

8 December 2023

Landmark Harassment Report shows need for Workplace Action

Data released by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) shows the horrific prevalence of sexual harassment in the workplace.

Harassment has various forms and perpetrators' actions often leave people distressed and feeling under threat. Harassment means any unpleasant or bullying behaviour and, when related to a protected characteristic, is unlawful. Sexual harassment is unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature, such as touch or suggestive comments.

However, violence against women and girls is too often accepted as normative, partly because of misogyny and partly because of under-reporting. Released on 7 December, the new [ONS data](#) on harassment has now been gathered properly for the first time. While the report makes dire reading, it is a call for union members and employers to address harassment more urgently than ever.

The data, taken from the last 12 months, shows that:

- 1 in 10 people aged 16 years and over experienced at least one form of harassment
- 13% of women and 7% of men experienced at least one form of harassment
- Sexual harassment was experienced by 8% of all women and 3% of all men
- Sexual harassment most likely in for women, especially ages 16-24 (23%) and aged 25 to 34 (16%)
- Of all those who experienced sexual harassment, a shocking one in four said it had occurred in the workplace

The [Fawcett Society reports 40% of women will experience sexual harassment](#) over the course of their career. A new law, called the [Worker Protection Bill](#), is coming into force next year. This will put a legal responsibility on employers to prevent sexual harassment. But we know that action needs to come from the ground up, not just from the top.

Is your employer getting ready for the Worker Protection Bill to come into force? Do they have an existing sexual harassment policy? Who is accountable for enforcing and renewing it? Is sexual harassment data available? Is there training for staff and managers to prevent and respond to sexual harassment? Ask your rep.

If you have experienced sexual harassment, in the workplace or outside, you can talk to you rep. Info for reps on [harassment](#) and [sexual harassment](#) is on PCS Digital.

Get colleagues to [join PCS](#) - safer workplaces, for women and for everyone.