

WISE GIVING™

GUIDE

BBB WISE GIVING ALLIANCE : FALL 2020

Sexual Harassment & Donor Trust





A Publication of the
BBB Wise Giving Alliance

The *Wise Giving Guide* is published three times a year to help donors make more informed giving decisions. This guide includes a compilation of the latest evaluation conclusions completed by the BBB Wise Giving Alliance.

If you would like to see a particular topic discussed in this guide, please email suggestions to

guide@give.org

or write to us at the address below.

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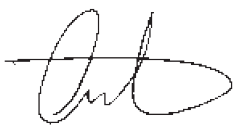
In the past few years, sexual harassment problems across society have become increasingly visible across society.

Unfortunately, charities are not immune to allegations of sexual harassment, and we have heard news of sexual harassment against fundraising staff, against subordinates within a charity, and even affecting communities served by a charity. In fact, mission-driven organizations may face more pronounced power dynamics than other organizations, suggesting that preparing to identify and respond to sexual misconduct is especially important in the charitable sector.

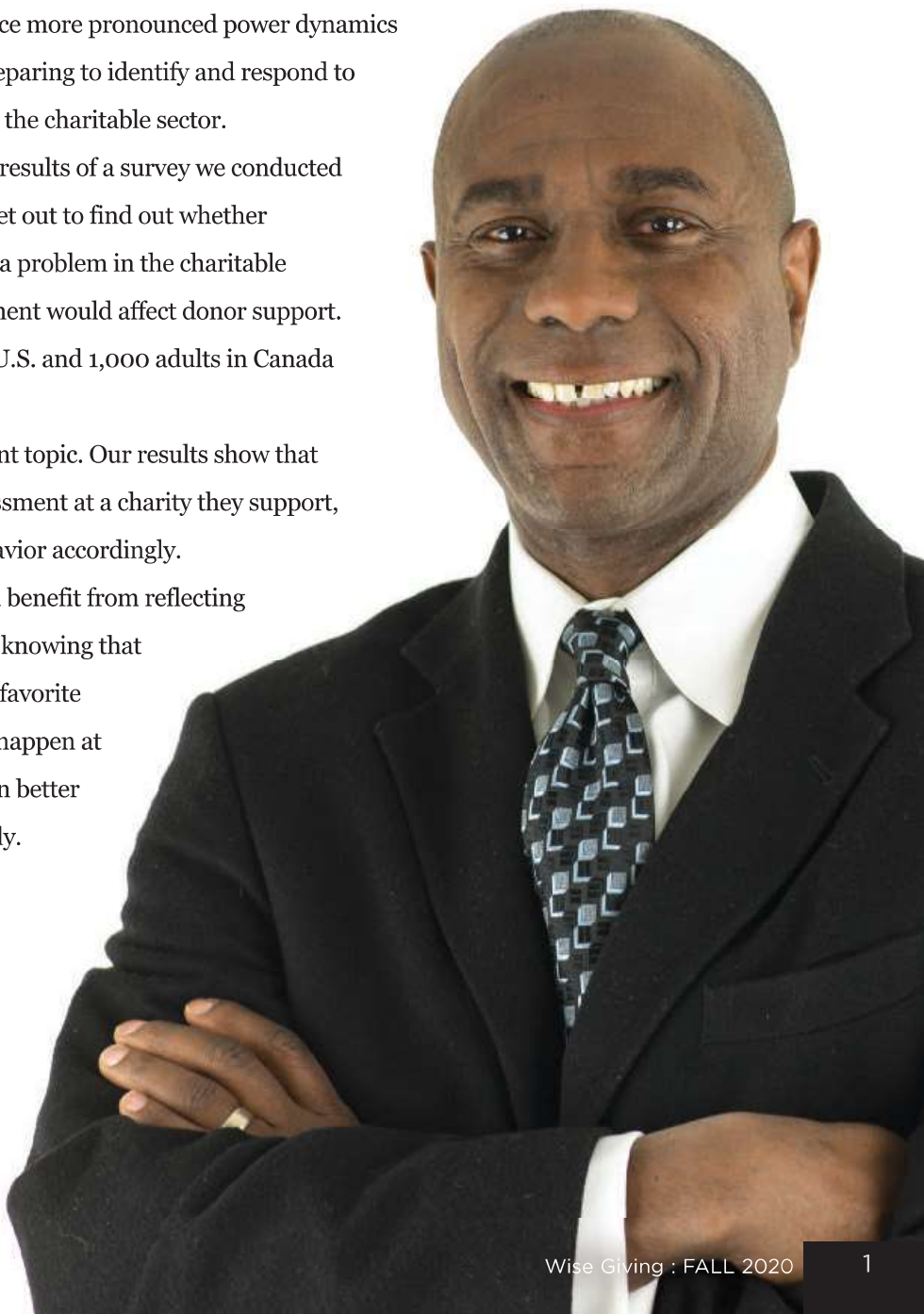
The cover story in this *Guide* shares the results of a survey we conducted on sexual harassment and donor trust. We set out to find out whether potential donors think sexual harassment is a problem in the charitable sector and how allegations of sexual harassment would affect donor support. We surveyed more than 2,100 adults in the U.S. and 1,000 adults in Canada to learn about their views.

We know this is a sensitive and important topic. Our results show that when people hear allegations of sexual harassment at a charity they support, many donors care and alter their giving behavior accordingly.

We share these results in hopes that you benefit from reflecting on the issue. If you would not trust a charity knowing that sexual harassment goes unchecked, let your favorite charity know. While sexual harassment can happen at any organization, well-governed charities can better prepare to identify and respond appropriately.



H. Art Taylor, *President & CEO*



Sexual Harassment & Donor Trust



Sexual harassment stories have made headlines over the past few years, shedding light on both incidents from the past and ones happening across society now. With nonprofits accounting for more than 10% of private sector employment in the United States¹, it is not surprising to see allegations of sexual harassment emerge from within the sector.

In fact,

several charities have been engulfed in sexual harassment scandals over the past few years. During 2017, news spread in Europe that Oxfam International (not to be confused with Oxfam America) staff allegedly used prostitutes while working on Haiti's 2010 earthquake relief effort. Later, other Oxfam International employees claimed they were harassed by senior charity officials.² Another global relief organization, Save the Children in the United Kingdom, similarly faced accusations of sexual abuse and misconduct by senior staff.³ These stories ignited a conversation about harassment in aid organizations more broadly, and donors in the United Kingdom took note. On February 20, 2018, a headline in The Guardian read: "Oxfam loses 7,000 donors since sexual exploitation scandal."⁴ Later that year, the House of Commons in the United Kingdom published a report stating that "[t]he aid sector, collectively, has been aware of sexual exploitation and abuse by its own personnel for years, but the attention that it has given to the problem [has] not matched the challenge." The report called for an active response to sexual exploitation in aid organizations and recommended action based on empowerment, reporting, accountability, and screening.⁵

Soon after, news channels in the United States began reporting instances of sexual harassment or misconduct at well-regarded U.S. charities, including the Boy Scouts of America⁶, the Humane Society of the United States⁷, Mercy Corps⁸, and The Nature Conservancy⁹.

It is worth noting that, since these allegations became public, many of the cited charities have conducted investigations and implemented corrective measures to address the concerns raised.

To maintain public trust and protect their mission work, charities must be prepared to appropriately address sexual harassment claims and concerns from employees, board members, communities they serve, and donors alike.

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With growing awareness of sexual harassment, a rise in victim willingness to speak is to be expected across sectors. Adding to that, the power dynamics of the charitable sector may be particularly corrosive. As described by *The Guardian*, “Rife with power, gender, race and class imbalances, the aid sector has long been a hotbed of abuse and misconduct.”¹⁰ According to a professional harassment survey by AFP (Association of Fundraising Professionals) and *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, “almost half of all fundraisers have some sort of personal experience with sexual harassment... and 13 percent feel that their organization places a greater value on the loyalty of donors than the safety of its staff.”¹¹

To maintain public trust and protect their mission work, charities must be prepared to appropriately address sexual harassment claims and concerns from employees, board members, communities they serve, and donors alike. As noted by *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* in a recent article about next steps for nonprofits, “to move forward, nonprofits must realize that sexual harassment is not about a handful of people acting badly but a pervasive problem in our workplaces, boards, and donor pools.”

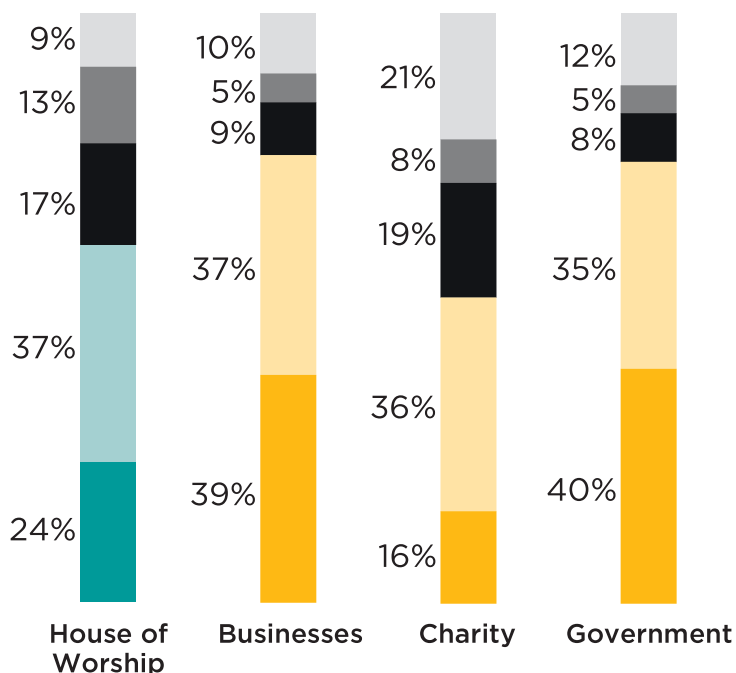
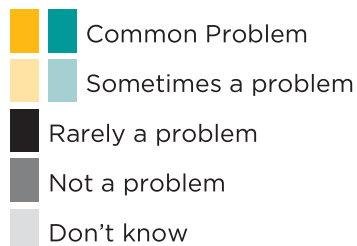
Our *Give.org Donor Trust Special Report: Sexual Harassment and the Charitable Sector* aims to shed light on how allegations of sexual harassment can strain the relationship between donors and charities in the United States and Canada. BBB Wise Giving Alliance commissioned an electronic survey of more than 2,100 adults across the United States, and more than 1,000 adults in Canada. Below are our key findings:

Do potential donors believe sexual harassment is a problem in charities?

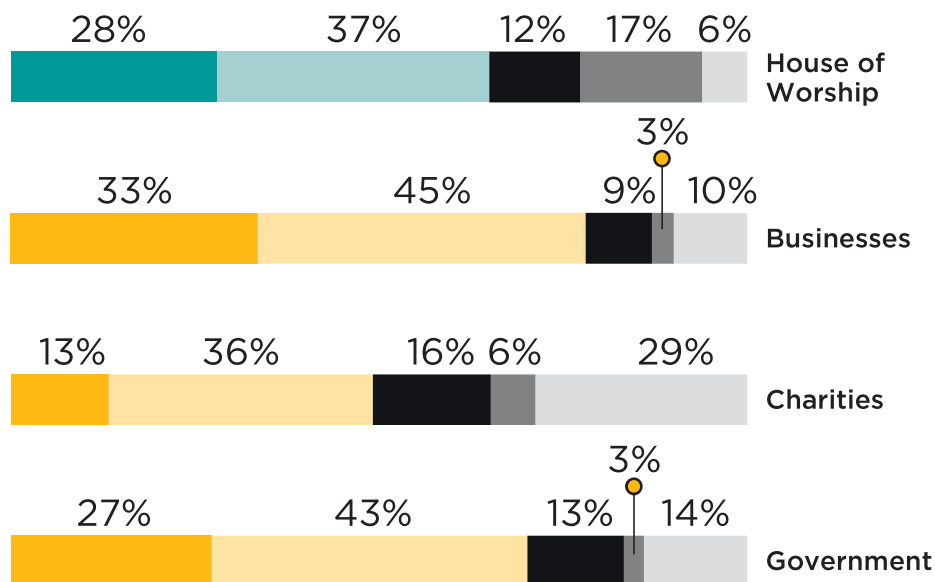
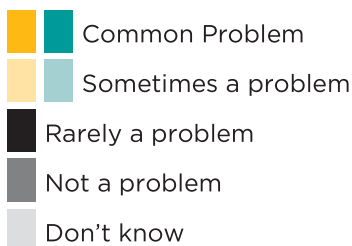
- When comparing different workplaces, relatively few respondents believe sexual harassment is a common problem for charities (15.8% in U.S./13.1% in Canada), as compared to houses of worship (24.2% in U.S./28.1% in Canada), businesses (39.3% in U.S./33.2% in Canada), or government (40.5% in U.S./26.5% in Canada). Notably, more respondents say they do not know whether sexual harassment is a problem for charities (20.8% in U.S./28.8% in Canada) as compared to other sectors (with 6.4% to 13.7% for other sectors in U.S. and Canada).
- Still, close to 50% of U.S. and Canadian respondents say they believe sexual harassment is a common problem, or sometimes a problem, in charity workplaces.
- Relatively few respondents heard about sexual harassment involving a charity during 2019 (22.7% in U.S./18.8% in Canada). Participants who report being employed by a charity themselves were much more likely to say that they heard about sexual harassment at a charity (52.0% in U.S./44.3% in Canada).

Close to 50% of U.S. and Canadian respondents say they believe sexual harassment is a common problem, or sometimes a problem, in charity workplaces.

When comparing different workplaces, relatively few U.S. respondents believe sexual harassment is a common problem in charity workplaces, but many say they do not know whether it is or not.



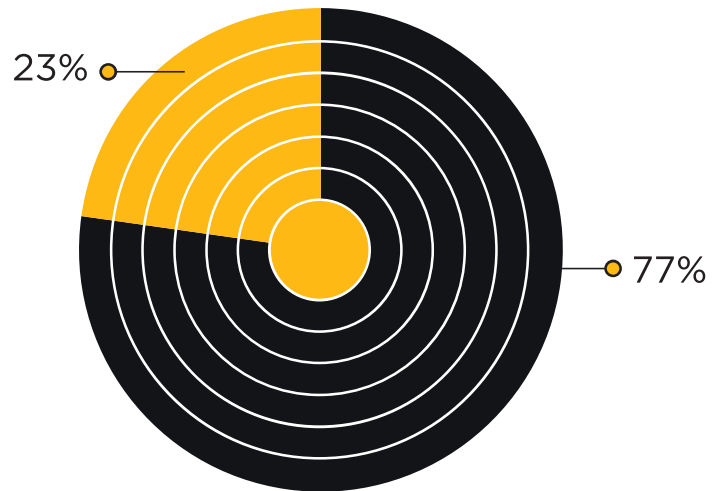
As with U.S. participants, when comparing different workplaces, relatively few Canadians believe sexual harassment is a common problem in charities, but many say they don't know.



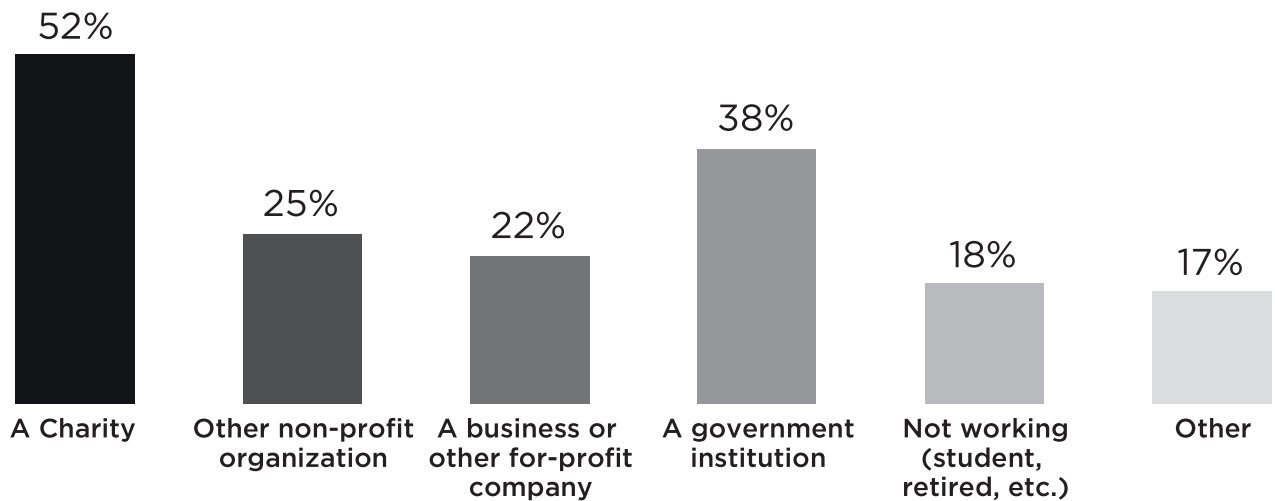
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Less than a quarter of U.S. respondents heard about sexual harassment at a charity during 2019.

Yes
 No

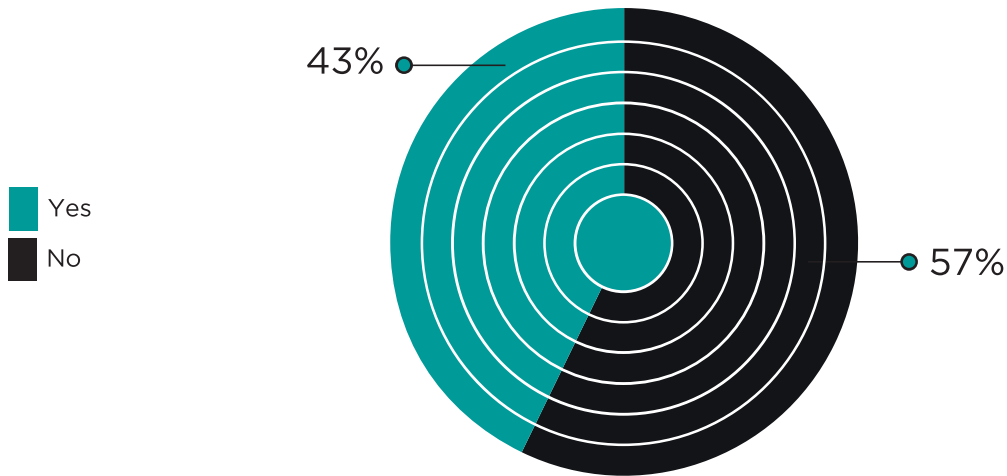


U.S. participants who report being employed by a charity were much more likely to say that they heard about sexual harassment at a charity.

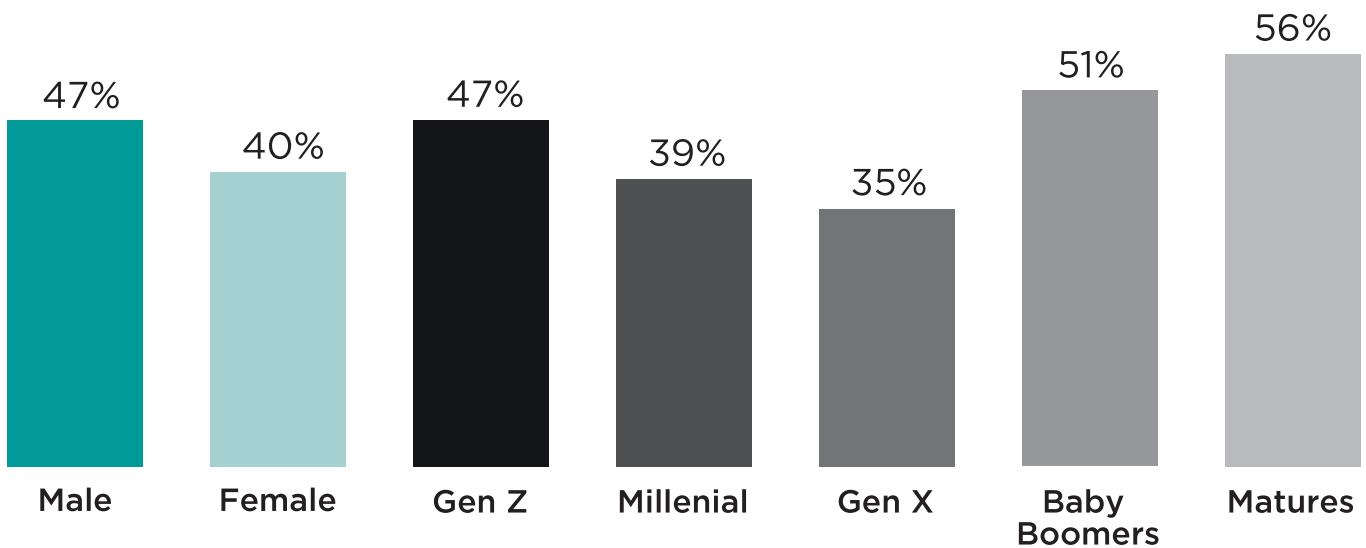


- Participants more frequently heard about sexual harassment at a house of worship (42.8% in U.S./41.7% in Canada). Older participants were more likely to report hearing about sexual harassment at a house of worship, with more than 50% of Matures and Baby Boomers aware of such news reports in the United States and Canada.

43% of U.S. participants report hearing about sexual harassment at a house of worship.



Men, Matures, and Baby Boomers were more likely to report hearing about sexual harassment at a house of worship.



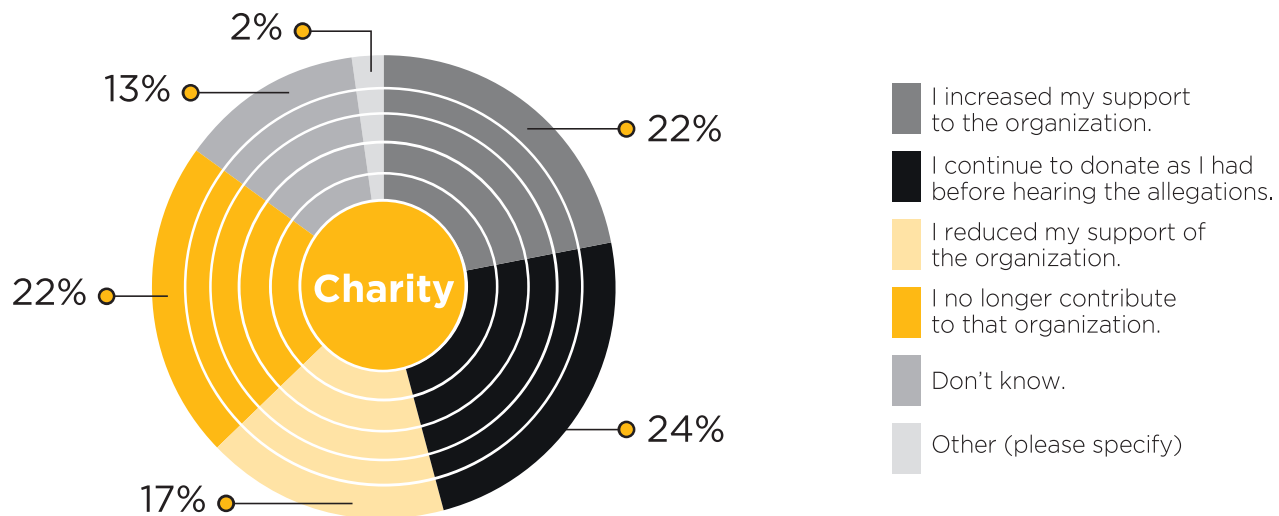
- Religious, arts and culture, and environmental donors were most likely to report hearing about sexual harassment allegations. Specifically, 45.0% of religious donors report hearing about sexual harassment at a house of worship. Similarly, 36.1% of arts and culture donors, and 36.1% of environmental donors, report hearing about sexual harassment at a charity.

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How does sexual harassment affect donor trust and giving in charities and houses of worship?

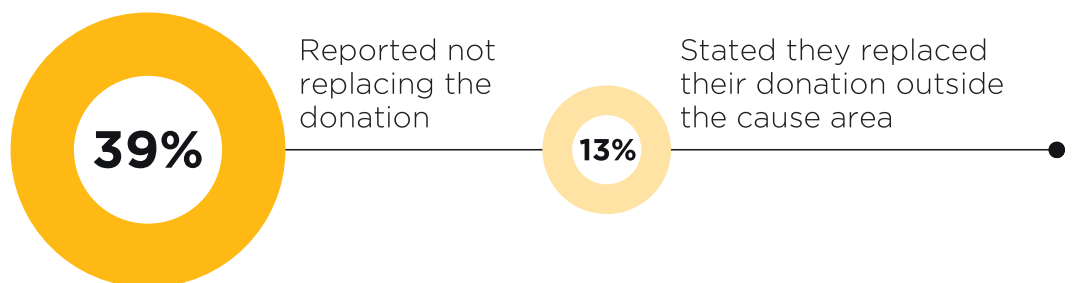
- Among donors who heard about sexual harassment at a specific charity (excluding houses of worship), 22.3% in the United States (29.5% in Canada) report no longer contributing to that organization; and 17.1% in the United States (16.3% in Canada) report reducing their support.

Donors who heard about sexual harassment allegations say:

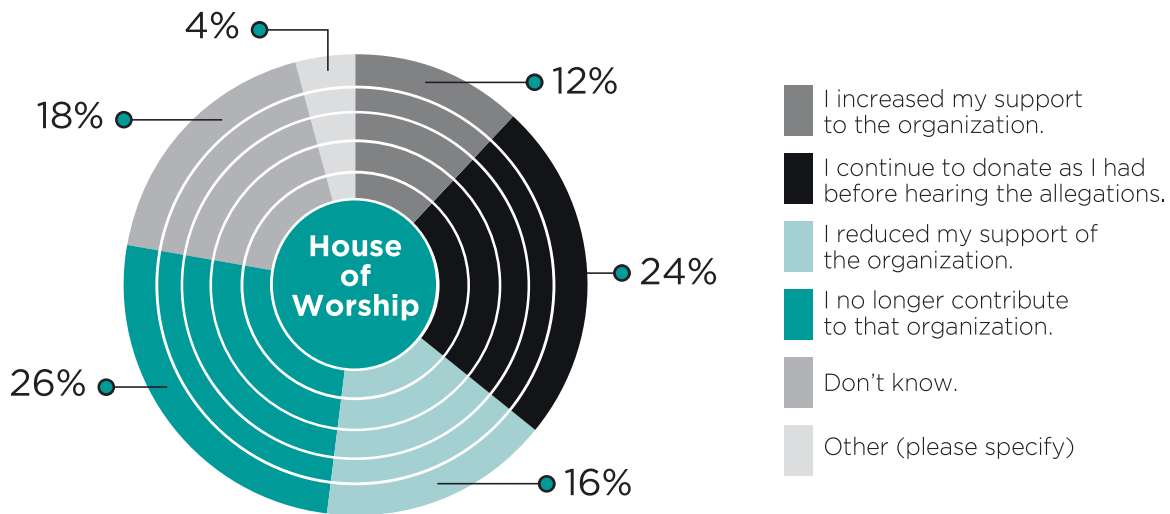


- Of those who reduced or stopped supporting a specific charity, 47.8% of U.S. donors (42.1% in Canada) reported replacing their donation with a donation to another charity in the same cause area; 13.3% in the United States (21.1% in Canada) reported replacing the donation outside the cause area; and 38.9% in the United States (36.8% in Canada) reported not replacing the donation.

And among donors who reduced or stopped support:



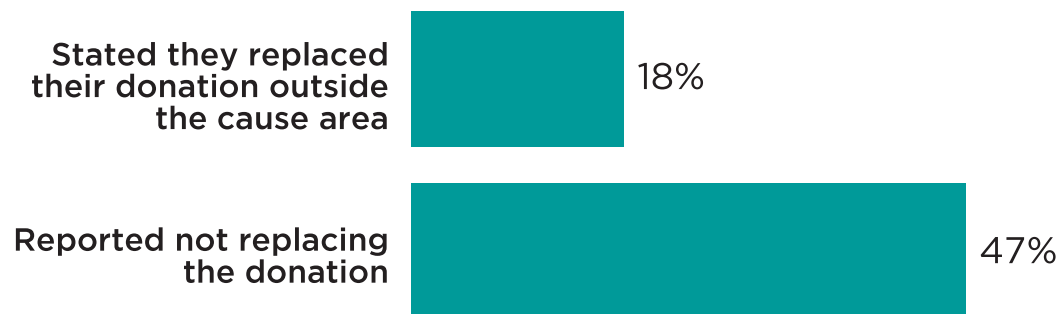
U.S. donors who learned about sexual harassment at a specific house of worship said:



- Among donors who learned about sexual harassment at a specific house of worship, 26.2% in the United States (30.4% in Canada) report no longer contributing to that organization; and 16.1% in the United States (14.0% in Canada) report reducing their support.
- Of those who reduced or stopped supporting a specific house of worship, 35.3% of U.S. donors (30.8% in Canada) reported replacing their donation with a donation to another charity in the same cause area; 18% in the United States (21.5% in Canada) reported replacing the donation outside the cause area; and 46.7% in the United States (47.7% in Canada) reported not replacing the donation.

Among donors who heard about sexual harassment at a specific charity (excluding houses of worship), 22.3% in the United States (29.5% in Canada) report no longer contributing to that organization.

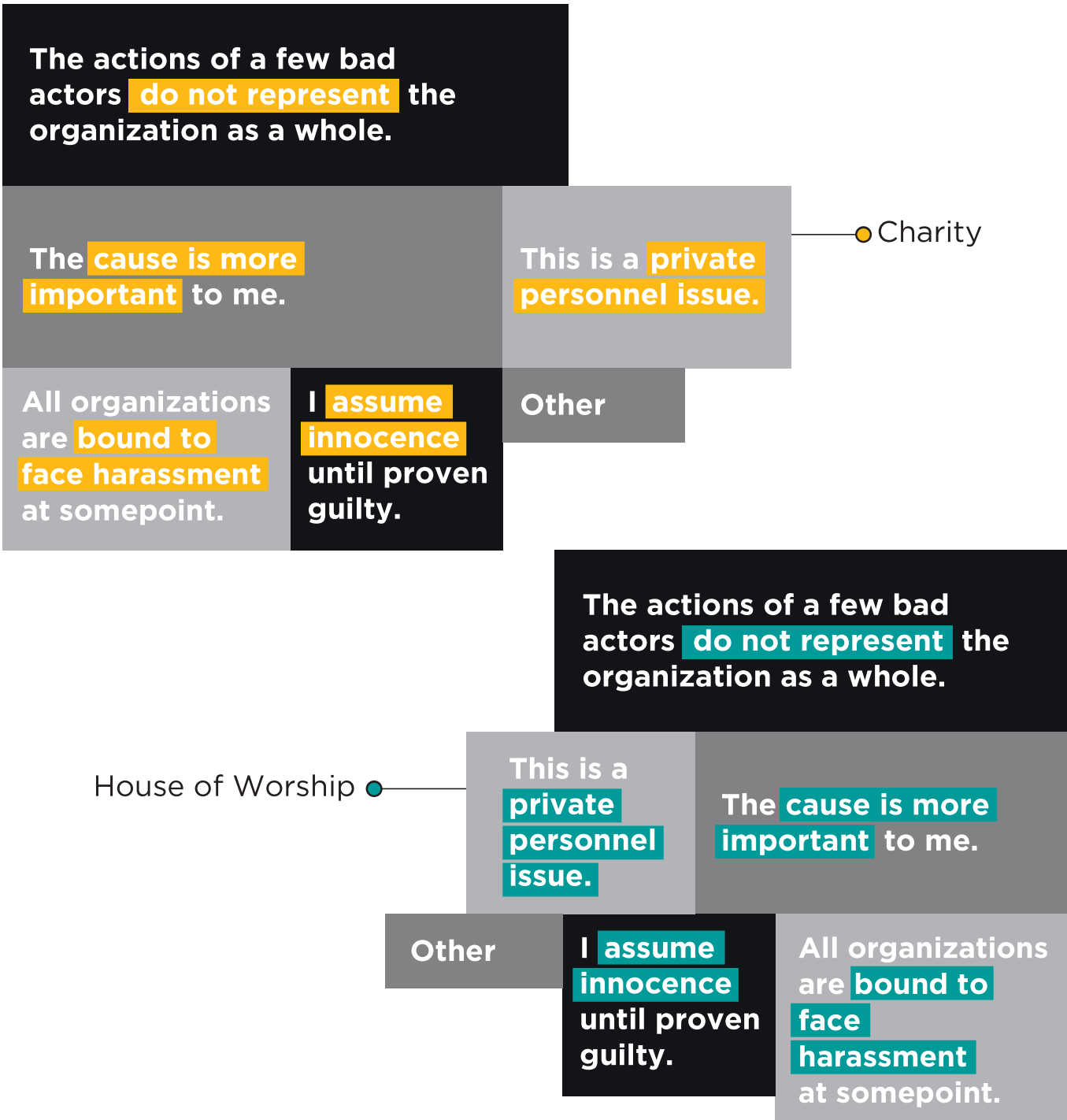
And among donors who reduced or stopped support:



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- Donors who increased or maintained support for a specific charity or house of worship after learning about sexual harassment allegations most frequently chose “the actions of a few bad actors do not represent the organization as a whole” and/or “the cause is more important” as reasons to continue giving.

Donors who increased or maintained support for a specific charity or house of worship after learning about sexual harassment allegations expressed:



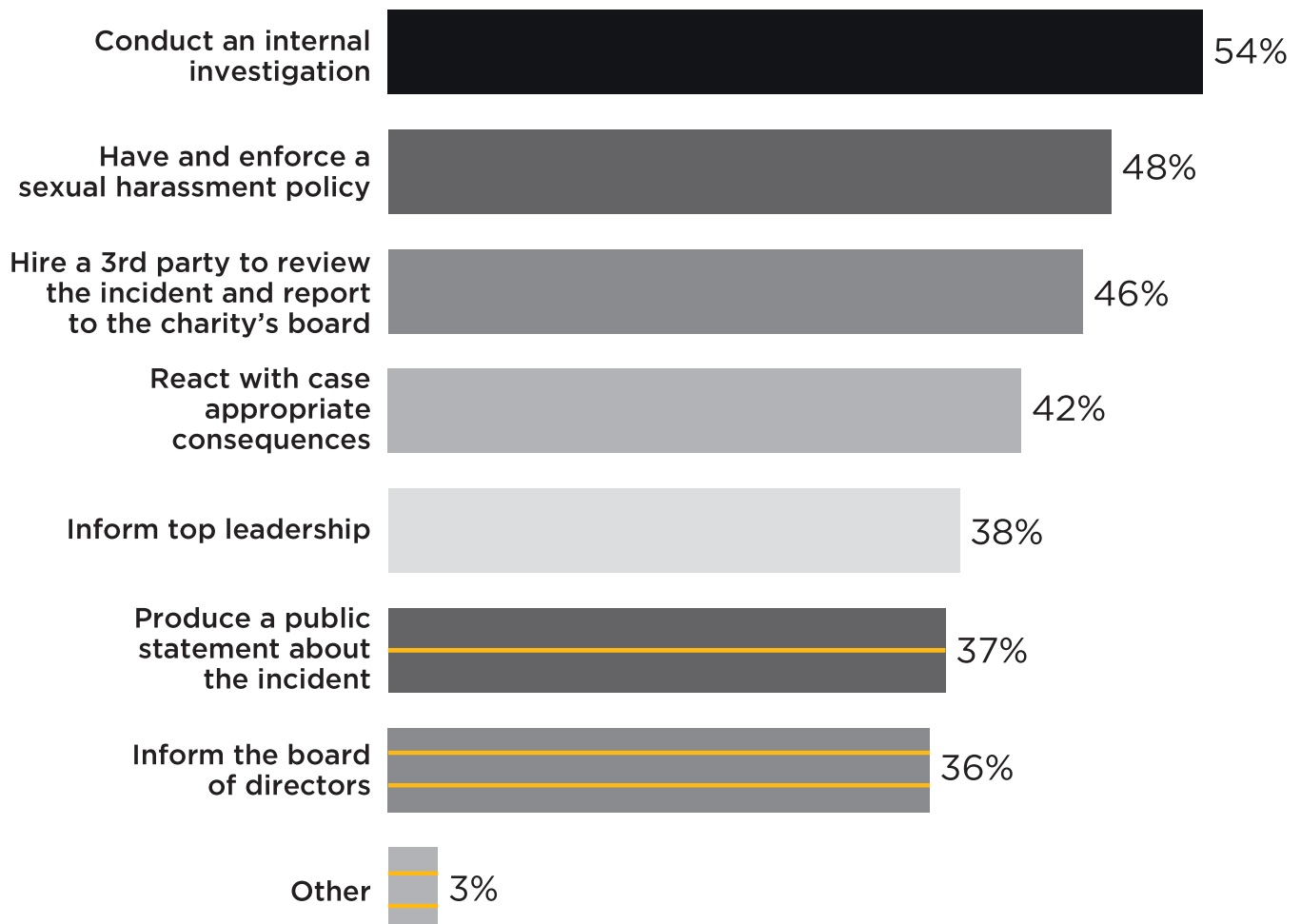
- When asked to consider how seven different sexual harassment allegation scenarios might influence a donor's willingness to donate, respondents frequently say they will not donate to a charity or house of worship upon learning of the allegations (between 44% and 61% say they would not donate, depending on the scenario). Approximately 10% of respondents consistently say they would likely continue to support across all allegation types.

Positively for charities, many donors are willing to resume support for the charity or house of worship after proper corrective actions are taken.

How do donors expect charities to prepare and react to sexual harassment allegations?

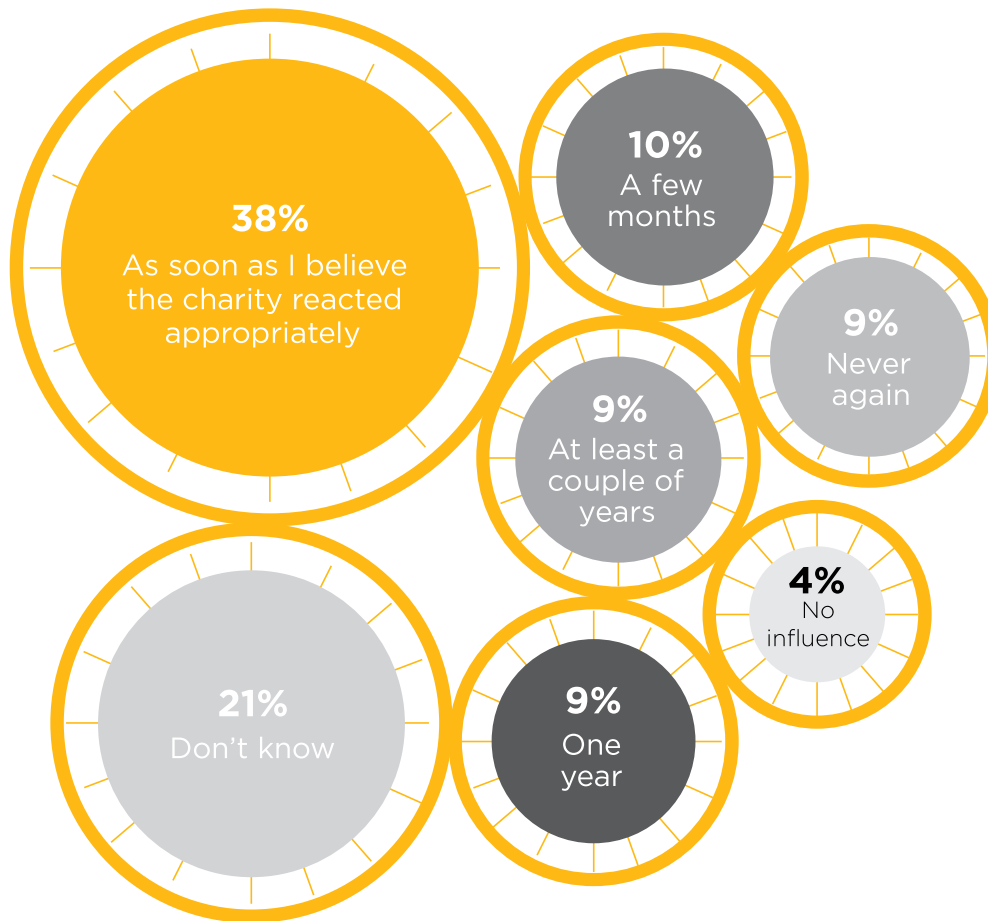
- Roughly half of participants would expect a charity facing sexual harassment allegations to (a) conduct an internal investigation (53.7% in U.S./58.6% in Canada), (b) have and enforce a sexual harassment policy (48.2% in U.S./52.4% in Canada), and (c) hire a third party (such as a lawyer) to review the incident and report to the charity's board (46.0% in U.S./50.4% in Canada).

When asked to imagine that a charity they personally support is facing sexual harassment allegations, U.S. respondents say they expect the charity to:



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When asked to imagine that the charity takes action to address the sexual harassment problem, participants say they would consider resuming their normal level of support:



- Positively for charities, many donors are willing to resume support for the charity or house of worship after proper corrective actions are taken. When asked to imagine that the charity takes actions to address the sexual harassment problem, 38.1% of U.S. and 35.1% of Canadian participants say they would resume normal level of support as soon as they believe the charity reacted appropriately. Only 8.7% of U.S. and 11.7% of Canadian respondents claim they would never again resume normal support.

As mission-driven organizations, charities have a special place in the hearts and minds of the public. At the same time, charities can be held to higher ethical standards. If a charity leader is accused of harassing an employee, if a charity's culture allows for mistreatment of staff by donors, or if charity representatives sexually harass people they serve, the trust between the charity and its donors can be fractured.

Our results suggest that charities would do well to pay close attention to their organizational culture and to proactively prepare to identify and respond to sexual misconduct within their organizations. While sexual harassment may occur at any organization, each organization's governance ultimately impacts the organization's cultural expectations and how the charity prepares, reacts, and communicates around the issue.

Fortunately for charities and for the sector, when asked to imagine that a charity takes actions to address a sexual harassment problem, more than one-third of U.S. and Canadian participants say they would resume a normal level of support as soon as they believe the charity reacted appropriately. With growing awareness of sexual harassment, other victims are likely to come forward over time. As an issue of good governance, charities must strengthen their cultures, be prepared to react in a timely and appropriate fashion, and openly communicate with their donors about the issues and any implemented solutions.

For a full version of the report, please visit [Give.org/donortrust](https://www.give.org/donortrust). ■

Notes

1. According to the U.S. Department of Labor: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, The Economics Daily, nonprofits account for 12.3 million jobs, 10.2% of private sector employment. Available at <https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2018/nonprofits-accountfor-12-3-million-jobs-10-2-percent-of-private-sector-employment-in-2016.htm>. According to the John Hopkins Nonprofit Economic Data Project's 2019 Nonprofit Employment Report, with 12.3 million paid workers, U.S. nonprofits employed the third-largest workforce of any U.S. industry in 2016, including twice as many workers as the nation's transportation, wholesale trade, and finance and insurance industries.
2. For a statement from Oxfam International on response actions, please see: <https://www.oxfam.org/en/immediate-response-actionssexual-misconduct>.
3. On October 8, 2018, BBC News reported that "Almost one in five staff at Save the Children UK has said they experienced harassment or discrimination in the past three years." (Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-45788872>) As of March 5, 2020, BBC News reports the organization has not properly handled the allegations. (Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-51749168>)
4. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/feb/20/oxfam-boss-mark-goldring-apologises-over-abuse-of-haiti-quake-victims>
5. Report by the United Kingdom's House of Commons International Development Committee. Available at <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/international-development-committee/inquiries/parliament-2017/sexual-exploitation-in-aid-sector/>.
6. As reported by *USA Today* on February 18, 2020, after more than a half-century of child abuse claims, Boy Scouts of America filed for bankruptcy protection "amid declining membership and a drumbeat of child sexual abuse allegations." (Available at: <https://www.usatoday.com/in-depth/news/investigations/2020/02/18/boy-scouts-bsa-chapter-11-bankruptcy-sexual-abuse-cases/1301187001/>)
7. On February 1, 2018, *The Washington Post* reported that employees of the Humane Society of the United States alleged that they were sexually harassed by the organization's former chief executive. (Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/humane-society-keeps-ceo-after-sexual-harassment-complaints-prompting-seven-board-members-to-resign/2018/02/01/781e9f9c-0769-11e8-b48c-b07fea957bd5_story.html) The Humane Society of the United States then embarked on a corrective path: choosing new leadership, encouraging internal dialog, and strengthening due process within the organization.
8. The October 9, 2019, edition of *Newsweek* reported that "the late co-founder of the Portland-based, global nonprofit organization, Mercy Corps, allegedly abused his daughter from preschool until high school." (Available at: <https://www.newsweek.com/global-humanitarian-organization-mercy-corps-overlooked-child-sex-abuse-allegations-against-1464290> and reported by NPR at <https://www.npr.org/2019/10/18/771219833/mercy-corps-faces-sexual-abuse-scandal>) As reported in *Newsweek*, Mercy Corps leaders allowed the late co-founder to continue working at the organization for more than a decade, despite knowing of his daughter's allegations. "Abuse revelations the third time around led to the resignation of a longtime board member and prompted Mercy Corps' CEO to send a message to donors and employees worldwide." (Available at: <https://www.newsweek.com/global-humanitarian-organization-mercy-corps-overlooked-child-sex-abuse-allegations-against-1464290>)
9. On May 29, 2019, Politico reported that two senior officials at "The Nature Conservancy, one of the world's most influential environmental groups, have exited the organization after an investigation into allegations of sexual harassment and workplace misconduct." (Available at: <https://www.politico.com/story/2019/05/29/the-nature-conservancy-harassment-probe-1488630>)
10. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/oct/14/aid-sector-forced-into-greater-transparency-by-metoo-movement>.
11. Available at: <https://afpglobal.org/one-quarter-all-female-fundraisers-report-sexual-harassment>.

Our results suggest that charities would do well to pay close attention to their organizational culture and to proactively prepare to identify and respond to sexual misconduct within their organizations.