

April 2019

## Panel: Sexual Harassment in Higher Education: Understanding Root Causes and Developing Labor-Management Solutions

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*National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine*

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### Recommended Citation

Benya, Frazier (2019) "Panel: Sexual Harassment in Higher Education: Understanding Root Causes and Developing Labor-Management Solutions," *Journal of Collective Bargaining in the Academy*: Vol. 0 , Article 20.

Available at: <https://thekeep.eiu.edu/jcba/vol0/iss14/20>

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## *Sexual Harassment of Women*

Climate, Culture, and  
Consequences in  
Academic Sciences, Engineering,  
and Medicine



#ScienceToo

[www.nationalacademies.org/sexualharassment](http://www.nationalacademies.org/sexualharassment)

Published by The Keep, 2019

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# Study Statement of Task

The Committee will undertake a study of the influence of sexual harassment in academia on the career advancement of women in the scientific, technical, and medical workforce, which will include the following:

- Review of the research on the extent to which women in the fields of science, engineering, and medicine are victimized by sexual harassment on college and university campuses, in research labs and field sites, at hospitals/medical centers, and in other academic environments;
- Examination of existing information on the extent to which sexual harassment in academia negatively impacts the recruitment, retention, and advancement of women pursuing scientific, engineering, technical, and medical careers, with comparative evidence drawn from other sectors such as the military, government, and the private sector;
- Identification and analysis of policies, strategies, and practices that have been the most successful in preventing and addressing sexual harassment in these settings.

# Study Committee Members

Co-Chair: **Paula Johnson**<sup>1</sup>, Wellesley College

Co-Chair: **Sheila Widnall**<sup>2</sup>, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Alice M. Agogino<sup>2</sup>

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# Key findings

- There is extensive sexual harassment
- Gender harassment is the most common form of sexual harassment
- Sexual harassment undermines research integrity, reduces talent pool, and harms targets and bystanders
- Legal compliance is necessary but not sufficient to reduce harassment
- Changing climate and culture can prevent and effectively address sexual harassment

using professional  
threats or rewards  
to get sexual favors

## UNWANTED SEXUAL ATTENTION

sexual assault

rape

unwanted groping or stroking

## PUBLIC CONSCIOUSNESS

## GENDER HARASSMENT

relentless pressure  
for sex or dates

nude images posted  
at work

unwanted sexual  
discussions

sexually humiliating acts

sexual insults, gender slurs,  
and vulgar name calling  
e.g. "whore," "pu\*\*y," "slut," "bitch"

offensive sexual teasing  
or remarks about bodies

sexist insults  
e.g. *women don't  
belong in science*

sabotage of  
women's equipment

obscene gestures

# Finding: Prevalence of Sexual Harassment

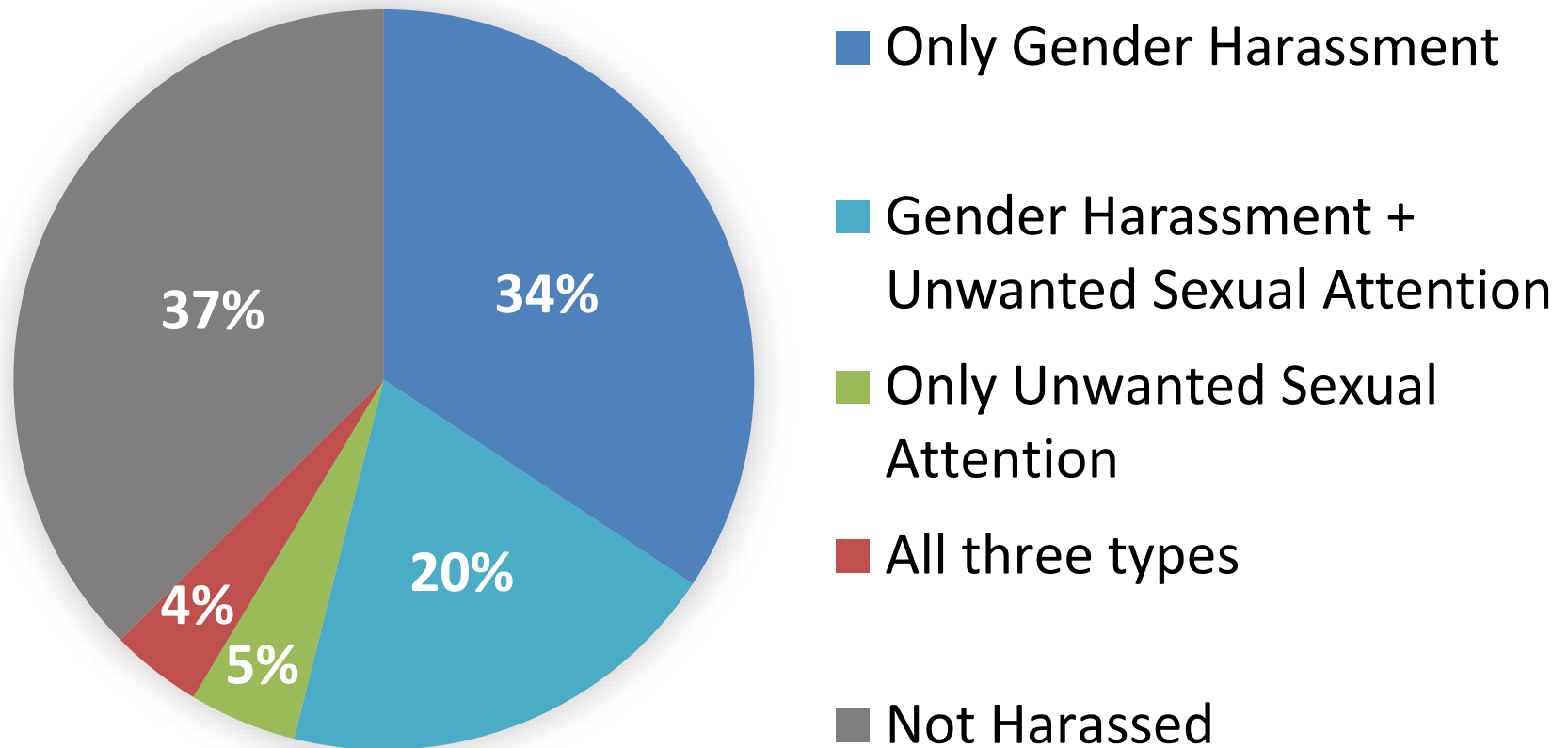
Sexual harassment is common in academic science, engineering, and medicine.

- Best available analysis to date shows that 50 percent of women faculty and staff in academia experience sexual harassment.
- Student surveys at a couple universities shows that between 20-50 percent of students in science, engineering, and medicine experience sexual harassment from faculty or staff.

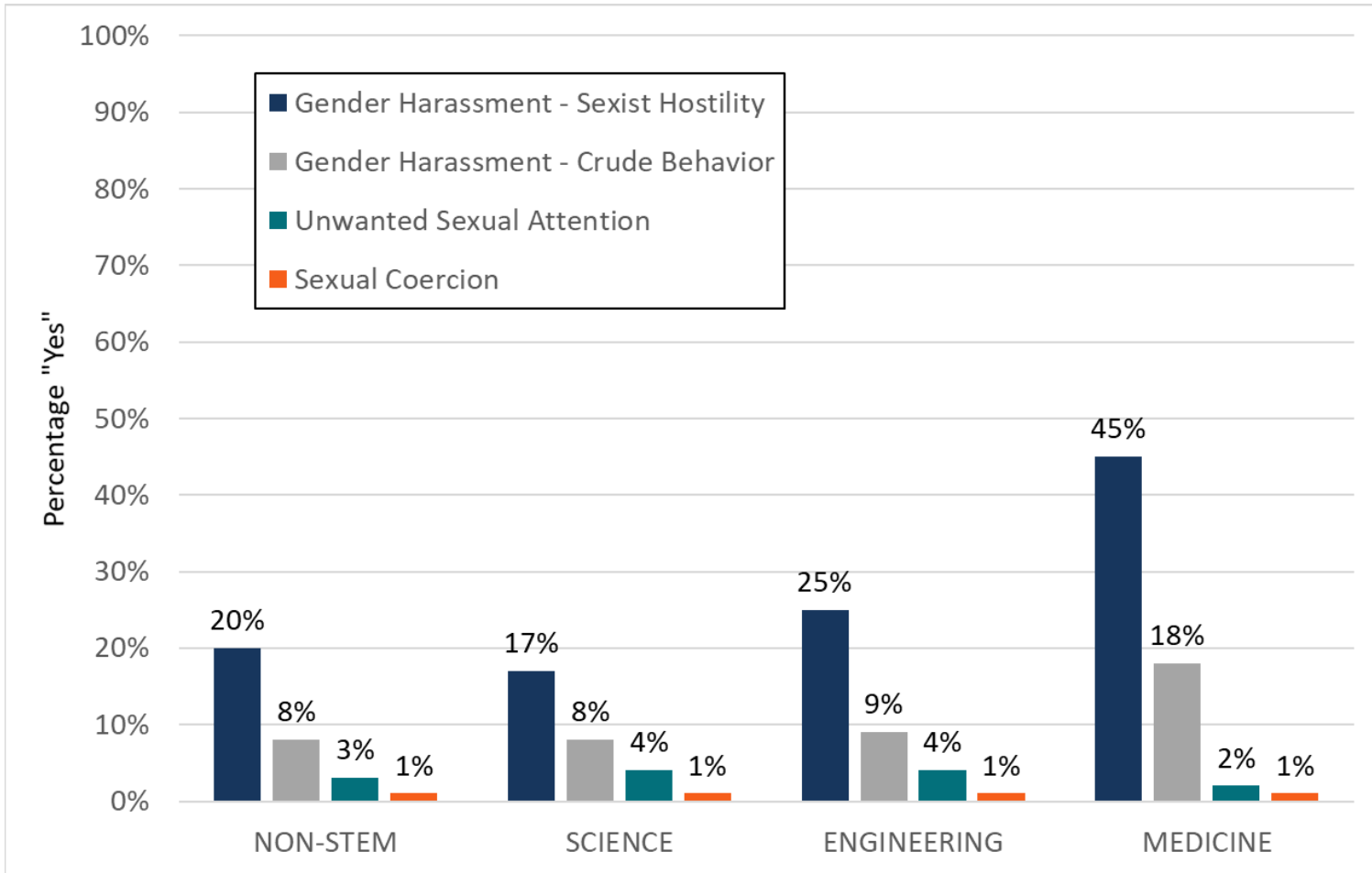


# Finding: Sexual harassment is common

Example – Percent of women faculty/staff harassed by coworkers or supervisors at a large public university:



# Finding: Sexual harassment is common (cont.)



# Findings: Impact on Targets and Bystanders

Sexual harassment undermines women's professional and educational attainment and mental and physical health.

Sexual harassment has adverse effects that affect not only the targets of harassment but also bystanders, co-workers, workgroups, and entire organizations.

# Findings on organizational climate

Sexual harassment is most likely to take place in environments that are:

- Male-dominated in number, leaders, and culture
- Tolerant of sexual harassment
  - Reporting is perceived as risky
  - Reports not taken seriously
  - Offenders escape sanction

*Organizational climate is, by far, the greatest predictor of the occurrence of sexual harassment.*

# INTERVENTIONS FOR PREVENTING SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Journal of Collective Bargaining in the Academy, Vol. 6, Iss. 14, 2020

## Create Diverse, Inclusive, and Respectful Environments

**Hiring and Promotion:** Take explicit steps to achieve greater gender and racial equity in hiring and promotions, and improve the representation of women at every level.

- The University of Michigan Committee on Strategies and Tactics for Recruiting to Improve Diversity and Excellence (STRIDE) offers Faculty Recruitment Workshops for faculty members with an important role in faculty recruitment.

**Civility-Promotion:** Combine anti-harassment efforts with programs to promote civility.

- The 2016 EEOC Task Force on the Study of Harassment in the Workplace recommends workplace training focused on respect and civility.
- The Civility, Respect, and Engagement at Work (CREW) program is an intensive 6-month intervention geared to enhance employees' interpersonal awareness and communication skills.

## Interrupt and Intervene in Inappropriate Behavior:

Utilize training approaches that develop skills among participants to interrupt and intervene when inappropriate behavior occurs.

- Bystander intervention training such as Confronting Prejudiced Responses (CPR) and Behavior Modeling Training (BMT) is designed to train participants to recognize and report problematic behavior.

## Training that Aims to Change Behavior:

Training should focus on changing behavior, not on changing beliefs.

- Programs should clearly communicate behavioral expectations and specify consequences for failing to meet those expectations. Training programs should not be based on the avoidance of legal liability.

## Improve Transparency and Accountability

**Clear Policies:** Develop and share clear, accessible, and consistent policies on sexual harassment and standards of behavior. Make clear that people will be held accountable for violating the policies.

- Include a range of clear disciplinary actions that correspond with the severity of the harassment.
- Engage the academic community in policy and practice reviews. Some institutions have created student advisory boards and forums for students to meet with the Title IX Steering Committee.

## Transparency about Handling Reports:

Be as transparent as possible about how the institution is handling reports of sexual harassment.

- Yale University publishes a semiannual Report of Complaints of Sexual Misconduct and an annual campus safety report to inform the campus community.

**Assess Climate:** Utilize climate surveys to further investigate and address systemic sexual harassment.

- The results of climate surveys should be shared publicly to demonstrate to the campus community that the institution takes the issue seriously. The Administrator-Researcher Campus Climate Collaborative (ARC3) survey has been used by more than 150 higher education institutions.

**Research Integrity:** Consider sexual harassment equally important as research misconduct in terms of its effect on the integrity of research.

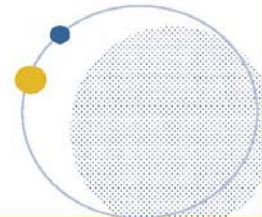
- The U.S. Geological Survey and the Department of the Interior have broad scientific integrity policies that apply to employees, appointees, volunteers, grantees, and contractors. Some scientific societies such as the American Geophysical Union have developed new ethics policies that explicitly call out sexual harassment and discrimination.

## Diffuse the Hierarchical and Dependent Relationship Between Trainees and Faculty

**Mentoring Networks:** Adopt mentoring networks or committee-based advising that allows for a diversity of potential pathways for advice, funding, support, and informal reporting of harassment.

## Independent Research Funding:

Develop ways research funding can be provided to the trainee rather than just the principal investigator.



## Provide Support for the Target

**Access to Support Services:** Provide means for the target of harassment to access support services (social services, health care, legal, career/professional).

**Informal Reporting:** Provide alternative and less formal means of recording information about the experience and reporting the experience.

- Provide anonymous, confidential reporting systems. Callisto is an online system that allows targets to control the disclosure of information, access supportive services, and share information on alleged perpetrators.
- Provide confidential reporting channels outside of the faculty or usual workplace hierarchy, such as an ombudsperson.
- Explore the use of restorative justice processes. The Campus PRISM (Promoting Restorative Initiatives for Sexual Misconduct) Project calls for accountability through collaboration and prevention through education.

**Prevent Retaliation:** Develop approaches to prevent the target from experiencing or fearing retaliation in academic settings.

- Be prepared to take action to ensure the target of the harassment is able to continue his/her academic work. This could include using mutual no contact orders between the accused and accuser, changing class schedules, changing the locks at the housing facility or workplace, rescinding building access for the accused, and reassigning advisors, mentees, and supervisors.

## Strive for Strong and Diverse Leadership

**Make it an Explicit Goal:** College and university presidents, provosts, deans, department chairs, and program directors must make the reduction and prevention of sexual harassment an explicit goal of their tenure.

**Develop Leadership Skills:** Support and facilitate leaders at every level (university, school/college, department, lab) in developing skills in leadership, conflict resolution, mediation, negotiation, and de-escalation, and ensure a clear understanding of policies and procedures for handling sexual harassment issues.

**Move Beyond Legal Liability:** Leadership training programs should include training on how to recognize and handle sexual harassment issues, and how to take explicit steps to create a culture and climate to reduce and prevent sexual harassment—and not just protect the institution against liability.

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This brief is based on the findings and recommendations in *Sexual Harassment of Women: Climate, Culture, and Consequences in Academic Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine* (2018). Copies of the Report are available from the National Academies Press, (800) 624-6242; <http://www.nap.edu> or at [www.nationalacademies.org/sexualharassment](http://www.nationalacademies.org/sexualharassment).

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# Key Recommendations

## Create diverse, inclusive, and respectful environments

- **Hiring and Promotion:** Take explicit steps to achieve greater gender and racial equity in hiring and promotions, and improve the representation of women at every level.
- **Civility-Promotion:** Combine anti-harassment efforts with programs to promote civility.
- **Interrupt and Intervene in Inappropriate Behavior:** Utilize training approaches that develop skills among participants to interrupt and intervene when inappropriate behavior occurs, such as bystander intervention.
- **Training that Aims to Change Behavior:** Training should focus on changing behavior, not on changing beliefs.

# Key Recommendations

## **Diffuse the hierarchical and dependent relationship between trainees and faculty**

- **Mentoring Networks:** Adopt mentoring networks or committee-based advising that allows for a diversity of potential pathways for advice, funding, support, and informal reporting of harassment.
- **Independent Research Funding:** Develop ways research funding can be provided to the trainee rather than just the principal investigator.

# Key Recommendations

## Provide support for targets

- **Access to Support Services:** Provide means for the target of harassment to access support services (social services, health care, legal, career/professional) without making a formal report.
- **Informal Reporting:** Provide alternative and less formal means of recording information about the experience and reporting the experience.
- **Prevent Retaliation:** Develop approaches to prevent the target from experiencing or fearing retaliation in academic settings.



# Key Recommendations

## Improve transparency and accountability

- **Clear Policies:** Develop and share clear, accessible, and consistent policies on sexual harassment and standards of behavior. Make clear that people will be held accountable for violating the policies.
- **Transparency about Handling Reports:** Be as transparent as possible about how the institution is handling reports of sexual harassment.
- **Assess Climate:** Utilize climate surveys to further investigate and address systemic sexual harassment.

# Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education



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