



Half of Women in New Hampshire Have Experienced Sexual Harassment at Work

Kristin Smith, Sharyn Potter, and Jane Stapleton

Sexual harassment in the workplace is a serious problem affecting workers across the United States and in New Hampshire. Nationwide, approximately four in ten women and more than one in ten men have been victims of workplace sexual harassment in their lifetimes.¹ Research shows that such harassment has lasting economic, health, and family-related consequences for victims and their families: it increases victims' job exits and financial stress, alters career paths, and has deleterious consequences for mental and physical health, including depression, anger, and self-doubt.²

In New Hampshire, more than half of women (52 percent) and nearly one quarter of men (22 percent) have been victims of sexual harassment at work during their lifetimes (Table 1),³ and women are more likely than men to have experienced any type of sexual harassment. Four in ten women reported being stared at, leered at, or ogled in a way that made them feel uncomfortable; one-third reported that coworkers had

KEY FINDINGS



Over half of women and nearly one-quarter of men in New Hampshire have been victims of sexual harassment at their workplaces during their lifetimes.



Women are more likely to state they suffered work-related consequences (for example, financial loss, being fired or demoted) than men (33 percent and 25 percent, respectively), but similar shares reported quitting their jobs as a result of the harassment (21 percent and 17 percent, respectively).

made offensive remarks about their appearance, body, or sexual activities; and about one-quarter (24 percent) reported that they were touched in an uncomfortable way or that someone exposed themselves physically while they were at work. About one-quarter of women reported that others displayed, used, or distributed

sexist materials while at work; and over 10 percent reported that others threatened retaliation for not being sexually cooperative or implied faster promotion for being sexually cooperative. Just over 10 percent of men reported that coworkers made offensive remarks about their appearance, body, or sexual activities or that others displayed, used, or distributed sexist materials while at work; just under 10 percent of men reported experiencing other types of workplace sexual harassment.

TABLE 1. LIFETIME PREVALENCE OF WORKPLACE SEXUAL HARASSMENT, WOMEN AND MEN, NEW HAMPSHIRE 2018

| | All | Women | Men |
|---|-----|-------|-----|
| Ever experienced sexual harassment at work | 37% | 52% | 22% |
| Type of harassment | | | |
| Stared, leered, ogled | 24% | 40% | 8% |
| Made offensive remarks | 23% | 33% | 13% |
| Touched you or exposed themselves | 16% | 24% | 7% |
| Displayed sexist materials | 18% | 24% | 11% |
| Threatened retaliation or implied promotion | 9% | 14% | 3% |
| Number of respondents | 989 | 412 | 577 |

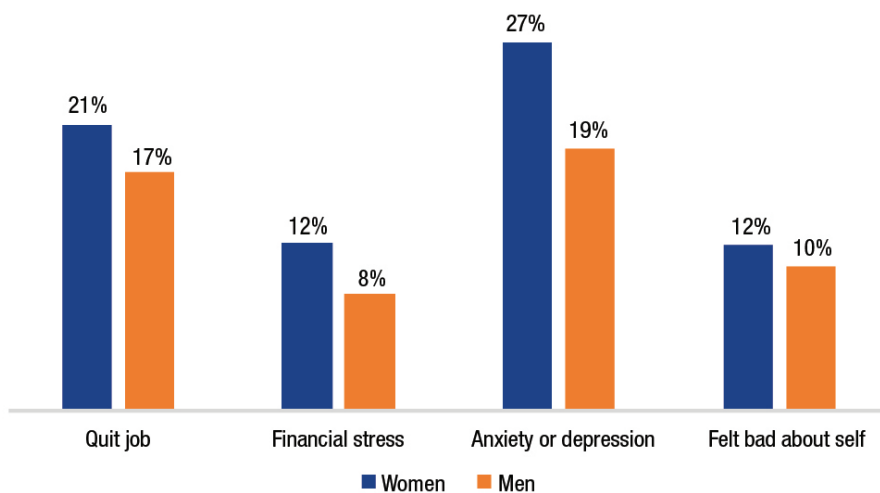
Note: Can experience multiple types of sexual harassment. **Source:** Pooled April and July 2018 Granite State Poll, "Sexual Harassment at Work" module. All gender differences are statistically significant at $p < 0.001$, two tailed tests.

Women More Likely to Suffer Work-Related Consequences Than Men

The detrimental consequences of workplace sexual harassment can be multifaceted and lasting, with negative effects on victims, their families, and workplaces. Victims of workplace sexual harassment suffer work-related consequences, including quitting their job, being fired or demoted, experiencing a voluntary or involuntary work transfer, taking leave, or having their work schedule modified. When asked to consider their most recent sexual harassment experience, women in the New Hampshire survey were more likely to state they suffered a work-related consequence than men (33 percent and 25 percent, respectively); however, the sample sizes are small and should be interpreted with caution. About one-fifth of women and men reported quitting their jobs in response to recent sexual harassment victimization (21 percent and 17 percent, respectively; Figure 1). Both women and men in New Hampshire reported financial stress due to sexual harassment (about 10 percent of each), according with existing research that shows a strong link between workplace sexual harassment and financial stress, largely due to job change, either voluntary or forced.⁴

Sexual harassment negatively impacts victims' physical and mental health, causing anxiety, depression, and diminished self-esteem, self-confidence, and psychological well-being. A higher proportion of women reported anxiety or depression than men as

FIGURE 1. CONSEQUENCES FOR WORKERS AFTER MOST RECENT EXPERIENCE OF WORKPLACE SEXUAL HARASSMENT, WOMEN AND MEN, NEW HAMPSHIRE, 2018



Note: Includes women and men under 70 years old who experienced sexual harassment at work. N=94 men and N=171 women. **Source:** Pooled April and July 2018 Granite State Poll, "Sexual Harassment at Work" module.

a result of the most recent sexual harassment victimization (27 percent and 19 percent, respectively); however, the sample sizes are small and should be interpreted with caution. Similar proportions of women and men reported feeling bad about themselves (about 10 percent each).

Sexual harassment is problematic for the workplace, as it reduces worker morale and job satisfaction, diminishes productivity, and increases absenteeism and worker withdrawal. It can be indicative of a toxic environment if employers fail to address harassers or protect victims.⁵ Employers would do well to invest in prevention, such as bystander intervention training, and encourage victims' use of supports to mitigate the negative effects of workplace sexual harassment.⁶

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Data

The data used in this analysis were collected in the Granite State Poll (GSP) in April and July 2018. The GSP, a random-digit-dialing telephone survey administered by the University of New Hampshire Survey Center, provides a state-wide representative sample of approximately 500 households and collects demographic, economic, and employment information. The authors developed a Sexual Harassment at Work Topical Module that was added to the GSP based on established definitions of sexual harassment at work in previous studies, including the National Study on Sexual Harassment and Assault Study, the Youth Development Study, and the SEQ: DoD Study. For a full definition of workplace sexual harassment, with examples, see the United Nations website: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/whatish.pdf>. All analyses are weighted using household-level weights provided by the UNH Survey Center based on U.S. Census Bureau estimates of the New Hampshire population.

Endnotes

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Acknowledgments

This research was funded by the Carsey School of Public Policy and the Prevention Innovations Research Center. The authors would like to thank Michael Ettlinger, Curt Grimm, Michele Dillon, Marybeth Mattingly, Laurel Lloyd, and Bianca Nicolosi at the Carsey School of Public Policy; Jennifer Scrafford, Caroline Leyva, Laurie Dawe, and Taylor Flagg at the Prevention Innovations Research Center; and Patrick Watson for his editorial assistance.



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