



Fact Sheet:

Key Findings

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) reviewed 152 complaints of sexual harassment in the workplace that were finalised in 2002. Following are the key findings from this review.

The information available in relation to each of the 152 complaints varied. As such, it was not always possible to determine each finding in relation to all of the complaints. For each of the findings below, the number of complaints for which the particular information was available is noted in brackets.

The reported harassment was by men against women

- 86 per cent of complaints involved a man sexually harassing a woman (of 152 complaints). The remaining 14 per cent of complaints included harassment of men and harassment by women.
- 95 per cent of the complainants were female (of 152 complaints). 88 per cent of individual respondents were male, five per cent were female and seven per cent involved both male and female respondents (of 152 complaints).

The nature of the reported harassment

- Most complaints involved multiple forms of harassing behaviours. 71 per cent of complaints involved verbal harassment, 37 per cent involved physical intimacy and 23 per cent involved sexual physical behaviour (of 152 complaints).
- 18 per cent of cases involved an isolated incident of sexual harassment (of 136 complaints). In 22 per cent of cases the harassment had continued for more than 12 months.
- 72 per cent of complainants reported that the harassment began in the first 12 months of the complainant's employment (of 121 complaints). 51 per cent reported harassment as beginning within the first four months of employment.
- 60 per cent of individual respondents were in a more senior position in the workplace than the complainant (of 161 individual respondents).

Harassment is an issue for all forms of business

- 44 per cent of complainants were employed in small businesses, 19 per cent in medium sized businesses and 36 per cent were employed in large businesses (of 135 complaints).
- 51 per cent of complainants were employed in the occupational groups of clerical, hospitality, shop assistant and labourer (of 146 complaints).
- 67 per cent of reported harassment occurred in workplaces located in cities, 31 per cent occurred in rural areas and three per cent was in remote rural areas (of 150 complaints).
- 78 per cent of complainants had reported the harassment within their workplace (of 130 complaints).

Harassment has a cost for employers

- At the time the complaint was made to HREOC, only seven per cent of complainants were known still to be actively working for the organisation where the alleged harassment occurred. 67 per cent had left the organisation and 10 per cent were on leave (of 152 complaints).
 - Financial compensation received by complainants varied from \$500 to \$200,000 and was most often paid by employers rather than the individual harasser.
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