

Gender Employment Statistics of Ensembles.

The rate of male to female orchestral musicians has evened out compared to past statistics; however, the authoritative positions of principal chairs and conductors still remain inherently skewed towards men, even if specific sections have a female majority across ensembles nationally. In a study done in 2019 by Desmond Charles Sergeant and Evangelos Himonides, 40 orchestras (3,420 musicians total) from the United Kingdom, the United States, and Europe were selected to be reviewed on the basis of their employment demographics. The study culminated in the following statistics: In the United Kingdom, 44.0% of musicians were female; in the United States, 40.1% were female; in Europe, 36.6% were female. Out of the fifteen instrument sections studied, the harp, second violin, and flute sections were the only sections with a female majority, and only the harp had a female majority for principal or assistant principal positions. Very few men are expected to be harp players due to it being the most traditionally feminine instrument, making the harp an outlier in this case.

While the percentages of male to female employment seem relatively even, only 16.8% of principal positions are held by females, and 35.18% of females hold an assistant principal position. Findings from this study also show that women achieve a higher acceptance rate into music conservatories compared to men, and women do not reach the same amount of tenure as their male counterparts in professional ensembles (Sergeant and Himonides). With more women receiving music degrees compared to men and overflowing into an already intensely competitive job market, women are more likely to struggle with employment and career advancement in orchestras when compared to their male counterparts.

Gender Employment for Non-Professional Groups.

Women are not only being outdone in the professional orchestral setting—men make up the majority of grade level and collegiate music educators. In an analysis of 61 years worth of

data from The Midwest Clinic, which is the most popular conference for music educators, Sheldon and Hartley discovered that only 33% of the middle school band directors in attendance were female. An even smaller percentage of high school band directors were female: 5.4%. There were no female university-level directors in attendance (Sheldon and Hartley 29-52). Elementary schools are thought to hire more women as music teachers because “administrators assume that young children need women teachers to serve as mothers during the school day” (Robbins 24-25). The maternal expectations that society places on women confine many female music educators to early elementary music careers. These gender normatives inhibit female music educators from achieving higher positions of employment in education, such as high school or college-level occupations, despite education being a female-dominated career field.

Gender Employment of Conductors.

From the data provided by the League of American Orchestras, only one female serves as a conductor in one of the 22 most elite orchestras in the country: Marin Alsop. Only 12 women serve as conductors in the top 103 orchestras in the United States. Finally, only 20% of the estimated 800 orchestras in the United States are conducted by women (Levintova). Women are at a disadvantage when evaluated for a conducting role, as their bodies and movements during the audition may inherently display physically feminine characteristics or mannerisms. As conducting positions have historically been expected to be held by men, conductors tend to be evaluated on the masculinity of their movements and mannerisms. Combined with the continued lack of representation for female conductors, this historical bias continues to bar women from pursuing and achieving conducting roles in orchestras across the country.