

FACTS ABOUT SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment is the inappropriate sexualization of an otherwise nonsexual relationship, an assertion by men of the primacy of a woman's sexuality over her role as worker or professional colleague or student (Fitzgerald and Ormerod 1991a).

Sexual harassment is sex discrimination.

Sexual harassment is about power, not sex.

Men use sexual harassment as a way of objecting to women's presence on the job and keeping them "in their place" when they have to work with them (Moccio 1991).

Sexual harassment is sexual victimization, an invidious form of sex discrimination, not a benign mating ritual.

50% to 85% of American women will experience some form of sexual harassment during their academic or working life (Hughes and Sandler 1986, 1988; US Merit Systems Protection Board 1987).

In a typical sexual harassment case, the accuser becomes the accused, and the victim is twice-victimized.

Women are nine times more likely than men to quit a job because of sexual harassment, five times more likely to transfer, and three times more likely to lose their jobs (Konrad and Gutek 1986).

90% of sexual harassment victims are unwilling to come forward for two primary reasons: fear of retaliation and fear of loss of privacy (Klein 1988).

Sexual harassment costs a typical Fortune 500 company \$6.7 million per year – a cost of \$282.53 per employee; meaningful preventive steps can be taken for \$200,000 – a cost of \$8.41 per employee. It is 34 times more expensive to ignore the problem (Klein 1988).

Most harassers are older than their victims (although some are younger), married (although some are single), and of the same race as their victims. Some harass many women, others harass only once (Fitzgerald 1991b).

Sexual harassment is pervasive in all school districts, urban and rural. Yet, sexually harassing behaviors are too often dismissed as harmless instances of "boys being boys" (AAUW 1992).

30% of the sexual harassment incidents reported in a 1992 survey occurred among women aged 18-24 years old. Employers may perceive young women in low status jobs or training positions as "expendable". At the same time, young women in entry level positions may be especially

reluctant to challenge their superiors (Working Woman 1992; Massachusetts Department of Education 1986).

Pervasive stereotypes about women of color not only shape the kinds of harassment that they face but also influence whether their stories are likely to be believed (Crenshaw 1991).

Sexual advances at work, when initiated by men, reinforce lesbians' positions as outsiders and highlight the potentially harassing and dangerous quality of their workplace environment (Schneider 1982).

Sexual harassment occurs on a broad scale in rental housing and in social service delivery. When harassment occurs in a woman's home, it is a complete invasion of her life (Cahan 1987).

For the estimated 200,000 illegal domestic workers in the U.S. who often depend upon their employer for room and board, workplace abuse is a 24-hour-a-day threat. Retaliation and the threat of the police or deportation keep them silent and vulnerable to further abuse (Chung and Turner 1991).

Institutional remedies do not measure up. One out of five women believes that most complaints are handled justly, whereas over 70% of personnel managers believe they are (Working Woman 1992).

There are no "typical" harassers.

-- Obtained from Sexual Harassment Research & Resources, by The National Council for Research on Women