

COMMITTEE: ILO - Working conditions

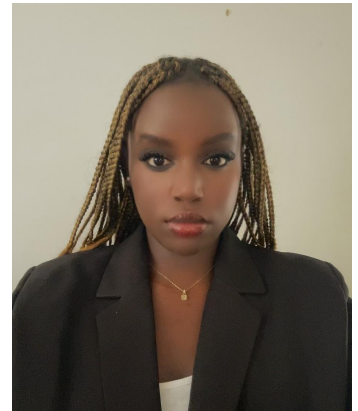
ISSUE: How can workers in the arts and entertainment sector be guaranteed protection against physical, psychosocial and job security risks?

CHAIRS: Harriet Onyango Wright, Gregoire Oury, Said Zamora Inzunza

PRESENTATION OF THE CHAIR

Hi, dear delegates!

My name is Harriet Onyango Wright. I am 17 years old and I come from both Kenya and Uganda. As a student in the English National Programme at the Lycée International of Ferney-Voltaire, I've lived in France for most of my life, though I was born in Kenya. I am also a polyglot who finds enjoyment in learning new languages (such as English, French, Swahili, Spanish and Korean). I also personally enjoy anything related to music, such as singing and dancing. I have been part of MUN for two years now, and I have been a delegate and a translator.



This year, in our committee, we will focus on labour conditions. This refers to the treatment of workers in terms of social protection, gender pay equality, the right to conversion, job insecurity, psychosocial, mental and physical health. Fair conditions ensure dignity, safety, and justice, while poor ones lead to exploitation and harm.

I look forward to the conference in January, where we will have the opportunity to convene and work collaboratively towards solutions that protect individuals from hazardous working conditions.

KEY WORDS

Freelancers/gig workers: Individuals who work on short-term or project-based jobs without long-term contracts.

Labour protections: Legal rights that guarantee fair working conditions, job stability, and social benefits.

Third-party intermediaries: Agencies or platforms that hire artists but may not provide full legal protections.

Burnout: Extreme fatigue and emotional exhaustion caused by prolonged stress and overwork.

Stunts: Dangerous physical actions performed by actors, often involving risk of injury if not done safely.

OVERVIEW

1. What are the physical risks?

Workers in the arts and entertainment sector face a wide range of physical risks due to the nature of their environments, equipment, and job demands.

Unsafe work environments

Performing artists frequently find themselves in unpredictable and unconventional environments, consisting of theatre stages, open-air venues, or bustling movie sets, wherein protection isn't continually prioritised. These areas can pose extreme hazards, from slippery or choppy floors to terrible visibility and insufficient emergency infrastructure. The bodily setup frequently calls for crews to move heavy gadgets or light rigs at great heights, often without the vital harnesses or defensive gear. Additionally, noise and exposure to chemicals, such as resins, paints/glazes/dust from toxic materials, etc, can play a huge role. In such conditions, an easy

oversight can cause intense injury, showing the pressing need for enforced protection requirements in innovative workplaces.

Repetitive Motion and Overuse Injuries

Performers such as dancers, musicians, and circus artists are especially vulnerable to overuse injuries because they repeat the same movements for long hours each day. This repetitive strain often results in conditions such as tendinitis, carpal tunnel syndrome, and chronic joint or muscle pain, which typically develop gradually but can cause long-term disability or even require surgery if left untreated. Studies show that between [39–87%](#) of professional musicians and [34–62%](#) of music students experience musculoskeletal disorders, while [72–83%](#) of all dance injuries are caused by overuse rather than accidents. In some high-repetition jobs, carpal tunnel syndrome affects up to [34%](#) of workers, a rate comparable to that of many performing artists. Due to performance pressures and a lack of health insurance, many artists delay treatment, which increases the severity of their injuries and threatens their long-term careers. (sources: [PMC](#) & [Readkong](#))

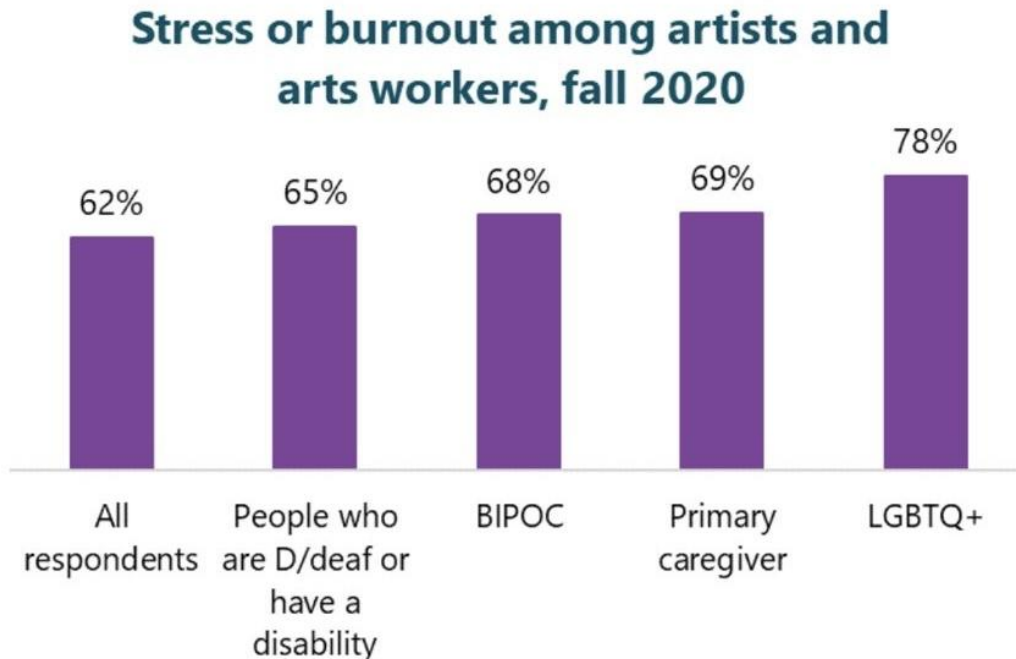
Stunts and Technical Hazards

Performers and backstage workers in the arts and entertainment sector are exposed to significant physical hazards, including burns, falls from heights, and equipment malfunctions. For instance, in 2020, the U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics reported that [645](#) workers died from falls to a lower level, with [49,250](#) nonfatal injuries resulting from such falls. In the construction industry, falls from heights accounted for [38%](#) of all fatalities, highlighting the severity of this risk. These statistics underscore the critical need for stringent safety measures, training, and protective equipment to mitigate these risks in the performing arts industry. (sources: [ESFL](#) & [Readkong](#))

Lack of regulation for Freelancers

A significant proportion of artists worldwide work as freelancers or in the informal economy, often without contracts, labour protections, or access to essential safeguards such as health and safety training, insurance coverage, or the right to refuse unsafe conditions. Without union representation or workplace oversight, these workers are highly vulnerable to risks being ignored or dismissed. Data reflects the scale of this issue: a 2018 European Commission study found that [44%](#) of artists and writers in the EU, including musicians, dancers, actors, and directors, were self-employed, compared to just [14%](#) in the general workforce, with rates surpassing [50%](#) in countries like Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands. Similarly, a 2024 ILO-UNESCO report

revealed that in Zimbabwe's creative sector, [93%](#) of cultural workers are own-account freelancers, most lacking contracts, social security, or unionisation, leaving them in precarious and unprotected working conditions. (source: [Readkong](#))

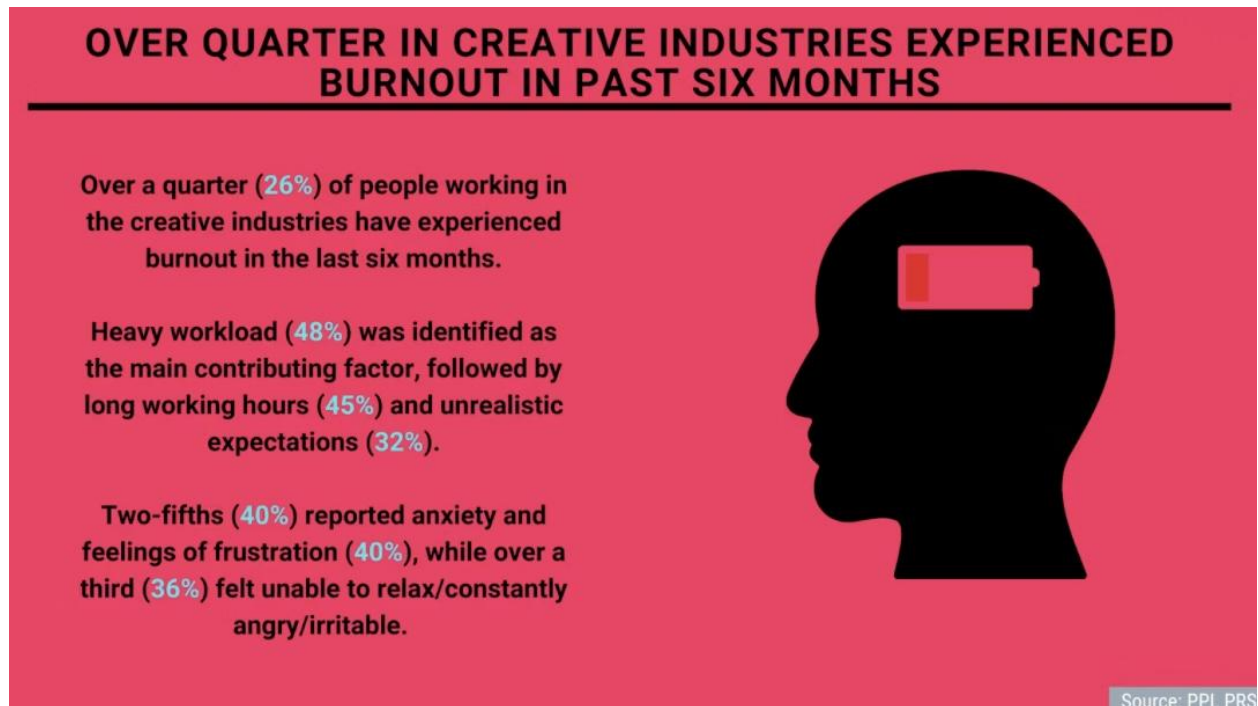


[Hill Strategies: "On Precarity in the Arts"](#)

2. What are the psychosocial risks?

Psychosocial risks in the arts and entertainment sector are deeply rooted in creative work, which often demands emotional exposure, constant reinvention, and public scrutiny. Artists are expected to maintain high performance levels and visibility, which can lead to severe mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, and burnout. This emotional toll is compounded by widespread workplace harassment, ranging from discrimination and bullying to sexual abuse, often occurring in environments that lack formal protections or complaint mechanisms. Freelancers and performers on tour can experience intense social isolation, becoming disconnected from stable support systems and professional communities. Additionally, job insecurity remains a major source of chronic stress: many artists rely on short-term contracts, gig work, or seasonal employment, leaving them without financial stability, benefits, or a clear career path. This uncertainty not only threatens their livelihoods but also creates a constant psychological burden that can severely affect well-being and personal identity. Britney Spears's conservatorship case serves as a prime illustration of how intense public scrutiny, loss of

autonomy, and exploitation can lead to significant psychosocial stress, underscoring the dangers to artists' mental health that the entertainment industry poses.



[Marketing week: Budgets, ad spend, burnout 5 interesting stats](#)

3. What are the job risks?

Job security risks in the arts and entertainment sector stem largely from the irregular, project-based nature of the work. Most artists are freelancers, temporary contractors, or gig workers without permanent employment status. As a result, they often lack access to essential protections such as unemployment benefits, sick leave, maternity leave, or retirement contributions. Their income is volatile, depending on seasonal demand, public funding, or the algorithms of digital platforms. Moreover, many creative workers face exclusion from national labour frameworks, meaning they are not legally protected in cases of unfair dismissal or sudden job loss. Even those working with contracts often find them vague, short-term, or dependent on third-party intermediaries like agencies or streaming services, which limits their bargaining power. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed and worsened these vulnerabilities, as over 20 million (UNESCO) artists were left without work or income security, many falling through the cracks and having to rely on general aid programs.

RELEVANT UN TREATIES AND EVENTS

10/12/1948

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). A foundational human rights text affirming the right to: Work, free choice of employment, just conditions, social protection, and equal pay (article 23)

[Universal Declaration of Human Rights | United Nations](#)

16/12/1966

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). A legally binding treaty that guarantees fair wages and safe working conditions, and also Social security and cultural participation. (article 7-15)

[International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights | OHCHR](#)

27/10/1980

UNESCO's non-binding but influential framework urges member states to uphold artists' rights to social security, fair employment conditions, mobility, and freedom of expression, including the right to unionise.

[1980 Recommendation concerning the Status of the Artist | Diversity of Cultural Expressions](#)

15/06/2006

The ILO's Employment Relationship Recommendation. It provides guidance on identifying employment relationships, including disguised and freelance arrangements, so workers in precarious forms of work receive proper labour rights and protections (No.198)

[Employment Relationship Recommendation, 2006 \(No. 198\)](#)

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

- First of all, governments should legally recognise artists and freelancers as workers with rights, not as informal or hobby-based laborers. This includes integrating artists into labour codes, enabling them to access social protections like unemployment benefits, health insurance, and pensions.
- We also need to urge governments to establish model contracts to prevent exploitation and ensure minimum standards regarding pay, working hours, copyright, and safety. In addition, collective bargaining rights for artists should be upheld through professional unions or associations.
- Next governments should adopt and enforce occupational safety standards that are tailored to performance and production settings. This includes providing mandatory safety training for stage workers, performers, and technicians. Additionally, there should be a requirement for personal and workplace health insurance for physically risky roles (e.g, stunt performers, dancers).
- Additionally, develop national strategies that support mental health services specifically for artists and cultural professionals. Moreover, create anonymous and accessible channels for reporting harassment and abuse, and ensure zero-tolerance enforcement in all cultural institutions.
- Increase public funding in culture, not only for elite institutions but also for local and grassroots creators. Furthermore, build emergency relief systems (e.g., for pandemics, strikes, or venue closures) that automatically include freelance and independent artists.
- Lastly, ensure visa and residency policies allow artists to work internationally without losing social protections. Also, sign and implement cultural treaties that protect freedom of expression and cultural diversity.

GUIDED QUESTIONS:

1. How does your country legally define and protect the status of artists and cultural workers, especially freelancers and gig workers?
2. What measures are in place to ensure physical safety on sets, stages, and performance venues in your country?
3. What support systems exist in your country to address mental health challenges and psychosocial risks for artists?
4. Are artists and performers in your country covered by social protection schemes such as health insurance, unemployment benefits, and pensions?
5. How does your country prevent and address workplace harassment, discrimination, and abuse in the cultural sector?
6. What lessons did your country learn from the COVID-19 pandemic regarding the vulnerability of the cultural and creative industries?
7. How does your country promote freedom of artistic expression and protect artists at risk of censorship or repression?
8. What policies or funding strategies does your government use to support both established institutions and independent or emerging artists?

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