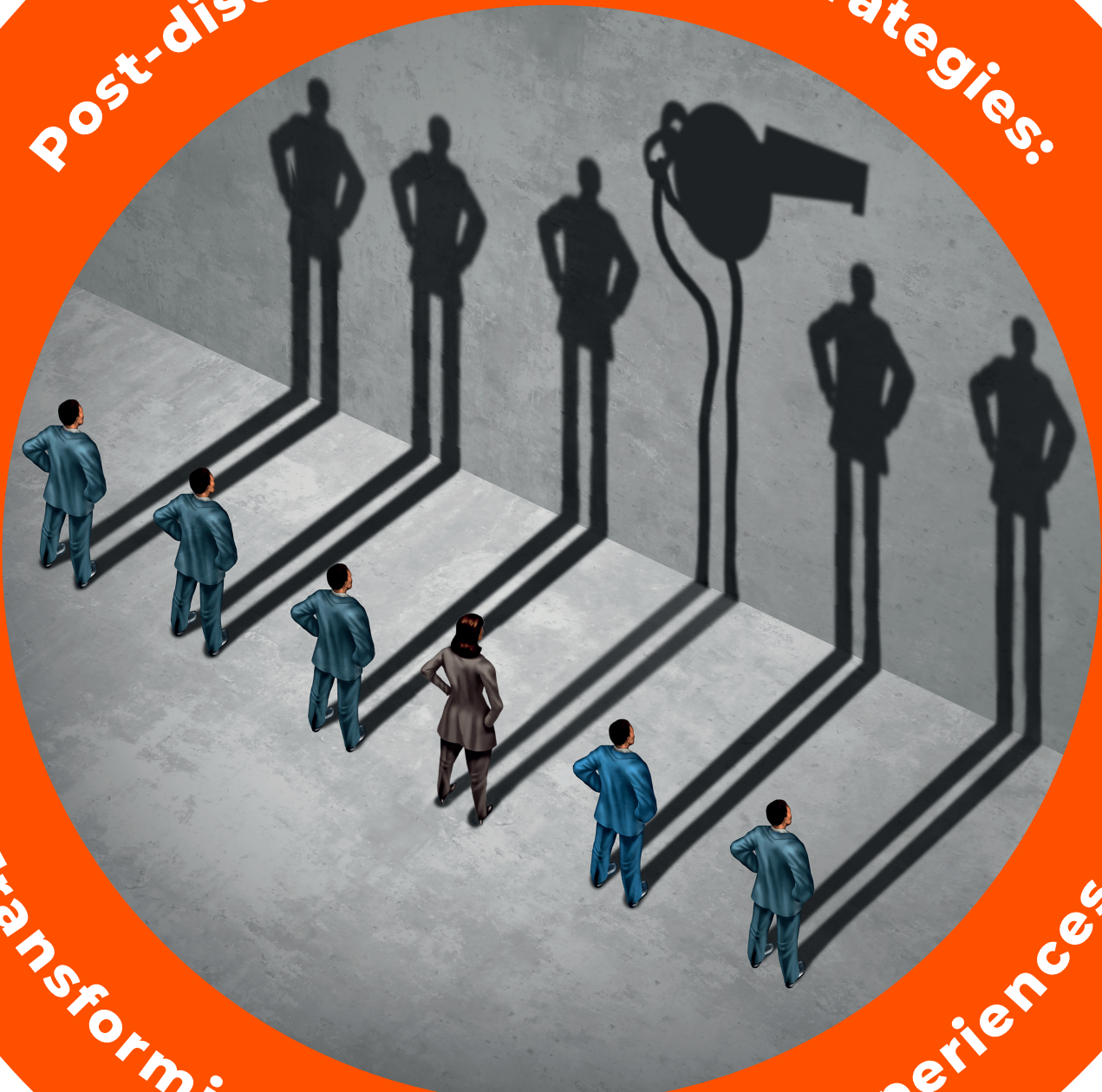


Post-disclosure Survival Strategies:



Transforming Whistleblower Experiences



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The Team

Since 2010, we have been researching various aspects of whistleblowers' experiences, along with how organizations can best encourage effective speaking up. Our research outputs, which include videos, podcasts, reports, newspaper articles and academic papers, can be found at <http://www.whistleblowingimpact.org>

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***Effective
support for
whistleblowers
is urgently
required.***

Before it can be achieved, research is needed to help understand the role whistleblowers play in society, how they serve the public interest and the real costs they incur in exposing various forms of corruption and wrongdoing.

We hope that our analysis of qualitative and quantitative evidence gathered from whistleblowers across a variety of sectors and countries will contribute towards developing better ways of protecting this group for the benefit of all.

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Executive Summary

The public debate on whistleblowing needs to be changed. There is a persistent contradiction in how whistleblowers are perceived. On the one hand, whistleblowing is a vital way in which corruption comes to light. Yet, society does little to support the real-life struggles of the many whistleblowers who find themselves without a source of income and with little prospect of sourcing further work in their chosen career. If this situation does not change, fewer and fewer whistleblowers might come forward.

For this project, we gathered empirical evidence in order to reappraise how organizations and society see and value whistleblowers, and how society might better support them. We present data from an eighteen-month study carried out between 2016 and 2018 that involved interviews with fifty-eight whistleblowers and seventeen experts, along with quantitative data from a survey of ninety-two whistleblowers.

The current project represents a novel attempt to address this issue. It is unique because, to our knowledge, no other research has attempted to measure and quantify the costs for people who leave their current role as a result of speaking out. Respondents were gathered from a variety of sectors (including public, private and non-profit) and countries.

Findings from the investigation show that whistleblowers can incur significant tangible and intangible costs after disclosing wrongdoing. For those who leave their role, these include:

- ✓ Significant costs to the individual for disclosing information, totaling an average of £216,987 (\$284,585) per person, with a yearly average of £24,817 (\$32,580);⁸
- ✓ For those reporting a reduction in income, the total cost rises to £483,654 (\$634,936) since disclosure, with a yearly average loss of £58,114 (\$76,291);
- ✓ A reduction in income from employment for 67 percent of those providing details (representing 65.2 percent of all survey respondents);
- ✓ Struggles to meet living costs;
- ✓ Significant time spent working on one's disclosure, with 40 percent of respondents spending over 1,000 hours;

- ✓ Intangible costs, including impacts on physical health and mental well-being, which can be alleviated by engaging in meaningful work post-disclosure;
- ✓ A lack of effective sources of support, including for: legal issues, media communications, assisting with disclosures, coping with negative impacts, and assistance for family members. Adequately resourced support organizations are scarce.

These findings suggest that changes are needed to ensure whistleblowers' survival post-disclosure. Existing supports available from society must be enhanced. Our recommendations are:



- 1. Provide assistance with the financial costs incurred as a direct result of speaking up.**
- 2. Deliver support to reduce the impacts of whistleblowing (including loss of employment, legal costs and impacts on health).**
- 3. Provide support for appropriate and targeted career rehabilitation schemes.**
- 4. Make available assistance for engaging with media, legal and political supporters.**
- 5. Develop an international network for whistleblowers.**
- 6. Drive social and attitudinal change around whistleblowing.**

Recommendations are discussed in detail at the end of this report.

We anticipate that this report will be useful to leaders and managers in organizations and policy-makers, alongside those involved in law enforcement, regulation, the media and, most importantly, whistleblowers.

It is our hope that future discussion and proposed reforms will be informed by this work, with the aim of creating a society that is fairer for those who sacrifice much for our protection.



Introduction: The Value and Necessity of Whistleblowing

This research project examined people's experiences after they had disclosed wrongdoing in their organization. Aware of the current lack of supports for those who find themselves in this situation, we wanted to obtain empirical evidence on exactly what is involved in the process and the aftermath of disclosure in terms of the impacts borne by whistleblowers.

Our specific research questions included:

- 1) What are the costs of whistleblowing, both tangible and intangible, to those who leave their organization?
- 2) What interventions can be developed that will provide support?
- 3) How can whistleblowing be reconceptualized in ways that emphasize the necessity of material and symbolic supports from society?

This report is important because whistleblowing forms a key means of addressing dangerous wrongdoing and corrupt behaviour in today's organizations. It represents one of the most important ways in which organizations and societies can avoid major disasters.⁹ Many cases of disclosure are addressed internally by the organization and lead to at least some improved outcomes.¹⁰ Where this does not happen, however, the implications for the person disclosing can be extreme. In many cases, suffering and retaliation experienced by whistleblowers are exacerbated because few, if any, supports are available for those who have spoken up and who find themselves out of their employment role as a result of this action.¹¹ As yet, research that details and quantifies these costs is scarce.¹²

The insufficient recognition of the important role of whistleblowers in protecting the public interest, the detrimental outcomes they face post-disclosure and the lack of supports in dealing with these have real consequences. Organizations and societies lose money, would-be whistleblowers are deterred from speaking out and enabling their employer to address wrongdoing early on, and people who speak up suffer, as do their families, from various forms of post-disclosure retaliation.



Economic value:

Whistleblowing is important from a societal and an ethical perspective but it also saves money for private and public sector organizations. A recent study of over 5,000 firms shows that 40 percent of companies surveyed suffered from serious economic crimes that averaged over \$3 million each in losses.¹³ Whistleblowers exposed 43 percent of these crimes, which means that whistleblowing was more effective than all the other measures (corporate security, internal audits and law enforcement) combined.¹⁴ Thus, whistleblowing has economic benefits for both organizations and society.



Encouraging early detection:

Workers who voice their concern can help prevent the dysfunctional behaviour that leads to financial and reputational losses by firms and public sector organizations.¹⁵ The current absence of supports for those who make this choice, however, represents a serious deterrent to others who are considering speaking up. Thus, organizations and institutions are denied the opportunity to address the wrongdoing that whistleblowers perceive and disclose early on in the process.¹⁶ The benefit that whistleblowers can offer as a built-in 'early warning system' to prevent or mitigate problems is undermined, causing organizations to lose time, money and effort, as well as incurring the risk of embarking on protracted and unnecessary legal battles.



Retaliation and the limits of legislation:

The issue of how best to support whistleblowers has become urgent. Media attention on whistleblowing cases has increased, particularly on the critical importance played by whistleblowers in exposing large-scale corruption and organizational abuse. This is prompting policy-makers across the world to pass legislation protecting whistleblowers.¹⁷ However, as repeated tales of whistleblower reprisal and suffering emerge, it becomes clear that existing legislation is not sufficient. Even where existing laws are in place, these can fail the person who speaks up. Other forms of support and assistance are vital and urgent.

The aims of this study were addressed through the following objectives:

- 1) Analyze, in-depth, the qualitative impacts of whistleblowing on those who leave their organizations, with a focus on mental health and well-being, and elements of 'successful' disclosure strategies.
- 2) Evaluate the material impacts of whistleblowing, including detailed quantification of the cost of making a disclosure on a person's life, in terms of earnings lost, legal and psychiatric expenses, among others.

- 3) Identify opportunities for career development, including income generation possibilities.
- 4) Trial these via a novel 'career rebuilding' initiative and assess the potential impact of this for whistleblowers' post-disclosure survival.
- 5) Develop a new theoretical approach that reframes whistleblowing as a process that requires and merits material and symbolic support.

In this report, we present a summary overview of our findings for 1), 2) and 3). We continue to develop outputs in relation to these and to further our work on objectives 4) and 5). We regularly update these at: <http://www.whistleblowing.org>

Note: Much current research and debate focuses on how best to support whistleblowers within their organizations, including reform of current legislation and implementation of speak-up systems, areas in which we are also involved.¹⁸ Others provide vital advice for employees who are considering speaking out about wrongdoing, and best practice guides on whistleblower legislation.¹⁹ These topics, while critical to study, are not the focus of this report.

“Whistle-blowing is important from a societal and an ethical perspective, but it also saves money both for private and public sector organizations.”



Project Method

Research design and project planning

This research involved mixed methods, with qualitative approaches aiming to explore the lived experiences of whistleblowers, while quantitative evidence was collected on financial costs, time spent on one's disclosure, health impacts and other metrics. The study was carried out in three stages.

We began with a review of relevant literature, policy documents and professional publications on experiences of whistleblowers. Next, we analyzed pilot study data from previous research projects (n=24) that examined whistleblowing in banking, health, social care, insurance and IT subcontracting. Events held in 2017, one in London (June) and one in Cambridge (September), showcased these findings and gathered valuable feedback from whistleblowers and experts in attendance.

From this and with the continued advice of our Project Advisory Team (see Acknowledgements), we developed our survey and interview instruments. Our participants were sourced through a snowball (or convenience sample) method, initially via helpers in whistleblower advisory and advocacy groups and existing contacts in relevant networks.²⁰ Our sample was restricted to the following group. We were interested in interviewing and surveying people who had spoken out in their organizations and were no longer in their current role as a result of their disclosure, either through resigning, moving positions internally or having been dismissed. We used the well-known definition by the influential scholars, Janet Near and Marcia Miceli, whereby whistleblowing refers to a disclosure, made by a member of an organization, either former or current, of "illegal, immoral, or illegitimate practices under the control of their employers" to a body that is likely to be able to take action.²¹

To work with a population that may be considered vulnerable, ethical protocols were developed based on the ESRC's Framework for Research Ethics and the Social Research

Association's Ethical Guidelines. These included providing a participant information sheet that detailed the right to withdraw from the study, how their data would be protected, what consent to participate would entail and that findings would be presented in such a way that no individual could be identified unless the participant were to expressly agree otherwise.

Data collection and analysis

A series of interviews with whistleblowers (n=58) and experts, including advocacy group leaders, legal representatives and other professionals working with whistleblowers (n=17),²² was carried out between April 2017 and March 2018. We then conducted a survey of whistleblowers (n=92) between March and June 2018,²³ which was preceded by a pilot survey (n=12) with input from our Project Advisory Team.

Qualitative analysis was carried out with the help of NVIVO and through open thematic analysis of interview transcripts,²⁴ followed by in-depth analysis of emergent codes.²⁵ Quantitative data were analyzed using R programming; analytic methods included probit regression, generalised linear modelling and some structural equation modelling where possible. More details on method are available in associated publications on www.whistleblowingimpact.org

“Two events held in 2017 in London (June) and Cambridge (September) showcased preliminary parameters of the project and gathered valuable feedback from whistleblowers and experts in attendance.”

Emergent findings were again presented to stakeholder audiences, including at an event in Warwick Business School's London campus in June 2017 and a workshop with whistleblowers in Belfast in June 2018. Results were also shared with the Project Advisory Team. Feedback throughout the project from the variety of respondents that helped us (including whistleblowers and experts, along with not-for-profits and charities that assist whistleblowers) was invaluable in forming our recommendations and plans for future work.

Limitations

Our quantitative data revealed valuable and unique information on the various costs of whistleblowing for our respondents. Finer-grained and detailed comparison between variables would have been possible with a slightly larger sample size of 120 respondents, with yet stronger results available by recruiting 200 participants. Future studies might usefully attempt this. However, for the purpose of this project, which was to obtain overall quantifications of costs, our sample was appropriate. A second point concerns the nature of our cohort: the difficulty in accessing whistleblowers is well-recognised. We were dependent on our contacts in advocacy groups initially and on a snowball/ convenience method after this. This meant that in our quantitative study, there were larger numbers of public service whistleblowers from federal government, health, military and local government, compared to private sector individuals. It also meant that respondents from the U.S. featured more heavily due to the assistance we received from the Washington DC-based Government Accountability Project.

Our qualitative study featured a wider range of countries. Overall, our aim was not to represent either particular countries or specific sectors but rather to share indicative findings from our sample group. Finally, it is important to mention that, given the convenience nature of the sampling method, respondents may be more well-connected and thus better supported (for example, by other whistleblowers and by support groups) than would be the wider population of whistleblowers that fall into the definition specified above. It could be argued, therefore, that our findings under-report the qualitative and quantitative costs of disclosing and that these are, in practice, more substantial than indicated by this study.

“In working with a population that may be considered vulnerable, ethical protocols were developed based on the ESRC’s framework for Research Ethics and the Social Research Association’s Ethical Guidelines.”



Findings: The Price of Speaking Up

Who were the Respondents?

The sectors included in this research span: defence and intelligence; federal/ central and state/ local government; media; health care; banking and finance; education; housing; legal services; manufacturing; construction; science and technology; legal; hospitality; utilities; charity; law enforcement; environment; international humanitarian organizations; and food safety.

A variety of countries were represented, with the majority being from the United States and United Kingdom. Others included Ireland, Switzerland, Canada, Belgium, Australia, Sweden, South Africa, Romania, Saudi Arabia and India.²⁶

The study's respondents occupied a variety of roles and positions. The majority were professional or skilled, including lawyers, bankers, nurses and chefs. The next largest group was managers and executives. Scientists and administrative personnel were also represented along with clerical and unskilled workers. Our respondents had disclosed a range of wrongdoings, from financial fraud to abuse of children and mismanagement of national security information.²⁷

The overwhelming majority of respondents had attempted to raise their concerns more than twice (90 percent of those surveyed), with 87 percent communicating them to more than one recipient. In this way, our sample aligns with other studies of whistleblowers.²⁸ We specifically focused on those who have left their former organizational role because they 'blew the whistle.'

The overwhelming majority of respondents had attempted to raise their concerns more than twice.

Whistleblowing and employment status

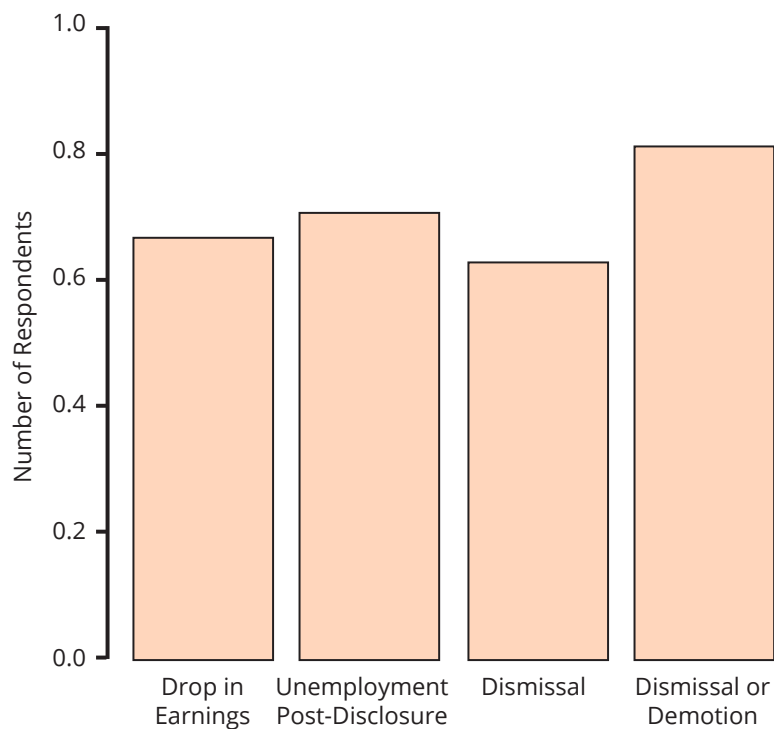
Our interest in this study lies in the cost of disclosing for those who find their employment status changing as a result of speaking out. All of our respondents underwent such shifts. Of the ninety-two people surveyed:

- Fifty-eight reported that they had been dismissed (63 percent);
- Twenty-six had resigned (28 percent);
- Fifty-seven had been demoted or given a more menial role within the organization (62 percent).

Figure 1 depicts the level of each of these negative outcomes for whistleblowers. The implications for earnings are profound, as is explained next.



Figure 1: Changes in employment status





1. Reduced Earnings

Reduction in earnings resulted from a variety of the above outcomes. Examples include:

Remaining in the Organization:

Some remained in their post, with others being placed on leave until the resolution of the dispute.²⁹ Our interviews featured a number of individuals who remained in their organization but whose career stagnated without the possibility of advancement and often with reduced responsibilities. This is a common form of whistleblower retaliation,³⁰ causing anxiety, frustration and depleted earning capacity after prospects of career development within the organization are curtailed.

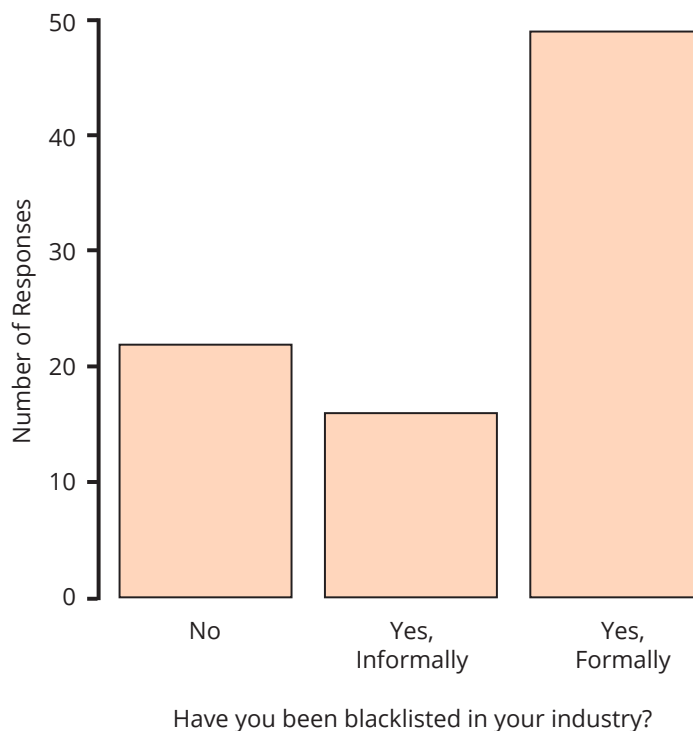
Blacklisting:

Blacklisting can affect whistleblowers post-disclosure, making it difficult or impossible to get a job in the same or a different sector.³¹

This occurs across all industries and happens both formally and informally. Formally, there may be actual lists of banned workers, while informal blacklisting occurs by word of mouth – passing information so that whistleblowers are not invited for interview. This means that people cannot work in the area for which they have been trained, despite in some cases having been at the peak of their careers and well-regarded by colleagues and managers. Figure 2 depicts the extent of this in our survey findings.

Of the seventy-seven (84 percent of total) respondents who answered whether they had been blacklisted in the industry, 63.6 percent reported they had been formally blacklisted (they had encountered written proof), 20.8 percent had been informally blacklisted (had verbal proof), and 28.6 percent had not been blacklisted.

Figure 2: Responses to Survey Question on Formal and Informal Industry Blacklisting.



Unemployment:

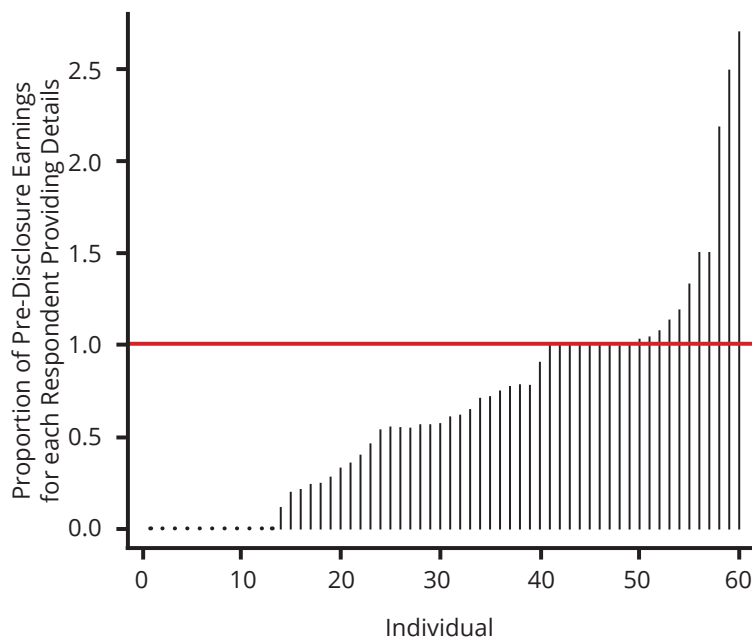
For those who found themselves out of work for a period of time, the average duration of unemployment was three-and-a-half years. Across all respondents, the average was approximately two years.

Many participant's earning capacity was reduced as a result of speaking out. Our survey focused on gathering data on the specifics of this loss of income. Sixty people provided information on their earnings prior to speaking up and on their post-disclosure income levels, allowing a comparison to be made. On average, a 67 percent drop between pre-disclosure and current earnings was reported. Figure 3 depicts this change in income.

Within this group:

- Forty people (67 percent) reported some drop in earnings;
- Twenty people (33 percent) reported no drop in earnings;
- Of this twenty, eleven people (18 percent of total) experienced an increase in earnings in the time since their disclosure.

Figure 3: Change in Income as a Result of Disclosing, for Those Providing Data. (Note: 1.0 represents no change, while 0.5 represents a decrease by 50 percent in earnings.)



“Our interviews featured a number of individuals who remained in their organization but their career stagnated; without the possibility of advancement and often with lessened responsibilities.”

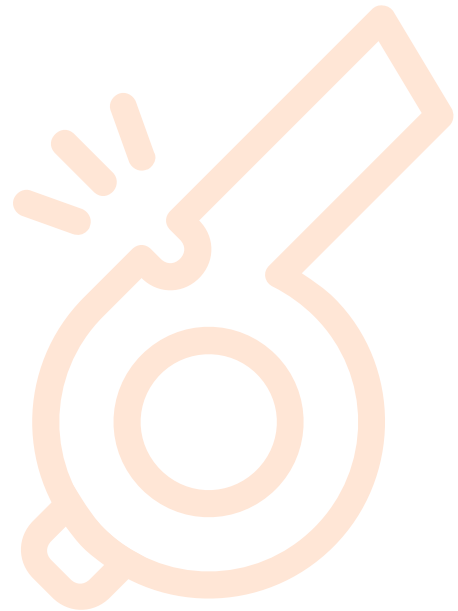
Thus, for almost seven out of every ten individuals that provided pre- and post-disclosure income information, whistleblowing resulted in loss of income.³² Our research also found that whistleblowers' pensions are affected due to their leaving the organization.³³

Importantly, while this research focused on past loss of earnings, many whistleblowers face a future career marked by a reduced capability to earn what they have the capacity to earn. Therefore, earnings foregone is an important aspect of the personal cost of speaking up.

With this in mind, our analysis included the possibility to develop new career directions for disclosers: We highlighted opportunities for career redevelopment for those that find themselves out of work. Our aim in this regard was to identify career paths and strategies that may help whistleblowers find successful employment after their disclosures. We continue to report on these findings elsewhere.³⁴

Even as earnings drop, we found that a person's expenses simultaneously increase as a direct result of making a disclosure that causes them to leave the role in which they were working. Our interviews revealed, for instance, that people found the financial costs of whistleblowing to be substantial³⁵ and, in many cases, unsustainable, as is detailed below.

“While this research has focused on past loss of earnings, many whistleblowers now face a future career marked by a reduced capability to earn what they have the capacity to earn.”





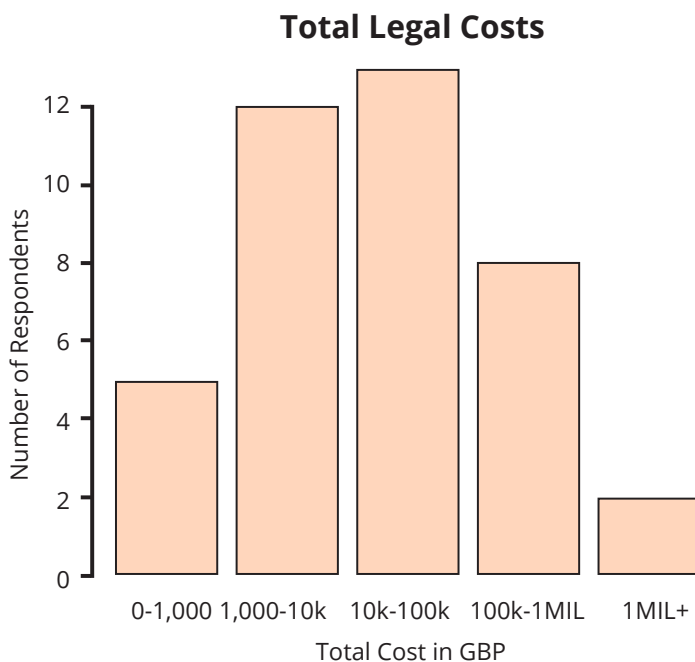
2. Costs of Speaking Up

Legal expenses

The legal costs related to employment tribunals and court cases were burdensome, with little to no assistance available.³⁶ Of the individuals who provided estimates of such expenses (forty respondents), the amounts fell in the following ranges (also depicted in Figure 4):

- Five people spent £0-1,000 (\$0-1,316) (13 percent);
- Twelve people spent £1,000-10,000 (\$1,316-13,158) (30 percent);
- Thirteen people spent £10,000-100,000 (\$13,158-131,579) (32 percent);
- Eight people spent £100,000-1 million (\$131,579-1,315,790) (20 percent);
- Two people spent in excess of £1 million (\$1,315,790) (5 percent).

Figure 4: Total Legal Costs, as Reported by Respondents Providing Relevant Data.



Four respondents reported having to pay back court costs, with an average repayment of £15,000 (\$19,737). In our survey, forty-eight individuals provided information about the waiving of legal fees. Of those, 44 percent (twenty-one people) had some help, including some or all fees waived in the case of 29 percent (fourteen people). For 9 percent, their fees were paid by their union (four people) a non-profit helped in the case of 6 percent (three people)

"And [my lawyer] said, 'I'm \$20,000 to retain and I'm \$500 an hour.' I'm thinking, 'You know what, that's a lot of money and I didn't do anything wrong.'"

- Frank

Advocacy Group Attendance:

In some countries, support organizations exist to provide advocacy for whistleblower rights, alongside legal assistance, practical advice and information on other relevant supports. Other disclosure-related costs pertain to travelling to such organizations, in attempts to gain assistance with the claim, and attending support group meetings to help with the difficulties being experienced. The mode value (the most often occurring figure) of this type of expenditure was approximately £2,000 (\$2,632) in total per person.³⁷

Health Care Costs:

People reported significant costs in relation to health care for changes specifically resulting from their experiences of speaking out:

- 66 percent of total respondents experienced negative changes to their mental health well-being (either 'worse' or 'much worse'), while 67 percent experienced negative physical health changes (either 'worse' or 'much worse');
- Every single respondent said that the changes in their health were either related or strongly related to having made their disclosure.

Whistleblowers can struggle with stress and other mental health issues.³⁸ Psychological and psychiatric services are expensive to access privately and limited in public health systems. The quality of therapist varies widely, as does their ability to provide specialised help relevant to the unique challenges that whistleblowers grapple with. These factors combine to create a significant drain on resources, in addition to adverse impacts on well-being.

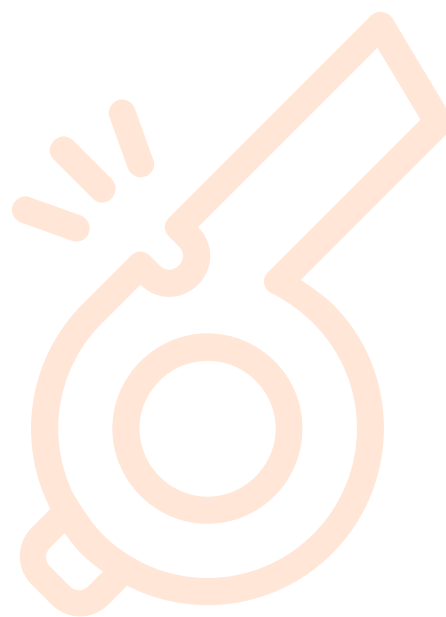
- The average out-of-pocket cost for physical health care related to disclosure was £1,126/ \$1,609 per year.
- The average out-of-pocket cost for mental health support was £1,036/ \$1,480 per year (the approximate mode for those reporting expenditure of this kind was £1,000/ \$1,316 per annum).

Career Change Costs:

Some find themselves needing or wanting to train in a different role in order to increase their chances of salvaging or progressing in their careers. Of our respondents:

- Twenty-nine individuals (32 percent of respondents) reported making an effort to retrain or seek additional education;
- Four respondents decided to retire early rather than attempt to retrain;
- Among those who retrained, the average cost of retraining was £16,035 (\$21,099).³⁹

Between legal costs, health care, career change and the cost of accessing appropriate support, it appears that speaking up in organizations can come with a hefty price tag. In addition, whistleblowers often attempt to meet this with a drastically depleted income, in many cases draining existing savings to do so.





3. The Final Price Tag

Combining the above data regarding loss of income with information on disclosure-related costs that are new to the whistleblower, we find that:

- On average, respondents had total costs of £216,987 (\$284,585) related to their disclosure, with a yearly average of £24,817 (\$32,580);
- For those who specifically reported lost earnings, the total cost amounted to £483,654 (\$634,936) since disclosure, with a yearly average of £58,114 (\$76,291);⁴⁰
- There is no significant difference by region in total cost of disclosure.

Figures 5 and 6 helpfully depict the extent of the total cost of speaking up, illustrating how:

- Thirty-nine people (42 percent) reported total costs of over £100,000 (\$131,579);
- Eighteen people (20 percent) reported total costs of over £500,000 (\$657,895);
- Four people (4 percent) reported total costs of over £1 million (\$1,315,790).

Figure 5: Total costs

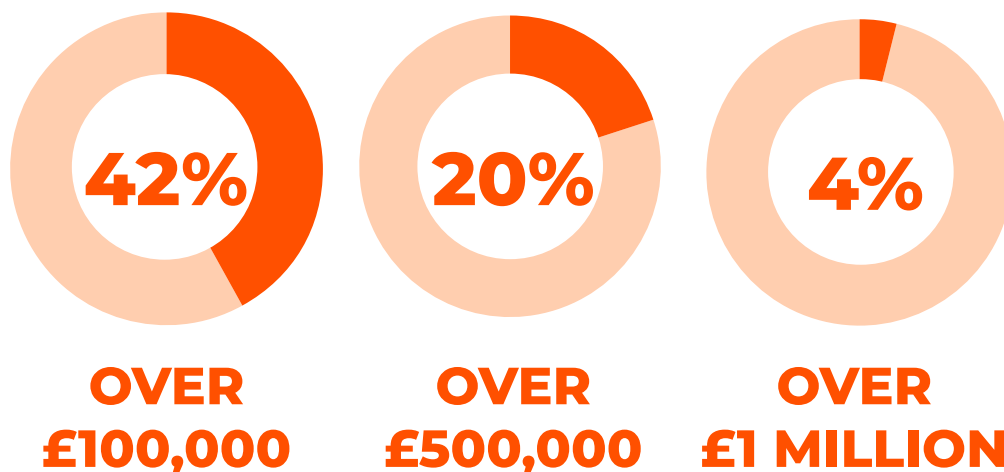


Figure 6: Total yearly costs



Breaking this down into an annual cost, we find that:

- Thirty-two people (35 percent) reported yearly costs of over £20,000 (\$26,316);
- Twenty-one people (23 percent) reported yearly costs of over £50,000 (\$65,790);
- Ten people (11 percent) reported yearly costs of over £100,000 (\$131,579).

These figures make it clear that the aftermath of whistleblowing, where one finds oneself outside of one's previous employment, can be a very expensive situation. It can cause difficulties for those who call attention to wrongdoing, as well as for their families. Our qualitative interviews back up this finding. Only three out of the fifty-eight whistleblowers interviewed reported not having problems related to the costs and financing of their speaking up. Two of these individuals were at retirement age and in comfortable financial situations.

For many whistleblowers, as these findings demonstrate, earnings go down while costs go up. Meanwhile, people must continue to support themselves and, in some cases, their dependents, continuing to pay for food, housing, education and general living. Thus, it can be difficult to make ends meet.

Our interviewees indicated that the pressures relating to the price tag of speaking up can lead whistleblowers and their lawyers to work towards dispute settlements with the organizations in question rather than continuing to fight to stop the wrongdoing they were originally trying to reveal. In settlement cases, people expressed disappointment after the fact, when they learned that neither an admission nor an apology was forthcoming for the wrongdoing or for subsequent retaliation against them.

"You then wear down the wealth very quickly because you can't get another job and you go through the savings. You are under tremendous stress, which gets greater as you can't get a job and the savings go down."

- Thomas

"I'm now couch-surfing. I've lost everything. But, at least, I've got a roof over my head... Yeah, at fifty-three years of age, I'm staying with my parents because I've got no job and nowhere else to go."

- Angela



4. The Time Cost

A less obvious expense is time. Whistleblower struggles can often drag out for years. This occurs because of the complexity of these cases, the length of appeals and other factors that include, for instance, the ability of companies and organisations to sustain protracted legal battles due to the disproportionate level of resources at their disposal. The issue of time is frequently neglected in newspaper reports on whistleblowing incidents.

Exploring the post-disclosure experience in more depth, our interviews suggest that people can spend substantial amounts of time working on their disclosures. It is often necessary to familiarize oneself with complex legal terminology, to seek assistance from various parties (such as journalists, politicians, regulators and lawyers) that might be able to help and to then arrange and provide evidence, background information and strategic support to such allies. The whistleblower often finds themselves with two occupations: working on one's case to dispute the retaliation that has occurred and continuing to advocate for the exposure of the original wrongdoing.⁴¹ To either of these ends, little help is available or accessible.

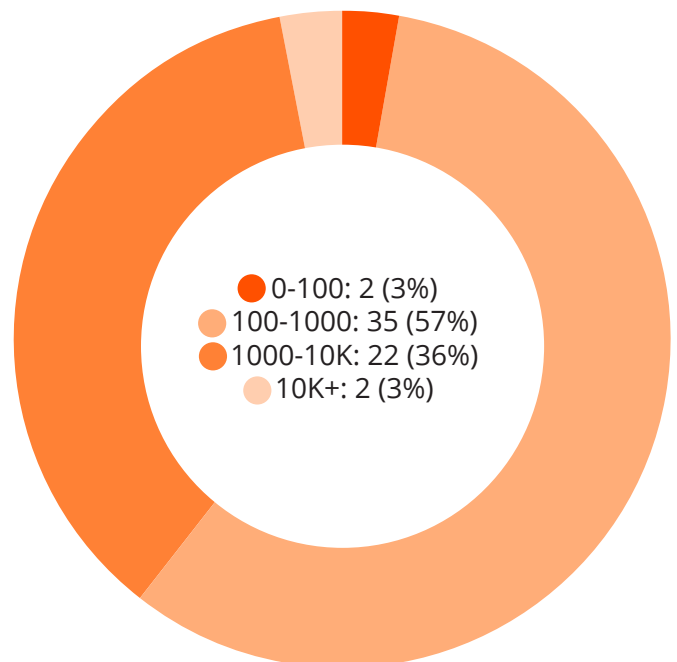
How much time do people actually spend on issues related to their disclosure? Given the problem of recall in this question, responses were indicative rather than exact. However, presenting results in terms of orders of magnitude illustrates the time commitment required of the individual whistleblower.

"Perhaps the reason no one can get a job while they are a whistleblower is that whistleblowing is an unpaid job."

- Thomas

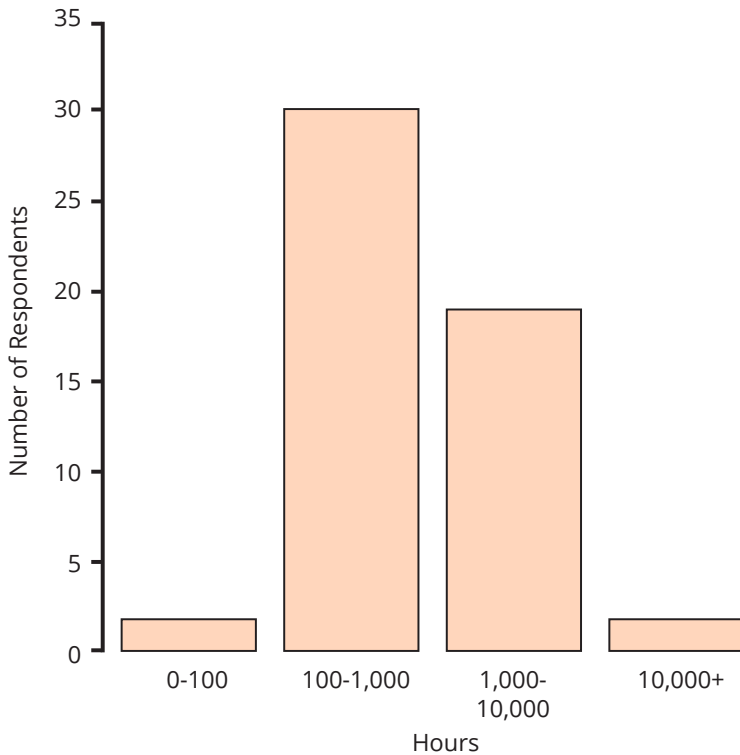
The distribution of hours spent working on one's disclosure is as follows (see also Figure 7):

- Two people spent 0-100 hours (3 percent);
- Thirty-five people spent 100-1,000 hours (57 percent);
- Twenty-two people spent 1,000-10,000 hours (36 percent);
- Two people spent in excess of 10,000 hours (3 percent).



Given that the results do not allow for estimation of time spent per year, the comments provide some of the best information on the intensity of time that the respondent has devoted to his or her disclosure. Four individuals reported working the equivalent of a full-time job on their disclosures, while another six reported working at least one full day per week. In total, our respondents spend significant amounts of time on their cases – time that takes away from being able to source further employment. In cases where the experience of whistleblowing involves retaliation, this difficult and isolated phase can be accompanied and aggravated by anxiety and trauma.

Figure 7: Time Spent on Disclosure-Related Activities.



Below, we detail the activities upon which whistleblowers spend their time, drawing from our interview findings.

Media:

Whistleblowers tend to turn to the media only as a last resort, in cases where few other options are available.⁴² We found that, in some cases, these are vital outlets for a disclosure if the situation is not addressed by the organization after the whistle has been blown.⁴³ Indeed, the lives of disclosers may be at stake if the issue relates to perceptions of the national security, defence and intelligence sectors or if a disclosure fundamentally affects an organization’s survival. Whistleblowing tends to lead to isolation for the disclosing person and may be detrimental to their physical and emotional health, while affirming responses from society resulting from good media coverage can be beneficial and protective for an individual. A positive reception provides both important professional validation as well as potentially insulating the whistleblower from reprisal by focusing attention on the message rather than the messenger. The media may also shed light on the ‘truth’ of a disclosure, allowing the public to understand why someone disclosed abuse. Such coverage can provide public

"[It has been] fourteen years [since the original disclosure]... The defendant [the organization] in the court case has the best counsel money can buy and can throw money at it ad infinitum."

- David

So, [it seems that] what then happened... is that the Prime Minister told the Solicitor General to find a way of keeping it out of the courts because it was potentially too embarrassing."

- Cory

support and also drive reforms that address the problems that warranted the initial disclosures.⁴⁴

At the same time, some whistleblowers noted negative media experiences, specifically with daytime talk shows or major news channels, where the invitation to appear was followed by an ‘ambush’ by representatives from their former organization.⁴⁵ Others regret neglecting to research the news outlet or the individual reporters prior to contact and note that they did not know where to turn for advice on navigating this field.⁴⁶ Some respondents in our study have found members of the media unhelpful, noting their short attention span focused only on the current news cycle, or their tendency to oversimplify or misreport the story. All of this may be detrimental to a whistleblower’s efforts, well-being and, ultimately, to the outcomes of their disclosures and the impact of those on the public good.

Negative experiences such as these can increase the burden of time, lessen people’s credibility and cause anxiety. Importantly, people reported that there were few supports available to help.

Political support:

Support from local and national politicians can increase the chances of whistleblowers finding success. All the same, securing political involvement can also be indispensable where politicians promote both the work of whistleblowers and their need for support when experiencing retaliation. Among our interview respondents, Members of Parliament in Europe and Members of Congress in the United States were able and willing to offer help in a number of ways, by exerting influence over organizations, lobbying to change legislation, assisting whistleblowers with necessary strategic manoeuvring and even offering emotional support in some instances.⁴⁷ The interviews from the U.S. indicate that whistleblowing is largely a bi-partisan issue, with support and, conversely, vilification of whistleblowers coming from all shades of political ideology. The stance adopted appears to depend more on positions taken in relation to transparency and anti-corruption or the underlying issue raised by the discloser than on party affiliation.

Political support can be difficult to secure when a case is not politically palatable or involves an embarrassing or politically-sensitive disclosure.

Legal support:

All of our interviewees emphasized the importance of effective legal assistance in the process of whistleblowing. Many individuals interviewed were unable to secure assistance for reasons of finances and circumstances surrounding the difficulty of identifying a lawyer or solicitor able to assist them in their disclosure. Those who were able to secure legal assistance – either through a whistleblowing advocacy group or private solicitor – greatly improved their experience and likelihood of success.⁴⁸

We found through this study and previous research that successful whistleblowing, or even a successful resolution of one's case against a retaliating organization, requires a strategic approach assisted by an experienced legal adviser familiar with disclosure cases.

Social media:

Social media offered another potential source of strategic support, through networks like Facebook and LinkedIn groups or bulletin boards and discussion groups.

Even so, a number of participants expressed uneasiness in relation to social media and had been advised against sharing personal information in such forums. A lack of understanding and knowledge on the appropriate use of social media was apparent.

"And for you to win your case, you have to be able to be in absolutely good health, have gathered all the evidence and be able to afford it, and also give up years and years of your life. If that's protection, then that's not much of a law to me."

- Angela

"This scandal needs to be exposed... the support I get on Twitter is phenomenal. That keeps me going, in a way."

- Barry

"So there is no way of stopping another Shipman, Savile, Beverley Allitt... How do I feel about that? Absolutely horrified. But what can I do? If I go on social media, how do you condense all that into – how many characters are you allowed?"

- Angela



5. Intangible Costs

There are also intangible costs to whistleblowers, which cannot be quantified and arguably have the greatest negative impact on a person. Our findings on this topic are largely in line with other studies⁴⁹ that are being developed for publication elsewhere and are available at <http://www.whistleblowingimpact.org> Key issues include:

Health:

Of the fifty-eight whistleblowers interviewed, only one could state with certainty that their health was not affected by whistleblowing, while two thirds reported declines in mental and physical health as a result of making their disclosure. As other studies have shown, such impacts are common consequences of the social isolation and pressures experienced by whistleblowers, along with the emergent problems of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), clinical depression, anxiety, heart problems, hypertension and health problems relating to weight gain and stress.⁵⁰ These stem from the common experiences of retaliation from employers and colleagues in and outside of the workplace, isolation from coworkers, being unable to relate to friends and family members and, in some cases, becoming the focus of public debates in relation to their disclosures. The stress caused by such situations can induce forms of depression and anxiety, and even prompted suicide attempts in some of the individuals we interviewed.

"They [my family] were good support but they were tired of hearing me!"

- Frank

Family Impacts:

A key issue highlighted in this research relates to the impact on one's family (and dependents, in particular), an area that has not been studied in depth to date. Interview and survey data reveal how the monetary cost to the family will determine, for example, whether or not parents can pay for their child's education and associated costs or be able to go on holiday and partake in recreational activities. The intangible costs may be worse; a child loses time with their parent, stress and anxiety can be high and spouses often experience a breakdown of their marriage.

"So the impact on... one's family is probably the most serious of them all... people can withstand losing their own job, but to see their children going through trouble at school or taken out of school or having to move home or to watch other people suffering because of what you have done, ultimately, [are some] of the greatest costs of becoming a whistleblower."

- Morris

Support for Intangible Costs:

As mentioned above, whistleblowing takes a significant toll on marital and family relationships, and they often fall apart due to the stress of the disclosure process. However, support from their partner was critical for many of those we interviewed, as was support from family and friends. Yet, this is a complex issue: individuals may not be able to speak about their disclosure to their spouses or family due to legal constraints. Moreover, those outside of the situation do not always understand the whistleblower's disclosure or reasons for speaking up, and so the overwhelming experience that the person is going through is not readily relatable nor easily assuaged by discussion with friends or family.

"My dad... keeps asking questions and he gets so angry and upset, and it's affected his health, whereas my mum would go into complete denial and not want to talk about it or anything, and it affected her health."

- Angela

For some respondents, the support of other whistleblowers is key. Interviews showed also that the researchers themselves were seen as a form of support for the participants; research provides a platform for sharing their experience and insight, while professional academic conferences and workshops can offer a space for discussion and networking with other disclosers and scholars. Furthermore, undertaking further education can help some whistleblowers to understand what they have gone through and attempt to alleviate some of the problems associated with the disclosure process through their own research and writing. Some whistleblowers emphasised the meaning and support they found in their religion. Religious leaders were valuable sources of support for a number of those of faith. Specialist advocacy groups were also considered helpful and, for some people, indispensable to any success they felt was achieved.

Figure 8: Responses to Questions about Personal and Social Benefit

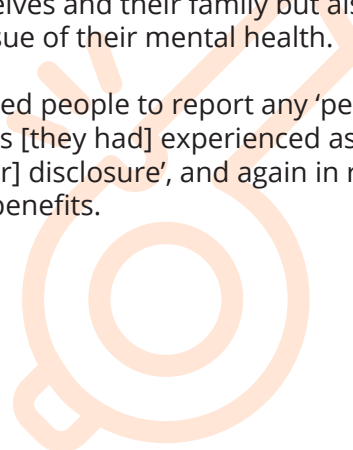
Question	Percentage
Personal Benefits	
Peace of mind	71
New friends and connections	38
Helped others	50
Positive career change	17
No personal benefits	6
Social benefits	
Raised awareness	62
Improved public safety	26
Saved taxpayer money	17
Empowered other whistleblowers	40
No social benefits	11

Career and Mental Well-being:

Curiously, while a majority of people reported negative mental health effects, a small percentage noted that 'mental well-being post-disclosure as compared to pre-disclosure' was either 'better' (8 percent), or 'much better' (16 percent); for 11 percent, it stayed the same. We further investigated those reporting improvements in mental health (twenty-four percent of our total sample). Of this group, 93 percent noted that this was either 'strongly related' or 'somewhat related' to their disclosure. As discussed next, this could be a result of the satisfaction of living in accordance with one's own values.

In one particular interview question, we asked people to report personal and social benefits that they perceived as a result of their disclosure (see Figure 8). Here, the vast majority (71 percent) of respondents said that they experienced peace of mind as a result of their disclosure. A significant proportion (62 percent) also stated that they had raised awareness of the wrongdoing issue. A small number (6 percent) of respondents expressed that they had received no personal benefits from their disclosure. A larger number (11 percent) felt that there had been no social benefit, commenting that they felt their disclosure had been futile because the wrongdoing had not ceased. Combining these results, we found that respondents who report that they have made 'a positive career change' as a result of disclosure are over five times more likely to report improved mental health. It appears, therefore, that career redevelopment for whistleblowers who have found themselves outside of their previous role is doubly important, not only for the practical impact of being able to support themselves and their family but also for the vital issue of their mental health.

We asked people to report any 'personal benefits [they had] experienced as a result of [their] disclosure', and again in relation to social benefits.





Conclusion

Our study examined a diverse group of whistleblowers from a variety of sectors that included public, private and non-profit, and a range of countries, albeit with most located in the U.S. and the U.K. People had spoken up about many types of wrongdoing. Our focus was on those who found themselves outside of their former role due to having spoken up.⁵¹

Overall, whistleblowers experience sizeable costs for their attempts to disclose information about wrongdoing, despite the value of their disclosures for society (and even for the organisations in which the wrongdoing is happening). It also emerges that few supports are available to lessen the impact of these expenses for disclosers and their dependents. Generally, our research findings show how a definitive majority (two thirds of our respondents) experienced a reduction in earnings because of speaking up, while their expenditure increased substantially, including that relating to legal cases, health care and contribution to support-group membership. Our participants faced, on average, a total cost of almost £217,000 (\$285,526) for having spoken out, this figure rising to almost £484,000 (\$636,642) for those who report a loss of earnings. This sum includes income foregone due to unemployment, career stagnation or a new role with a relatively reduced salary. However, it does not account for future earning potential that can be severely curtailed, thereby necessitating further research.

We also found that time represents a hidden cost that is rarely discussed in relation to whistleblowing, with a full one third of our respondents spending over a thousand hours working on their claim, largely alone, unsupported and without reimbursement for this task. Time can be spent on complex legal cases, learning the basics of legal defences with little or no prior training, attempting to work with media outlets or on the difficult process of seeking support from politicians and legislators. With appropriate support and assistance, this lost time could instead be better spent on developing one's career through a variety of means, rebuilding relationships with friends and family that are often damaged through the process of whistleblowing or recovering from all-too-common health issues related to one's disclosure. This factor merits further research.

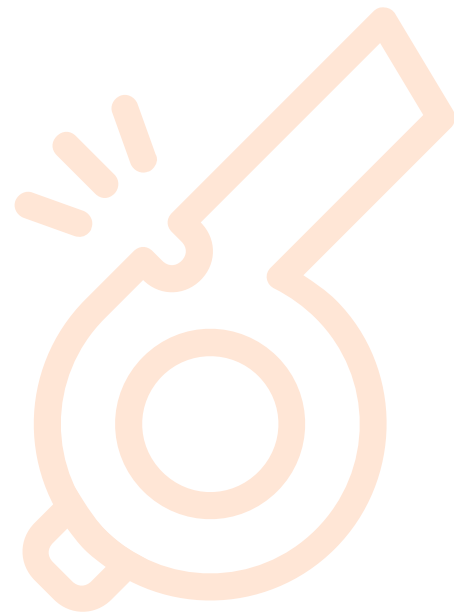
This report does not specifically focus on the intangible impacts of whistleblowing reported by our respondents, including, for example, long-term repercussions on health. However, other key studies substantiate these findings, including the significant rate of negative health effects, both mental and physical, that two thirds of our respondents reported as relating to their disclosure. Moreover, our interviews yielded insights into how the impacts that speaking up can have on one's loved ones tend to cause significant stress for the whistleblower.

“...Whistleblowers experience sizeable costs for their attempts to disclose information about wrongdoing, despite the value of their disclosures for society.”

The findings of this study must be considered against this backdrop because intangible impacts and more tangible effects (including financial ones) are intertwined: they reinforce each other. Depleted income, unemployment and blacklisting can severely affect one's self-esteem,⁵² making one both vulnerable to stress but also less able to pay for physical health care costs. Meanwhile, suffering from health problems makes it very difficult to obtain alternative employment and, concurrently, to fight one's cause. Thus, tangible and intangible impacts can come together to form a vicious cycle.

Finally, our interviews point to the various forms of support participants feel enable them to prevail. Sources include: engaging with other whistleblowers, their spouse or someone close; religious faith; academics and researchers; and whistleblower advocacy and support groups. Taken together, these findings indicate that providing resources to bolster these types of support could help to counter the intangible (and, more often than not, incapacitating) problems experienced by people post-disclosure. However, in most cases, this support is difficult to find and/or secure. This can be because of the complexity of the situation in which whistleblowers who are bound by confidentiality find themselves; their connections with others can be hindered as a result. It also relates to the absence or scarcity of formal support resources, a problem that also affects people's ability to attain more practical assistance from media, political authorities and legal advisors, as described previously.

Overall, people who speak out in good faith provide an essential conduit for us to learn about wrongdoing and corruption. Individuals who blow the whistle play a key role in promoting transparency and maintaining democratic institutions, but the endeavour can cost them dearly. Society currently provides very few mechanisms by which to help with these costs. This results in people sacrificing their own and their families' well-being and incomes, along with years of their lives, so that the wider public can benefit from their continued detection and reporting of abuse, waste and fraud. Our findings point to a number of ways in which we can address this situation.



“Overall, people who speak out in good faith provide an essential conduit for us to learn about wrongdoing and corruption. Individuals who blow the whistle play a key role in promoting transparency and maintaining democratic institutions, but the endeavour can cost them dearly.”



Recommendations

Our research clearly shows that whistleblowers require appropriate assistance but typically do not receive it. We hope that our findings, and their accompanying recommendations, will spark discussion and debate among policy-makers, support organizations and other professionals that work with whistleblowers, leading to improved support.⁵³



**Recommendation One:
Provide Assistance with
Financial Costs Incurred as a
Direct Result of Speaking Up.**

A key finding of this research is that the impact of income reduction, combined with increased disclosure-related costs, can be substantial. Those who experience a reduction in earnings can face costs of £483,654 (\$634,936) since disclosure. This has the effect of deterring would-be disclosers, ensuring that the existing wrongdoing continues. It also means that whistleblowers currently suffering such repercussions are more likely to abandon the struggle of speaking up in favour of providing for themselves and their families. Legal fees form a large proportion of this cost, of which whistleblowers frequently bear the burden.

How to minimise the damage for people who find themselves in this situation? A number of schemes have been mooted. National whistleblower funds are one suggestion, whereby whistleblowers are compensated with monies gathered from fines levied at organizations found guilty of crimes related to whistleblower disclosures.

While this is an important recommendation, financial supports must be available to help with the time period between disclosure and the point at which court-related compensation is made available (as these cases ordinarily take years). More structured provision of interim relief funds would help in the immediate aftermath of disclosure, while better access to affordable legal assistance would also be of vital benefit.⁵⁴

As has been discussed elsewhere, changes to the legal process to ensure speedier progression through the court system for those involved in whistleblowing-related cases would alleviate a number of problematic post-disclosure impacts, including those related to expenses.⁵⁵ In the United States, programmes such as the Dodd Frank/ SEC whistleblower awards have had some success. These should be considered in other areas in light of lessons learned since their implementation.⁵⁶ Further detailed research and the implementation of trial schemes is strongly recommended.



**Recommendation Two:
Deliver support to
reduce the impacts
of whistleblowing**

We have found that intangible costs related to disclosure – costs that cannot be monetarily quantified, including dissolution of relationships, loss of time with children, and health issues – severely impact a whistleblower's life and their ability to continue their fight to expose corruption. Currently, there are no resources for whistleblowers affected by resulting costs to family and little in the way of support for related health issues, perhaps due to a lack of comprehension of the pervasiveness and nature of these problems.

Our research indicates that one successful remedy for this is pro-bono counselling, including family counselling, and capacity for addressing more serious cases. Key here is that the counselling must be financially accessible and fitting for the idiosyncrasies of the whistleblowing process and experience. Further, given the variation in location of whistleblowers and the costs described here that are associated with accessing support services, internet video-based counselling sessions would improve the accessibility of these services.⁵⁷



**Recommendation Three:
Provide Support for
Appropriate and Targeted
Career Rehabilitation Schemes.**

Reinstating whistleblowers in meaningful full-time employment is important for society and whistleblowers alike. Not doing so means that, apart from discouraging future potential disclosers, society loses a valuable source of skills and expertise in the area in which the person has trained, often for years. Moreover, our research indicates the importance of finding meaningful work for maintaining one's well-being. A structured approach to finding new forms of employment for skilled whistleblowers should be developed.⁵⁸

A variety of whistleblower career rehabilitation schemes have been proposed by organizations, including the U.K.'s NHS and the U.S.'s Veteran's Administration,⁵⁹ learnings from which we have incorporated into our research. We found, for example, that career coaching must be bespoke, tailored to the individual's specific needs. C.V. analysis and further development of transferable skills for enabling a move to a new sector or industry can be helpful, as can practical advice on forming consulting firms and networking skills. Coaching must be offered in line with other supports, including counselling, as detailed above. Based on our findings, we prepared a whistleblower career development workshop and launched a trial with volunteers from among our study respondents.⁶⁰ Work on this remains ongoing.



**Recommendation Four:
Make assistance available for
engaging with media, legal and
political supporters.**

The research demonstrated that many respondents spend a significant amount of time and effort engaging with others who might help: legal professionals, media outlets and political representatives. However, such activity can be fraught with difficulty and problems. Whistleblower support organizations can provide help with this, including Transparency International Ireland's Speak-Up Helpline in relation to legal issues and the U.S. Government Accountability Project's long-standing and valuable advice on media engagement.⁶¹

More generally, advocacy groups can assist whistleblowers by connecting them with relevant professionals in these spheres. Such supports should be consolidated in a single location, adequately resourced, and made available in a clear and accessible manner to whistleblowers.

Training in the appropriate use of social media that is relevant to the different stages of the disclosure process, specifically focusing on the risks of further reprisal, is also crucial. Social media work is not always easy, particularly for people unfamiliar with new forms of technology. In addition to its use in sharing information related to one's disclosure, whistleblowers may find social media helpful as a form of emotional support and for sourcing information on best practice throughout and after the disclosure process.⁶²



**Recommendation Five:
Develop an
International Network for
Whistleblowers.**

An adequately resourced and well-supported infrastructure should be created to enable whistleblowers to connect with others in similar situations, internationally and across sectors. Our interviews showed such groups to be a key source of solace, advice and support for whistleblowers because people's experiences can be surprisingly similar, particularly where disclosers have occupied similar industry roles.

As one former whistleblower and expert noted, it is vital to 'find one's tribe' in order to survive what can be a gruelling experience post-disclosure. Despite this, we found that many respondents' knowledge of other whistleblowers was limited. While advocacy and support organizations exist, their presence and focus differ widely across countries. For this reason, an international support network is needed, explicitly aimed at encouraging and supporting such connections.

This should include supports for those who assist whistleblowers, be they loved ones, spouses, family, friends and/ or sympathetic colleagues. These connections are fundamental to whistleblower survival. Unfortunately, given the specific nature of whistleblowing, assistance for these important third parties is not usually available as and when needed.⁶³ This vital social support must be bolstered through, for example, awareness-raising events or internet support groups for people helping a loved one during a disclosure process.



**Recommendation Six:
Drive Social and
Attitudinal Change
around Whistleblowing.**

One of the overarching aims of this research was to explore whether and how the public debate on whistleblowing can be changed in order to bring attention to different forms of supports that are indispensable for these individuals' survival. The current inability or unwillingness of societies to support whistleblowers and ensure that the costs they experience are not crippling is likely related to a wider ambivalence and lack of knowledge about this group.

Whistleblowers are famously seen as either 'heroes' or 'traitors'⁶⁴ but rarely as ordinary people trying to highlight corrupt behaviours in their organizations and address serious wrongdoing that has wider implications for the public.⁶⁵ There is a need to reform perceptions of the whistleblower image so that they are seen as an asset to society, corporations and organizations.

In this research, we have begun to explore how this might be achieved through a public engagement model that invites whistleblowers to speak to members of the public.⁶⁶ Further research into how best to encourage a change in attitude, along with further investigation into the efforts required to 'normalize' the role of the whistleblower in organizations and society, is needed.

A key aspect of the implementation of these recommendations involves the development of effective and professionally-run support groups with expertise in a range of key areas, including legal advice, mental health supports and sector-specific knowledge. While many such organizations do exist, they are inadequately resourced at present.



Further Research

We have identified a number of key areas for further research. Future studies might include quantitative and qualitative analysis of post-disclosure career paths, along with details on how and why blacklisting occurs. More fine-grained analysis of the kinds of retraining and education that benefit whistleblowers would be helpful. In addition, quantifying the costs to society is key; society loses out financially because of substantial detriment that whistleblowers experience as a result of retaliation. Many such individuals are senior members of their organizations, with significant skills and experience in their chosen profession.

These capabilities are lost when disclosers find themselves out of work and unable to secure employment because of their status as whistleblowers. This represents a lost opportunity, a waste of training and sometimes additional welfare supports. Further research to quantify these costs is vital. Finally, emergent schemes to assist whistleblowers with costs incurred and career survival have been implemented, as detailed above. In-depth research into the impacts of these schemes for those they aim to protect is important.

For more on this research project, see www.whistleblowingimpact.org



Footnote References

- 1 Kenny et al. 2011.
- 2 Kenny and Fotaki 2014.
- 3 Kenny 2019.
- 4 <http://chpi.org.uk>.
- 5 Kenny and Fotaki 2014.
- 6 Fotaki and Pullen 2019.
- 7 Fotaki and Harding 2018.
- 8 USD to GBP exchange rate as at October 2018.
- 9 Devine and Maassarani 2011.
- 10 Smith and Brown 2008.
- 11 Alford 2011; Devine and Maassarani 2011.
- 12 The only exception is the study of 35 whistleblowers conducted by Jean Lennane in Australia in 1992 in which she estimates the cost to taxpayers of corruption and malpractice exposed by them, ranging from several thousand to one hundred million Australian dollars (\$) in 1992 prices. While the research identifies various detriments that whistleblowers experience, these are not quantified (see Lennane 1993).
- 13 Devine 2012.
- 14 The 2018 Global Fraud Study by the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners found that more than 50 percent of cases had been uncovered with the help of information provided by employees, more than twice the success rates of other detection methods (ACFE 2018; ACFE 2014).
- 15 European Commission 2018; Vandekerckhove et al., 2016.
- 16 Public Concern at Work and University of Greenwich 2013.
- 17 Devine 2015; Vandekerckhove 2006.
- 18 Vandekerckhove et al., 2016; Kenny et al. 2019.
- 19 See Martin 2013; Devine and Maassarani 2011; Devine 2013; Transparency International Ireland 2014; Government Accountability Project 2018.
- 20 This kind of convenience sample is common in cases where a target group is difficult to find and/ or access.
- 21 Near and Miceli 1985.
- 22 Others included a psychologist that works with whistleblowers, and politicians, legislative aides, specialist lawyers, authors and union leaders.
- 23 The survey instrument was developed from previous research, including Vandekerckhove et al., 2013, Cassematis and Wortley 2013, Near et al. 2004, Davern et al. 2005 and Foster and Lound 1993.
- 24 Cuervo-Cazurra et al. 2016; Gioia et al. 2013.
- 25 Gioia et al. 2013.
- 26 Note: while there exist differences between different geographical and legal jurisdictions that affect the support a whistleblower may have access to, our survey indicated that these did not have a significant effect on participant responses.
- 27 The types of wrongdoing were classified into a list that was adapted in part from Vandekerckhove et al., 2013.
- 28 Vandekerckhove et al., 2013. See also Public Concern at Work 2011, 2015. We note that whistleblowers can provide a useful early-detection mechanism for organizations interested in addressing fraud and corruption; however, internal channels for reporting are not always effective, nor do they always prevent retaliation against whistleblowers, as our sample indicates.
- 29 While not the focus of this report, we found that increased age correlated with the likelihood of finding oneself out of work. Each additional year of age corresponds to a 5 percent increase in the probability of being dismissed, and a 7.6 percent increase in the probability of experiencing unemployment following disclosure. In each case, there is no significant effect of gender on likelihood of being dismissed.
- 30 Devine and Maassarani 2011; Martin and Rifkin 2004.
- 31 Mesmer-Magnus and Viswesvaran 2005; Devine and Maassarani 2011.
- 32 65 percent of all respondents - sixty people - provided details.
- 33 While our survey responses were too few and too diverse to estimate loss of retirement benefits as a portion of expected total, 50 percent reported at least some loss in retirement benefits and/ or pension entitlements. Some who were terminated following disclosure described losing employer matching funds. At least one respondent cashed in pension benefits for living expenses following termination of employment.
- 34 See <http://www.whistleblowingimpact.org>.
- 35 Our findings in relation to earnings and likelihood of dismissal and unemployment are largely in keeping with previous surveys (see Mesmer-Magnus and Viswesvaran 2005; Qusqas and Kleiner 2001).
- 36 Notably, in many cases, these trials focus on the retaliation that the whistleblower has experienced rather than addressing the original wrongdoing they disclosed.
- 37 This is the most representative measure because of a small number of extreme outliers in this category that skewed the average cost.
- 38 Kenny et al. 2019; Fotaki et al. 2015.
- 39 This figure excludes one large outlier.
- 40 Our respondents varied in time since disclosure. For some people, this was six months; for others, ten years. Therefore, we provide yearly averages here.
- 41 See also Kenny 2015.
- 42 Smith and Brown 2008.
- 43 Culiberg and Mihelič 2017.
- 44 Smith and Brown 2008.
- 45 Bushnell et al. 2019.
- 46 See Smith and Brown 2008; Devine and Maassarani 2011.
- 47 Whistleblowers have found some support in Congress, particularly from a few individual senators, including Charles Grassley (Republican, Iowa, a longstanding source of help for this group).
- 48 It should be pointed out that whistleblowers reported certain laws not fit for purpose (Bouloy 2012) and had particularly difficult experiences with employment tribunals in the U.K. Employers can and do file legal charges against whistleblowers, and judges, solicitors and lawyers should be cognizant of such political-legal maneuvering (Lewis 2008).
- 49 Glazer and Glazer 1989; Kenny 2019; Kenny et al. 2019; Lennane 2012; Peters et al. 2011; Jackson et al. 2010; Devine and Maassarani 2011; see also Transparency International Ireland 2015, 2017.
- 50 Lennane 2012; Rothschild 2013.
- 51 Alford 2001.
- 52 Kenny et al. 2019; Kenny 2019.
- 53 Legal protections are lacking in many countries and, even where they are present, there can be problems in their implementation or gaps in the security and assistance that they offer to whistleblowers. Work is ongoing by various advocacy groups to improve the legal landscape for whistleblowers, something that remains beyond the scope of the present report.
- 54 Further research is required on the specific nature of these funds, including who might resource them and what institutional mechanisms might best be used to manage them. For a valuable discussion of interim relief, potential hardship funds and other related proposals, see Transparency International Ireland 2015. In addition, Tom Devine of the U.S.-based Government Accountability Project has published recommendations on appropriate options, including mandatory alternative dispute resolution mechanisms that would provide free counsel, interim relief and expedited resolution - see Devine 2013.
- 55 Devine 2015
- 56 For a useful consideration of how such programmes can be improved, see the Government Accountability Project 2018.
- 57 Additional research is required into the nature of support services and the appropriate mechanism to pay for these.
- 58 This could include forming networks of organizations that actively support whistleblower placement in appropriate positions; we have found a number of organizations willing to hire former whistleblowers but there is little coordination between them. As an example, industry regulators tasked with investigating corruption could benefit from structured access to whistleblowers who are an ideal source of expertise and ethical sensitivity and could carry out tasks including oversight, investigation and working with internal disclosers. Career opportunities in university-based research could be made available to whistleblowers with relevant skills or following the appropriate training. Furthermore, whistleblowers skilled in particular areas represent ideal trainers and mentors for campaigning activists and advocacy groups.
- 59 Our research included emerging feedback from the pilot NHS Whistleblower Support Scheme, which aims to provide career coaching, financial advice and mediation for primary care staff who have suffered as a result of raising concerns about NHS practice.
- 60 Held at Queen's University Belfast in June 2018.
- 61 GAP have provided useful 'matchmaking' connections between whistleblowers and journalists, and offer a useful guide for both parties - see Government Accountability Project 2017.
- 62 This area warrants further research. Whistleblowers can be subject to attacks - for example, in comments that follow on from press coverage. On the other hand, social media provides a powerful means of amplifying media coverage of issues in a positive way, acting as a catalyst for whistleblower support and legal reform.
- 63 People often lose the support of friends at work, as colleagues may be complicit with the wrongdoing, fear reprisals to themselves or not understand what a whistleblower experiences. Disclosers can suffer from a more general social isolation, as the process of whistleblowing can be all-encompassing. This is particularly difficult for the families of whistleblowers, who may not understand the person's choice to continue their struggles.
- 64 Grant 2002; Hersch 2002.
- 65 Alford 2001; Kenny et al. 2019; Kenny et al. 2019; Kenny 2019.
- 66 In March 2018, we co-hosted a public and open event that featured a well-known financial services whistleblower at Queen's University Belfast; it was attended by over 150 people. This model was inspired by the Government Accountability Project's American Whistleblower Tour, which has visited over thirty college campuses in order to raise awareness of the issues involved in speaking out.



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