

Sexual Harassment 'Rife' At Work, Study Says

The most common places women experience inappropriate behaviour is at their desk, a work party or in a lift, the survey finds.

Nearly two thirds of women have had a male work colleague behave "inappropriately" towards them, new research reveals.

And of the 60% who said they had experienced this behaviour in the workplace, 21% classed it as persistent. When it came to inappropriate comments and touching, more than half the offenders were more senior members of staff, and two thirds of women said the inappropriate behaviour came from a married man. But despite saying the behaviour of their colleagues was often degrading and embarrassing, only 27% reported the behaviour to someone senior.

The research, which was commissioned by employment law specialists Slater & Gordon and polled 1,579 people, also found almost 40% of men surveyed said they had been victims of sexual harassment. Claire Dawson, an employment lawyer with the firm, said: "We deal with some really shocking cases of sexual harassment in the workplace, but it's always surprising to hear how widespread the issue is and how many women don't feel like they can report behaviour like this."

More than a third of women surveyed said a senior male colleague had made inappropriate comments about their breasts, sex life, backside, or the clothes they were wearing. One in six women had been forced to fend off a colleague who tried to kiss them and 12% had a colleague place his hand on her behind.

Of the 24% of women who had a superior make a move on them, 5% then lost their job, and more than one in 10 said they had been turned down for a promotion.

The most common places for women to experience inappropriate behaviour were at their desk while they were working late, at an office party or in a staff corridor or lift.

The law firm says the legal definition of sexual harassment is if a person's dignity has been violated or a perpetrator has created an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. The survey found that one quarter said they did not think people commenting on their body parts was sexual harassment, one third did not think someone viewing pornography near them was sexual harassment and more than half did not think inappropriate comments about their partner from a colleague or discussions about their sex life was harassment.

Speaking on Sky News, entrepreneur Katie Hopkins cast doubt on some of the harassment claims. She said: "We have to question these people who make these complaints."

"If you can see down the blouse, don't wear the blouse."

Shadow women and equalities minister Gloria De Piero said: "This research shows just how far we still have to travel on women's equality."

"We should be doing more to empower women to challenge this behaviour and come forward and report it to their employer."

LEADING TO:

- Loss of jobs
- Absenceism
- Litigations and court cases
- Loss of productivity/distraction
- Psychological: anxiety, depression and suicidal ideas
- Great economic loss
- Adultery
- Affairs
- Crimes

Dr Katme