



## Archaeologists Branch Research Paper 1

# Getting our House in Order: Archaeologists' responses to Prospect's Workplace Behaviours Survey

By Jenny Andrew, Jessica Bryan and Sadie Watson<sup>12</sup>

## Introduction

Prospect is a trade union representing over 145,000 engineers, managers, scientists and other specialists in both the public and private sectors. One industry represented by Prospect is Heritage, and it is within this industry that the Archaeologists branch sits. The Archaeologists branch is made up of over 900 members divided into both sections and workplaces. Our branch has seen rapid and sustained growth over the last few years, tripling our numbers and we have ambitious plans to expand our influence and provide support for more archaeologists across the UK.

In 2018 Prospect conducted a Workplace Behaviour Survey of all its members. The results were presented by Prospect Officer Jenny Andrew at the Prospect National Conference in June 2018, along with the launch of a new guide to members '*A workplace guide to dealing with sexual harassment*'.<sup>3</sup>

At the time of the survey the Archaeologists Branch had around 600 members, half of whom responded to the survey.<sup>4</sup> This is clearly a significant dataset and this article reports on the results, both from our sector and in relation to the larger sample size of 7000. Within archaeology harassment, bullying and equality had become widely discussed topics, and groups such as British Archaeological Jobs Resource's RESPECT<sup>5</sup> and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' E&D Special Interest Group<sup>6</sup> had been created to support those within the industry facing issues at work. These groups joined previous campaigning and activist groups such as British Women Archaeologists<sup>7</sup> and Trowelblazers<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr Jenny Andrew is an Oceanographer-turned-data scientist and researcher for Prospect Union. Jessica Bryan is the Chair of the Archaeologists Branch of Prospect. Sadie Watson is the Equalities Officer for the Archaeologists Branch of Prospect. Both Jess and Sadie have spent many years in the trenches.

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<sup>3</sup> The sexual harassment guide can be downloaded for free  
<https://d28j9uci9uj44t.cloudfront.net/uploads/2019/07/2018-01069-Members-guide-Sexual-harassment-Version-25-06-2018.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> We are now over 1000 members strong

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.bajr.org/BAJRGuides/44.%20Harrasment/Sexual-Harassment-in-Archaeology.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.archaeologists.net/equality-and-diversity-group>

<sup>7</sup> Set up by Dr Rachel Pope and Dr Anne Teather, BWA supports survivors of sexual violence as well as campaigning, publishing and lobbying for equality throughout archaeology.

<sup>8</sup> <https://trowelblazers.com/>

The prevalence of harassment and bullying in our sector was generally assumed to be largely due to the environment in which we work, with the contracting sector working in construction which is male dominated and our academic colleagues working in institutions with long standing biases and power inequalities. As such archaeologists welcomed the survey and willingly participated, providing valuable data and accounts of harassment and bullying within our industry.

## Bullying and harassment: some definitions

All employees have the right to be treated with dignity and respect, in a working environment free from discrimination, harassment & bullying. Actions or behaviours that interfere with that right, and which are unwanted and offensive to the recipient, can be construed as bullying or harassment. It is important to keep sight of this, since behaviour that is acceptable to one person may be offensive to another. Whether or not harassment is intentional, it is its effect upon the recipient that is important<sup>9</sup>. Harassment is used to assert or undermine power, or for personal pleasure. Harassment cases that hit the headlines are usually of a sexual or racial nature, but anyone who is perceived as somehow different can be harassed at work.

Bullying can manifest itself in many obvious ways, such as shouting at staff in public and/or private, instantaneous rages, 'nit-picking', personal insults and name-calling, persistent criticism or public humiliation. There are also more subtle methods such as setting objectives with impossible deadlines, removing areas of responsibility, constantly changing working guidelines or blocking a person's promotion.

According to UK law, sexual harassment is unwanted conduct or behaviour related to sex, or of a sexual nature. This behaviour has the purpose or effect of violating the other's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment. The legal definition also encompasses less favourable treatment because of rejection (or submission) of unwanted conduct of a sexual nature or related to gender reassignment or sex. The law can apply to one-off incidents, or to patterns of behaviour. We must not underestimate the cumulative effect a pattern of 'low-level', even unintentional, sexual harassment can have on the victim. At its worst, sexual harassment destroys careers and fundamentally damages mental health.

Harassment and bullying are most often exercised by people in positions of power, such as supervisors and managers, who abuse their authority and impose their conduct upon others as a means of control. But they may also be used by colleagues of equal status, for example because of cultural differences, or because they are men assuming a higher status over women. They can also be used to humiliate and undermine the authority of a person of higher rank within the organisation.

Particularly important in archaeology, employees may suffer harassment from members of the third parties with whom they are in contact in the course of their work. It is important that an employer's harassment policy covers this situation, as employers have a duty to provide a safe working environment for their employees. They would be clearly failing in this duty if they ignored or condoned harassment.

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<sup>9</sup> A guide to bullying and harassment can be downloaded for free here:  
<https://d28j9ucj9uj44t.cloudfront.net/uploads/2019/07/2007-00549-Members-guide-Harassment-and-bullying-Version-22-10-2018.pdf>

## The survey respondents

The Prospect Workplace Behaviours survey was conducted online in 2018 and had nearly 7,000 responses – a substantial body of evidence. Of these 61% were female and 35% were male.

Overall the survey found that that 35% of women reported sexual harassment of various kinds. Over a quarter were subjected to suggestive remarks or jokes or were forced to endure unwanted comments about their appearance. 14% experienced unwanted and inappropriate touching, hugging or kissing.

There was a strong sample of members in archaeology: nearly 300 members responded - about half the branch at the time. The archaeology sector response was unusual among the wider survey sample, in that it was female dominated, and had a relatively even distribution across age groups – better representing younger workers. This fits with the most recent data we have about our sector, which comes from Profiling the Profession<sup>10</sup> and confirms that most archaeologists under the age of 40 are female and most of those over 40 are male. At the time of writing that report (2013) it was postulated that if that trend continued, there would be gender parity in archaeology by 2017-18 and that women would make up the majority of the archaeological workforce by 2022-23.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Aitchison and Rocks-Macqueen, 2013, 93-96 , Figure 20 and Table 73

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 97

## Identifying the Harassers

Overall rates of unwanted behaviours (bullying, harassment, discrimination) were significantly higher in the archaeology sector response (51%) than in other sectors. These higher rates appear to be driven by the demographics of the sector, with women experiencing more unwanted behaviours than men and younger workers experiencing more unwanted behaviours than their older colleagues.

It might be hoped that where women (or young people, or other demographics) are not in a clear workforce minority, they are less unfairly treated. However, Prospect's research shows that behaviour-related workplace power dynamics are less simple. For instance, we define male-dominated workplaces and occupations as those that are mostly male, those that are mostly *led* by men, and/or those that are historically or traditionally male. As generally the women and young people in the archaeology sector are concentrated into junior positions, they are unlikely to benefit from the protection from harassment and discrimination of a diverse and inclusive workplace culture. The power dynamic is self-evident.

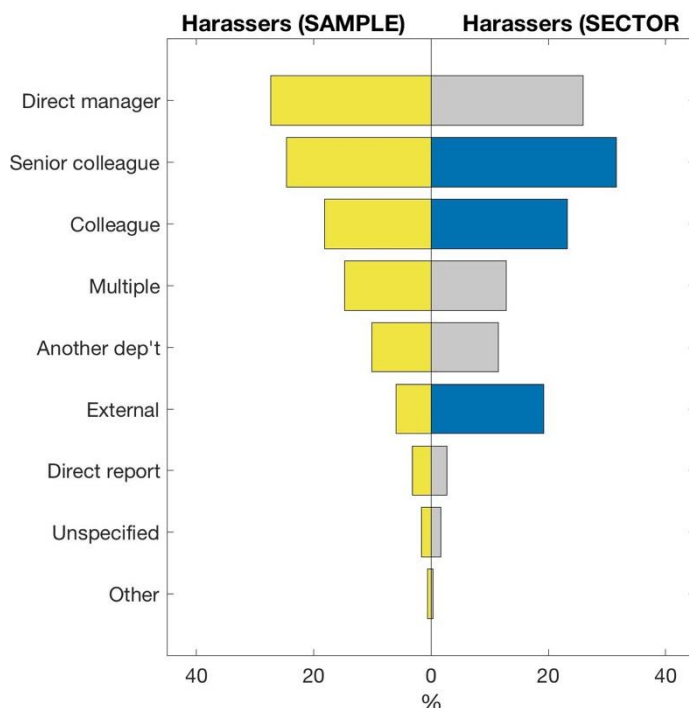


Figure 1 Percentages of harassers. All results on the left in yellow, archaeologists on the right in blue.

19% of respondents in the sector report have experienced unwanted behaviours from external/3rd party workers, such as contractors or clients: a much higher rate than in other sectors. However, 3<sup>rd</sup> party workers rank only fourth among sources of unwanted behaviours. The majority of bullying, harassment and discrimination in the sector is from within the victim's own organisation (see Figure 1). Our results suggest that the contribution of 3<sup>rd</sup> party workers to unwanted behaviours, while high, may be exaggerated. Employers, and managers, must not hide behind the idea that external workers are the whole source of the problem. Most of the unwanted behaviour comes from senior colleagues (25% of respondents), direct managers (23% of respondents), and other immediate colleagues (22% of respondents).

This high incidence, and the apparent tolerance, of unwanted behaviours from employees, feeds a culture which encourages misconduct from co-located 3<sup>rd</sup> party workers. Tolerance, or even just the appearance of tolerance, of any degree of bullying, harassment or discrimination clears a path for the perpetuation *and the escalation* of such behaviours. It is the responsibility, and within the power, of employers to set a standard of behaviour for their own staff that will help to set an expectation of the behaviour of other, co-located workers.

## Assessing our current procedures

Rates of satisfaction with workplace procedures are low: only 35% of women who reported unwanted behaviours were satisfied with the outcome of their report, and only 14% of men. Rates of reporting of bullying, harassment, discrimination, and especially sexual harassment are low across all sectors. Figure 2 shows how the sample size lessens through the process of reporting, with a far smaller number being satisfied with the outcome after having reported being harassed.

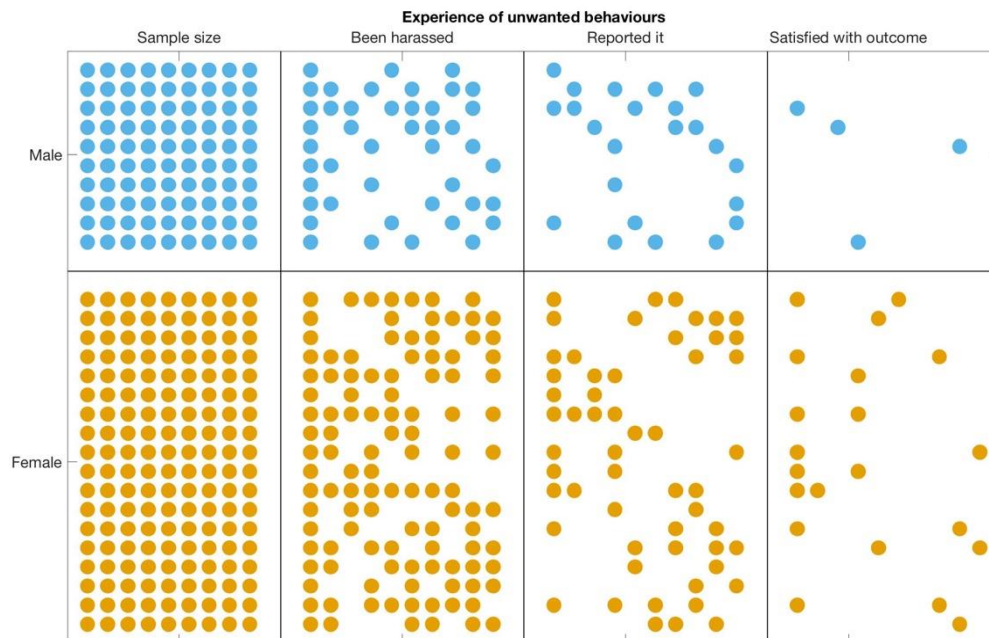


Figure 2 Experiences of unwanted behaviours.

## The danger of ignoring 'banter'

There is a common, persistent stereotype of sexual harassment as the unwanted sexual advance: the 'come-on'. Published research shows that the 'come-on' constitutes only a small fraction (8%) of workplace sexual harassment. If we only recognise as sexual harassment this narrow subset, we only see the tip of the iceberg. Most workplace sexual harassment (55%) is generalised sexism/sexist hostility, or the 'put-down'. There is a third, 'hybrid' type (31%), where the 'come-on' is used as a tool of the 'put-down', to belittle or demean.

Workers, especially female workers, in archaeology experience high incidence of 'background sexism' (see Figure 3– women's experiences on left hand side, orange; men's experiences right hand side, blue):

- Suggestive 'jokes' – 20% of workers, 30% of women
- Unwanted comments on appearance – 20% of workers, 27% of women
- Sexual comments – 18% of workers, 26% of women

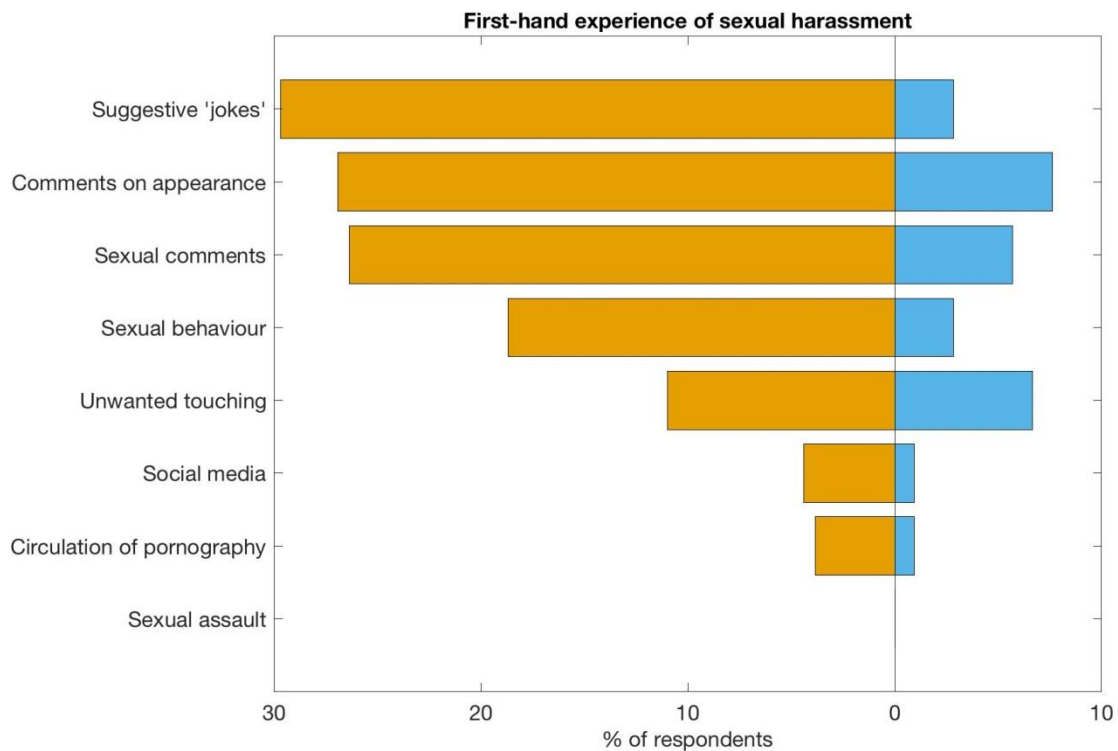


Figure 3 First-hand experiences of sexual harassment

The archaeology sector appears to experience significantly higher rates than other sectors of sexual behaviour, and men in the sector experience significantly more unwanted touching than men in other sectors.

These behaviours are damaging, particularly *because* of their ubiquity and apparent acceptance, and especially in male-dominated workplaces, where they serve to reinforce cultural stereotypes and established power imbalances.

## Young workers and the power imbalance

Young workers experience much higher rates of sexual harassment than their older colleagues. Respondents in the 'less than 30 years old' age group were ten times more likely (57%) to have experienced sexual harassment than respondents in the 'greater than 60 years old' age category (<6%) (see Figure 4).

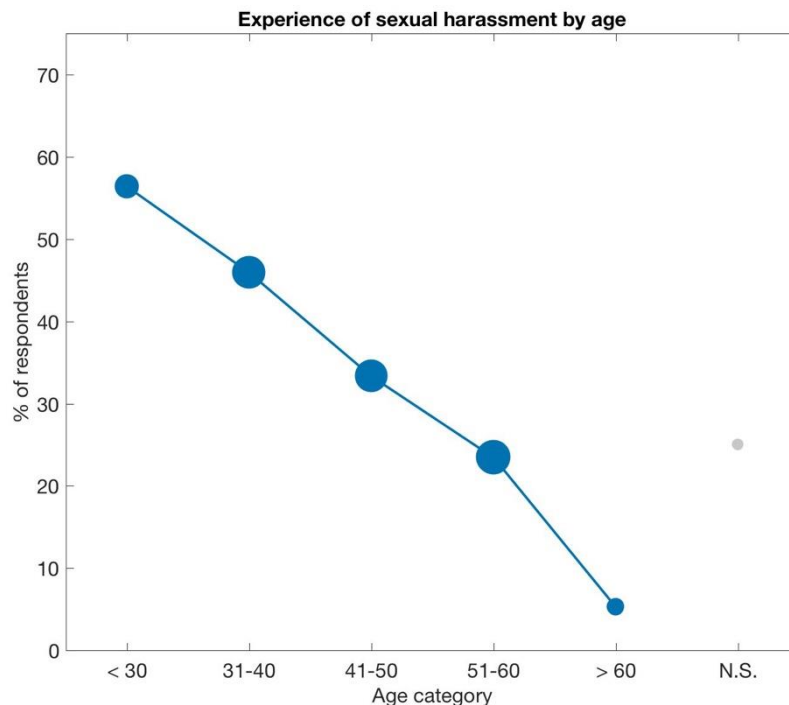


Figure 4 Experience of sexual harassment by age

Sexual harassment, along with other forms of discrimination, is an abuse, and a reinforcement of established power imbalances, which intersect strongly with age. Younger workers are more likely to be on precarious contracts, or in junior ranks of the workplace hierarchy. They are less likely to have strong social and professional networks in the workplace, and are less likely to be union members, or surrounded by a unionised peer group.

In diversifying workplaces, younger workers are more likely to belong to other workplace-minorities (eg: LGBT+, BAME). The effects of these implicit and intersectional power dynamics serve to impact upon the younger workers most severely, particularly as we continue to be a startlingly undiverse profession, with the Profiling the Profession Report recording 99% of practitioners as white, within a wider context of 12.7% of people of working age across the UK being of black or minority ethnicities.<sup>12</sup> Notably, the Digging Diversity report<sup>13</sup> suggests that the archaeological student body is far more ethnically diverse than the profession (which is largely constituted of graduates), indicating there are severe issues with structural discrimination that should be tackled before it can be reasonably expected that BAME students enter the profession. Furthermore, all the senior roles surveyed in Cobb's report were occupied by white people.<sup>14</sup> These statistics are now out-of-date, and we would welcome an update of this important sector survey.

<sup>12</sup> Aitchison and Rocks-Macqueen 2013, 98-99 and Tables 77 and 78

<sup>13</sup> Cobb 2015, 237 and Figure 10

<sup>14</sup> Cobb 2015, 238 and Figure 11



## Is our own house in order?

Archaeology has patterns of working that predispose the sector to problems with sexual harassment: a male-dominated hierarchy and field-working with colleagues in close physical proximity. The common practice of working away from home, often in isolated settings, will enhance these factors. However, sexual harassment does not escalate to physical, more aggressive forms of sexual harassment where there is no background of generalised sexism. As with health and safety, attention to minor hazards is doubly rewarded in the elimination of major hazards.

Sexual harassment is a spectrum of behaviours, ALL of which contribute to a culture of sexist discrimination. The failure of a workplace, or a sector, to address the most common types of sexual harassment - 'low-level', typically verbal behaviours – creates the perception of tolerance of sexism, and a path for escalation, increasing the likelihood of the most serious, most aggressive forms of sexual harassment.

It is clear from the survey that as an industry we are far from dealing with this effectively, and Prospect demands a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of sexist discrimination, including casual, 'everyday sexism'. This includes 3<sup>rd</sup> party workers who make a significant contribution to unwanted behaviours in archaeology. In this respect, we recommend treating workplace behaviours and culture as an analogy to workplace health and safety: where employers set the standards according to their legal responsibility protect staff, and whole workplaces raise the bar accordingly.

## Trust and the victim-led approach

Given the high rates of harassment recorded in the survey, Prospect recommend that employers (and union reps) should assume that unwanted behaviours are almost certainly happening in their workplaces. If employers are not hearing about it, their staff have a problem with trust: workers don't trust the employer to tell them about it; they don't trust the employer to deal with a report sensitively and appropriately; they don't trust the employer to make things better and not worse'.

We advocate a 'victim-led' approach to disclosures of bullying, harassment and discrimination: giving workers informal, even anonymous mechanisms to disclose unwanted behaviours, and get initial advice. We recommend that managers, HR professionals and union reps lay out a range of approaches, a range of sources of support, and empower the 'discloser' to choose whether or how to proceed: an informed, supported, and *free* choice. We strongly advise against pushing victims towards *any* course of action, including formal workplace procedures.

Every workplace has power structures: formal and informal. Some are appropriate and necessary to the type of work done – it is not our aim to eliminate those. However, they are important factors in workplace sexual harassment. Workplaces should understand and map their own workforce power dynamics, and then manage them as the risks that they are. Employers should reassess their formal power structures: taking particular care over bottlenecks of power (eg: single-point decision makers, managers of otherwise isolated staff), and hierarchies exaggerated beyond their useful purpose.



## Our recommendations

We understand that even progressive employers can find navigating the law and language around these issues difficult. There are nevertheless a few simple steps that can be taken to ensure improvement is meaningful and so we would ask them to consider these key points:

- **Strong leadership is crucial**

Workplace leaders, whether management or activists, must definitively commit to the challenge of tackling sexual harassment. It is essential that they know how that translates into practice. A strong statement of intent, followed by weak or inappropriate action, actively undermines trust in the workplace to deal with misconduct. Workplace leaders, from the chief executive down, must understand their role in supporting culture change, and have a plan in place to deal with disclosures of misconduct.

- **Create diverse, respectful workplace cultures**

Sexual harassment is not the responsibility of 'a few bad apples' - it is a cultural problem. The strongest protection against sexual harassment is a shift towards a respectful workplace culture, predicated on values of diversity and inclusion. Lasting culture change is often driven by the grassroots, whilst being supported from the top. Importantly, every worker must feel safe and supported to challenge behaviour that makes them, or their colleagues, uncomfortable.

- **Tackle the most common forms of sexual harassment**

The vast majority of sexual harassment in workplaces is 'low-level', verbal hostility: sexist jokes, unwanted comments on appearance. This background harassment is degrading and humiliating in its own right. It also paints a picture of permissiveness towards sexism, supporting progression to more aggressive, more severe types. A workplace that is serious about stopping sexual harassment must understand the full spectrum, and make clear that no form of sexism or discrimination will be tolerated.

- **Diffuse the power relationships**

Power relationships exist in all workplaces: hierarchies and decision-making structures; social networks; demographic imbalances. Some serve a useful purpose, but any may be subject to abuse. Workplaces should 'map' their organisational power dynamics, formal and informal, and manage the risks they present.

- **Support the targets of sexual harassment**

Most sexual harassment is unreported, because the victims don't trust their workplaces to deal with it appropriately, or in a way that protects them. We recommend a system for dealing with disclosures of sexual harassment that gives autonomy back to the victim: laying out a range of possible actions, and alternative sources of support, for them to choose how to proceed, if they choose to proceed at all. Where the targets of sexual harassment feel safe to disclose it, the workplace has the best chance of tackling the problem.

## Our commitment

As a trade union if we are truly honest about the challenges we face to eradicate sexual harassment and bullying from workplaces we need to acknowledge there are areas we also need to improve upon and are committed to the following strategic aims going forward:

- Requesting facility (paid) time for Equality reps in recognised workplaces. Health and Safety reps are a statutory position and protected, we feel that Equality reps should be treated in the same way.
- Providing Equality training for all Archaeologists Branch Officers and reps.
- Requiring employers across our sector to monitor inclusion in their workplaces, during recruitment and among their community project participants.
- Auditing our sector's policies and procedures, including reporting and complaint procedures, to ensure inclusive approaches and practice.
- An update of the important sector-wide Profiling the Profession survey, to enable monitoring and assessment of how we are moving forwards (or not) as a sector.
- Requiring our employers to commit to annual reporting of the Gender Pay Gap for all levels of staff.
- The recording of harassment and bullying reports to be part of the audit carried out at registered organisations by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists.

## Conclusions

This article has not strayed into discussions of practice and how these inequalities must surely inform our excavation and recording strategies but there are clear progressions into the suggested white cis-male dominance of publication and therefore also publicly visible interpretation.

Finally, sexual harassment is a union issue and we have made stamping it out one of our core missions. As archaeologists we are used to working in teams and often this can be a positive experience. It is the negative ones we want to eradicate. When workers join together in a union they can overcome the power imbalances that exist and help create workplaces where they can develop their skills, form healthy relationships and engage fully in the wholly transformative (and enjoyable) profession of archaeology.

## References

Aitchison, Kenneth and Rocks-Macqueen, Doug, 2013, Archaeological Labour Market Intelligence: Profiling the Profession 2012-13, Landward Research Ltd

Cobb, Hannah, 2015, A diverse profession? Challenging inequalities and diversifying involvement in British archaeology, In Everill, Paul and Irving, Pamela, 2015 (eds) Rescue Archaeology: Foundations for the Future, 266-245

## Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank all the Prospect members who contributed to the survey and the Archaeologists Branch members in particular. We may have felt marginalised in our work in the past, but momentum is growing in our branch and we feel we can all make a real change to our workplaces together.

We have had particular support from Prospect Organiser Louise Staniforth, Negotiator Andy Bye and Senior Deputy General Secretary Sue Ferns.

There are several vital campaigns across our sector working to stamp out sexual harassment, bullying and discrimination, and we would like to acknowledge the important contributions of the ClfA Equality and Diversity Special Interest Group, British Women Archaeologists, the BAJR Respect team, the Mentoring Women in Archaeology and Heritage team, the Trowelblazers, the women behind the Seeing Red initiative, and of course our own reps who are all volunteers.

This article is dedicated to all of the activists working to create respectful and inclusive workplaces.