



# timeTo

**report**

A report on the UK's first  
**timeTo** survey for release  
*28th June 2018*

# thanks

## A WORD OF THANKS

We would like to thank all those who supported the **timeTo** survey, and particularly people who responded and told us of their experiences.

We recognise that many people may have shared their experiences for the first time and, for some, this would have been an upsetting and unwelcome exercise. If this was your experience, then we greatly appreciate your openness and honesty, and we promise anyone affected that their answers will remain private – always – and we will do everything we can to help create a better UK advertising and marketing industry for everyone working in it.

The **timeTo** steering group



**No one should  
have to put up with  
sexual harassment;**

**anytime or anywhere.**

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# introduction

In late 2017, the hashtag #metoo became the symbol of an international movement against sexual harassment and violence. The movement inspired individuals around the world to examine behaviour in the workplace and throughout wider society.

**timeTo** was formed in the UK on the 12th March 2018 to address concerns over sexual harassment in the advertising and marketing industry. It is an alliance between the Advertising Association, NABS (National Advertising Benevolent Society) and WACL (Women in Advertising and Communications London), and backed by the IPA and ISBA.

This report presents the findings of a survey of 3,580 people working in the advertising and marketing communications industry, carried out between 12th March and 16th April 2018.

# executive summary

The results have helped us understand the scale and nature of sexual harassment in our industry and have provided insights which have informed our recommendations for change.

- Of those surveyed, 26% have been sexually harassed while working in the advertising and marketing industry – 34% of female respondents and 9% of male respondents
- The great majority (72%) of those who have been sexually harassed have been harassed more than once, and of them, 25% have been harassed 6 times or more
- A further 30% have witnessed sexual harassment happening to others so, in total, 41% have either experienced it and/or witnessed it (some people have both experienced it and witnessed it)
- Sexual harassment is far from being a thing of a past – some 20% of female respondents aged 18-24 have already been sexually harassed in the few years they've spent working in the industry
- The results reveal a significant lack of clarity in both the definition of sexual harassment and in reporting systems
- Many respondents also expressed distrust in reporting systems, with fears of career damage, and consequently 83% of those harassed said they did not officially report their experiences

# about the survey

The **timeTo** survey was administered using an online survey software tool which ensured respondent anonymity. Great care was taken to ensure that people completing the survey weren't only those affected by sexual harassment. We wanted as wide a range of views and perspectives as possible and, for this reason, the survey was administered by contacting industry leaders (CEOs, Chief Operating Officers) via the Advertising Association, NABS and WACL, who then asked their staff to complete it.

***The definition of sexual harassment used was taken from the Equalities Act: "unwanted conduct of a sexual nature with the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or creating a hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them"***

Nevertheless, there will still be biases in the sample and it is possible the results over-represent those affected by sexual harassment, though we believe less so than many other surveys on this subject.

***Of the 3,580 people who completed the survey, the resulting sample composition was as follows:***

- 66% Female (2,031)
- 81% London (2,891)
- 39% creative agency (1,383)
- 34% media agency (1,223)
- 8% media owner (300)
- 4% brand marketers (149)
- 15% other (525) made up of PR, events, experiential companies, charities and trade bodies.

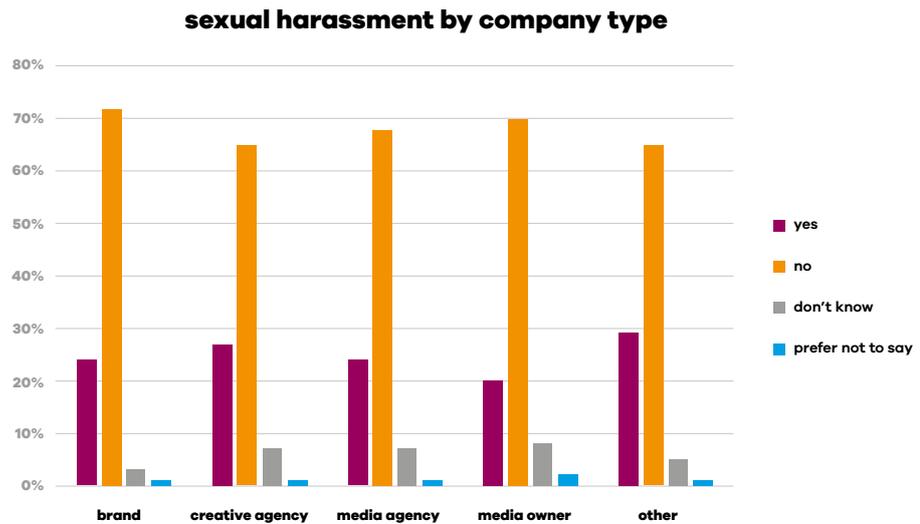
All figures quoted in this report are unweighted and, because of the nature of the survey and the clear biases towards females in London agencies, they are not a perfect representation of the entire advertising and marketing workforce. All results are indicative and should be used as a guide. We have only published numbers where the biases in the sample are unlikely to have had a significant effect on the headline findings. Also, despite the preponderance of agency respondents, the numbers of both media-owners and brand marketers are substantial in their own right, so some results by sector are statistically sound.

The survey comprised 22 questions, some of which were closed, tick-box questions, others of which left space for open-ended responses. Most of the statistics quoted in this report have been garnered from the closed, tick-box questions. While some simple coding of the open-ended responses was carried out, allowing for statistical reporting, the verbatims were extensive and often distressing to read. We have therefore extracted recurrent, dominant themes from these answers, rather than quantifying every single component of these deeply personal accounts.

# findings

## **Who is affected? Not just women**

Some 26% of those surveyed have been sexually harassed whilst working within the advertising and marketing industry while 30% have witnessed it, creating a combined total of 41%. A third (34%) of female respondents have experienced sexual harassment compared to 9% of male respondents, demonstrating that, while sexual harassment affects more women than men, it is far from being a female-only issue. The results also suggest that sexual harassment is not limited to certain company types. As shown in the below chart, sexual harassment had a similar level of prevalence across all company types measured.



## **Who are perpetrators?**

The great majority of those affected by sexual harassment have been harassed by someone senior to them (82%), making bosses and managers by far the most common perpetrators.

In responses to open-ended questions, some respondents described the involvement of senior management in covering up sexual harassment cases, while others highlighted their role in encouraging staff to flirt with their clients or customers, or put up with unwelcome attention to win, or retain, business.

Those in a position to award business, referred to as 'clients' in the survey, were the second most prevalent source of sexual harassment, with 23% of those affected by sexual harassment listing them as a source.

## **It isn't just historic behaviour**

For those who haven't experienced sexual harassment, it could be easy to assume that widespread sexual harassment is a thing of the past.

However, the results of the **timeTo** survey suggest that such behaviour persists in our industry. Of those respondents to have been sexually harassed, 69% have experienced it within the last five years while 28% have experienced it within the last 12 months. It is very much a current issue. Even looking at the younger age bracket in the survey (18-24 years old), 20% of female respondents and 5% of male respondents have been sexually harassed within the short time that they have been working in the industry.

### ***Reporting sexual harassment – or not***

Fewer than 1 in 5 (17% of) respondents who have been sexually harassed have ever officially reported such an incident. The majority of those who have told someone have either discussed it with a friend (59%) or a trusted colleague (58%). This means that people are talking, but rarely to those who can most effect change. Very few respondents who have been affected by sexual harassment (1%) have sought support through NABS.

Of those who did report harassment, and gave an opinion on the reporting process, over half (59%) expressed dissatisfaction with the outcome. Such figures suggest a lack of faith in many reporting processes, something which is further supported by the fact that only half (49%) of all respondents think their company has a strong enough stance on sexual harassment.

The results of this **timeTo** survey also indicate a lack of clarity in communications to employees over what constitutes sexual harassment, the company policy on such behaviour, and the reporting system. A third (34%) of all respondents aren't sure whether their company has a (strong enough) stance on sexual harassment. Even among those who have been sexually harassed, this figure remains steady at 33%. This theme is echoed in the verbatim answers; when asked why they left sexual harassment unreported, respondents often cited uncertainty around whether such instances were 'serious enough'. Where they gave details, it was clear that sexual harassment had taken place and, in some cases, sexual assault.

The survey provides evidence that sexual harassment doesn't just impact people physically and emotionally, it also has a direct impact on their careers. Of those respondents who gave an opinion on the reporting process, 11% indicated that they either resigned, were (in their words) forced to resign, were made redundant, or were sacked as a result. In such circumstances it is unsurprising that 15% of non-reporters cited fears over their immediate employment or long-term career prospects.

Despite the negative experiences and concerns explored above, 28% of respondents who gave an opinion on the reporting process expressed satisfaction with the outcome, suggesting that some companies are getting it right in terms of tackling sexual harassment. Scenarios in which positivity towards the reporting process was expressed ranged from the perpetrator being served a warning and changing their behaviour as a result, to the perpetrator being sacked almost immediately.

While themes such as the abuse of power remained consistent across genders, there are some notable differences between men and women's experience of sexual harassment.

# gender differences

## ***Challenging sexual harassment***

Proportionately, women challenge their harassers more often than men do. A lower proportion of males (15%) who said they have been sexually harassed had challenged their harassers (compared to 28% of females). A similar pattern was seen when it came to officially reporting their experiences. Just 8% of males who had experienced sexual harassment reported via official channels compared to 18% of females.

This points to a difficulty some men experience in acknowledging any harassment they experience. Their reluctance to speak about their experience compounds the problem because it is then assumed that sexual harassment doesn't happen to men, that it doesn't need special attention and can even be seen as something of a 'joke'; the **timeTo** survey casts doubts on all of those assumptions.

However, male witnesses to sexual harassment are more likely to have challenged such behaviour (41%) than female witnesses (25%). This suggests that men feel more able to challenge sexual harassment when it is happening to others but are less able to address such behaviour when it is directed towards them.

## ***Company policies***

Female respondents are less likely to think their company has a strong enough stance on sexual harassment (44%) compared to their male counterparts (59%). It would seem likely that this is because a greater proportion of female respondents have either experienced (34% female vs 9% male) or witnessed (33% female vs 25% male) sexual harassment than male respondents, and that these women have subsequently found their company policy and/or reporting process wanting.

Despite most respondents (63%) agreeing with the statement "I feel more able to talk about sexual harassment now than I have in the past", there is a widespread level of cynicism about company responses, with 41% of respondents feeling that "victims of sexual harassment are generally ignored, or made to shut up", while 66% believe that "perpetrators of sexual harassment often get away with it".

## ***Attitudes towards sexual harassment***

While there is a sense that things are getting better, it is not as widespread as one may expect, with just under half (46%) of respondents thinking that "sexual harassment is not as bad as it once was". These findings suggest that significant work needs to be done to convince advertising and marketing employees that they are working in an industry which is serious about tackling sexual harassment. The results also provide evidence to suggest the existence of a more conservative minority.

While most respondents disagree with statements such as “people are now complaining about things they were perfectly happy with years ago” (58%) and “it’s hard to know what the rules of behaviour are these days” (69%), the fact that these percentages aren’t higher show that some respondents feel left behind by recent changes in attitudes. Despite the underlying cynicism and differences in opinion explored above, there are signs of unity. This is best expressed by the fact that agreement with the statement “sexual harassment should not be tolerated in our industry” is almost universal (97%). This demonstrates that, even among more conservative respondents, sexual harassment is widely recognised as being unacceptable.

**How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?**

	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither</b>	<b>Agree</b>
Sexual harassment should not be tolerated within our industry	<b>4%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>96%</b>
Sexual harassment is not as bad as it once was	<b>29%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>46%</b>
People are now complaining about things they were perfectly happy with years ago	<b>58%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>22%</b>
It’s hard to know what the rules of behaviour are these days	<b>69%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>22%</b>
Victims of sexual harassment are generally ignored or made to shut up	<b>29%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>41%</b>
Perpetrators of sexual harassment often get away with it	<b>12%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>66%</b>
Sexual harassment is this year’s bandwagon	<b>53%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>25%</b>
I feel more able to talk about sexual harassment now than I have in the past	<b>10%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>63%</b>
Unless physical assault is involved, I’d just call it flirting or banter	<b>80%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>8%</b>
Harassment isn’t that bad – some people just need to toughen up a bit	<b>89%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>3%</b>

**Areas of most risk**

Of those 512 respondents who told us more about their experience of harassment, 20% mentioned alcohol, 18% work parties or events, and 6% referred to hotels. Others detailed experienced in cars or taxis. These themes often appeared together, but independently they reveal three risk areas – alcohol, events and travel – in which sexual harassment is most likely to happen.

# areas of change

We asked all respondents, regardless of whether they had experienced sexual harassment, what they would like to change within their company, or the wider industry. Of those who answered, a significant number (17%) cited the need for greater clarity on either what constitutes sexual harassment, the reporting process at their company or the consequences of sexual harassment. Others referred to the need for 'zero tolerance' though others called for the need for proportionality, particularly where the perpetrator has shown remorse and contrition.

***On balance, it would seem that the best outcomes are seen when HR and management ensure;***

- Clarity around what sexual harassment is, and typical behaviours that could be considered sexual harassment
- That there are clear policies and guidance on sexual harassment, which are well-communicated, regularly updated and re-issued
- That these policies are genuinely applied to all, regardless of level or position of power
- There is a confidential and unbiased reporting system – ideally involving a third party
- Any issue is dealt with quickly, is seen through to resolution, with results communicated to all parties
- Serial offending is identified, and not tolerated
- Customers and clients are clear on the company's sexual harassment policies and any behaviour not in line with this is simply not acceptable
- That all staff, including freelancers, are provided with the necessary protection and reassurance to enable them to speak up and work in a safe and inclusive environment, without fear of reprisals
- That people in positions of seniority are supporting methods to address sexual harassment
- Representation, support and impartial advice is provided for all parties involved



# timeTo

**timeto.org.uk**



**No one should have to put up with sexual harassment; anytime or anywhere.**

For free, confidential and impartial advice and support, for anyone working in the advertising, marketing and media industry, call the **NABS Advice Line on 0800 707 6607**, 9am-5.30pm on week days.

This report was written by **Karen Fraser MBE**, a fellow of the Market Research Society, and **Tom Dennett** of Credos, advertising's think tank.

We adhered to the Market Research Society's code in the collection, preparation and analysis of the data.