

Key Findings

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What #MeToo
Means for
Corporate
America

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What #MeToo Means for Corporate America

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“Sexual misconduct at work is a secret in plain sight. But because of the systems in place, and individual fears, we’ve turned a deaf ear and a blind eye. We need to develop the same muscle we’re developing for implicit bias, and to call out misconduct when we experience it or see it happening.”

Why We Studied #MeToo

The **#MeToo** movement gave a much-needed platform to many victims of sexual misconduct who had been ignored, silenced, and dismissed by those around them. For decades, a culture of silence around sexual misconduct has prevailed at work, thanks to three drivers:

Speak no evil.

Few victims report their experiences. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) found that nearly three out of four employees who experienced sexual harassment did not report it to a supervisor, manager, or union representative.¹

See no evil.

Until recently, companies could look the other way. As long as they trained employees on their anti-harassment policies, they could mount a strong legal defense against claims of employer liability, thus separating their reputations from those of bad actors.²

Hear no evil.

To date, there has not been a comprehensive study of sexual misconduct within white-collar occupations. White-collar employers don’t have benchmarks by which to assess the rates of sexual harassment and assault within their own companies.

As a result, companies tell us they remain unsure how to respond post-**#MeToo**—and lack the information they need to do so. It is imperative that employers address sexual misconduct, especially given the costs associated with it. Not only are leaders ousted, share prices topple and company reputations suffer.³

We set out to provide companies with the information they need to understand the breadth of sexual harassment and assault at work, both for women and for men. With our nationally representative survey, we gathered data from:

3,213 Survey Respondents



Working full-time



Ages 21–65



White-collar

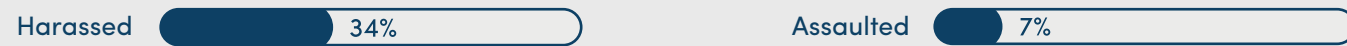


Bachelor's degree+

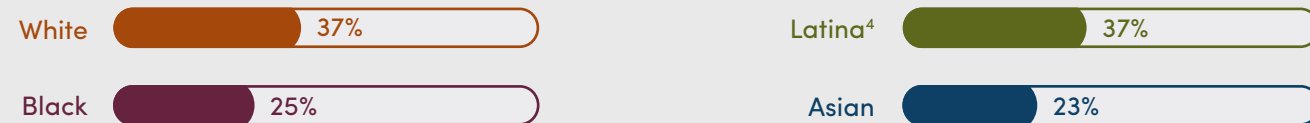
More Than 1 in 3 Women Have Been Harassed

Sexual misconduct affects a broad swath of the corporate workforce. Women in white-collar occupations bear a significant risk of sexual harassment in the workplace. We also see gender and hierarchical power dynamics at play in sexual harassment; nearly all female victims have been harassed by men. Women who have been sexually harassed are also highly likely to be harassed by someone with a rank higher than their own.

Women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted by a colleague

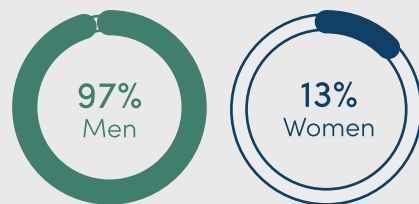


Women who have been sexually harassed by a colleague (by race)

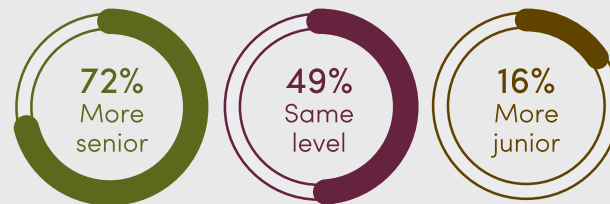


When women have been sexually harassed, here's what they say about the perpetrator(s)

They have been sexually harassed by:



They have been sexually harassed by someone:



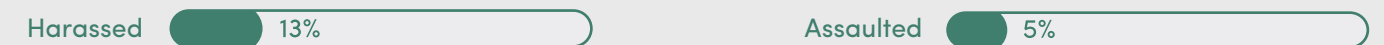
female technology architect

Men Have a Difficult Time with Misconduct

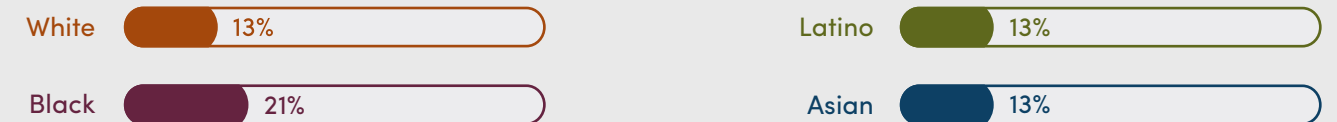
Although #MeToo showcased female voices, male victims of harassment and assault also suffer social stigma.⁵ Black men in our sample are more likely to have been sexually harassed by a colleague than white, Latino, or Asian men. We hypothesize one reason for this disparity is black men's complex dual legacy of being feared and desired.⁶

Meanwhile, men in our sample who have been harassed are less likely to be satisfied with their jobs than women who have been harassed. Unlike women, men may not have any expectation of becoming victims of sexual misconduct. Because there's no social script for male victims, experts tell us, they often feel the misconduct compromises their masculinity. As a result, they don't talk about it, remaining isolated and ashamed.

Men who have been sexually harassed or assaulted by a colleague



Men who have been sexually harassed by a colleague (by race)



Employees who are satisfied with their current jobs



Michael Kimmel, Professor of Sociology and Gender Studies at Stony Brook University

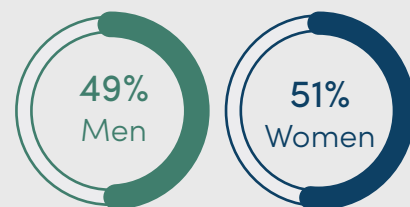
“During my first interview as a twenty-something, the hiring manager put his hand on my leg and pushed it up my skirt. At the time, I didn't think anything of it. Now, thanks to #MeToo, I'm re-evaluating.”

“Compared to men, women talk about more things that happen in the workplace, and their networks have created more channels of communication and support.”

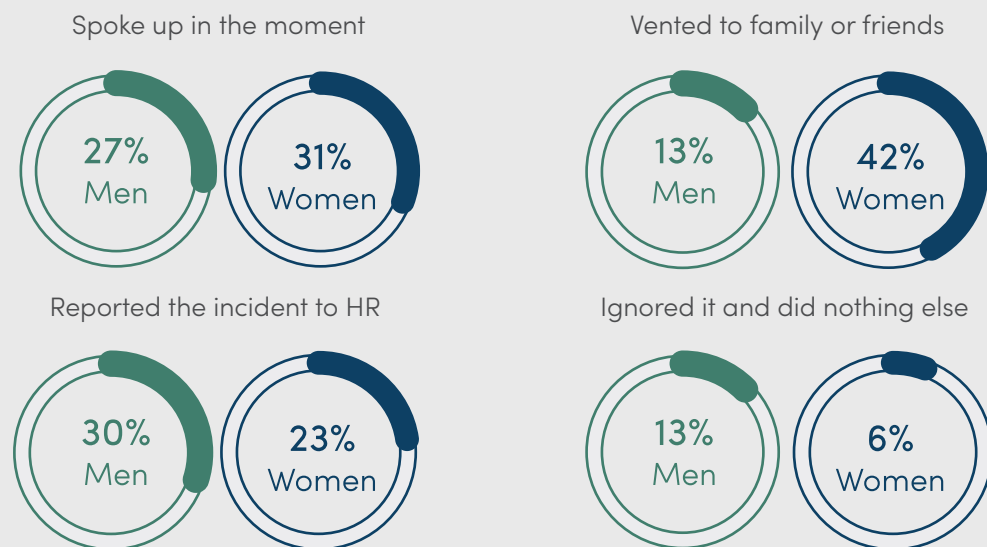
People Talk, but Witnesses Don't Report

When employees hear about sexual harassment of a colleague, about half of them tell someone else at work. However, when employees witness sexual harassment at work, most do not report to human resources. Interviewees tell us they avoid reporting due to **mistrust** of official reporting mechanisms.⁷ This mistrust shows most companies have yet to create safe workplaces—both for those who experience sexual misconduct and for bystanders.

Of employees who have heard about a colleague being sexually harassed, those who have told someone else at work



When employees have witnessed someone being sexually harassed by a colleague, here's how they've reacted:



Asha Santos, Shareholder, Littler Mendelson P.C.

“Everyone has a stake in their company’s culture. Many of us are conflict-avoidant, but simple banter, teasing comments can be the gateway to more serious behavior. That’s why we all need to get comfortable saying something in the moment.”

Building Safer Workplace Cultures

Companies must respond to the new social norms #MeToo has surfaced. To respond well requires collaboration among employers, further research into corporate cultures where sexual misconduct is less likely to occur, and experimentation with (and evaluation of) new solutions. Solutions that are cropping up generally fit into four categories:

Take a Stand

Reinforce company values through zero-tolerance policies towards sexual harassment, or get transparent about what existing policies entail.

Train Differently

Improve training related to sexual misconduct and gender discrimination, so that employees have productive ways to support victims and push back against perpetrators.

Update Reporting and Response

Handle reports and incident responses more transparently, so that employees can place more trust in HR and feel that their concerns will be taken seriously.

Track Data

Implement periodic climate surveys and culture audits to understand risks of misconduct and other types of gender discrimination.

Josh Levs, Author, *All In: How Our Work-First Culture Fails Dads, Families, and Businesses —And How We Can Fix It Together*

“This isn’t a battle for women to wage alone. It’s up to all of us to work together to build better, safer work environments.”

Methodology

The research consists of a survey; an online forum to collect stories (opened on February 20, 2018); an Insights In-Depth® session (a proprietary web-based tool used to conduct voice-facilitated virtual focus groups); and one-on-one interviews with over 30 women and men.

The national survey was conducted online and over the phone in January 2018 among 3,213 respondents (1,566 men, 1,633 women, 12 who do not identify as male or female, and 2 who did not disclose their gender) between the ages of 21 and 65 currently employed full-time in white-collar occupations, with at least a bachelor's degree. Data were weighted to be representative of the US population on key demographics (age, sex, education, race/ethnicity, housing tenure, telephone status, and census division). The base used for statistical testing was the effective base.

This survey was conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago under the auspices of the Center for Talent Innovation, a non-profit research organization. NORC was responsible for the data collection, while the Center for Talent Innovation conducted the analysis. In the charts, percentages may not always add up to 100 because of computer rounding or the acceptance of multiple responses from respondents.

ENDNOTES

1. "EEOC Select Task Force on the Study of Harassment in the Workplace," Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, June 20, 2016, https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/task_force/harassment/.
2. Claire Cain Miller, "Sexual Harassment Training Doesn't Work. But Some Things Do." *New York Times*, December 11, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/11/upshot/sexual-harassment-workplace-prevention-effective.html>; Lauren Edelman, "What's the Point of Sexual Harassment Training? Often, to Protect Employers," *Washington Post*, November 17, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/whats-the-point-of-sexual-harassment-training-often-to-protect-employers/2017/11/17/18cd631e-c97c-11e7-aa96-54417592cf72_story.html?utm_term=.26854f48da84.
3. Brandon Cline, Ralph Walking, and Adam Yore, "The Consequences of Managerial Indiscretions: Sex, Lies, and Firm Value," *Journal of Financial Economics* 127, no. 2 (February 2018), 389-415, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jfineco.2017.11.008>.
4. For data collected and referenced in this research, "Latina" and "Latino" refer to those who identify as being of Latino or Hispanic descent.
5. Heather R. Hlavka, "Speaking of Stigma and the Silence of Shame," *Men and Masculinities* 20, no. 4 (June 2016), 482-505, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1097184X16652656>.
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7. Jana Kasperkevic, "HR is Not There to Be Your Friend. It's There to Protect the Company," *Marketplace*, October 30, 2017, <https://www.marketplace.org/2017/10/30/business/human-resources-protect-employee-employer>; Danny Crichton, "HR Has Lost the Trust of Employees. Here Is Who Has It Now," *TechCrunch*, February 10, 2018, <https://techcrunch.com/2018/02/10/hr-has-lost-the-trust-of-employees-here-is-who-has-it-now/>; Susan Heathfield, "Reasons Why Employees Hate HR," *Balance Careers*, March 8, 2017, <https://www.thebalance.com/reasons-why-employees-hate-hr-1917590>.

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