



WELLBEING IN ENTERTAINMENT AND CREATIVE ARTS

**RESEARCH BRIEF
2023**



Overview

The COVID-19 Pandemic has forever changed our lives and our worlds. The entertainment industry, in particular, was hit hard by the pandemic as shutdowns forced the closure of theatres and productions, resulting in significant financial loss and economic insecurity for thousands of entertainment professionals. However, entertainment workers struggled long before the pandemic, and conditions during the pandemic only served to exacerbate these struggles.

The research on entertainment workers' mental health and wellbeing is scant, and scholarly, peer-reviewed research is limited. What we know from our little research is that people who work in entertainment are hurting. These workers experience a high rate of mental health and substance abuse challenges. Research has pointed to 9 factors (shown below) contributing to diminished mental health and wellbeing for entertainment workers. Thankfully, **there is hope**. We can learn from other industries about principles of prevention and trauma-informed solutions to promote the health, safety, and wellbeing of the cast and crew.



Prior to the Pandemic

Entertainment Assist published a peer-reviewed study in **Australia in 2016**. The study interviewed 36 participants and surveyed an additional 2904 who were entertainment performers, support workers, and technical operators. This study found:

- Respondents were six times more likely to experience suicidal thoughts and four times more likely to be thinking of a suicide plan when compared with the national average.
- Respondents were twice as likely to attempt to take their life than the national average.
- 44% of respondents reported symptoms of moderate to severe anxiety

The Film and TV Charity in the **United Kingdom** published *The Looking Glass Survey* in **February of 2020**. The survey consisted of roughly 10,000 film and television workers found that:

- 87% of respondents reported experiencing a mental health problem at some point compared with 65% of the general population.
- 64% of respondents had experienced depression compared with 42% of the general population.
- More than half the sample considered taking their life, compared with one in five nationally.
- two in five women reported sexual harassment at work
- Black men reported higher rates of bullying (69%) compared with 50% of the total population sampled
- 87% of women from ethnic backgrounds reported bullying at work.

During the Pandemic

In the fall of 2020, nearly six months after the pandemic outbreak, a study was conducted in the United Kingdom exploring the effects of COVID-19 with 385 entertainment workers. The results showed:

- 53% of respondents reported financial hardship
- 85% reported increased anxiety
- 63% reported being lonelier than before the crisis
- 76% of respondents had experienced a decrease in income
- 54% considered themselves to be in financial hardship.

A literature review of studies conducted worldwide during the pandemic was compiled in 2021. The findings concluded that a lack of economic security was a risk factor that increased the likelihood of developing PTSD. Furthermore, experiencing loneliness was a risk factor associated with depression. This knowledge is essential when you consider the unique vulnerability of entertainment workers, as highlighted in the research findings presented here.

"We spend so much time caring for other people's stories without taking care of the people who tell them."

Tyee Tilghman
Actor, Creator, WECA Co-Founder



Most Recent Research

The Film and TV Charity has committed to conducting follow-ups to the original 2020 Looking Glass Survey in order to produce a longitudinal perspective of what is occurring in the entertainment industry.

In 2021:

- 9 in 10 of nearly 5,000 respondents had experienced a mental health problem
- 53% had experienced bullying, harassment, or discrimination in the past year; while two-thirds (67%) had witnessed these behaviors
- Four in 10 (39%) of Black, Asian, and minority ethnic respondents had experienced racial harassment or discrimination in the past year
- 43% of female respondents experienced bullying in the past year, compared to 34% of men
- 20% say that people working in the industry have positive attitudes towards people experiencing mental health issues.
- only 10% of respondents agreed that the industry was a mentally healthy place to work
- 65% of respondents said they had thought about leaving the industry in the past year because of concerns about their mental health
- Nearly half of respondents (46%) said that they simply didn't have the time to access mental health support
- 78% say that work intensity is having a negative impact on their mental health

In 2022:

- Some improvements in measures were noticed.
- 46% had experienced bullying, harassment, or discrimination in the past year (a 7-point reduction)
- 80% of respondents sensed a positive change in the industry's capability to provide support
- 11% describe the industry as a mentally healthy place to work
- 75% worried about future income
- 33% of respondents worked more than 50 hours in the week before the survey, compared to 39% in 2021

Conclusion

One of the silver linings of the pandemic is that it exposed just how significant and essential mental health and wellbeing are to human functioning. Further, it brought to light various social and systemic issues that were bubbling just under the surface of the entertainment industry. Research has confirmed the hypothesis that entertainment workers were highly vulnerable before the pandemic and that they suffered tremendously during the pandemic. Therefore, the time is ripe to use trauma-informed practices and resources to create solutions to systemic and cultural challenges while encouraging and supporting entertainment workers to engage in self-care activities and activities that foster resilience and growth.



WECA is here to help.

Ongoing Support Offerings

Community Offerings

- **Online Resource Hub**
 - *Research Debrief*
 - *Toolkits*
 - *Info Sheets*
- **Live Events**
- **Blog**
- **Online Courses**
 - *Wellbeing Essentials for Sets and Stages*
- **Lights on Mental Health! Podcast**

Upskilling

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Certification

Mental Health First Aid is a training course that gives you the skills to reach out and provide initial help and support to someone who may be developing a mental health or substance use problem or experiencing a crisis and help connect them to the appropriate care.

Suicide Prevention and Intervention Certification

Evidenced-based approaches to recognizing, supporting, and intervening with someone experiencing a suicidal crisis.

Customized Training and Consultation

Workshops

- Trauma-Informed Artistic Creation: Boundaries, Self-Care, and Returning Home to Self
- Hollywood and Mental Health: Let's Talk About It
- How to Recognize and Manage Character Bleed
- Disenfranchised Grief for Creatives: What Does it Mean to Mourn our Work?
- Teambuilding
- Grief at Work: Navigating Loss & Spurring Resilience in Creative Workplaces

Risk Assessments

A comprehensive assessment of current wellbeing risks present in script and production. Careful attention is paid to scenes that may cause the cast and crew difficulty. Areas that may be hazardous for trauma and mental health are also identified, and recommendations are provided.

Towards an Industry Standard

Our Mission, Vision and Values

WECA envisions an entertainment industry guided by trauma-informed principles, by which the health, safety, and wellbeing of artists and entertainment workers are prioritized throughout the entire creative process, from pre to post-production.

WECA strives to be the premiere hub of wellbeing in entertainment in the United States, ensuring that creative spaces are well-equipped to promote the health, safety, and wellbeing of cast and crew members. WECA is committed to decreasing mental health stigma, increasing access to support, and establishing industry standards for wellbeing. These goals are achieved by developing resources and training, partnering with productions to provide risk assessment and consultation, and supporting and uplifting ongoing mental health research.

WECA is guided by values of social justice, intersectionality, and trauma-informed knowledge. We believe that the creative arts are an essential component of human wellbeing where individual and community healing can occur. We believe that those who work in entertainment have the right to work in healthy and safe environments guided by principles of prevention and harm reduction.



WECA'S LADDER OF WELLBEING

Keep in Touch!

We want to hear from you!

Let us know how our team can support you in promoting the health, safety, and wellbeing of your cast and crew.

hello@wellbeinginentertainment.org

www.wellbeinginentertainment.org



#WEMUSTDOBETTER

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