



Women and Equalities Committee

Oral evidence: Misogyny in music, HC 317

Wednesday 26 October 2022

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[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Caroline Nokes (Chair); Elliot Colburn; Kim Johnson; Kate Osborne; Anum Qaisar.

Questions 1 - 50

Witnesses

I: Dr Nicola Puckey, Senior Lecturer, Department of English, Creative Writing and American Studies at University of Winchester; Dr Rosemary Hill, Senior Lecturer in Media and Popular Culture, Department of Media and Performance, School of Music, Humanities and Media at University of Huddersfield; Dr Cassandra Jones, Lecturer in Criminology, Department of Applied Social Sciences, Forensics and Politics at University of Northumbria; and Charisse Beaumont, Chief Executive at Black Lives in Music.

Written evidence from witnesses:

[Dr Nicola Puckey](#)

[Dr Rosemary Hill](#) and others

[Dr Cassandra Jones](#) Bullying and Harassment in the Music Industry

[Charisse Beaumont](#) Black Lives in Music



Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Dr Nicola Puckey, Dr Rosemary Hill, Dr Cassandra Jones and Charisse Beaumont.

Q1 **Chair:** Good afternoon, everybody. Welcome to this afternoon's meeting of the Women and Equalities Committee and the first evidence session of our inquiry into misogyny in music.

I thank all our witnesses for attending this afternoon. We have Charisse Beaumont, Dr Rosemary Hill, Dr Cassandra Jones and Dr Nicola Puckey. I am going to go to you all in turn and ask you to introduce yourselves, but when you do that, can you also indicate how you wish to be referred to? Whether you are happy with first names or whether you wish me to use your full title, I am easy either way. Can I start with Charisse, please?

Charisse Beaumont: Hi, my name is Charisse Beaumont. I am chief executive at Black Lives in Music. You can refer to me as Charisse Beaumont.

Dr Hill: I am Dr Rosemary Lucy Hill from the University of Huddersfield. You can call me Rosie.

Dr Jones: Hi, I am Dr Cassandra Jones from Northumbria University. You can call me Cassandra.

Dr Puckey: Hello, I am Dr Nicola Puckey from the University of Winchester. You can call me Nicky or Nicola.

Chair: Thank you. The first set of questions are going to come from Anum Qaisar.

Q2 **Anum Qaisar:** Thank you, Chair. My questions are going to be directed to specific members of the panel, but if anyone wants to chip in, they should feel free to.

I remember back in 2013, listening to the song "Blurred Lines" on the radio. I do not know if you remember that song. It has been a good 10 years now, or coming up to 10 years. I remember hearing it and it was a really catchy song and of course, as an 11-year-old—oh, my maths is way off, thankfully I was not a maths teacher—as a young person, I remember hearing that song thinking it was really catchy and really trendy, but when I started actually listening to the lyrics, it was obviously quite problematic.

I will come to you first, Nicola. Do you think these misogynistic lyrics contribute to the normalisation of violence against women and girls?

Chair: Sorry, before you respond, I completely forgot to put a trigger warning in. I cannot predict what any of you are going to say; for those people who are either here in the public gallery or watching online, there may be all sorts of interesting topics discussed this afternoon that might not be age appropriate.



Dr Puckey: We are aware of more niche music having explicit content. Popular music that is played on the radio and listened to in cars by families does tend to normalise the idea of sexual objectification, ownership and viewing women through a certain lens, even if it is not specifically violence against women. It does not necessarily mean that everybody will subscribe to those views from those songs, but having them in those familial situations and in settings that are not live music events where perhaps we might expect them can certainly lead to a sense that these are appropriate and normal topics or terms of reference that people are using.

Q3 **Anum Qaisar:** You are speaking about the comparison with niche music where we are more likely to expect that, but it can actually creep up in popular culture; do you find that more often than you expect?

Dr Puckey: Yes, certainly. The problem we have, and I raised this in my submission, is the labels we have to identify explicit music. If there is not swearing in those songs, they do not necessarily get labelled as explicit, or we hear radio edits, but the content can still be misogynistic. We are saying that these songs are okay because they are not labelled as explicit, or they are being played on the radio, whereas songs that have that explicit label may lead to conversations with caregivers, teachers and schools. If we hear these songs and we are not being told they are explicit, that can lead to a normalisation of speaking to women in those ways or expecting that that behaviour is acceptable.

Q4 **Anum Qaisar:** Would anybody else like to jump in on that?

Dr Hill: I would like to comment that it is important to not make causal connections between what we hear in music and what people then go on to do. There is evidence that shows that young men do not listen to violent music and then go out and commit violence. It is really important not to make that causal-effect relationship, but to think about the ways in which popular culture really generally tells us what is normal, and how that impacts on the women and girls who are listening to the music and how that affects the ways in which we then go on to understand our own ability to consent to sexual relations, and whether that might also cause upset and harm to us when we are hearing things that may reflect our experiences in an emotionally damaging sense.

Q5 **Anum Qaisar:** Following on from that Rosie, can it be argued that when people are hearing this type of music, all it is doing is simply reinforcing views that they maybe already held?

Dr Hill: Yes and no. Potentially they may be hearing things that they hear in other songs and therefore they do not pick that out as being unusual. If we think about our own listening practices when we are listening to music, we will all have different ways of understanding the music we are listening to. We bring different things to the music.

Research shows, for example, that young people do not necessarily understand what they are listening to when they are listening to violent



music, and it is important to be aware of that. There is evidence that we are not always listening to lyrics; we sing along and do not think about it. I completely agree with you that there are a lot of problematic lyrics, but we also need to think about the context in which listening happens.

Q6 Anum Qaisar: Thank you for that. Nicola, the example I gave was “Blurred Lines”, which was sung by a man. When we are looking at all genres of music and the types of lyrics we hear from both male and female artists, to what extent would we find misogyny in those lyrics and music?

Dr Puckey: Misogyny is always difficult to identify, especially if it comes from female musicians’ lyrics, because there is a very fine line between female empowerment in lyrical content and misogyny. Women taking ownership of their own sexual practices and sexual preferences may be seen as empowering.

The issue we have—which is not something I can speak to specifically and might be something for somebody else on the panel—is that while the music industry is so heavily populated by men, to what extent is female empowerment and lyrical content and performance really empowerment if it is still within a lens of this misogynistic male gaze in those fields? But that is starting to move beyond my expertise.

Q7 Anum Qaisar: Thank you. Would anybody else like to jump in on that?

Charisse Beaumont: We carried out a piece of research last year where we surveyed over 2,000 black musicians and creators in the music industry. We had a lot of comments on this in verbatim data. We did not ask the question about misogyny; it just came up. Many of the women that we surveyed and spoke with feel that as a community we are being over-sexualised and objectified as women of colour.

The majority of our members feel that the music industry only make investment in black women so they can over-sexualise, and that is quite controversial within itself. Some of the comments from the data were: “The industry chooses to put most of its money into rappers and singers who feel they portray an image that will continue to bring down the black community. These lyrics are hypersexual.” Another comment was: “I feel like black creators are more supported when they push a self-destructive narrative. For example, if black female artists—rappers in particular—more often speak about overtly sexual topics and carry themselves in a manner that brings more attention than other females.”

One of the issues that came out in the data is that 70% of black women felt the need to change something about themselves in the industry and 43% of black women had changed something about themselves to be more accepted in the industry. One of the comments was: “I wanted to change my name and lighten my skin to be more appealing, to be accepted and fit in and have more opportunities.” As my colleague said earlier, how does that affect society?



I think you are doing another inquiry and you have just brought out some evidence, I believe from Ofsted in June 2021, about the effects of sexual assault in schools. I believe that there might be a link. We can probably speak about that later, but those are my thoughts on that.

Q8 Chair: Can I just ask a clarification? You said you had surveyed 2,000 people; was it 2,000 women or 2,000 people?

Charisse Beaumont: We surveyed just under 2,000 people: men, women and those who identified as non-binary. We had an almost 50/50 split, so we are looking at around 900 women, and 70% of those 900 women felt that they needed to change something about themselves to assimilate and be accepted into the music industry. So that male gaze that we are talking about does have an effect on those who are living and working in the music industry.

Q9 Anum Qaisar: Thank you so much for sharing that, Charisse. I have a report here from the Independent Society of Music and their findings are somewhat similar to yours: 94% of black, black British, Caribbean or African respondents experienced discrimination. How far do you think this goes in terms of being reinforced in musical lyrics that we hear in our day-to-day lives?

Charisse Beaumont: Where discrimination is in the lyrics themselves?

Anum Qaisar: Yes. It is rather an open-ended question.

Charisse Beaumont: On discrimination for black women industry professionals and creators, we often refer to it as misogynoir, as black women are discriminated against twice: first, they are females, and secondly, they are black. What that looks like is an effect in terms of their pay. Black women are paid 17% less than black men, 25% less than white women and 52% less than white men in the industry.

In terms of mental health, if you think about how we are degraded, how there are barriers to progression in the music industry—which we have enough evidence on and UK Music have evidence on as well—when we look at those barriers to progression, they could look like racial comments and having to accept racial microaggressions to progress in your industry. Eighty per cent. of black women have experienced racial microaggressions and 77% of those black women we surveyed have experienced indirect racism. With those barriers, with that misogynistic attitude, with being the most disadvantaged in the music industry, we can see that those lyrics may contribute to negative attitudes and perceptions of black women.

Q10 Anum Qaisar: Thank you, Charisse. I am going to follow that up with one more question for you and for the rest of the panel. We clearly see a lack of gender parity among singers and songwriters who are signed to record labels. Do you think this then helps to explain the abundance of misogynistic lyrics? Charisse, we can start with you.



Charisse Beaumont: In terms of the industry, there is a low level of female participation. If we are looking at producers, I believe it is 2.6% of producers are female, so female producers struggle to find their way to make it in the industry. They study it, they understand it, they are qualified, yet they cannot seem to get into the room because of that white male gaze, because they are seen as less than and because they are seen as not technical. Those are the perceptions of women in terms of misogyny in that area of the industry.

I think that can contribute if you have got that male gaze. They call it “women music”—music that is soft and fluffy. If you cannot make music outside of that, we’re not accepting you; therefore, women cannot penetrate outside of that music, if you will, and effect lyrics.

Q11 **Anum Qaisar:** Can I just follow up on that? What can women do, then, to diversify that? Or what can be done? The responsibility surely should not just be on women.

Charisse Beaumont: One of the examples that I wanted to give is that there are women in senior management leadership roles who are now supporting independent artists who are taking control of their brand and seeing women from a different perspective. There is an artist called Little Simz, she is a rapper: completely authentic, beautiful dreadlocks, covers herself up—not like that matters, but she covers herself up—and she speaks lyrics that are only empowering. She has gone on to win a Mercury Music Prize, she has won a Brit Award, and the person who is in charge of her career is a black woman. That is because she understands the culture, she understands Simz’s stance and most importantly, she knows how to market and make someone a success. That means it can be done: if you choose to diversify, you can make a success out of an artist.

One of our recommendations is the UK Music industry initiative called the Ten-Point Plan. One part of that plan is diversifying senior management and boards, with a 50:50 gender goal and a 30:70 ethnicity goal, to create a more reflective industry and—dare I say—a safer one.

Q12 **Anum Qaisar:** Thank you so much. Would anybody else like to add anything?

Dr Puckey: When we create narratives and discourses, we have an imagined reader audience in mind. We can create for diverse audiences, but it is easier when we have experience of those audiences, either as being part of that community or spending time with that community. If we are in a situation where the majority of producers of those narratives are men and they spend the majority of their working lives in the company of other men rather than, say, female performers, it becomes less and less likely that you are going to get diversity in terms of the topics, the subject, the style.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

As we know, it is a commercial endeavour, so we see the same topics and the same styles coming up. If somebody has been successful with a particular approach, it will be replicated and replicated and replicated until it is not. While we have topics like these producing such a huge amount of revenue for record labels and companies, producers, writers and performers, it is very difficult for others to break in. We see cases where they do but it is less likely currently, and that does come down to the diversity of voices at the creative and at the financial end of the industry.

Anum Qaisar: Thank you so much. I will hand back to the Chair.

Q13 **Chair:** I am going straight to Nicola and that comment about diversity of voices, both creatively and on the financial side of the industry. I think we heard from Charisse just now that 2.5% of music producers are women; we have figures that say less than 5%, so I am prepared to buy that as a proportion. What impact does that have on the working cultures within the industry?

Dr Puckey: In any industry, the fewer diverse voices you have the less likely you are to produce materials or outputs that speak to the experiences of the range of people that might be listening to it. We see again with diverse voices, or lack of diversity in voices, that people do not see themselves in those industries. If they are not represented, obviously then it seems like it is somewhere they should not be or would struggle to get into.

If we are seeing more women and women of colour in positions where they have power, not just as performers who have a certain level of power but who can actually make bigger decisions on content and style, then I think we would open up the industry to much more diversity and women seeing it as a place where they could not only succeed but thrive and be safe.

Q14 **Chair:** Thank you. Rosie, did you have anything to add on that?

Dr Hill: It is really important that we hear women's stories. As Nicola and Charisse have spoken about, if we have a music industry which is dominated by men, we hear stories told from men's perspectives. They are really interesting, but they are only half the story.

We should be able to, as Nicola says, hear ourselves reflected in the songs that we listen to and that we want to sing along with. We also need to acknowledge that sometimes the way men portray women in songs is not how we would like to see ourselves portrayed. It is really, really important to hear women's stories and to hear the different things that we have to say about the world and that reflect our different experiences.

Q15 **Chair:** Charisse, I am going to go back to you. You used the word "safe", and Nicola then used the word "safe". Are women—not necessarily artists—working in the industry safe? If not—this is a really big, horrible question to ask you—what can the Government do? What can we do to



HOUSE OF COMMONS

make recommendations to the Government to make them safer?

Charisse Beaumont: Can I answer that question with a testimony?

Chair: Yes, of course.

Charisse Beaumont: In the live music industry—I am sure we will get there—we tend to focus on festival goers, not on the staff who work in the live music industry. There are women who work in the live music industry who do not feel safe. This is one of the testimonies, if you do not mind me reading it, from one of the women who work there:

“I have been in the industry for 20 years. The very first trade show I attended at 22 years old, and most of them ever since, I have been inappropriately touched, propositioned on a regular basis, and on one occasion, sexually assaulted. I did not know what to do. For many years I was scared that I would lose my job or not be believed. It was normalised behaviour.

In hindsight, it was a dangerous place to be. Most trade shows are environments with drugs and alcohol flowing freely all day. Whilst the alcohol and the drug side has certainly improved, or at least become more discreet over the years, the inappropriate behaviour has continued. Perhaps because the pandemic created social distancing for a while, it was even more noticeable at this year’s trade shows as being back to the old days. Even as a 42-year-old mother now, I found that I was being inappropriately touched and powerplay was very much back on the show floor. How on earth can we expect and encourage young people to move into the live entertainment industry with this culture happening before our eyes, within a professional business environment?

I have reported two incidents this year and have encouraged others to do the same. Many others have come forward since we’ve opened up this conversation on social media, including one case of sexual assault on a show floor at PLASA this year. I am certain that this is one of the reasons for the huge skills shortage in the live music industry and the way the industry is represented to the younger generation.”

I was supposed to do an initiative with this organisation for young black people, young black women, to be trained up to go into the live industry. When she shared that with me, I said: “We are not doing it; it’s not safe.” To answer your question, utilising that testimony, it is rife in certain pockets and areas of the music industry.

Chair: She is a 42-year-old who was scared to speak up.

Charisse Beaumont: She is not scared to speak up now, but when she was 22, yes. She now encourages other women to speak up, but this is happening on a regular basis.

Chair: I was shocked when you said that—when you made reference to it being post pandemic. We like to think that things like that happened 10



HOUSE OF COMMONS

years ago, 20 years ago, and that they do not happen now, but that is a current testimony.

Charisse Beaumont: I was supposed to go to that trade show. It was on 4 September this year.

Q16 **Chair:** So last month. One of the things we have noticed in trying to get witnesses to come to this inquiry is a reluctance from women to speak up because they are scared. What can we do? What can we do to help them to use their voices?

Charisse Beaumont: Looking at the way reporting is, there is some work to do. Some pockets of support are there. You have the Musicians' Union Safe Space scheme and the AIF Safer Spaces campaign, and they signpost to organisations if an incident has happened. If it was me and I was wanting to report, I would want to know what the pathway is. I would want to know that I would be feeling safe and would be protected.

Some of the reasons why people do not report is fear of losing your job, as was said in that testimony, and being blackballed in the music industry. They say the music industry is like the wild west. There is no central place to report bad behaviour, and it shows. There could be more signposting and more obvious ways of showing that there is going to be a consequence for the perpetrator and that you are going to be protected and safe.

As Black Lives in Music, we have partnered with the Independent Standards Authority, which has gone into proposal and been backed by the music industry, to create a place where women—those who have been under discrimination and those who are bullied and harassed—can report and get some mediation, get counselling and get some help. They are working with the department responsible for human rights to ensure that they can deal with employment discrimination as well. It is a good organisation to be a part of.

Q17 **Chair:** Cassandra, do you want to come in on that?

Dr Jones: Yes, I just wanted to add some stats from my research to back up the testimony Charisse read out and give a better idea of how extensive bullying and harassment is. My colleague and I ran a survey. We were focusing on everyone who works in the industry in any form or fashion—from the promoter reps, to merchandise, technical crew and musicians. What we found was that 96% of women had been subjected to bullying and harassment. We are talking almost every single woman who took part in our survey had been subjected to this.

You mentioned the pandemic and the fact that we would like to think this behaviour is not happening any more, but we looked at this over the course of their career and over the course of their career they were experiencing bullying and harassment 19 times a day.

Q18 **Chair:** Cassandra, can you talk to us a bit about the imbalance in gender



in the music industry and how that translates into a misogynistic culture?

Dr Jones: If we look at it as a workplace, the music industry is certainly not a traditional type of workplace—far from it. As Charisse was saying, it is much more like the wild west, but we can still draw from these traditional workplaces and the research that has been done. From that, we know there is a gender imbalance in senior leadership, but also when there are gender imbalances in the workforce there is little regulation or incentive for men who are in power and in charge to have their views, what they are doing and what their practices are challenged or changed. When there is little incentive for that, it then translates into certain manifestations such as sexual assault and rape, but also bullying and sexual harassment. It becomes this vicious cycle. When men, as the workforce and in the senior leadership, are dominating these things, they have these viewpoints, they are acting on these viewpoints and then it is only reinforcing these viewpoints.

Q19 **Chair:** Thanks. Nicky?

Dr Puckey: I would like to add a case study from an interview I did. It is almost pre-violence or things like that, but it ties in with Cassandra's point. A female musician was only the only female musician—the rest of the band were male. After every show, they would go to the local strip club. She spoke to a female executive: "What should I do? I feel very uncomfortable. I want to socialise with the band—it's an important part of my working practice and I want to be part of this band." She was told to either go along or accept it. There was no discussion of perhaps this band was not behaving in an appropriate manner, and that they were excluding one member of their group. She was told to, in the vernacular, suck it up and join in with the boys or accept she was not one of them.

This leads to this idea of spaces that are male dominated, where women are interlopers. We are allowed access to those spaces on the proviso that we behave in a specific way and that we accept the behaviours of some—not all—men in these spaces. That starts down this route where women then feel like there is no point in reporting things that have happened because when they have started at lower-level things and they are told to put up with it, why would they bother reporting anything further along?

That is a part of our society as a whole for women generally, but it is under a microscope in the music industry, particularly at the moment with many artists coming out and exposing sexual abuse, sexual assault and power grabs over their music—for example, Taylor Swift and Kesha recently.

Q20 **Chair:** Rosie, can I turn to you? This is an industry that has non-traditional employment methods, lots of freelancers, lots of vague structures that people like me are never going to understand. What sort of impact does that have on support for women in things like maternity? How can women working in the industry get the support they would get if



they were working in a much more traditional setting?

Dr Hill: This is something that the Musicians' Union will be really good to speak to about. I know they have been campaigning for work towards making musicians in venues employees in order to protect their rights. This point about safety and not being able to report is a really important one. This is a much broader problem around freelancing, around the vulnerability that people have when they are in a position where they are unable to report violence that may have happened to them. I think the Musicians' Union will be better placed—

Q21 **Chair:** I think we are seeing them later on in the inquiry, but it is a really important point. If you are a freelancer, who do you have to report it to? If you kick up a fuss, for want of a better phrase, it is very easy for you to end up finding you get no work.

Dr Hill: Although my research into what has been happening in music venues with regards to sexual violence has been focusing on audience members, we have also spoken to a number of musicians who have told us about their experiences of being sexually assaulted or sexually harassed by fans and by people who work in venues. They have tried to talk to venue staff about it, but venue staff have not known what to do.

One of the problems in terms of protecting women's safety in music venues—whether they are audience members or whether they are musicians or staff members, as Charisse was talking about, working behind the bar, for example—is that there is a lack of understanding of the kinds of experiences of sexual violence. There is a lack of understanding of how rape myths shape our responses to sexual violence. There is a huge gap in understanding what to do about it when it does happen and how to prevent it. Because the music industry is made up of all of these little pockets of businesses and freelancers, there is no central organisation that says, "You will need to have this training." But that is what they need. They need that kind of training.

In France, their music council, which is the Centre national de la musique, has tied their funding for venues and festivals to sexual violence training, so they do not get funding for their festival if they do not make sure that all of their staff are trained. They say that money is going to persuade people. Meanwhile, in Ireland they have just tied it to the liquor licensing laws, so venues will not get their liquor licence if they are not shown to be proactive in dealing with sexual violence.

These two examples are things that also came up in our own research, where music venues and many small freelancers and many small music businesses are operating on an absolute shoestring, and they do not have the resources then to get the help they may well know they need in dealing with some of the problems they face. Anything that we can do to help them to get that kind of training or to get that kind of oversight will be valued by the music industry as well, where they see it as a problem.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Q22 **Chair:** Charisse, you have indicated you wanted to say something.

Charisse Beaumont: Yes, it was regarding maternity.

Chair: Yes, of course.

Charisse Beaumont: An organisation called Parents and Carers in Performing Arts published a report last week where they surveyed over 400 parents and carers working in the classical music industry. Nine out of 10 musicians reported turning down work due to caring responsibilities. Only 4% of respondents referenced a supportive employer, and 40% of respondents are thinking of leaving their careers in music.

This is reflected across the music industry, not just in classical in this case. There is not much support from the Government. There is not much support from the industries and the employers when it comes to parents and caring responsibilities. That is something that definitely needs to be looked at, not because it is haemorrhaging talent, not because it affects the gender imbalance at the top, but because it is just a basic understanding of what your workers need to survive and thrive in the music industry. That is an important piece of reporting that I think everyone could have a look at.

Chair: Thank you.

Q23 **Kate Osborne:** My first question is for Rosie. Can you describe how it is that notions like creativity and novelty in music creators are coded or seen as being inherently male?

Dr Hill: The thing about creativity in particular is tied to ideas of male genius and masculine genius, where men are assumed to be able to access these incredible ideas and be inspired, whereas women are only good at copying what men have done.

We see this quite commonly in notions of women's craft, where women are supposedly able to engage in craft, but that would not be seen as art, for example. We get distinctions between things like embroidery and painting. This is common not just in music but has a much broader kind of environment. Where we see it playing out in the music industry is particularly in cases where women's labour and women's artistic work is not given the kind of credit that it should be given.

For example, the Icelandic musician Björk is a music producer in her own right. She has those technical and audio skills to create these fantastic soundscapes of music, but the artistry of what she does is so frequently attributed to the male sound engineers, who are the people who twiddle knobs and set up the microphones, rather than to her creative vision. That is one example, but we see this across the creative arts. It is not just in music. I am not sure about the novelty aspect.

Q24 **Kate Osborne:** That is fine. Maybe a more difficult question is about



HOUSE OF COMMONS

what practical steps can be taken to change this. Who can take those actions or change it? What do we need to do?

Dr Hill: It is a really good question, because it is one of these fundamental discourses that we live with—one of these ideas that is so current in society. When we look at the ways in which feminist organisations have challenged these kinds of ideas, we are looking at all-women festival line-ups, for example, and exhibitions of women’s art. In those cases, we can see some success in showing the wide range of women’s artistry.

We also need some way to challenge these kinds of ideas that women are only good at copying what some man has done or being operated by some kind of Svengali figure, like the Phil Spector idea. We need some way to challenge that. I am not sure what that is, but starting to talk about it and have these conversations and looking at the way music is written about will be an important part of that.

Q25 **Kate Osborne:** Thank you. Did anybody else want to come in on that?

Dr Puckey: We are slowly seeing more diversity and more female artists producing creative, novel outputs. If I think about bands that this past year have gained great success, I think about the band Wet Leg, for example, who are female-fronted, female-led and are producing music that is creatively different. They are being promoted widely by radio stations and festival line-ups. There is some progress being made in hearing female voices and female writing that is different from things we have heard before, but they are so in the minority that I can tell you a specific example and not many more. But it is starting to change.

Q26 **Kate Osborne:** Why do you think it is changing if it has not been different before?

Dr Hill: I think listener power, the organic nature of music now in that people are searching out acts much more, and sharing. They are listening with others, creating playlists, for example. People are finding bands through non-traditional means and I think that is helping. Social media, although there is a balance to be struck, is sometimes not great for female artists, but I think it does allow for women in particular to hear female artists. Then of course, people power leads to them getting record contracts or getting on to the radio.

Q27 **Kate Osborne:** Charisse, can I come to you? You touched on this earlier in terms of mentioning pay and mental health, but how do protected characteristics such as race or disability, for example, interact with sexist discrimination in the music industry? I do not know if you have anything else to add, because you did touch on this earlier, or if any of the other panel members want to come in.

Charisse Beaumont: Protective characteristics interact quite badly with the music industry. We are publishing a report in a couple of weeks on black disabled musicians. There are issues there of accessibility, issues of



pay, mental health, but they are invisible. No one really understands what they are going through. What people need to understand is you cannot raise standards and you cannot tackle bullying and harassment without tackling discrimination. If you break race and gender, as my friend Paulette behind me says, you can break anything.

To say a bit more about disabled people, our report says 65% of all black disabled music creators have experienced discrimination due to their race; 35% of black disabled creators have experienced gender discrimination; and just 7% were subject to discrimination because of their disabilities. This is disabled musicians, so again it comes down to race being the biggest issue. As we are speaking about misogynoir or black women or women in the industry, 58% said they experienced the most discrimination because of their race. Unless we break or tackle racial discrimination, we cannot really tackle everything else.

Q28 Kate Osborne: Thank you. Does anybody else want to come in?

Dr Jones: To give further evidence to support what Charisse is saying, in the work we did we asked everyone in the industry—it was mostly white people who responded—their opinions about what the culture was like within the music industry. Nearly 60% of them said the industry favours white British over other ethnicities, 84% thought it is sexist, and 80% thought it favours non-disabled over disabled people. Further supporting what she has been saying, throughout the industry there is almost a general acceptance of these discriminatory views.

One of the ways that they are manifested is bullying and harassment, but absolutely I agree that you have to address these views in order to stop how it is manifested. What we found was that women with disabilities were subjected to bullying and harassment so much more often than men without disabilities. We also found that women who identified as sexual minorities experienced bullying and harassment much more than heterosexual men and BME women were sexually harassed more often than white men were.

Q29 Kate Osborne: How do the unique features of the music industry help to enable the high incidence of sexual discrimination and harassment?

Dr Jones: It is the very nature of it. It is dominated by white heterosexual men. It is not regulated. It relies on these informal precarious working agreements. It might be an oral agreement where somebody calls somebody else up and says, "Hey, do you want to come work this gig?" They go and work that, and then they find out that suddenly they are not getting paid what they originally thought they were going to get paid. That can be the beginning of what they experience in terms of the bullying or the harassment, and entangled within that could be other discriminatory views. It is the very nature of the music industry itself. It is just ripe for these toxic workplace behaviours.

Kate Osborne: Thank you.



Q30 **Chair:** Is there a parallel with the film industry? The film industry gave us Harvey Weinstein, did it not?

Dr Jones: Yes. We are seeing more and more media reports about well-known artists but also prominent organisations. It is slowly starting to trickle out in the media. There is a promotion company where women came forward and said, "The head of this promotion company was sexually harassing us and bullying us." Surprisingly, it has just stuck to the media reports so far. There is something unique about the music industry that the #MeToo movement has not really penetrated it to the same extent as the film industry.

Q31 **Kim Johnson:** Good afternoon, panel. I want to pick up on those points, Cassandra, because we know that not a lot of women report misogyny in the workplace and, as Caroline alluded to, it is similar to the film business and the #MeToo movement. What is it that you think stops women reporting these incidents?

Dr Jones: I would say it is a very complex question. To give an example, from evidence collected in our survey we found that 80% did not report. Of the 20% who did report, nothing would happen. In some instances, their career was hurt, and they were issued with an NDA or a cease and desist. When that happens to one woman and another woman sees this she will often think, "Well, why should I report because look what happened to her? What's the point in me reporting in this organisation?" This is in the case where a reporting pathway is available.

Most of the time there is no clear reporting pathway, which reflects the music industry where it can be difficult to know who is in charge. If it is a group of people coming together for a live event, sometimes you might have a sound technician; sometimes you might not. It might be a one-piece band; it might be a five-piece. There is so much variability. The person that brought them all together may not necessarily take ownership of that and of that workplace. It might be that they say it is the venue that has ownership of it. When there are no clear regulatory procedures in terms of who is in charge of that event, there is no clear reporting pathway.

Q32 **Kim Johnson:** Where does the Musicians' Union come into this reporting mechanism, or does it not?

Dr Jones: As far as I understand, they will support anyone involved in the industry in terms of their helpline. Their union membership is comprised mostly of musicians. There is a real need for the rest of the industry to have some type of support in a union and reporting body.

Q33 **Kim Johnson:** Are there no other unions that meet the needs of women working in the music industry then?

Dr Jones: I do not think the ISM has a helpline, but they do have internal lawyers who can provide support for women who have experienced discrimination, bullying and harassment.



Q34 **Kim Johnson:** The very fractured and precarious element of the business provides these barriers to women?

Dr Jones: Yes.

Q35 **Kim Johnson:** What needs to happen then? What do we need to do to give confidence to women to be able to report abuse?

Dr Jones: One thing—picking up on something that Charisse says—is there is no accountability for perpetrators at the moment. There needs to be something that oversees, scrutinises or monitors the music industry that has legal statutes behind it, because if you have a body that says, “Yes, we’re going to investigate this,” and they say, “Okay, this person that was accused did perpetrate these types of behaviours,” what is going to happen? How are they going to be held accountable? There needs to be something backing that up. There needs to be a body not only that scrutinises the organisations which say they have a policy but to make sure they actually implement it. It also needs to be a body that makes sure freelancers are fully supported and have a way that can hold perpetrators accountable, and that can let victims come forward and protect them from retaliation.

Q36 **Kim Johnson:** Thank you. Rosemary, did you want to contribute?

Dr Hill: I was going to add that although they are not a union, the Music Venue Trust has been working very hard to protect venues from closure over the last few years. It has contacts with nearly every venue in the country, and that is a lot of small venues. I know they are interested in working on some sort of guidance for music venues. That would be an interesting organisation to see what they could do further with the support from organisations like the Good Night Out Campaign, who offer training to venues.

Also, there are things like safer spaces policies, which at the moment tend to operate in a very bespoke way for individual music venues. If they are well done and have good oversight, they can be really effective. If they are tied with good accountability programmes as well, they can offer some accountability for people’s actions. These tend to be in more DIY spaces at the moment, particularly those associated with queer culture, but it is worth looking at how those kinds of ideas can be extended out across other parts of the music industry, including into studios, to see how they could work in a way which retains the uniqueness of venues and in ways where they can have a policy and a set of procedures which are going to work for them and their particular remit. Some sort of oversight as well would be amazing because there is nothing.

Q37 **Kim Johnson:** Thank you, Rosemary. Charisse?

Charisse Beaumont: I am going to bring them up again, sorry: the Independent Standards Authority. We are hoping that will be the oversight we are looking for. It has been developed very closely with the



HOUSE OF COMMONS

film and TV industry and theatre sectors. It will have the power to investigate the most serious and complex cases of bullying and harassment, as well as advocating for positive culture and discrimination. It does have the legal expertise behind it as well.

To clarify what was said about the Musicians' Union Safe Space scheme, it is open to outside members, so you do not need to be a member of the Musicians' Union. It is a great scheme, and just to co-sign that, the Safe Space scheme with the Music Federation is a great idea in principle; we would love to see it executed really well.

There are pockets of support. We have—how could I forget?—the Help Musicians bullying and harassment helpline. Like I said, if you are looking for help, where do you go? That is why it is important to have that overarching organisation with that strong messaging of consequence, of protection and that you do not have to fear retaliation, and that can be found with the ISA.

Dr Jones: To clarify further what I was saying, much of my research has been with what I guess you would call on-the-ground type people working in the industry. When I have talked to them about the Musicians' Union, their perception is that it is strictly for musicians and because of this perception they will be very hesitant to go to those types of resources. Part of this awareness and training is to make it more spread throughout the industry where these pockets of support are.

Q38 **Kim Johnson:** Rosemary, you mentioned before the examples from Ireland and France in terms of setting up some quality standard. Do you know if that is being rolled out in this country at all?

Dr Hill: The two cases are top down, so it is what those Governments are doing. I do not know all the details, but I can send further information about that. This is information that has just come to me in the last couple of days.

In the case of France, in order to support venues and festivals suffering the financial effects of covid, they set up Centre national de la musique to provide funding to get the venues and the festivals back on their feet. That funding is dependent on them accessing training around sexual harassment and sexual violence. They are working with a grassroots training organisation to provide that training, so that funding is particularly tight. That is worth exploring further to see how that might work. Whether they provide funding for the training I am not sure at the moment, so I will have to investigate that.

Q39 **Kim Johnson:** Do you think some of the problems in terms of reporting are that so many women see it as part of their job? It is part of the culture, so why bother because nothing is going to happen?

Dr Hill: That has certainly been the case up until the last few years. Our research with music audiences found that people said, "Oh, it has been the extra price of a gig ticket to get groped." It has been so normal. If



HOUSE OF COMMONS

you have had one bad experience of reporting it, the next time that happens you are not going to do it again. People talk about the responses they have had when they have reported it as being dehumanising. They have basically been brushed off and told it is not important, or they should just expect that kind of thing to happen and, therefore, it has been normalised. Over the last seven years, people have started to talk more about this problem.

Q40 Kim Johnson: There is a piece of work to be done then in terms of training and awareness to let women know that this should not be accepted and that there are some pathways that can be accessed to challenge.

Dr Hill: We could train the men first.

Q41 Kim Johnson: Very good, yes. You have mentioned safer spaces; I wanted to know whether the policy described by the Safer Spaces campaign can be effectively implemented in large venues and festivals.

Dr Hill: That is a really good question. I am waiting to see the research on that particular campaign. I know a number of festivals, including Leeds Festival, have signed up to the charter, so I am interested to see how that is going to work out. I know they are pairing with Good Night Out, for example, so that fills me with confidence that these different festivals will be well supported. I am hopeful, but I do not have the evidence.

Q42 Kim Johnson: The end of this year's festival did not bode well, did it, in terms of lots of fires and violence and stuff? It needs to be far more secure in terms of staffing.

Dr Hill: That is absolutely right. I know there has been a lot of excitement—if that is the right word—about the “Woodstock 99” documentary, but actually watching the “Woodstock 99” documentary pretty much summed up my experience of going to the Leeds Festival on a number of occasions.

Kim Johnson: Thank you, panel. Those are all my questions.

Q43 Elliot Colburn: Thank you very much, panel. Cassandra, could I come to you first to talk a little bit about the Equality Act and its effectiveness or otherwise in protecting freelance and other workers within the music industry from discrimination? How effective do you think the Equality Act is in its current form? If it is not, what sort of broadening might be done to improve its effectiveness in tackling discrimination?

Dr Jones: I will start by saying that I do not have a legal background, so this is very much my opinion from what I understand of the Equality Act. In terms of employment, I understand that freelancers are not covered currently within the Equality Act, and as freelancers make up the vast majority of the music industry it leaves them at even more peril to experience all forms of discrimination.



The first thing I would recommend is speaking with lawyers who have this expertise to figure out how that can be changed to include freelancers, but also to include another very common practice which is that as freelancers, for instance, they might have a tour coming up, but then they might have another tour that is overlapping so they will find someone to come in and cover a few shows. In those instances, if the person who comes in to cover a few shows—because of the nature of that it is a freelancer covering a freelancer—they are also not currently covered. Finessing it to adapt to the specifics of the music industry would be my biggest recommendation.

Q44 **Elliot Colburn:** Fantastic. Does any other member of the panel have any anecdotal feedback on the Equality Act and its effectiveness in this space? Do not worry if not; I think we are hearing from lawyers later on in our investigation.

In that case, I can wrap this up by going to each of you in turn and asking how, on a very broad level, organisations within the music industry might be able to effectively diversify their workforces and their leadership in this space. Charisse, I will start with you and then work my way down the panel.

Charisse Beaumont: Like I said earlier, UK Music has a Ten-Point Plan. Through UK Music, the trade bodies of the music industry are signed up to the Ten-Point Plan. Phase 2 of it is coming out in November—next month—to make sure it rolls out to record labels and the DSPs. One of the points in the Ten-Point Plan is diversifying senior management and the leadership and board. I think they have until 2025 to do it. I might be lying; I need to confirm that one. The point is there is something in place to do it, so let us do it.

Elliot Colburn: Seeing it through to the—

Charisse Beaumont: Yes, seeing it through.

Q45 **Elliot Colburn:** Rosemary, can I come to you next?

Dr Hill: I am not really sure how to answer this question because the music industry is a huge number of different organisations and hundreds of thousands of individuals working in their own way and it is really hard to know what to do. Where we have bigger organisations, like larger record labels, they can work on their internal structures in the same way that other organisations can look to improve the working conditions of women, people from ethnic minorities and disabled people within their environments.

It is a tricky one to know where to begin with because the music industry itself—

Elliot Colburn: Is so big.

Dr Hill: Yes. I would like to see a broader, more diverse range of people making music that actually earns them a living, for example, so that



would be one area to look at. I know there was a committee on music streaming a couple of years ago to look at the way in which this intersects with other kinds of structures of the music industry which cause problems. We know the people making most money in the music industry are the people at the very top. People like Rihanna are going to keep making money hand over fist, and all the people at the bottom, many of whom are black women—as Charisse has told us—who are paid the least and are impacted by these problems of the streaming industry, and how that works with the royalties. It is a tricky one.

- Q46 **Elliott Colburn:** We saw some of that in—I am using a white example here—the Taylor Swift legal battle over the rights to her own music, which woke quite a lot of people up to how the money actually reaches the artist and how people get paid for their own work. Do you think much more publicity around events like that are useful in this space to help Governments to wake up to the need to step in? Or does it hinder progress?

Dr Hill: I would say it is probably useful.

- Q47 **Elliot Colburn:** Thank you, Rosemary. Cassandra, can I come to you next on the same question of anything that the industry might be able to do? Or is it too broad?

Dr Jones: I also struggled when I was thinking about this question because the industry is so complex and there are different genres, different sectors and different job roles. Building upon the research that I did, I would love to see more diversity not only among the musicians but all the crew and everyone behind the scenes who help to make all of this happen. Certain job roles tend to be very segregated in terms of gender and ethnicity, let alone thinking about disability or any of the other protected characteristics. I am seeing more schemes to help women get into these job roles of producers and other things. I have not seen as much for the more technical side of things, so that could be one route.

There are more awareness-raising campaigns. I am seeing more small ones but, again, it only keeps reaching these different pockets. It is about coming together to think about the grassroots level. There is so much going on at the grassroots level that can be positive. It is where so much music is building from, and one of my suggestions, to start with, would be to diversify the music industry. Part of that is the awareness raising, and these bystander programmes that are evidence-based. There is lots of great training, not just in the music industry but across the UK, but they tend to be one-offs. What evidence shows us is that these one-off, one-day, four-hour type of trainings are not as effective as full bystander programmes.

Again, I understand because of how complex the industry is that it will be tricky to implement those and to get those started, but we have to find a place to start, maybe with one venue or one band or something like this, to test this out and roll it out more widely.



Q48 **Elliot Colburn:** Thank you, Cassandra. Finally, over to you, Nicola.

Dr Puckey: I know slightly less about the mechanics of the industry compared to the other three women here, but I know that diversity and inclusivity training as a tick-box exercise does not really work. If people have to sit at a computer going through a series of slides and answer questions at the end, it does not work at increasing any sense of understanding of diversity and inclusivity.

To support Cassandra's point, broader discussions that are ongoing around diversity and inclusivity and the benefits it could have financially to organisations would probably be more beneficial. We know the less diverse a workforce or a space is, the less creative and the less robust it is and the more likely they are to make mistakes. If we can diversify these spaces and these workforces, we can increase creativity and productive outputs. I think that can be tied into it—not just discussions around whether we should do this because it is right, which I am sure all of us would agree is the case, but we can also point out that there are financial benefits to increasing diversity and then we would get a two-pronged approach to it.

Charisse Beaumont: Sorry, Elliot, if you do not mind, I did not give a lazy answer earlier but I would be amiss if I did not mention what we do at Black Lives in Music.

Q49 **Elliot Colburn:** Please, go ahead.

Charisse Beaumont: We do that very thing. On top of our research, we have a critical friend model. We have around 85 partners signed up to this critical friend model and they are assigned a relationship manager. We work with the senior management level, the CEO, to help them reach their EDI objectives. How we do that is we look at governance, marketing and comms, recruitment, retaining staff, and diversifying.

We also run programmes to tackle the grassroots aspect of it all. We have six of the top conservatoires signed up to ensure that they diversify and that there are pipelines so that young people can get a quality education. We are Black Lives in Music, so we work with black, Asian and ethnically diverse people ensuring that they, too, have the chance to fulfil their aspirations in the music industry.

Just to touch on a point that you made, that relationship manager is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week—we feel it sometimes. It is not a tick-box exercise, which I get in terms of the EDI programmes, and we are seeing some great headway in terms of diversifying the industry. But we are one organisation and definitely not a silver bullet. There is a lot that needs to be done.

Q50 **Elliot Colburn:** It sounds like there could be a lot of really good learning from that example, because one thing that we see a lot as a Committee, when we have organisations come in to give evidence—whether it is social media companies, other businesses, charities or whatever—is that



HOUSE OF COMMONS

often they seem a bit remiss on that. They do not know how to approach EDI and they do not know how to avoid it being a tick-box exercise—as you mentioned—with just one computer session and then having it done.

Would you be able to share some more details of that scheme with us afterwards so that we can feed that into our recommendations? That would be really helpful for us to better understand how that works.

Charisse Beaumont: Yes.

Elliot Colburn: Thank you so much.

Chair: Can I take this opportunity to thank all the witnesses for your evidence? As ever, if there is anything that you feel you really should have said that comes to you as you are on your way home, please do send it in in writing. We would be really pleased to receive it. That is the end of the meeting.