

Written Submission of Evidence to the Women and Equalities Committee inquiry into misogyny in music

by Dr Cassandra Jones and Dr Kallia Manoussaki

The Organisation

1. BaHMI (Bullying and Harassment in the Music Industry) is a research project funded by the Royal Society of Edinburgh exploring bullying and sexual harassment experienced by women and men working in the UK music industry. It is co-led by Dr Cassandra Jones at the University of Winchester and Dr Kallia Manoussaki at the University of the West of Scotland. We are responding to the call for evidence by this Committee on Misogyny in Music in our capacity as experts on gender-based violence and the misogynistic attitudes underpinning violence against women.

2. We thank the Committee members for this opportunity to contribute. Our submission addresses the questions posed regarding the expectations for women working in the music industry compared to men, how women can report problems or abuse, and steps the government and other industries bodies should take to address misogynistic and sexist attitudes towards women. We are happy to give evidence orally to the Committee.

Background

3. The UK music industry is dominated by white, heterosexual men, lacks regulation, and relies on informal, precarious working agreements¹²³. These factors create an environment for bullying and harassing behaviours to thrive⁴ and for women in particular to experience a range of consequences impacting their mental and physical health, as well as their professional careers⁵. Considering that all parts of women's lives may be affected by their negative workplace experiences, we were surprised that we could not find any research evidencing the experiences of bullying and harassment in the UK music industry workplace. We used our expertise on rigorous research methods to generate the first evidence base on

¹ Black Lives in Music. (2021). *Being Black in the UK Music Industry*. Available at: <https://blim.org.uk/report/>

² Hennekam, S., and Bennet, D. (2017). Creative industries work across multiple contexts: Common themes and challenges. *Personnel Review*, 46(1), 68 - 85.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877919891730>

³ Hill, R. L., Hesmondhalgh, D., and Megson, M. (2020). Sexual violence at live music events: Experiences, responses and prevention. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 23(3), 368–384.

⁴ Jones, C. (2018). Gender-based violence amongst music festival employees. In: L. Platt & R. Finkel (eds.) *Gendered Violence at International Festivals*. Routledge.

⁵ Fitzgerald, L. F., & Cortina, L. M. (2018). Sexual harassment in work organizations: A view from the 21st century. In: Travis, C. B., White, J. W., Rutherford, A., Williams, W. S., Cook, S. L., & Wyche, K. F. (Eds.). *APA handbook of the psychology of women: History, theory, and battlegrounds*. American Psychological Association.

these behaviours by collecting data from people working in the UK music industry via an online survey⁶. The evidence in this submission is based on over 450 quantitative and qualitative survey responses. 43% of survey participants identified as women and 54% as men⁷⁸. Participants reported a range of job roles including: musicians, audio visual and technical crew, education, managers, producers, promoters, trade association and merchandise.

Summary of Key Findings

4. For women working in the UK music industry, being subjected to bullying and harassment is the rule rather than the exception – 96% of women survey participants experienced bullying and harassment and they reported they experienced these behaviours an average of 19 times a day over the course of their career. The ubiquity and frequency normalises these workplace behaviours and creates the expectation for women that they have to accept bullying and harassment will happen to them.

99% of women respondents experienced bullying. They were more likely than men to experience the following bullying behaviours:

- Invasion of their personal space
- Insulting or offensive remarks made about them by colleagues
- Gossip or rumours spread about them by someone they work with
- Being stared at in a hostile way
- Persistent criticism about their work (including their creative outputs)
- Hints or signals from others that they should quit working in the music industry

96% of woman participants experienced harassment. They were more likely than men to be subjected to a range of sexually harassing behaviours, including but not limited to: unwanted sexual comments and questions; being sent unwanted sexual images; and sexual coercion.

8 in 10 women respondents who experienced bullying and harassment did not make an official report.

4 in 10 woman who made an official report indicated their career was negatively impacted.

⁶ For further information on the development of the survey see: Jones, C. and Manoussaki, K. (2022). [“Completely entangled in its fabric”: Bullying and harassment in the music industry](#). University of Winchester.

⁷ The numbers do not sum to 100 as some participants identified as non-binary (1.6%) or another gender identity (0.4%). 1.4% preferred to not say how they identified. These participants were not included in the analysis for statistical reasons.

⁸ Survey participants were asked to identify their gender and to indicate if they identified as transgender. Ten (2.0%) did. They were included in the analysis according to the gender identity. For example, if a survey participants reporting identified as a woman and as transgender, the analysis included them with participants who identified as women. This was done only for statistical purposes.

Recommended Next Steps

5. The music industry needs to take immediate action to address bullying and harassing behaviours that create toxic work environments and impact women's personal and professional lives. We believe that the experiences and views of those affected should be placed at the heart of the next steps undertaken by the government and the UK music industry. The following recommendations to prevent and combat bullying and harassment are based on survey responses:

- Women participants employed by companies indicated their workplaces did not have and/or did not implement measures to ensure a health and safe working environment, thus violating the Health and Safety Act 1974. A public and independent music industry Health and Safety Body (HSB) is needed that will monitor companies and ensure perpetrators are held accountable and victims are protected from retaliation.
- Most of the UK music industry are self-employed yet there are no regulations determining who is responsible for their welfare. The HSB should develop regulations that are tailored to the unique workplaces of the music industry and that include measures to protect self-employed from bullying and harassment.
- In conjunction with the above recommendations, there is an urgent need for a change in the music industry workplace culture. This should be a multi-pronged effort that includes: industry leaders demonstrating commitment to tackle bullying and harassment; improving equality, diversity and inclusion; surveys of employees and self-employed assessing attitudes and behaviours; awareness raising campaigns; and bystander programmes.

What expectations are there on women working in the music industry compared to men?

6. Behaviours become normalised and expected when they are widespread and frequent. Our findings evidence precisely this: **96% of women survey participants reported that they were subjected to bullying and harassment** and they had experienced these behaviours on average **19 times per day over the course of their career**. Summarised aptly by one woman participant: “Harassment and bullying are PART of the music industry- completely tangled in its fabric.”

7. Bullying can be characterised as unwanted behaviour that is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting or it can be an abuse or misuse of power that undermines, humiliates or causes physical or emotional harm⁹. **99% of women respondents were subjected to these kinds of behaviours**. This findings shows that bullying experienced by women in the UK music industry is far more prevalent than in other workplaces, where 36% of women in teaching, 32% of women working in prisons and 29% of women in the police service experienced bullying¹⁰.

8. Our findings¹¹ showed that women were more likely than men to be subjected to at least one form of bullying. When we examined bullying in more detail, women participant were more likely than men participants to experience:

- Invasion of their personal space
- Insulting or offensive remarks made about them by colleagues
- Gossip or rumours spread about them by someone they work with
- Being stared at in a hostile way
- Persistent criticism about their work (including their creative outputs)
- Hints or signals from others that they should quit working in the music industry

9. The majority of women respondents (86.3%) thought that the music industry is oriented towards men, which comes as no surprise considering men dominate senior job roles and have higher incomes¹². In these gendered workplaces, bullying is more likely to occur⁴ and create norms that make women feel like they “*have to accept it*” because their male bosses are “*so influential [and] can help your career.*”

10. Survey questions on harassment asked participants about experiences of sexual harassment, as set out by the Equalities Act (2010) and further explained by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission¹³. **96% of women participants were subjected to sexual**

⁹ ACAS. (n.d.). [If you're treated unfairly at work](#).

¹⁰ Hoel, H., & Cooper, C. L. (2000). Destructive conflict and bullying at work (Unpublished report). Manchester, United Kingdom: University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (UMIST).

¹¹ Chi-square tests were used to compare the prevalence of experiences across women and men.

¹² UK Music. (2020). [Diversity Report 2020](#).

¹³ Equalities and Human Rights Commission (2020). [Sexual harassment at work. Technical guidance](#).

harassment, suggesting that sexual harassment is far more prevalent in the UK music industry than other industries, where 40% of women reported being sexually harassed¹⁴.

11. Women respondents were more likely than men respondents to be subjected to at least one form of sexual harassment and they were more likely than men to experience¹⁵:

- Unwanted questions about sexuality
- Sexist remarks made to them
- Sexist remarks made about them
- Unwanted sexual remarks made about them
- Unwanted sexual remarks made to them
- Being stared at in a sexualised/objectified way
- Unwanted sexual attention by a colleague
- Sent unwanted sexual photos/videos by a colleague
- Offered a career benefit for sexual cooperation
- Experienced a negative career impact for refusing sexual cooperation
- Made them do something sexual when they were intoxicated with drinks and/or drugs
- Pressured to do something sexual they did not want to do
- Forced or threatened with force to do something sexual they did not want to do

12. While the UK music industry is becoming more diverse¹², prejudices such as sexism, racism and ableism remain prevalent. The majority of women respondents reported they thought the music industry is sexist (84.4%), favours non-disabled over disabled (80.0%), and favours White British over other ethnicities (58.9%). These discriminatory attitudes may influence experiences of bullying and harassment so we compared different groups of survey respondents¹⁶:

- Women with disabilities were subjected to bullying and harassment more often than men participants without disabilities.
- Women who identified as sexual minority (e.g. lesbian, bisexual) were subjected to bullying and harassment more often than heterosexual men.
- BME women more were sexually harassed more often than white men were.

¹⁴ BBC & ComRes. (2017). [Sexual harassment in the workplace](#).

¹⁵ Chi-square tests were used to compare the prevalence of experiences across women and men.

¹⁶ Independent sample t-tests were conducted to compare frequency of experiences across groups.

How can women report problems or abuse?

13. **81.6% of women participants who were subjected to bullying and harassment did not make an official report.** As explained by woman respondent, women could not report because the people to whom they would report were the ones bullying and harassing:

“The issues I had were with my bosses, so I had no one I could report it to, or any way to stand up for myself. Eventually I found a new job, but for months I was crying daily after work.”

The flawed reporting procedure resulted in the workplace colluding with perpetrators and creating¹⁷ the norm that bullying and sexual harassment is accepted and tolerated. Consequently, perpetrators are given unspoken permission to bully and sexually harass and victims are told “they have to move on” because “it is like that for everybody”.

14. Of the 18.4% women participants who did report, over half made reports to the line manager of person(s) responsible (63.6%) or their employer (51.5%). Women also reported to the police (18.2%), union (15.2%) and other official organisation (12.1%).

15. **3 in 10 women respondent who made an official report (30.3%) indicated that nothing happened,** which has consequences for not only women making reports but others as well. One woman respondent provided such an account:

“I left an employed role where I experienced bullying for several years, after making a complaint to the CEO and Board of Trustees. I could have sued them for wrongful dismissal or bullying in the workplace but the industry is small and I am trying to develop my career. The organisation did nothing about my complaint, and so that person continues in that job, is treating my replacement in the same way, and I’m gaslighted into being told that it wasn’t malicious and wasn’t harmful to me.”

This woman described how she lodged a complaint with people in her organisation that held positions of power. They took no action, which allowed the perpetrator to keep his job and bully her replacement. Instead of disciplining the perpetrator, the organisation retaliated by emotionally abusing the woman.

16. **For those who did experience an outcome, 39.3% said their career was negatively impacted,** 17.4% were issued an NDA, and 4.3% were issued a Cease and Desist. Unsurprisingly, 63.6% of women were not satisfied or somewhat dissatisfied with the outcome of their report.

¹⁷ Gruber, J. (1998). The impact of male work environments and organizational policies on women’s experiences of sexual harassment. *Gender & Society*, 12(3), 301 – 320.

What steps should the government and other industries bodies take to address misogynistic and sexist attitudes towards women?

17. Misogynistic and sexist attitudes manifest as bullying and harassment in the UK music industry workplaces. We recommend the following steps to combat and prevent these behaviours that create a toxic work environment and harm women.

18. **Music Industry Healthy and Safety Body (HSB).** The accounts provided by women respondents suggested that bullying and harassment were rife in companies lacking a HR department, where reports could be lodged. HR functions to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of employees and compliance with legal statutes. Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, all employers must provide a safe working environment, including protection from bullying and harassment. The BaHMI research demonstrated that UK music industry companies violate this law. An independent music industry health and safety body (HSB) is urgently needed that will monitor company work environments and the health, safety and wellbeing of employees, especially those in positions of less power such as women and marginalised groups.

19. **Hold perpetrators accountable and protect victims from retaliation.** While the majority of participants thought there should be formal regulations tackling bullying and harassment in their work environment (96.8% women; 88.3% men) and across the entire UK music industry (91.5% women; 76.5% men), they also indicated that they did not think formal regulations would be effective. One woman respondent described what her experience was like when she engaged with formal regulations:

“I have worked for a very large company who did introduce a code for bullying and harassment. An official route for reporting. It makes no difference..... I went through official route. Investigation found the staff member to be guilty of harassment and assault and theft. They make recommendations to employer for disciplinary action. Left again to the discretion of the person’s manager. No action taken. Promotion given. sadly these official regulations once in place are only on paper.”

This was one of many examples provided in which respondents worked at companies with formal regulations but disciplinary action was not taken. Perpetrators must be held accountable. As part of their work to monitor companies, the music industry HSB should scrutinise implementation of regulations, ensuring perpetrators are held accountable and victims are protected from retaliation.

20. **Develop regulations that set out who is responsible for the health, safety and wellbeing of self-employed.** The majority of UK music industry workforce is self-employed¹⁸, coming together temporarily to achieve a music-related goal, such as a live gig or album record⁴. These project based organisations do not have a clear power structure or

¹⁸ Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). (2019). [DCMS Sectors Economic Estimates 2019: Employment](#).

regulations. One woman respondent commented, “*Questions for protective regulations in the music industry have no relevance for freelancers- no one would be held accountable.*” She highlighted a crucial point that there are no regulations determining who is responsible for the health, safety and wellbeing of self-employed people working in the UK music industry. It is then difficult to discern how perpetrators could be held accountable. The music industry HSB should develop regulations that are tailored to project-based organisations and protect the welfare of the UK music industry self-employed.

21. Change music industry workplace culture. Men and women survey respondents suggested that the UK music industry workplace culture must change. This includes the workplace cultures of companies and project-based organisations. Efforts to shift cultures from one that tolerates bullying and harassment to one that actively prevents it should take place in conjunction with the work of the HSB and should include the following components¹⁹²⁰.

- Leaders from all sectors of the music industry (e.g. live, recording, publishing) need to demonstrate their commitment to tackling bullying and harassment.
- Improve equality, diversity and inclusion in all workplaces.
- Anonymous workplace surveys on attitudes and experiences of bullying and harassment, in order to assess progress and areas in need of further improvement.
- Awareness raising campaigns that promote bystander actions²¹.
- Bystander programmes that shift norms on acceptable workplace behaviour by targeting misogynistic and discriminatory attitudes underpinning bullying and harassment and provide training on how to safely challenge harmful behaviours.

¹⁹ Mayer et al. (2020). [Tackling sexual harassment in the workplace.](#)

²⁰ Unison. (2013). [Tackling bullying at work.](#)

²¹ Mabry, A., & Turner, M. M. (2016). Do sexual assault bystander interventions change men's intentions? Applying the theory of normative social behavior to predicting bystander outcomes. *Journal of Health Communication, 21*(3), 276-292.