

Harassment and Discrimination in Canada's Live Entertainment Industry

Report of the Survey of
Canadian Actors' Equity Association Members

Published: October 26, 2020

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About the Study

This study was undertaken to learn more about the extent of harassment (including bullying) and discrimination in the live performance industry in Canada, how these incidents are being addressed by the Canadian Actors' Equity Association ("Equity"), and lessons that can be learned to provide effective whistleblower protection and create safer and healthier workplaces.

Funding for the study was provided by the Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of Canada. The researchers wish to acknowledge the assistance and support of Ange Holmes, Kristian Clarke, the Institute for Social Research at York University, and Arden R. Ryshpan, Lynn McQueen, and Steven Sparling of Equity.

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Introduction

Over the past few years, there have been a number of high-profile occurrences of disturbing behaviours in the cultural and creative industries that have pointed to the need for policies and practices to ensure a suitable working environment free of harassment and discrimination.

In the fall of 2017, Canadian Actors' Equity Association (Equity) launched a campaign entitled Not in Our Space!ⁱ to promote healthy and productive working conditions for live performance professionals across Canada. As the national not-for-profit organization representing nearly 6,000 artists working in live performance, Equity's initiative was both pathbreaking and important. Its members include performers, directors, choreographers, fight directors, and stage managers in theatre, opera, and dance. It negotiates and administers "scale agreements" and administers engagement policies on behalf of its members. These agreements and policies set the terms and conditions for the provisions of artists' services.

Equity's Not In Our Space! campaign was developed based on feedback from its membership regarding harassment and discrimination in live performance spaces, starting with a survey of members in early 2015 seeking a more comprehensive understanding of workplace problems across time and disciplines and a sense of what members needed by way of assistance from their association.ⁱⁱ A total of 1,043 members replied to this initial survey. Approximately half of the women and 37% of the men reported that, over their working lives, they had experienced harassment in the workplace -- with three-quarters of the incidents having occurred in the previous five years. Of those who had been a target, 70% experienced personal harassment and 30% experienced sexual harassment, with 12% reporting that the incident included both. Just under 5% reported discrimination in the workplace.

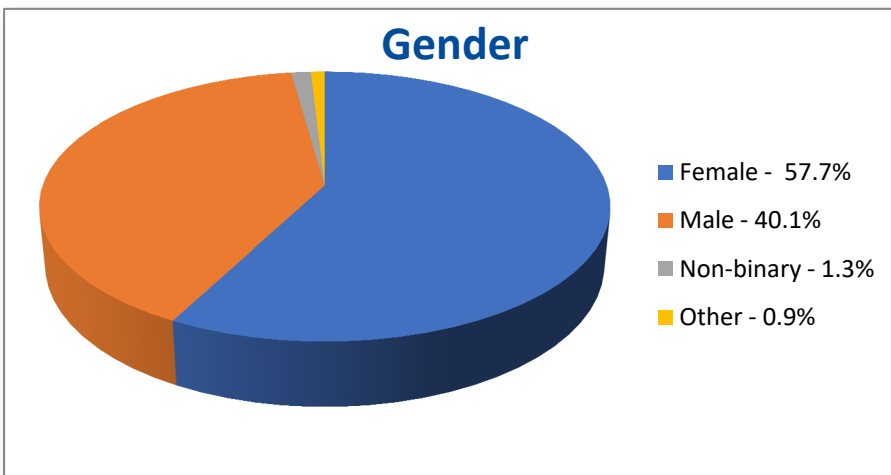
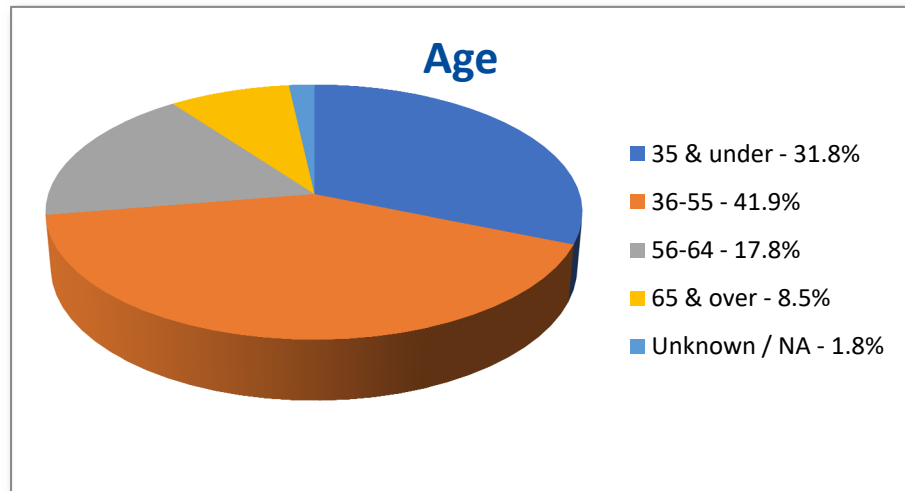
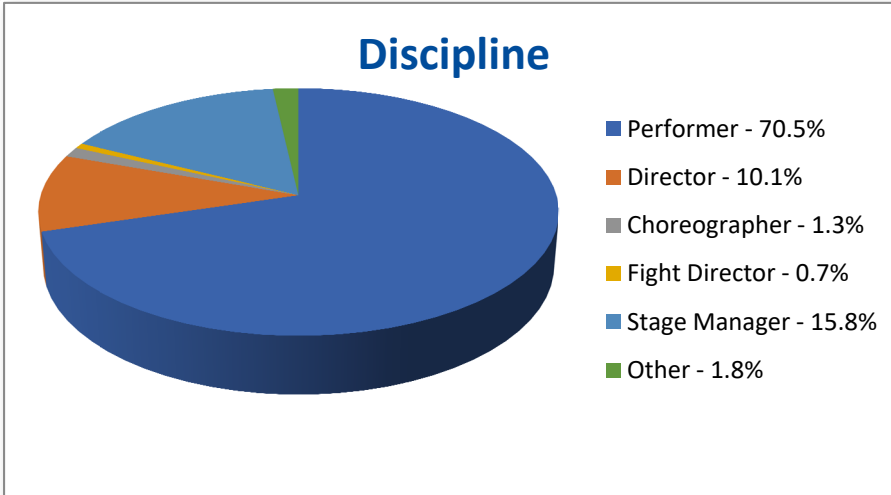
The purpose of Equity's subsequent Not In Our Space! campaign was to inform and educate its members about harassment, to elicit cooperation by the organizations that engage its members, and to provide a whistleblowing process whereby a member of the association could report unacceptable workplace behaviors to Equity, who would then initiate further follow-up actions. The campaign's objectives and materials were communicated to its members through various media, as well as through a joint statement read during the first rehearsal.

In the fall of 2019, in cooperation with Equity and with the financial support of Canada's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), a multidisciplinary team of researchers led by James Turk (Center for Free Expression, Ryerson University) conducted another survey designed to assess the effectiveness of the campaign and explore issues related to whistleblowing in the live entertainment industry. This survey was conducted in March 2020 and was distributed to all 2,790 Equity members who had had at least one engagement of two weeks or longer in the previous two years. The purpose of this report is to summarize the findings of this survey and provide recommendations both to Equity regarding subsequent steps it could take with respect to its Not in Our Space! Campaign and to the broader creative industries sector with respect to making the workplace safer.

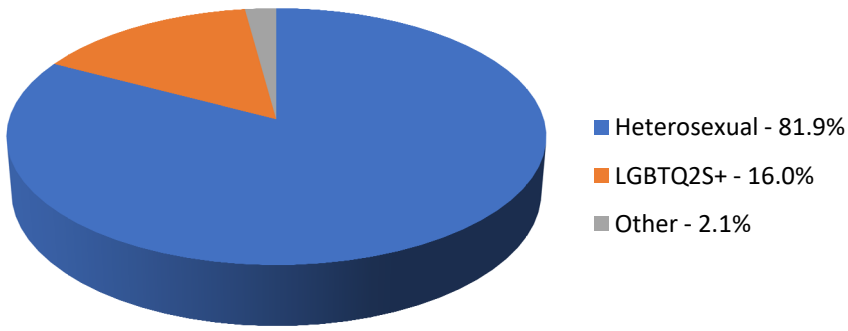
Survey Respondents

A total of 871 respondents completed the survey, for a response rate of 31.2%. Respondents, on average, worked 36.3 weeks at their engagements in the past two years.

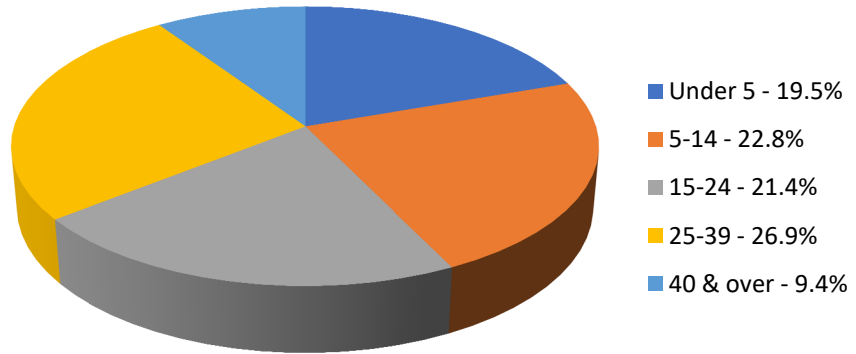
The profile of the respondents is as follows:



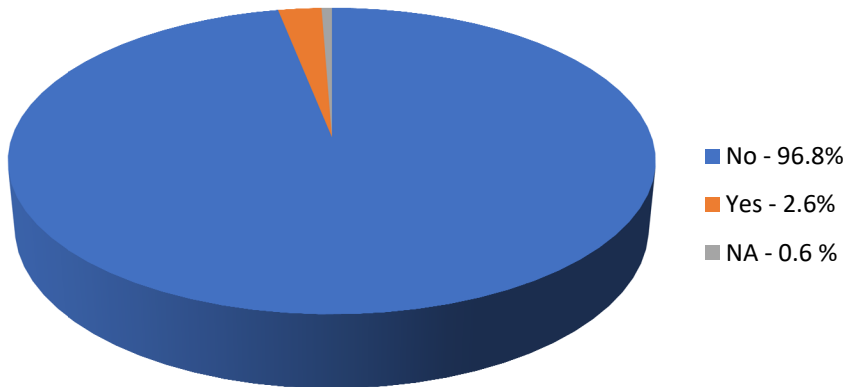
Sexual Orientation



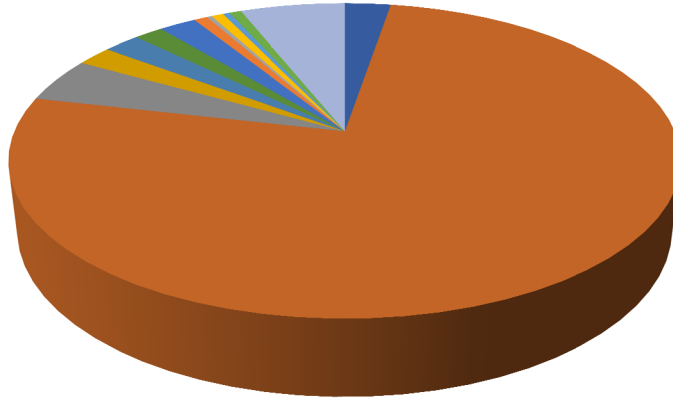
Years in Equity



Disability or Impairment



Ethnocultural / Racial Identity (Multiples Allowed)



■ First Nations/Metis/Inuit - 2.7%	■ White - 78.1%
■ Black - 4.7%	■ South Asian - 2.1%
■ Chinese - 2.2%	■ Filipino - 1.7%
■ Latin American - 2.2%	■ Arab - 0.8%
■ Southeast Asian - 0.3%	■ West Asian - 0.7%
■ Korean - 0.4%	■ Japanese - 0.7%
■ Other - 6.2%	

Findings

The most notable finding is that 82.9% of the respondents reported that, during their two most recent engagements in the past two years, they had not been the target of personal harassment, including bullying, sexual harassment, or discrimination on the basis of their identity. The 17.1% of respondents (149 respondents) that experienced personal harassment reported a total of 170 incidents during their two most recent engagements in the previous two years.

Over 90% of respondents said that they had not observed anyone else being the target of personal harassment. Those that did report witnessing personal harassment reported 136 incidents, of which 52% (71) were bullying, 26% (35) were sexual harassment, and 22% (30) were discrimination on the basis of a person's identity.

82.9% of the respondents reported that, during their two most recent engagements in the past two years, they had not been the target of personal harassment

These numbers are significantly lower than the findings from the 2015 Equity Safe and Respectful Workplaces noted above. However, that survey was different in that it asked whether respondents had experienced incidents at any time in their careers, whereas this survey focused on the occurrence of incidents in the two previous years following the introduction of Equity's Not in Our Space! campaign.

The incidence of personal harassment is also lower than the rates reported in surveys done in arts industries elsewhere. For example, in the arts industry in the UK, up to half of managers and bystanders surveyed had witnessed bullying.ⁱⁱⁱ In the creative industries in the Netherlands, sexual harassment was reported by two thirds of the women interviewed in a study looking at hiring and promotion practices for women.^{iv}

How bullying is defined and measured in workplaces across all industries can vary widely, making estimates of incidence rates quite difficult to assess with much certainty. For example, when employees are given a definition of bullying and asked to 'self-label', average incidence rates tend to be around 11%. When the 'behavioural experience method' is used (whereby employees check off behaviours to which they have been exposed) average rates of bullying are around 15%. However, if no definition is given (as was the case in our survey), typical incidence rates across all workplaces and industries tend to be approximately 18% - placing

rates in this survey at around the average. Further, estimates can vary widely by country, industry, and the type of harassment being considered (e.g., bullying vs. sexual harassment).

One of the key issues being explored in our study is whether the Not in Our Space! campaign had any effect on the incidence of harassment experienced by Equity members. Accordingly, the respondents were asked a number of questions about their experience of the campaign, which begins with the reading and discussing of a joint statement on the first day of rehearsal. For those that did experience personal harassment, the survey sought to learn more about the nature of the harassment, what was done about it, and the outcome.

The design of the Not in Our Space! Campaign called for an anti-harassment Joint First Day Statement to be delivered through a prepared formal script or through a more informal checklist at the first day of rehearsal at all engagements in the industry. Of the respondents who were present and who can recall, 83% said that the statement was read.

Some of the respondents commented that their colleagues were talking about the campaign, that the issues of harassment and bullying were “out in the open”, and that there was general awareness of these issues. Others also noted that fewer inappropriate behaviours are being “swept under the rug”, and that the overall working environment was more comfortable, especially when it comes to issues of inappropriate comments and inappropriate physical contact.

The respondents were overwhelmingly aware of the campaign (97%) and reported seeing improvements in workplace culture and behavior. Less than 1% of respondents believe that working conditions worsened since the launch of the initiative. Specifically, a vast majority of respondents (84%) believe that live performance engagers have been effective at supporting safe and respectful workplaces. Instances of personal harassment in Equity engagements, including bullying, sexual harassment, and discrimination based on a person’s identity, were deemed to be rare or absent by more than 80% of the respondents.

Other respondents commented on their colleagues’ more widespread awareness of their words and actions. Some stated, however, that “it had more to do with *MeToo*” and were not sure how much of the change was directly attributable to the Not in Our Space! campaign versus a cultural paradigm shift. That Not in Our Space! coincided with *MeToo* made it difficult for some respondents to identify the effects of each on Equity members.

There was quite a variation in the recall of details among respondents who were present to hear the Not in Our Space! Statement at the first rehearsal (see table below).

Details recalled from first rehearsal Not in Our Space! Statement	
	% who recall
That there was a zero tolerance policy regarding harassment & bullying	93.8%
Information about available supports if an incident	74.3%
Information about informal procedures that could be used	63.6%
Roles and responsibilities were outlined	63.3%
Examples of prohibited and permitted actions under the policy	55.6%
Description of formal resolution procedures	55.1%
Possible outcomes when incident reported	35.9%
Subsequent monitoring and review when incident reported	28.7%

While almost all remembered the declaration that there was a zero tolerance policy for personal harassment, and most recalled being informed about supports being available to those who experienced personal harassment, only about two-thirds recalled specification of informal procedures that could be used or recalled any description of roles and responsibilities. Only slightly more than half of the respondents remembered being provided examples of actions that were prohibited and permitted and being given details of formal resolution procedures.

Even more worrisome, only a little over one-third recalled being told about possible outcomes and under one-third remembered details about subsequent monitoring and review following the report of an incident.

This suggests an uneven and incomplete approach to the Joint First Day Statement, where, for about half of the respondents, the anti-harassment discussion failed to cover key details of the policy or the consequences for failing to follow it. In those cases, there was a gap between merely stating that some behaviors are unacceptable and explaining what those behaviours were, how to deal with them, and making explicit the consequences of harassing behaviour, in addition to possible outcomes when an incident is reported.

While it appears that the Not in Our Space! campaign has had an impact, bullying and harassment continue to occur in the live performance industry. The 17.1% of respondents that reporting incidents outlined many types of harassment behaviours, such as male actors bullying female actors, unwelcome touching, racial comments, harassment based on sexual orientation, ageism, etc. The 170 incidents occurred mainly in the rehearsal phase (46%), sometimes just in the performance phase (16%), but often throughout the engagement (39%). Those reported responsible for the incidents were:

- Fellow performer (38%)
- Director (25%).
- Manager or administrator (11%)
- Stage Manager (8%)
- Technician/Crew member (5%)
- Choreographer (3%)
- Fight director (0%)
- Other (9%)

Some respondents gave examples of the types of sexual harassment that faced during the course of their employment from being faced with sexual jokes that made them uncomfortable to being shouted at by male colleagues, being slapped on the bottom, having their wrists grabbed and told to be quiet, and having fellow actors pretend to grab their breasts in public.

While the numbers of experienced or observed personal harassment are about average, they suggest an ongoing issue that needs to be addressed in improving of the Not in Our Space! campaign. Our findings suggest that a significant percentage of live performance professionals are not sufficiently informed at the onset of the engagement specifically about

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seriously unless there are
repercussions for inappropriate
behavior

what constitutes harassment or given clear enough examples of unacceptable behaviors and the consequences for engaging in them. As some of the respondents noted, the Not in Our Space! campaign will not be taken seriously unless there are repercussions for inappropriate behavior, as well as more management training. Otherwise some instances of personal harassment risk becoming normalized over time or seen as “the way things work” in this sector.

Those who reported experiencing incidents of personal harassment were asked whether they tried to stop the behaviour. In 72% (123) of the cases, they answer was “yes.” The actions individuals took were (they could choose as many actions as were applicable):

- Spoke personally with the person responsible for the behaviour - 62% (76)
- Raised the issue with a member of the production staff or the engager asking for assistance addressing the issue with the person responsible - 47% (58)
- Made a formal complaint to a member of the production staff or engager who was not the person responsible - 15% (19)
- Raised the problem informally with the overall management of the engager - 25% (31)
- Made a formal complaint to the overall management of the engager - 6% (7)
- Spoke to your stage manager - 33% (40)
- Spoke to your Deputy - 26% (32)
- Called Equity and asked them to intervene in some way - 8% (10)
- Other - 12% (15)

In 9% of the cases, the matter was resolved to the respondent’s satisfaction. In 12%, it was resolved but not completely to their satisfaction. In 18% of the instances, the matter was resolved but only to a degree. In 19% of the cases, the matter was not resolved but the behaviour stopped. In 41% (51) of the cases, the matter was not resolved, and the behaviour continued.

Our survey explored why some affected individuals did not attempt to take action.

Unfortunately, the number of respondents in this category is so small that the responses can only be suggestive at best and require further research. That said, the three principal reasons offered in the 43 instances reported of not taking action were that, “I wanted to avoid conflict”, “I did not think it would do anything”, and “I feared retaliation or reprisal.” A few noted, “I had previously spoken up about a similar issue to no effect.”

While the majority of those who experienced instances of personal harassment did take action, the reluctance of others to “blow the whistle” is hardly surprising. Whistleblowers can be regarded as both heroes and traitors^v, making it difficult for them to engage in meaningful public debate in the face of dominant organizational, state, or societal forces.^{vi} Some of the key reasons for not blowing the whistle are fear of revenge, reluctance to be viewed as a victim, fear of being seen as too sensitive, belief that the harasser will not be punished, little awareness of rights, and lack of access to external support.^{vii} The likelihood of reporting is also negatively influenced by organizational or occupational characteristics such as industry culture^{viii} and power differentials.^{ix} Some respondents indicated they were initially less inclined to participate in the survey because the term ‘whistleblowers’ for them has a negative connotation associated with complaining and finger-pointing instead of sharing experiences with colleagues.

While the majority of those who experienced instances of personal harassment did take action, the reluctance of others to “blow the whistle” is hardly surprising.

Those that demand equitable treatment are often labelled as troublemakers at best and dangerous and traitors at worst. Some survey respondents argued that shining a light on harassment is making their workplaces feel more dangerous, making people nervous and fearful of causing offence while, at the same time, enabling some to seek out faults and engage in public shaming of colleagues. A few suggested the Not in Our Space! Campaign created an atmosphere in Equity workplaces, supplemented by #MeToo, in which women are trying to advance themselves by claims of sexual harassment and in which LGBTQ2S colleagues’ expressed concerns are making the rehearsal space more fractured and less supportive for all.

In part, the stigmatization and hostility towards whistleblowers is driven by the inability or unwillingness of organizations and society to accept challenges to its dominant narrative as a coherent ethical entity.^x Furthermore, within the context of harassment or bullying, individuals may not necessarily distinguish between their personal grievance and whether their grievance may be indicative of a broader institutional problem. Public interest may be mixed with personal conflict, making it even more challenging for the whistleblower to come forward.^{xi} For example, a respondent observed an occurrence of a white male actor behaving very poorly to his black female colleague, but was unsure if that behaviour was harassment.

Recommendations

While the reported number of incidents experienced or observed is lower than in previous surveys of Equity members (although there are difference in time intervals sampled), there is more work that can be done. Almost all the respondents were aware of Equity's Not in Our Space! Campaign. Of the respondents who were present at the first rehearsal and who can recall, 83% said that the Campaign's anti-harassment Joint First Day statement was read. Fewer respondents, but still a significant majority, recalled being given examples of prohibited or permitted actions, provided with a definition of bullying and harassment, and informed about formal resolution procedures. Just a bare majority recalled hearing about possible consequences for those who engaged in prohibited behaviors, and only 43% recalled being told about the monitoring that followed the reporting of an incident.

If the Equity's Not in Our Space! Campaign is to be more effective, we propose the following three recommendations:

- A1. Review Not in Our Space! Campaign's Joint First Day Statement** to explore how it can be supplemented so as to ensure that everyone involved with the engagement is aware of the Not in Our Space! Campaign, understands generally what is permitted and prohibited, understands what constitutes bullying and harassment, and knows that there are formal procedures for dealing with any incidents. Furthermore, all Equity members need to know how to access and initiate these procedures, need assurance that consequences for inappropriate behavior will be administered, and need to know their options if they feel the designated process is not handled to their satisfaction.
- A2. Further clarify Not in Our Space! parameters.** Within the live performance industry, where the often physical nature of the work can blur the lines between acceptable and unacceptable behavior, public interest may become mixed with personal conflict, making it even more challenging for those experiencing incidents as well as those observing them to come forward. Hence, for the campaign to be fully successful, it should contain clear definitions and examples of harassment; how victims and observers should respond and report harassment; how HR should handle the process; and what disciplinary measures will follow, and when. A complainant must have an explicit process to follow, with clear step-by-step guidelines, a fair process, and they must be given feedback about the results of follow-up investigations and the actions that will be taken. There must be repercussions for bad behavior, more management

training, and more protections for those who speak out, which can address fear of reprisals and blacklisting complainants. To assist its members facing personal harassment and discrimination,

A3. Provide accessible information and assistance. While it is vital that the First Rehearsal Statement contain the essential information about the Not in Our Space! Campaign, it is equally important that Equity make available complete, accessible, and clear what-to-do information to members in the event they experience or observe an incident of personal harassment or discrimination. To that end, Equity should consider producing a short video that walks potential complainants through the process and reminds them of the details. We also recommend that Equity have a dedicated, confidential phone line members can call to reach one of Equity’s Respectful Workspace Advisors. Both the phone line and video should be easily found on the Equity website, and the phone line should be monitored daily by a dedicated staff member. Adding a flow chart of steps to take and how to proceed in the case of an incident may also be useful.

The issues addressed in this report are serious issues throughout all creative industries. The following six recommendations are relevant for Equity and all other organizations in creative industries:

B1. Undertake more extensive education and advocacy in relation to harassment and bullying. Despite the success of Not in Our Space! to date, harassment and bullying are manifestations of a much broader and complex issue in creative industries, in which precarity, competition, and lack of regulation exacerbate privilege and inequity, Equity and others in creative industries should consider a range of actions at the individual, educational, sectoral, and government levels. This includes dedicated curriculum interventions for future workers and engagers in creative industries throughout their formative years, as well as working with policy makers to provide additional stability and better standard of living. This also involves raising awareness amongst the general public and educating patrons about acceptable behaviors, and by multiplying conversations to clearly convey the message that all forms of harassment and bullying are never acceptable^{xii}.

- B2. Implement Bystander Training** to help individuals become more aware of harassment and bullying so they can identify them, reiterate that assistance is expected of them, emphasize their accountability and duty to assist, and ensure understanding of the reporting process. The research literature suggests that such interventions to stop personal harassment and discrimination have special impact when initiated by individuals in positions of influence or power, and, in cases of sexual harassment, when initiated by men, where having them speak up leads to a reduction of inappropriate behaviors^{xiii}. Bystanders are seen as the linchpin to stopping such incidents^{xiv}, and focusing on them indirectly takes pressure off victims.
- B3. Promote Proactive Monitoring.** Equity and other organizations in creative industries should consider developing and/or rolling out harassment and bullying monitoring systems based on clear metrics. For instance, The Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R) is a 22-item questionnaire to audit bullying in the workplace, including personal bullying, work related bullying, and physically intimidating forms of bullying. Such system would allow for corrective measures to be taken early and to spot trends.
- B4. Frame whistleblowing within the context of fundamental human rights**, such as freedom of expression, would help to make the act of whistleblowing more acceptable, and lessen the social stigma^{xv}, and frame it as a form of activism, rather than an act of deviance.^{xvi} In addition, a greater recognition of the importance of whistleblowing to transparency and accountability of power structures should be fostered.^{xvii} It is important to shift the perspective from whistleblowers as trouble makers to viewing whistleblowers as providing checks on abuses of power.^{xviii} Conducting member training may be helpful in order for the campaign not to become a “box to tick” but rather challenge people’s pre-existing stereotypes of whistleblowers as “abnormal.”
- B5. Lead cultural change.** Many of the concerns reported have to do with social stigma associated with the act of whistleblowing as well as the precarious nature of the work in the live performance industry. Broader societal trends such as #MeToo have not necessarily translated into a fundamentally different environment within creative industries, where organizations still prioritize protecting their reputations over protecting the overall “public good.”^{xix} While cultural change is notoriously hard to achieve, it is perhaps important to give younger and systemically disadvantaged

members a greater sense of community, mentorship and security by periodically conducting targeted outreach and surveys. In order to effect cultural change, talking about instances of harassment has to become normalized, rather than be viewed as insurmountable.

B6. Include a mental health dimension to account for whistleblowing's heavy toll.

Counselling services or trained peer-support network should be available to potential whistleblowers to help them navigate the complaint system and the potential blowback from their complaints. Having a specific designated person to talk to or even serve as a support person when a complaint is made may help whistleblowers not feel so isolated.

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Endnotes

- ⁱ <https://www.caea.com/Features/Not-In-Our-Space>
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- ⁱⁱⁱ A.M. Quigg, *Bullying in the Arts: Vocation, Exploitation and Abuse of Power*. New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016.
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- ^{vi} Alexis Bushnell, Kate Kenny and Marianna Fotaki, "The battle for the whistleblower: An interview with John Kiriakou," *Ephemera: Theory & Politics in Organization* 19:4 (2019) 825-845 at 838.
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- ^{xiv} Bowes-Sperry and O'Leary-Kelly (2005). To act or not to act: the dilemma faced by sexual harassment observers. *Academy of Management Review*, 30, 288-306.
- ^{xv} Richard Haigh and Peter Bowal, "Whistleblowing and Freedom of Conscience: Towards a New Legal Analysis," *The Dalhousie Law Journal* 35:1 (2012) 89-125 at 90, 91.
- ^{xvi} Iain Munro, "An Interview with Chelsea Manning's lawyer: Nancy Hollander on human rights and the protection of whistleblowers," *Organization* 26:2 (2019) 276-290 at 277.
- ^{xvii} Richard Haigh and Peter Bowal, "Whistleblowing and Freedom of Conscience: Towards a New Legal Analysis," *The Dalhousie Law Journal* 35:1 (2012) 89-125 at 98.
- ^{xviii} Iain Munro, "An Interview with Snowden's Lawyer: Robert Tibbo on Whistleblowing, Mass Surveillance and Human Rights Activism," *Organization* 25:1 (2018) 106-122 at 107.
- ^{xix} Ian Bron, "Vile wretches and public heroes: A survey of Canadian whistleblowing literature," *Canadian Public Administration* 62:2 (2019) 356-361 at 358.