

# Sexism at work

## Violating sexist expectations can lead to sexual harassment

### Women

Large numbers of women in positions of authority report sexual harassment. In the EU, **75 % of women in top management positions reported experiencing sexual harassment** since the age of 15, although this could reflect a greater awareness of sexual harassment law and policy<sup>[1]</sup>.

However, research in the United States found that even when controlling for awareness of sexual harassment laws and policies, women in authority positions faced greater harassment<sup>[2]</sup>. **Women in work contexts dominated by men also faced greater harassment, suggesting this behaviour is a tool to keep targets 'in their place'**<sup>[3]</sup>.

One survey found that **70 % of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in the United Kingdom had experienced sexual harassment in the workplace**, with LGBT women particularly affected<sup>[4]</sup>.

Both women and men are more likely to face harassment in work contexts dominated by men<sup>[5]</sup>.



Both women and men are more likely to face harassment in work contexts dominated by men.

## Men



Men who engage in feminist activism can face harassment

There is a paucity of research on sexual harassment against men. In the EU, men face sexual harassment at roughly a third of the rate that women do<sup>[6]</sup>.

Sexual harassment of men has been found to primarily consist of sexual comments and jokes, as well as intrusive questions about one's private life<sup>[7]</sup>. **Men are more likely to face harassment from other men**, as opposed to from women<sup>[8]</sup>.

Men who violate stereotypical gender roles are more likely to face harassment, with **men who engage in feminist activism** facing higher levels of sexual harassment in the workplace<sup>[9]</sup>.

Men who complain of sexual harassment have been found to be **believed less, liked less and punished more** than women who complain<sup>[10]</sup>.

## Footnotes

[1] FRA, 2014, p. 96.

[2] McLaughlin, H., Uggen, C. and Blackstone, A., 'Sexual harassment, workplace authority, and the paradox of power', *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 77, No 4, 2012, p. 640 (<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0003122412451728>).

[3] McLaughlin et al., 2012, p. 635.

[4] Trades Union Congress (TUC), *Sexual harassment of LGBT people in the workplace*, TUC, London, 2019 ([https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/LGBT\\_Sexual\\_Harassment\\_Report\\_0.pdf](https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/LGBT_Sexual_Harassment_Report_0.pdf)).

[5] TUC, 2019.

[6] FRA, 2014, p. 100.

[7] McDonald, P. and Charlesworth, S., 'Workplace sexual harassment at the margins', *Work, Employment and Society*, Vol. 30, No 1, 2016 p. 8 (<https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017014564615>).

[8] McDonald et al., 2016, p. 6.

[9] Campbell Quick, J. and McFadyen, M. A., 'Sexual harassment: have we made any progress?', *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, Vol. 22, No 3, 2017, p. 291 (<https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/features/ocp-ocp0000054.pdf>).

[10] McDonald et al., 2016, p. 121.