

SDGS 5, 8 AND 16: CONDUCTING UNPRECEDENTED ACTION TO ELIMINATE SEXUAL HARASSMENT (The Australian Human Rights Commission)²²



Sexual harassment is a form of violence, discrimination and abuse of power related to sex and gender inequality. It is a human rights violation that intersects with a number of SDGs, including SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 8 (decent work) and

SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions).

Recent global campaigns, including #MeToo and #TimesUp, signal the alarming prevalence of sexual harassment affecting workers across countries and different sexual orientations.

The Australian Human Rights Commission (“the Commission”) is making efforts to combat sexual harassment and consequently contributing to the following SDG targets: 5.1 and 5.2 (through the promotion of a systemic response to eliminate violence and discrimination against women); 8.8 (protecting labour rights and promoting safe and secure work environment for women); and 16.1 (combating all forms of violence).

Between April and June 2018, the Commission conducted a national survey²³ to investigate the prevalence, nature and reporting of sexual harassment in Australian workplaces and the community more broadly. The 2018 survey was conducted both online and by telephone with a sample of over 10,000 Australians. It revealed that one in three people (33%) have experienced sexual harassment at work in the last five years.

In relation to remedial action, the survey revealed that formal reporting of workplace sexual harassment continues to be low: only 17% of people who experienced sexual harassment at work made a formal report or complaint. In one in five cases (19%), the formal report or complaint brought no consequences for the perpetrator. The most common outcome of reports or complaints was a formal warning to the perpetrator (30% of cases). Almost half (45%) of people who made a formal report said that no changes occurred at their organisation because of the complaint.

In response to the survey, Australia's Sex Discrimination Commissioner announced an unprecedented National Inquiry into sexual harassment. The survey findings will inform the National Inquiry, which is aimed at identifying good practice and creating recommendations to provide a way forward for preventing sexual harassment in the workplace. The Commission received online submissions and conducted public consultations in all capital cities and several regional centres across Australia.

²³ Read more here: <https://bit.ly/2K1b1VF>

