

**Research Opportunities Arising from the Australian Human Rights Commission  
2018 Report Everyone's business: Fourth national survey on sexual harassment in  
Australian workplaces**

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**Submission to the  
National Workplace Sexual Harassment Inquiry**

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Report Everyone's business: Fourth national survey on sexual harassment in Australian  
workplaces**

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to this inquiry. We do so as members of the Department of Psychology and Public Health, CQUniversity, and as the authors of *Sexual harassment: the employer's guide to causes, consequences and remedies* (Business and Professional Publishing). We are solely responsible for the views and content in this submission.

This submission considers the research opportunities arising from the data collected for the report *Everyone's business: Fourth national survey on sexual harassment in Australian workplaces* (henceforth, The Report).

Our primary submission is that three important research topics that could be explored using the data collected for The Report, but not included in The Report. These analyses would generate important new insights into the issue of sexual harassment and could be completed within a short timeframe.

In the section below, we identify three potential research topics. In each case we identify a finding from The Report and identify further analysis that could be undertaken.

**Topic 1: Legal and Behavioural Definitions of Harassment**

*Finding*

In the Report it is stated that,

*In total, 43% of respondents reported having been sexually harassed on the basis of the legal definition. This is despite the fact that a much larger number (71%) of people then went on to report having experienced one or more of the 16 sexual harassment behaviours listed at some point in their lifetime. (p.24)*

*Further analysis*

Some 28% of respondents said they had not been sexually harassed (legal definition) then subsequently said that they had been sexually harassed (behavioural definition). Are there any

characteristics of this sub-population that might account for this discrepancy, or are there certain types of behaviours that respondents do not immediately identify as sexual harassment?

## **Topic 2: Resistance and Resilience**

### *Finding*

In the report it is stated that,

*71% of Australians have been sexually harassed at some point in their lifetimes. (p.7)i*

The analysis then largely concentrates on profiling the 71% who have been sexually harassed (behavioural definition).

### *Further analysis*

Some 29% of respondents stated that they had never been sexually harassed. To the best of our knowledge, this population has never been profiled. Such an analysis might offer new insights on harassment, possibly highlighting structural/demographic characteristics of individuals/organisations that appear to be resistant/resilient to sexual harassment.

## **Topic 3: Quid pro quo**

### *Finding*

In the report it is stated that,

*.... nearly one third (31%) of women and one in ten men (11%) have experienced unwelcome requests or pressure for sex or other sexual acts on at least one occasion over the course of their lifetime. (p.20)*

In the section on workplace harassment, where behavioural incidence is only reported for “most recent incident of workplace sexual harassment”, 3% of all respondents reported (p. 40) experiencing “Requests or pressure for sex or other sexual acts” (2% of men, 3% of women).

### *Further analysis*

The behavioural item “Requests or pressure for sex or other sexual acts” is the item that most closely corresponds to *quid pro quo* harassment. As this is one area of sexual harassment where there is clear agreement (reasonable person standard) that such conduct is invariably

sexual harassment, in-depth analysis of such cases is warranted. First, what are the five-year incidence figures? This information does not appear to be included in the report. Second, can the cases (both “most recent” and “last five years”) be profiled (individuals/organisations)?

Similar behavioural item-specific profiling could also be undertaken (e.g., “sharing or threats to share intimate images or film of you”), or by item clusters (e.g., social media-based items n & o).

## **Recommendation**

We believe that the above analyses would generate important new insights on sexual harassment in Australia.

These analyses could either be completed directly by the AHRC, or by an external partner. We would like to offer to undertake these analyses as external partners, ideally working in conjunction with the AHRC team.

This would require that the AHRC releases the raw survey data. The analyses could be undertaken as either contracted research (advantages: quick turnaround; drawbacks: would require research funds to hire a research assistant), or as non-contracted work (advantages: no cost; drawbacks: slow turnaround). If required, a formal research proposal could be drafted for the above analyses.

The results of any such analyses could be issued by the AHRC as additional reports.

## **Authors**

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<sup>i</sup> Throughout the report the lifetime incidence rate is stated as 71%, but on one occasion it is stated as 72% “Nearly three in four (72%) of Australians report having experienced sexual harassment at some point in their lives.” (p.18)