

Key Findings

Key Findings of the National Telephone Survey

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission ("HREOC") commissioned the Gallup Organization to conduct a national household telephone survey on the incidence and nature of sexual harassment experienced in the Australian community.

The incidence of sexual harassment experienced in the community

- 28 per cent of interviewees to the telephone survey stated that they have personally experienced sexual harassment at some time in an area of public life.
- 41 per cent of women and 14 per cent of men stated that they have personally experienced sexual harassment at some time in an area of public life.

The incidence of sexual harassment experienced in the workplace

- 18 per cent of interviewees to the telephone survey stated that they have personally experienced sexual harassment in the workplace at some time.
- 28 per cent of women and 7 per cent of men stated that they have personally experienced sexual harassment in the workplace at some time.

The incidence of workplace sexual harassment experienced in the last five years

- 11 per cent of interviewees to the telephone survey stated that they have personally experienced sexual harassment in the workplace in the last five years.
- 15 per cent of women and 6 per cent of men stated that they have personally experienced sexual harassment in the workplace in the last five years.

The incidence of witnessing sexual harassment in the workplace in the last five years

- 14 per cent of interviewees to the telephone survey stated that they have witnessed sexual harassment in the workplace in the last five years.
- 87 per cent of those witnesses of sexual harassment in the workplace in the last five years took some sort of action when the sexual harassment occurred.

Nature of sexual harassment in the workplace in the last five years

- 94 per cent of the sexual harassment experienced involved "crude or offensive behaviour".
 - 85 per cent of the sexual harassment experienced involved "unwanted sexual attention".
 - 43 per cent of the sexual harassment experienced involved "sexist behaviours".
 - 20 per cent of the sexual harassment experienced involved "sexual assault".
 - 19 per cent of the sexual harassment experienced involved "sexual coercion".
 - 62 per cent of the sexual harassment experienced included physical harassment.
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Duration of the sexual harassment in the workplace in the last five years

- 15 per cent of interviewees to the telephone survey who experienced workplace sexual harassment in the last five years stated that it was a one-off incident.
- 50 per cent stated that it continued for up to six months.

Seriousness of the sexual harassment in the workplace in the last five years

- On average, interviewees to the telephone survey who experienced workplace sexual harassment felt more offended than intimidated by the sexual harassment experienced.
- 40 per cent of interviewees rated the sexual harassment experienced as very or extremely intimidating.
- 50 per cent of interviewees rated the sexual harassment experienced as very or extremely offensive.
- On average, female interviewees rated the sexual harassment experienced as more offensive and intimidating than male interviewees.

Characteristics of the target of sexual harassment in the workplace in the last five years

- 72 per cent of the targets of harassment in the telephone survey were women; 28 per cent were men.
- The greatest prevalence of sexual harassment in the workplace occurs among women younger than 45 years of age.
- 70 per cent of the sexual harassment experienced by interviewees to the telephone survey involved men sexually harassing women.
- 19 per cent of the sexual harassment experienced by interviewees to the telephone survey involved women sexually harassing men.
- Nine per cent of the sexual harassment experienced by interviewees to the telephone survey involved men sexually harassing men.
- Two per cent of the sexual harassment experienced by interviewees to the telephone survey involved women sexually harassing women.
- 70 per cent of the targets of workplace sexual harassment were working full time and 30 per cent part time.
- Employees who have been at a workplace for less than 12 months appear to be more likely to experience sexual harassment.

Characteristics of the workplace harasser in the last five years

- 79 per cent of the harassers identified by interviewees to the telephone survey were men; 21 per cent were women.
 - The age of the harasser estimated by the target of the sexual harassment in the telephone survey was predominantly over 30 years of age.
 - 35 per cent of interviewees who experienced workplace sexual harassment stated that the harasser was a "boss or employer", "supervisor or manager", or a person in a more senior position.
 - 48 per cent of interviewees who experienced workplace sexual harassment stated that the harasser was a "co-worker".
 - 16 per cent of interviewees who experienced workplace sexual harassment stated that the harasser was a "client or customer" or "others associated with the workplace".
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Characteristics of the workplace where the sexual harassment occurred in the last five years

- Sexual harassment is prevalent across all employer sizes and is widely spread across industries.

Reported sexual harassment in the last five years

- Less than one third (or 32 per cent) of interviewees to the telephone survey who experienced sexual harassment in the workplace stated that they made a formal report or complaint about the sexual harassment.
- Female targets of sexual harassment were more likely than male targets to formally report the sexual harassment experienced.
- Of those interviewees who did report the sexual harassment, the majority reported it to their "manager or supervisor at work" or "boss or employer".
- Only one per cent of interviewees to the telephone survey who experienced sexual harassment in the workplace stated that they made a complaint of sexual harassment to either HREOC or to a State or Territory anti-discrimination agency.

Reasons for not reporting sexual harassment experienced in the last five years

- 31 per cent of the 132 interviewees to the telephone survey who did not report the sexual harassment experienced stated that they "did not think that the harassment was serious enough" to warrant reporting.
 - 26 per cent stated that they "took care of the problem myself".
 - Almost half of the 132 interviewees to the telephone survey who did not report the sexual harassment experienced expressed a lack of faith in the grievance process as one of the reasons for not reporting it.
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