



# Prevention, Awareness, and Response to Sexual Harassment in the Workplace

## Handbook

**female  
algorithm**

**KUN**  
CENTRE FOR EQUALITY  
AND DIVERSITY



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# What is sexual harassment?

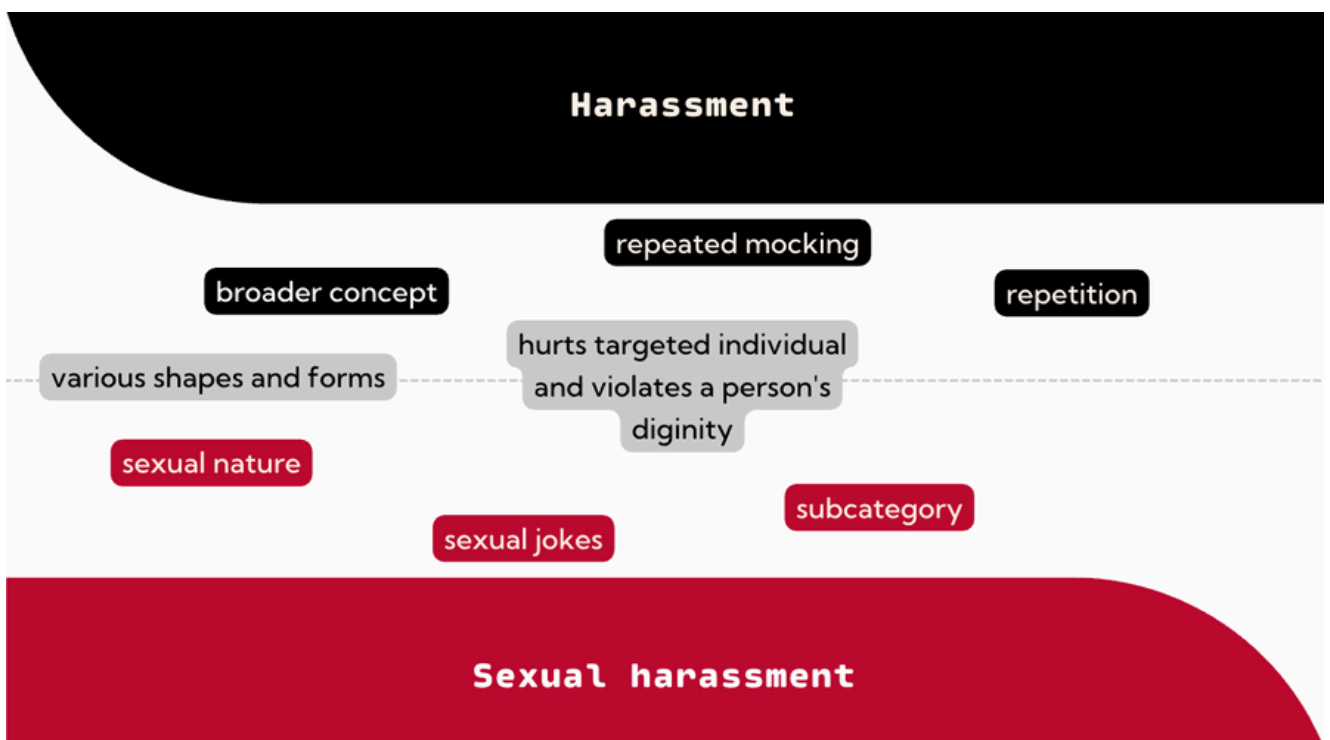
## Introduction to sexual harassment in the workplace

### Harassment

“any undesirable behaviour with the purpose or effect of violating another person’s dignity”

### Sexual harassment

“unwanted sexual attention or unwelcomed behaviour of a sexual nature, with the intention or effect of being offensive, frightening, hostile degrading, humiliating or annoying”



## International legislation

### Council of Europe (CoE)

Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention)

Article 40 – Sexual harassment: Parties shall take the **necessary legislative or other measures** to ensure that **any form** of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a **sexual nature** with the **purpose or effect of violating the dignity** of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment, is subject to **criminal or other legal sanction**.

### European Union (EU)

Directive 2006/54/EC on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast)

Article 2 (1d): Sexual harassment: where any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature occurs, with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Directive (EU) 2024/1385 on combating violence against women and domestic violence

Article 28: In cases of sexual harassment at work that constitute a criminal offence under national law, Member States shall **ensure** that **counselling services** are available for victims and employers. Those services shall include information on ways to **adequately** address such cases of sexual harassment, including on **available remedies** to remove the offender from the workplace

## EU-Gender Based Violence SURVEY

**Sexual harassment is more common than we think**

“27.2% out of them were victims to a male perpetrator, be it a co-worker (15.8%), boss or supervisor (7.4%), or another man in the work context, like a client or customer (9.3%)”

**“1 in 3 women (30.8%) has experienced SH in the workplace.”**

Out of them, 42% of young women aged 18 to 29 experienced SH.

75% of ever-working women believe that sexual harassment is uncommon.

### Common effects of sexual harassment in the workplace

#### Psychological and physical health issues

- workplace anxiety
- impacting personal and professional relationship
- mental and physical health issues

#### Decreased company productivity

- fear of coming to work
- absenteeism

#### Efflux of workforce

- higher employee turnover
- low employee retention

## Decreasing attractiveness of the workplace

- toxic workplace environment
- from outside but also from inside of the company

## Financial challenges

- costs of legal proceedings
- costs connected with high turnover

## Key takeaways...



### KEY ASPECTS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT:

- unwanted, unwelcomed, sexual nature

### 4 TYPES OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT:

- verbal, non-verbal, physical, digital

There is a LEGAL BACKGROUND AT INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL LEVEL, however, there are several serious loopholes.

Sexual harassment is much more common than we think.

### SEXUAL HARASSMENT HAS SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES:

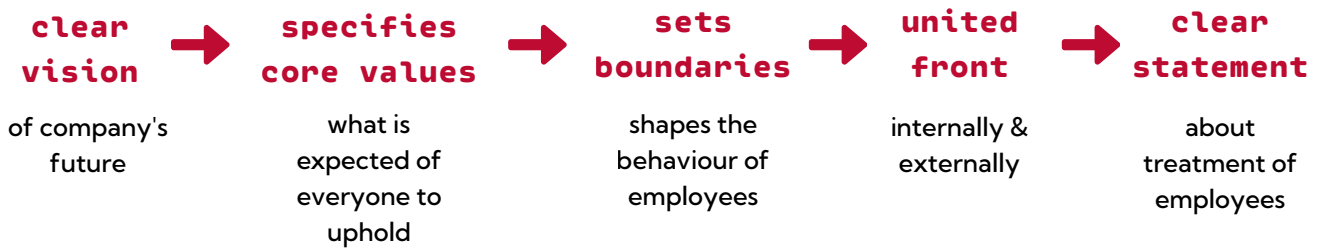
- psychological, financial, productivity, attractiveness of the workplace

## Identifying industry-specific risks

### Organisational culture

**“set of norms, values, beliefs and attitudes that guide the actions of all organization’s members and have a significant impact on employee behaviour.”**

## Why is it important?



## Who is responsible?

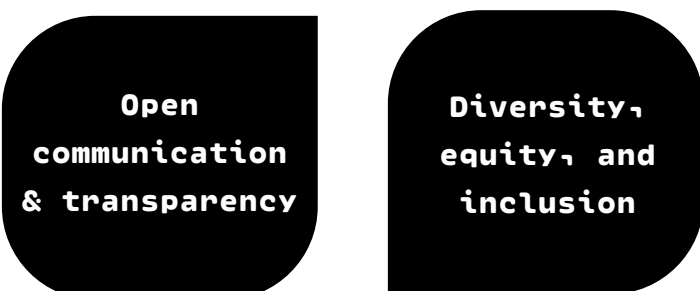
**Employers** & **Employees**

## 7 crucial components



Forbes, 2024

## ...in relation to sexual harassment



**How much of a difference can an environment make?**

**Industry- specific risks**

**Homogenous vs. heterogenous fields**

low workers diversity = more prone to sexual harassment

**male-dominated fields**

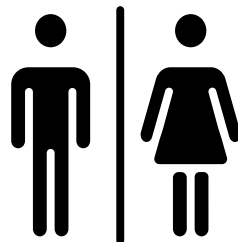
- more prone to issues with sexual harassment
- e.g. information and telecommunication, technically-versed fields, construction, finance and engineering

**blue collar vs. white collar jobs**

- highly masculine, associated with sexual bravado, sexual posturing... = higher chance of sexual harassment cases

**female-dominated fields**

- close contact with clients = higher threat
- e.g. retail, care sector, hospitality



**Homogenous vs. heterogenous fields**

more manual work = more prone to sexual harassment

**blue collar**

- manual and physical work mostly
- e.g. construction, uniform jobs



highly masculine, associated with sexual bravado, sexual posturing... = higher chance of sexual harassment cases

**white collar**

- office/ clerical/ managerial work, administration,
- e.g. accounting, law...

**Power imbalances**

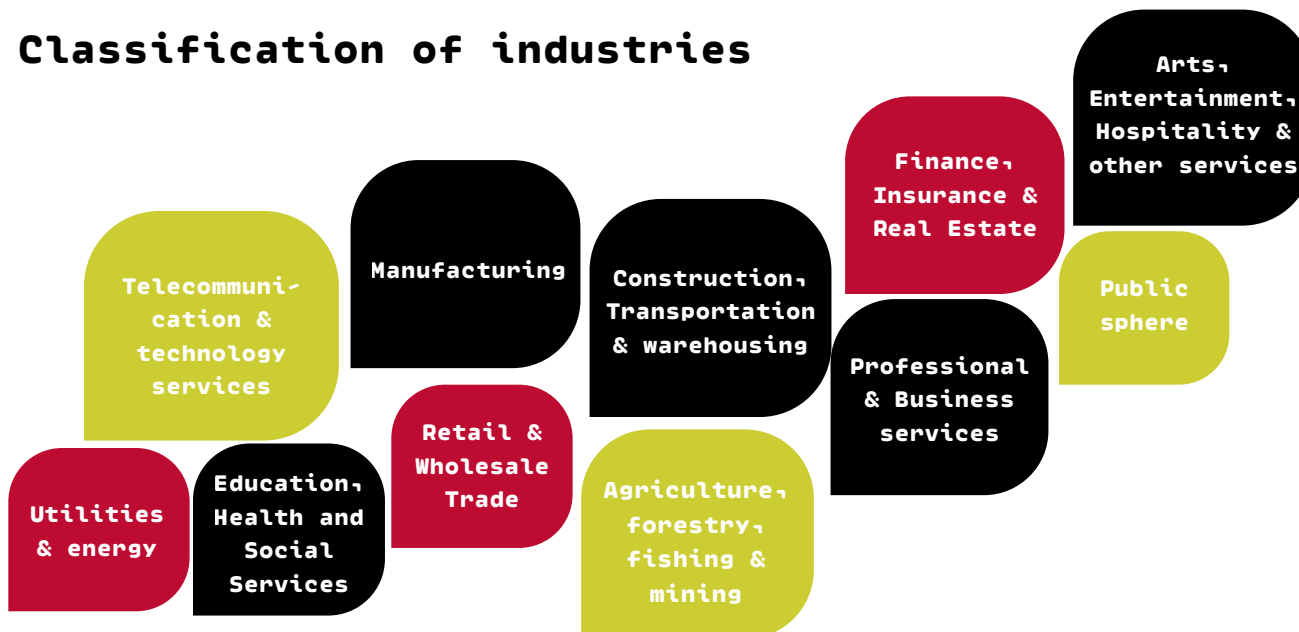
**Contact with customers, public**

**Isolated workplaces**

**Monotonous tasks of low intensity**

## Zooming in by specific industries...

### Classification of industries



#### Public sphere

Government, public administration, politics...

#### Risks:

- Rigid hierarchies with powerful gatekeepers
- Reputation-driven environments may discourage speaking out
- Harassment used to assert power or control

#### Arts, Entertainment, Hospitality & Other Services

Tourism, media, restaurants, recreation, personal care...

#### Risks:

- Late hours, alcohol consumption, and close customer interaction
- Power imbalances between staff and managers / talent and producers/directors
- Tips-based compensation may discourage reporting
- Informal work culture and blurred professional boundaries
- Gig/contract work can leave victims unprotected

## Education, Health & Social Services

schools, universities,  
hospitals, social care,  
NGOs...

### Risks:

- Close physical proximity in caregiving roles
- Gender imbalance (e.g., female nurses, male doctors)
- Vulnerability in night shifts or isolated settings
- Power imbalances between faculty/students or administrators/staff
- Isolated office or classroom settings
- Reporting can be complicated in tight-knit academic communities

## Finance, Insurance & Real Estate

banking, investment,  
insurance services,  
property markets...

### Risks:

- Competitive, high-stress environments with power imbalances
- After-hours work events with alcohol consumption
- Non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) used to silence victims

## Retail & Wholesale Trade

sales of goods to consumers  
and services...

### Risks:

- Direct interaction with the public (customers may harass)
- Younger, often inexperienced staff
- Fear of retaliation or losing hours
- NDAs

## Construction, Transportation & Warehousing

logistics, shipping,  
public transit, storage,  
construction...

### Risks:

- Male-dominated environments with "macho" culture
- Solo or remote work (e.g., truck drivers, delivery workers)
- Isolated job sites with limited supervision
- Infrequent HR presence or training, especially in small subcontracted teams
- NDAs

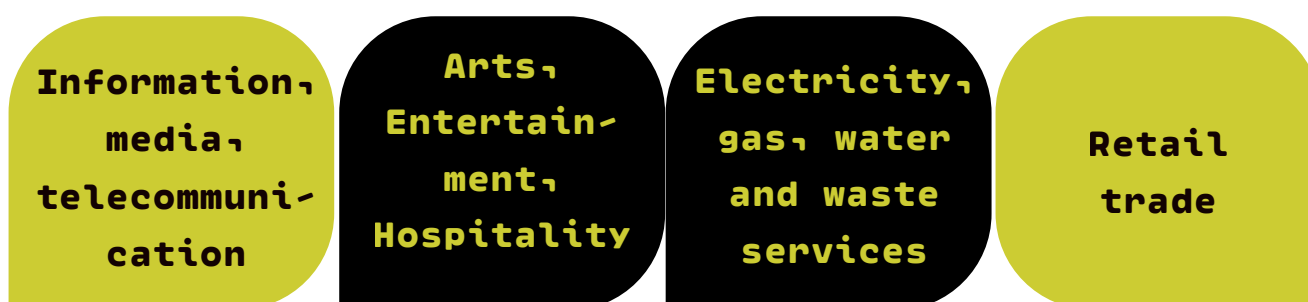
## Telecommunication and technology services

IT services, network engineers...

### Risks:

- Male-dominated environment
- Solo or remote work (isolated jobs with limited supervision)
- lack of HR supervision and training in place
- NDAs

### Top 4 industries with high rates of sexual harassment



### Key takeaways...



Organizational culture can make all the DIFFERENCE

Organizational culture should be established by an EMPLOYER, but it is also the EMPLOYEES that define its edges

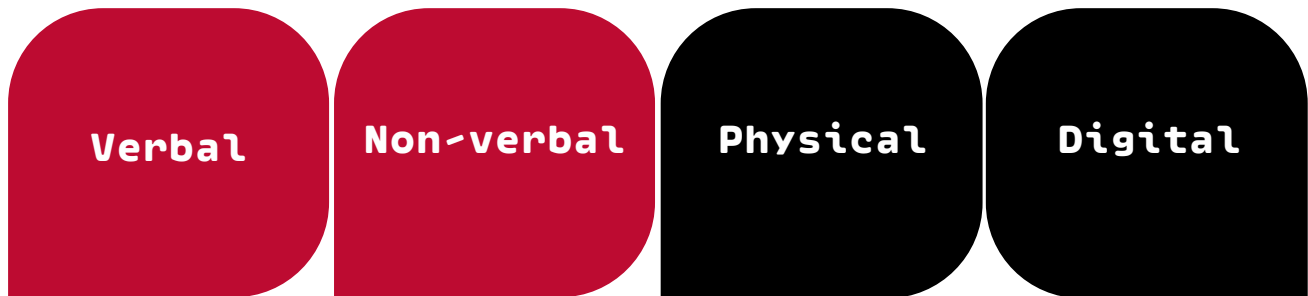
Some industries are naturally MORE PRONE to sexual harassment acts than others

Analyse POTENTIAL RISKS your company may be prone to, you can create much safer environment and prevent sexual harassment before it even appears

# Forms of Sexual Harassment

## Verbal and non-verbal sexual harassment

### 4 forms of sexual harassment



### Verbal Sexual Harassment

#### Definition

"an act of sexual harassment that is said out loud either to a person directly, near them or about them"

#### Main features:

- verbalized desire
- content of sexual nature
- unwilling recipient
- making someone feel uncomfortable or unsafe

#### Examples of verbal sexual harassment



## Non-verbal Sexual Harassment

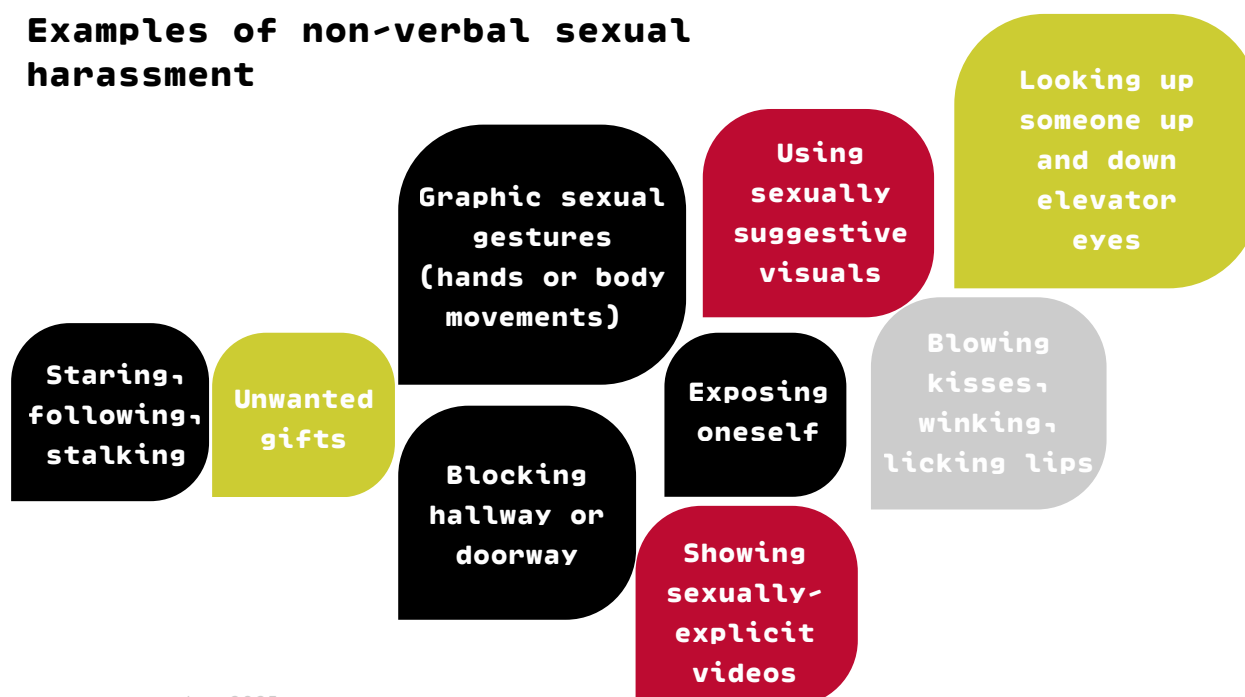
### Definition

"any form of unwanted sexual communication or conduct that involves something other than verbal speech but falls short of physical sexual contact"

### Main features:

- written communications, gestures, images
- context of sexual nature
- unwilling recipient
- making someone feel uncomfortable or unsafe

### Examples of non-verbal sexual harassment



source: trust me bro, 2025

## How to Set Boundaries

... guidelines, rules or limits that a person creates to identify for themselves what are reasonable, safe and permissible ways for other people to behave around them and how they will respond when someone steps outside those limits.

**Everyone's boundaries are DIFFERENT, and they need to be RESPECTED.**



## Setting Boundaries at Work – Practical Examples

### Communicating clearly:

- "I don't feel comfortable with this kind of joke. Let's keep the conversation professional."

### Redirecting the topic:

- If a colleague makes a sexual comment, shift the conversation back to work matters.

### Using body language:

- Maintain a serious expression, avoid laughing at inappropriate jokes, and step back physically if needed.

### Setting limits on availability:

- Declining after-work invitations that feel uncomfortable, or limiting personal sharing.

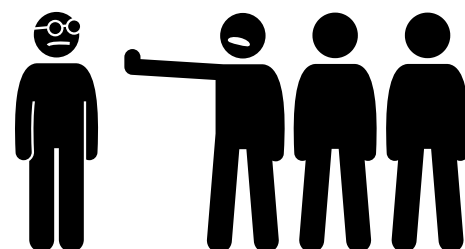
### Seeking support:

- Talking to HR, a manager, or a trusted colleague when boundaries are crossed repeatedly.

**If somebody feels UNCOMFORTABLE, actively declares their discomfort, you should STOP what you are doing and change the way you are approaching them**



**It is NOT OKAY to DIMINISH these feelings, BELITTLE somebody for speaking out and setting boundaries or EXCLUDE them from conversations as a result.**



How can we create a positive and respectful workplace where everyone feels safe and included?



Boundaries are key – they guide our actions and remind us to treat colleagues with respect.

## Consider...

- different types of acts presented are subjects of perceptions
- setting your own boundaries and be aware of boundaries of your colleagues
- environment without any judgement and ostracization is crucial
- ask for consent

## Be careful...

about differential treatment

make sure that differences between colleagues are only in style of delivery and do not spread into distribution of work or work related agenda

especially, if you are in a position of power

If somebody sets stricter professional boundaries it is not a reason for ostracization, differential treatment or discrimination.

## Key takeaways...



There are four different forms of sexual harassment. A harasser could use more than one form at once.

Verbal and non-verbal sexual harassment might be more difficult to identify as tend to be quite subtle as well.

Key aspects of an act of sexual harassment:

- unwanted, unwelcomed, aiming to violate person's dignity

For HR/Managers:

- Do not undermine any inappropriate behaviour and all reports that may come your way should be handled with proper care and attention
- Creating a safe environment does not mean preventing friendly relations to being built

For Individuals:

- Do not undermine the way you are feeling
- Set proper boundaries

# Physical and digital sexual harassment

## Physical Sexual Harassment

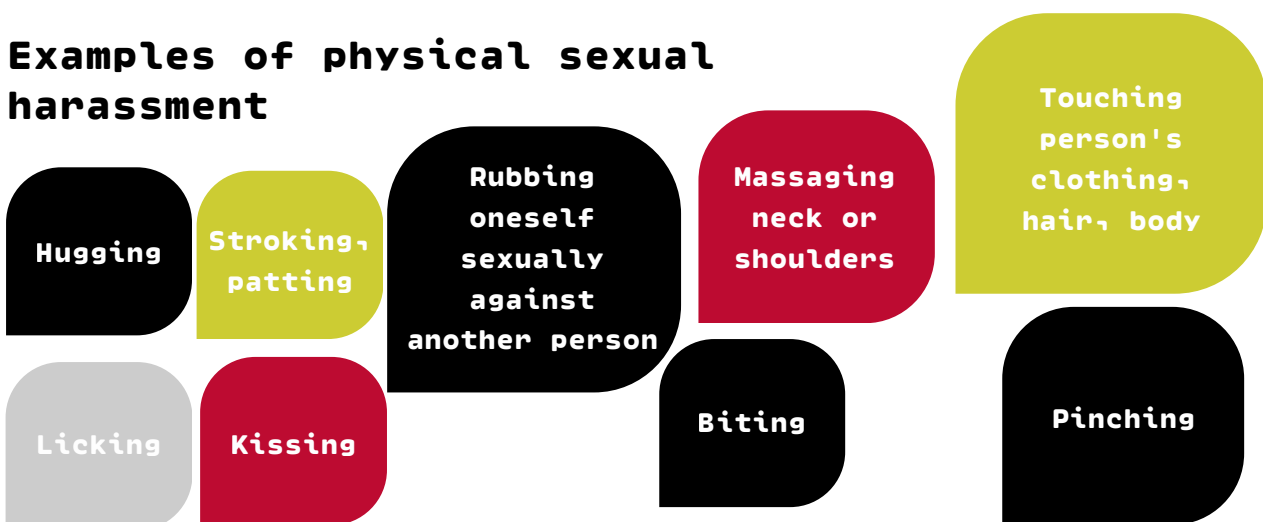
### Definition

"unwanted or unwelcome sexual advances include physical contact and unwanted touching"

### Main features:

- physical aspect, proximity
- extremely invasive
- context of sexual nature
- unwilling recipient
- making someone feel uncomfortable or unsafe

### Examples of physical sexual harassment



## Digital Sexual Harassment

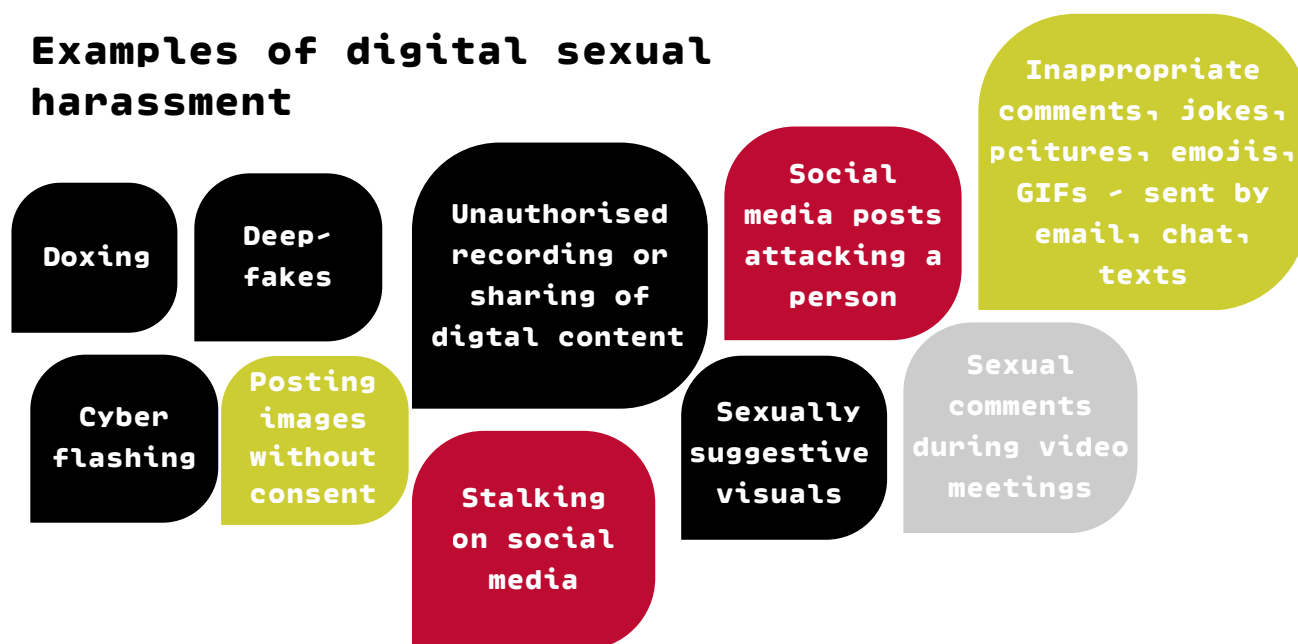
### Definition

"occurs when an employer, co-worker, manager, or fellow employee uses the internet, email, or text messaging to send sexually explicit messages and requests to employees"

### Main features:

- digital sphere, virtual platforms
- context of sexual nature
- unwilling recipient
- making someone feel uncomfortable or unsafe

## Examples of digital sexual harassment



## Responding to Sexual Harassment



### Reporting?

You can decide whether to report the incident, seek professional help, or choose another approach that makes sense to you. No solution is 'more correct' than another.

## Coping mechanisms

Try to acknowledge what happened

Confide in someone you trust

Talk to a counsellor or a therapist

Journaling

Stress-reducing activities

Social media - connect with others



## Useful tips to consider...

Keep evidence (screenshots, chats, pictures...).

A witness can play a crucial role.

Know your rights.

It is not your fault.

Anonymity can sometimes play to your disadvantage.

## Key takeaways...



There are four forms of sexual harassment – and a single situation may involve more than one at once.

Physical and digital harassment can be invasive and have a serious impact.

Key aspects of sexual harassment are that it is **unwanted, unwelcome, and aims to violate a person's dignity.**

### For HR/Managers:

Experiencing sexual harassment can be deeply unsettling, and in many cases a person may choose not to report it. It is important to create a safe space if someone decides to come forward.

### For Individuals:

Remember, there are different ways to cope with an experience of sexual harassment, and it is up to you to decide which approach feels most suitable.

# Risk Factors and Situations

## Understanding High-Risk Environments

### Why the Environment Matters

Sexual harassment doesn't happen in a vacuum.

This training explores how to spot and stop those risks.

It thrives in places where power isn't balanced, people stay quiet, and protection is weak.

### High-Risk Environments Quick Industry Recap

Hospitality, entertainment & services

Retail & wholesale trade

Finance, insurance & real estate

Healthcare, social services & education

Transportation & warehousing, construction

## Physical and Organizational High-Risk Factors

### What Makes an Environment High-Risk?

#### Physical Factors

**Isolated/ Quiet Spaces:** Easy for harassers to get away with it because no one's watching.

**Night Shifts:** Fewer staff, limited supervision, reduced support.

**Poor Security Infrastructure:** Bad lighting, unmonitored areas (locker rooms, parking lots).

**Work Off-Site:** Frequent travel, working in clients' homes.

**Online Work:** Digital communication brings new harassment risks.

#### Alcohol as a Workplace Risk Factor

**Alcohol** does not directly cause sexual harassment, but research shows it often plays a role in various forms of violent or inappropriate behavior. **While it is not a direct cause, it lowers inhibitions and increases the risk of misconduct.**

**Slovakia** ranks among the countries with the highest alcohol consumption in the EU. In 2022, the average annual consumption was **86 liters** of alcohol per person. (Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic)

That's why it is important to view alcohol consumption, **especially at company events**, as a potential risk factor.

## How Workplace Culture Influences Harassment

Workplace culture shapes whether sexual harassment is ignored or addressed. In unhealthy cultures, SH is seen as normal, kept quiet, and rarely punished.

**Normalization:** Sexist jokes, trivialization ("just a joke"), implicit acceptance.

**Silence & Secrecy:** SH is often a "public secret" – known, but ignored. Fear of retaliation and distrust in procedures stop people from reporting.

**Lack of Accountability:** Failure to investigate/sanction, protecting harassers. Powerful harassers are often protected to avoid "bad press."

**In male-dominated fields (e.g. Tech, logistics), tolerated sexism is more common.**

## Power Dynamics as a Key Factor

**Abuse of Power:** Sexual harassment is fundamentally an abuse of power.

**Hierarchical Structures:** Abuse of authority (managers, executives).

**Limited Recourse for Subordinates**

**Informal Hierarchies (seniority, social influence)**

## Why Many Don't Report

**Decision to Report:** Rarely passive; victims are actively silenced by internal & external pressures.

**Fear of Retaliation:** Job loss, demotion, social exclusion are key deterrents.

**Lack of Trust in Procedures:** Many believe reporting is futile; low rates of official reporting 2.6% (Gotthardová, K. (2024). National report on sexual harassment at the workplace: Slovakia. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung).

**Shame & Self-Blame:** Person experiencing SH may internalize blame, or avoid action to protect privacy/dignity.

**Invisibility of Vulnerable Workers:** Often excluded from official SH policy communication/training.

**Behavioral Changes:** Person experiencing SH adapt (clothing, avoidance) – burden shifted to them (Valkovičová, V., Karkošková, S., Musilová, M. (2023). A workplace without sexual harassment. IVPR).

## Forms of Dependency Amplifying Silence

**Dependency Amplifies Silence:** Various forms make reporting riskier for victims.

**Economic Dependency:** Fear of losing income/reduced hours; powerful deterrent for precarious workers.

**Professional Dependency:** Reliance on harasser for mentorship, assignments, reviews, references.

Career progression tied to silence; immense courage needed to report.

**Social Dependency:** Fear of ostracization or reputational damage in close-knit teams/industries.

Compounded if harasser holds significant social influence.

## The Bystander Effect

"It's not my problem."  
becomes "It's everyone's  
problem."

When no one reacts, the  
behavior becomes  
normalized. Silence  
protects the harasser -  
not the target.

Bystanders often feel uncertain,  
afraid, or assume someone else  
will act.  
Doing nothing sends a message:  
this is acceptable here.

## Recommendations

**Proactive Risk Assessment:** Regularly audit your environment.

**Cultural Transformation:** Actively work to challenge normalization, silence, lack of accountability.

**Address Power Imbalances:** Ensure fair processes, empower all employees.

**Beyond Legal Compliance:** Foster a workplace culture of respect and dignity.

**Reflection:** What high-risk factors exist in your organization?



## Key takeaways...

**For HR/Managers:** You learned that high-risk environments are defined by physical and organizational factors. You can actively prevent **harassment** by ensuring **balanced power dynamics and a transparent culture**.

**For Individuals:** It is crucial to remember that sexual harassment thrives in silence. Even as a bystander, your actions matter, as doing nothing sends a message that the behavior is acceptable. Your decision to report is powerful, even in the face of pressures.

## Vulnerable Groups and Disproportionate Risk

### Vulnerability Is Not Equal

**Sexual harassment affects many – but not equally.**

**Migrant workers, LGBTQ+ people, women in precarious jobs and others face higher risk due to overlapping vulnerabilities.**

**Effective prevention must be targeted, and built on empathy and structural awareness.**

### Groups at Increased Risk & Specific Barriers

#### Precarious & Client-Facing Women

- No access to HR or stable contracts
- Depend on tips or pleasing clients
- Abuse seen as “part of the job”

#### Migrant and Refugee Workers

- Language barriers, fear of deportation
- Isolated, unaware of rights
- High dependence on employer

## Groups at Increased Risk & Specific Barriers

### LGBTQ+ people

- Targeted SH (slurs, microaggressions, outing threats)
- Fear of being “outed” prevents reporting
- Lack of inclusive policies creates hostile climates

### Persons with Disabilities

- Dependence misused by harassers
- Communication barriers and disbelief

## Structural Barriers and Legal Gaps

Even **strong individuals** are **powerless** in weak systems.

Precarious work often falls outside labor protections, creating legal “**grey zones**” where SH happens with impunity.

**Formal justice is costly** and inaccessible — especially for those facing hardship, language barriers, or lack of support.

Most anti-harassment policies ignore **intersectionality**.

Generic, **one-size-fits-all** policies combined with **low employee awareness** result in weak or **ineffective protection** against sexual harassment.



**Without tailored protections and trust in the system, reporting becomes a last resort – often seen as futile: too costly, too risky, too lonely.**

## Intersectionality in Practice: Compounding Vulnerabilities

**Definition:** Overlapping identities (gender, race, class, sexual orientation, disability, nationality) create unique experiences of oppression and increased risk.

For SH, risk is not just one identity but how it intersects with other marginalized statuses (e.g., migrant woman, disabled LGBTQ+ individual).

**Example:** A trans man working part-time in the service sector avoids reporting SH due to precarious employment (fear of losing shifts) and profound fear of being 'outed'—having his gender identity involuntarily revealed.

**Implication for Employers:** SH prevention must be multi-dimensional, flexible, empathetic.

## **Implications for Prevention & Inclusion**

**Proactive Data Collection:** Identify patterns and high-risk areas before escalation.

**Tailored Policies:** Map vulnerabilities, cover all worker types, address third-party harassment.

**Accessible/Culturally Sensitive Training:** Multiple languages, accessible formats, unconscious bias training.

**Independent, Trusted Reporting Channels:** External ombudsman, ethics hotline, NGO partnerships.

**Full Support for Survivors:** Legal, psychological (trauma-informed), practical help.

**Foster Psychological Safety:** Culture where all feel safe to speak up without fear.

## **Final Message & Call to Action**

SH is a **fundamental workplace safety issue**, not just an individual offense.

Protecting the most vulnerable **raises safety** standards for everyone.

An **investment** in justice, productivity, and company reputation.

**Call to Action:** Identify at least two concrete steps to implement in your organization.

## Key takeaways...



**For HR/Managers:** This part taught you that harassment does not affect everyone equally. You must create tailored policies and accessible training to protect vulnerable groups like migrant workers, LGBTQ+ individuals, and those in precarious jobs. Ensure that your anti-harassment policies address intersectionality.

**For Individuals:** It is important to have in mind that even strong individuals can be powerless in a weak system. When reporting, it can feel too costly, too risky, and too lonely without tailored protections and trust in the system.

# Power, Relations, and Boundaries

## Power, relations & sexual harassment in the workplace

### Statistics



Out of all responses, 10.4% of SH cases detected were with a male offender in position of power.

0.9% of cases mentioned female offender in position of power

Research on Gender-Based Violence Against Women 2023: Key Findings, IVPR

## Understanding Power Dynamics

### Power

#### Definition

“Ability of an individual or group to control their physical and social environment; and as part of this process, the ability to influence the decisions which are and are not taken by others.”

#### 3 rules:

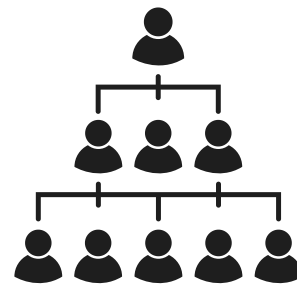
- Power is never evenly distributed.
- Power is always relative.
- Power is always fluid.

#### 3 levels of power

1. Societal (social perceptions)

2. Organisational (organisational structure)

3. Interpersonal or personal factors (individual perceptions)



Power can be objective or perceived

## Formal vs. Informal Power

often comes from (job) titles, and someone's place in the organisation's hierarchy.

comes from influence, relationships, or knowledge (e.g. persuasive personality, longevity or experience, cultural privilege, strength of relationship)

## Examples

### Informal

- an employee that is working in the company for longer period/ seniority level
- an employee that has strong networking skills
- an employee with persuasive personality – somebody that is perceived by others as highly influential

### Formal

- boss-employee
- manager-subordinate
- senior employee-junior employee
- professor-student
- mentor- mentee
- coach - trainee

## Gendered POV:

### Informal

Societal perception & gender stereotypes:

Our society do not usually associate power with feminine qualities and argue that women do not usually possess the skills to acquire either formal or informal power.

### Formal

Vertical seggregation:

Men are more likely to occupy positions with greater power/ higher-status positions. Women, on the other hand tend to occupy positions that lack the power aspect.

**Other important terms to remember**

**Power dynamics**

distribution and exercise of power among individuals in different positions

**Power imbalances**

unequal distribution of power between people in their (work) relationship

**Power-based harassment**

Harassment that occurs when someone misuses authority or influence to intimidate, exploit, or silence others

**Sexual Harassment by Person in Power**

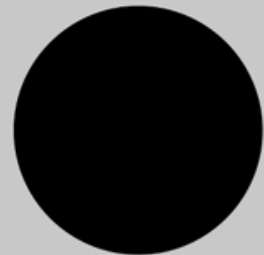
**Sexual harassment by:**

**supervisor**

- Power imbalance is recognisable
  - reward and coercive powers
- Effect
  - humiliation
  - abuse of power
- Perception: even innocent gestures may be taken as manipulative steps

**co-worker**

- Less visible power imbalances
  - perception of power
- Effect
  - humiliation
  - increase one's power
- engagement in less severe types of sexual harassment



**Power paradox**

**subordinate**

Contrapower harassment = people in power being harassed by their subordinates

**Example:** female professor - male student

Usually, woman in more dominant position

- threatening feeling → motivating behaviour diminishing that power
- glass cliff: being in position that with high risk of failure
  - high risk of failure → even small mistakes are damaging

## Specific Types of SH with Power Imbalances

### Coercion

“Pressuring someone to act against their will, often due to a power imbalance”

Abusive or coercive power:

when someone in a position of authority uses threats, punishment, or manipulation to control or harm others, often for personal gain

Sexual coercion in the workplace:

Involves pressuring or forcing someone into unwanted sexual activities by threatening their job security or career prospects.

### Quid pro quo

“A person in a position of power demands sexual favours in exchange for job benefits, such as promotions, raises or continued employment”

2 key aspects:

- Employment decisions are based on exchanging sexual favours.
- They must choose between their integrity and career progression.

### Hostile work environment

Unwelcome sexual behaviour, such as inappropriate comments, gestures, or physical contact, becomes severe enough to interfere with an employee's ability to perform their job.

## Watch out for false consent

It is an agreement that appears voluntary but is given under pressure, fear, or obligation.

It is a very frequent phenomenon of sexual harassment whenever power imbalances are in play.

One of the reasons are fear factor and retaliation



## Key takeaways...



Power relations take a crucial role in cases of sexual harassment.

There are different ways power can come into play:

- formal vs. informal power
- coercion, quid pro quo, hostile environment

Power paradox is present in cases of sexual harassment as well.

## Setting Boundaries and Effective Structures

### Why Are Power Relations a Crucial Factor in SH Issues?

Sexual harassment coming from a person that holds a certain amount of power over you in professional settings adds a different layer.

Difficult for those with less power to challenge inappropriate behaviour or report issues like harassment.

## Most Common Reasons for Underreporting

“Out of fear that it could negatively impact my job, position, and future career.”

“I thought nothing could be done.”

“It would only worsen the situation.”

NATIONAL REPORT ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT THE WORKPLACE SLOVAKIA, CELSI, 2024

### Retaliation and Fear Factor

“Retaliation occurs when an employee faces adverse actions from their employer or colleagues after reporting or resisting sexual harassment in the workplace.”

Retaliation is illegal.

### Forms of retaliation



source: trust me bro, 2025

### What Can Organisations Do to Prevent Abuse of power?

## Four key factors

professional  
boundaries

safety

zero  
tolerance

organisational  
accountability

### Professional boundaries

"limits that define respectful and appropriate behaviour between people in a work context"

What to do: Set clear boundaries within your organisations, teams, work relationships

Lead by example

How to:

- written materials that reinforce the organisational (code of conduct)
- voice them out loud,
- ethical leadership

### Safety

2 ways how safety can be achieved:

- psychological safety
- safe structures

Key components:

- trust
- transparency
- respect

How to: stating clear boundaries, proper employee training, show active effort

Remember providing safe space makes all the difference in SH cases!

## Zero tolerance

**Zero tolerance policy:** set of rules and procedures that aim to prevent and eliminate any violations of workplace health and safety standards

**How to:** formal establishment in the organisational rules and structures

**Establishing a zero tolerance policy is a commitment**

**Key components:**

- strong and clear policy
- clear implementation
- regular assessment

## Organisational accountability

**“Systems and structures that ensure all members of an organization are held responsible for their actions, regardless of status”**

**How to:**

- transparency
- clarity in roles and responsibilities
- leadership
- trust
- consequences

**These rules are helping to prevent SH, but they are beneficial for workflow as such.**

**“the organisation being answerable for its actions, decisions, and impact it has”**

## Step-by-step guidance



## Key takeaways...



Power relations take a crucial role in cases of sexual harassment

It is important to have clearly defined approach towards sexual harassment (as an employer as well as an employee)!

**THERE ARE 4 STEPS EMPLOYERS CAN DO TO PREVENT SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THEIR WORKPLACE**

- professional boundaries, safety, zero tolerance policy, organisational responsibility

# Stereotypes Behind Harassment

## Understanding Biases and Stereotypes

Everyone who has a brain has **PREJUDICES...**

Human beings are **irrational by nature.**

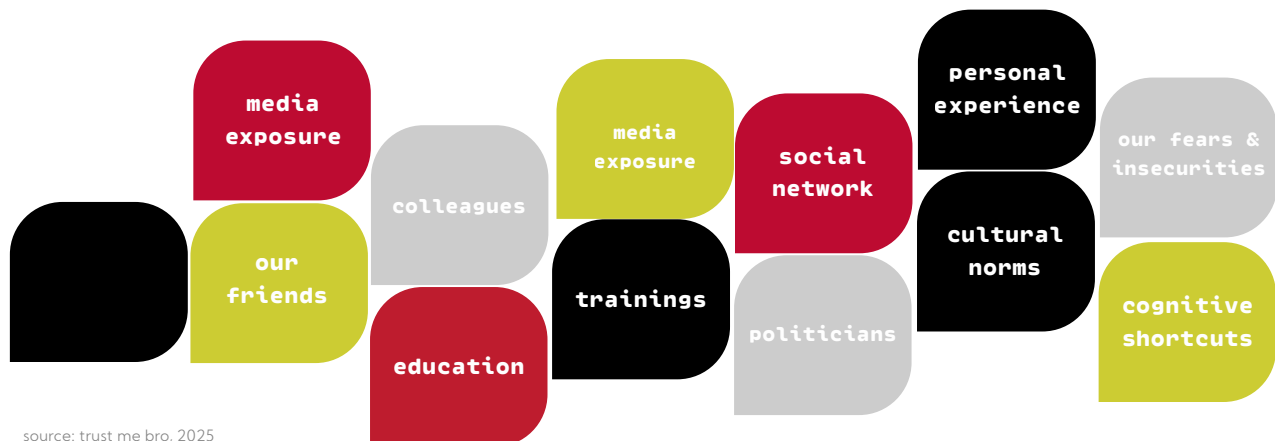
People often make decisions based on biases, poor judgment, or other irrational factors.

### Our cognitive biases

- can assist us,
- can cause us harm,
- affects decisions or conduct.

critical thinking

### What factors shape our prejudices?



source: trust me bro, 2025

### What are unconscious biases?

- shaped by previous experiences and cultural influences
- may contradict the individual's values and beliefs
- affect behavior and decision

## What are stereotypes?

- a set of cognitive generalizations about a group of people
- simplify (rather negative) perceptions and judgments resistant to revision

### Unconscious biases & stereotypes

...may unintentionally dismiss talent...

...may affect our judgement, in the workplace...

...automatically linking a particular background to negative characteristics.

## SEEDS model

NeuroLeadership Institute

### Mental abbreviation - SIMILARITY

Preferring individuals with comparable experiences or connections.

Consequence:

Limited diversity and its associated advantages.

### Mental abbreviation - EXPEDIENCE

Relying on personal judgment due to deadline pressure and limited information.

Consequence:

Frequently wrong and based on poor or inaccurate information."

### Mental abbreviation - EXPERIENCE

Surrounding ourselves with individuals who share our perspectives.

Consequence:

Fear of leaving the comfort zone and lack of experimentation or innovation.

### Mental abbreviation - DISTANCE

Annual versus quarterly assessment. Remote work vs office.

Consequence:

Unfair judgement and possible neglect of priorities.

**Mental abbreviation - SAFETY**

Fear of change. Excessive emotional involvement without factual basis.

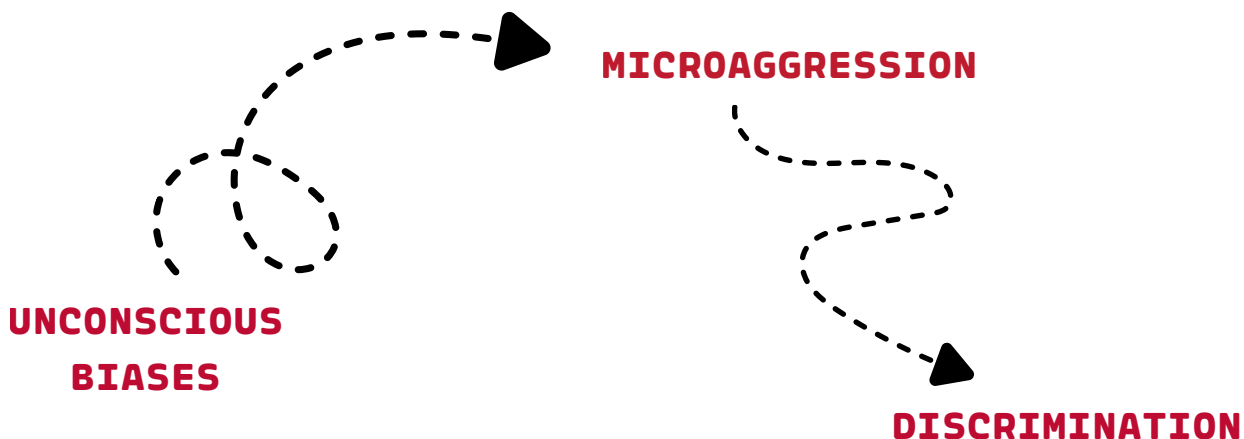
Consequence:

Sticking to failing projects and delaying necessary changes.

**Microaggression**

- verbal and nonverbal expressions
- caused by differences, bias, and stereotypes,
- and can range from compliments and subtle insults to open aggression.

**Microaggressions cannot universally be deemed discriminatory.**



**Normalization Through Bias**

unconsciously downplaying, ignoring, or excusing problematic behavior

women are too sensitive  
=  
implicit gender bias



## Key takeaways...

### HRs should remember:

- SEEDS model
- unconscious biases
- (micro)aggression

### INDIVIDUALS

- errors in thinking
- prejudices

### MANAGERS should remember:

- normalization
- discrimination

## How Gender Stereotypes Fuel Sexual Harassment

### SH & Biases

often stems from biased attitudes about gender, power, and sexuality—treating people as inferior or less worthy based on stereotypes rather than as individuals, which fuels discriminatory and disrespectful behavior.

The European Parliament notes that migrant women were almost twice as likely as non-migrant women in the EU to report experiencing sexual violence and harassment. Among girls from ethnic minority backgrounds who suffered abuse, over one-third (37%) reported being targeted because of their race or ethnicity.

### How common is sexual harassment in the Workplace?

#### According to the results of the EIGE (2025)

- 31% of working women have experienced sexual harassment at work, rising alarmingly to 42% among young women aged 18 to 29.
- 75% of ever-working women believe that sexual harassment is uncommon.
- 7% of women do so through social media messaging apps, rising to 13.5% for women in the age group 18 to 29.

## Legal Definitions of SH

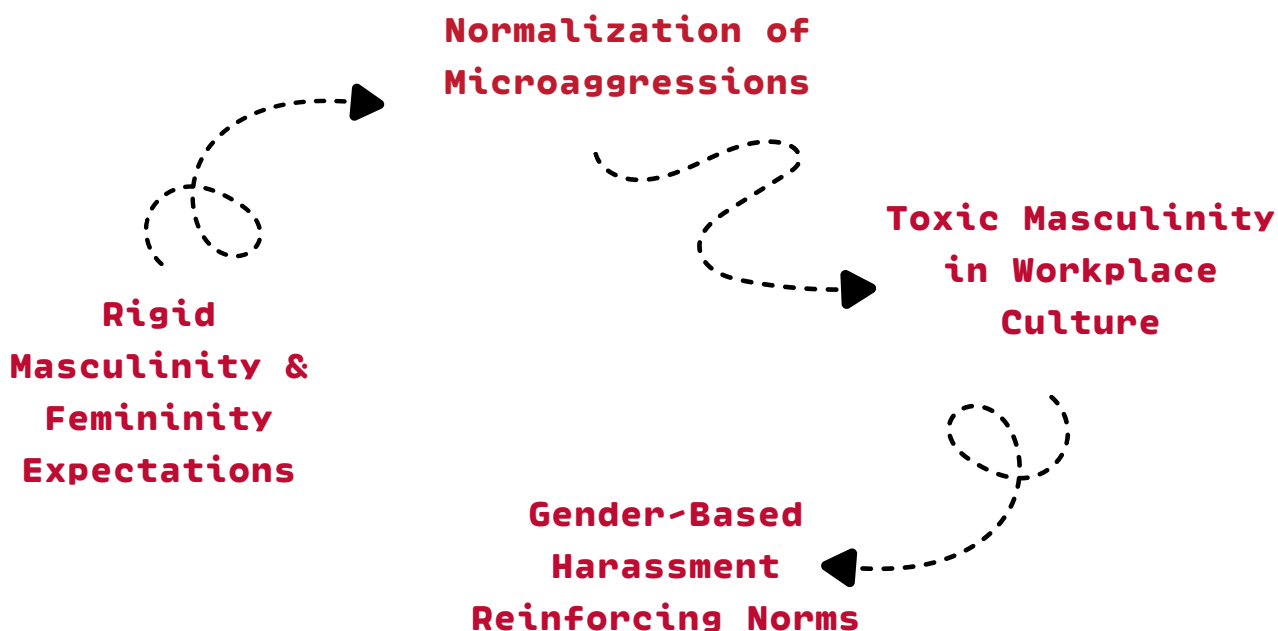
### Norwegian Law

«Sexual harassment» means any form of unwanted sexual attention that has the purpose or effect of being offensive, frightening, hostile, degrading, humiliating or troublesome.

Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act, Section 13.Prohibition against harassment

### Slovak Law

Unconscious verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, the intention or consequence of which is or may be a violation of person's dignity and which creates an intimidating, degrading, disrespectful, hostile or offensive environment". Our biases and societal stereotypes affect our judgment, even in the workplace.



### Normalization

"That's just the way he jokes."

"It happens all the time here."

"Nobody else has a problem with it."

### Gaslighting

"You're being too sensitive."

"You're overreacting."

"Are you sure it wasn't just a misunderstanding?"



## Challenging Gender Norms



Promote Inclusive Policies



Encourage Open Dialogue



Provide Training



Lead by Example

**Men are also sexually harassed.**

**The ratio is 1:3.**

**But many men often never tell anyone...**

**Biases and SH fueled by overlapping identities.**

**Gender combined with race, motherhood, disability, sexual orientation, or immigration status.**

**Person experiencing SH confronting the person who committed SH**

**3 things that help to confront:**

- have an ally or a witness
- be specific about what is upsetting you
- be clear that you want the behaviour to stop.

**...if the behaviour continues after confrontation, you have much stronger case moving forward**

**Key takeaways...**



**HRs/ Managers should remember:**

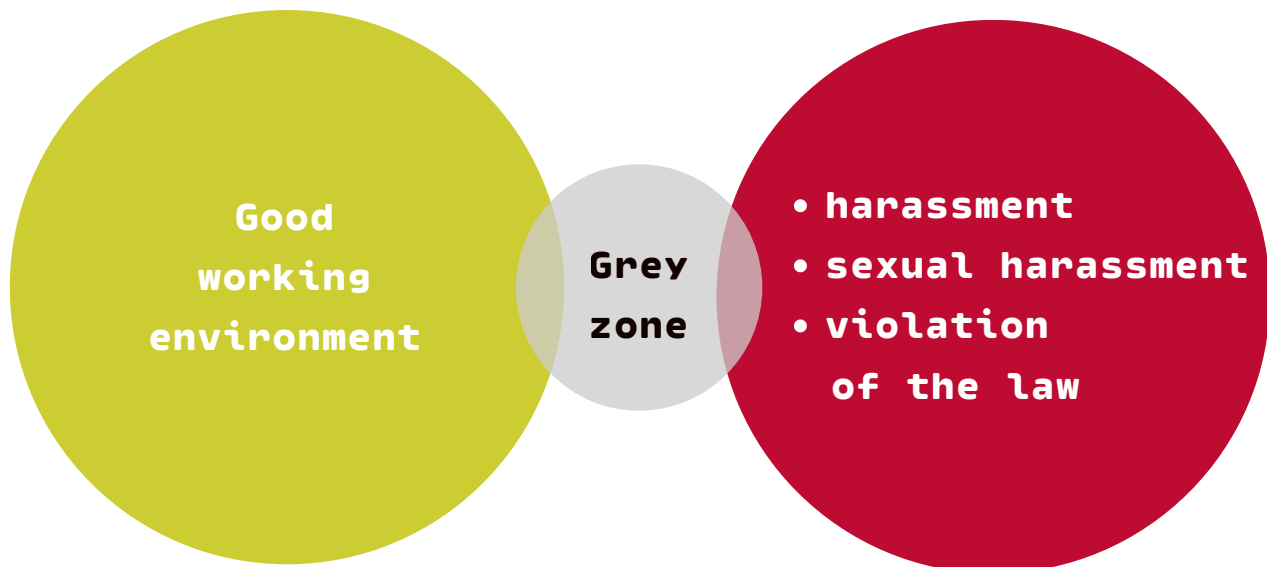
- SH is related to biases and often fueled by intersectionalities and power
- SH can't be normalized

**INDIVIDUALS**

- be aware of biases and think critically
- recognize and respond to SH
- confront harassment with clarity and support

# Identifying and Responding to SH

## "Grey Zone" Behaviors & Understanding Impact



### Recognizing Grey Zone Behaviors in Context

#### Workplace Examples:

- Unwanted comments about appearance, excessive flirting.
- Overly personal questions about private life or sexuality.
- Standing too close, prolonged staring, suggestive gestures.

#### Social Settings (related to work):

- Persistent invitations after work.
- Inappropriate touching or comments at work social events

### Common Justifications & Excuses

"It was just a joke!"

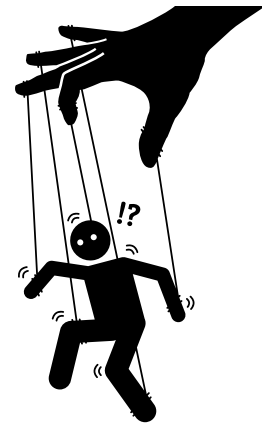
"It was just a compliment!"

"I was only kidding!"

"You're too sensitive!"

A common strategy used to dismiss someone's experience is **gaslighting**.

Manipulating a person into doubting their own feelings or memories.



## The Cumulative Effect of Harassment

### Intent vs. Impact: A Core Principle

Sexual harassment is not about sex, it's about power, disrespect, and the violation of personal boundaries.

Even subtle actions can have big impacts if they make someone feel unsafe, humiliated, or objectified

What matters most is the effect on the person experiencing it, not the intention behind it.

### The Cumulative Impact

#### Small Actions, Big Consequences

Seemingly minor actions can have a significant, cumulative impact.

This affects the individual experiencing it and the overall health/productivity of the workplace.

Little cracks in the foundation can lead to a collapse.

Leads to fear, secrets, and resentment – the “Morning Show Effect.”

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## Red Flags for HR

"That's just how he/she jokes."

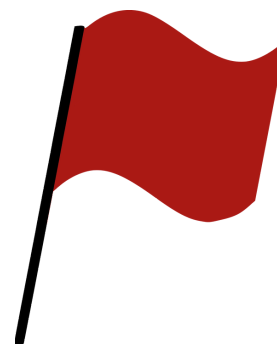
People rolling eyes but **staying silent**.

High **turnover** in one department.

Employees **avoiding** certain colleagues or areas.

Lots of "**off-the-record**" conversations about someone's behavior.

People **reluctant to speak** in meetings.



**Even if your workplace seems positive, it's crucial to address grey zone behaviour early and openly.**

## Key takeaways...



**For HR/Managers:** You learned that sexual harassment is a violation of the law. You must be proactive in recognizing "red flags" such as frequent rumors, high turnover, and staff avoiding certain managers, because "Culture is not what you proclaim. It's what you tolerate."

**For Individuals:** It is crucial to remember that harassment is defined by its impact on you, not the intent of the person engaging in the behavior. Seemingly minor actions can have a significant cumulative effect, so if you experience it, you can try set boundaries, document the interaction, and decide whether to report it.

## Establishing a Culture of Consent and Respect

Consent is an **agreement between participants** to engage in sexual activity. Consent should be **clearly and freely** communicated.

Consent cannot be given by individuals who are **underage, intoxicated or incapacitated by drugs or alcohol, or asleep or unconscious**. If someone agrees to an activity under pressure of intimidation or threat, that isn't considered consent because it was not given freely.

**Unequal power dynamics**, such as engaging in sexual activity with an employee or student, also mean that consent cannot be freely given.

### Creating a culture of consent

Avoid touching people or their belongings without clear permission.

Treat everyone equally and respect boundaries, no matter their identity.

Silence isn't consent; it must be explicit.

Anyone can withdraw consent at any time, and "no" always means stop.

Anything beyond normal work interactions should be clearly agreed upon

### Consent in the workplace

Consent does not exist if someone abuses a **position of trust**, power or authority. The workplace is usually a space where different hierarchies are at play at all times.

Employees might feel **they have to accept everything** a manager or a client asks of them, so as to not have any negative consequences at their job. This means that it is often easier for persons in positions of power (supervisors, managers, clients) to act in a harassing way.



## Responding to Sexual Harassment

### Responding as a recipient

#### If You Experience SH

##### Your Steps to Action:

Try to set clear verbal boundaries: (e.g., "That makes me uncomfortable. Stop.")

Try to document interactions: Write down what happened, when, who was there, and how you felt.

If it feels safe and possible report the issue: Use official workplace channels (HR, manager) and consider external options.

### Responding as a Bystander

#### If You Witness SH

##### The Power of Intervention

Bystander Intervention: When someone who is not directly involved steps in to help.

Importance of not being a passive observer – your actions can make a difference.

Learn safe and effective strategies.

#### The **3D** Bystander Method

##### DIRECT:

Speak up directly if safe.

- "That's not appropriate."

##### DISTRACT:

Change the topic or create an interruption.

- "Hey, can you help me with this over here?"

##### DELEGATE:

Get help from someone with authority.

- HR, manager, senior colleague



Support someone experiencing SH by checking if they're okay, offering help to report if they wish, and ensuring they know they're not alone or where to find support.

## Responding as a Leader

### Your Responsibility

Ensure reporting mechanisms are clear, confidential, and accessible.

Foster a zero-tolerance policy on sexual harassment.

Provide bystander training and promote an inclusive culture.

Act promptly, impartially, and thoroughly on all reports.

**Culture is not what you proclaim.  
It's what you tolerate.**

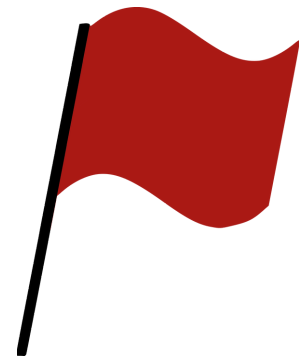
### Red Flags for HR

Frequent rumors about certain individuals.

Staff avoiding specific managers.

High staff turnover in some departments.

Patterns of unexplained sick leave.



### Recommendations for Employers & HR

Establish clear and confidential reporting channels.

Communicate and enforce a zero-tolerance policy.

Provide regular training on recognizing subtle behaviors

Respond promptly and fairly to complaints.

Monitor workplace dynamics for warning signs.

Support and protect employees who come forward.

## Key takeaways...



### For HR/Managers:

It is essential that you create a culture of consent and enforce a zero-tolerance policy. You are responsible for establishing clear, confidential, and accessible reporting channels to support and protect employees who come forward.

### For Individuals:

It is important to know that consent must be clearly and freely communicated, and it can be withdrawn at any time. Consent cannot be freely given if someone is in a position of power.

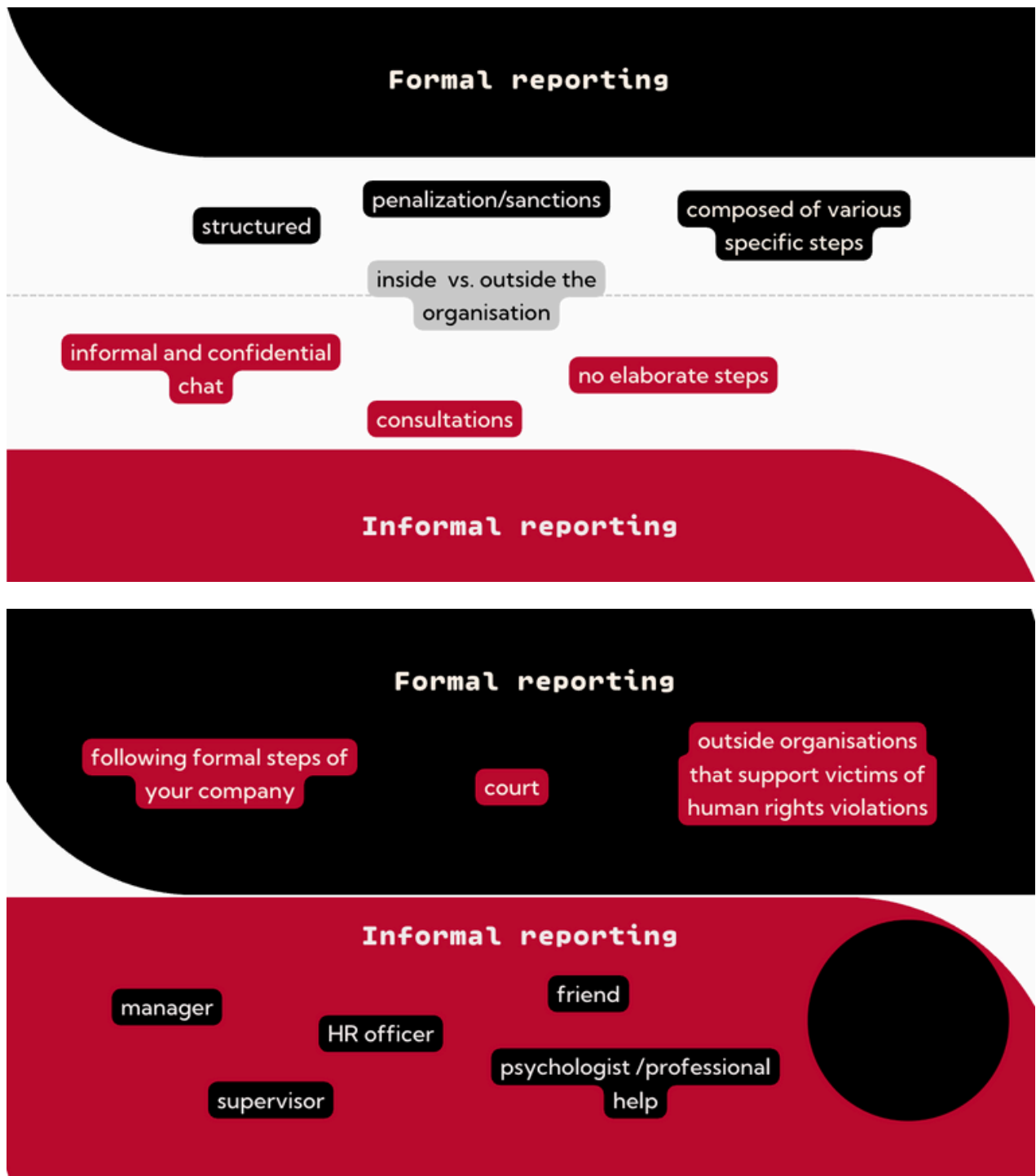
If you witness harassment, you can use the 3D Bystander Method (direct, distract, or delegate) to intervene safely and effectively.

# SH Reporting - Big Picture

## Introduction into SH Reporting

### Reporting procedure

the process of bringing to the attention of the appropriate authorities any unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment





**Key thing to do:**

**Report the incident as soon as possible  
if possible**

## ESG Reporting & SH

### Relevant ESG components

**Social (S):** Safe and inclusive workplace, human rights, equal opportunities, employee well-being.

**Governance (G):** Codes of conduct, anti-harassment policies, accountability of leadership, whistleblowing mechanisms.

### What is assessed in ESG reporting:

- Existence of anti-harassment policies and public commitments.
- Reporting channels and protection of whistleblowers.
- Training & prevention programs for employees and managers.
- Key indicators: number of cases reported, resolved incidents, disciplinary actions.
- Diversity & inclusion metrics as part of workplace culture.

**Preventing sexual harassment is not only a legal obligation, but also a key ESG factor shaping reputation, sustainability, and employer attractiveness.**

**Dissatisfaction with attitude, pre-emptive activities and reporting mechanisms ...**

### According to the statistics...

- Interviews revealed a gap in sexual harassment protection in healthcare and social services.

- Almost 1/2 of the respondents claimed that they do not know whether their current employer has any regulations in place to prevent, address, and penalise workplace sexual harassment
- Among those who experienced SHW, 72% feel their employer falls short in education, 67% are dissatisfied with prevention, and 63% are dissatisfied with sanctioning
- nearly 1/2 of respondents feel their employer is insufficiently educating them about sexual harassment (SH) in the workplace, and about a third believe there's inadequate sanctioning for it

Source: CELSI Report, 2024



**Most harassed individuals who decide to report the incident, prefer to report it informally to colleagues or their managers or supervisors.**



**they need to:**

- **feel that they can confide in them**
- **be aware that the inappropriate behaviour is sexual harassment**

## **Key takeaways...**



There are 2 types of reporting procedures:

- **formal vs. informal**

According to the law the employer is required to create a safe environment and take care of any discriminatory activity.

There are different institutions outside of the employer's premises that can provide support to victims in extreme cases.

**Report sexual harassment as soon as possible, if possible.**

## Barriers to Reporting

### Institutional

“systemic obstacles within an organization, these kinds of barriers are usually in place as a result to the employer’s/the organization’s doing or state structures”

### Personal

“guided by the victim of sexual harassment, they are internal or emotional factors that eventually discourage someone from reporting such an act.”

## Institutional barriers

### 1. Lack of clarity

Unclear reporting processes

Unfamiliarity with reporting processes

Confusion over what constitutes reportable definition of sexual harassment= “gray zone”

### To remember...

#### Employer

- put in place clear reporting procedures
- put the work into familiarizing the employees on what options they have
- be clear on what kind of behaviour is tolerated

#### Employee

- be aware of what reporting procedures are in place
- do not be afraid to ask that the information be shared with you

Employees need to be aware also of the options they have outside of their company.

### 2. Limited confidence in formal reporting

Negative experiences with reporting

Lack of reporting channels

Poor HR response

Substantiation of the act

**To remember...****Employer**

- offering individuals who experienced SH or the person reporting the incident **anonymity, protection and safe space**
- make sure that the **processes are functional and proper response is offered**

**3. Influence of hierarchy, leadership and training level**

Fear of retaliation  
Unequal treatment

**To remember...****Employer**

- Consider that people coming from different hierarchical positions are **protected equally and adequately**. Make sure that the processes are functional and proper response is offered.
- The same possibility to report safely an unacceptable behaviour.

**4. Organisational culture**

Perpetuating sexual harassment  
Ignorant to sexual harassment incidents

**To remember...****Employer**

- make sure that **the rules and strict lines are defined** in terms of sexual harassment in the workplace
- workplace environment cannot enable unacceptable behaviour

**Personal barriers****1. Shame**

Victim-blaming  
Internalized guilt, self-blame  
Diminishing the validity of their feelings, boundaries

**2. Fear**

Stigma  
Being misunderstood  
Retaliation, consequences

### 3. Trauma

Burden on mental health

Suppressing feelings, undermining the seriousness of the experience

### 4. Darvo

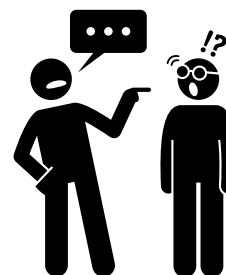
Deny

Attack

Reverse

Victim

Offender



### Defining barriers based on the type of an institution

#### Small and medium enterprises

size  
proper protective/ preventive mechanisms  
financial resources

#### Public and state sphere

access to justice  
distrust in the reporting process  
strong hierarchy, power plays

#### Large and international enterprises

more tools at their disposal  
more finances = more trainings  
long chain of bureaucracy



### From a legal perspective

Internal mechanisms and processes

Sensitization of society and raising awareness about sexual harassment

The need for individual and empathetic approach as well as large scale of services to offer to victims

Lack of trust in the institutions or people offering professional help in the reporting process

Addressing SH requires strong leadership accountability, transparent processes, and a cultural shift that prioritizes victim protection over institutional image.

## Key takeaways...



There here are 2 types of barriers:

- institutional and personal

Each company is prone to different types of potential barriers to reporting (based on its size).

Some barriers are also developed outside of the organisation at a state or legal level.

Identifying different possible barriers affecting your company can be a crucial step towards establishing proper reporting mechanisms.

# SH Reporting - Deep Dive

## Building Speak Up Culture & Reporting Procedure Step by Step

### Key aspects of reporting procedures

**Anonymity  
and safe  
space**

**Diversity  
of options**

**Easy  
access**

**Clear  
explanation  
of steps**

#### **Anonymity and safe space**

Create a space where people feel protected and able to open up.

**Be prepared to offer comforting and helping hand!**

#### **Diversity of options**

Ensure availability of diversity of tools and options that are able to provide adequate support to any situation and that the victims need.

**Be ready to listen!**

#### **Easy access**

Consider the level of formality and accessibility of different tools and information. Are they in easy reach for those in need?

**Make sure there are no obstacles!**

#### **Clear explanation of steps**

Take the time to carefully explain all the steps of the procedure and make sure that it was fully understood.

**Make sure that everybody understands!**

## Build an open “Speak-Up” culture

Encourage respectful disagreement

Reward courageous behavior

Share outcomes—not identities

### 1. Breaking the silence & recurrence

Reporting disrupts the cycle

Expose patterns

### 2. Empowering and protecting individuals

Preserve legal rights

Emotional relief & validation

Prevent escalation

Support network

### 3. Fostering safe, productive workplaces

Cultivate accountability

Boost morale & reduce turnover

Lower financial risks

### 4. Challenging bias & cultural stigma

Mitigating victim-blame bias

Boost morale & reduce turnover

Normalize speaking out

## Ways to encourage others to speak up



**By reporting SH, individuals not only protect themselves, but also help shape workplaces that are safer, fairer, and healthier.**

## **Step by Step Guide of SH reporting process**

**for a person who experienced SH in the workplace**

1. Document the incident.
2. Read policy & know procedures.
3. Choose your reporting route.
4. Submit a detailed, written report.
5. Follow up and escalate if needed.
6. Engage with investigation steps.
7. Understand your external legal options.



### **1. Recognize & Document**

Define the incident/s of sexual harassment clearly

Document details immediately (emails, screenshots, photos etc.)

**Keeping consistent documentation strengthens the case during investigation.**

### **2. Review Company Policies**

Locate the harassment policy

Reporting pathways (HR, designated officers, hotline)

Confidentiality protections

Anti-retaliation measures

### 3. Choose Your Reporting Channel

Direct supervisor or manager

Human Resources

Anonymous hotline or third party

Legal/professional advisor

### 4. Submit the Report

all documentation

statement of the outcome

request follow-up timeline



#### Reporting SH Example:

**Date & Time:** May 20, 2025 – 10:45 a.m.

**Location:** elevator in main office building

**People Present:** just me and [Name]

**What Happened:** [Name] stood unusually close, brushed against me twice, and said, "You should wear dresses more often—they really suit your body."

**How I Responded:** I stepped away and said, "I'm not comfortable with those comments." He smirked and said, "Take it as a compliment."

**Prior Incidents:** Jan 23, March 2 – similar inappropriate remarks

**Saved Evidence:** None from this instance; verbal only

### 5. Follow Up & Seek Support

check the update

use escalation

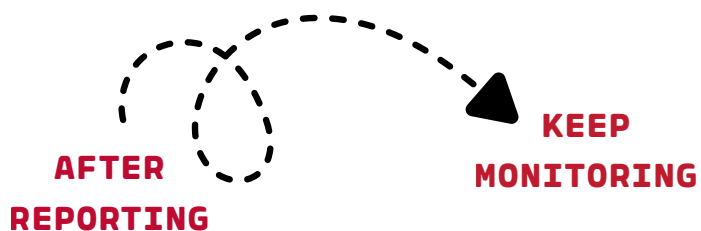
seek support

### 6. Understand Next Steps

investigation phase

interim measures

final resolution



**If you feel you cannot report SH or abusive behaviour within your workplace, please consider reporting to a state authority (i.e. the Ombudsman or the Labour Inspectorate) or your Union.**

## 7. Know Your Rights Outside the Organization

In most EU countries:

- Labour Inspectorate, Ombudsman, or equality bodies can be approached.
- Court action under anti-discrimination laws may be possible.

### Key takeaways...



#### For HRs/Managers

- set effective & safe systems of reporting SH
- build Speak Up Culture

#### For Individuals:

- keep detailed documentation
- follow the step by step procedure
- safe disclosure
- follow up and monitor
- know your rights outside of your workplace

## Investigation Process & Safety

**1 in 3 women in the EU have experienced physical violence, sexual violence, or threats in their adulthood.**

**Reporting is quite low: only 1 in 8 incidents are reported to the police; only 1 in 5 victims contact healthcare or social service providers.**

**While 31% of women in the EU report having experienced sexual harassment at work, 75% of ever-working women believe that sexual harassment is uncommon.**

Source: Fundamental Rights Agency. (n.d.). EU Gender-Based Violence Survey.

**A systematic review of 28 studies found many barriers: fear of not being believed; fear of mistreatment by police or justice system; internal reactions such as shame, guilt, self-blame; societal norms and “rape myths”; perpetrator being someone with higher status or credibility, etc.**

Source: Wieberneit, M., et al. (2024). Silenced Survivors: A Systematic Review of the Barriers to Reporting, Investigating, Prosecuting, and Sentencing of Adult Female Rape and Sexual Assault. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 25(5), 3742-3757.

### What Happens After Reporting

**The employer must take complaint seriously, promptly investigate, stop the harassment, and protect from retaliation while maintaining confidentiality where possible.**

## Step by Step Guide of SH investigating process

1. Intake and acknowledges
2. Investigation steps
3. Possible outcomes

for employer dealing with the SH incident report

### 1. Intake and acknowledgment

- formally document the notifier's claim
- preliminary review
  - report assessment
  - completeness assurance
  - immediate actions determined

Notifier should be informed about next steps during whole process.

#### An acknowledgment

The employer will provide the notifier with an acknowledgment confirming that the notification has been received.

The employer will also provide the notifier with information on the outcome of the notification.

### 2. Investigation Steps

- Fact-finding
  - interview parties, identify witnesses
- Evidence gathering
  - collect documents, records, messages
- Interim measures
  - ensure safety, prevent retaliation, adjust workplace if needed

#### Presumption of Innocence vs. Duty to Act

##### Presumption of Innocence (Legal principle)

- Enshrined in the Slovak Constitution and Criminal Procedure Code.
- Everyone is considered innocent until proven guilty by a court of law.

- Applies in criminal proceedings (e.g. sexual harassment as a potential crime).
- Protects individuals from being unfairly punished without due process.

Focus is on risk management, prevention, and protection, not on declaring someone guilty.

#### Duty to Act (Employer responsibility)

- Employers are legally and ethically required to ensure a safe workplace.
- Obligation to respond immediately to any report of harassment – even before guilt is legally established.
- Actions can include:
  - temporary separation of parties,
  - offering support and counseling,
  - launching an internal investigation,
  - ensuring no retaliation.

Focus is on risk management, prevention, and protection, not on declaring someone guilty.

### 3. Possible Outcomes

- Employer remedies
  - disciplinary action, policy updates, training
- Settlement or lawsuit
  - mediation, legal claim, compensation
- No change
  - allegations unsubstantiated, case closed
- Restorative Approaches (voluntary, victim-centered)
  - mediated dialogue, apology, agreed corrective actions

### Potential Follow-Up

#### Appeals Process

- Eligibility
- Submission timeline
- Review
- Response & Outcomes

**Dissatisfaction process**

- Lack of investigation or dialogue
- Appeal mishandling can constitute harassment
- Delays and stonewalling

**Timelines & Communication**

- Within 24–48 hours: HR receipt of the report
- 1–4 weeks: Investigation
- Weekly updates to reporting party
- Final Report & Conclusion



| Phase                       | Timeframe          | Key Communication   |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|---|
| Report Receipt              | Day 0–2            | Acknowledge and explain next steps.                         |
| Investigation               | Week 1–3           | Conduct interviews, gather evidence.                        |
| Interim Protective Measures | Week 1–4           | Notify parties of temporary actions (e.g., seating changes) |
| Status Updates              | Weekly during      | Inform complainant/respondent of progress.                  |
| Conclusion Delivery         | By day 30          | Share investigation outcome and follow-up plan.             |
| Post-Investigation          | 1–2 weeks after    | Check-in for feedback, retaliation, well-being.             |
| Aggregate Reporting         | Quarterly/annually | Publish anonymized metrics and improvements.                |

\*Estimated timelines are for guidance only and can differ depending on the company



## During the process

Every person involved in a case has the right to a fair, unbiased, and transparent process.

### Confidentiality

## Communications

Employers must ensure confidential, transparent, and proportionate communication:

- inform involved parties directly,
- engage managers/HR strictly on a need-to-know basis,
- communicate to the wider workforce only  
in general terms  
(policies, aggregated data,  
reminders of zero tolerance),
- regular compliance update to TOP Management.

## Secondary Victimization

Additional trauma that a victim may experience as a result of how others respond to their report (e.g., disbelief, blame, or insensitive questioning).

### Example:

"Asking a victim what they were wearing is a form of secondary victimization."

## Victimization Prevention Checklist

- Training
- Safe reporting options
- Monitoring
- Keep reporters informed
- Emotional and legal support
- Cultivate organizational culture

## Roles & Responsibilities

### Leadership Commitment to Safe Workplaces

1. Tone at the Top
2. Leading by Example
3. Empowering Reporting & Ensure Accountability
4. Transparency & Consistent Follow-through

### HR: Workplace SH Response Framework

1. Policy Development & Compliance
2. Training & Awareness
3. Confidential Reporting Channels
4. Investigation & Documentation
5. Support for Victims & Witnesses
6. Ongoing Review & Cultural Leadership
7. Building Trust Through Reputation

### Person reporting SH is responsible:

- providing an accurate and truthful account of the incident
- sharing all relevant details to the best of their knowledge
- using designated reporting channels within the organization
- cooperating with the investigation process when needed
- respecting confidentiality of the process

### Should get:

- safety,
- updates,
- emotional support.



## Witness/es

- duty to cooperate with the investigation process
- respecting confidentiality of all parties
- exercising rights to protection from retaliation/backlash

## Should

- support the person who experienced SH (listen, validate, encourage reporting)
- document their own observations and actions
- promote a respectful, safe workplace culture

## FRIES Concept

Consent means agreeing to sexual activity clearly and freely.

Saying "yes" helps both partners understand and respect each other's boundaries.

## YES or NO?



## Key takeaways...



### HRs should remember:

- Company policy
- Training
- Investigation & Documentation
- Support

### MANAGERS should remember:

- Empowering Reporting
- Transparency
- Trust

## INDIVIDUALS

- right to safety
- duty to cooperate

# FINAL INFORMATION



**Publication name:**

SOS – Speak Out Safely: A Workbook for Preventing Sexual Harassment in the Workplace

**Year of publication:**

2025

**Publisher / Project implementation:**

- Women's Algorithm (Slovakia), zenskyalgoritmus.sk
- KUN – Centre for Equality and Diversity (Norway), kun.no

**Author team and professional patronage:**

The content was developed by experts from the Women's Algorithm and KUN organizations based on current surveys and legislation in the Slovak Republic and the EU.

**Graphic processing:**

Designed in line with the visual identity of the SOS project, The Female Algorithm.

A free online course in Slovak is available on the website:

<https://www.zenskyalgoritmus.sk/speak-out-safely>

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Funded by the European Union. The views and positions expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views and positions of the European Union or the Slovak Academic Association for International Cooperation (SAAIC). Neither the European Union nor the SAAIC assumes any responsibility for them.