (2015) recently reported on a study of over 300 Victorian women musicians that focused on workplace gender equality and career development. The survey results identified five factors that contribute to a pay gap in the music industry: 'lack of paid work opportunities; casualisation of the workforce; gendered nature of caring responsibilities; access to opportunities; and the confidence gap' (Music Victoria, 2015, p. 2). Journalists at national radio station Triple J have also undertaken work that collates statistics from across the Australian music industry (including from APRA AMCOS), which demonstrates continued disparity in women's representation on festival line-ups, in airplay, and nomination for music awards (McCormack, 2017). Gendered differences in both pay and representation in the Australian music industry are connected to the changing face of the music industry in a digital world, as well as gendered norms associated with both music genres and technologies that shape the career choices presented to aspiring and active composers. These findings are not unique to Australia and are echoed in reports from comparable countries (see Nordicity, 2015; PRS Foundation, 2016).

Researchers have explored women's position in music from a number of angles in attempts to explain why these disparities exist. For instance, in popular music it has been demonstrated that specific styles and genres of music are coded as 'masculine' (rock, rap) or 'feminine' (pop, singer-songwriter), and that women find it difficult to cross into masculine genres (Leonard, 2007). This is compounded by social practices in music scenes and in the music industry that exclude or marginalise women, from the common assumption in venues that women backstage are either girlfriend or 'groupies', to the dismissal of women's technical abilities, through to, in the most extreme case, sexual harassment and sexual violence (Bayton, 2006). Women's roles in music are circumscribed, with female musicians being much less common than female vocalists. This has started to change in some genres, such as rock, but in others, such as jazz, remains entrenched. This is significant in jazz, as there is also a hierarchy of prestige associated with different roles, whereby singing is not valued as highly as playing an instrument (Istvanity, 2016). In music journalism, women's appearance is often where attention is focused, rather than their musical abilities, regardless of whether they are vocalists or play instruments, and female artists are often compared to each other in a way that suggests there is 'women's music' that is separate from the mainstream (Davis, 2001). Finally, the popular music 'canon' is heavily dominated by white men (Schmutz and Faulpel, 2010), which exacerbates the lack of visibility of women in music. Taken together, this research paints a complex picture of women's marginalisation. These assumptions about women's involvement in music more generally have consequences for how they are perceived when working as composers.

In classical music composition, the celebration of canonical composers has helped to perpetuate an association between composition and masculinity. Women are almost completely excluded from the body of the 'great' classical works (including in Australia; see

Appleby, 2014). While in the classical world, much headway has been made in terms of the acceptance of women as musicians, especially since the introduction of blind auditions in many orchestras, an absence of women role models and the continued failure to entrench the idea of women as composers creates barriers to entry into this field (Macarthur, 2014). Armstrong (2011) also suggests that composition is symbolically associated with technology (because of the technical knowledge required to produce compositions), an area that is also highly gendered as masculine. As is demonstrated in the Education Institutions section of this study, far fewer girls and young women consider composition as a career option in comparison to males.

The fact that screen composers exist at the intersection of two male-dominated industries must also be taken into consideration. The film industry is demographically similar to the music industry. Lisa French's (2012) report on women in the Victorian film industry found that 'the position of women in audio-visual industries has not improved since 1992' (p. 4) and that women are still underrepresented, particularly in creative roles. These findings were echoed in the *Gender Matters* report by Screen Australia (2015), which found, for example, that women made up only 34% of TV and 16% of film directors, and 37% of TV and 21% of film writers, and that men are overrepresented on-screen. Similar to the Music Victoria report, Screen Victoria highlighted confidence issues and caring responsibilities as factors limiting women's careers, but also noted the impact of having men in most key decision making roles in the industry, and the way that related industries are also dominated by men. French, in her report, also found a correlation between men in creative roles and males being central to stories being told on screen. Screen composers were not explicitly considered in either French or Screen Australia's reports, but are unlikely to be insulated from these trends.

On the basis of the *Gender Matters* findings, Screen Australia has taken action 'to ensure Screen Australia's production funding is targeted to creative teams that are at least 50% female by the end of 2018', including creating new grants that target women, and changing the assessment criteria of all grants 'to encourage projects that promote gender and cultural diversity and remove barriers that women who take time out of the workforce' (Screen Australia, 2015, p. 15). Screen Australia has already reported successes from these initiatives (Screen Australia, 2016).

Finally, research relating to the creative industries more generally suggests that while there are areas where women are making inroads, this can lead to the sex-based segregation of jobs in line with pre-existing notions of what men and women are 'good' at. This leads to women being more likely to be found in roles such as PR and production, whereas men take on more prestigious creative roles and technical positions (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2015; French, 2012). This has been connected by some researchers to socialisation processes that make it easier for men to display what Taylor (2010) has described as a 'masculine selfishness'; that is, an individualistic foregrounding of the artistic goals of oneself. Taking this approach can be harder for women, as it conflicts with gendered norms associated with femininity, particularly relating to care and maternity expectations (Taylor, 2010; Armstrong, 2013). Our society, in short, still expects women to put others first, and it is difficult to do this and also strongly pursue your own creative vision. Our current research is designed to probe the relationships between the gender norms, career expectations, and work experiences of screen music composers who are registered with APRA AMCOS.

## 4. Methodology

This project used APRA AMCOS membership data and a combination of qualitative and quantitative data-gathering approaches in order to understand how musicians establish and maintain careers in film and television music, and what barriers there are to this. Ethics approval was granted from the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee for this research. Data collection was done through two primary sources.

First, a survey was administered via an online data collection and analysis tool. The survey was sent to all film and television composers that were registered with APRA AMCOS. The survey instrument was developed in conjunction with APRA AMCOS and was circulated to potential participants via an email from APRA AMCOS to their members, which contained a link to the online survey tool. The survey was active between 15 December 2016 and 16 February 2017, with APRA AMCOS sending three reminders to members during this time. Once the survey period ended, the survey data were assessed for errors ('cleaned') and responses that were unusable in analysis were removed. A copy of this survey can be found in Appendix 1.

Second, our research team conducted interviews of approximately one hour with 27 screen music composers from within the survey sample group. Eleven female and sixteen male screen composers participated in one-on-one interviews, after indicating their desire to participate in interviews by providing their contact details in the survey and responding to invitation emails. These interviews provided more in-depth information on the topics covered in the survey, and allowed for detailed mapping of the development of careers. Interviews were conducted in person, over the telephone, and via Skype by members of our research team. Interviews were recorded with the explicit permission of participants, transcribed and coded using the data analysis software NVivo. The interview guide used to assist interviewers in their questions and conduct can be found in Appendix 2.

In recognition of the role that educational institutions can play in creating pathways to music careers, the study also undertook:

- a review of Australian educational institutions that teach film and television composition, and
- data-gathering on the gender breakdown of staff and students in those institutions, using a convenience sample that encompassed Universities, for-profit institutions and vocational education providers from different locations in Australia.

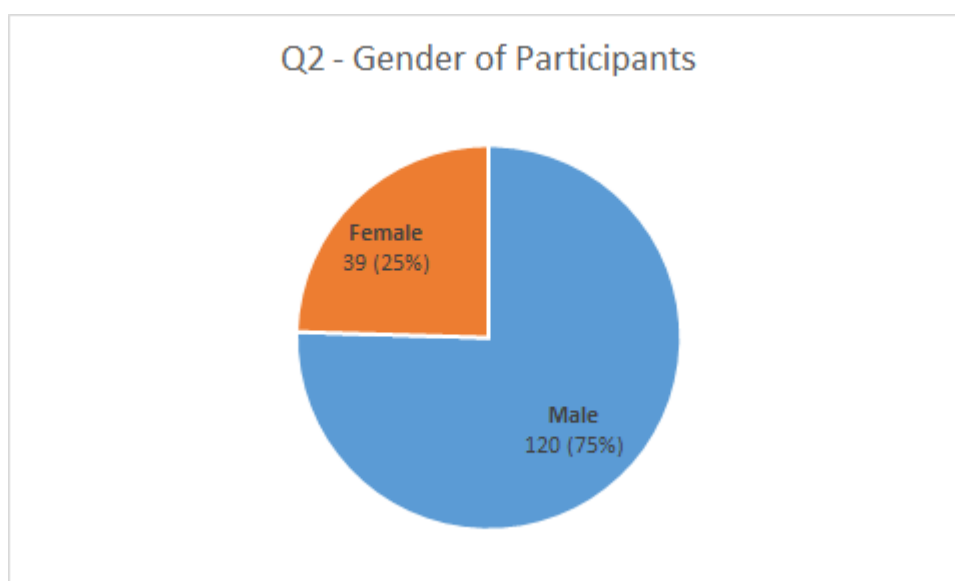
The results of this section of the research can be found from page 52.

## 5. Findings

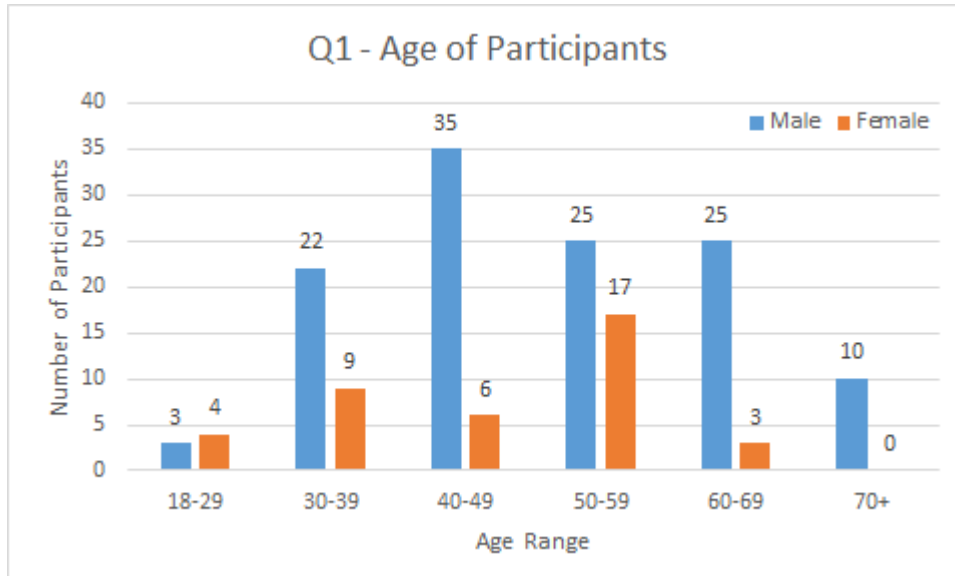
### 5.1. Overview of Participants

This section presents basic demographic data for survey respondents, which provides important context for the interpretation of the more detailed survey questions below.

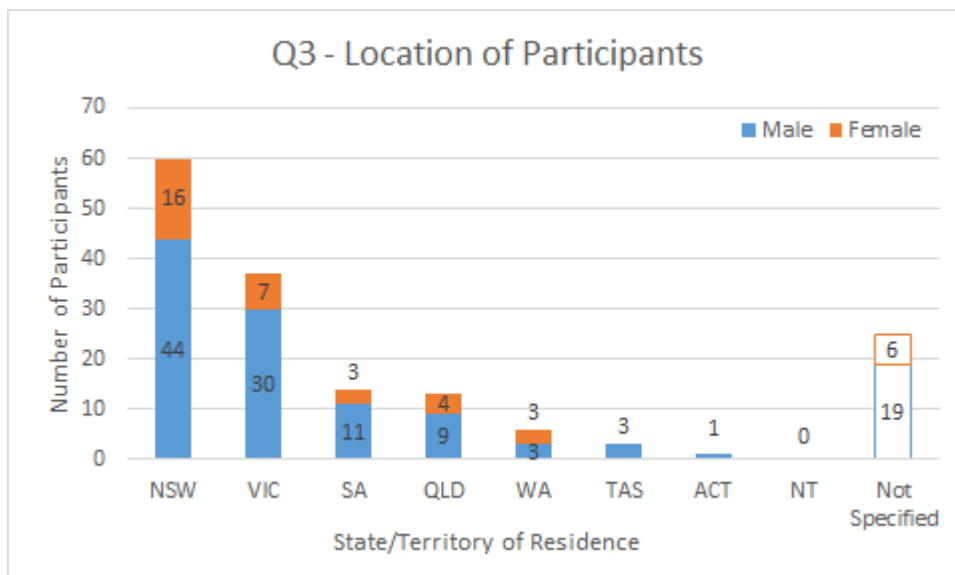
A total of 166 participants responded to the online survey. Data from 7 respondents were removed from the final analysis because their forms were incomplete, making a total of 159 useable survey responses for the study. This represents an overall response rate of 7% of the 2279 screen composers to whom the survey was distributed.



Of those that responded, 25% reported their gender as female and 75% as male. No respondents chose the 'Other' option offered in the survey. Given the gender disparity among film and television composers, this result represents a much higher proportion of the female study population compared to males; that is, 13% of APRA AMCOS's 296 registered female screen composers responded to the survey, compared with 6% of the 1983 registered male composers. The survey results can, therefore, be considered somewhat more representative of women than men. Given that men are included as a comparison category, rather than the main focus of the survey, this does not affect the validity of the results.



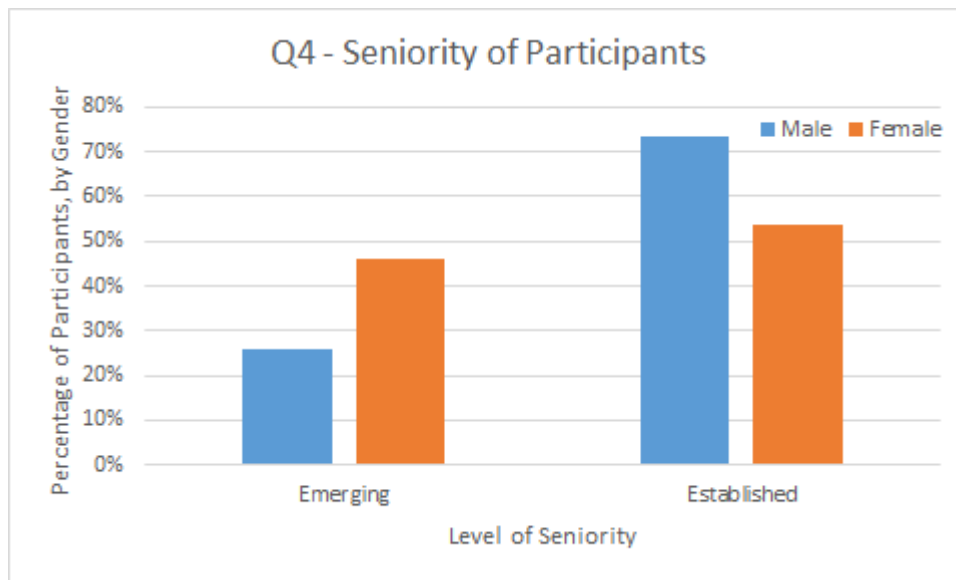
Survey respondents identified themselves as, on average, older than the overall Australian workforce, with more than 76% of respondents claiming to be at or over the Australian worker median age of 40 (Department of Employment, 2017). This can be explained partly by the findings of the survey that showed most screen composers enter the field via another career (see Q11 on page 38). The age of respondents also differed by gender. As shown in the graph above (Q1), the most frequent respondent age group for males was 40-49 years of age (29% of male respondents), while female respondents were most likely to be 50-59 years of age (44% of female respondents). Nine percent of males were 70 or older, but no females were in this category. Approximately one-quarter of respondents (20% of males and 33% of females) were under 40 years of age.



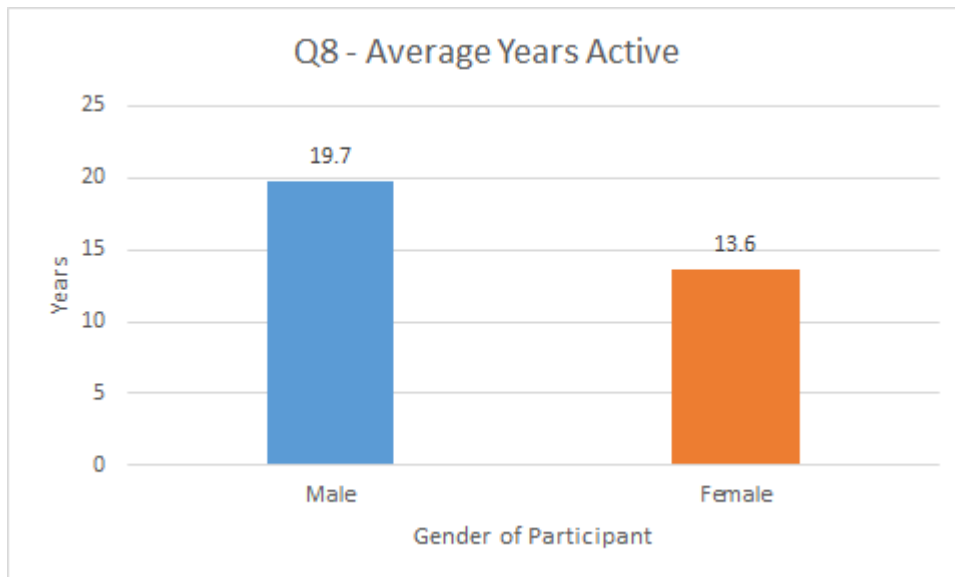
Participants were located mostly in NSW (38%) and Victoria (23%). This is unsurprising given that Sydney and Melbourne are considered to be the major centres for film and television making in Australia. Open-ended comments in surveys and interviews confirmed that these cities were where the majority of respondents were based. There are however still a significant number of composers outside these centres, both in other cities and in rural areas. Analysis

of comments from open-ended questions revealed that the 'not specified' category (16%) consisted of people living outside Australia; mainly New Zealand.

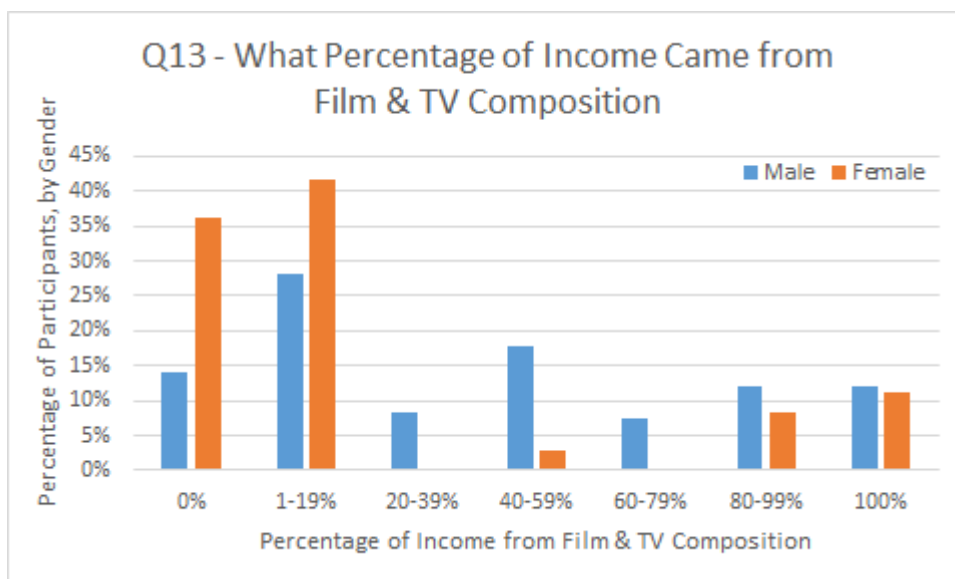
Of the respondents to the survey, almost 70% identified themselves as being 'established' composers. Given the relatively small size of the screen composition market in Australia, this suggests that successful composers are overrepresented in our sample. Our participant sample group is less likely to include individuals who have left professional screen composition and those who have not yet worked in a paid, professional capacity.



Our survey results show a number of career stage disparities between men and women screen composers. Firstly, in terms of their relative seniority, male screen composers in our sample tended to consider themselves to be more established than their female counterparts, as shown in the graph (Q4) above. When asked whether they consider themselves as 'emerging' or 'established' composers, 74% of male screen composers (compared with 54% of females) described themselves as 'established', with the remainder identifying as 'emerging' (26% of males and 46% of females), and one male composer not responding.



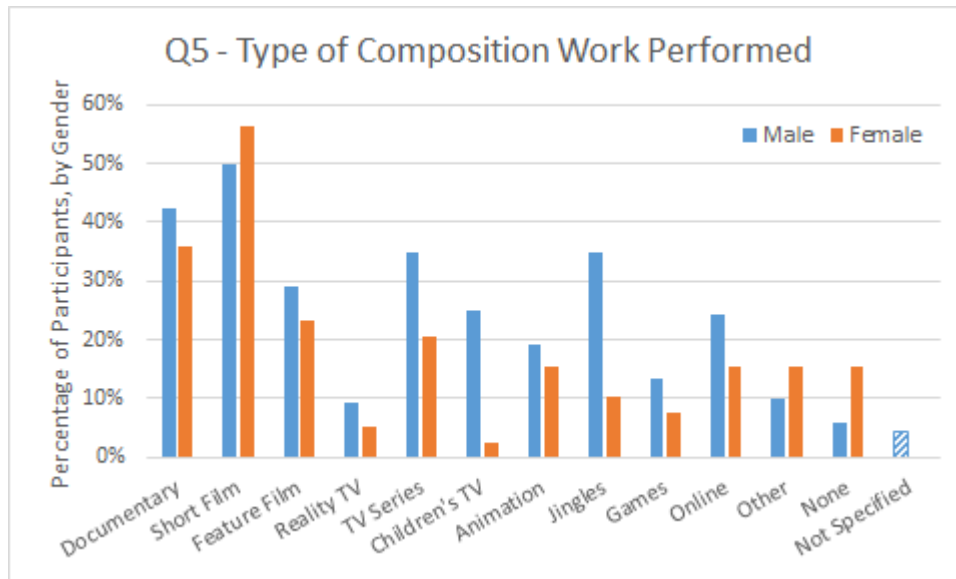
Screen composers were further distinguished along gendered lines by the years of active engagement with screen composition, partially reflecting the generally older male sample group surveyed in this study. While female screen composers reported an average of 13.6 years of working in screen composition, male screen composers reported an average of 19.7 years, a total of 6.1 years more experience than their female counterparts, as noted in the graph (Q8) above.



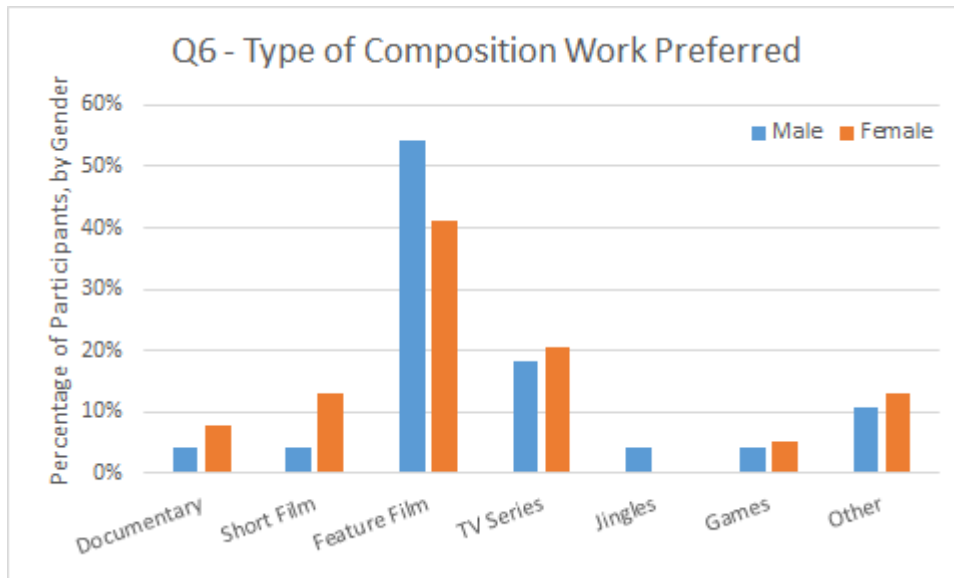
Gendered differences in screen composers' income were also reflected in the survey data. The above graph (Q13) shows that both male and female screen composers are most likely to draw 0% or 1-19% of their income from their composition work. However, this trend is notably more emphasised for female screen composers, 78% of whom claimed that film and television composition work made up 0-19% of their income, as opposed to 42% of male composers. Male screen composers in our sample were more evenly distributed over income categories, whereas female screen composers were split between two extremes, with 78% earning less than a fifth of their income from film and television composition work, and 19% of them earning between 80-100% of their income from such work. These results suggest that



women may be more dependent on other paid work commitments or compose without being financially compensated for their work than their male counterparts.



Participants were also asked 'What type of film and television composition have you done over the last year?' and were allowed to select multiple responses from a set list of categories, as noted in the above graph (Q5). The short film genre was the most frequent response from both male (50%) and female (56%) composers, followed by the documentary format (43% for men and 36% for women). Interview participants described these genres as having artistic merit or capacity for self-expression, but they also tend to be used in screen composition education and training programs. Taking on short film work (often unpaid) was seen as a way to gain enough skills and credibility to move on to more prestigious and higher-paying jobs. It is also noteworthy that male composers are largely overrepresented in some types of composition work, specifically children's television (25% men vs 3% women) and advertisement 'jingles' (35% men vs 10% women). Of those participants responding 'other', the most frequent type of composition work reported was production/library music (4% of all screen composers).



When asked 'What type of composition work would you like to be doing?' and asked to select one response from a predetermined list with an 'other' option, participants overwhelmingly noted a preference for the feature film genre, as shown in the above graph (Q6). Approximately 54% of male and 41% of female screen composers nominated feature films as their preferred type of work, with television series composition as the next most popular genre (18% of men and 21% of women). In interviews, feature films were characterised as more prestigious and having a greater potential for creative fulfilment, and were often framed as the pinnacle of screen composition work:

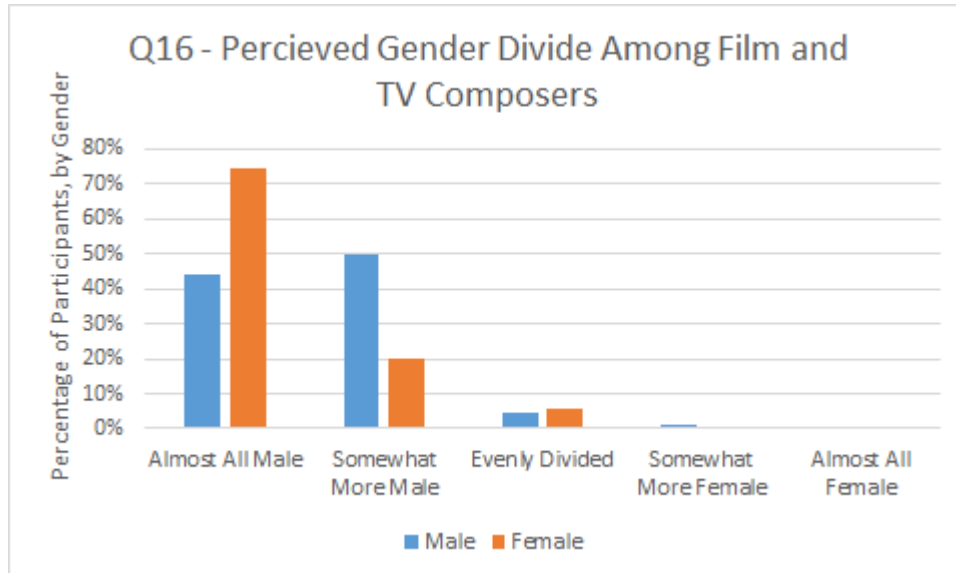
[With] film, you're fully engaged because you're the composer, you become part of the team. TV, probably a little less so.

While female screen composers were more interested in both short films (13% as compared with 4% of men), documentaries (8% as compared with 4% of men) and game music (5% as compared with 4% of men), a preference for 'jingles' was reported only by male participants (4% of all male screen composers). Of those reporting that they would like to engage in 'other' kinds of composition work to the types specified, several participants nominated that they would like to perform 'any' kind of composition work (3% of all screen composers) or wanted to do 'interesting' composition work rather than a specific genre (2% of all screen composers).

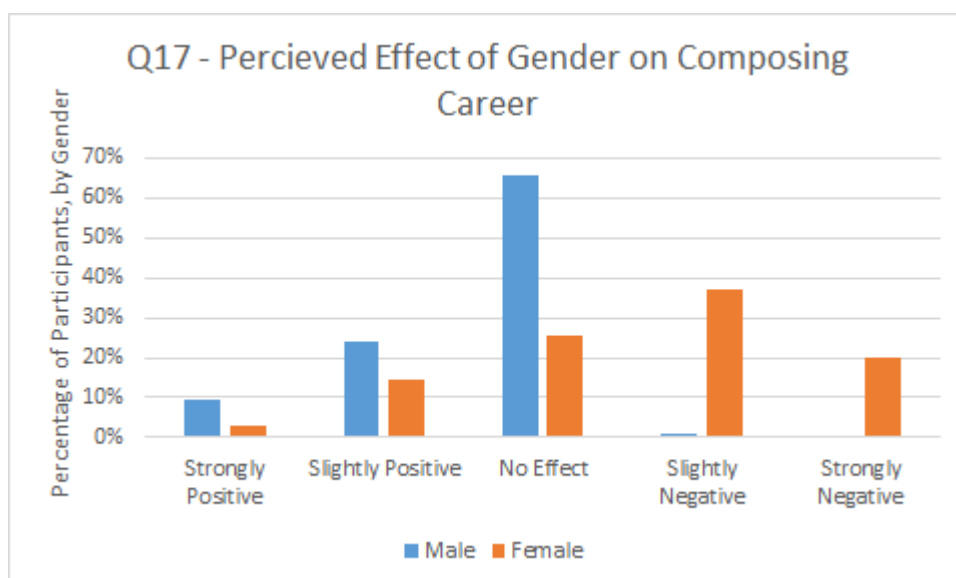
Male and female screen composers in our sample group have several distinguishing characteristics noted here that will shape the analysis to follow: women are better represented in this study than men (despite the higher number of male respondents in our sample group); men are more likely to be 'established' composers and have been working as composers for longer; women are more likely to draw very little or most of their income from composition work; and men are more likely to have experience in some media genres such as children's television and advertising. What male and female composers share is equally relevant: a likelihood of being older than the average Australian worker; a likelihood of being from Victoria or New South Wales; and a preference for feature film composition work. These characteristics are shaped in part by the economics and labour markets of the industries themselves, but also by the (gendered) experiences of composers that shape their work options and choices.

## 5.2 Perceptions of Gender Inequality

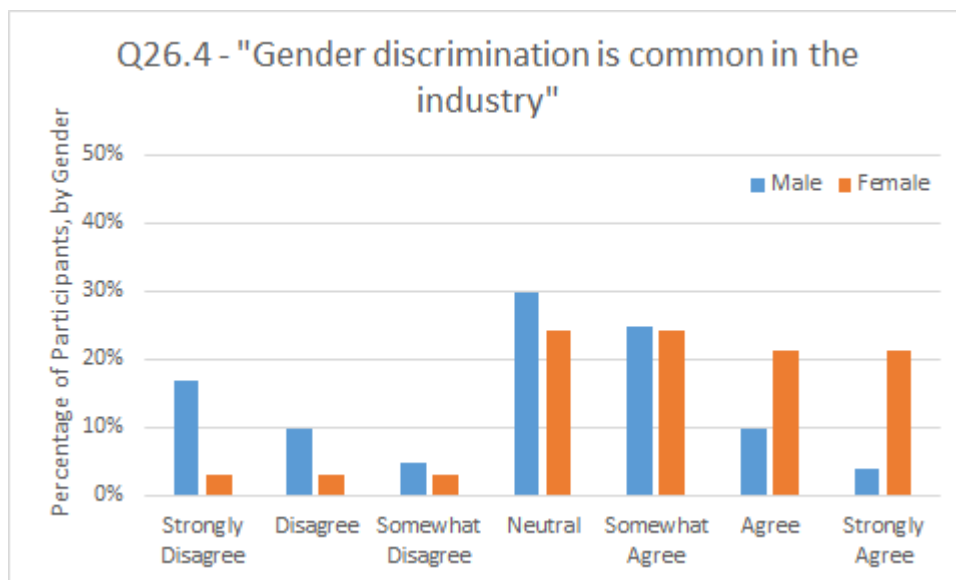
The survey included a number of questions designed to directly explore the extent to which respondents thought gender inequality and discrimination existed in screen composition, and what effect they thought their gender had on their career.



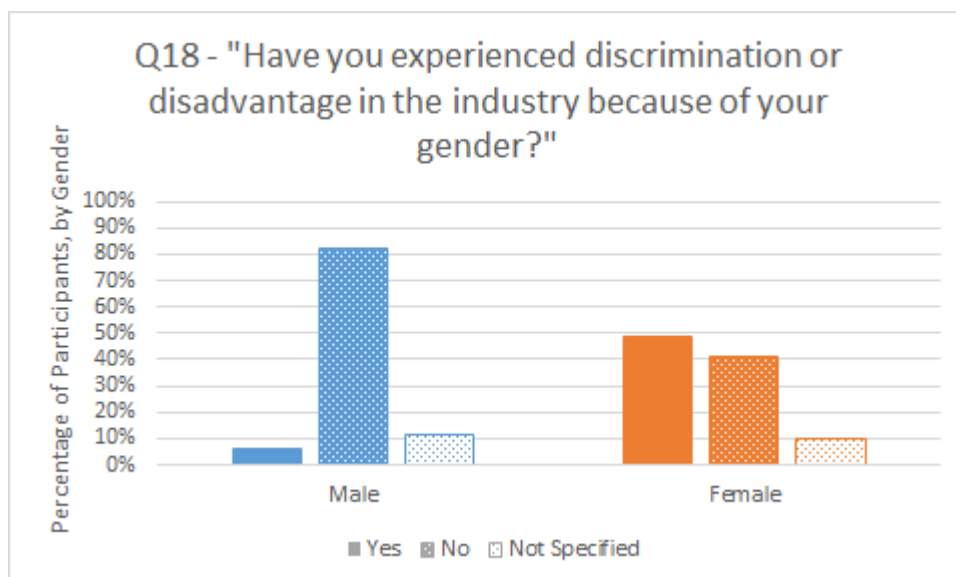
When asked, 'How would you describe the gender divide among film and television composers?' (Q16), both male and female composers tended to agree that the industry was dominated by men. Women were, however, much more likely to describe screen composers as being 'Almost all male', with 75% choosing this option, compared to 44% of men. So while there is a general consensus that the industry is male-dominated, women perceive this domination as more extreme than men do. Given that APRA AMCOS figures show that only 13% of screen composers are women, it could be argued that in this instance women tend to have a more accurate view of the state of the industry.



Survey responses suggested a gendered division in how gender inequalities are perceived among screen composers. In response to the question 'What effect do you think your gender has had on your career in film and television composing?' (Q17), only one male respondent (1%) answered that they thought there was a slight negative effect. All other males said their gender had no effect or a positive effect on their career. In contrast, over 50% of female respondents thought their gender had a negative effect on their career, with 20% claiming that this was a 'strongly negative' effect. Male respondents were more than twice as likely as females to say their gender had no effect on their career.



Opinions of males and females differed more dramatically when asked whether 'Gender discrimination is common in the industry' (Q26.4). Thirty-two percent of male respondents disagreed, with 30% neither agreeing nor disagreeing. However, 67% of females agreed with this statement, with 21% strongly agreeing. Only 4% of males strongly agreed.

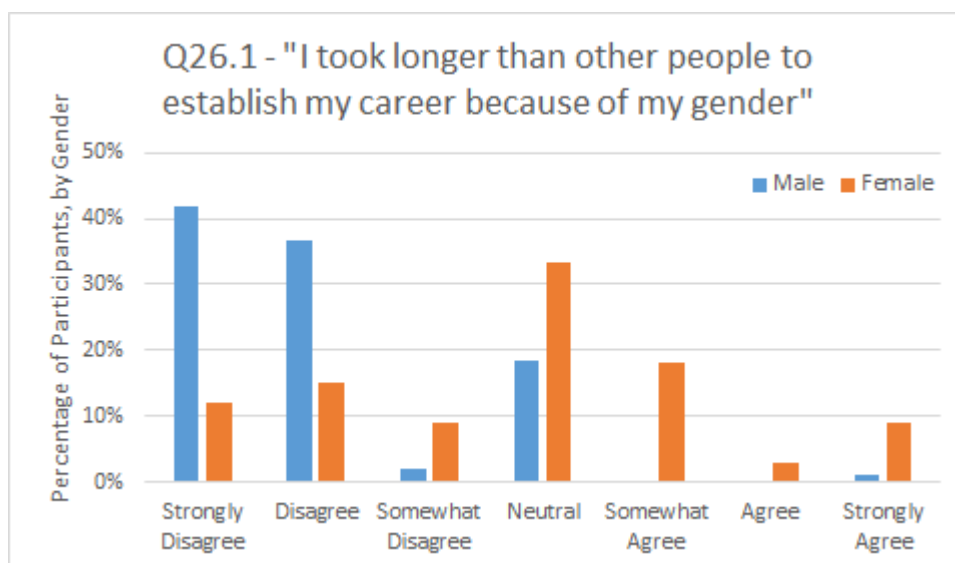


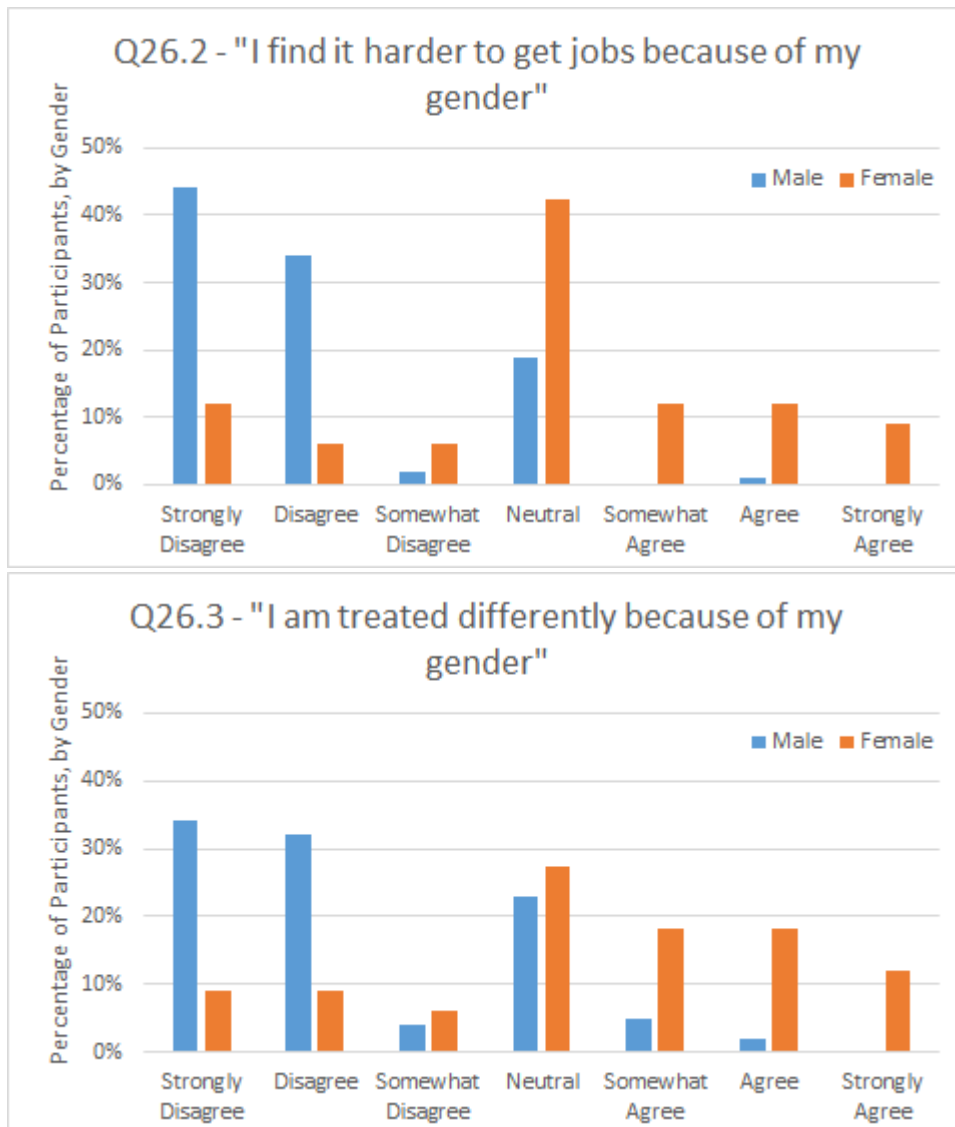
Women were also far more likely to both have experienced gender discrimination or disadvantage, and be more aware of the negative experiences of others in the industry.

When asked 'Have you experienced discrimination or disadvantage in the industry because of your gender?' (Q18) male screen composers overwhelmingly reported that they had not experienced any gender discrimination or disadvantage (82% of males) and only a small group had reported instances of discrimination (6%), with a further 12% not recording a response. This contrasted sharply with female screen composers. Nearly half of female screen composers (49%) claimed to have experienced gender discrimination or disadvantage in their industry, with 41% claiming to not have had those experiences, and a further 10% not specifying an answer.

Participants who reported having experienced gender discrimination or disadvantage were next asked 'Could you please describe the discrimination or disadvantage you experienced?' The most frequent themes noted by female participants included being bullied by coworkers, being marginalised in a male-dominated industry, and feeling that women aren't perceived as competent as men in the performance of technical or computerised tasks. One female composer noted that her gender had led to positive discrimination in being selected to compose for a children's music show and four stated that they would prefer not to describe their experiences. Male screen composers' responses to this question were more frequently about not being offered work on a project because the director or producer wanted either a woman composer (3 responses) or a composer of a specific sexual orientation (1 response).

A series of questions designed to measure specific effects that gender discrimination could have on people's careers reveal similar patterns. Respondents were asked whether they think it took longer than other people to establish their careers because of their gender (Q26.1), whether they find it harder to get jobs because of their gender (Q26.2), and whether they are treated differently because of their gender (Q26.3). In responses to all three questions, men were highly unlikely to think their gender had an impact on them, whereas 30-50% of women agreed that their gender had an impact in these areas, as shown in the graphs, below. While very few men agreed with these statements, there was a large minority of women who disagreed in each case.



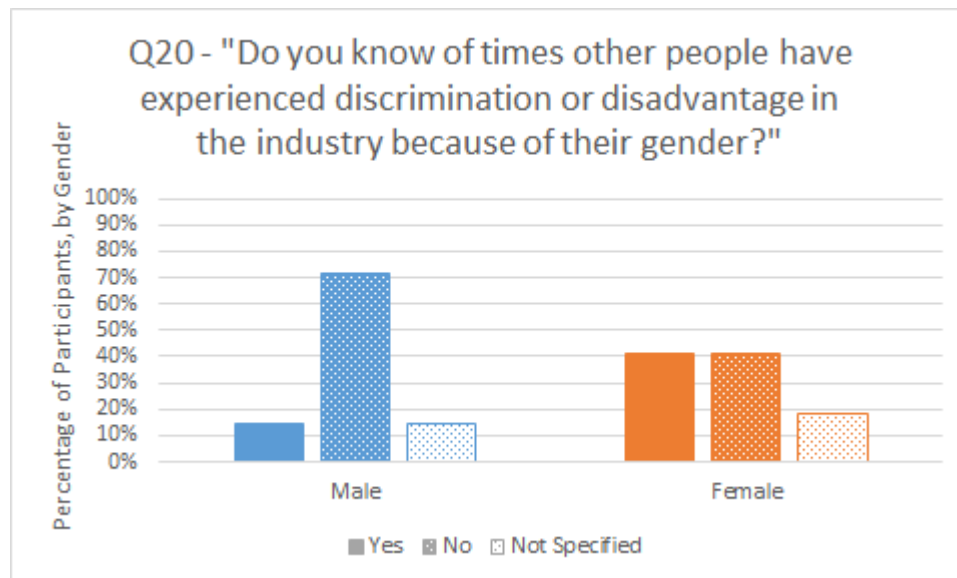


In interviews, women who had moved into screen composing from other areas of the music industry sometimes noted that they felt their gender was more of a disadvantage in the screen composing than in other areas. One woman compared the culture in screen composition unfavourably to her experiences in orchestras, which she described as ‘non-sexist’, and another contrasted screen composition with dance music as follows:

The guys are different [in dance music]. They’re heaps more egalitarian, about the pecking order. They’re totally bitchy with each other but they’re a lot more inclusive and they embrace - I just couldn’t believe what a beautiful thing dance music, the group of people, they’re really nice and it’s because it’s not coming from that intellectualised, you know, it’s just classless... [Screen composition is] like a boys’ club and I don’t know how to break into it. It’s like a select group of men get all the work.

Aside from their own experiences of discrimination or disadvantage, survey participants were also asked whether they had known of times that other people have experienced discrimination or disadvantage because of their gender (Q20). This question was used to

probe the differences in awareness of male and female screen composers to the difficulties experienced by others in the industry.

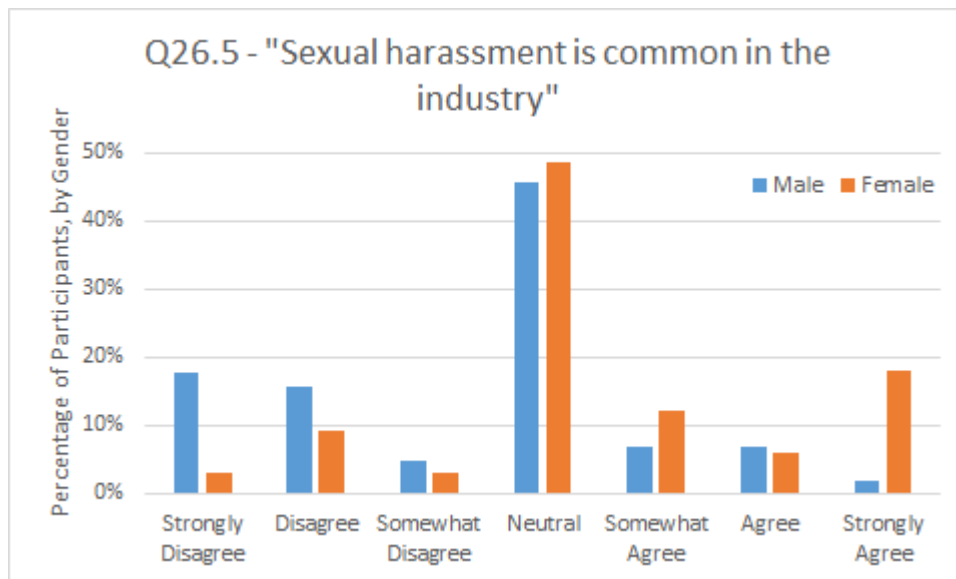


Female screen composers were much more likely to report knowing of others' negative experiences than their male counterparts, with 41% of female screen composers claiming that they did know of such experiences, while the same number claimed not to. The proportion of male screen composers claiming to know of instances of other persons' discrimination or disadvantage was much smaller, with 14% of men knowing of some event, while 72% claimed to be unaware of any gender discrimination or disadvantage experienced by others in the industry. The disparity in proportions of male and female respondents answering 'yes' to this question may have occurred for a number of reasons, such as the lower exposure of male composers to composers who have experienced gender disadvantage or discrimination, a lesser chance of victims of discrimination sharing their experiences, or less frequent communication with victims of discrimination in a setting that would facilitate the sharing of those experiences. Female respondents may also be more likely to characterise a shared story as 'discrimination' than males.

Those survey participants who claimed to know of times when others had experienced gender discrimination or disadvantage were given the opportunity to describe the experiences they were aware of, however, many chose not to do so. Similar themes emerged from the answers here as in the answers to Q18 above; for example, women being discriminated against in the workplace, or excluded from aspects of the industry, women being underpaid, or being discriminated against on the basis of pregnancy or motherhood.

## 5.2.1. Sexual Harassment

A question on sexual harassment (Q26.5) was included as a way of measuring composers' awareness of more extreme forms of discrimination.



Almost half of male and female respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that 'sexual harassment is common in the industry'. However, we once again see a mirror-imaging of male and female responses on either side of this, with 36% of males disagreeing with the statement, compared to 36% of women agreeing with it. This suggests that what harassment does occur is experienced by women, and men are more likely to be either not aware of it or do not consider the same behaviours as 'harassment' that women might.

In open-ended comments and interviews some women included examples of the type of harassment that could be encountered:

I was sexually harassed, and physically groped one night by an external computer tech man while I tried to salvage a job. When I reported it to the owners of the music company I was working for they laughed, and said, 'Of course a guy will try it on', and that I should lighten up and stop being a whinger. At the time the incident occurred I was alone late at night in the studio with the tech, and I was extremely scared and found having to assert myself really difficult.

Attractive young female artists, composers, musicians, arrangers, etcetera do get hit on at work by males. It can be inappropriate when you want to be liked/respected/hired again for the work you are doing however you feel like 'well since I knocked him back on hanging out or whatever I am unlikely to be hired again' - I dunno.

One female colleague was asked to give the Director a blow job!



These types of stories were rare in the data collected, suggesting that although sexual harassment exists it has either not been normalised in the culture or people are reluctant to share sensitive information of this nature. However, its existence at all is a cause for concern, and with over a third of our female respondents characterising it as 'common' it is likely to have a negative impact on these women's perception of their safety at their jobs. On the whole, though, the discrimination women experience is more likely to take the other forms, such as exclusion. In the following sections we explore the themes that emerged around these more subtle forms of discrimination, and the impact they had.

### 5.2.2. The Boys' Club: Male-Dominated Professional Networks

Many women felt they were at a disadvantage in competing with male colleagues for similar roles and opportunities and that some areas of the screen music industry were unwelcoming to women more generally. In interviews, female screen composers emphasised the connection between gender inequality and masculine studio cultures.

A complete boys' club. And the nature of the industry is that it's dominated by - not so much by individual composers but by post-production sound companies. And they're not women. They're all men. And they don't tend to employ women ... They have big, impressive studio complexes that cost a lot of money to set up. And that's impressive for potential clients.

Definitely the composing world it's all who you know, and people tend to feel more confident with the old timers and all the old timers are blokes. And it is a bit of a bloke's world. I mean if you're a new, young man then they might take notice of you. But I was a middle-aged woman at that stage, I was in my 40's and I think that was the biggest problem.

Some studios actually felt hostile. You would hear comments made about women. Sexual references... I was just sitting in on this session and the other band member yelled out, 'Put some balls on that woman. You can't play guitar. You're playing like a girl.' You know, just stuff like that. All the time that kind of just - and they wouldn't have even realized it was offensive.

The sense of gendered exclusion expressed by these composers was not limited to the studio setting, but rather studio culture (or 'boys' club') was used as a metonym for the idea of male-dominated screen and music industries. Female screen music composers described feeling excluded because of their gender in relation to their treatment in workplaces, concerns with self-presentation, or access to professional networks.

Another female composer, describing changing attitudes towards women in the film industry, claimed that discrimination and disadvantage are not always overt. She characterised the social life of film industry colleagues as being heavily centred on male-dominated groups and lifestyle norms, which reproduces gender imbalances.

I think it's just that there are fewer women, more men, so they are just a bigger group which is sort of, in some ways, more comfortable together as men... And I'm hoping that this is going to improve with, you know, younger people coming

through who are maybe going to be just more, much more aware but I think that older males sort of group, go for a drink after the shoot... there is like a boysie club, even though they don't - I imagine most people will say that they don't identify as part of that. I mean I can't say - but I feel that there is that thing, that both guys are - they're kind of comfortable together with guys because they know how to talk and they're used to the same thing... It's sort of about - they're all together having the common experience, their wives are at home or their partners or whatever, looking after the kids... they don't go 'You aren't able to do that because you're a woman', it's just more 'Mm, who should we choose, yeah, okay.'

The composer quoted above expresses a hope that the attitude towards women in the screen industry will change with the introduction of a younger labour force, yet also notes the perception of a continuing presence of a 'boysie club' that is 'comfortable' with their established male-centred culture derived from 'common experience[s]'. This participant describes feeling isolated from networks that have the power to 'choose' who is included in screen production projects, even if this exclusion is not explicitly about gender.

Some women also felt that the existence of this 'boys' club' restricted the options open to them to try to bring about change. This view was acknowledged by a female composer who was cautious about personally challenging the 'boys' clubs' in her own life.

It's not about being militant and the thing about it is I am a fucking feminist but I know that the biggest turn-off for Australian men. I know: I deal with advertising types. You know what I'm going to tell you; they can't stand it when you let them know that they're wrong. So, if there's any way that this can be approached without pointing out that'd be fucking awesome. I know just from dealing with tradesmen and stuff, the average bloke doesn't like to be reminded and that's the thing: you just can't remind people and if there's any way that it can be done without reminding people that would be great.

Most participants - male and female - expressed a willingness to participate in improving outcomes for women in screen composition, but were less willing to promote any specific course of action. The perception that many men in the industry would be resistant to change and to assertiveness on the part of women is suggested to be a barrier to participating in change.

### 5.2.3. Rationalising Gender Inequality as 'Merit'

When asked, 'Does the screen music industry have a gender bias?' all male interviewees claimed that it was likely or certain that men were overrepresented in the industry. Many, however, struggled to articulate why this is occurring, and were reluctant to attribute it to anything deliberate or systematic.

...definitely you cannot deny there are more male composers than female. Why that is I do not know. I couldn't tell you... Is there anything more insidious going on? I absolutely hope not. Definitely I could not tell you because I'm not, from a personal viewpoint, I have never discouraged anyone from coming into the

profession, or just discouraging anyone within it, simply based on gender. And I don't discourage anyone anyway.

I think possibly the lifestyle of women precludes them from being there all the time, so bit like a boy's club quite often. [Q: "Lifestyle"?] Responsibilities and family and things like that.

I wouldn't call it a bias as much as a reality of the way that things are.

Only two of the sixteen male screen composers interviewed spoke about gender inequality without prompting, contrasting sharply with interviews with female screen composers, which tended to centre on talk of gender inequality, and where women could clearly articulate what they thought the problems were. Many male participants, while acknowledging an 'imbalance' of gender, sought to distance themselves from attributions of responsibility, blame, and admission that this imbalance was a problem. Our interview results indicate that even composers who are willing to acknowledge and discuss gender inequality issues in the industry find it somewhat difficult to reconcile their understanding of this with their own involvement and beliefs about equality.

Open-ended comments in the survey revealed the existence of less open attitudes within the screen composer population. A number of men made statements in this section to the effect that they did not believe gender inequality was an issue, and a small number went further in expressing strong opposition to the issue being investigated at all.

Surely if we are talking about art then it has to be MERITOCRACY. I don't care if all the best art is created by women I want the best. It's not about gender it's about quality. We hear this same gender thing with female politicians. Unfortunately or fortunately women are predisposed to having babies they can't dedicate the same amount of time to becoming careerists. I want the best people running my country irrespective of gender. Do you favour gender over merit?

I believe that when it comes to music composition for film and TV the so called 'gender inequality' (mis)conception is a complete myth and merely another symptom of the current regressive leftist, feminist, gender political correctness gone awry. Gender / identity politics is a social disease. The simple fact is that far more males than females have an interest in this type of composition and take it up as a career path. Women make different life choices than men. This is a demonstrable fact.

Some female respondents described coming across similar attitudes in encounters with male colleagues:

We were chatting and I said, 'what do you think of the gender equity initiatives?' and he said, 'there's no reason women can't be screen composers. No reason at all. They just have to try and do better. Try and do better work and then they'll get recognized...' And you know, I could have had a really knee-jerk reaction and just said, 'No, what you probably don't understand and I probably wouldn't

understand it from where you sit either is that we're not actually getting the opportunities to show that we can do better.' [...] It's not that we don't compose beautiful music. We do. That's not the issue. I just had to talk him through it. We just aren't getting the opportunities to shine and to show our work on the big stage. You know, a lot of what we're doing is under the carpet, low key work, which we do very well, so I had to explain all of that to him. But there is that sort of entrenched attitude across the profession, and it's like, I met that merit argument which they always try and throw at you - you know, 'Well, why aren't you getting the big jobs and why aren't you getting noticed?'

The framing of gender equality and merit as being in opposition to one another in the description of these composers reflects a belief that the outcomes in the industry are the result of fair competition and objective judgement processes. This belief was not only held by men: two female screen composers in our interviews voiced their discomfort with the idea that their gender may have disadvantaged them and suggested that perhaps too much attention is focused on distinguishing women as needing to be treated differently from male composers.

But, I haven't found any sexism really, in the yeah, but the only sexism that I have found... I find that when they have like special women as composer awards, things like that. I think well that's really nice that we're being recognised as a woman composer, but I'd rather compete with the men as well, I think we're all going to do it together. That's the only thing, I think sometimes there's too much allowance for women. Like, that's the thing for me, like, I'd rather just be trying to be more gender-neutral with it I suppose.

At the time I didn't feel anything about my gender at all. It didn't even enter my head that that was not a problem. It was a very free time, really, freer than now. There wasn't any notion of, I think, in the young talent in the '70s, coming into the '80s... Women were quite empowered in those days I think. I think it is much more wimp-ish these days, looking back. I think women behave badly these days if you ask me. They put everything behind them; 'I'm a woman monster!' I thought, 'Look, if I get this job it is because I'm good at it, not because I'm a woman.' So it didn't bother me, I didn't think about it. I was young, and strong and able and thought, 'Well why not? I can do this.'

The idea that doing good work should - and will - lead to positive outcomes underlies these statements. Although men were much more likely than women to see the industry as *currently* being meritocratic, this was seen as the ideal that should be worked towards by most interviewees. The idea that composers might be treated differently because of their gender, whether this led to disadvantage *or advantage* was held to be morally suspect.

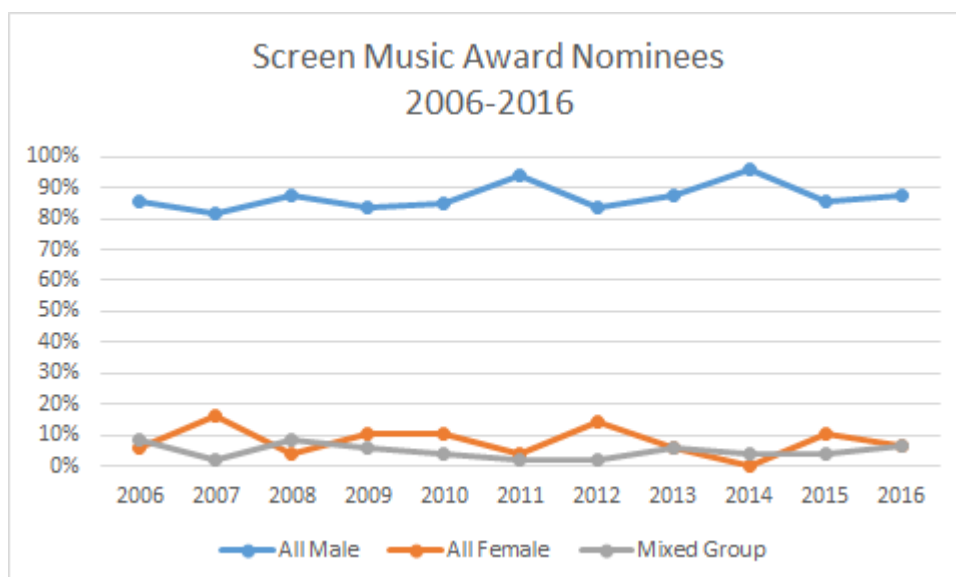
The belief that gender equity initiatives are anti-meritocratic and therefore unjust emerged as another common source of discouragement for female composers. When asked about improving gendered outcomes for screen composers, some participants raised issues with the question itself, finding fault with the idea that addressing 'imbalances' in the ratios of female and male composers was a just goal. The following male composer articulates a common form of rhetoric used to problematize equal opportunity initiative by dichotomising the ideas of equality and merit.

There are a lot of women making films now so if they wanted to hire a female composer they could... I think from my point of view I've worked extremely hard to be the best that I can in my field... How do you [get more women involved]? Is it about poor mentoring opportunities for – it's a tricky question so you want to provide more opportunities for women so that we get more women involved in it at the expense of merit, which is making me sound like I should be in the Liberal Party when I say things like that, which is, it's great we only have five women because we did it on merit, I don't think that's true. I think it's very difficult is the answer to that.

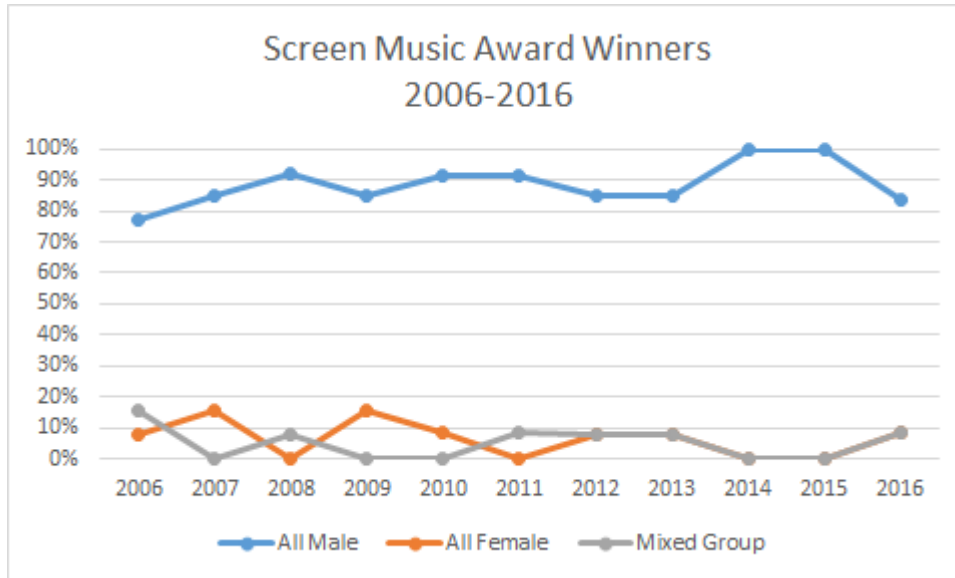
The idea that screen composers' success reflects their merit as artists and musicians was a common sentiment among our participants, and one that was often conflated with ideas of fairness. While the above participant expresses reservations when stating this claim, he also rationalises the rejection of equality initiatives that target women exclusively. The two perceptions noted above, that the screen industry is male dominated (and cannot change) and that equality initiatives are themselves unfair, may create barriers to change in the screen industry. This may particularly be the case when (as discussed in Section 5.6 below) most screen composers struggle to find as much work as they would like and see their work as precarious. Under such circumstances, male composers such as the one above who discussed how he has already 'worked very hard' may be more resistant to measures that appear to be giving others an advantage not available to them.

#### 5.2.4. Music Awards

Certain indicators of success, such as prestigious screen and music awards, are seen as evidence of a composer's value in the industry, and can therefore act as a concrete example of both women's exclusion and how the notion of the industry as a meritocracy supports this exclusion. Figures provided by APRA AMCOS show that in the APRA AMCOS/AGSC Screen Music Awards, for example, while women submit works for nomination at levels slightly higher than their overall representation in the industry (around 17% between 2011 and 2015), their levels of actual nomination and wins tend to be lower than this.



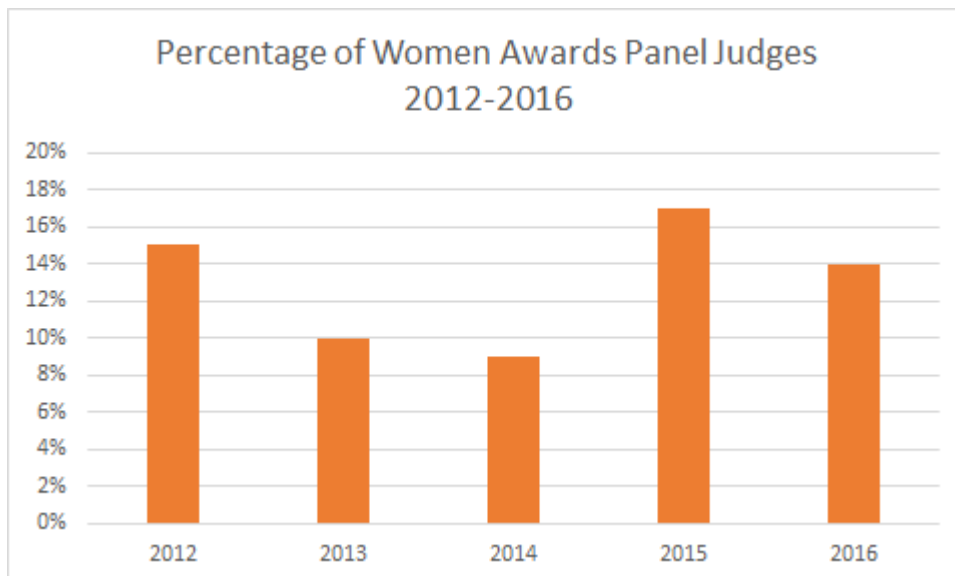
Source: APRA AMCOS



Source: APRA AMCOS

These graphs show each nomination and award, whether for individuals or teams. Nominations for men or all-male teams have not dropped below 80% of all nominations since 2006, and only in 2006 did wins for men or all-male teams drop (slightly) below 80%. In 2014 and 2015 no women or teams with female members won any awards.

Higher male representation is also apparent in the composition of judging panels, as shown in the graph below (figures provided by APRA AMCOS). A judging panel is assembled for each award category and is comprised of between 4 and 6 judges who are. For the years 2012–2016 these panels have been, on average, 87% male. However, there is also a high degree of variance between categories of awards, with some categories devoid of female representation in multiple years.



Source: APRA AMCOS

In open-ended interviews with screen composers, awards and award ceremonies were often mentioned when participants were asked to discuss their career highlights, suggesting that these events are important markers of success for screen composers.

I think the years that I was nominated for... the APRA AMCOS awards. That would have to be my – those years would have to be my high point. I was surprised I got nominated in [year removed], I must say. They would be my high points, for sure.

However, screen music awards were discussed very differently by male and female respondents (most awards mentioned by interview participants were the APRA AMCOS/AGSC Screen Music Awards, as well as ARIAs, AFI awards and various international equivalents). Male composers discussed the awards as largely a meritocratic process, with the assumption that the awards were judged fairly and were therefore evidence of musical accomplishment. Women's occasional wins were seen as evidence of this:

Caitlin Yeo won the best music for a documentary at the last APRA AMCOS awards and the best music for a feature film the one before that, and the best music for documentary two years before that, so she's established herself at that level over years, and during the process also had two babies. There's a woman for you... She's really good.

Some male respondents did have difficulty, however, in accounting for the dominance of male award nominees and winners while attempting to characterise the judging process as fair:

I remember a few years ago someone once asked, I think at the APRA AMCOS Screen Music Awards, every nomination bar one, was a male. Someone questioned why is this the case? And not to begrudge the males that were in the race. And I sat there and I thought, 'Geez I don't know'. The simple thing is that you would have to argue that there were just more male entries than females. Or when the judging took place, if there were equal numbers, the judgement panel believed that the entries done by males - it's blind judging as far as we're all led to believe. It just so happened that the male entrants just did it in those judges' eyes, a more substantial creative work in that particular year, with that particular judging panel. There's so many variables of that one.  
(male composer)

In accounts such as this, factors like differences in numbers (that is, more male composers leading to there being more male nominees, making it likely a male will win) can be used to make men's dominance at awards nights seem both inevitable and fair.

Similar tensions between the idea of fairness and male dominance of awards and nomination were also expressed by some female participants, although women screen composers interviewed were much more likely to suggest that the awards judging was biased. The following female screen composer suggested that the judgments of the awards panel may express unconscious bias and that perhaps this is unavoidable.

So year after year I'd just go okay well the jury just preferred that... Jury just preferred *that*... Jury just preferred *that*... Jury just preferred *that*... And then there were a couple of projects I did which I was really proud of. I was like yes that's okay but this one – wow! And then that doesn't win and then I did wonder, hang on, is there some sort of unconscious bias going on here or is there not? I don't know. It just seems like a lot. A lot. So I don't know the answer. How do you tell?... You can't do a blind tasting because everyone knows what projects have gone to who. It's too easy to find out. Just IMDb it or whatever. So there's no real way.

To composers like this woman, the continued lack of women winners has become harder to explain with answers that don't involve bias against women, and she is less inclined than the male composer quoted above to accept that the judging process is blind. Other women note this also, and point out the negative effects that this can have for other women's participation in the industry:

...year in and year out, there's barely a woman nominated, and multiple years where not a single woman wins anything the whole entire night. And this has been happening for - well, since I've been in the industry. And nothing has changed. And to me... you can take them with a grain of salt, but they are kind of a measure of success and I think there's a very important issue of role modelling for women. There just aren't many women screen composers - successful, full-time working ones - who other women can look to and go, 'Wow, she did that. I can too.'

The largely male-dominated awards nominations and ceremonies have the potential to contribute to how women view both the value of screen music awards and also the position of women in the screen music industry more generally. The awards ceremonies are an institution where screen composers may recognise their accomplishments and reflect on career progression in the screen music business. The gendered differences in how these awards are perceived and distributed is a key site for thinking about addressing gendered careers among screen music composers.

### 5.2.5. Women's Compositional Styles

Another gendered form of exclusion raised by many interviewees, both male and female, was the idea that men and women composed different types of music. While most expressed uncertainty about whether or not this was really the case, they thought that there was a general belief in this difference in the industry, and that this had an influence on who was chosen for certain jobs.

The stuff that I think is interesting is do female composers write a different style of music than male composers? Now I don't know how you would even assess that. I have read interviews with female directors who have remarked that for certain projects a female sensibility - I've read it in the context of a director complementing their composer because what they were bringing gender wise was important. I suspect there's some truth in that, maybe blokes write a lot more bombastic stuff, I've got no clue. (male composer)



Well, I mean I was the only one, but when I look at women film makers and I don't see many film composers, but one of the film makers, they're much more human stories. Documentaries. I think there's more women in documentary making and that makes sense because they're more interested in real stories. (female composer)

I really think that on a purely creative and taste-making level, women tend to appreciate, understand and listen to music made by other women a lot more than men do. And it's dangerous territory saying there's women's music and that women have a style of composing, which I would be hesitant to say. But there is - I kind of laugh about it with another friend of mine who's a composer. And we notice it particularly in the world of television advertisement music, and we call it the kind of the big dick music. It's all about massive drums, and the kind of music that you hear in car advertisements or beer advertisements. Obviously aimed at a male demographic, but it's that big balls sort of music. And women can make that music. It's just that I think probably we don't a lot of the time. (female composer)

The comments on this topic reflect stereotypes about gender, with suggestions that women are more 'emotional' and men more 'aggressive', as well as the claim that women and men tend to appreciate music produced by persons of the same gender. While this study cannot comment on whether men and women compose different types of music, the effects of this way of thinking should be examined. On the one hand, this may lead to women being more likely to be hired by women directors, but the corollary of this is that it may enable male directors to justify not hiring women. Given the gender imbalance among film and television directors noted earlier, framing female composers as specialists in 'feminine' music is potentially limiting.

### 5.2.6. Changing Attitudes towards Sexism

Despite identifying numerous discriminatory and disadvantaging practices, interview participants also noted several ways that they believed that attitudes towards women in the industries are transforming. There was a common belief among interview participants that sexist cultures within recording studios and music production companies have shifted towards more woman-friendly, or at least less overtly sexist, workplace cultures. Several participants said they thought attitudes had changed for the better, particularly concerning overtly discriminatory practices, such as bullying, using sexist language and gestures, and the creation of unfriendly work environments.

The whole thing's male dominated... [but] that culture's changed. And these are dear friends of mine. But when I started working with them 15 years ago, blokey blokes, they had pictures of girls in bikinis in the backroom. And I'm working with them. And it's like, terrific guys. Just blokey blokes. All sorts of sexist comments, never about me, but about abstract women, all the time, which I found ridiculous and offensive. And actually they don't do it anymore. It's totally stopped... I wonder if there's been a cultural shift where they now realise it's inappropriate or I wonder if they've grown up. I don't know. (female composer)

Composers tend to be a little bit more isolated and often work by themselves or in a small team. But the studio culture being a little bit more kind of laddish and bogan-y and the language around that, and I imagine for some women definitely - not so much recently but definitely in decades previously where that could have been quite a challenging environment... I'm talking days gone by, but sort of language, the type of drugs that might be used, the crazy hours that people do, the drugs people do to stay awake. But that might also turn some men off. I definitely think that that aspect was definitely less female friendly than what it is now, but it's changing a lot and that vibe is - I don't really see that vibe anymore. [Q: Do you know why it's changed?] I think it's just a general maturing and I think it's one of the great things of a more PC society in general. I think it's just a greater understanding throughout the music world and society in general. (male composer)

However, despite these perceptions of change, female and male participants often noted that sexist attitudes had not so much disappeared from the screen industry as they had become more covert. The following participant reflected on her experiences in 'hostile' work environments, where compositions were disparaged if they were written by women, and was asked to reflect on whether work environments had changed in the last few decades.

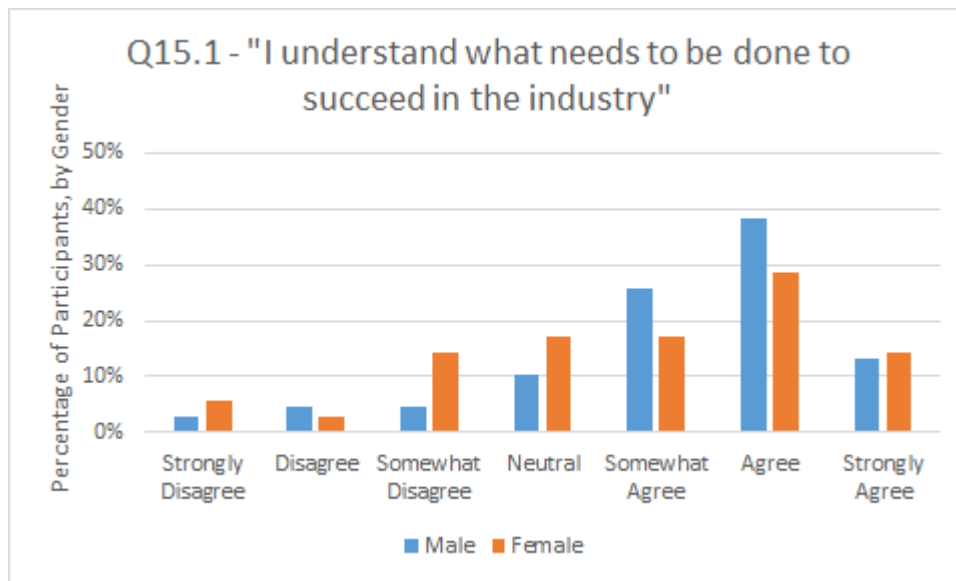
I think there's a really good conversation happening which is kind of calling this stuff out a lot, and I think it's a lot easier for young women now than it was 30 years ago for me. And I think it's easier for young women now than it was 15 years ago, you know? I think it's just getting easier and easier, which is great, but I still think - like people who I mentioned, like this dude who is really quite - is quite misogynistic. He's still working, so there are people who are still - albeit, he's a bit of a dinosaur by now, but there are still attitudes and they might not be as freely expressed now, but there are still attitudes. (female composer)

Composers who claimed that studio cultures and the screen industry more generally had become more inviting to women distanced themselves from the forms of behaviour that they claim occurred in the past. Their stories draw on metaphors of the 'development' of laddish (or 'bloke-y') cultures that mirror coming of age stories about the moral development of young men. The perception of change described by composers here contrasts against the stories of sexual discrimination, harassment and disadvantage described earlier in this report, and is encouraging, but the idea that maturing is taking place and can be relied upon to gradually erode sexist attitudes could also make taking direct action to counteract inequality seem unnecessary.

### 5.3 Self-Confidence among Screen Composers

In addition to asking screen composers to report their level of seniority ('emerging' or 'established'; described earlier in Q4), we presented them with a set of six further statements that related to their confidence in succeeding in the screen industry, and potential barriers to success. Survey participants were presented with a series of statements and asked to report to what degree they thought the statements were applicable to themselves. The response

options ranged from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree' with five other responses in between, as shown in the graph (Q15.1) below.

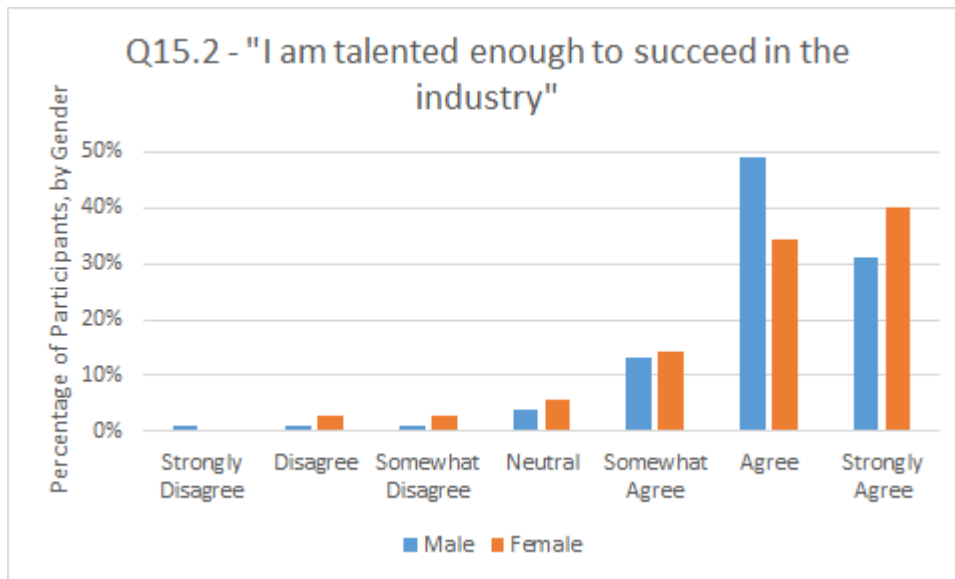


When presented with the statement 'I understand what needs to be done to succeed in the industry', the majority of respondents agreed to some degree with the statement. Eighty-four percent of male screen composers agreed with the statement, while only 60% of female screen composers did so. Female screen composers were more likely to disagree with the statement, with 23% disagreeing to some degree, while only 12% of males did so.

The slightly higher degree of disagreement with the statement among female screen composers may reflect an awareness of exclusion from some parts of the screen industry and its associated social networks (as discussed in Section 5.2). One interview participant claimed that working in a male-dominated work environment created problems for her self-confidence, suggesting that the normalisation of sexism may be a cause of self-doubt within the music industry.

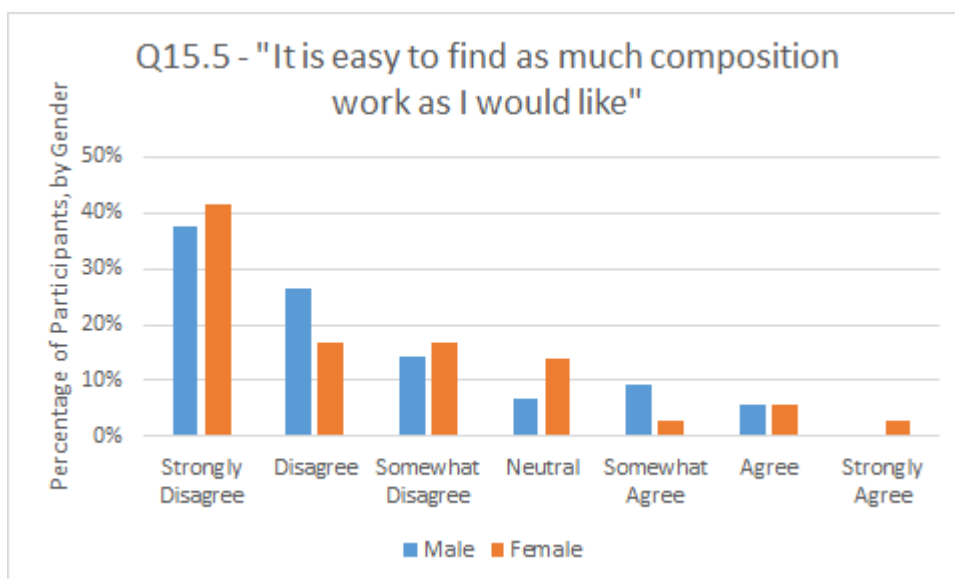
You can feel like you're in a hostile environment just because there are no other women there, you know? Everyone else is a man, and so while they might be saying lovely things to you and they might be very pleasant you just don't feel that your kind is there, and you don't feel that you belong there, and so you feel you have to prove that you belong there, or you start second guessing your ability and shutting up and not saying things because you're in a minority and you're worried that you'll put a foot wrong, and it's just all that stuff that women do all the time... I'm a mature woman and I know I'm talented. I know my ability, but I still second guess myself. It's tiring.

Participants were presented with a further statement probing their self-confidence. When presented with the statement, 'I am talented enough to succeed in the industry', participants' responses were overall far more positive and gender differences were less pronounced. The graph (Q15.2) below shows the percentage of respondents, divided by gender.



Notably, only a small minority of both men (3%) and women (5%) disagreed with the statement to some degree and an overwhelming majority agreed (93% of men and 89% of women) with the statement to some degree. A higher percentage of women than men 'strongly' agreed with the statement (40% of women, compared with 31% of men), suggesting that if women are differentiated from men in terms of their confidence about knowing what it takes to succeed in the industry, this confidence issue is unlikely to be connected with their beliefs about their musical or compositional talents.

Screen composers in our survey were far less optimistic about their ability to secure work. When presented with the statement, 'It is easy to find as much composition work as I would like' (Q15.5), both male and female screen composers were more likely to disagree with the statement to some degree, as is shown in the graph below.



Seventy-eight percent of male screen composers and 75% of female screen composers disagreed with the statement to some degree, with 38% of males and 42% of females 'strongly' disagreed.

disagreeing with the statement, leaving a minority who agreed with the statement to some degree (15% of men and 11% of women).

Interviewees commonly held views that the sector is undergoing a widespread transformation that has brought fortune to some and hardship to many more. A few segments of the screen industry were highlighted by interview participants as faring well, including video game music and sound design. For more traditional media, participants often described a sense of decline and concern for the future.

Feature film's in crisis globally, isn't it? Independent features are in crisis globally in terms of finding an audience and being sustainable... People really aren't seeing low to medium budget films that much, so I'd say I do more TV... the budgets in film are going down whereas the budgets in TV are steady. (female composer)

But I must say we've really found that work has dried up enormously, particularly in Victoria. The opportunities aren't there... It's a big difference in terms of what's available. The funding's not coming through and we found too that the biggest problem probably is that television has changed. In terms of television programs, it's all multi-nationals now and it's very - there's no chances taken. There's no risk... they follow a formula now. It's completely different, yeah, which is why commercial television's dying. Because it's so bland. (female composer)

Our participants were located throughout several sectors of the Australian and New Zealand screen industries, and so conflicting views about which segments of the industry are undergoing booms or busts are to be expected. However, there was a majority of participants who described careers in screen composition becoming more difficult to sustain. Interview participants offered a number of reasons for this, notably: the bidding systems used by some producers, where composers are asked to produce a work 'on spec', which may not necessarily result in a secured contract bid; the Global Financial Crisis, which was mentioned by several participants in their discussions of reduced work opportunities and reduced budgets for original musical compositions in film and television projects; an increase in the rate of graduates coming into the screen industry in comparison to the availability of work; and also the perception by a few older screen composers that the advertisement and television producers are biased in favour of 'young' composers and hold assumptions about their increased awareness of the tastes of younger audiences.

The willingness of producers and directors to pay for original compositions was a pressing concern across our sample group, most often linked to financial recessions, technological changes in music production, and especially the growth of use of (relatively) cheap 'library music'.

I feel like it's almost a consequence of you've got the Napster generation where, I guess, younger people feel that... 'it's just music, you can download it, it's just music, it's free, I can get it from wherever.' And so those people are now in control of the budgets of companies and so when you turn around to them and you say, 'Well, look, this is the budget, this is what it's going to cost you,' they

just can't believe it, they can't comprehend in their brain and they can't understand why music would cost that much. (male composer)

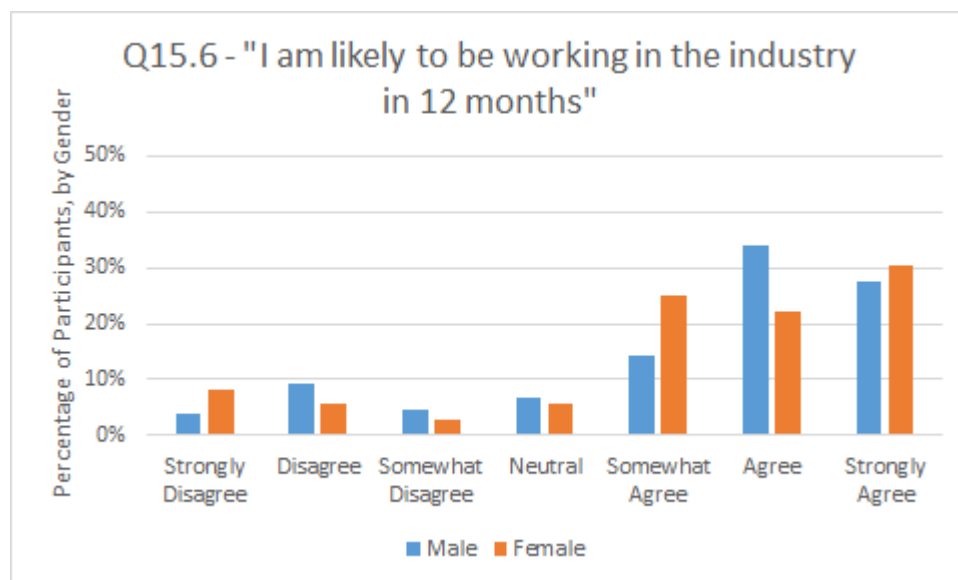
...those who were regular employers for us were suddenly just paid a very small annual fee to access library music, and really, they had to cut a lot of our jobs as well. (female composer)

Shrinking budgets for original compositions have the potential to affect not only the employment of screen composers, but also the opportunities for apprenticeship that may come with collaboration. The following composer describes the impact that the Global Financial Crisis ('the recession') has appeared to have on his opportunities for professional development.

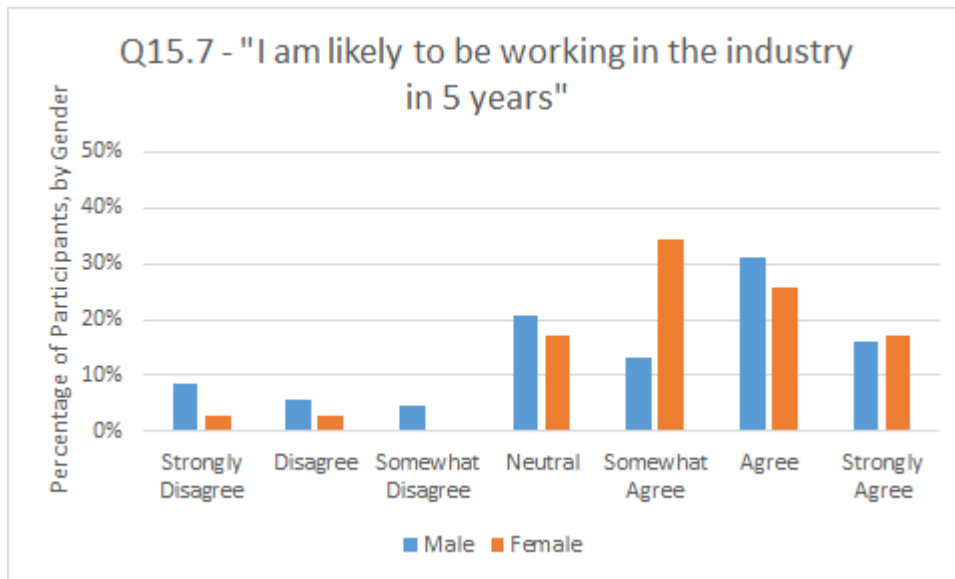
After the recession all the people who would have been happy to have me intern or do sound editing at night, those jobs all dried up because no one had any money. I think there's a lot to be said for working under someone else but they've got to have enough work and they've got to have a space that works for two people... (male composer)

Overall, the majority of male and female screen composers cannot find as much work as they want, and are pessimistic about the current and future state of the industry.

Survey participants were given two statements relating to their likelihood of working in the industry in 12 months' time (Q15.6) and 5 years' time (Q15.7). The results of these two questions are displayed in the graphs below.

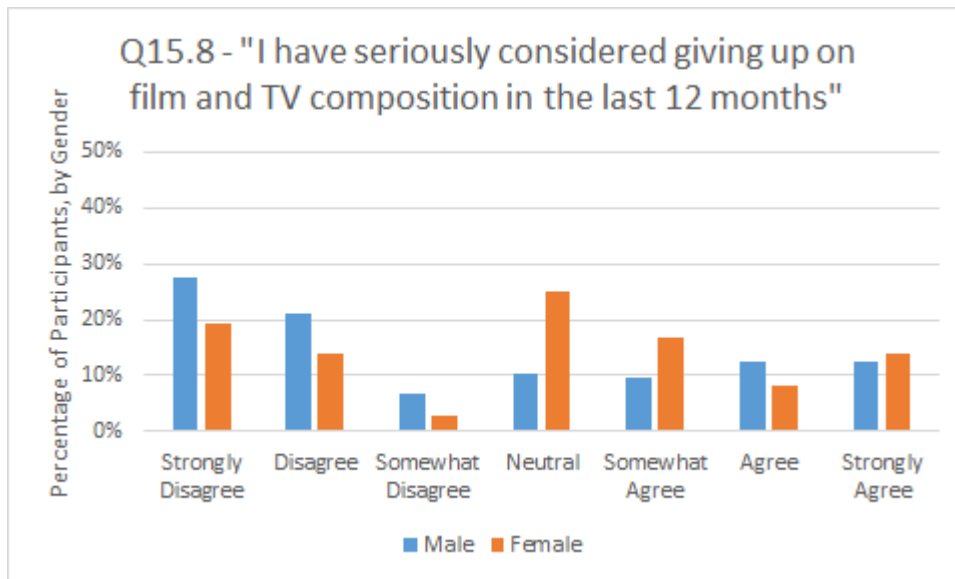


There was a high proportion of both male (75%) and female (78%) screen composers who agreed to some degree that they are likely to be working in the industry in 12 months, with 31% of females and 27% of males strongly agreeing with the statement. A minority of respondents (18% of males and 17% of females) disagreed with the statement to some degree.



In response to the statement ‘I am likely to be working in the industry in 5 years,’ the confidence of many male screen composers wavered, with only 60% agreeing with the statement to some degree, while the percentage of female screen composers agreeing with the statement remained close to the previous question, at 77%. However, a notably smaller proportion of female screen composers strongly agreed with the 5-year statement, falling 14 percentage points to 17% of all women in the sample. While the proportion of men who disagreed with the 5-year statement (19% of men) was very similar to those that disagreed with the previous statement, far fewer women disagreed (6% of women; 11% lower than the previous response), suggesting that some women who are not optimistic about working in the industry in 12 month are perhaps expecting that they may be more likely to return to the industry in the longer term. It is also notable that most of those who marked ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’ to this question were from the oldest two cohorts (60-69 and 70+ years of age), suggesting that age may be a factor for those who think they are likely or very likely to leave the industry.

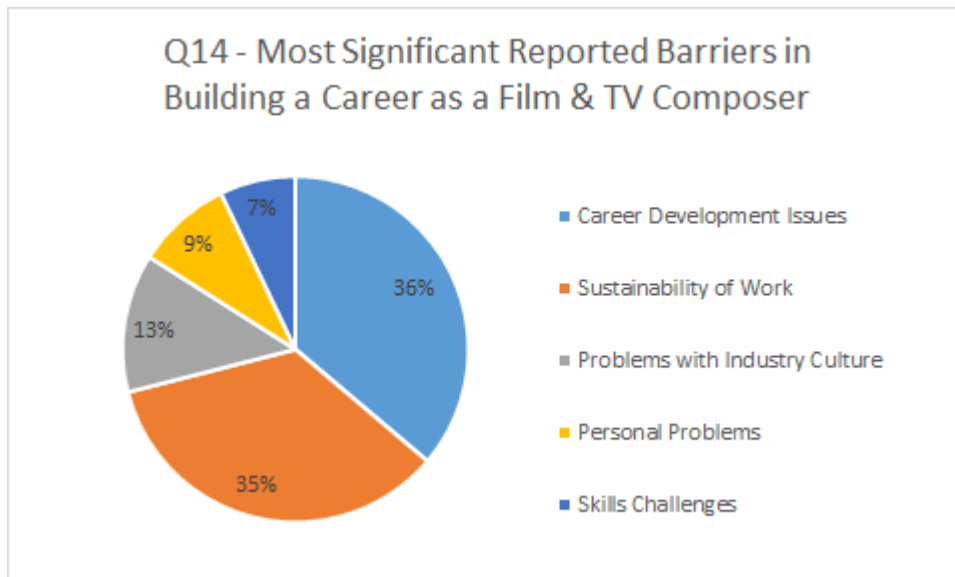
Survey participants were also asked to respond to the statement, ‘I have seriously considered giving up on film and TV composition in the last 12 months’ (Q15.8). The responses to this statement, displayed in the graph, below, show a dispersed range of responses, with male respondents tending to disagree with the statement (55% of males) more frequently than their female counterparts (36% of females). Female screen composers were more likely to respond with ‘neutral’ to this statement (25% of females) than were the men (11% of males).



The survey results from these statements, Q15.(1, 2, 5, 6, 7 & 8), suggests that screen composers generally trust in their abilities as composers and musicians and believe they will remain in the industry, perhaps despite experiencing a widely-shared frustration with securing work and perhaps even seriously considering leaving the industry. Gender differences were not as strongly pronounced in this section of the survey as in other areas, but the results here do reveal some differences in confidence levels between males and females.

The issues explicated above (and also in the 'Support and Mentoring' section below) also emerged when survey participants were asked to 'describe the three (3) most significant barriers' they faced in building a career as a film and television composer (Q14) in an open-ended question. The results of this question were categorised and have been summarised in the pie chart, below. This chart shows what percentage of responses from composers fell into each of five categories. These categories were developed through analysing participant's responses for common themes and problems that they identified. Composers in this study responded in a diversity of ways to this open-ended question, with most offering brief (one-sentence) responses, while others documented life events and narratives of hardship, and a few participants responded with very brief contextual signs, i.e. '\$\$\$', most likely to indicate 'money issues or concerns'.

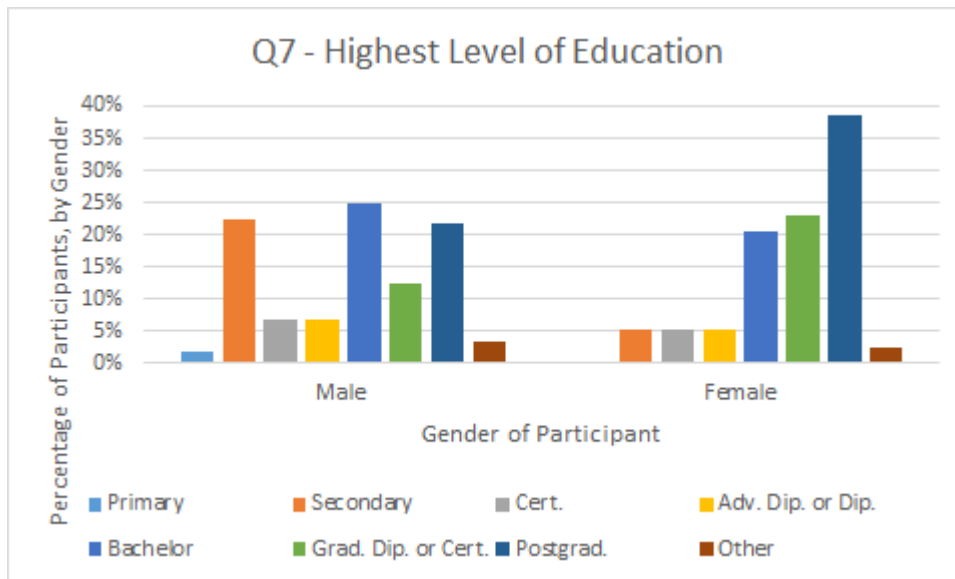




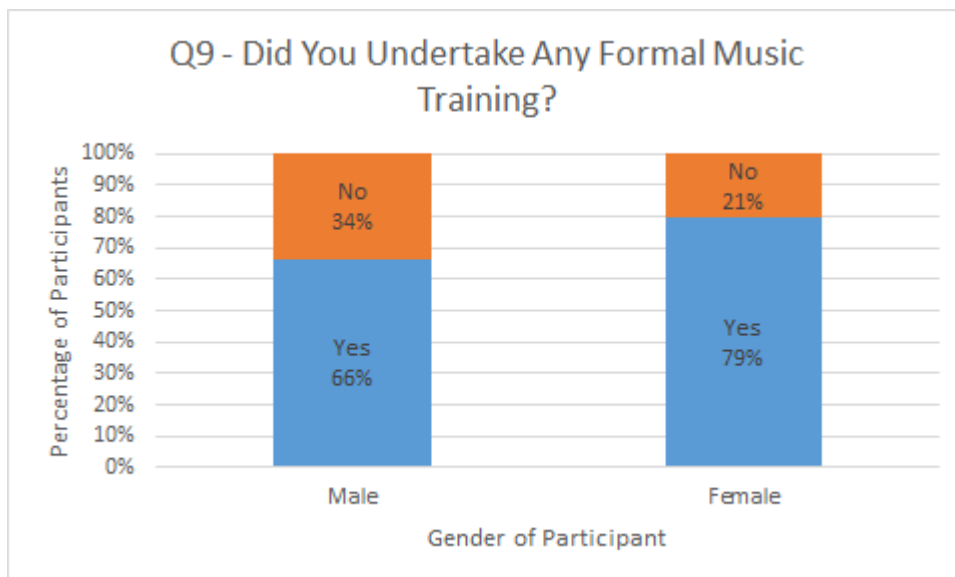
The most common theme to emerge was ‘career development issues’, which included comments relating to both the ability to foresee a career path or ideal to progress towards, and also issues with accessing the resources or assistance to pursue these ideals. Thirty-six percent of responses from participants were categorised as career development issues, with 88% of all participants mentioning some form of career development issue. Survey respondents identified the ‘sustainability of work’ as another key concern, with 35% of all responses being categorised as such. Work sustainability issues include personal work-related problems as well as changes in the screen music industry itself. In total, 83% of participants mentioned an issue related to the sustainability of their work as a career barrier. The final 29% of significant career barriers reported concern problems identified with the screen and music industries’ cultures, participant’s personal (often psychological) problems, and skills challenges that participants face. Each of these categories are explored in more detail in the five tables in Appendix 3, which summarise the key statements that emerged from Q14 and the frequency of such sentiments in participants’ responses.

## 5.4 Education

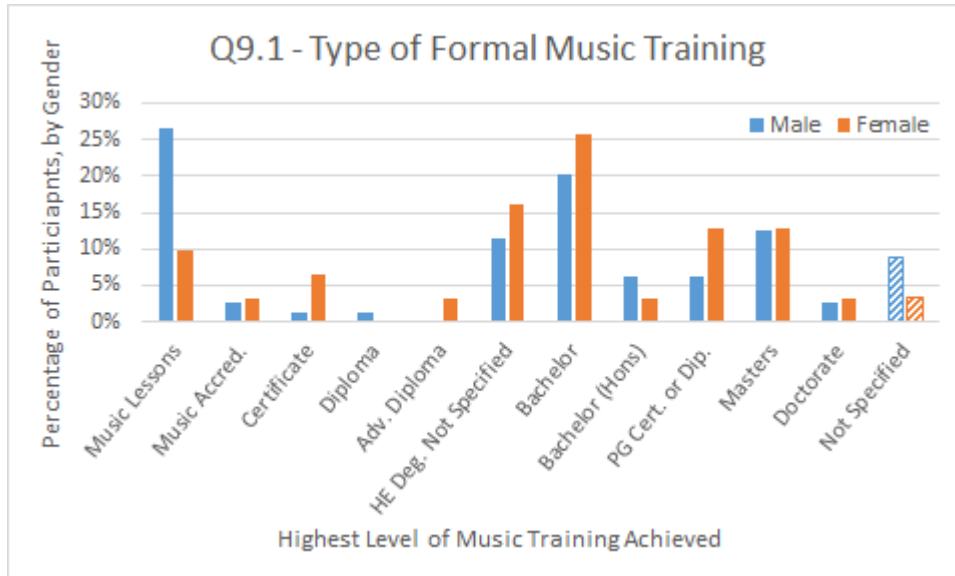
The survey questionnaire included several items that asked participants to describe their education, both musical and otherwise, to determine the extent to which education can act as a pathway in the industry. The results of these items revealed differences in the patterns of education between female and male screen composers.



Survey respondents were asked to select their highest level of qualification from a set list of responses (Q7). Female respondents were more highly educated than males, with 62% holding a qualification higher than a bachelor degree, compared to 34% of men. Males were much more likely to have secondary school as their highest level of education, with 23% in this category as compared to 5% of females.

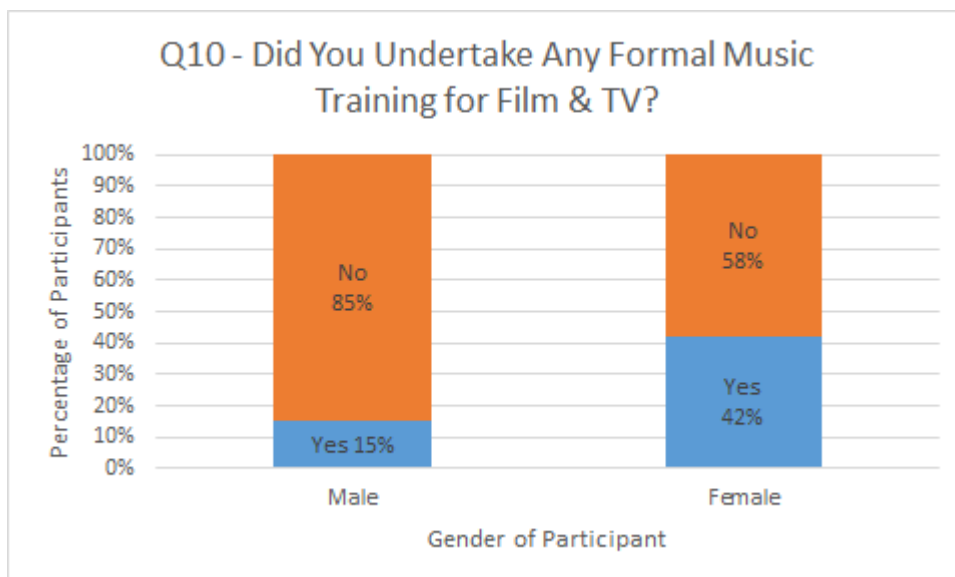


When asked if they had undertaken any formal music training (Q9), female screen composers were more likely to state that they had. While 66% of men claimed to have been formally trained to play or compose music, 79% of females claimed to have been formally trained. Those participants who had received formal music training were asked to describe their training in the form of an open-ended response (Q9.1). A total of 30 women and 72 men gave details of their formal music training, with several survey participants not specifying a response (7 men and 1 woman). These responses were then categorised and tallied, and are presented in the graph below, as a percentage of total responses from each gender.



Female composers tended to be qualified at a higher level than men. The category 'Music Lessons' encompasses anything formal but non accredited, including music lessons taken by respondents as children. Almost 30% of males but only 10% of females have moved into careers as screen composers with only this level of music education.

Survey participants who had formal music training were also asked whether they had undertaken any formal music training relating specifically to film and television production (Q10). As shown in the graph, below, far fewer persons had been specially trained for screen composition. Only 15% of male screen composers and a surprising 42% of female composers reported formal screen composition training. Over half of all women in this study who have been formally trained in music have also been trained in screen music composition, while less than a quarter of musically-trained males can claim likewise.



The survey asked those participants who had formal music training for film and television to specify what kind of training they had received in an open-ended response. A total of 16 male and 16 female screen composers had received formal music training for screen composition

and provided a description of their training, while one male was formally trained, but did not specify the kind of training. A summary of the kinds of film and television music composition training undertaken by respondents is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 - Types of Formal Training for Film & TV Undertaken (Q10.1)	
<b>Responses from Women (n=16)</b>	
Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS) - Grad. Cert., Grad. Dip. or Masters	9
Masters of Applied Composition	1
Grad. Dip. (Film & TV)	2
Grad. Cert. (Film composition)	1
BA with screenwriting courses	1
Year 12 composition training	1
Unaccredited film composition training courses	1
<b>Responses from Men (n=16)</b>	
Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS) - Grad. Cert., Grad. Dip. or Masters	7
BA (Honours) in Film Music	1
Grad. Cert. (Film composition)	3
BA/BMus with screenwriting courses	2
Unaccredited film composition training courses	2
On-the-job training	1

The most common accreditation held by both male and female participants is either a Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma or Masters degree from the Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS), with 9 women and 7 men holding one such qualification. Many participants did not specify their education provider, and so some of the other forms of formal training and accreditation stated may have also been conferred by AFTRS.

Exploring the career paths of respondents in interviews gave insights into how and why women come to be more qualified in this field than men. Of the male interviewees, none returned to study to gain more qualifications in music after they had been employed in their first screen composition job, or they made the decision to move into screen composition. This was only raised as even a consideration by a male composer on one occasion:

I guess I also knew that in terms of formal qualifications, they're not really needed in the industry, I mean, unless you want to be a teacher. Nobody ever asks you what level of qualification do you have, it's more about your work. So I guess the thing for me is that I haven't formally trained, but I've had a lot of mentors and I've had the kind of drive, I guess, to continue bettering myself. So even to this day, I mean, I'm still studying orchestration ... you know, all kinds of courses.

Male participants were more likely to share stories expressing their self-confidence and willingness to engage in forms of composition work that they were either unfamiliar with or untrained for. The following male screen composers note that their engagement with new genres or music production practices did not come about by formal training and accreditation, but rather through trial-and-error experimentation.

I saved up the cash that I had and what I could earn and I bought myself an Atari ST computer... and then I guess tried out ideas I had, but without a band I could use a small little sound module to imitate drums and imitate bass guitar and keyboards and things like that. So I started doing that for myself and creating songs that way.

I basically had one lesson when I knew of a really good funk musician, and thought that I'd like to learn how to play funky guitar better than I was. Other than that, really, you may as well say no, I've had no lessons... I'm self-taught.

I got involved doing television music. [A colleague] was looking for a guitarist for something. So I started playing guitar for him. And then he asked me if I wanted to compose. So then I had this two-week crash course in how to use Logic, and was suddenly recording music... I just basically got thrown in at the deep end... I've always been the sort of person that's willing to learn in public, I guess.

Male interviewees often used the term 'self-taught' in relation to both the development of their skills as musicians, and development of various technical skills, as described above. Only one female interviewee used this term. This reliance on their own abilities was just one manifestation of the greater self-belief that males demonstrated in interviews. Some described themselves using terms such as 'child prodigy', or included strong positive assessments of their abilities such as 'I was fucking brilliant', while women would only sometimes describe themselves in interviews as talented, or highly skilled (despite being prepared to acknowledge this in Q15.2 above).

When confronted with roadblocks in their careers, men were also more likely than women to identify failed business relationships, difficult producers or directors, or 'selling out' to commercial interests at the expense of producing artistically-challenging work, than they were likely to point towards their own skills or experience as the source of hardship. Given this view of the causes of career barriers and low points, it makes sense that education would not be seen as necessary to remedy these issues or revitalise career prospects. For most men in our interviews, career lows and barriers emerged from a failure to negotiate satisfying,

sustainable, secure work within the industry, rather than from becoming out-skilled or unsure of one's own abilities to perform composition work.

For the women interviewed, however, education in the area was generally seen as necessary for pursuing screen composition as a career, or for career development and advancement towards more prestigious forms of composition work. Even women who had extensive experience in the music industry as musicians and/or songwriters, or who already had music qualifications, returned to education as a way of transitioning to screen composition, rather than gaining experience on the job as the men did. This was discussed in a matter-of-fact way in most interviews, as though it goes without saying that one needs the qualification to do the job. For example, one female interviewee who had a very successful career as a musician described moving into screen composition training as follows:

There I was with a music degree and absolutely no prospect of employment, and no idea what to do. ... a friend of mine suggested [AFTRS] to me. And it actually was the perfect thing for me, because I'd always had an interest in the visual arts... And it was just like a perfect melding of art forms that seemed like - I was incredulous that it hadn't occurred to me before.

For this woman, once screen composition was considered as a possibility, doing the qualification became the natural next step. In contrast to the men, women who were already skilled in music and screen composition still saw gaining a qualification as necessary. This extended even to those already working in the industry. One woman described how she returned to education even though she had already established a successful screen composition career as a way to try to break into areas of the industry she was unable to access:

I was working with international productions, and I just realized that I was kind of at the peak of where I could go. Not so much the level of the productions I was working on, but you know, I always wanted to be working on more features and more heavy hitting series, but I was working constantly. I was making a living, and I knew I needed to know more about my craft... Surely, I can get to the level of writing those big feature films if I get my orchestral chops up, and that's really why I went back and got my Bachelor of Music degree - in order to have more certainly concert music, but also to break through the glass ceiling and get those big feature films.

This sentiment of needing to be instructed through formal training was also focused on engagement with technology and its transformation in the industry:

I wanted a break. And then when I thought, I'll get back into it. There's nothing here and so I'll just take another break from it for now... Technology has just moved so quickly too. It's like I've been out of it for a few years, so I'd have to be retrained to how all the software programs and all the technology and sound for the instruments and all of that works. (female composer)

This interview data suggest women are more likely to see education in the field as important to succeeding, whereas men are more likely to believe their abilities are good enough and that

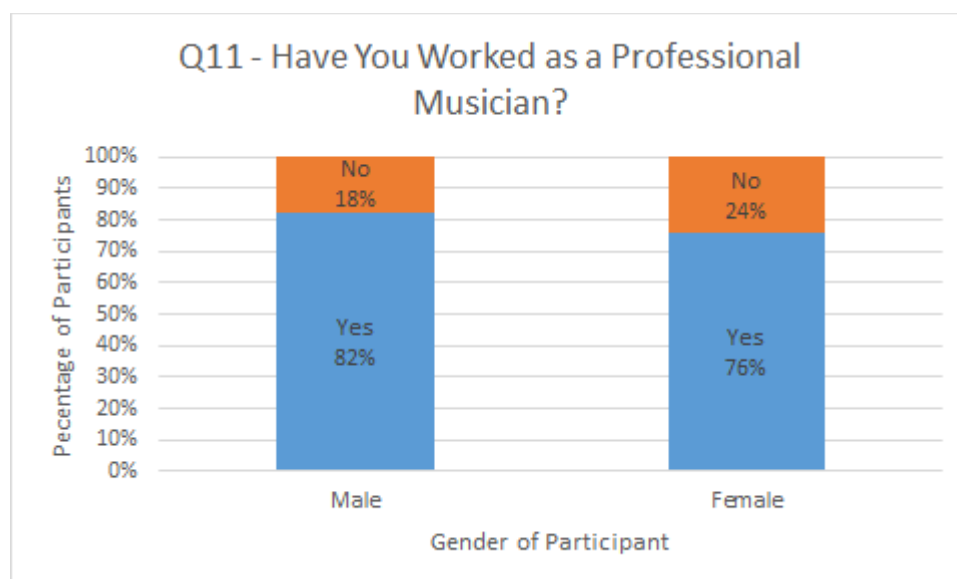
skills can be developed through experimentation and on-the-job training. Gendered differences in the degree of confidence that composers express in their own abilities may go some way to accounting for the desire for more education. As the following female composer noted:

Yeah, I feel like – it’s so hard to tell what is a generalisation and what is what I experience as well but I feel like a lot of men just have the confidence to just accept it and just do it and I think a lot of women feel like they have to study for a million years and then they might be qualified to do a job beyond the score or whatever, you know.

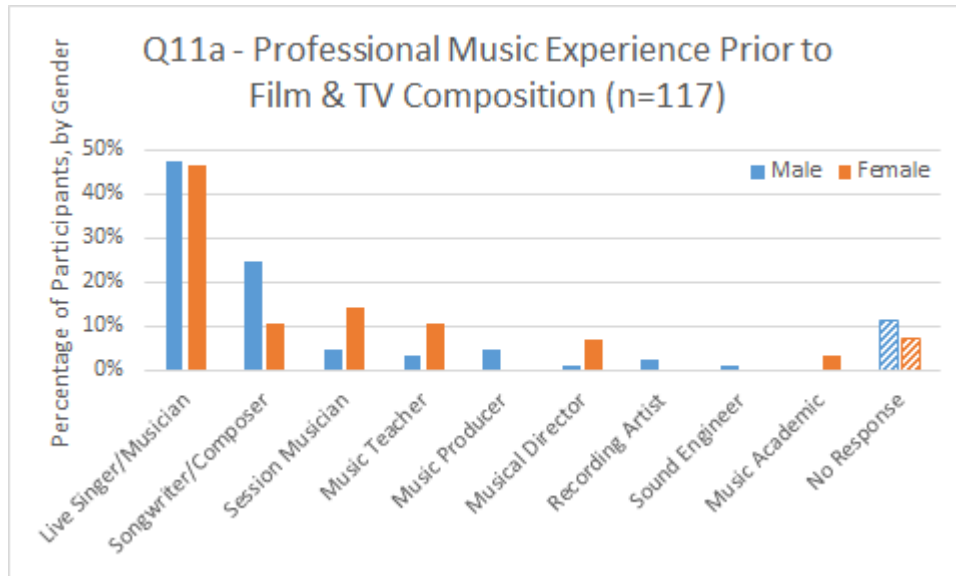
While education in the field has clearly provided a pathway for many of these women, in terms of increasing their skills and confidence and connecting them with others in the industry, the perception among women that further training is required to work as a composer can also be regarded as a barrier to women’s participation in the industry. It is unclear from the data collected here whether women actually need more qualifications than men to be hired, or whether women do not feel confident enough to embark on a career that they have not been formally trained in. Regardless, this extra training means it takes longer for women to establish themselves in the field, or leads to them taking career breaks or reducing the work they can take on while they complete further qualifications. This is an area that may benefit from further research.

## 5.5. Pathways into Screen Composition

When examining how people began their careers in screen composition, it became clear that there were very few respondents for whom screen composition was their first career. Most respondents to our survey had experience in the music industry in particular before beginning composition work in the screen industry. When asked ‘Did you work as a professional musician in another capacity before starting as a film and television composer?’ (Q11) 82% of males and 76% of females responded ‘yes’, as shown in the graph below.



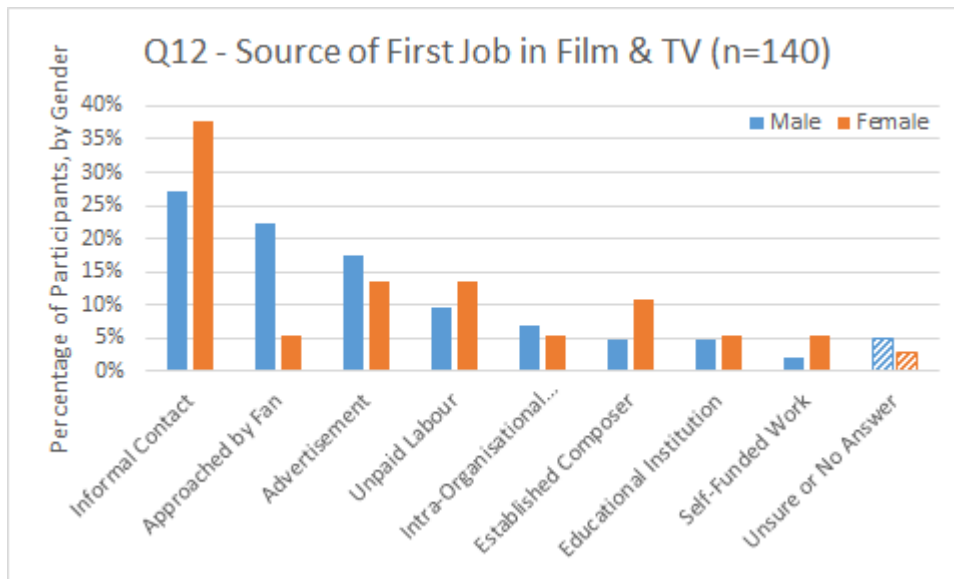
Survey respondents who answered 'yes' to Q11 (n=117; 89 male, 28 female) were also asked to specify the details of their previous musical work experience in an open-ended response. These responses were categorised, tallied, and have been presented in the graph (Q11a) below.



The two most commonly reported kinds of work experience were being a live musician/singer (55 participants), followed by songwriter/composer (25 participants). Smaller numbers of participants were session musicians (8 participants), music teachers (6 participants), music producers (4 participants), musical directors (3 participants), recording artists (2 participants), sound engineers (1 participant) and music academics (1 participant), with a further 12 participants not specifying their work experiences. The dominance of 'Live' singers and musicians (which includes those performing in bands, theatres, orchestras, or solo gigs) and songwriters/composers in this sample suggests that most screen composers do not start out as composers for screen, but rather engage with sound as the focus of their creativity.

Unfortunately, those who answered 'no' to Q11 (n=28; 19 male, 9 female) were not asked about their work experiences and hence cannot be compared with the 'yes' respondents. Interviewees indicated a range of previous occupations, from working as academics in non-music related disciplines, to working in other parts of the screen industry or arts sector. However, as the majority of men and women screen composers have previously worked as professional musicians, entry into the labour economy of the screen industry is a significant challenge for many screen composers. We asked survey respondents 'How did you get your first film and television job?' (Q12) in an open-ended format and found that having informal contacts or fans within the industry is a key source of initial employment and opportunities.





Survey participants accessed their first screen composition work opportunities through a variety of sources. The most common forms of entry into screen composition are through an informal contact (such as a friend, colleague or family member) (n=42), being approached by a fan of one's music who is also a director/producer (n=25), responding to an advertised job or bid (n=23) and performing some kind of unpaid labour, often for friends or students (n=15). Less common entry points included taking on a composition role in an organisation after working there in some other capacity (n=9), working with an established composer (as either a co-writer or ghostwriter) (n=9), getting composition work during formal education and through the educational institution (n=7) and through self-funded projects (n=4). A further 6 participants did not specify an answer, or claimed that they could not remember. For the most part the gender differences here were not dramatic, with the exception of men being much more likely to report being approached by a fan as the catalyst for their first job, whereas women are more likely to talk about informal contacts. In the remainder of section, we have not disaggregated the entry pathways of men and women into screen composition careers, primarily because journeys were not greatly differentiated by gender.

Data from interviews gave further insights into how respondents gained entry into the field. Interviewees gave details as to how work might come about as a result of informal contacts or being approached by a fan (the most commonly chosen categories above). It was also common for first-time screen composers to describe finding their way into screen music composition through more informal contacts that they either had made in other work roles, or by meeting and talking with persons in decision-making positions in the screen or music industries. Opportunities came about through a director's enjoyment of a composer's past music, but also due to the emergence of unexpected production failures (such as a composer withdrawing from a production) or other pressures to have music composed at short notice. In retrospect, these organisational failures are read by participants as lucky moments.

It was at a radio studio, a film studio, and I was having my first coaching lesson, and working out my pronunciation, and making sure I was clear, and everything like that. And, this film guy walked in and spoke to my teacher, and said, 'Oh, my composer's just dropped out, I don't know what to do.' And it was literally like that. And, he goes, 'Well, she writes music.' And, I said, 'Yeah, I do.'... He

gave me a DVD with the QuickTime file on it, and I went home. And, it ended up being this amazing opener for [a documentary], and I loved it... The next day I brought it back, and he said, 'What are you doing here?' Because, he was very brash, like too busy, you know like all directors are, excuses and that. And, I said, 'Well I've got it here.' He goes, 'Oh, really?' And didn't believe me, and put it on, and I'd given him a couple of versions too, because I was so excited about it, and he loved it. (female composer)

Friends and family also played a large role in the early screen music experiences of a few of our interview participants. One female composer noted that she and her partner worked together on music clips, creating a 'strong connection with music' that would be 'a really, really big part of [her] life', developing through composing background music and eventually thematic music for their shared business ventures. Other interview participants noted the role that friends and family played in early screen composition work experiences.

[Q: What knowledge of the industry do you feel like you've gained through that relationship with your father?] Well, it was great for me in terms of getting my first jobs, I didn't get them through him but I knew that they existed, thanks to him and that's one of the big things, knowledge of industry. (male composer)

But generally most of the contacts I've made have come through just through work. You know, like turning up and doing a job. But they would be recommendations, I guess, really, is the key. You know, friends of friends and then you start to meet more people in the scene and it's actually not as big as you think. And so, you know, somebody says, 'Oh look, I need a guy that can do this' and then a friend of theirs that knows you might say, 'Well... give [name removed] a call,' you know, 'You might like what he does.' (male composer)

Friends and family played several roles in interview participant's career narratives; as sources of employment; as reservoirs of financial and other material support, especially during times of unemployment or establishing oneself; as libraries of knowledge and expertise about the industry and other 'soft' skills that are vital to managing oneself as a sole trader or entity within legal transactions; and as intermediaries between composers and decision-makers within the screen and music industries. Contacts made through education institutions also played a large, and in some cases an ongoing, role in the screen composition careers of some interview participants. The cluster of screen and music industry personnel that circulate through these institutions offer opportunities for establishing ongoing friendships and collegial relationships.

Job hunting strategies, such as distributing sample CDs (or tapes) and cold-calling potential clients were also described as common practices for composers attempting to gain work. Opinion on this strategy was divided, with some composers describing cold-calling as futile, but a number of others giving accounts of how this approach gained them employment:

I sent my stuff in just on CD everywhere, pestered people everywhere, and one day as fate has it, a CD of mine landed on the desk of an editor who was cutting a documentary and she used it... as temporary music in the film and it worked so well that they ended up calling me and asking me to do the film as a first time composer. (male composer)

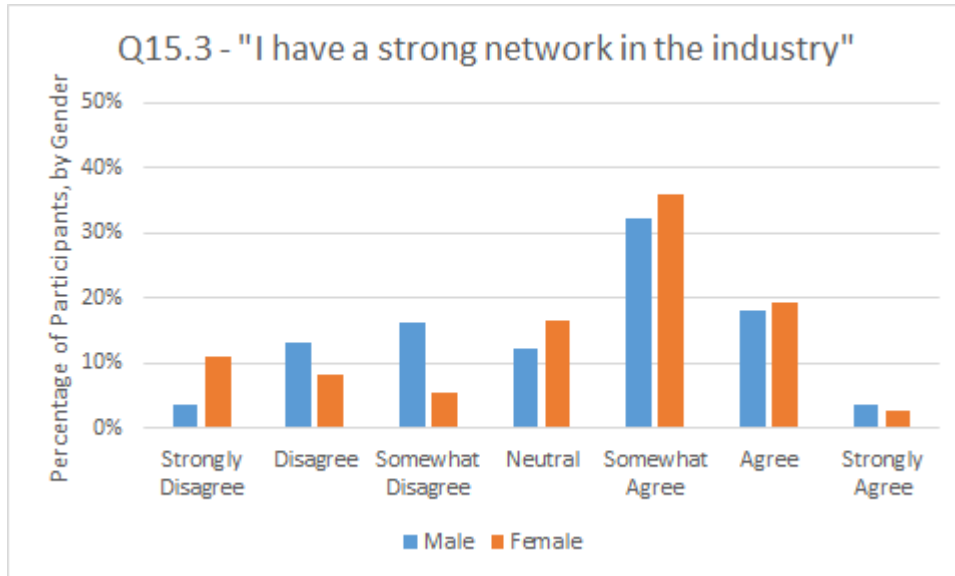
Unsurprisingly, interview participants who reported knowing others who worked in the screen industry, or who had musical admirers working in decision-making positions in the industry, were more likely to be describing successful attempts to secure work. The following female screen composer relates a typical narrative in this regard, although few other participants mentioned that they used the services of film agents to find work.

How did I find jobs? Mostly through just word of mouth as people that I had worked with who recommended me to other filmmakers. I send out various pictures and show reels and CVs to people - what actors would call cold-calling. And that never generated a single job. It was like a complete waste of time. And so it just grew from there really. And then, actually, quite significantly, not long after graduating, a film composing agent approached me. And so I then had an agent who could help me find work. And he is still my agent. And he finds me about - I'd say 30% to 40% of my work. And the rest is just word of mouth and previous directors returning.

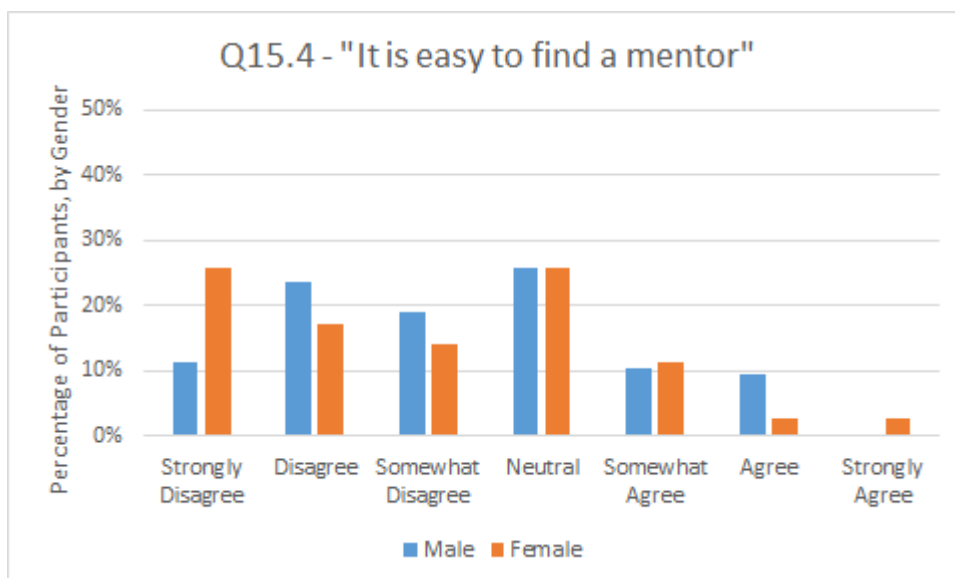
Entry and participation in screen composition roles are serendipitous and precarious experiences for many. A combination of musical skills, business knowledge, professional social networks, and access to technology and workplaces must intersect with chance events. Those working in sections of the industry with more routinised job application processes, contract bidding (as in the advertisement industry), and use of agents to source composers, are able to identify and perhaps more readily rely on these institutions. Most importantly, to have access to professional networks, it is an advantage to be known and trusted in that network. It is hence not surprising to hear even participants who have had long careers working within the same groups of producers and studios are likely to have initially come into contact with these networks through informal social networks - friends, family, and fans.

## 5.6. Support and Mentoring

Given the heavy reliance of many musicians and others working in the creative industries on the information and work opportunities offered by others, we sought to understand how screen music composers think about their professional networks. Firstly, as part of our survey, participants were asked to what degree they agreed with the statement 'I have a strong network in the industry' (Q15.3). Overall, just over half of both male and female composers tended to agree to some degree that they have strong networks (54% of males and 58% of females) as shown in the graph, below. Seventeen percent of both men and women either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement, with women disagreeing more strongly than men, suggesting that a large minority of both genders feel that their networks are not well established.



Survey participants were also asked whether the statement ‘It is easy to find a mentor’ applied to their experiences (Q15.4). Male composers were only slightly more likely to agree with this statement generally, with 20% agreeing with the statement to some degree as compared with 17% of females, as shown in the graph below. The proportions disagreeing were likewise similar, with 54% of males and 57% of females disagreeing to some degree. Where there is a noticeable difference is in the degree to which each group is likely to disagree with the statement, with 26% of females claiming to ‘strongly disagree’ with the statement, compared with 11% of males. This disparity in response points towards a key problem for women entering the screen composition arena, given the likelihood that participants will report such career development and guidance issues as being a central barrier to establishing a career as a composer (See Appendix 3, especially Table 2).



In our interviews with screen composers, both male and female participants often noted the importance of being able to access support networks and mentorship to building a career in the screen industry. Many participants claimed that being a member of a guild, community, or other professional group inspired by a collegial ethic of solidarity among screen composers

was a valuable resource for less well-known composers, especially those starting out in the screen and music industries. Issues such as learning how to negotiate a fair price for work performed, dealing with legal issues, finding out about work opportunities, and learning how to communicate with industry professionals were noted in conversations as key benefits of being involved with professional groups. When asked what could be done to help new composers establish their careers, the following (established) composer noted the importance of professional social groups in his own experiences.

When I was doing advertising, there was an attempt to get together a group of composers... a sort of a guild or a gathering, so people could get some idea of how it really works, because everything's negotiable, as you know, and everyone's trying to undercut everybody... I would advise new composers to avail themselves of those organisations – pay the fees, join up, and get to know the guys that are in there. Because that is where you will learn what the real world is – what guys are really charging. You'll meet people, and you'll learn the ropes a bit about what the producers expect. It's that real information sharing that only comes from knowing people who are in it... It's really hard to get that information, because it's all private and all confidential. But that's what you really need.

Following on from professional social groups, making connections with other composers (especially more experienced colleagues) was identified as central to the musical and professional development of several composers. Some noted advantages included learning new technical skills, learning how to structure work and daily routines, developing a strong work ethic, and building a client-friendly approach to working and self-promotion. The dangers of not availing oneself to advice from professional industry groups, such as the Screen Composers Guild, or more informal professional social groups and mentorship was also noted by several participants, such as the following male composer.

A lot of new composers, and I've met a bunch of them, didn't even know the Guild existed. They are accepting disastrous deals, shocking deals, and I don't mean pay, I mean they're trading away all their publishing rights and all their copyright with nothing in return. It upsets me so much that there's a group that we've formed locally with as many experienced composers as we can inviting guys that are starting out, if anyone knows of a new guy starting out, let them know, they can come along and we catch up and meet.

Another composer commented that 'my University course didn't even cover APRA', suggesting that there may be an information gap in the training of musicians in some university degrees. Access to mentorship, resources and advice that circulate in professional social groups is a key issue for gender equity among screen composers in the early stages of their careers. Learning what producers expect from professional composers, how to negotiate work contracts, and how to become aware of opportunities for work are suggested by the above participant to have a status synonymous with trade secrets, which can only be known 'from knowing people who are in [the industry]'. The ability of beginning composers to access professional social groups may influence their likelihood of success in later career and work life. The social makeup of such groups, and whether they are inviting spaces for both men and

women, shapes the underlying professional networks which screen composers and their industry depend upon.

Some composers noted, however, that the networks could be difficult to maintain because of the inherently isolated and individualised nature of much of the work, which was described as being exacerbated by technological advances.

It is generally fairly solitary work and my studio is based at home, so there are some days where I'll talk to my wife before she leaves for work and I will talk to her when she gets back. That's sort of the only human contact. I talk to [my] dogs probably more than is healthy. I sort of have to make a concerted attempt to speak to other people especially once a project gets going. I have quite a good, creative relationship with the director of ... the bulk of my work and so he very much trusts me to do what needs to be done, so he'll go, here's the episode, go and then I won't talk to him throughout production and then, when I send him the finished product, he will go that's great thanks. So there's not even a lot of creative back and forth but I guess it's good that I've got that, engendered that level of trust in the work but it doesn't sort of lead to a lot of social contact. (male screen composer)

In circumstances such as these, more effort was required to maintain connections and networks, or to make new ones.

For some female participants, exclusionary practices in both professional social groups as well as production companies have shaped career decisions. One participant, recalling her early years in film composition two decades ago, describes her experiences of being forced out of two professional social networks (or 'boys' clubs' in her terms). These experiences had contributed to her preference to work alone, rather than with other composers on the same projects or in shared work spaces.

I think men are better at organizing. I think men are better at forming collectives, and I think women need to get better at it... I tend to want to work on my own. It's like a control thing so I don't get pushed out, and so what that then does is set up a dynamic where you then work on your own, and I think women would be stronger if we could form our own collectives, our own girl's clubs, you know? I think we would be stronger. (female composer)

For some women, professional groups, such as the Australian Guild of Screen Composers (AGSC), were perceived to be inaccessible avenues for engaging with the broader screen composition community. The following screen composer believes that women need to be 'more vocal' in the industry, but suggests that constraints on time, such as care duties, may create a sense of isolation from groups such as the AGSC that may help achieve this goal.

I don't know whether maybe I should have contacted those guys or something or maybe I should have, as Americans would say 'reached out' to those guys. But I've just been doing my own thing. Working... So I haven't really reached out to those guys. But they have never reached out to me either, at all... I've never been asked to give a talk. I've never been invited to a dinner. To be fair, maybe you're meant to be more involved in their organisation and then that

happens that way. So it may well be that I'm a bit isolationist. And the thing is, when you've got kids and you're working a lot, that's it. It's full. That's why I'm not at functions. I'm not out networking. I'm just not. I'm just either working or with the kids.

One male composer who attended AGSC social events expressed concern about the dominance of men within these events and the message it might be sending to women attendees.

Ten percent of the people coming along are female but, yeah, imagine coming into a room full of guys all standing around drinking beer or whatever, and they're all – I mean, most musicians are pretty relaxed and pretty cool, but it's still there, isn't it? That's got to be a bit intimidating.

Several comments from female participants mirrored the above composer's statement. One participant in particular noted that the goal of increasing women's participation in professional bodies, such as APRA AMCOS, may be a futile one, if there are not initially a larger proportion of female musicians wanting to become composers in the first place. As a potential source of support, professional bodies such as APRA AMCOS and Guild organisations were perceived as difficult to access for both early-career composers and women. Our interviews also revealed that many screen composers were unaware of what initiatives have been trialled or currently exist to assist female composers. Many suspected that such initiatives exist, but when pressed for more detail admitted, 'I don't know'. Disseminating information about initiatives run to engage female composers in screen composition may further enable those already eager to enter the film and television industry to flourish.

For many participants, women were especially vulnerable if they could not find a group or mentor willing to lend professional advice, share information about work opportunities, and offer technical support. The perceived persistence of a boys' club in screen composition, where mentorship and work opportunities are circulated among a guarded group with its own culture and preferences to share among one another, was identified as a key contributing factor to this feeling of vulnerability, and hence need for solidarity and community among women. The following screen composer relates her desire to see more women composers support one another.

There are a couple of sound groups I'll send to you of women helping each other. I'll send you these groups because there's actually on-the-ground groups in other countries that are women helping each other. I will help other composers. I'll mentor young composers, female composers. I don't have a problem with that at all. I would love to do that... When I was setting up my studio... [there were] some great groups on social media especially on Twitter; these young girls helping each other. If you don't know something technical it's really hard to get an answer. It's so complicated setting a studio up. Just those technical aspects can be a real turn-off for some young girls.

Opportunities to interact with other composers and persons working in the screen and music industries were highlighted as vital for the development of screen composers careers, but these opportunities were spoken about nor available to men and women in the same capacity.

Participants were more likely to mention professional organisations such as APRA AMCOS as helpful in responding to industry-wide issues such as these. Where the gendered make-up of professional social groups was not seen as a problem, organisations such as APRA AMCOS were readily identified as key power-brokers in connecting people within the screen and music industries and helping composers to establish and build their careers.

I guess having come from the live [music] world and then being in the composing role as well, they are actually two very different scenes in the sense that there's an obvious opportunity for live musicians to meet and exchange ideas and build relationships in the sense that, you know, when you're playing live, you are all in the same room. And being a composer, you don't have that same luxury. I feel like what would be a great thing for composers is if there were more opportunities, say, through a body like APRA AMCOS or something like that, for composers to actually all get in the same room and actually meet and do the same thing. (male composer)

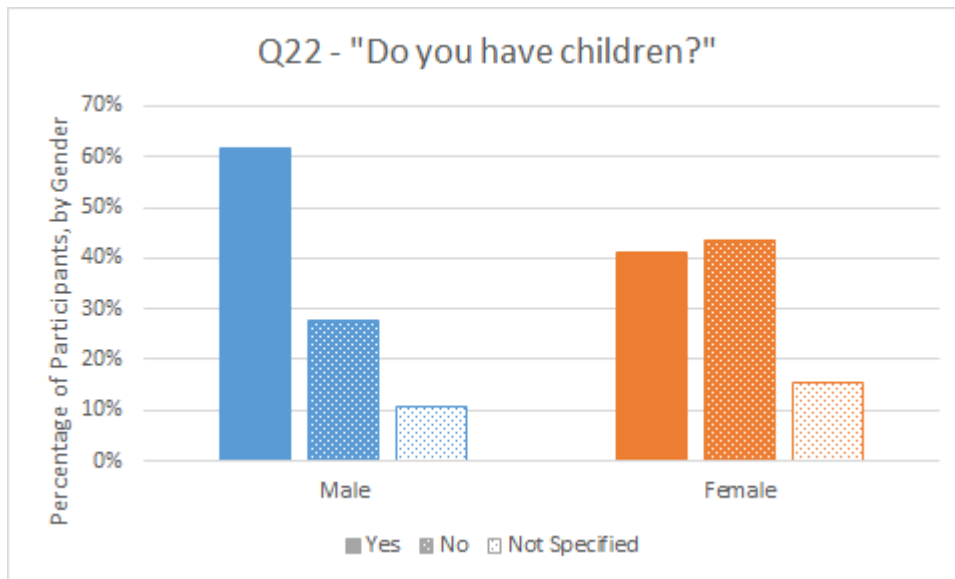
Trying to probably increase female membership of professional bodies. So, in getting people – in getting them on board and getting them along to speak at – not just having panels with guys, trying to sort of – it's just sort of basic stuff, but kind of actually making – having women there and visible, it's just – until people just forget that it was ever a thing. (male composer)

Overall, then, although the majority of composers felt they had good networks, there was a sizeable minority that did not, and mentorship was hard to come by. There was a sense that composers would like more opportunities to interact with one another, and that despite the overwhelmingly informal nature of most industry networks, more leadership from professional bodies in this area would be welcome. Professional social groups offer their members an opportunity to engage with others in the screen and music industries in much more informal exchanges than in a classroom setting. The informal networking environment offered by professional social groups is a space where industry professionals may share their personal interests, passions, and ideas with one another. This allows for the opportunity to question established and emerging composers about their experiences, but also means that access to such groups may be inhibited by the norms of preferences of the group's members, reproducing inequalities (DiMaggio and Garip, 2012).

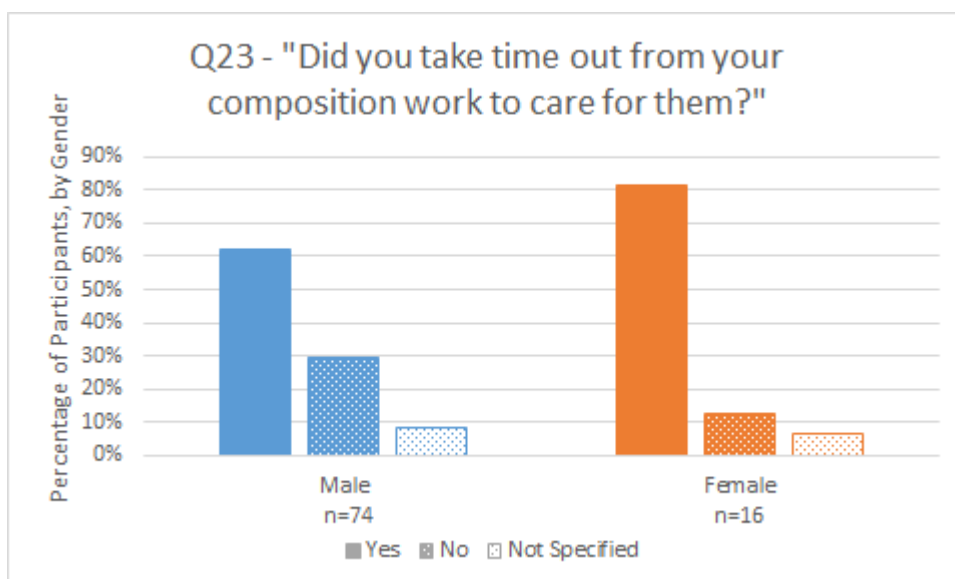
## 5.7. Child Rearing

One of the most commonly cited barriers to women's career progression in any field is having children. As such, the survey included a number of questions exploring how this affected screen composers' career trajectories.



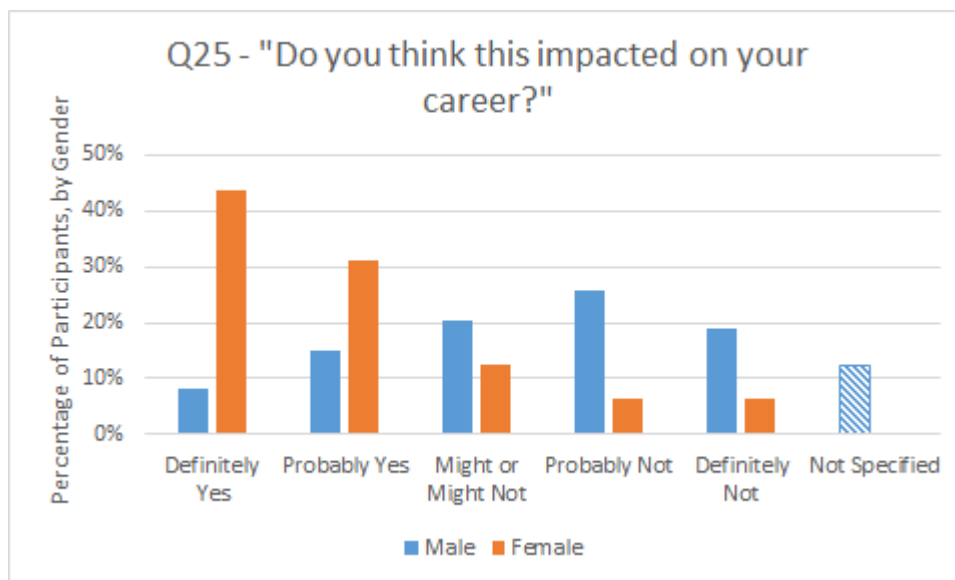


Fifty-seven percent of respondents indicated that they have children, with men being more likely to answer 'yes' to this question than women. Women were slightly more likely to not have children than to have them, and around 15% of female respondents declined to answer this question.



Eighty-one percent of the women who had children said they took time away from their composition work to care for them, compared to 62% of the men (as shown in the graph above; Q23). In a follow up question about how much time was taken away from work to provide this care (Q24), more differences emerged. Nine female respondents and 12 males said they took a number of years out of work to care for children. For females, this averaged out at 5.5 years, whereas for males this was 1.5 years. Men, then, were much less likely to have a break in their careers related to childrearing, and this break was much shorter if it occurred. Men, however, were more likely to respond that the time away from work involved working shorter days rather than taking time out completely from work. Seventeen men, as compared to three women, gave this response.

The respondents who said they took time out to care for their children were asked to evaluate if childcare had an impact on their careers (Q25). Women were much more likely to see this as having had an impact on their career than men, as shown in the graph below. Over 70% of women who answered this question thought the time they took away probably or definitely impacted their career, compared to 25% of men, whereas 50% of men said time away probably or definitely did not affect them, compared to 12% of women (Q25). This is likely to be connected to the above findings that men took less time out, or counted reduced working hours as time away from work in a way that women rarely did.



Discussions during interviews gave more insight into the type of disruption composers experience when they have a family, and how this impacts their composition work. For all female interviewees who had children, this was something that was discussed extensively during the interview. Women interviewees described extensive disruption to their composition work, and needing to renegotiate schedules, relationships and priorities:

And yeah, it was just so amazing, just working like a mad person and then I had the baby and just like completely different world. Yeah. And so I feel like I'm just emerging from that now, [the child is] starting kindy so I have a bit more time... I find it really hard to even imagine being in that head space while having [a baby] as well 'cause it's such a – I've read a lot about it as well and a lot about women being creative and being parents and how there's that myth that creative work has to be obsessive work and whatever but it's still how I feel like you just – you have deadlines, it's so not negotiable and you might have a toddler who's a complete arsehole and not letting you do anything or he might be sick or he might have trod on a bee and can't walk anyway either. So it's been pretty tricky juggling that.

I'm finding it hard to compose in - because I like to have a few hours, like most people, to be able to be creative, it takes a while for it to sort of start and then you get on a roll. That's what it's like for me, I presume that's for most people anyway. And, like even this phone call here, I've got a two-and-a-half-year-old

coming back in with toys, standing at my legs. So, I'm trying to do my best to have focus, but it's just too hard to compose.

Women such as the two quoted here who still had small children and anticipated resuming their careers as the children got older identified ways in which this would be difficult, including re-establishing networks and re-learning changed technologies.

However, for women who were past this stage, in more than one instance, the birth of a child had ended their composition career, or severely curtailed it:

So I quit basically and just had three children... So I had my hands full, really. So because I had my hands absolutely full I just decided to give into it for as long as it took and I did that.

One thing I noticed in terms of the trajectory was that it didn't keep building in the way it had prior to the children. Sort of from 20 to 35 I was really building in terms of volume but also the status of the kind of jobs that I was working on, and I found that when I stopped being so available and I stopped - you know, and it became known that I was juggling pregnancies and juggling small children and I was saying no to things because of that - it wasn't that the offers didn't keep coming... But it wasn't building. It didn't keep going up, and to an extent soliciting from my own energy - I didn't push, I didn't try and build up as much because I had my hands so full, and I didn't have the energy to be going and meeting with the - you know, the big guns... The deadlines around screen composing aren't family friendly, as I'm sure you've heard other people say, and I just went, how do I do all of this on my own? I'm going to have to sacrifice the screen composing, so it was at that point that I sort of made a more or less conscious decision to no longer go for the work.

In the few instances where childbirth did not significantly disrupt a woman's career, this was almost always associated with having a supportive partner who also worked in the film and television industry, which enabled women to work more flexibly and maintain relationships within the industry.

On the other hand, children did not feature significantly in the stories most men told about their careers. In most interviews with men, children were mentioned only in passing if at all. No men described a career break associated with children, and only one male interviewee, who was the primary caretaker for his children, said that his career had been affected by needing to care for them. Even in this instance, the discussion was not about being held back, but of having to make responsible decisions that ensured the family's security, rather than pursuing more artistic but financially risky projects.

Having children, then, has highly gendered outcomes, and disadvantages women. This is exacerbated by the insecure nature of the industry, and the importance of informal networks that can be hard to maintain during a career break, or re-establish afterwards.

## 6. Education Institutions

### 6.1. Background and Music Education Trends in Australia

The Australian education system includes programs for the teaching of music across education levels, from primary, to secondary, to vocational and tertiary. At the tertiary and vocational levels, music education is regulated by a nationally-recognised registration scheme under the auspices of the Australian Government. Certificates II, III, IV, Diploma, and Advanced Diploma of Music Industry courses are offered at approximately 330 vocational and higher education institutions across the country as part of the 'Music' training package (code CUS09; see [www.training.gov.au](http://www.training.gov.au)). Thirty five of these education providers are also registered to offer specific training in screen music composition through the nationally accredited unit, 'Compose music for screen' (code CUAMCP502). In the higher education sector, our research team found 26 higher education providers offering bachelor or higher qualifications in music, music composition or Arts degrees with options for musical training and accreditation.

Music education has been shown to have various gendered outcomes. Numerous studies overseas, primarily from the UK and the United States, have highlighted key issues for gender equality in the screen music sectors that emerge from educational environments. Studies of music education in primary and secondary schooling suggest that the socialisation of future musicians into gendered music practices begins early on in life and develops alongside children's social identities.

In elementary schools, research in the USA has indicated that teachers struggle to encourage boys into some music programs, with teachers also at odds when trying to articulate how gender influences their classroom practice (Roulston and Misawa, 2011). In the secondary school setting, Joseph Abramo (2011) notes that boys and girls tend to associate with one another differently, with gendered groups developing their own methods for playing music together. All-boys groups tended to use more non-verbal cues to communicate their intentions to one another while playing, while all-girl groups tended to compartmentalise their instrumental playing time apart from time for discussing their music practice. In mixed groups, boys were likely to play over the girls' (verbal) suggestions, frustrating more verbal participants in musical groups. Teachers' participation in encouraging and mentoring students has been suggested to be directly linked to school performance through influencing the self-esteem of high school students (Kelly, 2016). In a study of women in US high school songwriting and music technology courses, female students expressed feeling excluded from classroom environments, as if they were intruding on someone else's space (Tobias, 2014, p. 16). The socialisation of boys and girls into gender-segregated styles of communication and music play constitute a key component of gendered music development.

A second phenomenon emerging at the high-school level involves exposure to music production and composition technologies. Research by Victoria Armstrong (2008) in the UK suggests that girls express a lot less confidence with using music technology for composing (p. 381) and prefer more formal training in technology use than do boys (p. 382). Armstrong (2011) claims that the symbolic association of technology with masculinity contributes 'to perceptions of women as less able and less interested in all things technological', including music technologies (p. 3). Other studies have supported Armstrong's findings, noting that boys

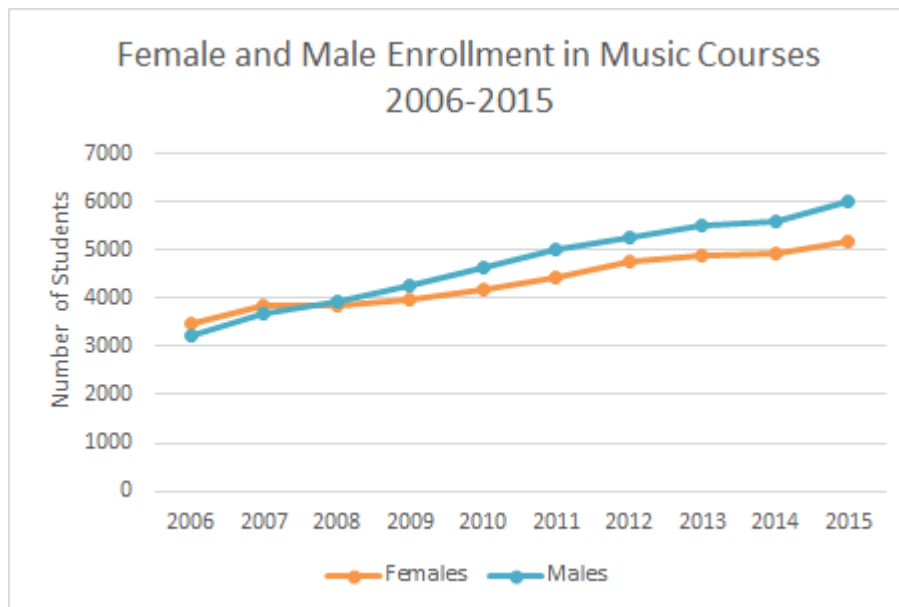
express more confidence and are trusted more to experiment and use music composition and production technologies (Cooper, 2007; Shibazaki and Marshall, 2013). Lucy Green's classic and oft cited study of gender and music composition notes that the presence of women composer challenge gender ideologies, in which 'the cerebral delineation of composition continues to carry overwhelmingly masculine connotations' (1997, p. 105). Green theorised that students tend to 'adopt certain musical practices and musical styles... that helps them to affirm their gender' (2002, p. 138). In music composition, boys in Green's study were more likely to be praised for and assumed to be competent with composition, while girls were described as unimaginative or 'rote' learners (2002, pp. 139-40). These observations suggests that assumptions about gender-based competencies play a powerful role in the socialisation of young composers and musicians.

In the tertiary education sector, these earlier associations of gendered educational spaces and the association of technology and composition with masculinity are likely to persist. Research in the higher education section (mostly in UK universities) has established that contemporary music education practices often do little to redress the marginalisation of women composers in music education and composition classrooms. The music higher education environment is 'governed by a certain type of masculine behaviour, language and culture, which women have to adapt to' (Bogdanovic, 2015, p. 12). Parkinson and Dylan Smith, in their UK study, add that women are often unable to adapt to the masculine cultures in classrooms, as female participants in many of these environments are rendered 'invisible' and seen as inauthentic, especially in popular music education setting where classrooms draw on potentially 'hetero-normative and misogynistic' popular genres and styles (2015, p. 110). An Australian study by Katie Zhukov (2006, p. 28) notes that women in her sample of conservatoriums (hosted by tertiary education providers) tended to 'adopt a more compliant role' in classes than their male counterparts, asking and answering less questions with the instructor.

Changes to the music industry have been mirrored by changes to music education, especially in higher education. The shift in higher education music composition courses in the UK, from being primarily centred on classical training, to incorporation popular music styles and a closer connection to vocational/industry-oriented training has seen higher proportions of men and low-SES students enter these degrees, compared with more traditional music composition courses (Born and Divine 2014, p. 136). Born and Divine (2014, p. 146) note that 'the student population across various [music technology] degree designations is nearly 90 per cent male' compared to traditional music courses which are closer to 45% male, and that 'a key problem... is the sheer lack of women applying'. Born and Divine (2014, p. 147) proposes a 'leaky pipe' model to explain the lack of women in music technology courses, with the percentage of women (compared to men) involved in music technology shrinking with each step up the education ladder, from primary, to secondary, to tertiary education. An increasing focus on technology in music composition courses is highlighted in these studies as a key explanation as to why these spaces tend to be male-dominated. However, any claims of causality presented in these studies should be treated tentatively. Both Ballentyne and Harrison's (2005) and Webster's (2012) studies note a lack of research on gender in music technology and highlight a need for more research in the higher music education field.

The present study contributes to our growing understanding of music education in Australia. Recent demographic trends in music education in the higher education setting warrant further

investigation of the educational setting and its consequences for gender equity initiatives. The graph below depicts a concerning trend in the gendered composition of music students.



Source: Department of Education and Training

What can be observed in this graph is a gradual increase in the percentage of male students across this ten year period. Males move from 48% of students in 2006 to 54% in 2015, and while this does not represent a large disparity at this stage (it is a difference of slightly less than 1000 students), the continuation of this trend would be a cause for concern in an area where practitioners are already more likely to be male. In the UK, a similar pattern has emerged, and has been connected to the growth of music technology degrees in particular (Born and Divine, 2014). The low numbers of women enrolled in STEM courses is well-established, and this is reproduced in music technology. We tentatively suggest that this is the case in Australia also, but further research on change over time in degrees is required to confirm this.

## 6.2. Film and Television Composition Education

To gain a more in-depth understanding of how music education in higher education institutions might be contributing to the gender imbalance among film and television composers in particular, we collected data from eight institutions. These ranged from universities to the vocational education sector, and for-profit institutions. This data was collected from academics responsible for teaching courses on composition, and, where possible, those composition courses specifically tailored to film and television. In order to encourage staff to talk as freely as possible about the situation at their institution, this data has been anonymised and presented in a form that does not allow identification of specific institutions.

Across these institutions, staff reported that enrolments in composition courses were heavily weighted in favour of males, with the highest enrolment levels for women in non-postgraduate courses being around one-third of students, and in some cases much lower. Postgraduate courses could have much higher proportions of women but this was often a result of the very

small numbers of students in these courses; for example, if a Masters degree had an intake of only four students, two women could constitute 50% of the students. However, all staff also reported that low numbers of female students were broadly reflective of application rates, or, in cases of degrees where composition was an optional element, of student uptake of these electives. No staff thought that selection processes used were resulting in lower levels of female students. That is, women are applying for composition-related courses at a much lower rate than men.

Interviewees noted that in related courses, such as songwriting or performance, around 50% of students were female. Courses using the word 'composition' dropped to between 35% and 25% female students, and courses that had titles that suggested a greater use of technology (such as sound design, or production) were likely to have even lower numbers of women, around 10%. This finding corresponds with the findings from overseas research discussed in Born and Divine (2014), which suggests that the association between composition and technology is a barrier to female participation in education in this area.

There was also an overall gender imbalance in terms of staff teaching composition. Only one institution consulted had more female staff members teaching in composition than males. In almost all cases, male staff outnumbered women, including some institutions that had an all-male staff.

While all staff members interviewed indicated that they were aware of the gender disparities in the industry, the approaches that were being taken by their institutions in terms of addressing this varied greatly. On the one hand, some interviewees noted that their institutions were conscious of the gender imbalance in this area, and were either trying or considering ways to address this:

- *Giving female course applicants favourable treatment.* For instance, one interviewee said their institution accepted almost any female applicants, and another institution gave female applicants a boost to their Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR) score.
- *Standardising course admissions.* One interviewee described how admission processes had been standardised to reduce biases, and how this had led to higher enrolment rates for women.
- *Providing female-only mentoring/internships.* Interviewees discussed programs designed to enhance the opportunities for their female students. These included mentorship opportunities and internships that were only open to women, or where women and men each had a certain number of places open to them.
- *Creating awareness of classroom gender norms.* Some institutions are acknowledging and attempting to counter aspects of the industry culture that might discourage women's participation. This included being aware of gendered dynamics in classrooms and the way that staff can reproduce industry norms, and asking questions about the content of student work.
- *Improving female representation among staff.* Some institutions were considering ways to improve female representation among staff, or had recently brought more women on board as teachers. An interviewee who is a student at an institution that had recently hired its first female lecturers in this area said, 'I really appreciated that. It

made me feel a lot better actually being in the department and having more female teachers to look up to and to hear how they went through their journey’.

Not all institutions were as invested in taking action on this issue, and some interviewees reported barriers to change. In some instances, this was because of a lack of organisational motivation to address the issue. One interviewee talked about the extreme gender disparity of staff at his institution. Despite the efforts of this staff member to increase the representation of women, what he described as the ‘boys’ club’ mentality meant appointments were more likely to be made on the basis of who people knew rather than their skill set, and this resulted in the continued hiring of men. He suggested this both limited the quality of the education that the students were receiving and reproduced aspects of the industry culture that marginalise women. A staff member at another institution, where around one third of their composition students were female, said that as this was a higher rate of inclusion than at another institution that was considered to be their closest competitor, no further efforts were being considered to bring this number up.

At other institutions, however, staff who were interested in improving women’s representation were simply uncertain how to bring this about. Some interviewees felt disempowered to bring about change. This was often related to the low numbers of women applying for their courses, which they saw as putting the issue beyond their control, or as being indicative of a ‘natural’ difference between men and women in terms of talent and preferences that could not be changed. Other staff reported being unsure as to what strategies could be employed

Information from interviews with composers also gave some insights into the effects the culture in education institutions can have. Some women found these institutions to be overtly discriminatory, which made pursuing their goals more difficult.

I had to really go through the absolute ringer and jump through so many hoops even to be admitted, which I subsequently found out later that what I had to submit was way above and beyond what my fellow [male] classmates had to do. So my interview alone went for two to three hours just to be admitted. But not only that, they made me go and write a piece to film, which I’d never done before. So they gave me a film and said, ‘Go away and write a film score.’ It was just a short film. But I had no studio. I really had no experience. Then, nevertheless, I went away and did it, and it cost me money to hire a studio. But I had to do that, and none of my classmates had to do that.

All the boys got taken seriously and to the point where they were allowed to be in bands outside of the conservatorium and I wasn’t. [Q: As in you weren’t allowed, your teachers told you not?] No, you actually had to talk to the department about being involved in extra musical activities outside of the conservatorium. What I found was that it was quite an insidious breeding ground for boys being taken seriously and girls not being taken so seriously. I wasn’t allowed to even apply to the jazz department because I was a woman. [This was in] the early ‘80s. Mid ‘80s. The guy who was in charge of the jazz department at the conservatorium didn’t like women as jazz players.



Although most such stories were from at least a decade ago, and hopefully represent practices that are no longer prevalent, they give some insight into some of the ways women have been excluded in the past, and how the culture of education institutions can impact on who is allowed entry into specific creative fields. This cannot be considered to be entirely in the past: despite the attempts at change documented above, and despite being generally happy with her institution, a current screen composition student reported that:

...I do keep quiet sometimes when I hear the class get a little bit taken over by, I don't know, there's this little boys' club situation that happens sometimes, where guys do have a very natural aptitude for technology and technical things. It's probably unfounded, but I just get the sense that they really take it really seriously, they get really into it and they know what they're talking about and they make sure that they know what they're talking about. I don't know what it is, I don't understand the psychology of it, but I just notice it.

Further, wider-ranging research on the experiences of girls and women in music education in Australia, including points at which they make choices about what type of education to do and how gendered dynamics play out in classrooms, would be beneficial. Despite attempts made within some higher education institutions to address gender inequalities in music composition, the increasing proportion of males (compared to females) in music courses and ongoing experiences of exclusion in these institutions suggest that there is a gendered career barrier being reproduced in at least some of these organisations.

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

Many of the findings in this report reflect understandings of gender differences in society more broadly; for example, the fact that women are more likely to be caregivers than men, or the idea that men and women have fundamentally different natures which leads to them creating different types of music come from social norms that are not specific to the screen or music industries. However, the industry-specific ways in which these manifest have led to a situation where female screen composers are vastly outnumbered by males; where they feel the need to gain more qualifications than their male peers; where their careers can be severely curtailed or ended by having children; where they are less likely to be undertaking the type of composing work they would most like to; where they are less likely to be recognised with official awards for their work; where they experience frustration at being excluded from networks that they perceive as being 'boys' clubs'; and where, in some cases, they are actively harassed and abused. The reasons for these outcomes are complex, but the findings contained here suggest key areas where action could be taken to redress this situation.

*Recommendation I: Engage Men in Equity Initiatives.* Of central concern is the gap between women's perception and experiences of the industry (as a 'boys' club'), and those of men (as more of a 'meritocracy'). Developing strategies that engage men in discussions in this area, and invite them to gain a better understanding of the experiences of their female colleagues is recommended. In addition to this, the men who do see gender inequality as a problem but who are confused or feel disempowered in relation to this could benefit from access to a clear articulation of the issue and suggestions for solutions that they can help effect. This could include developing specific talking points and suggestions for action targeted at male composers, educators, and industry members such as directors and producers, including male-to-female mentoring programs (possibly in conjunction with the *Gender Matters* initiative). In short, it should be made clear that it is not incumbent on women only to take action to bring about change, and that men need to examine how their beliefs and practices can (advertently or inadvertently) negatively impact their female colleagues.

*Recommendation II: Create Networking and Partnership Opportunities.* Increasing opportunities for networking and mentorship would be desirable, and in particular instituting more formalised programs to help emerging composers who have not yet established the networks they need to find work make connections in the industry. Modelling ways that composers can work together, or form collectives (including with other film and television professionals), could give composers different ways to think about their career paths. The women who were best able to avoid the negative consequences of motherhood or unexpected life events (such as illness) were those who were working in groups or in partnership with other industry professionals. While it is questionable whether this type of working arrangement could be normalised in this highly competitive and individualised area, some composers may find the increased flexibility and potential security offered by working in groups appealing and others may find opportunities to learn and share their professional skills and experiences with one another.

*Recommendation III: Spotlight Female Role Models.* The research here has found that women believe for the most part that they are talented, but do not express or act on this belief in the same way that men do. Exploring strategies to increase women's self-confidence is therefore encouraged. Increasing the visibility of women in the industry is one aspect of this. Finding ways to increase the profile of successful female screen composers, for instance, would have the effect of providing role models for emerging composers and normalising the idea that women can be successful screen composers. Similarly, increasing women's representation on, for example, the judging panels for the Screen Composer awards would send a message that women's expertise is valued, and may increase women's confidence in the processes around these awards. Altering the rules on who sits on these judging panels so that a certain number of women is mandated should be strongly considered.

*Recommendation IV: Help Girls to Engage with Music Technology.* Although this report has demonstrated that there are many different pathways into screen composition, not all of which involve formal education, the discrepancy between males and females enrolling in composition and music technology courses in higher education means women are not being equipped with the skills for this industry in the same numbers as men. This is particularly significant in light of the finding that women are more likely to undertake formal education before attempting to establish a career as a screen composer than men are. Finding ways to introduce girls to music technology and composition at earlier ages - in primary or secondary school, for instance - may ultimately be necessary to achieve gender equality among screen composers, but we recognise this is a long-term strategy that would involve collaboration between many different stakeholders. Collaboration between industry bodies like APRA AMCOS and education providers, and communication between educators about what strategies are being employed to improve enrolment of and outcomes for female students, and, more importantly, which of these strategies are successful, would be an important first step in this direction.

*Recommendation VI: Ongoing Research in Women and Music-Making.* Finally, the issues that have been uncovered here represent a small part of what is happening in the music industry more broadly. Further industry-wide research can build on what has been found in relation to screen composers, in order to bring about a permanent and overdue shift in how women are represented in music-making in this country.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1 - Survey Instrument

Q1. How old are you?

- 18-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60-69
- 70+

Q2. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Q3. Which state or territory do you currently live in?

- New South Wales
- Victoria
- ACT
- Queensland
- Northern Territory
- Western Australia
- Tasmania
- South Australia

Q4. Are you best described as...

- An emerging composer
- An established composer

Q5. What type of film and television composition have you done over the last year? Please choose all that apply.

- Documentary
- Short film
- Feature film
- Reality TV
- TV series
- Children's TV
- Animation
- Jingles
- Games
- Online
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Q6. What type of composition would you most like to be doing? [Select one option]

- Documentary

- Short film
- Feature film
- Reality TV
- TV series
- Children's TV
- Animation
- Jingles
- Games
- Online
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Q7. What is your highest level of education?

- Graduate diploma or graduate certificate
- Postgraduate
- Bachelor Degree
- Advanced diploma or diploma
- Certificate
- Secondary Education
- Primary education
- Other

Q8. How many years have you been working as a film and television composer (please round up to the nearest whole year)?

Q9. Did you undertake any formal music training? If yes, please describe.

- No
- Yes \_\_\_\_\_

If No is selected, then skip to Q11

Q10. Did you undertake any formal training in making music for film and television? If yes, please describe.

- No
- Yes \_\_\_\_\_

Q11. Did you work as a professional musician in another capacity before starting as a film and television composer? If yes, please describe.

- No
- Yes \_\_\_\_\_

Q12. How did you get your first film and television job?



Q13. Over the last year, approximately what percentage of your income came from film and television composing?

- 0%
- 1-19%
- 20-39%
- 40-59%
- 60-79%
- 80-99%
- 100%

Q14. In your own words, please describe the three (3) most significant barriers you have faced in building a career as a film and television composer?

Q15. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

“I understand what needs to be done to succeed in the industry” (15.1)

“I am talented enough to succeed in the industry” (15.2)

“I have a strong network in the industry” (15.3)

“It is easy to find a mentor” (15.4)

“It is easy to find as much composition work as I would like” (15.5)

“I am likely to be working in the industry in 12 months” (15.6)

“I am likely to be working in the industry in 5 years” (15.7)

“I have seriously considered giving up on film and television composition in the last 12 months” (15.8)

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Q16. How would you describe the gender divide among film and television composers?

- Almost all male
- Somewhat more male
- Evenly divided
- Somewhat more female
- Almost all female

Q17. What effect do you think your gender has had on your career in film and television composing?

- Strong positive effect
- Slight positive effect
- No effect
- Slight negative effect
- Strong negative effect

Q18. Have you experienced discrimination or disadvantage in the industry because of your gender?

- Yes
- No

If No is selected, then skip Q20

Q19. Could you please describe the discrimination or disadvantage you experienced?

Q20. Do you know of times other people have experienced discrimination or disadvantage in the industry because of their gender?

- Yes
- No

If No is selected, then skip to Q22

Q21. Could you please describe this discrimination or disadvantage?

Q22. Do you have children?

- Yes
- No

If No is selected, then skip to Q26

Q23. Did you take time out from your composition work to care for them?

- Yes
- No

Q24. How long did you take away from your work to care for your children?

Q25. Do you think this impacted on your career? If yes, please describe how.

- Definitely yes
- Probably yes
- Might or might not
- Probably not
- Definitely not

Q26. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

“I took longer than other people to establish my career because of my gender” (26.1)

“I find it harder to get jobs because of my gender” (26.2)

“I am treated differently because of my gender” (26.3)

“Gender discrimination is common in the industry” (26.4)

“Sexual harassment is common in the industry” (26.5)

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Q27. Are there any other comments you would like to add?

Q28. Would you be willing to participate in a 30-60 minute interview on this topic? If so, please provide an email address below. This address will NOT be associated with any of the data you have provided in this survey.

## Appendix 2 - Interview Schedule

Ask respondent if they are happy to be recorded and advise them when you are starting the recording. Tell them that participation is voluntary and they can stop anytime, and that no materials produced from the interview will allow them to be identified. Say that although this research project is about gender, this interview is about us getting a good understanding of how the respondent's career developed overall. (These questions are guidelines only. Prompt as required, but other topics should be pursued also if they seem fruitful, especially in these early interviews.)

- Can you tell me about your relationship with music as you were growing up?
- Do you have any family members who are musicians or music composers?
- Are there any other persons you knew growing up who shared their interest in music with you?
- Can you describe your career or work experiences in music and music composition?
- Did you find it difficult to break into the industry? How did that happen?
- What do you think is essential to be a successful music composer?
- Did formal education help you to establish connections in the film/music industry?
- How have you established your professional contacts?
- What have been your career highs? Lows?
- What could be done to help new composers get started?
- Does the screen and music industry have a gender bias?
- Why do you think that it does (or doesn't)?
- How could we improve gendered outcomes for music composers?

Ask if they have any further comments or questions. Thank them for their time.

## Appendix 3 - Perceived Career Barriers

Table 2 - "Career Development Issues", Frequency of Themes (Q14)	
Difficulty developing connections / networks / credits / self-promotion / "exposure"	44
Difficulty finding clients or work experience	20
Opportunities are given to established / known composers	19
Location of composer limits opportunities (Tasmania, WA, Regional NSW, Christchurch, Adelaide, NZ, Brisbane)	12
Lack of role models / industry knowledge / mentoring	8
Difficulty working with directors / producers	7
Pigeonholed by producers / directors / composers	3
Lack of recognition for work performed (and "credit stealing")	2
Producers want to work with production companies	2
No apparent career pathway for screen composers	1
Screen composition is (over)glamorised among composers	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>119</b>

Table 3 - "Sustainability of Work", Frequency of Themes (Q14)	
Shortage of work / jobs	26
Work undervalued / expected to work for free or "on spec"	20
Royalties / income too low or uncertain	18
Producer lacks budget for composer	16
Competition / saturated job market	14
Other sources of music available for project (i.e. library music)	8
Cost of production / equipment / renting studio space too high	6
Technology innovations (i.e. looping tracks) allow composers to undercut one another	2
Outsourcing of film production overseas	1
Piracy	1

No access to professional workspace	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>113</b>

Table 4 - “Problems with Industry Culture”, Frequency of Themes (Q14)	
Producers / directors have unrealistic expectations about composition or musical ignorance	7
Chauvinism / sexism / “boys’ club”	6
Have other music/film industry work commitments	6
Childbirth / childcare limited career or flexibility	5
Nepotism / “who you know”	3
Ageism	3
Poor workplace relations practices (i.e. late contracts or flawed knowledge)	2
Television networks are focused on select genres (i.e. reality TV)	2
Not well integrated into social norms of industries scenes (i.e. fashion)	2
Being undermined by peers	1
Family commitments incompatible with work	1
Difficult or unrealistic deadlines	1
Legal issues	1
Need to put career first	1
Prejudice (unspecified)	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>42</b>

Table 5 - “Personal Problems”, Frequency of Themes (Q14)	
Self-confidence issues	9
Boredom with genre / burnout	5
Need to focus / unable to focus	4
Personality issues (“introvert”)	3
Lack of producing content	1
Feeling exploited	1

Learning not to overthink jobs / briefs	1
Prefer to work on own projects	1
Lack of support / open-mindedness on the part of producers / directors	1
Ill family member / friend	1
Loneliness of solo work	1
Lack of family support	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29</b>

Table 6 - "Skills Challenges", Frequency of Themes (Q14)	
Keeping up with technology	6
Need to broaden skill set	4
Lack of formal music training	3
Limited musical style	3
Lack of networking aptitude / business skills	3
Lacking sound engineering skills (for home or studio)	2
Producers expect broad skill set	1
Keeping up with compositional styles / trends	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23</b>