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The Missing Voices of Women in Music and Music News

How to ensure that the news about women's
presence in the Grammys reflects reality

The fourth in the series of Missing Perspectives reports

Summary of key insights

The report examines women's presence in the Grammys in the past eight years, comparing the false overly-positive narratives of the Recording Academy and news providers with the much grimmer reality of women's marginalisation as nominees and winners. It articulates structural barriers that women face and identifies five existing biases that lead to the gap between reporting and reality. It also outlines solutions for ensuring future accurate reporting of the reality for women in music.

Part 1: The positively-skewed news narrative about women at the Grammys

- The headline analysis of online articles published between 2017 and 2024 revealed a positive bias within both specialist music and general news media when covering women and the Grammys. 39% of the headlines contained a positive sentiment, 37% were neutral and only 26% drew attention to impediments women face in relation to the Grammys (pp. 19-21).
- A distinct narrative about women's dominance in the Grammys has been pushed by both the Recording Academy and the media. In 2024, almost a quarter of headlines (24%) relating to women and the Grammys contained the words "dominate" or "rule". This framing was also detected in published articles in 2023, 2021, 2020 and 2019 (p. 59).
- Between 2017 and 2024, men dominated the nominations in 94% of Grammy categories, exposing a male-favouring nominations culture (p. 33). From this position, unsurprisingly, men dominated the wins in 86% of categories. In that period, no woman has won a Grammy in seven categories including producer of the year, non-classical; songwriter of the year; orchestral or metal performances (p. 35).
- AKAS' 2025 Grammy nominations analysis revealed that with 69% (up a percentage point since last year), men are once again dominating the nominations. Women/all-female bands have achieved their highest nominations in nine years, but still account for a mere 28%. (See [Postscript chapter, pp. 80-82](#))
- Despite a quarter of the media headlines about women and the Grammys reporting that women achieved a clean sweep in the four most-coveted Grammy awards in 2024, in reality they only received 1 in 5 (22%) of all the Grammys in these four awards. Actually it takes a village of male songwriters, producers, engineers and mixers to raise a female superstar (pp. 40-43).

Part 2: Reality check

- The gender coding of 8,580 nominations across 103 Grammy categories between 2017 and 2024 revealed that 4 in 5 nominations and wins were in fact given to men, with women receiving just 1 in 5 nominations and wins (p. 28-29).
- In 2024, across all 94 categories, 1 in 4 nominees (24%) and 1 in 3 winners (32%) were women (p. 29).
- In 2025 women account for 20% of the Grammy nominations in the top four most-coveted categories
- AKAS' literature audit attests to an exclusionary culture that permeates the music industry and lies at the heart of women's peripheral music success and recognition. Gender discrimination, sexual harassment and sexual violence remain an integral part of the culture, as do at least six other structural barriers: credibility and pay gaps, lookism/ageism, cultural condescension and exclusion, performance-siloed bias and role incredulity, instrument segregation and promotion-related barriers (pp. 46-49).



Part 3: Reasons for the gap between reporting and reality

- Five biases within the music and news industries result in the rupture between the publicly-shared narratives and the reality for women in the Grammys:
 - **The pro-female publicity bias**, anchored in the Recording Academy's overly positive communications about women in the Grammys and its over-emphasis on women winning the big four awards has driven journalists' unfounded perceptions of women's equality, if not dominance in the Grammys. (p. 53)
 - **Male-dominance bias**, driven by the heavily male-dominated leadership across top music labels, Academy voters, music news editors and reporters, which has led to male perspectives being internalised as the default and limited appetite for challenging the status quo. (pp. 54-57)
 - **The exaggeration-of-women's-representation bias**, manifested in the shared misperceptions that women are better represented in society, music and the Grammys than they are. Only 5% of the 2024 Grammys headlines focused on the representation, diversity or inclusion challenges that women face in relation to the Grammys. (pp. 58-60)
 - **The female-music-icon bias** shown in the Recording Academy's and news' disproportionate focus on music superstars. For example, 30% of the 2024 headlines about women in the Grammys focused on Taylor Swift, masking the fact that women account for a minority of nominations in 94% of categories and of wins in 86% of categories (pp. 61-62)
 - **The herd mentality bias** evident in the news industry's frequent tendency to amplify the same story angles around women making history year in year out. The flipside of this bias is the omission of angles centring around women's under-representation as nominees or winners and, critically, the structural barriers underpinning this. (pp. 63-65)

Part 4: Solutions. What drives change and how to report the truth more accurately

- To improve women's standing in music and the Grammys, sustainable change is needed on three levels: systemic/industry-wide, organisational, and individual. Moreover, gatekeeping structures or individuals must transform into enabling ones throughout the five stages of a musician's journey through the industry ecosystem: talent discovery, contract development, creative development, performance/promotion/commercialisation, and recognition. (pp. 68-69).
- News media should be (but isn't) one of the enablers of positive change for women through reporting the full truth. To become enablers, news outlets must dig beyond the press releases of the Recording Academy or other music institutions. Fact-checking is a catalyst to much-needed transparency on the part of the Academy. For example, the much-vaunted addition of more than 3,000 women voting members conceals the fact that women's representation among all voters still sits at only 28%. (pp. 72-74)
- Given its uniquely influential role in the music industry, the Recording Academy has to step up its efforts if sustainable change is to take place. Seven interventions, like committing to gender parity among voting members and having a more nuanced rather than overly positive PR narrative, could prove structurally transformative in advancing gender diversity. All require much greater openness and transparency. (p. 77)
- Asking one or more of 21 investigative questions would lead journalists and researchers to uncover the reality of women's squeezed position in the Grammys/music industry in the future (pp. 78-79). Perhaps start with a question for the Recording Academy: What are the long-term gender trends for Grammy nominees/winners across every category? Show us the database...

The substantive research challenges encountered on Grammy.com

Additional note from the report's research lead, Richard Addy

Researching the winners and nominees for the Grammys proved extremely challenging for two reasons: the sheer volume of winners and nominees, and the quality of the data on the Grammy.com website where nominations/nominees and wins/winners are recorded.

Our task was to code the gender of each band and individual who had been nominated for or won a Grammy by reviewing nine years-worth of data, comprising over 700 cumulative award categories and nearly 10,000 lines of nomination information covering over 25,000 individual nominations. To do this we relied on nominees and winners lists pages on the Grammy.com website. When coding the gender of the Grammy-nominated/winning bands we assumed that all bands received just one Grammy statuette.

As the project evolved, we learnt that the Grammy list page we were using was not the only one published by the Recording Academy. However, the other Grammy lists pages we discovered were often incomplete, inconsistent and sometimes inaccurate. Specifically:

1. Multiple Grammy lists: For each year, two Grammy nominees and winners lists existed. Taking 2023 as a typical example, the first list we used was titled "2023 GRAMMY Nominations: See The Complete Winners & Nominees List" (<https://www.grammy.com/news/2023-grammy-nominations-complete-winners-nominees-list>). However, despite being labelled "The Complete... List", it did not prove to be so: we later found a second, more detailed list titled "66th Annual Grammy Awards Winners & Nominees" (<https://www.grammy.com/awards/66th-annual-grammy->

awards-2023) which included more nominated/winning artists, songwriters, producers, mixers and engineers.

2. Band members' names not consistently listed: We found that the Grammy lists did not systematically record the individual names of Grammy-nominated and winning band members. This is important because we later learned that where a winning band has less than ten members, each band member receives an individual Grammy statuette, while bands with ten or more members receive one collective statuette.

3. Individual artists' pages not completely reliable: We therefore had to separately research the names of band members to ascertain whether each one had received a Grammy. We did this using the individual artists' webpages on Grammy.com and discovered that:

- Some Grammy winners did not appear to have a Grammy.com artist's page, whilst others had more than one
- Some winning artists' pages did not hold a record of their Grammy win
- In one case a Grammy win was attributed to the wrong person with a similar name but a different gender.

Due to our finding the more detailed Grammy.com lists part-way through the process, the discovery that individuals in winning bands with less than ten members receive individual Grammys, and having cross-checked Grammy wins against those registered on individual artists' Grammy.com webpages, we have concluded that this report is likely to overestimate women's progress in Grammy nominations and wins for two reasons:

1. Women's proportional share of nominations and wins would decrease if the more detailed lists had been used from the outset as these lists include more producers, mixers and engineers, roles which are male-dominated.
2. Women's proportional share of nominations and wins would decline further when the individual band members are counted because male bands were 11 times more likely to be nominees and 8 times more likely to be winners than female bands.

A spot check for 2024 showed that had we used the more detailed Grammy list and the accurate

rule for band members receiving statuettes, women's share as winners would have been 27% rather than the 32% stated in this report.

The only way for us to get a comprehensive picture of women's progress in nominations and wins is for the Recording Academy to open up their databases and provide their official gender representation proportions.

Body Count case study: Ice T's missing Grammy recognition on Grammy.com

In the 63rd Grammy ceremony held in 2021, the seven-member band Body Count won the Grammy for Best Metal Performance for their song Bum-Rush.

- The announcement and frontman Ice-T's acceptance speech was captured on the Recording Academy's own YouTube page. In that speech Ice-T listed the other six members of Body Count: Vincent Price, Ill Will, Juan of the Dead, Little Ice, Ernie C and Sean E Sean.

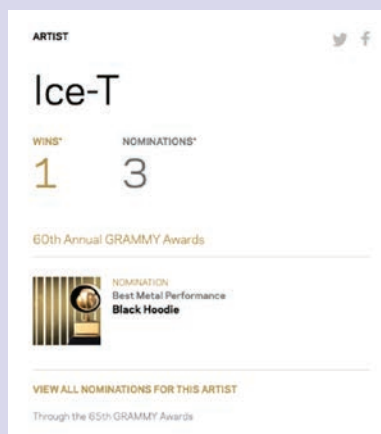


Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DE07Nqllv-A>

- However, when we researched the Grammy.com artists' pages for the band members, we found multiple inaccuracies with half of the band members not having their Grammy win recorded.
- On the positive side, the artists' pages for Body Count (as a band), Ernie C, Juan Gracia (aka Juan of the Dead) and Little Ice all

correctly referenced their Grammy wins for Bum-Rush.

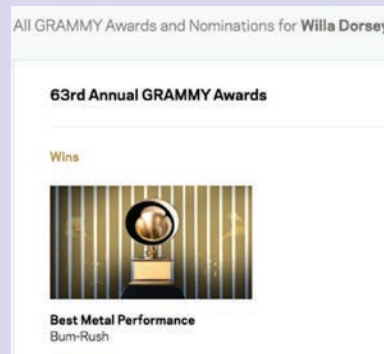
- However, Ice-T's artist's page had no record of his Grammy win for Bum-Rush, listing only his 1990 Grammy win for Best Rap Performance By A Duo Or Group.



Source: <https://www.grammy.com/artists/ice-t/14192>

- Vincent Price's Grammy.com artist's page inaccurately recorded him as not having won any Grammys.
- Finally, Ill Will's Grammy.com page did not record him as a Grammy winner either.
- However, Ill Will is also known as Will 'Ill Will' Dorsey. Whilst no Grammy.com artist page was found for "Will Dorsey", there was one for Willa Dorsey, a female

gospel singer born in the 1930s. Her Grammy.com artist's page wrongly attributed her as the winner of Best Metal Performance for Bum-Rush.



Source: <https://www.grammy.com/artists/willa-dorsey/1993>

- As well as most likely disappointing for the artists involved, this case study shows how women's share of wins could have been inflated. Had we based our analysis solely on the Grammy.com artists' pages, we would have recorded four members receiving a Grammy for Bum-Rush, one of whom was a woman – a female win rate of 25%. In fact, the accurate picture was that seven members of Body Count received a Grammy, and being all male, the female win rate was 0%. We would recommend that all Grammy nominees and winners check their Grammy.com artist's page for accuracy.