Dignity in study:
a survey of higher education institutions

2018

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Executive summary

Today's music, drama and dance students are the future artists in our theatres, concert halls and dance productions. Whether they are preparing for a life on screen, on stage, behind the curtain or in the recording studio, ensuring our students have the very best start to their career in the arts is paramount.

Since November, the #MeToo movement against sexual harassment and assault has dominated headlines globally to demonstrate the widespread prevalence of sexual assault and harassment, especially in the workplace. Originating in the film industry, the movement quickly generated traction in the wider creative industries, including the music, theatre and dance sectors, revealing the endemic level of sexual harassment, inappropriate behaviour, bullying and discrimination that many artists are experiencing.
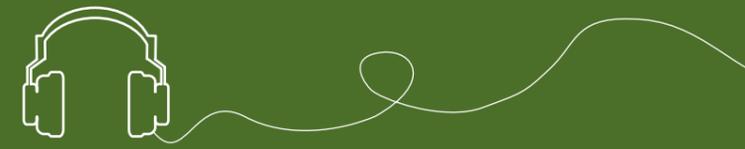
As a result of these revelations, Equity, the ISM and the Musicians' Union have been working to improve dignity in the workplace for their members who work in the music and performing arts. During the course of our initial work, we heard from our student members about issues relating to the culture within higher education institutions and a lack of awareness around the policies and procedures in place. This, coupled with evidence of cultural issues within the professional workforce, led to the decision for all three organisations to work together and extend work to the education space to ensure an awareness of the current environment for students attending higher education institutions.

To do this, we launched a joint confidential and anonymous survey for students, which was open for responses between 9 April and 21 May 2018. 600 students currently attending specialist drama schools, music colleges, conservatoires, dance colleges and universities submitted responses.

Headline findings

Our research has shown students currently studying within higher education institutions are at risk from levels of inappropriate behaviour, bullying, sexual harassment and discrimination on the basis of gender, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, race and marriage or civil partnership. Out of the 600 students who responded to the survey, over half of the respondents said they had experienced some sort of incident – many more than one type – in the course of their study.

57% of these respondents reported experiencing inappropriate behaviour (behaviour that is considered socially unacceptable), **42%** experienced bullying, **36%** experienced gender discrimination and **27%** experienced sexual harassment. Although the majority of students selected more than one type of perpetrator (and over 1000 examples were given as a result) 'fellow student' was the highest reported at **58%**. However, the breakdown does suggest high levels of incidents also by members of the institution's permanent teaching staff (e.g. teacher or academic lecturer) at **42%**. Notably, **57%** of respondents did not report their concerns, with **54%** of these respondents stating they felt at risk of not being believed or taken seriously if they did report their concerns. This was mirrored by comments given by respondents, as shown in the results overview.

57% reported experiencing inappropriate behaviour

42% experienced bullying

36% experienced gender discrimination

27% experienced sexual harassment

At the request of our student members, we sought to find out the level of awareness around how to report concerns in their higher education institution. Although the breakdown differs from type of institution to institution, **57% of all respondents** knew how to report overall. This is positive. What is concerning however, is the level of respondents who knew how to report but chose not to anyway – **49%** – with many again stating they felt at risk of not being believed or taken seriously if they did report their concerns.

The student's voice matters

Although many higher education institutions are doing good work to ensure the safety of their students, it is clear there are several issues that must be addressed and taken seriously.

The high level of non-reporting, as well as an overall culture of fear, needs to be tackled. Although many students are aware of how to report, many still choose not to. The survey results and the comments provided with answers suggests a lack of confidence in their higher education institution's capability to 'take concerns seriously' as the main reason for this. It must also be noted that many students who did go on to report their concerns felt unsafe after doing so and felt unsupported. This contributes to an overall climate of fear and shame, and risks many incidents going undetected. This is concerning. It is impossible to investigate a case that has not been reported.

One way this could be addressed is to put in place a **safeguarding model** based on the model currently in place for children aged 18 and under. This would include a designated member of staff – a **pastoral officer** – for students specifically to report their concerns to. Many respondents also requested **anonymous reporting** to be considered, which would assist in

eradicating the fear of retribution. Higher education institutions also have a responsibility to ensure their policies and procedures are sufficiently visible and discussed with the students regularly **to normalise the idea of reporting.** Ensuring that all staff, including those who visit the higher education institution or employed on a freelance or temporary basis, are aware of these policies and procedures, including consequences of inappropriate behaviour, would also be recommended.

Education and discussion is also vital. Many respondents also felt that **training** on how to recognise discrimination, sexual harassment, bullying and inappropriate behaviour should be established within their higher education institution. It must be addressed that at least **66%** of all respondents – regardless of whether they had experienced something or not – could not recall whether their higher education institution provided any kind of guidance or training on this matter. In response to the higher level of permanent staff members named as alleged perpetrators, respondents suggested that **staff**, as well as **students**, needed sufficient knowledge of the Equality Act 2010 and also be aware of what behaviour is expected of them and what the consequences are if they are found to be behaving inappropriately.

Monitoring student perception and welfare is essential in tracking progress in achieving cultural change. This includes monitoring the level of reports and ensuring that those who have reported are kept in contact with.

Finally, it is vital the whole creative sector works together to eradicate these issues from education right into the profession. We recommend that all higher education institutions publicly sign up to relevant industry codes of conduct, including the **UK Theatre and SOLT 10 Principles**, the **Equity Agenda for Change** and the **ISM-Musicians' Union Code of Practice for the Music Sector.**

We thank the ISM's Francesca Treadaway for the analysis of the survey's data and creation of this report. We would also like to thank all the students who came forward to share their experiences and suggestions, as without your responses, change is not possible.

The full breakdown of the results can be found in the **results overview**.

Christine Payne, Equity
Deborah Annetts, Incorporated Society of Musicians
Naomi Pohl, Musicians' Union
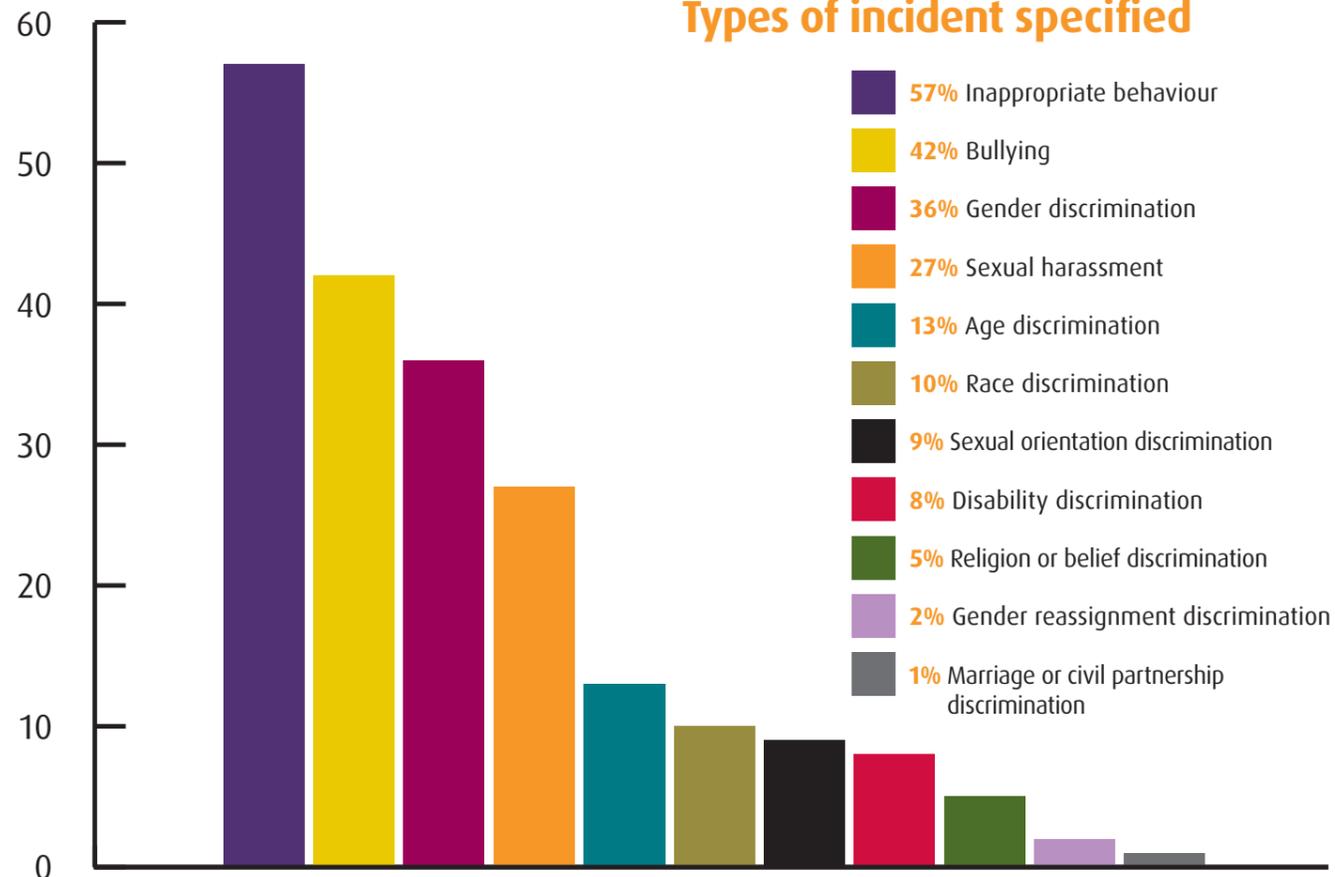
The results: overview

51% of the respondents said they had experienced sexual harassment, inappropriate behaviour, bullying or discrimination, whilst **49%** said they did not.

Out of these respondents, **73%** of respondents identified as female, **18%** identified as male, **2%** identified as non-binary and **7%** didn't specify their gender.
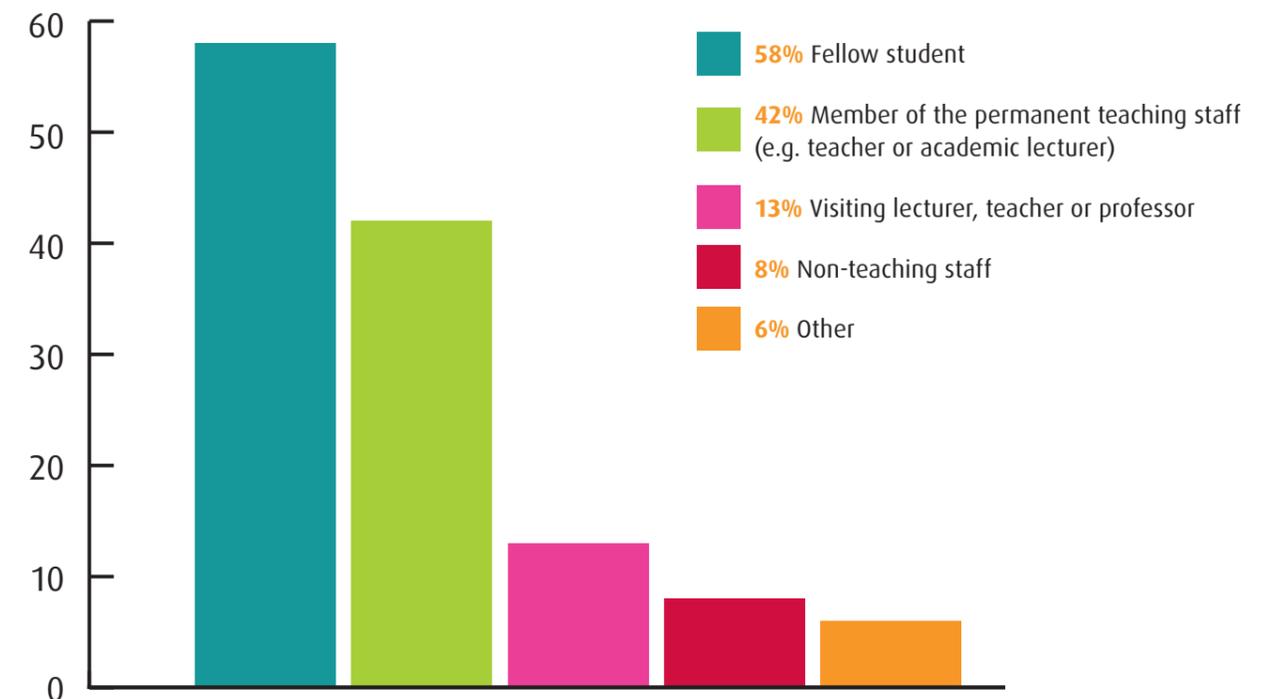
The respondents were able to select more than one option to specify their experiences, and many did. Of those who reported an experience, the top four most reported experiences were inappropriate behaviour (**57%**) bullying (**42%**), discrimination on the basis of gender (**36%**) and sexual harassment (**27%**).

Types of incident specified

- **57%** Inappropriate behaviour
- **42%** Bullying
- **36%** Gender discrimination
- **27%** Sexual harassment
- **13%** Age discrimination
- **10%** Race discrimination
- **9%** Sexual orientation discrimination
- **8%** Disability discrimination
- **5%** Religion or belief discrimination
- **2%** Gender reassignment discrimination
- **1%** Marriage or civil partnership discrimination

Types of incident broken down by alleged perpetrator

Respondents who said they had experienced sexual harassment, inappropriate behaviour, bullying or discrimination also specified who the alleged perpetrator was. Some gave more than one example (and as a result, nearly 1000 examples were given). Notably, **58%** of respondents said their experience involved their fellow student and **42%** said it involved a member of the permanent teaching staff at the higher education institution.

- **58%** Fellow student
- **42%** Member of the permanent teaching staff (e.g. teacher or academic lecturer)
- **13%** Visiting lecturer, teacher or professor
- **8%** Non-teaching staff
- **6%** Other

Reporting concerns

Reporting

We asked respondents if they had reported their concerns or not to their higher education institution. **57%** of respondents who experienced sexual harassment, inappropriate behaviour, bullying or discrimination **did not** report their concerns, whilst **13% did** report their concerns and **24%** reported **some but not others**. **6%** did not say.

44% of the respondents who did not report their concerns identified as female, **10%** identified as male, **7%** identified as non-binary and **6%** did not define their gender.

57% did not report their concerns

13% did report their concerns

24% reported some but not other concerns

Respondents who did not report their concerns

We asked the respondents who did not report their concerns why not, and many of the respondents gave more than one answer.

54% said they felt at risk of not being believed or taken seriously, **47%** said they felt at risk of damaging their reputation, **47%** felt at risk of their complaint not being handled appropriately and **45%** felt the behaviour seems to be culturally acceptable in the higher education institution where it happened.
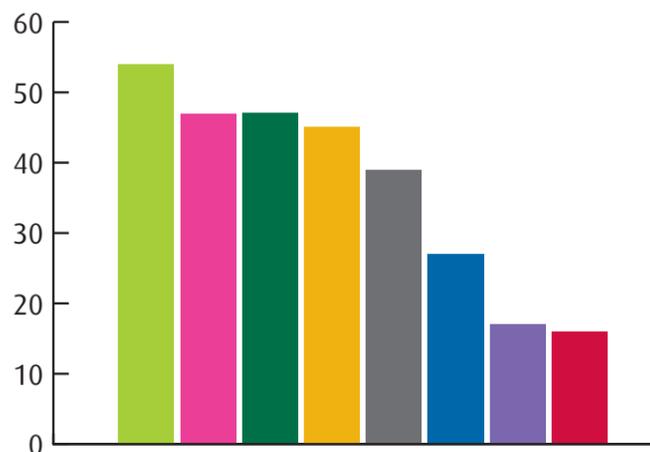
Reasons for not reporting

54% – Risk of not being believed or taken seriously

47% Risk of damaging your reputation

47% Risk that your complaint would not be handled appropriately

45% The behaviour seems to be culturally acceptable in the higher education institution where it happened

39% Risk of losing opportunities

27% Risk of negatively impacting grades

17% Fear of the perpetrator

16% Other

Some respondents provided comment on why did they did not report. Comments included:

'Knowledge that prior complaints had not been handled well.'

'Everyone already knew. He was notorious for it.'

'I had mentioned it to several members of staff who said "it is just his age, he really does care about his students and sometimes you just need to laugh things off" so not taking it seriously and making excuses for it stopped me from taking it further.'

'Embarrassment related to low self-esteem.'

'The behaviour is culturally acceptable to that member of staff in this institution.'

'There was no forum to report, especially if it came from the Principal.'

'Fear that favouritism/bias towards perpetrator would make head of course turn against me.'

Respondents who did report their concerns

We asked respondents who had reported their concerns **whether they were satisfied with the outcome**. **48%** were not satisfied with the outcome. **43%** were, **8%** selected 'don't know', and **3%** did not give an answer.

We also asked respondents who were unsatisfied with the outcome of their reporting whether any action was taken. **79%** said that no action was taken, while **16%** said yes, **5%** said they did not know and **5%** did not give an answer.

Of the respondents who said no, some gave **reasons**. These included:

'My anonymity was not protected and the perpetrators made life harder for me.'

'My treatment worsened because [the perpetrator] knew had complained about [them].'

'The person still kept their job and contact with students and no apology was received from them.'
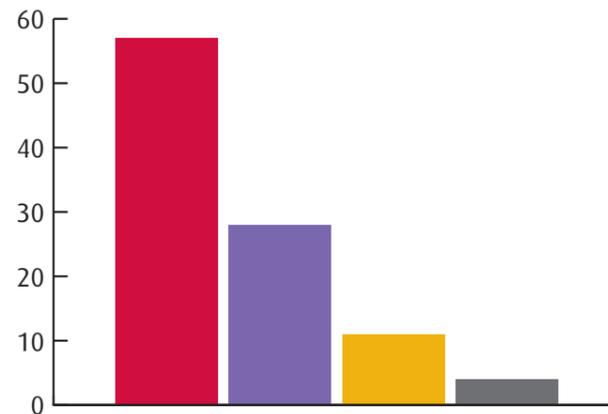
'The teaching staff did not take it seriously, didn't understand it and dismissed it.'

'We had to sort it out ourselves.'

'The culture of the institution allowed it to persist.'

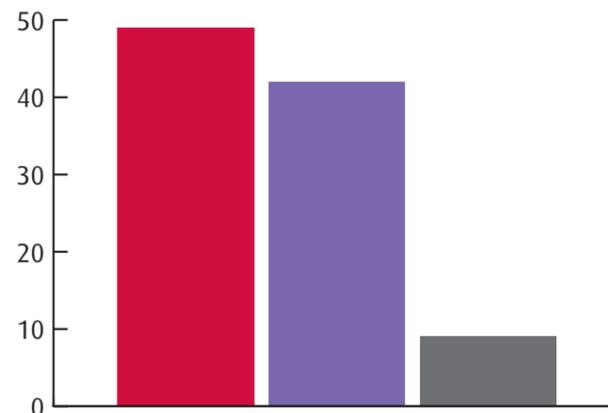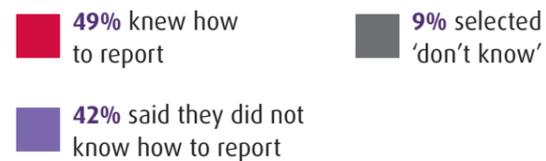'Several lecturers colluded and made my life hell.'

Overall awareness of reporting processes

We asked all respondents if they were aware of how to report any incidents of sexual harassment, inappropriate behaviour, bullying or discrimination in their higher education institution, regardless of whether they had experienced it or not.

Of all the respondents:

- **57%** knew how to report incidents
- **11%** selected 'do not know'
- **28%** did not know how to report incidents
- **4%** did not give an answer

Most notably, of those who did **not** report their concerns:

- **49%** knew how to report
- **9%** selected 'don't know'
- **42%** said they did not know how to report

We also asked respondents if their higher education institution provided guidance on training and/or guidance on how to recognise and report inappropriate behaviour, bullying or discrimination:

- **40%** said no
- **26%** did not know
- **31%** said yes
- **4%** did not say
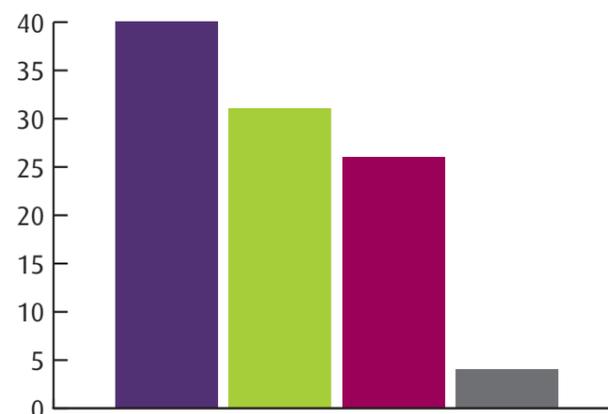
Views on what could be changed for the better

Finally, we asked respondents if they think, if anything, needs to change in their higher education institution to improve the culture and eradicate sexual harassment, bullying, inappropriate behaviour and discrimination. Out of all respondents, **43%** gave a suggestion, and some respondents gave more than one.

Calls for reviews of processes

69% of these respondents called for tightened processes in dealing with any incidents of sexual harassment, bullying, inappropriate behaviour and discrimination from their higher education institution. This includes employing a designated member of staff for students to report concerns to, introducing anonymous reporting and a zero-tolerance policy (ensuring repeat offenders are permanently removed), closer monitoring of all staff, ensuring equality of treatment for all students and staff and ensuring staff have the correct training to deal with reporting incidents of this nature and ensuring victims have sufficient support. Some respondents also discussed boundaries in the 'student-teacher' relationship and the need for professionalism in this relationship to be clarified.

'There needs to be a process in place of which complaints can be made anonymously, and dealt with by members of staff who do not have personal relationships with each other.'

'We need sensitivity training for staff.'

'There have been [examples] where a student has been suspended or expelled for physical violence or rape, in one instance the victim was promised the aggressor would never be allowed on the grounds again. In all three instances, the aggressor was back in either a matter of months, or in one case weeks.'

'Staff needs diversifying and training on cultural subjects and supporting students of colour.'

'External staff should not be re-hired after numerous complaints about their conduct.'

'Ensure ALL teaching staff are up to par, including just visiting/part time teachers not just the main staff.'

'Have a zero-tolerance policy that is upheld in regards to bullying, gender-discrimination and sexual harassment/abuse alongside other forms of discrimination.'

'An institution wide culture change that believes victims, acknowledges the severity of impact these can have and respond with harsh consequences for perpetrators i.e. a zero tolerance policy.'

'Staff relationships are close and this means it is hard for students to question staff behaviour.'

'Too many teachers (one-to-one) are not vetted effectively in line with current safeguarding regulations.'

'The relationships and boundaries between ALL staff and ALL students needs to be properly established and maintained with clear guidelines on how to do this available to both parties.'

Calls for improved awareness of reporting and training

Of these respondents who gave a response, 54% called for **improved awareness of reporting** and **training** for students to recognise acts of sexual harassment, bullying, inappropriate behaviour and discrimination from their higher education institution, including training specifically on the Equality Act 2010.

'Above anything, we need to find a way of making people understand that they did not do anything to deserve what happened to them.'

'Greater visibility in how to get in contact with the college if there has been an issue.'

'Clear outlines of what constitutes as sexual harassment, bullying and discrimination so that students know what is wrong and feel like they can report it and it will be taken seriously. Also, having a member of staff who is not connected to others so will not have bias.'

'More information on the equality act and also being able to talk to a higher member of staff about these issues without any concern or worry.'

'Have an open conversation upon induction week. We are introduced to time keeping, sick day procedures but not those that actually help us to feel safe.'

'There needs to be an implemented system that is outlined to all student where everybody or anybody who has a complaint goes through a specific system on how to make a complaint and this should be the same for every student regardless of who they are.'

21% of respondents suggested other solutions such as:

'Rehearsals should be recorded and monitored, conductors, teachers and students should be held accountable for what is said and done in rehearsals.'

'Continued education about the industry and the correct treatment of all those working in theatre.'

'Constant discussions and a language/ process for girls to call out inappropriate things in the moment whilst still feeling professional and equal to their male peers.

'There needs to be more time for discussion between students and teachers about all these issues and what we can expect to face in the industry.'

'It should be compulsory to ask students if they are comfortable before making physical contact with them, whether that be in a large group, masterclass or 1-1 setting, permission must always be given before physical contact.'

'The culture that allows sexual harassment, sexism and discrimination etc. to be normalised is widespread in the music industry and particularly in conservatoires and this NEEDS to change in order for anything to improve.'

'I think students could be encouraged more to talk about any experiences with sexual harassment/bullying/inappropriate behaviour/ discrimination with members of staff.'

Calls for a review of current attitudes towards concerns of this nature

Many respondents also suggested that many higher education institutions currently do not take complaints seriously.

'This university is so happy to ignore it because they are so focussed on making money. They don't care how unsafe we feel, or how we feel we are getting different opportunities to more privileged divisions.'

'Staff need to be more active in stopping it and not ignoring it.'

'The way reports are handled by high-up staff. It should be taken more seriously.'

'I think that the college need to be more understanding and empathetic of people's issues however irrelevant it might seem to them.'

'Students need to be reassured that they will be taken seriously and that any reports are dealt with discretion and respect.'

'The heads of department need to actually deal with issues rather than ignore them. Not dealing with discriminatory and unprofessional behaviour allows people to get away with it and does not show support for the person affected.'

'Students' voices [need to] be given credence – even from people working within educational institutions there's still an opinion if 'you're too young to know', 'you're only young you don't know what you're talking about', and 'I'm sure they didn't mean it like that' – as in someone behaving inappropriately and it being dismissed as an accident, or not intentionally bullying/sexualising/ harassing for example.'

'At the moment it feels like so much of what happens is just brushed under the carpet. You are told not to make a fuss. And here policies that are meant to protect us don't exist, they are just tick box exercises so the institution can say 'aren't we brilliant we've got this document!' but in reality it is meaningless.'
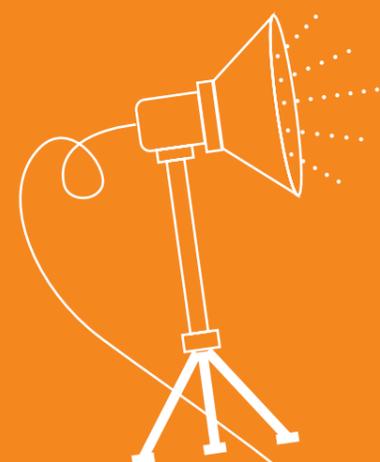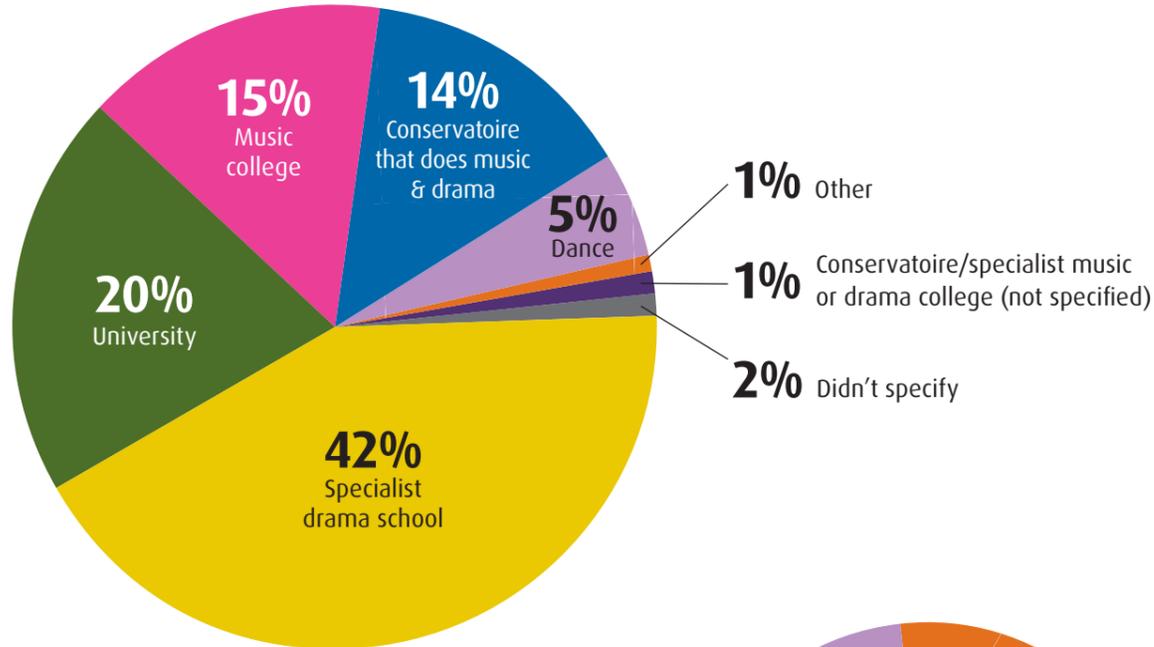
About the survey – further information

This confidential, anonymous survey ran from 9 April to 21 May 2018 and within that time frame the survey received 600 responses.

We asked respondents to tell us where they study.
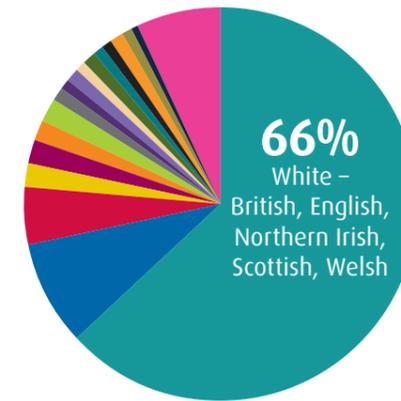
Type of institution:

- **15%** Music college
- **14%** Conservatoire that does music & drama
- **1%** Other
- **5%** Dance
- **1%** Conservatoire/specialist music or drama college (not specified)
- **2%** Didn't specify
- **20%** University
- **42%** Specialist drama school

In addition to the survey, respondents had the option to complete an equality and diversity monitoring form to help further our analysis.

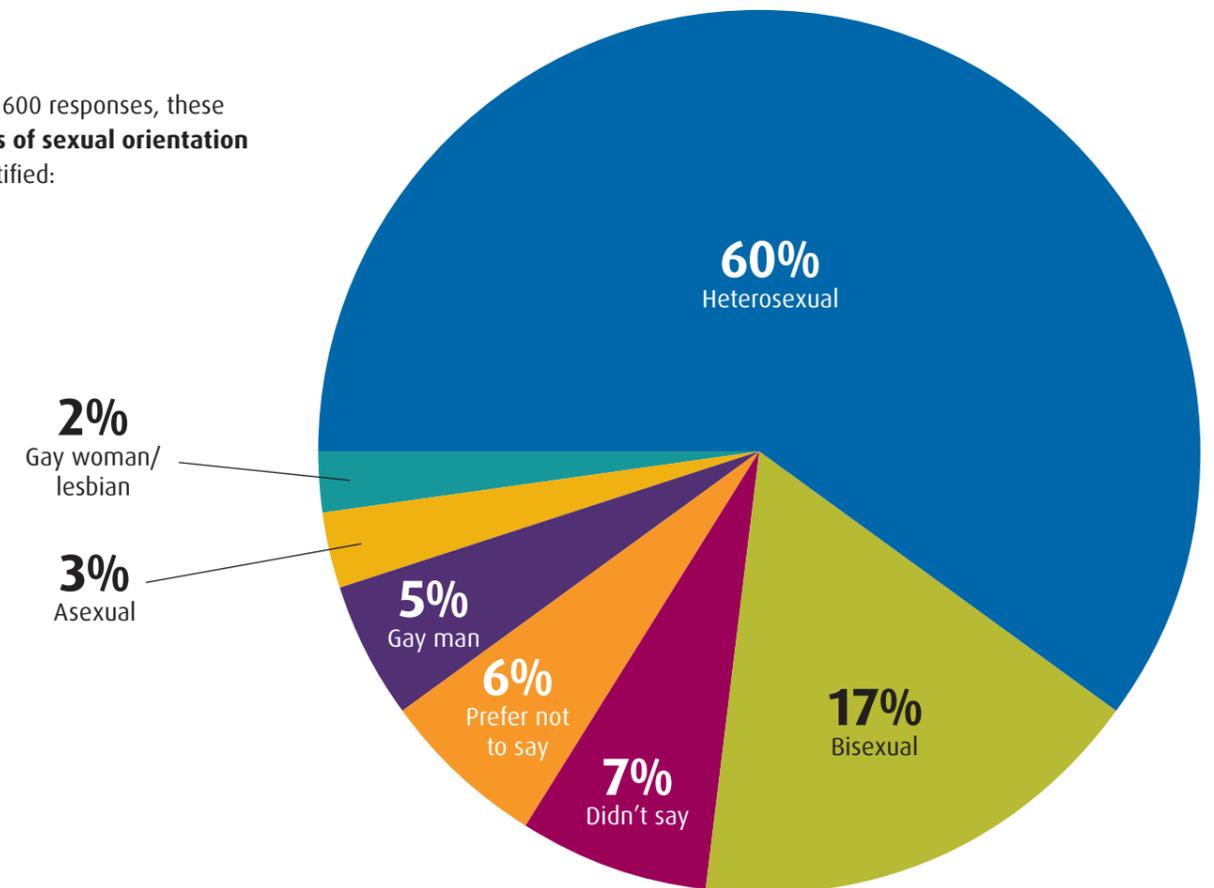We asked respondents **what gender they identified as:**

- **26%** Male
- **1%** Non-binary
- **65%** Female
- **8%** Did not give an answer
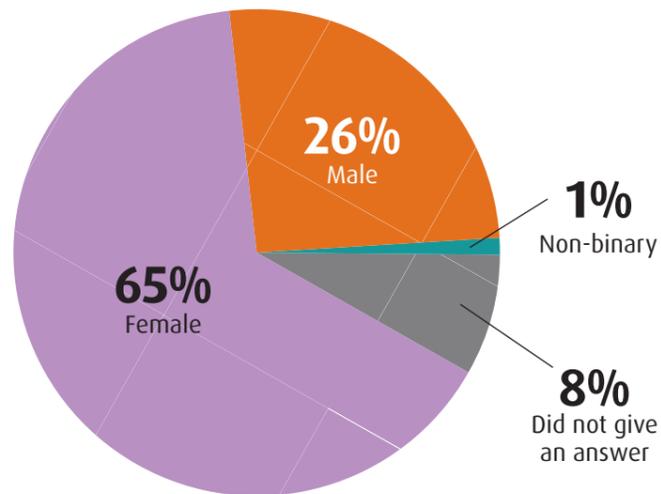
The following ethnicities were identified:

- **66%** White – British, English, Northern Irish, Scottish, Welsh

Types of ethnicity

White – British, English, Northern Irish, Scottish, Welsh	66%	Any other ethnic group	Less than 1%
White – White European	9%	Black / African / Caribbean / Black British – African	1%
Any other white background	5%	Mixed / Dual heritage – White & Black African	1%
Any other Mixed/Dual heritage group	2%	Other Asian background	Less than 1%
Mixed / Dual heritage – White & Asian	2%	Asian/Asian British – Chinese	1%
White – Irish	2%	Asian/Asian British – Indian	Less than 1%
Mixed / Dual heritage – White & Black Caribbean	2%	Asian/Asian British – Pakistani	Less than 1%
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British – Caribbean	1%	White – Gypsy, Roma or Irish Traveller	Less than 1%
Prefer not to say	1%	Didn't say	7%

Out of the 600 responses, these **categories of sexual orientation** were identified:

- **60%** Heterosexual
- **2%** Gay woman/lesbian
- **3%** Asexual
- **5%** Gay man
- **6%** Prefer not to say
- **7%** Didn't say
- **17%** Bisexual

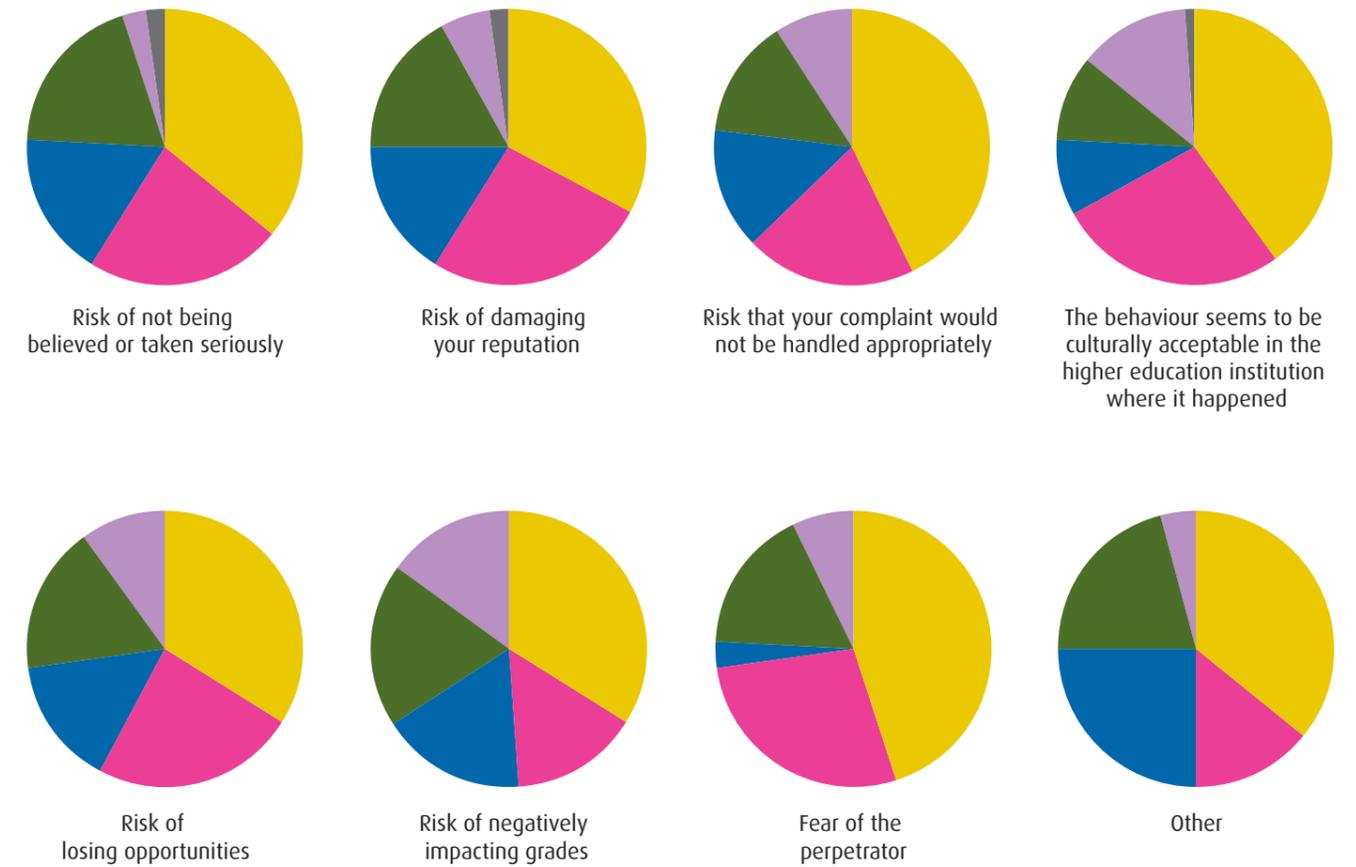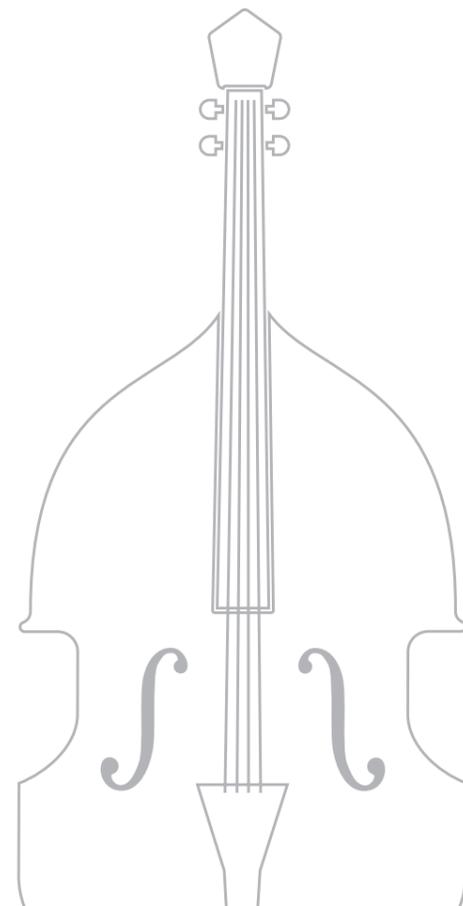## Reporting – breakdown by institution type

We asked respondents **if they reported their experiences** and broke the results down by institution-type.
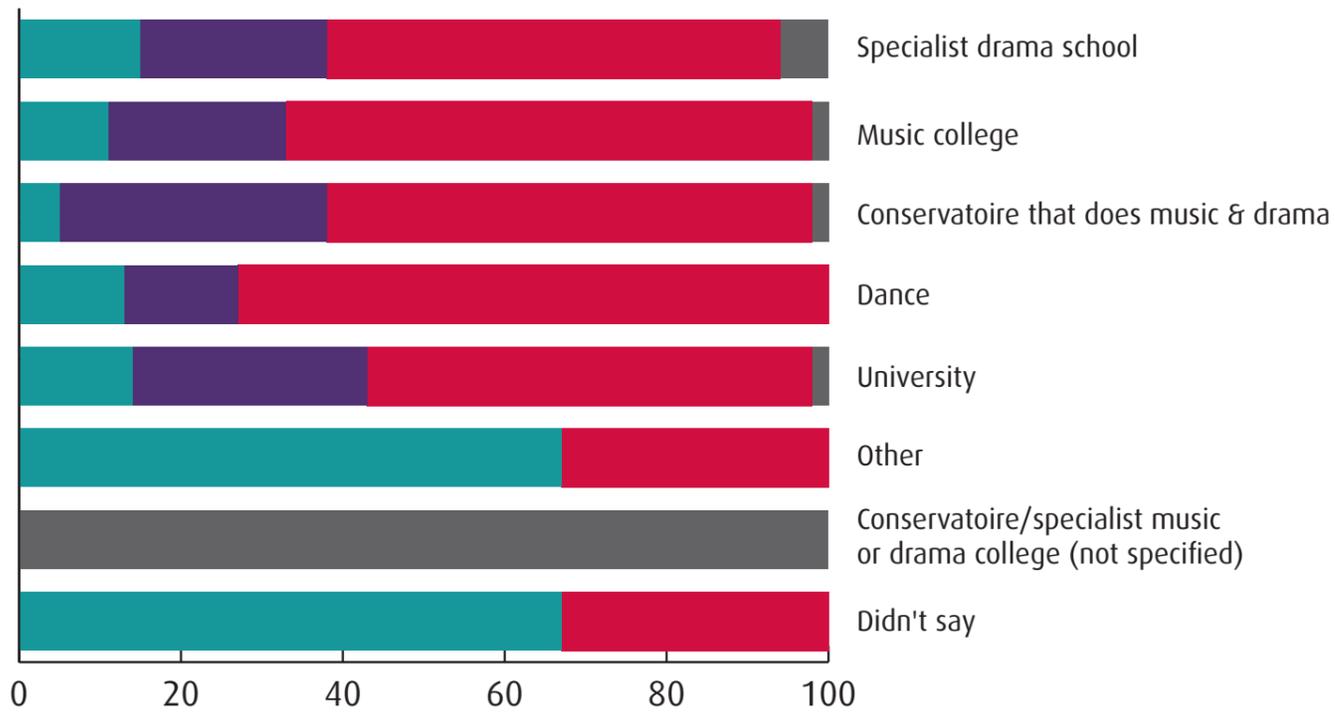
Legend:
- Yes, I reported all incidents
- I reported some, not others
- No, I did not report any incidents
- Did not say

Categories (top to bottom):
- Specialist drama school
- Music college
- Conservatoire that does music & drama
- Dance
- University
- Other
- Conservatoire/specialist music or drama college (not specified)
- Didn't say

Reasons for not reporting – breakdown by institution type

We asked respondents **why they did not choose to report their experiences** and broke the results down by institution-type.


- Risk of damaging your reputation
- Risk that your complaint would not be handled appropriately
- The behaviour seems to be culturally acceptable in the higher education institution where it happened

Type of institution
- Specialist drama school
- Music college
- Conservatoire that does music and drama
- University
- Dance
- Didn't specify

Awareness of how to report – breakdown by institution type

We asked respondents **if they knew how to report** and broke the results down by institution-type.

Type of institution

- Specialist drama school
- Music college
- Conservatoire that does music and drama
- University
- Dance
- Other
- Didn't specify
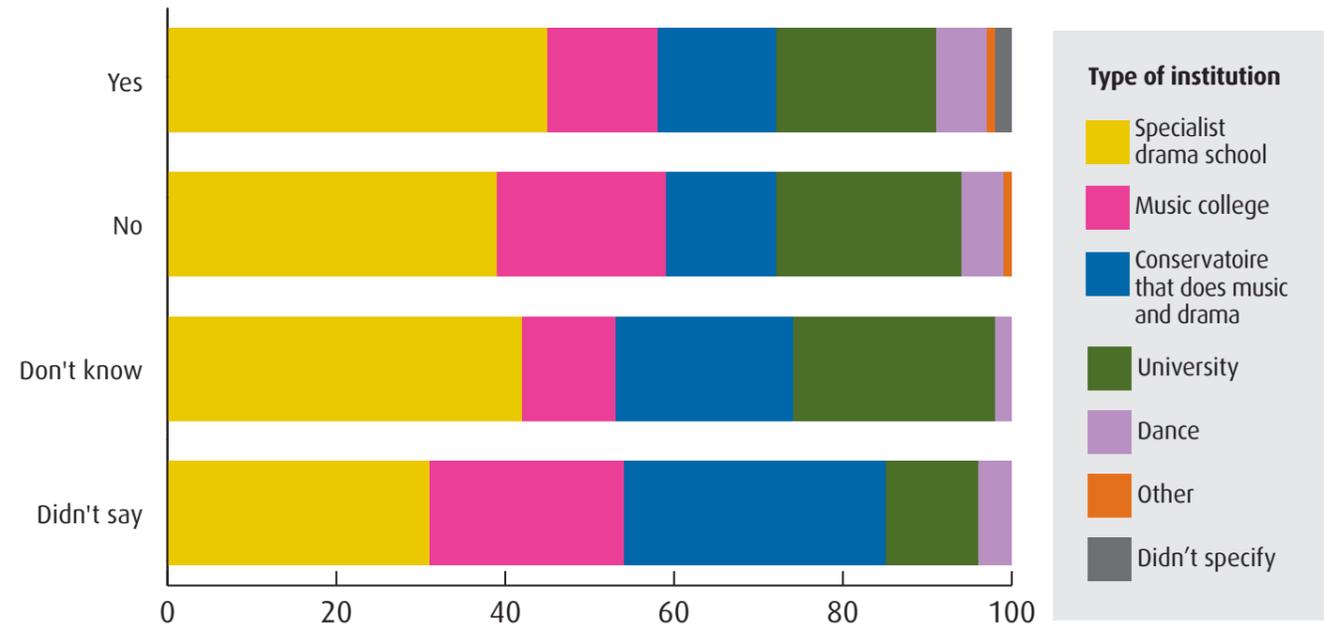
Awareness of how to report – breakdown of respondents who chose not to report

We asked respondents **who did not report if they knew how to**.

Yes
No
Don't know
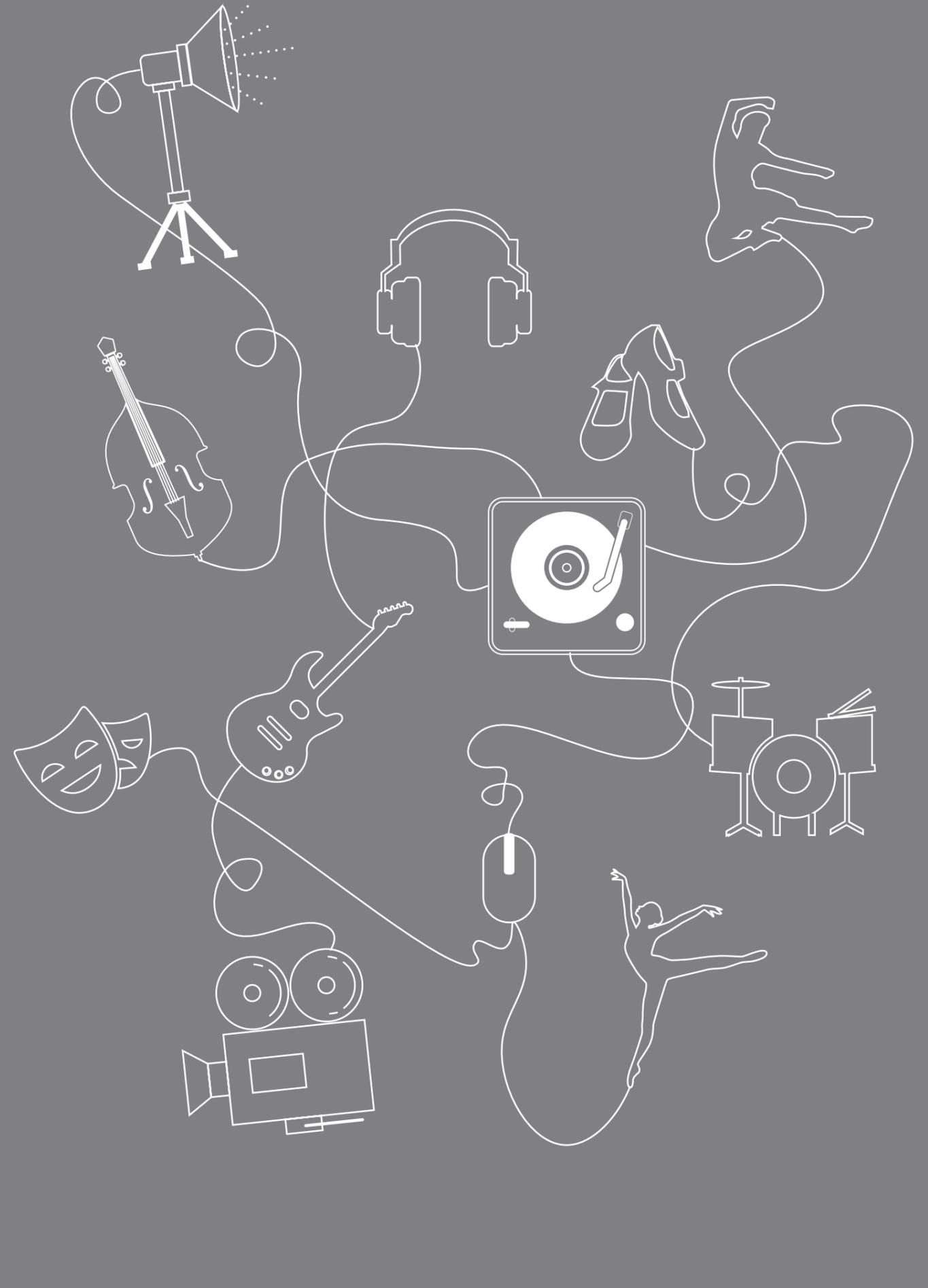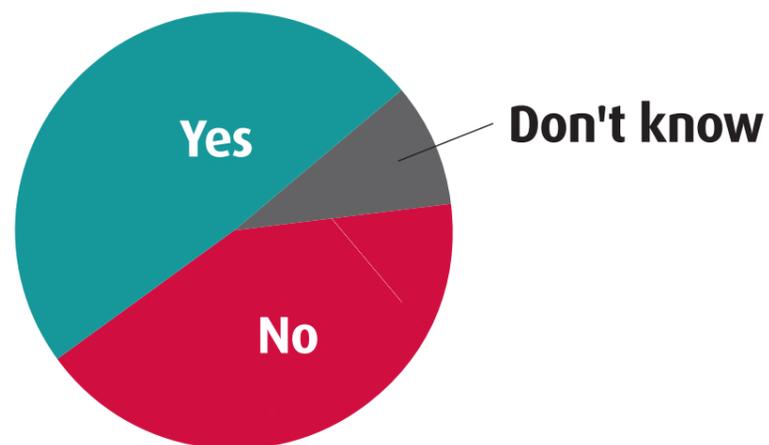
Make the future happen today

It is vital the whole creative sector works together to enforce good behaviours, right from the beginning of a career. We recommend that all organisations, including higher education institutions support and adopt all relevant industry codes of conduct, including:

The ISM-Musicians' Union Code of Practice for the Music Sector which are a set of principles that aims to eradicate bullying, harassment, discrimination and other forms of inappropriate behaviour within the sector: **ism.org/dignityatwork | musiciansunion.org.uk**

Equity's Agenda for Change which offers a string of action points for the people, organisations and venues within the sector, and aims to empower members affected by bullying, harassment or sexual harassment to come forward: **equity.org.uk/getting-involved/campaigns/safe-spaces**

The UK Theatre and SOLT 10 Principles which encourage safer and even more supportive working practices in theatre: **uktheatre.org/theatre-industry/guidance-reports-and-resources/safe-and-supportive-working-practices**

The British Film Institute's 8 Principles which aim to eradicate abuse and also help employers meet legal requirements and offer a shared vision to promote and maintain a safer, more inclusive workplace environment for everyone working within the screen industries: **bfi.org.uk/about-bfi/policy-strategy/set-principles-screen-industry**

Help and advice

If you have been a victim of sexual abuse, we would encourage you to speak to one of the following organisations. They can provide support such as counselling and signposting of specific services to assist you in recovery and advise on reporting the incident to the police should you choose to:

Sexual Assault Referral Centre – **dial 111** to find the nearest Sexual Assault Referral Centre. They can provide immediate support and advice, including medical examinations and tests, and will not go to the police until you decide if you want to or not.

- **Rape Crisis** – rapecrisis.org.uk
- **Victim Support –** 08 08 16 89 111 www.victimsupport.org.uk
- **Galop (LGBT+)** – 0207 704 2040 www.galop.org.uk
- **Survivors UK (men)** – www.survivorsuk.org
- **Samaritans** – 08457 909090

Equity members can contact the union's **Bullying and Harassment Helpline** on **020 7670 0268** or **harassment@equity.org.uk** There are a range of materials available to members at **www.equity.org.uk/members-area/member-resources/bullying**

If you are an ISM member, you have access to confidential advice from our experienced in-house employment lawyers by contacting the **ISM legal team** at **legal@ism.org** You can access their 24-hour advice line on **01275 376 038**. The ISM also runs a **counselling helpline** on **0800 042 0136**.

If you are a member of the MU, you have access to confidential legal advice and assistance from their team of **specialist officials and solicitors**. See **theMU.org** for more info and contact details. The MU has a dedicated email account – **safespace@theMU.org** – to provide **a safe space** for members and non-members to share instances of sexism, sexual harassment and sexual abuse. All emails are treated in the strictest confidence.

About the organisations

About Equity

Equity is the UK trade union for professional performers and creative practitioners. As a leading industry organisation, Equity is known and respected nationally and internationally for the work we do with, and on behalf of, our members working across all areas of the entertainment industry.

We are a campaigning and organising union and proud of our strong record of taking the things that matter to our members to parliament and other centres of influence. Being part of Equity gives members a voice in these places. Members are at the heart of all the union's activities and by getting involved they drive forward the work of the union.

About the ISM

The Incorporated Society of Musicians is the UK's professional body for musicians and a nationally-recognised subject association for music. We were set up in 1882 to promote the art of music and to protect the interests of all musicians. Today we support over 8,500 members with specialist and tailored services and expert advice, from study up until retirement and beyond.

About the Musicians' Union

Established in 1893, the MU represents over 30,000 musicians working in all sectors and genres of music. As well as negotiating on behalf of its members with all the major employers of musicians in the UK, the MU offers a range of services tailored for the self-employed such as legal advice and assistance, unpaid fee recovery, template contracts and specialist insurances.
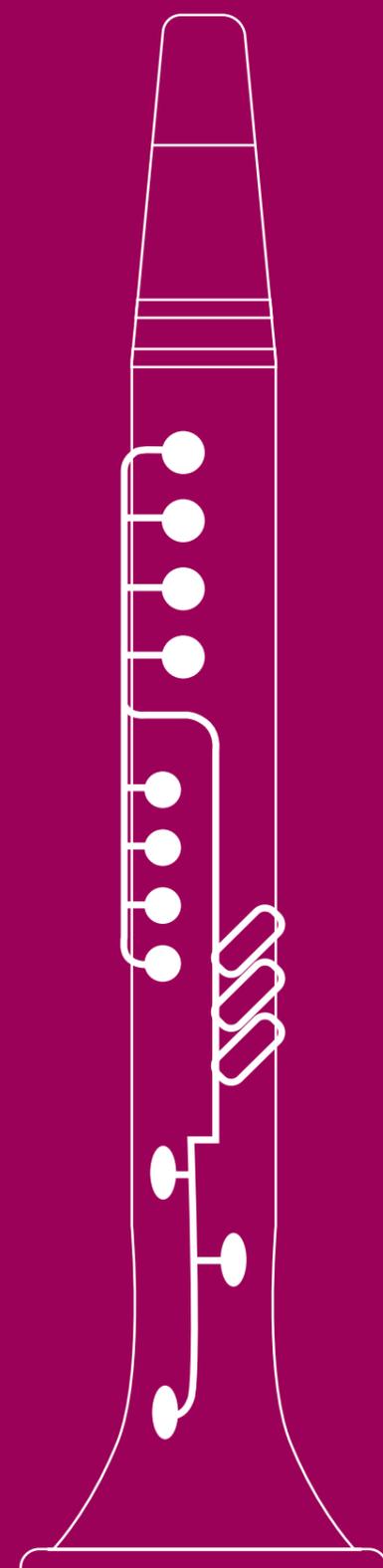
equity

- equity.org.uk/members-area/member-resources/bullying
- harassment@equity.org.uk
- /EquityUK
- /equityUK
- @equityuk
- /company/equity-uk
- @EquityUK

ISM INCORPORATED SOCIETY OF MUSICIANS

- ism.org/dignityatwork
- membership@ism.org
- /ismusicians
- /ISM_music
- @ism_music
- /company/incorporated-society-of-musicians
- @ism_music

Musicians' Union

- theMU.org
- safespace@theMU.org
- /Musicians.Union
- /wearethemu
- @wearethemu
- /company/musicians'-union
- @TheMusiciansUnion