

# The Change You Want to See

Results of the first-ever survey  
of workplace sexual harassment  
in the Canadian performing arts,  
film, and television industries

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## Key Findings

March 2021

Survey design and analysis



**aftermetoo**

**Over 1,100 artists and arts workers told us about their experiences and the change that they want to see regarding workplace sexual harassment in Canadian performing arts, film, and television industries, based on the first-ever Canadian survey on this topic in this sector.**

Because the sample was not random, we know that survey respondents might not be representative of all workers in these industries (often referred to as "the sector" in this report). The strength of the non-random approach is that 1,102 people chose to tell us their stories. We are astounded by the overall number of responses and are incredibly grateful to each respondent.

Most of all, we are stunned by what people told us. Three key findings from the survey are the prevalence of experiences of sexual harassment, the negative impacts on survivors' mental health, and the need for an independent reporting body.

## About the Survey

The Survey of Workplace Sexual Harassment in the Canadian Performing Arts, Film, and Television Industries employed a survivor-centred and trauma-informed approach throughout the survey design and outreach. The survey was completed by 1,102 individuals, including 873 who completed the survey in English (79%) and 229 in French (21%). Survey outreach included significant social media efforts and direct communication with many unions, arts service organizations, and associations across the country. Because the sample was not random, margins of error have not been estimated for the results.

# 92% of respondents have experienced or witnessed sexual harassment

The survey results clearly demonstrate that change is required:

- During their arts careers, **92%** of survey respondents (almost 1,000 people) experienced or witnessed some form of sexual harassment.
- Even among people with only a few years of experience in the sector – workers who started after the #MeToo movement began in 2017 – **87%** have experienced or witnessed sexual harassment.
- **82%** of respondents (about 850 people) have personally experienced sexual harassment.
- **90%** (953 people) have witnessed sexual harassment happening to someone else around them.
  - Of the 953 people who witnessed sexual misconduct, **94%** also experienced such behaviours themselves.

# Sexual misconduct: Gender bias and sexual harassment

The survey asked respondents about 11 different behaviours that they might have experienced or witnessed in Canada’s performing arts and film sector. The most common problematic behaviour is gender bias. Overall, **77%** of respondents have experienced or witnessed gender bias, i.e., “different treatment based on sex/gender (e.g., quality or nature of assignments)”, including **61%** who have personally experienced bias and **74%** who have witnessed bias happening to someone else.

The other 10 behaviours could all be considered a form of sexual harassment. The prevalence of sexual harassment in the Canadian performing arts, film, and entertainment industries is stunning: **92%** of respondents experienced or witnessed sexual harassment. Details for all 10 harassment behaviours are provided in Table 1. Of note, more than 1 in every 4 respondents said that they experienced or witnessed sexual assault.

<b>Table 1:</b> Prevalence of sexual harassment among survey respondents	Experienced and/or witnessed	Personally experienced	Witnessed
<b>Any form of sexual harassment (i.e., any of the 10 behaviours below)</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>90%</b>
Unwelcome sexual teasing, jokes, comments, or questions	79%	61%	74%
Unwelcome invasion of personal space (e.g., crowding, leaning over)	77%	63%	72%
Unwelcome sexually suggestive looks or gestures	63%	47%	57%
Unwelcome communications of a sexual nature (e.g., emails, phone calls, notes, text messages, social media contacts)	60%	38%	56%
Use of derogatory or unprofessional terms related to a person’s sex/gender (e.g., slut-shaming)	57%	38%	52%
Pressure for dates and/or sexual favours	35%	24%	28%
The presence of sexually oriented material in any format (e.g., photos, videos, written material)	30%	22%	26%
Sexual assault (i.e., sexual contact with a person without that person’s consent)	27%	18%	20%
Stalking (i.e., unwanted intrusion – physically or electronically – into someone’s personal life)	26%	14%	22%
Someone offering preferential treatment in the workplace in exchange for sexual favours	23%	13%	20%

# Who experiences and/or witnesses sexual harassment in arts workplaces?

## The short answer is that sexual harassment could happen to **anyone**.

But the survey reveals some clear differences in the prevalence and perceptions of sexual harassment, based on individuals' characteristics:

- Transgender and gender diverse respondents (95%) and women (94%) have experienced and/or witnessed sexual harassment much more than men (81%). The differences are even more pronounced for personal experiences of sexual harassment (excluding witnessed harassment): transgender and gender diverse respondents (88%); women (88%); men (53%).
- English-language survey respondents have experienced and/or witnessed sexual harassment much more than Francophones (95% vs. 81%).
- Unionized workers (94%) have experienced and/or witnessed sexual harassment somewhat more than non-unionized workers (89%).
- Contract workers, whether self-employed (95%) or employed (93%), have experienced and/or witnessed sexual harassment more than workers who currently hold a permanent position (87%).

Based on other demographic and work characteristics, the survey showed consistently high rates of experiencing and/or witnessing sexual harassment:

- Over 90% for most occupations covered in the survey: performers, crew members, production and post-production workers, directors/producers/choreographers, and designers/screenwriters/playwrights. Somewhat lower for arts administrators, managers, and educators (86%).
- LGBTQ respondents (93%) and heterosexual respondents (92%)
- BIPOC respondents (91%) and non-BIPOC respondents (92%)
- Respondents who indicated that they are Deaf and/or have a disability (95%) and those who reported no deafness or disability (92%)
- Respondents who have worked in film, TV, and web series (93%) and those who have not (90%)
- Respondents who have worked in live performing arts (92%) and those who have not (also 92%)
- Similar rates across the country, except Quebec: Atlantic provinces (96%), Quebec (83%), Ontario (94%), Prairie provinces (94%), and British Columbia (96%)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The survey was not able to identify whether there is a “real” difference in sexual harassment between Quebecers (predominantly Francophones) and other Canadians (predominantly Anglophones), or whether there is a difference in *perceptions* related to sexual harassment. It is noteworthy that a 2017 public survey showed that a higher proportion of Quebecers than residents of other regions believe that “sexual harassment of women does not happen” in their workplace. (Source: Abacus Data, <https://abacusdata.ca/sexual-harassment-of-women-is-widespread-in-canada/>, retrieved December 18, 2020)

# Who causes harm? Where?

The 849 people (82% of all respondents) who personally experienced sexual harassment, many of whom experienced multiple incidents, told us about who caused harm and where incidents took place:

- A person in a position of power caused harm for 75% of people who experienced sexual harassment
- A colleague or co-worker caused harm for 66% of respondents who experienced sexual harassment
- Sexual harassment takes place in many different environments, including social events and work-related parties (selected by 46% of people who experienced sexual harassment), offices (29%), places of training or education (24%), on-location trailers or dressing rooms (19%), private residences (16%), auditions or job interviews (10%), and various other work-related environments such as a recording studio, on set, on a tour bus, backstage (63%).

## Impacts

Survivors of sexual harassment experience a range of negative impacts. Most common is a deterioration in mental health (reported by 74% of people who personally experienced harassment). Common mental health challenges are anxiety, depression, and lack of sleep.

Sexual harassment has other wide-ranging negative impacts on survivors' well-being, including their relationships with colleagues (58% of people who experienced sexual harassment reported a deterioration), their job security (40%), their physical health (39%), and their financial well-being (29%).

## Reprisals

Close to two-thirds of people who experienced sexual harassment (63%) suffered some type of reprisal – whether or not they reported an incident. The most common reprisals include gaslighting (i.e., someone attempting to make them question their recollection of the incidents, selected by 37% of respondents who experienced sexual harassment), being considered “difficult to work with” (33%), and generally having fewer career opportunities (23%).

# Reporting and supports provided

**Two-thirds of survivors did not report any incident that they experienced or witnessed, for a range of reasons:**

- Not thinking that it was serious enough (60%)
- Not thinking that anything would change (48%)
- Being worried that reporting would hurt their reputation at work (43%)
- Not wanting to be thought of as difficult or confrontational (43%)
- Wanting to forget about it and/or move on (42%)
- Not trusting that their reporting would be kept confidential (38%)
- Not knowing who to report to (36%)
- Being concerned that they might not be hired again by the same company (31%)
- Being afraid to report (23%)

Only one in every five survivors reported an incident to their arts employer (20%), while only 15% reported to their direct supervisor (e.g., stage or production manager). Even fewer reported to their union or guild representative (9%), their agent or representative (5%), or law enforcement (2%).

Among those who did report an incident, an investigation took place in only 21% of cases. Another 20% of respondents who reported an incident did not know if an investigation took place. For 60% of respondents who reported an incident, no investigation took place.

After reporting an incident, it appears that, very often, few supports were provided to survivors. For example, only a small minority of survivors who had reported to their arts employer indicated that they were supported in the following ways:

- By maintaining confidentiality: 34%
- By supporting them through the process: 25%
- By making their workplace safer after they reported: 23%
- By protecting them from reprisals: 10%
- None of the above: 48%

Supports from direct supervisors, union or guild representatives, and agents were similarly rare.

# The changes that survivors want to see

**For survivors, top of mind among potential changes is the creation of an independent body to take reports of workplace sexual harassment in the performing arts, film, and television industries:**

**97%** of respondents believe that the establishment of such a body is important, including **82%** saying “very important”.

Many respondents commented that an independent body to handle reports and investigations of workplace sexual harassment would be a major improvement in the sector:

- “We need to create a safe, unbiased, nonjudgmental way for people to report and know that there will be punishment for reprisals of any kind against those reporting. Why should women be frightened that they’ll lose their job, or that the abuser tells a different story to ruin a woman’s career and reputation? Women should be able to report this to an independent organization that is there for them. Women need to be supported through that experience, not bullied or made fun of.”
- “Smaller arts organizations like theatre and dance companies or indie film production companies simply don’t have the resources or personnel to allow for safe reporting. An independent body offering licensing and oversight to these companies is the only way for a reporting system to be created.”

Other research has shown that there are many actions that arts employers, unions, funders, service organizations, associations, training institutes, and agents could take to address workplace sexual harassment.

## The survey asked respondents to select the two or three changes that they would most like to see for each group. The most desired changes are listed below.

### Arts employers

- Arts employers use an independent body to receive reports, investigate, and adjudicate/mediate workplace sexual harassment allegations: **75%**
- Arts employers use a reporting procedure that eliminates conflicts of interest: **72%**
- Arts employers pay for specialized training for staff and board members so that they are aware of their responsibilities when it comes to safer workplaces: **50%**

### Arts unions and guilds (asked of union members only)

- Unions and guilds implement a progressive internal discipline approach, where a person who causes harm receives increasing levels of discipline for each inappropriate behaviour: **64%**
- Unions and guilds ensure that no one from unions can oversee, vote on, or inform investigations if they have the potential to be employed by any of the people whom they are investigating: **56%**
- Unions and guilds ensure that there is publicly transparent, annual independent review of sexual harassment policies, team members, and budget allocated for sexual harassment incidents: **54%**

### Arts funders

- Funders ensure that employers and producers (union and non-union) have survivor-centred, trauma-informed sexual harassment policies that cover reporting, mediation/adjudication, through to appeals: **69%**

- Funders contribute to establishing and maintaining ongoing funding for an independent body to handle reports, investigation, mediation, and adjudication for the Canadian arts sector: **63%**

### Arts service organizations

- Organizations/associations ensure that incidents are reported to an independent body rather than the employer: **63%**
- Organizations/associations ensure specialized training for staff and board members so that they are aware of their responsibilities when it comes to safer workplaces: **51%**

### Arts training institutes

- Schools/training institutes commit to a reporting procedure that eliminates conflict of interest, i.e., the person who receives the report of sexual harassment doesn't have the ability or power to hire or fire the survivor in the future: **58%**
- Schools/training institutes commit to survivor-centered, trauma-informed sexual harassment policies that cover reporting, mediation/adjudication, through to appeals: **47%**

### Arts agents and managers

- Agents/managers support a client who confides to being sexually harassed and follow provincial and labour laws: **57%**
- Agents/managers adopt survivor-centered, trauma-informed policies on how agents/managers will track reprisals on behalf of clients, working alongside unions and guilds: **51%**

# In survivors' voices

We asked survivors to offer **suggestions** as to how to improve the safety and respectfulness in the sector.

Below are **direct quotes** from the anonymous respondents regarding some of the key themes that emerged.

## Training

- “I like the idea of training, but the reality is that it would become the performing arts version of WHMIS [workplace hazards training] in food-service establishments – clinical, rushed through by someone who makes fun of it, and disliked by the people who are forced to take it because it feels useless and time-wasting. If there was a way to implement in-person training from people who prioritize communication, problem solving, respect, and actual PRACTICE for participants, then I would really like to see it in all levels of the performing arts world.”
- “All training institutions [should] have a course/class that covers these elements in a way that promotes self-advocacy and agency whenever possible, so that everyone knows what the expectations of their rights and responsibilities are and what are best practices. What things they can look for, ask for, best practices, ways to support people as a witness/active bystander, etc.”

## Different treatment of people in senior positions

- “Most of all the harassment I have received was from males in positions of power. Producers, Production Managers, Directors. All untouchable... All the bullying and harassment seminars DO NOT APPLY TO PRODUCERS/DIRECTORS. They can be as dismissive and unprofessional as they like.”

## The need to change the power dynamics and institute a culture change toward greater equity

- “There is a culture of misogyny in the film and television industry that has deep roots. This keeps women out of leadership positions throughout the industry. Female performers also have to deal with a general lack of respect for actors, as well as misogynistic scripts.... Without more women in leadership, behind the lens, writing the scripts, and literally calling the shots, sets will continue to be a tenuous place for women to work, no matter what workplace policies we adopt.”
- “Hire more BIPOC women and decolonize the power structure.”
- “Tie grant applications to safety plans in general! No plan, no money!”

## Thinking beyond sexual harassment

- “Sexual harassment is the beginning of the conversation: we have to talk about psychological and institutional harassment, abuse of power and the dangers related to our mental health due to our precariousness.”
- “I have worked in many different industries including many that are male dominated and have a reputation for sexism. I was a plumber, a carpenter, a janitor, a construction labourer, a landscaper – the film industry was the most misogynist industry out of all of these by far. I was shocked at the degree and prevalence of sexual harassment. We have a lot of work to do.”

**“We have a lot of work to do.”**

# About the 1,102 survey Respondents

Responses were received from all 13 provinces and territories.

The regional breakdown is:

Atlantic provinces (6%);

Quebec (23%),

Ontario (39%),

Prairie provinces (18%),

British Columbia (13%);

the three northern territories (0.5%);

Canadians residing outside of the country (0.9%).

Gender: 77% identify as women; 19% as men; 5% as transgender / two-spirit / gender diverse.

LGBTQ: 29%

BIPOC: 15%

(includes Indigenous: 3%, Black: 2%, other people of colour: 10%)

People who have a disability and/or are Deaf: 14%

Age ranges:

20% between 18 and 29;

32% in their 30s, 22% in their 40s;

15% in their 50s; 9% 60 or older.

Partial responses were kept if respondents completed a substantial proportion of the survey. For those who completed the entire survey, the median response time was 16.8 minutes. For questions with fewer than 1,102 respondents, the percentages are based on the actual number of people responding. Also excluded from the percentages are respondents who selected "prefer not to say", which was an option offered in many questions, given the extremely sensitive nature of the survey content.

## Reports available from "The Change You Want to See", the first-ever survey of workplace sexual harassment in the Canadian performing arts, film, and television industries

- **Key Findings:**  
The Change You Want to See (this report)
- **The Status:**  
Workplace Sexual Harassment in Canadian Performing Arts, Film, and Television Industries
- **The Toll:**  
Impacts on Survivors of Workplace Sexual Harassment in Canadian Performing Arts, Film, and Television Industries
- **The Aftermath:**  
Reporting, Supports for Survivors, and Who Caused Harm Related to Workplace Sexual Harassment in Canadian Performing Arts, Film, and Television Industries
- **The Future:**  
Changes that Arts Workers Want to See Regarding Workplace Sexual Harassment in Canadian Performing Arts, Film, and Television Industries
- **The Field: In Survivors' Words.**  
Analysis of Respondents' Written-In Suggestions Regarding Workplace Sexual Harassment in Canadian Performing Arts, Film, and Television Industries

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