



Voices of our industry.

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Belgian Creative Industry Diversity & Inclusion Report 2019

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www.creativebelgium.be/voices-of-our-industry



Foreword

Welcome to the Voices of our Industry Report for 2019. At Creative Belgium, we believe in 'creativity for all', which is why we're committed to shaping a happy, diverse, inclusive and equal industry for everyone.

To start, we realized the data was simply not there. How can we start a conversation and drive strategies for change if we don't know what needs to change, why we should change it or how we can do so?

So we've partnered with Creative Equals (UK) to understand what this looks like in Belgium in 2019 and to shape our plans for 2020.

In October 2019 we did a baseline measurement that covers everything from how people feel about pay, to flexible working, equal opportunities, happiness and stress, and more. It was the first deep-dive of its kind in the sector.

We have uncovered more than we expected, so thank you to everyone who took part for their honesty, as well as to Vlaanderen Gelijke Kansen and our supporting partners and contributors who made this report happen.

We found out mental health, stress and female leadership are challenges within the industry.

We also discovered most people in the creative sector are happy - 55% feel their company has a purpose beyond making money. We see great results on flexible working, which is fantastic as only 1 in 4 people get their best ideas in the office.

This is a great time to start preparing your company for the future with a strong and genuine understanding of what's happening now. The results in this report will bring us some quick wins and I do hope the insights will have a profound impact on shaping our future.

We hope you will read this report and commit to at least one change to enable our great industry to grow.

Creative Belgium is here to help you find and navigate opportunities.

Best,

Isabel Van den Broeck

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Executive Summary

In late 2019, Creative Belgium measured the industry to see how it was progressing on its inclusion and diversity journey.

To bring this to life, we engaged a UK-based research partner, Creative Equals, who have used their methodology and expertise from their Equality Standard insights and know-how to compile this report.

The creative industry in Belgium is an industry with some challenges, including becoming more inclusive of minority groups and addressing gender inequalities. However, employees in the industry are generally happy and they see their long-term career in the creative sector. Most are set on staying for five years or more. This presents a real opportunity to create lasting change that improves the working lives of employees in the industry.

How are we feeling?

- 73% of respondents feel stressed at work
- 82% regularly work more than their contracted hours
- 60% say they have a healthy work-life balance
- 68% of employees in the industry are happy

People working in the Belgian creative industry are experiencing high levels of stress and a lack of healthy work-life balance is the biggest contributor to stress. Overtime is directly related to stress: almost 90% of employees who regularly work overtime experience high levels of stress.

That means burnout is prevalent in the creative industry and agencies should support their staff by acknowledging this and putting measures in places to prevent overtime and unhealthy work-life balances, pushing back against the long-hours culture where possible.

In the Belgian creative industry, almost one in four people experience mental health issues. Those working in advertising and digital

agencies, as well as those in strategic planning and copywriting roles, are more likely to experience these issues. However, only a third of those in this bracket feel adequately supported by their manager. This indicates agencies need to take mental health seriously and put measures in place to support employees, including educating managers and senior leaders to understand mental health issues, providing them with a toolkit to help their staff.

Overall, two in five employees feel there is awareness of mental health in their agency. Organisations should be aware of the effect and link between stress and mental health issues. Several studies have linked these two factors - most notably those that link high stress levels, time pressure and a lack of support from colleagues towards their mental health issues.¹

Creativity is reduced in stressful working environments² and organisations should work to counter these environments to improve the performance of their agency.

¹ Babazono, A., Mino, Y., Nagano, J., Tsuda, T., Araki, T., 'A Prospective Study on the Influences of Workplace Stress on Mental Health', *Journal of Occupation Health*, 47.0 (2005), 490-495 (p.494).

² Shanteau, J., Dino, G.A., 'Environmental Stressor Effects on Creativity and Decision Making', in *Time Pressure and Stress in Human Judgement and Decision Making*, ed. By Ola Svenson and A. John Maule (New York: Plenum Press, 1993), pp.293-308 (p. 300).

In Brief

What is the Belgian creative sector feeling?

What's the problem?

In a 2008 baseline measurement, just over a third of the Belgian population reported having depression or anxiety.³ While the advertising industry stacks up around the national average, there is a high risk of this percentage increasing due to the high-stress culture within the industry. Additionally, with a majority of employees feeling that mental health awareness does not exist in their industry, the frameworks are often not there - or not publicised enough - to support employees experiencing difficulties.

Actionable Solutions

We'll work through different strategies you can use in the workplace to promote mental health and frameworks you can put in place to increase awareness around policy implementation. These include programmes to Promote Adult Resilience (PAR), allowing more time for flexible working and other policies to reduce stress, encouraging openness so employees feel comfortable reaching out for help and other strategies such as exercise breaks.

What is the Belgian creative sector experiencing?

What's the problem?

While staff across all demographics score their company highly on inclusion, this is probably because agencies are homogenous. Minorities in the industry are experiencing discrimination. Inappropriate behaviour is a particular concern, as more minorities have experienced it than the average (a fifth of women, a third of LGBT+ individuals and almost half of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people employees). Those from diverse characteristics are not perceived as visible or speaking regularly in the industry and around two in five people said they have seen meaningful changes in their company policy around inclusion and diversity or that it is demonstrated as important by leaders.

Actionable Solutions

There is a need for increased measures to be taken to ensure diversity and inclusion in the workplace is improved. This needs to come from all angles in the form of policies and processes that create a culture of equal opportunities for all. Companies need to look at their own data and understand where they can improve. We'll explore different strategies for moving towards culture change in this report.

3 Gouwy, A., Christianes, W., Bracke, P., 'Mental health services use in the general Belgian population: estimating the impact of mental health and social determinants', Arch Public Health, 66.0 (2008), 50-68 (p. 57).

Untapped Opportunities for Staff Retention, Development and Progression

What's the problem?

Diversity - including on the grounds of gender - is a real issue in the Belgian creative industry. Men are twice as likely to be in a senior role as women and almost 72% of respondents have a male line manager. In certain roles - such as art direction - the likelihood of having a male line manager was as high as 97%. Without role models and bias in progression structures, this has a huge impact on women's careers. Women are not progressing to leadership roles and this is seen as the norm in the industry. It's important to challenge this to address a lack of representation of women and female creativity. Awareness and actions needs to happen immediately as a consequence of this report.

Actionable Solutions

We need to see more women in senior roles and making their way up the ladder. There are various ways of changing structures to do this, including challenging [un]conscious bias, increasing progression transparency and accountability, integrating gender and other characteristics into policy and improving maternity policy. These will be explored within the report.



Methodology

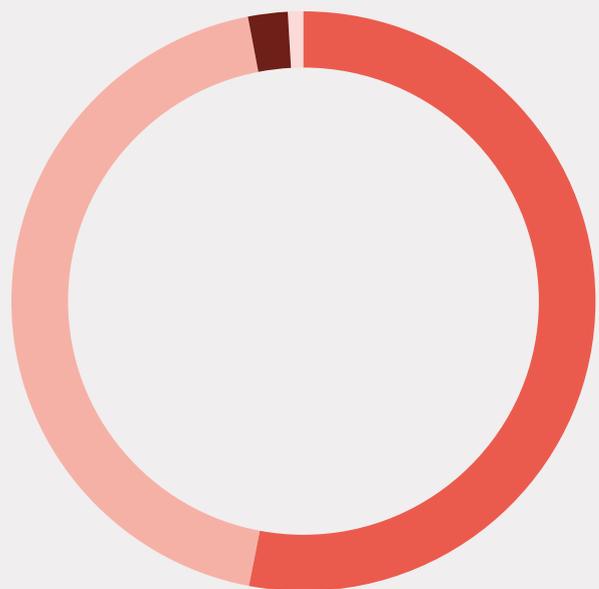
The Belgian Creative Industry Diversity & Inclusion baseline measurement was issued to a broad pool of members of the Belgian creative industry, through Creative Belgium's own contacts, the broader community, industry organisations and supporters.

Throughout the marketing of the baseline measurement, we placed no emphasis on seeking responses from any particular demographic, expecting to see a bias in terms of diverse groups. The baseline measurement launched on 11 October 2019 and closed on 4 November 2019, receiving 475 completed responses. In a sector of approximately 3,500, that represents 14% of the entire workforce.

Gender

The gender split in our baseline measurement skews towards female respondents. According to Statbel, the gender split of the Belgian population is 51% female and 49% male.⁴

- 53% Female
- 44% Male
- 1% Non-Binary
- 2% Prefer not to say



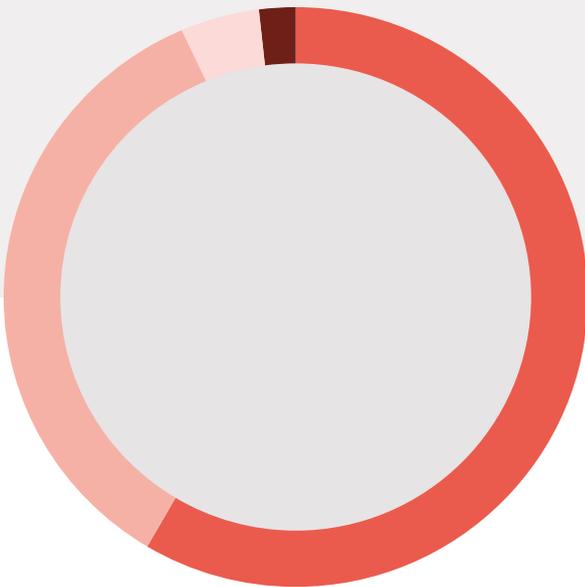
⁴ Statbel: Belgium in figures, 'On 1st January 2019, Belgium had 11,431,406 inhabitants', <https://statbel.fgov.be/en/themes/population/structure-population> [accessed 27 Nov 2019]

The respondents were predominantly white European, between 18-34, heterosexual and speak Dutch.

Age

60% of our baseline measurement respondents were aged 18-34, emphasising the relative youth of the industry – 19% of the Belgian population are aged 20-34 –⁵ and the lack of diversity in the industry.

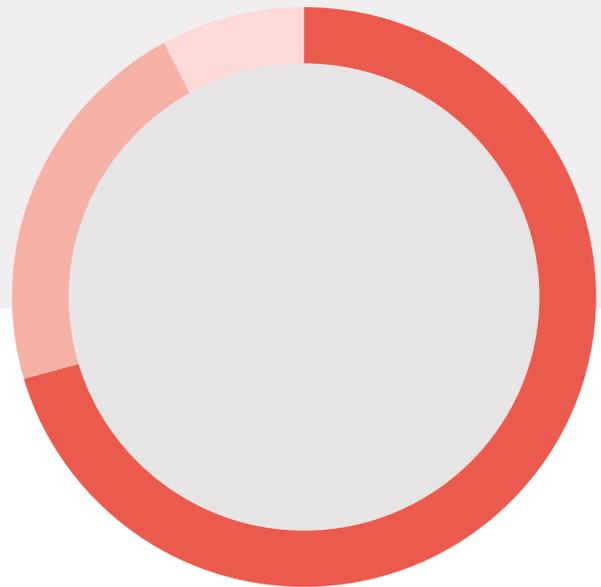
- 59% 18-34
- 35% 35-54
- 4% 55+
- 2% Prefer not to say



First Language

In our baseline measurement 71% of respondents first language was Dutch, this is higher than the Belgian population average of 60%.⁶

- 71% Dutch
- 21% French
- 8% Other



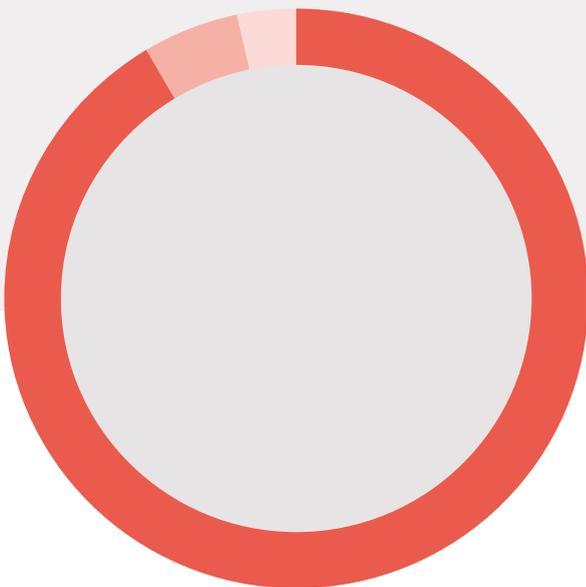
⁵ Statbel: Structure of the Population, 'Age Pyramid' , <https://statbel.fgov.be/en/themes/population/structure-population#panel-11> [accessed 27 Nov 2019]

⁶ CIA: The World Factbook, 'Belgium', <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/attachments/summaries/BE-summary.pdf> [accessed 27 Nov 2019]

Ethnicity

5% of respondents were Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people.

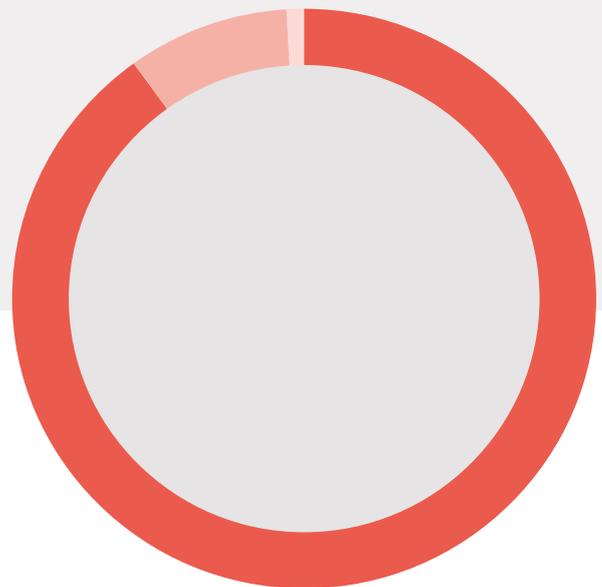
- 92% white European
- 5% Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people
- 3% Other/Prefer not to say



Sexual Orientation

In our baseline measurement 9% of respondents identified as LGBT+, again there are no available population stats for those who are LGBT+ in Belgium.

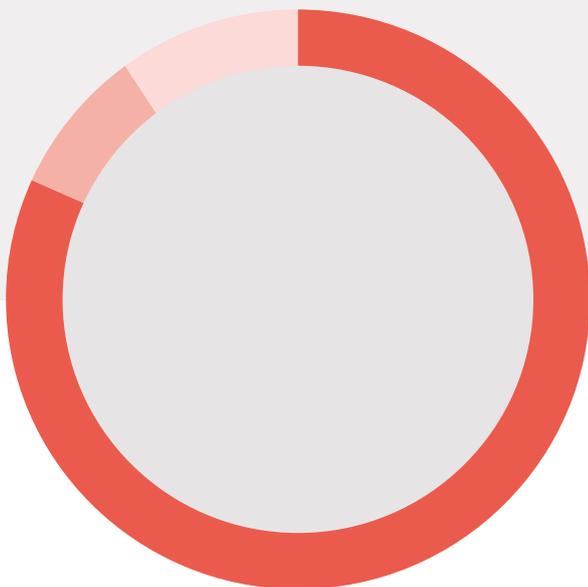
- 90% Hetrosexual
- 9% LGBT+
- 1% Prefer not to say



Neurodiversity

8% of those who completed the baseline measurement were neurodiverse (ADHD, Dyslexia, Autism/Aspergers, Dyspraxia/DCD, Tourette Syndrome).

- 82% Not
- 8% Neurodiverse
- 10% Prefer not to say



Disability

Less than 1% reported having a disability. According to the Federal Public Service for Social Security, 661,818 people had officially-recognised disabilities in 2016⁷, which amounts to around 5.5% of the population. Not all disabled people are in employment, but they are not represented within the creative sector.

Parents

179 respondents to the baseline measurement were parents. 170 were thinking of becoming a parent one day, 101 were not parents and 25 weren't sure.

A majority of the respondents were therefore considering parenthood.

Role

31% of respondents work in a creative role, 20% are in account management, 9% are in executive management, 8% are in strategic planning and 32% are in other roles.



Key Findings

1.0

How is the Belgian creative sector feeling?

Our baseline measurement shows that stress, feeling overwhelmed and mental health issues are very common in the Belgian creative industry.

Addressing work-life balance and enabling flexible working will play an important role in addressing these issues.

Stress

1.1 Stress:

Summary

73% of respondents are stressed by their work.

64% of the Belgian population claims to have stress at work.⁸

82% of employees regularly work more than their contracted hours.

Almost one in four employees experience a mental health issue.

Roles

At all levels of the industry, the vast majority of employees are working longer than their contracted hours. The desire to do these longer hours varies per level:

- 39% of juniors work longer, but would rather be doing something else
- 35% of mid-level employees work longer, but would rather be doing something else
- 91% of seniors work longer hours, but 69% of them don't mind

Of those who work overtime, 89% are stressed.

Some departments are more stressed than others, including account management - 82% of whom feel stressed.

1.1.1 Stress:

In brief

Creatives are four times more stressed by work than the general Belgian population.

There is very little data available publicly on the stress levels of the Belgian population at work as a whole.

The result that three in four employees in the creative industry are stressed at work - as opposed to almost one in three generally - is significantly higher than this.⁹

Senior staff are much happier to do overtime than junior and mid-level staff

While 43% of junior staff don't mind doing overtime, 39% say they would rather be doing something else. This is similar to mid-level staff, who report figures of 46% and 35% respectively.

When it comes to senior staff though, only 22% would rather be doing something else and 69% don't mind working more than their contracted hours. This may lead to a top-down culture of presenteeism and the idea that staff should enjoy staying longer.

⁹ Guy Van Ges, 'Belgium: EWCO comparative analytical report on Work-Related stress' <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/report/2010/belgium-ew-co-comparative-analytical-report-on-work-related-stress> [accessed 10 Dec 2019].

¹⁰ Welford, R., 'Work-Life Balance in Hong Kong: Baseline measurement Results', The University of Hong Kong and CSR (2008), (p. 22).

Work-life balance is a big driver of stress

Work-life balance - and a manager setting a good example of it - is the biggest differentiator between stressed and unstressed employees.

Improvements in work-life balance are strongly correlated to improvements in happiness of employees,¹⁰ as well as large drops in the number of employees considering leaving their jobs.

Again, a culture of high-pressure working normalises long hours.

Some departments need extra care

Account management employees feel particularly stressed, with four in five reporting that they are stressed.

A number of factors cause this, but employers should look at departments where stress is particularly high and understand the data within that department to move forward from this.

“A number of people, especially young people, cannot keep up with the pressure and decide to leave. I think the company is aware of this, but is keeping an ostrich policy. We exploit people and if they crack, we replace them”

- Midlevel Copywriter



There are other issues which are prevalent within advertising that link in to stress, such as the high pressure to perform and work demands.

Further governmental advice on work-related stress can be found at:
www.bit.ly/eurofound-stress

1.1.2 Stress:

Actionable solutions

For employers

Train your managers in how to understand signs of stress.

Signs may include:

Actions

- Arriving late for work more frequently
- Leaving earlier than usual
- Taking more time off
- Making more mistakes
- Deterioration in quality of work

Emotions

- Irritability or anger
- Mood swings or increased sensitivity
- Becoming unusually withdrawn
- Lack of motivation
- Loss of confidence

- Ensure stress management strategies are in place *before* employees become stressed.
- Implement policies and publicise them via email networks, internal networks and messaging services (such as Slack) so employees are aware that they can ask for help and can do so before they reach the point of high stress or burnout.
- Give managers a 'toolkit' of responses for people who may be feeling stressed.

These might include authority to:

- Offer a worker 'time-out' for a few minutes when feeling stressed
- Offer the use of a quiet(er) space to aid concentration
- Agree to on the job contact with a mentor or support worker
- Temporarily adjust flexible working arrangements to help reduce stress factors

It is clear that within the creative industry in Belgium, a big driver of stress is the inability to balance work and life

Interestingly, a study has shown that there is no relationship between work-life balance and productivity, when we allow a control for good management.¹¹ In the case of the creative industry, though, under a third of employees get their best ideas in the office, which contributes to the importance of flexible working for productivity.

Moreover, work-life balance in Belgium is making employees unhappy and is a key driver for retention of staff, particularly talented members of staff.¹² Several quotes from the baseline measurement indicate this, referencing staff burnout and leaving when the pressure is too much, and companies should take this as a barometer for exploring new policies.

Flexible working is a key requirement for the Belgian creative industry and could be a force for change.

Stressed employees do not see their managers setting examples of flexible working and a culture of long hours and presenteeism seems to dominate the industry - which rises to senior management.

Indeed, a study into senior management and its effect on work-life balance culture has shown that 'the greatest obstacle to achieving work-life balance is seen as the "long-hours" culture in which availing oneself of flexible options [...] is incompatible with holding a senior management post'.¹³

11 Bloom, N., Kreschmer, T., Van Reenan, J., 'Work-Life Balance, Management Practices and Productivity', in *International Differences in the Business Practices and Productivity of Firms*, ed. By Freeman, Richard B., Shaw, Kathryn L. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), pp.15-54, (p. 37).

12 Deery Leo Jago, M., 'Revisiting Talent Management, work-life balance and retention strategies', *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 27.3 (2015), 1-25, (p.13).

13 Drew, E., Murtagh, E.M., 'Work/life balance: senior management champions or laggards?', *Women in Management Review*, 20.4 (2005), 262-278, (p.262).

14 *Ibid.*, pp.275-277.

How can we promote work-life balance within an organisation?

The following policies have been recommended by Drew (Trinity College Dublin) and Murtagh (Commission for Energy Regulation): ¹⁴

- Establish role models and good practice at all levels of the business - including senior leadership - to normalise working flexibly or from home.
- Ensure policies are communicated to staff, but also ensure they know how to take up these options, and offer confidential advice.
- Adopt training programmes to support work-life balance to send a positive message of support to employees considering it.
- Ensure that staff can establish boundaries between work and life, for example not contacting them on their personal mobile outside of work hours except in an emergency.
- Long hours are seen as compulsory within advertising and this can be combatted by: reducing the number and length of meetings (and schedule them during work hours), schedule days in which meetings will not be taken, allow video calling/ dialling in to meetings where possible, allow working from home or working compressed/flexible hours, encourage taking time off in stead of working for longer hours.
- Make a symbolic and public commitment to encouraging work-life balance, for example having a 'family day' or allow each member of staff a day off for World Mental Health Day (which has been done in the UK).

There are other issues which are prevalent within advertising that link in to stress, such as the high pressure to perform and work demands. Further governmental advice on work-related stress can be found at www.eurofound.europa.eu.

1.1.2 Stress:

Actionable solutions

For individuals

Culture change on stress management has to come from above. However, individuals can learn to understand their own stress as best as possible and reach out to a manager or mentor to help them cope with this.

- Understand your own stress ‘triggers’: this might mean keeping a diary of your emotions each day and working out what makes you feel stressed or not.
- Be realistic about the expectations you place on yourself for timescales.
- If you trust the people around you, ask for help or talk to colleagues.
- Use online resources to help you where possible (an index of sites can be found [here](#)) or talk to your GP/another medical professional.
- If you don’t find immediate help from your company, take the issue to HR (Human Resources), senior management or your trade union.



Mental Health

1.2 Mental Health:

Summary

Almost one in four employees in the creative sector in Belgium experience mental health issues.

38% of employees feel there is awareness of mental health issues in their company.

Of those who suffer from mental health issues, just over one third feel that their company provides a supportive environment around mental health.

Roles

While the overall figure is one in four, some departments have a higher proportion of employees who experience mental health issues.

These include:

- 30% of employees in digital agencies
- 29% of those working in advertising agencies
- 42% of those who work in strategic planning
- 36% of copywriters

1.2.1 Mental Health:

In brief

Stress and mental health

As we explored earlier in this report, stress and mental health are closely linked. Not all mental health issues are caused by stress, but a stressful job can be a factor in a larger picture of the development of some mental health problems.

With mental health responsible for over one in four long-term absenteeism cases,¹⁵ it should be a priority for agencies moving forward.

Awareness and support are low

While the proportion of people experiencing mental health issues is in line with the Belgian average - at around one in four -¹⁶ figures around awareness of mental health in agencies are low and the majority of employees with mental health issues do not feel that their company is supportive.

Employers are not adequately addressing the issue of mental health

While mental health issues are not unique to the creative industry, there is a clear need to address them more and make sure that employees are aware of their options and policies.

“In my last job I had a series of anxiety attacks due to stress and I was on the verge of a burnout.

Mental health is something you have to keep an eye on for yourself. Your employer won't do it for you”

- Senior Consultant

1.2.2 Mental Health:

Actionable solutions

For employers

It should be noted that some mental health problems require medical care and monitoring and the [re]integration of individuals into the labour market should be handled with special consideration.¹⁷

The Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development recommends that employers and the authorities:¹⁸

- Involve occupational health specialists in the retention and reintegration of employees experiencing mental health issues, including returning from sick leave.
- Systematise the cooperation between companies and public employment services.
- Develop employment-oriented mental health care and integrate health and employment services.

¹⁵ 'World Mental Health Day 2017: The Bulletin's guide to mental health support in Belgium', <https://www.thebulletin.be/world-mental-health-day-2017-bulletins-guide-mental-health-support-belgium> [accessed 28 Nov 2019].

¹⁶ Jacob, B., 'The Belgian Reform in Mental Health Care: Where are we now? A short overview of state and progress', *Journal of Psychiatry*, 19.7 (suppl) (2016), 43, (p.43).

¹⁷ OECD, 'Belgium should be more proactive in tackling mental health issues in the workplace, says OECD; <https://www.oecd.org/belgium/belgiumshouldbemore-proactiveintacklingmentalhealthissuesintheworkplacesaysoecd.htm> [accessed 28 Nov 2019].

¹⁸ Gabriel, P., Liimatainen, M.R., *Mental Health in the Workplace: Introduction, executive summaries* (Geneva: International Labour Office, 2000), (p.3).

Employers should implement a variety of policies to help employees with mental health issues and implement these effectively by communicating their availability and how to access them, on a confidential basis.

- Train Mental Health First Aiders in the workplace. This training is ‘effective in improving some aspects of mental health literacy, confidence in providing help to others and the type of help provided’.¹⁹ A network of first aiders all around the business evens out access to such training and encourages conversation around mental health.
- The World Health Organisation provides a framework for implementing tailored policies in the workplace based upon data from companies. If agencies take data from their own workforce, they can use this as a basis for implementing change.
- A 2014 study found that ‘workplace physical activity and yoga programmes are associated with a significant reduction in depressive symptoms and anxiety, respectively’.²⁰ Several studies report the association between physical activity and a reduction in mental health symptoms, but this should be taken only as one part of a generalised approach.

In order to improve awareness of mental health, companies should consider implementing a programme around mental health awareness to start the conversation.

While there is a lack of publicly-available research showing the effectiveness of these programmes in the workplace, programmes like these in schools were positively received and recognised the importance of the topic.²¹

The programmes used in the study ensure that people who had experienced mental health problems to co-facilitated the workshop and discussed information and stigma (among other topics).²² While the school environment is evidently different to the workplace, awareness around mental health was highlighted in the baseline measurement as a key area for development.

¹⁹ Kitchener, B.A., Jorm, A.F., ‘Mental health first aid training in a workplace setting: A randomised controlled trial’, *BMC Psychiatry*, 4.23 (2004), 1-8, (p. 8).

²⁰ Chu, A.H.Y., Koh, D., Moy, F.M., Müller-Riemenschneider, F., ‘Do workplace physical activity interventions improve mental health outcomes?’, *Occupational Medicine*, 64 (2014), 235-245., (p. 235)

²¹ Pinfold, V., Stuart, H., Thornicroft, G., Arboleda-Flórez, J., ‘Working with young people: the impact of mental health awareness programmes in schools in the UK and Canada’, *World Psychiatry*, 4.1 (2005), 48-52, (p. 51).

²² Ibid., p.48.

1.2.2 Mental Health:

Actionable solutions

For individuals

It should be noted that some mental health problems require medical attention, but we've listed some general advice for mental health in the workplace:

- Ask for help from someone you trust, whether it is a colleague, a mentor or a manager.
- Stay healthy where possible: exercise is closely linked to mental health and can improve symptoms.
- Seek medical help when needed: some mental health problems require special care. Contact your GP or another medical professional.
- Online resources can be useful: a directory of services is available at www.thebulletin.be/world-mental-health-day-2017-bulletins-guide-mental-health-support-belgium.



Key Findings

2.0

What is the Belgian creative sector experiencing?

A career in the creative sector in Belgium should be inclusive for everyone who wants to work in the industry.

Our research and analysis suggests there is much work to do to foster a culture where equal opportunities are the norm.



Inappropriate Behaviour

2.1 Inappropriate Behaviour:

Summary

One in five employees have experienced or witnessed inappropriate behaviour

Women are more likely to have done by men. Worryingly, this increases within minority groups:

- The majority (56%) of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people employees had witnessed or experienced inappropriate behaviour.
- A third of people who identify as LGBT+ had experienced or witnessed inappropriate behaviour.

Roles

34% of the Belgian employees experience inappropriate behaviour. In our industry we see lower numbers, but we should aim for zero tolerance.²³

- 22% of those working in advertising industries had witnessed or experienced it.
- 8% of those in PR had witnessed or experienced it.
- 8% of employees working in digital had witnessed or experienced it.

2.1.1 Inappropriate Behaviour:

In brief

Inappropriate behaviour is often in the form of jokes or jests

Inappropriate behaviour is prevalent in the industry. It centres around inappropriate comments - including those made in jest - about sexuality and race.

There are also incidents of indecent behaviour by male towards female members of staff.

Most employees feel comfortable reporting such behaviour

Over half of employees would feel comfortable reporting inappropriate behaviour and would know how to report it.

A small proportion - 15% - would feel comfortable but don't know how, a further 12% would not feel comfortable and 16% were not sure.

While there could be increased awareness about how to report such behaviour, it is very encouraging that almost three in four employees would feel comfortable reporting such incidents.

Inappropriate behaviour is a serious issue

Inappropriate behaviour in the workplace has health consequences and negative effects on the job satisfaction of employees who are victim to it.²⁴

As such, eliminating instances of such behaviour should be treated as a priority for employers and managers.

“The sexualisation of new employees resulting in a ‘meat inspection’ is just disgusting”

- Female Creative, 25-34

2.1.2 Inappropriate Behaviour:

Actionable solutions

For employers

Our research into the Belgian creative industry highlights that inappropriate behaviour in the workplace is closely linked to minority groups.

While we offer some more generalised strategies for dealing with inappropriate behaviour below, we suggest referring to the Diversity and Inclusion section of this report (section 3.1) to see how to take action against wider patterns of discrimination in the workplace.

Employers should publicise their frameworks for dealing with inappropriate behaviour. Some individuals highlighted that senior management are sometimes the ones behaving inappropriately, which makes reporting harder.

In order to combat this, employers should:

- Equip managers with better 'soft skills' through training. The skills shown to help deal with bullying include 'conflict resolution, interpersonal relations, leadership, negotiation, stress management and team building'.²⁵
- Ensure individuals are aware of policies and how to report behaviour, before they witness it.
- Have an independent task force to deal with such behaviour and give it the power to challenge any member of staff on their behaviour. Task forces should be able to approach members of staff who are committing inappropriate behaviour, even if they are senior in the organisation.

24 Mohd. Yusop, Y., Dempster, M., Stevenson, C., 'Understanding inappropriate behaviour: harrassment, bullying and mobbing at work in Malaysia', Procedia - Social and Behavioural Sciences, 127 (2014), 179-183, (p. 179).

25 Sheehan, M., 'Workplace bullying: responding with some emotional intelligence', International Journal of Manpower, 20.1/2 (1999), 57-69, (p.64).

2.1.2 Inappropriate Behaviour:

Actionable solutions

For individuals

When confronted with inappropriate behaviour, consider using the Non-Violent Communication Framework at www.nonviolentcommunication.com

This framework allows for a clear indication of how certain comments made you feel and can be useful for diffusing complex situations.

Where possible, familiarise yourself with the policy for reporting inappropriate behaviour in your workplace. If you feel able, report the behaviour you are experiencing to the task force.



Key Findings

Untapped opportunities for Staff Retention, Development and Progression

The data paints a picture of the Belgian creative industry as having an opportunity to improve in the areas of inclusion and diversity. The sector is currently experiencing discrimination demonstrated by inappropriate behaviour, but also in the form of the lack of promotion of women and minorities into leadership positions. These are important areas for development and can be utilised in the future to maximise the potential of the talent in the sector.

3.1 Diversity + Inclusion:

Summary

Diversity

37% feel their company is diverse in the area of ethnicity

39% feel their company is diverse in the area of social background

49% feel their company is diverse in the area of educational attainment

Gender

3 in 4 respondents had a male line manager. This rises as high as 90% in some areas, such as the creative department

55% of women have never had their work entered into any awards (compared to 35% of men)

Men are twice as likely to be in senior roles than women

Women were half as likely to be promoted in the last year than men

Women were less likely to work on a new business pitch than men

Pay equity

56% of employees agree their pay is fair for their level, qualifications, skills and experience

44% of Black, Asian and minority ethnic people employees agree their pay is fair for their level, qualifications, skills and experience

49% of LGBT+ staff agree their pay is fair for their level, qualifications, skills and experience

Engagement

79% of those who have worked in their company for 1 year or less describe themselves as happy in their role, this drops to 63% of those who have worked in their company for 1-4 years

29% plan to leave their agency within the next 2 years

8% plan to leave the industry within the next 2 years



Opportunity

59% feel that people recruited into their company are done on the basis of their skills, rather than personal characteristics or connections

Visibility

43% say people of diverse characteristics and backgrounds are visible and speak regularly in their company

37% say they are seeing meaningful changes in company policies and practices to improve diversity and inclusion

40% say leaders at their company have demonstrated diversity is important to the company's success

“Diversity in my company doesn't exist. Only Flemish and white. Big paradox while we say to our clients they should be more inclusive”

- Female Creative, 25-34

3.1.1 Diversity + Inclusion:

In brief

Diversity within the Belgian creative industry could be improved

Under half of employees believe their company is diverse in any of the areas we listed: ethnicity, social background and educational attainment.

Employers should aim for better diversity. Cited by Quantas as one of the main reasons for their turnaround from record losses to \$850million profit, the business benefits of diversity are increasingly publicised and acknowledged.²⁶

Change on diversity and inclusion is slow

The benefits of diversity and inclusion in the workplace are widely reported: from increasing creativity and performance²⁷ to increased appeal to job seekers and outperforming competitors.²⁸

However, only just over a third of employees and only 25% of those who identify as LGBT+, are seeing meaningful changes in their company to improve diversity, indicating a need for more action on the subject.

The Belgian creative industry is very homogenous

Three in five employees believe that people of diverse characteristics are not visible and do not speak regularly in their company.

Coupled with the evidence mentioned earlier in this report that the majority of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people and a third of LGBT+ employees had experienced or witnessed inappropriate behaviour in the workplace.

²⁶ Bourke, J., Dillon, B., The Diversity & Inclusion Revolution: Eight Powerful Truths (London: Deloitte Review, 2018), (p.83).

²⁷ 'Diversity in the Workplace: it means more than you think', Investors In People, <https://www.investorsinpeople.com/knowledge/workplace-diversity/> [accessed 28 Nov 2019].

²⁸ Martic, K. 'Top 10 Benefits of Diversity in the Workplace', TalentLyft, <https://www.talentlyft.com/en/blog/article/244/top-10-benefits-of-diversity-in-the-workplace-infographic-included> [accessed 28 Nov 2019].

Employees from minority groups are less likely to perceive pay as fair

While ethnicity pay gaps vary between groups and the data is not available for Belgium,²⁹ it is concerning that Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people and LGBT+ employees are less likely to perceive their pay as fair for their level, skills, qualifications and experience.

This should be a priority for the industry moving forward.

Engagement in the creative sector: most people are happy

Overall, happiness statistics paint a more positive picture in the industry, with only one in ten people considering leaving the industry in the next two years.

Engagement in the Belgian creative industry is mainly driven by leaders, finding meaning and recognition of the contributions that employees are making.

Gender discrimination is prevalent

Women are less likely to have had their work entered into awards and the likelihood of having a male line manager is as high as 97% in certain areas.

14% of female respondents say they are currently in a senior role, compared to 29% of male respondents.

Women are promoted half as much as men are, underlining how the lack of women in leadership positions is unlikely to change in the future.

Women are also 16% less likely to be allocated work on a new business pitch (92% of men have been given this opportunity, as opposed to 76% of women).

This highlights a serious need for change. The sector lacks female leaders and opportunities for women across the board and this should be a priority action from this report.



“More recognition
of the meaning and
influence of my work.
At this time this is
mainly expressed
in the yearly bonus,
but apart from that
I don't feel a lot of
appreciation from
the management”

- Mid-level project manager

3.1.2 Diversity + Inclusion:

Actionable solutions

For employers

The first step is understanding recruitment bias:

- Where do you recruit? Why do you recruit there?
- Do you have a referral bonus scheme? Given that most people's inner circle look is similar to them (in terms of ethnicity, sexuality, religion, class etc), referral bonuses are one of the main ways in which the homogeneity of the workforce is reinforced.
- Label salaries as 'negotiable' - studies show that there is a 45% gender gap in applications when jobs do not explicitly say that the salary is subject to change.³⁰
- Use skills based tasks in recruitment, as well as structured interviews that ask the same questions to everyone who applies for a job and introduce transparency to promotion, pay and bonus policies.³¹
- Consider 'blind' recruiting, in which certain areas of applications (such as name, university, etc) are blanked out to help prevent unconscious bias.

³⁰ Leibbrandt, A., List, J.A., 'Do Women Avoid Salary Negotiations? Evidence from a large-scale natural field experiment', *Management Science*, 6.19 (2015), 2016-2024, (p.2023). © 2012 by Andreas Leibbrandt and John A. List.

³¹ 'Actions to Close the Gender Pay Gap: Effective Actions', United Kingdom Government: Gender Pay Gap Service, <https://gender-pay-gap.service.gov.uk/actions-to-close-the-gap/effective-actions> [accessed 28 Nov 2019].

³² Castilla, E.J., 'Accounting for the Gap: A Firm Study Manipulating Organisational Accountability and Transparency in Pay Decisions', *Organisation Science*, 26.2 (2015), 311-333

³³ 'Actions to Close the Gender Pay Gap: Effective Actions', United Kingdom Government: Gender Pay Gap Service, <https://gender-pay-gap.service.gov.uk/actions-to-close-the-gap/effective-actions> [accessed 28 Nov 2019].

³⁴ Allison, M.T., 'Organizational Barriers to Diversity in the Workplace', *Journal of Leisure Research*, 31.1 (1999), 78-101, (p.96).

Implement structural change within your organisation

- Introduce accountability and transparency policies. Research shows that by evaluating performance more openly, behaviour changes and pay is allocated more equitably.³² This can also be applied to promotions, in that employees should have a clear structure that shows how they can reach the next pay grade.
- Improve and publicise parental leave policies. Make sure that you mention parental policies to all candidates in interviews (without having to ask for them) and encourage all genders of employees to take up parental leave. Consider the forms of support offered to women and men coming back from parental leave and establish a toolkit for managers and employees.
- Consider appointing a manager and task force to reduce bias in decisions. These managers should have data, be allowed more information when they ask for it and have a senior role in the company.³³ If you appoint a task force, make sure this is part of a job specification for the individuals on the task force and that they are allowed to allocate time out of their work day to dedicate to it.
- Train your team on unconscious bias. The Harvard Implicit Association Tests continually show an association between 'women' and 'family' and 'men' and 'career', as well as other problematic stereotypes. By being aware of our bias, we can begin to combat this. View these tests at <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>
- Diversity should always be accompanied by inclusive policies and culture. In order to avoid the consequences of treating diversity symbolically or superficially, organisations 'must critically evaluate their nature and understand the prominence of the status quo in the continuation of inequitable practices and policies'.³⁴ It is important that all employees - including senior leadership - promote and encourage inclusive culture in the workplace in order for diverse talent to be thrive.
- Organise events to publicly demonstrate a commitment to establish diversity and inclusion.

3.1.2 Diversity + Inclusion:

Actionable solutions

For individuals

If you feel uncomfortable at work or do not feel included, talk to your line manager, a trusted colleague or HR.

Encourage an inclusive culture through amplifying the contributions from employees from different backgrounds in meetings and ensuring all voices are being heard.

Call out discrimination when you see it: be an ally for individuals from different backgrounds.



Learning and Development

3.2 Learning + Development:

Summary

Promotion and performance reviews

43% of employees know exactly what is required from them to receive a promotion

53% receive regular feedback on their performance that they find helpful

56% say their line manager has shown genuine interest in their career progression

Training

38% received training linked to their career goals in the last year

55% did not receive any training in the last year

Of those who did not receive any training in the last year, 45% do not know how to request training



3.2.1 Learning + Development:

In brief

The road to a promotion is unclear and varies with level

Just over three in five employees do not know what is required of them to get a promotion.

Junior employees are even less likely to know how to get a promotion, at 36%.

This is reflective of a lack of information on promotions and unclear criteria, which can sometimes lead to favouritism and bias within the promoting process.

Training needs vary by profession and gender

Women are more likely to say training courses would help them progress in their careers.

Over half of them say that being trained on presentation skills would help, followed by a third who said managing stress.

Four in five employees of PR agencies would like training in pitching and seven in ten employees in digital agencies would like leadership skill training.

Training is not often requested, but can be hugely beneficial

Over half of employees did not request training last year.

When delivered effectively, there is 'a strong relationship between training satisfaction and overall job satisfaction',³⁵ meaning that investing in high-quality training courses could be a real area for development for the creative sector in Belgium.

Mentorship is another area for development

According to our baseline measurement, 43% of employees have a mentor or have had one in the past and almost two in five have not had a mentor but would like one.

Aside from providing motivation and expertise, having a mentor provides long-term advantages for mentees.³⁶

³⁵ Schmidt, S.W., 'The Relationship Between Satisfaction with Workplace Training and Overall Job Satisfaction', *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 18.4 (2007), 481-498, (p.492).

³⁶ Chao, G.T., 'Mentoring Phases and Outcomes', *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 51 (1997), 15-28, (p.24).

“No transparent information on how to get a promotion or what is thought of as a job well done. I get the feeling you have to be loud and even threaten a bit to get a promotion”

- Female, 25-34

3.2.2 Learning + Development:

Actionable solutions

For employers

The training needs of the creative sector in Belgium are as follows:

- 51% Tech/digital/innovation
- 44% Leadership skills
- 42% Pitching skills
- 35% Presentation skills
- 30% Languages
- 29% On-the-job (functional/craft) skills
- 27% Negotiation skills
- 25% Managing stress
- 24% Developing a personal brand
- 21% Data Skills
- 16% Navigating office politics
- 14% Sales skills
- 13% Resilience skills
- 9% Unconscious bias
- 1% None

In addition to this, employers should:

Circulate the policy for asking for training around the business and encourage people to apply. Where possible, allocate a training budget to each member of staff and encourage them to use it for courses of their choice.

Establish a mentoring network. Studies repeatedly show that mentoring has positive benefits for employees³⁷ and it can help establish communication between senior and junior levels of the company. This mentoring programme should be promoted to all employees and they should be able to take time out of their work day to access it.

Implement clear criteria for promotion. As discussed in the Diversity and Inclusion section of this report (Section 3.1), transparency around criteria for promotion allows for fairer selection of candidates, as well as clarity for employees on how to reach the next level. This can also include salary bands attached to each level to ensure continuation across the business.

³⁷ Allen, T.D., Poteet, M.L., Eby, L.T., Lentz, E., Lima, L., 'Benefits Associated With Mentoring for Protégés: A Meta-Analysis', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 89.1 (2004), 127-136, (p.134).

For individuals

Consider asking your line manager about what is required of you to reach a promotion and putting in place a plan to get there.

Ask for a personal training budget or discuss training with your manager, and apply for training through the framework provided by your organisation.

Enquire about local mentor networks, or ask how you can be allocated a mentor by your manager.





4.0

Practical Steps

Stress

Equip managers with a toolkit for people who may be feeling stressed.

Establish a better work-life balance through setting a culture of flexible working from the top of the business.

Learning and development

Allow open criteria for promotion and salary banding and encourage staff to apply for training through circulating application processes and promoting a mentor network.

Inappropriate behaviour

Equip managers with better 'soft skills' to deal with inappropriate behaviour, circulate policies and establish an independent task force.

Mental Health

Consider putting employees on a resilience-based training programme, train Mental Health First Aiders, implement tailored policies and encourage physical exercise.

Encourage awareness through initiating a conversation and hold workshops facilitated by people who have experienced mental health issues.

Diversity and Inclusion

Understand recruitment policies and make processes more transparent and appoint more minority groups (including women, ethnic minorities and LGBT+ candidates) to leadership positions.

Consider appointing a diversity task force, offer training on unconscious bias, encourage an inclusive culture and organise events around inclusion and diversity.

Conclusion

This study - initiated by Creative Belgium, funded by Flanders Gelijke Kansen and conducted through Creative Equals - has highlighted a lot of areas for development.

It has, however, underlined positive signs around the happiness of employees in the sector and their intention to stay in the industry.

We have offered several well-researched, easily implementable policies that should help transform the creative sector and offer new ways of working. In the long term, these policies should lead to a revolution and increased engagement of employees working in agencies.

Moving forward, we would encourage agencies and businesses to undertake an in-depth study of the data relating to their workforce, so they can adapt the solutions suggested here to their individual needs.

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