

Sanremo 2026 and the running order: the curve of the felicità

Written by Jesús Manuel Rodrigo Céspedes (@Euronumerics) 08/03/2026

Our calculator travels this time to Italy and the legendary Sanremo Festival. We focus on the running order of the Italian national selection and discover that the participants are strategically placed. The result is a "happiness curve" that adapts to maximize the audience for a long Saturday evening.

SANREMO 2026 AND THE PERFORMANCE ORDER

Sanremo is such a major event in Italy that it's only natural to expect it to be meticulously planned and executed. The final gathered over 11 million viewers and a 70% audience share. In recent editions, 30 songs have participated, making it the most crowded final among all national selections, including Eurovision itself. In the pan-European festival, the final typically features 25-26 participants, and we've already studied how important the performance order is in influencing the results.

In the following graph, we've represented the results for each participant according to their performance order. The vertical axis shows the positions achieved, and the horizontal axis shows the running order.



If we look at the line that forms, we can see a kind of arc: the first songs fared poorly in the final ranking, those in the middle were the best placed, and the last ones didn't fare well. In other words, it seems that the favorites have ended up in the middle of the performance order. To what extent is this intentional, or is it random?

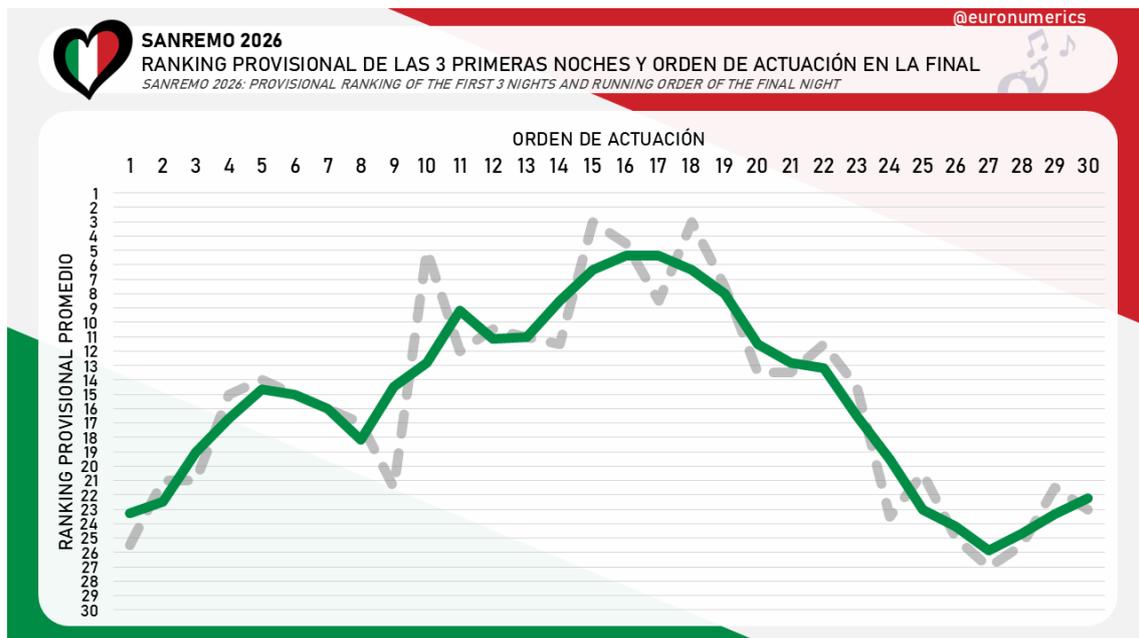
TO LEARN MORE... HOW SANREMO WORKS

In general, the Sanremo Italian Song Festival is divided into several consecutive nights, or serate (singular: serata). Lately, it begins on Tuesday with the presentation of all the songs. On the following two nights, Wednesday and Thursday, half of the songs are presented each evening. During Friday night, the participants sing a different song with another guest artist—the cover night. Finally, on Saturday night, all the competing songs are performed again. Important note: each night before Saturday a different criterion votes (press, jury, televote...) and only the top 5 is revealed in no particular order.

THE PROVISIONAL RANKING: THE INFLUENCE OF THE FIRST SERIES ON THE FINAL

In the last couple of editions, a provisional ranking or index has been calculated, tracking how the different songs are ordered week by week based on the votes from each night. In other words, before the fifth final serata, the organizers have a ranking of the 30 songs according to the most popular votes. Does the organizers use this ranking to determine the running order for the final?

The following graph represents this average provisional ranking (2023-2024) according to the running order. From top to bottom, it shows the previous ranking, and from left to right, the running order in the final.



The dotted gray line represents the averages as is. For example, those performing 15th in the final have had an average of being the third highest ranked in the last two years. The green line is a smoothed version that represents the trend of the dotted line. It further illustrates this arc shape.

This means that the organization effectively places the highest-rated songs from previous rounds in the center. On the contrary, the lowest-ranked songs are placed at the extremes.



SANREMO 2026

TOP5 DEL RANKING PROVISIONAL ANTES DE LA FINAL Y PUESTOS DE SALIDA EL SÁBADO

SANREMO 2026: TOP5 OF THE PROVISIONAL RANKING AND THEIR RUNNING ORDER ON SATURDAY

@euronumerics



Looking at the provisional standings for this year's final, the five favorites up to that point were positioned around the center: the highest-ranked was Sal da Vinci, starting in 12th place; Arisa started in 17th; Sayf immediately after; Nayt, who was fourth, started in 16th; and Fedez and Marco Masini started in 20th place.

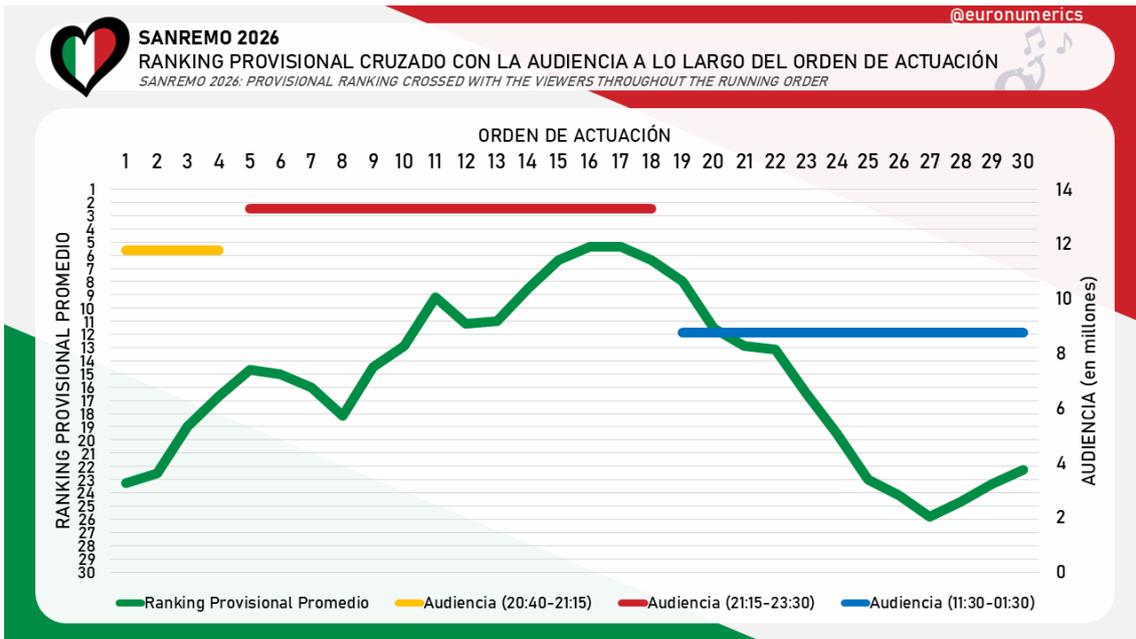
In other words, the top favorites were positioned in the center. But there are exceptions to this: Elettra Lamborghini, who was 28th according to the previous rounds, was awarded 13th place in the performance order (and rose to 26th place in the final). On the other hand, the sixth-ranked contestant, Luchè, was relegated to 24th place in the order (and fell out of the top 10, finishing 12th).

We can conclude that the order of performances gives us a good indication of who the favorites are to win the legendary Sanremo Festival. Furthermore, it accurately predicts the winners: there is a 96% correlation between the provisional ranking and the final result.

OBJECTIVE: RETAINING THE AUDIENCE

Sanremo is a very long program, running from 8:40 PM until well into the early hours of the morning. Therefore, it's worth asking how the audience evolves and to what extent the program is able to retain viewers.

We don't have detailed audience figures, but we do have data broken down by time slot. From 8:40 PM to 9:15 PM, the average audience was 11.8 million viewers. In the 9:15 PM to 11:30 PM slot, it rose to 13.3 million. Finally, in the last segment, from 11:30 PM to 1:30 AM, the audience dropped to 8.8 million. If we cross-reference this data with the performance schedule, we get the graph below.



Assuming this is the typical audience pattern for Sanremo, the organizers place less popular songs at the beginning while the audience gets hooked on the festival, and then reserve the best songs for the peak viewing hours. As the show gets late, the organizers bring back the less popular songs since the audience is already captivated and will stay until the results are announced.

More precise data would be needed, but it seems that the organizers push the best songs to the final peak viewing hours to retain viewers for as long as possible and give them more time to connect with the competition.

This differs from Eurovision, where the best songs are placed in the middle to later parts of the running order.

TO LEARN MORE... THE CHOW TEST: DEMONSTRATING A TREND BREAK

This section is for those who want to delve deeper into the statistics and demonstration of the trend in the Sanremo running order. The Chow test is a statistical test used to demonstrate whether, in a series of data, there is a trend break, or in other words, that the trend is not always the same.

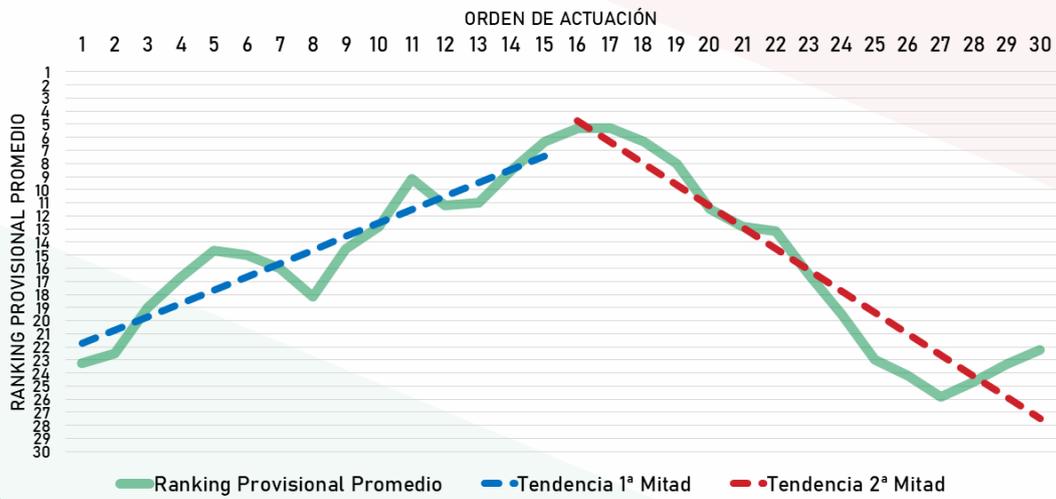
This test is particularly relevant here: we are going to demonstrate that the performance order in the Sanremo final is not random, but rather that the organizers deliberately distribute it. To do this, it is necessary to "break" the data chain at a point, the break point. To be fair, we will divide the running order into two halves: from 1 to 15 and from 16 to 30.

Without going into the details of the calculations, the test demonstrates that the trend is not a single linear one, but rather that there are different trends for each half. The graph below shows the provisional ranking according to the order of performance (green line) and the trend for the first half (blue line) and the second half (red line).



SANREMO 2026
TENDENCIAS EN EL RANKING PROVISIONAL (TEST DE CHOW)
SANREMO 2026: PROVISIONAL RANKING TRENDS ACCORDING TO THE CHOW TEST

@euronumerics



At first glance, it's clear that in the first half, as the order progresses, the songs become the most popular. After the halfway point, the popularity declines. One final note: the trend in the second half is more pronounced than in the first. This could be a sign that the organizers save the weakest songs for the end, when there aren't as many alternatives on television and the audience is already waiting for the results.

In short, on this blog, we've seen that the order of the Sanremo finale is meticulously planned to maximize the event's impact. The organizers place the best songs in the middle to hook the audience at the peak moment. Does it lose its excitement by being so predictable? What would happen if it were random? Sanremo is unique, and so are its numeri.