



Sexual harassment in
the workplace.

Introduction

In 2023 the ICE undertook a survey amongst its female members to assess the extent and impact of sexual harassment in the workplace. The [survey responses can be found in the appendix to this summary](#).

Context

This pulse survey was an initiative from past president Keith Howells' President's Future Leaders, who anecdotally identified sexual harassment as an issue and wanted to determine the extent of the problem.

A group comprising Rachel Hayden, Svetlana Joao (Future Leaders), and Nada Elhariry, Tina Gunnarsson FIR (Fairness, Inclusion and Respect committee) members was supported by ICE staff and Kate Cairns (FIR committee chair) to devise a series of questions. It was decided to focus on members whose gender is female, rather than look at harassment in a broader context. Multiple answers were allowed so figures refer to instances of harassment.

Of ICE's female members, representation is strongest in consultancy:

- 42.4% are consultants.
- 11.5% are contractors.
- 13 % are clients, national/local government, utilities.

Other sectors include students, military, financial, academia, charity, research, unknown, retired.

Method

A sample of 3,300 broadly representative of the members above who opt into emails, were sent the survey link. 940 responses were received over a two-week period, a response rate of 28.5%.

Q1 shows the broad age bands of respondents, with strong representation from older members who have stayed in the industry.

Q2 describes type of employment - 176 respondents cited more than one sector for their employment.

Summary of findings

48% had witnessed instances of harassment, citing 925 separate instances.

Categories of sexual harassment witnessed by respondents

- Telling sexual jokes or recounting sexual stories
- Using sexually explicit language
- Sharing/showing/sending sexually explicit images (e.g. via social media)
- Making sexually explicit gestures
- Other - please state at the end of the survey

45% of respondents had been harassed in the last 4 years, citing 1016 instances.

Categories of sexual harassment experienced by respondents

- Sent inappropriate sexual messages about you.
- Sent you sexually explicit material eg by social media.
- Made unwanted gestures or used offensive body language that embarrassed, affected, or threatened you.
- Made unwelcome attempts to establish a relationship/go on a date with you despite discouragement.
- Suggested a sexual relationship would be good for your career.
- Suggested refusing a sexual relationship would be bad for your career.
- Inappropriately touched you eg unwelcome arm on the shoulder.
- Verbally sexually harassed you .
- Sexually assaulted you.
- Physically assaulted you.
- Stalked you/excessively messaged you via social media/email.
- Sent messages to colleagues undermining you, following a rebuff.
- Verbally undermined you to colleagues.
- Other please state at the end of the survey.

Q5 asked who was involved in the incidents.

- 68% of the 756 responses cited colleagues, line managers and other senior people in their organisations.
- 21% cited people connected with their work
- 9% cited trade/craft professionals.

Q6 asked how people dealt with the instances of sexual harassment.

- 13% of those responding either left their employment or asked to be moved.
- 21% reported the person,
- 39% did nothing and/or did not report the person.

- 17% asked the harasser to stop, and they did.
- In 10% of cases, they did not.

(636 instances cited; 448 stated they had neither witnessed nor suffered sexual harassment).

Categories

- I left my employment.
- I asked the person to stop, and they did.
- I asked the person to stop, and they didn't.
- I asked to be moved.
- I reported the person.
- I did nothing/I didn't report it.

Q7 asked about the effects of the harassment.

- 46% of respondents had not been affected by sexual harassment,
- 17% just carried on as before.
- 37% of respondents cited 785 ways in which they were affected, ranging from lack of enjoyment and embarrassment, through to feeling threatened along with less effective work-performance, and culminating in illness: 153 instances of time off with Work Related Stress, anxiety and depression, physical illness, and actual physical injury in 3 cases, with other members reporting historic assaults in the comments, going back further than the 4 years of the survey.

Categories

- I took time off with work related stress
- I no longer enjoyed work
- I felt the work environment was threatening
- I performed less well
- I was embarrassed
- I suffered attacks of anxiety/depression
- I took medication for my mental health
- I suffered physical injury
- I suffered from other physical symptoms eg sleeplessness, throwing up before work
- Not applicable I carried on as before

Q8 asked whether reporting the incidents had solved the problem. The ratio of Positive: Negative outcomes was reported as roughly 16:84.

Categories

- Yes – a disciplinary warning was issued and was adequate
- Yes - The case was investigated, and the person received training
- Yes – the person concerned was dismissed
- Yes – the person involved apologised and I was satisfied
- No - a disciplinary warning was issued but it was an inadequate response
- No – I was persuaded not to proceed
- No – I was removed to a different team
- No – the perpetrator was moved to a different team
- No – I felt excluded from my team
- No – the harassment continued
- No - I was given no other alternative and was required to leave
- Other please state at the end of the survey

Industrial Sector

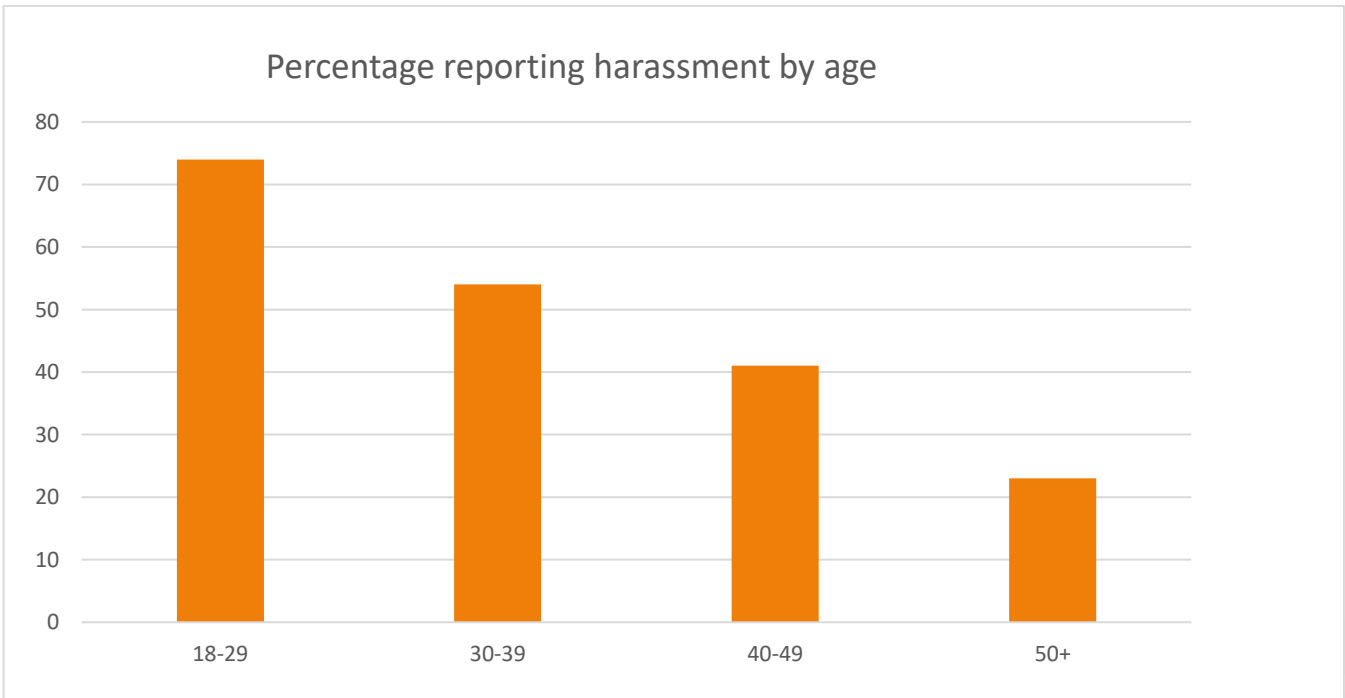
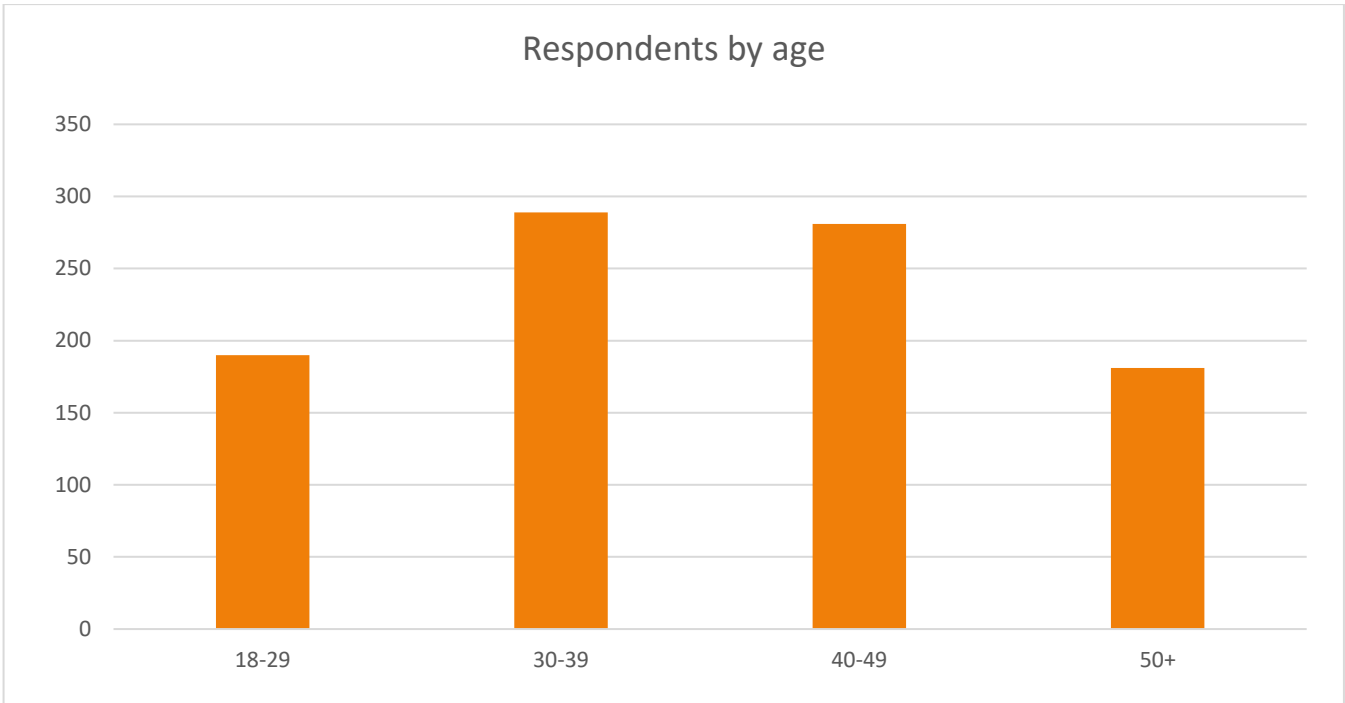
Of those declaring contracting as part of their role, 70% reported instances of harassment in the last 4 years.

Of those citing consultancy, client and other mainly office-based roles, 40% reported instances of harassment in the past 4 years.

Age Profile

The age profile of those reporting harassment was perhaps as expected given the gender imbalance in the comments. Some older respondents commented that they were now too old or senior to be targeted but kept an eye on younger colleagues.

Two respondents reported serious issues in the comments, which should have resulted in professional conduct hearings and in one case a police report. The author has redacted the information in the comments appended, but one should be followed up.



Limitations and comparators

With a self-report study, the validity of responses is always questionable. It can be argued that respondents may either exaggerate or underreport. Participants' views of incidents may also differ from employers' views.

As a comparator, the Women and Equalities Committee 2023 Report, Attitudes towards women and girls in educational settings notes that 'women students experience high levels of sexual harassment and sexual violence, both on and off the university campus.'

The same report cites a 2022 poll by the NASUWT teachers' union of 1,500 female members which 'found 58% had experienced misogyny from pupils, 45% from the senior leadership team, 42% from other teachers, 30% from their headteacher and 27% from parents—in 45% of reported cases no action was taken schools'.



Appendix - sexual Harassment at work - findings

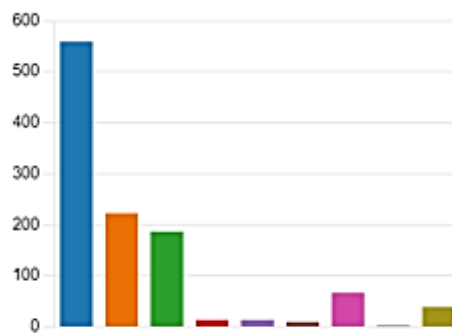
1. Please tick your age band (0 point)

● 18-29	189
● 30-39	291
● 40-49	200
● 50-59	162
● 60+	18



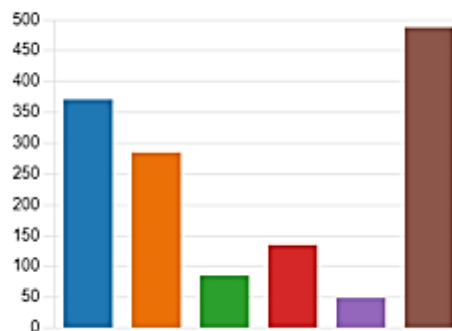
2. How would you describe your employment in the last 4 years? Please tick all that apply: (0 point)

● Consultant	559
● Contractor	223
● Client	187
● Academic	14
● Self-employed	14
● On a career break	10
● Student	67
● Retired	3
● Other - please state at the end ...	39



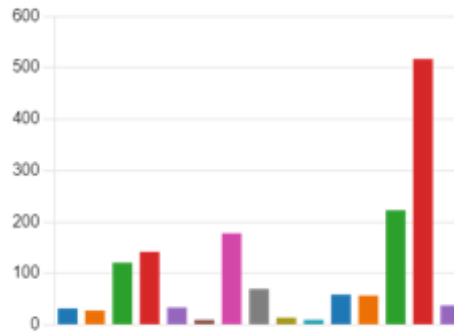
3. Looking back over the last 4 years (to include pre-pandemic), have you witnessed co-workers (0 point)

● Telling sexual jokes or recountin...	371
● Using sexually explicit language	285
● Sharing/showing/sending sexua...	85
● Making sexually explicit gestures	135
● Other - please state at the end ...	49
● No I have not witnessed this	488



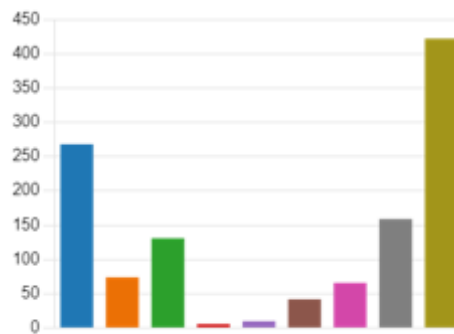
4. In the last 4 years, have you been in a situation or situations where a co-worker has: (0 point)

- Sent inappropriate sexual messa... 32
- Sent you sexually explicit materi... 28
- Made unwanted gestures or use... 121
- Made unwelcome attempts to e... 142
- Suggested a sexual relationship ... 34
- Suggested refusing a sexual rela... 10
- Inappropriately touched you eg ... 178
- Verbally sexually harassed you 70
- Sexually assaulted you 14
- Physically assaulted you 10
- Stalked you/excessively messag... 59
- Sent messages to colleagues un... 57
- Verbally undermined you to coll... 223
- No - none of the above have oc... 517
- Other please state at the end of ... 38



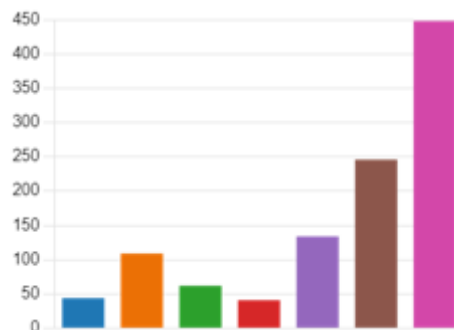
5. If you have said Yes to any of the above, was the person (or persons) concerned in the incident(s) a (0 point)

- Colleague 268
- Line manager 74
- Other senior person 131
- Trainer 6
- Someone in academia 10
- Junior colleague 42
- Operative/Craft professional 66
- Someone connected to your wo... 159
- Not applicable 422



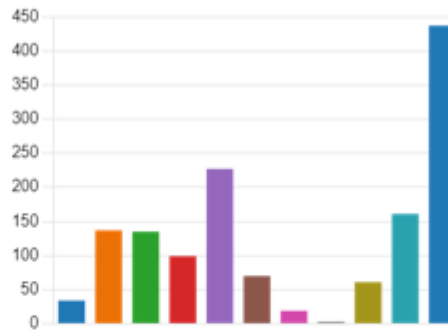
6. As a result of any harassment incident(s) you have commented on above, how did you deal with it: (0 point)

- I left my employment 44
- I asked the person to stop and t... 109
- I asked the person to stop and t... 62
- I asked to be moved 41
- I reported the person. 134
- I did nothing/I didn't report it 246
- Not applicable - I have neither ... 448



7. As a result of any harassment incident(s) you have commented on above, how did it affect you? (0 point)

- I took time off with work related... 34
- I no longer enjoyed work 137
- I felt the work environment was ... 135
- I performed less well 99
- I was embarrassed 227
- I suffered attacks of anxiety/dep... 70
- I took medication for my mental... 19
- I suffered physical injury 3
- I suffered from other physical sy... 61
- Not applicable I carried on as b... 161
- Not applicable - I have neither ... 437



8. If the behaviour was reported, did this resolve the situation(s)? (0 point)

- Yes - a disciplinary warning was ... 19
- Yes - The case was investigated ... 15
- Yes - the person concerned was... 19
- Yes - the person involved apolo... 25
- No - a disciplinary warning was i... 19
- No - I was persuaded not to pr... 29
- No - I was removed to a differe... 22
- No - the perpetrator was move... 13
- No - I felt excluded from my tea... 30
- No - the harassment continued 22
- No - I was given no other altern... 20
- Other please state at the end of ... 138

