

SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE MEDIA

ARAB REGION
REPORT



Women in News



Women in News

Women in News is a media development programme of the World Association of News Publishers (WAN-IFRA). Its mission is to close the gender gap in news media.

It works with 80 media organisations from 17 countries in Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia thanks to support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

WAN-IFRA is a global organisation of the world's press with a membership of 3,000 news publishing companies and technology entrepreneurs; and a board of 60 member publisher associations representing 18,000 publications in 120 countries.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2020, WAN-IFRA Women in News (WIN), in partnership with City, University of London, set out to establish the extent of sexual harassment in news organisations and to gauge their effectiveness in managing it. The research project focused on regions where WIN operates: Southeast Asia, Africa, the Arab Region and Russia as well as select countries in Central America.

This report is a summary of its findings in the Arab Region.

Some 526 media professionals completed an online survey. They were from four countries in the Arab Region, namely Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine. The overall tally includes seven responses from within the Arab Region that were outside the focus countries.

RESULTS AT A GLANCE



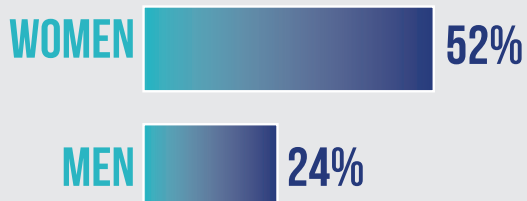
1 IN 3

women have faced verbal or physical sexual harassment at work (35%)



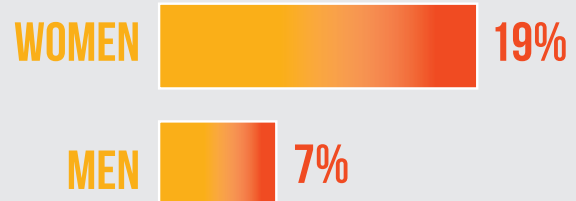
Just under one in seven cases of sexual harassment were ever reported to management

VERBAL SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT WORK



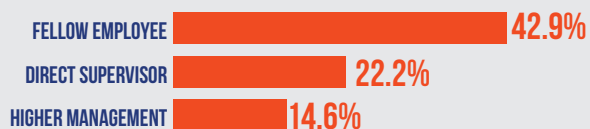
29% of the 78 participants who did not disclose their gender experienced verbal harassment

PHYSICAL SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT WORK

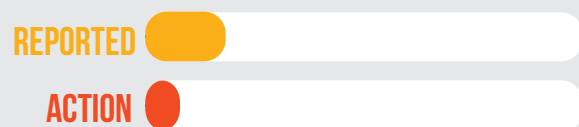


14% of the 78 participants who did not disclose their gender experienced physical harassment

THE TOP 3 PERPETRATORS



REPORTED VS ACTION



Only 15% of cases were reported. Organisations took action for 46% of the reported cases.

2

BACKGROUND

Sexual harassment was a taboo subject until media and social media put the issue in focus. Many ignored admitting it was pervasive in daily life for people. Yet studies such as the Arab Barometer Wave V in 2019 have shown that sexual harassment is prevalent in Arab countries. According to congress documents in 2020, women in the Arab Region face greater legal discrimination than women elsewhere, with differential laws on issues such as marriage, freedom of movement, and inheritance, as well as limited to no legal protection from domestic violence .

In the Arab media industry, the situation can be even worse. Being a woman journalist adds more burdens to what women already face in the Arab Region. A number of studies confirmed that women suffer more and face harsher online bullying attacks and more domestic violence. Lack of updated and adequate information about sexual harassment in the region complicates the status quo and prevents from addressing the issue.

If you do not measure, you cannot improve. This is the reason for our research to document the extent of sexual harassment in the media industry in the Arab Region, ultimately filling gaps in the 'global' data that currently exists and enabling informed, evidence-based responses to sexual harassment.

Exploring percentages, types of sexual harassment in the media industry and how different media organisations react to those incidence will provide substantial inputs for key decision makers and different stakeholders to start evaluating the current procedures and policies in order to reach a safe and positive work environment for all media practitioners; a key pillar in having a sustainable independent media sector.

Sexual harassment is a global societal problem, and WIN views it as such. Evidence from this research shows that the culture of sexual harassment needs to change regardless of country. Our mission is to advance and establish stable media environments that embrace equality in content and in the way people are treated, regardless of gender. This cannot be achieved if sexual harassment of any kind is tolerated. As such, we remain committed to work with the media to eradicate harassment of any kind.



See “What organisations can do” on page 30 for concrete steps that media can take to address and improve the safety of their working environment.

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METHODOLOGY

DATA COLLECTION

- This project employed a survey of media personnel, distributed online.
 - The survey responses were anonymous to protect their identity.
 - Data collection began February 2021 in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine, and ended April 2021. All data collection was in Arabic.
- After the initial filter questions, 526 participants completed the survey.

DEFINITIONS, LANGUAGE AND SAMPLE SIZE

WIN is aware that the language around gender and sexuality continues to evolve rapidly, as it did while this report was being written. The refinement of words and their definitions is based on our understanding of how complex constructs related to sexuality and gender evolve.

In the research, participants selected their identity as Woman, Man or Gender Nonconforming. The number of respondents who identified as nonconforming was small. While this does not diminish their experiences, it poses a challenge statistically as it is difficult to find significant relationships from the data. Statistical tests typically require a larger sample size to ensure a representative distribution of the population and to be considered representative of groups of people to whom results will be generalised or transferred. It was,

therefore, essential to consider this. The data, however, shows that experiences of sexual harassment cannot be ignored for any group. Thus, while the numbers are small, we recognise this fact.

WIN acknowledges the profound diversity regarding size, development level, political, legal and economic system, geography, culture, and history within individual countries. This is why, for this phase of the research, we have focused on regional patterns on sexual harassment experiences and, while providing a country-by-country breakdown of data, have avoided comparative analysis.

WIN defines sexual harassment as unwanted and offensive behaviour, of a sexual nature, that violates a person's dignity and makes them feel degraded, humiliated, intimidated or threatened.

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DEMOGRAPHICS

DEMOGRAPHICS

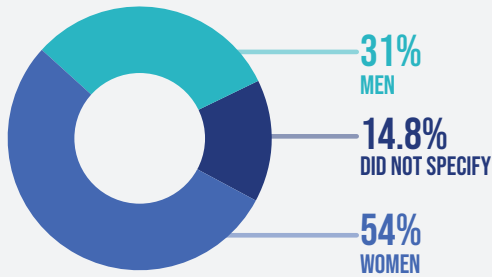
526 ONLINE SURVEY PARTICIPANTS



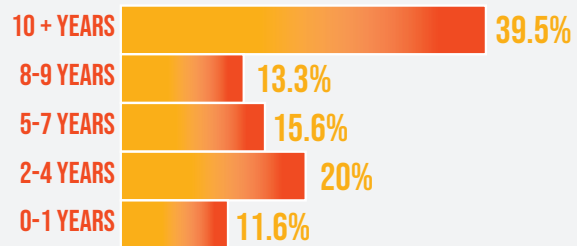
5 MAIN COUNTRIES
EGYPT 34.2% (180),
JORDAN 22.1% (116),
LEBANON 29.8% (157),
PALESTINE 12.5% (66),
OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE REGION 1.3% (7)



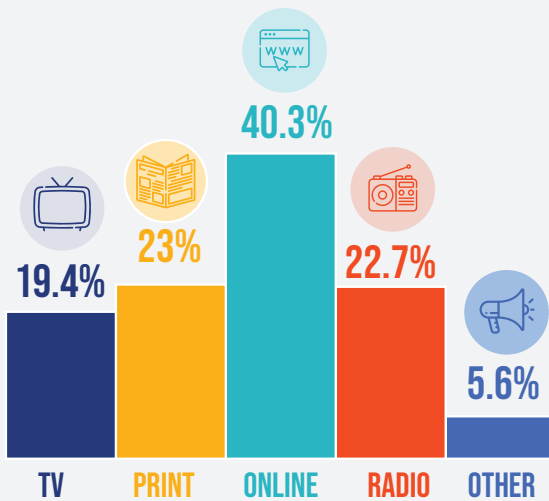
GENDER IDENTITY



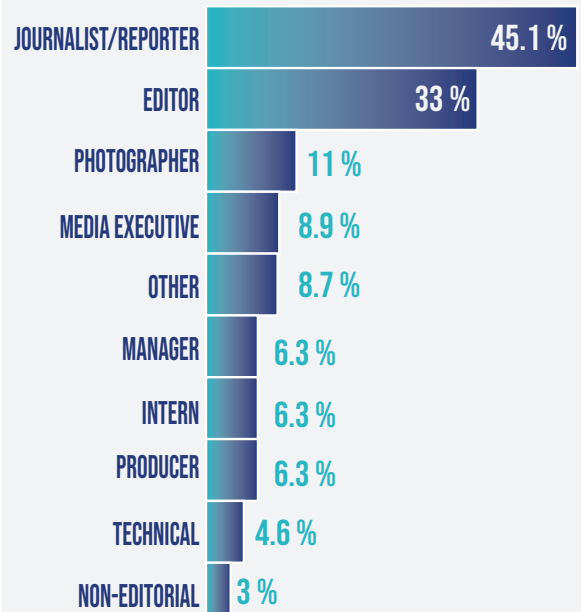
EXPERIENCE



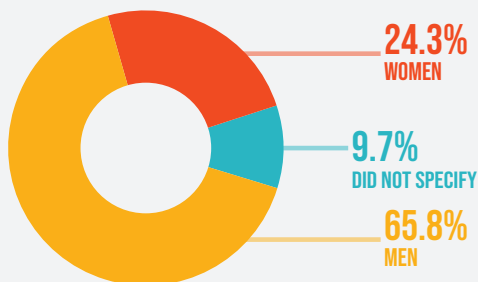
MEDIUM



ROLE



GENDER OF SUPERVISOR



5

FINDINGS

ONLINE SURVEY

PREVALENCE:

PREVALENCE OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT WORK



*Percentage is based on those who reported experiencing harassment at work

The first set of questions asked participants their experience of verbal and physical sexual harassment on a scale from never to five or more times.

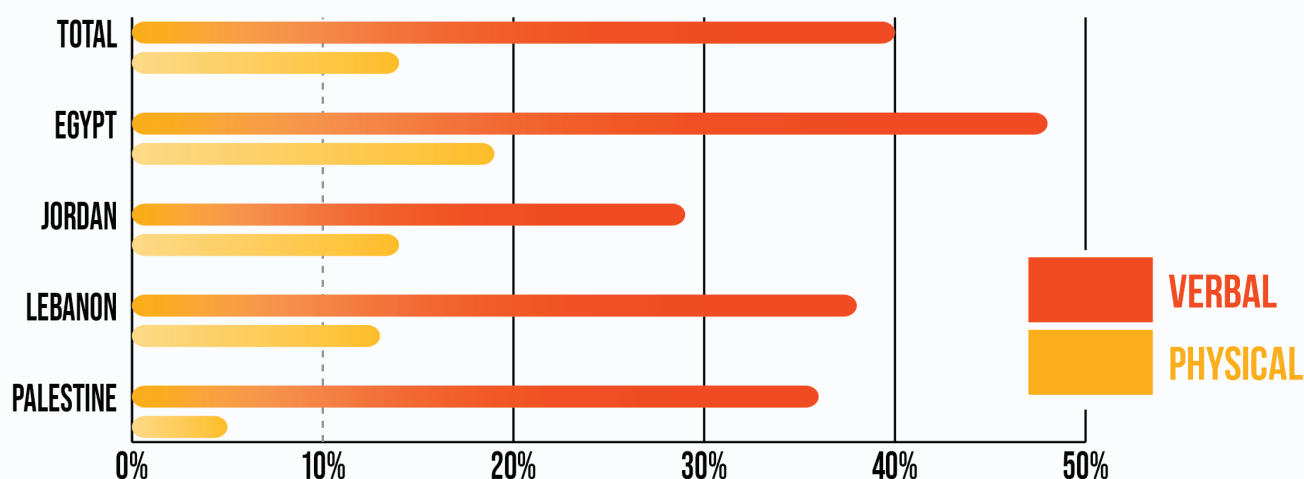
Of those who reported experiencing harassment, 40% experienced verbal and 14% experienced physical.

For men, 24% of participants indicated they'd experienced verbal sexual harassment at least once at work, and 7% experienced physical sexual harassment at least once.

For women, 52% of participants responded they'd experienced verbal sexual harassment at least once—17% five times or more, and 19% stated they'd experienced physical sexual harassment at least once—1.4% five times or more.

Though a comparatively small portion of the survey, participants who chose not to disclose their gender experienced verbal sexual harassment at a rate of 29%, and physical harassment 14%.

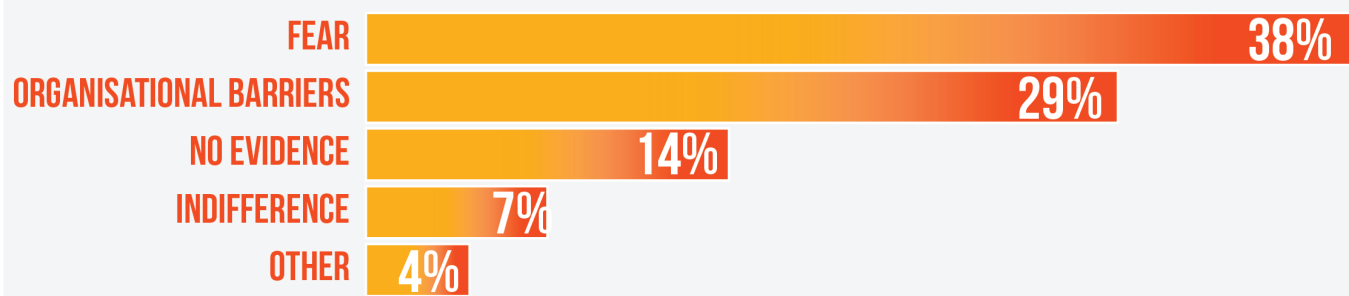
PREVALENCE OF VERBAL AND PHYSICAL SEXUAL HARASSMENT



* Percentage is an average of the total survey respondents who experienced verbal and physical harassment at work

REPORTING AND ACTION

WHY I DID NOT REPORT SEXUAL HARASSMENT



***Responses have been categorised as:**
Fear: “I was afraid of losing my job”; “I was afraid I would negatively impact my job”; “I was afraid the perpetrator would retaliate”; “I didn’t want myself or others to be negatively labeled”
Organisational barriers: “I didn’t think my organisation would believe me”; “There are no reporting mechanisms at my organisation”; “I didn’t know how to report”;
No evidence: “I didn’t think I had evidence”
Indifference: “I didn’t think it was a big deal”
Other: “I was offered something by the perpetrator for not reporting”; “Other””

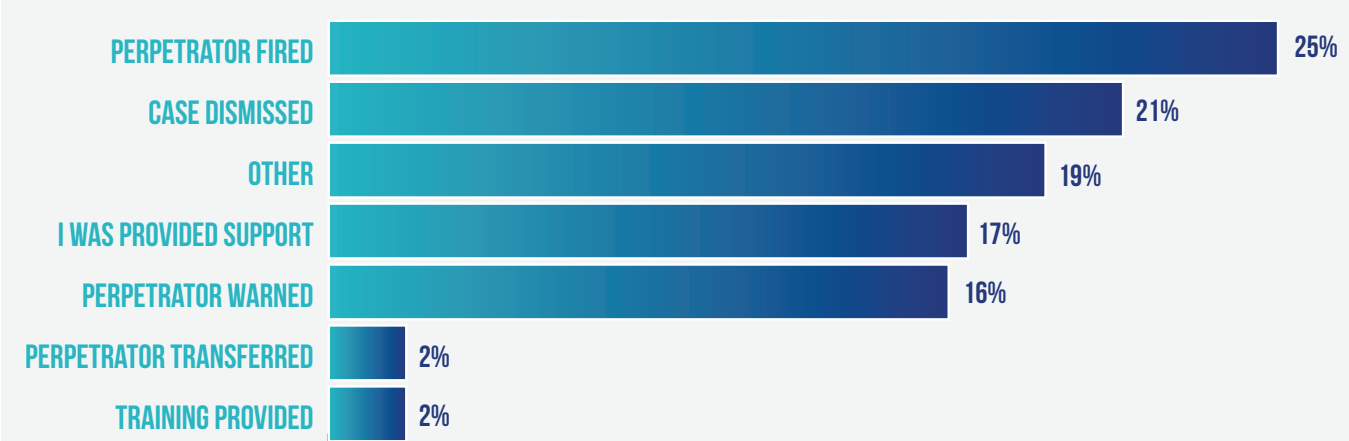
On average, only 15% of cases were reported to the participant’s respective media news organisation. Of those reported cases, news organisations took action 46% of the time.

The most common reasons listed for not reporting were no reporting mechanism (17.3%), no evidance (13.8%) and not wanting to be negatively labelled (12.8%).

However when combining responses into themes, fear - of not being believed, of job loss, of negative impact or retaliation - was the prevailing concern.

The most common responses of organisations when they took action was firing the perpetrator (24.5%), offering emotional support for the participant (16.5%), or warning the perpetrator (16%). “Other” actions were taken 18.5% of the time, and cases were dismissed 20.5% of the time.

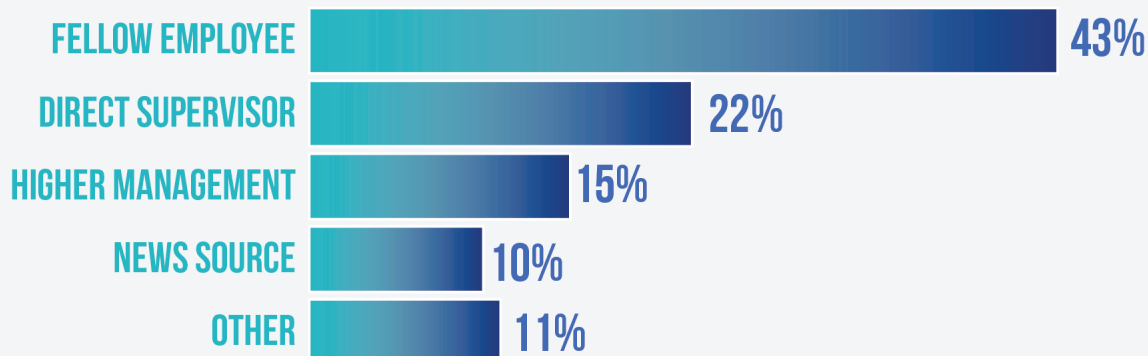
ORGANISATIONAL RESPONSE TO FORMAL COMPLAINTS



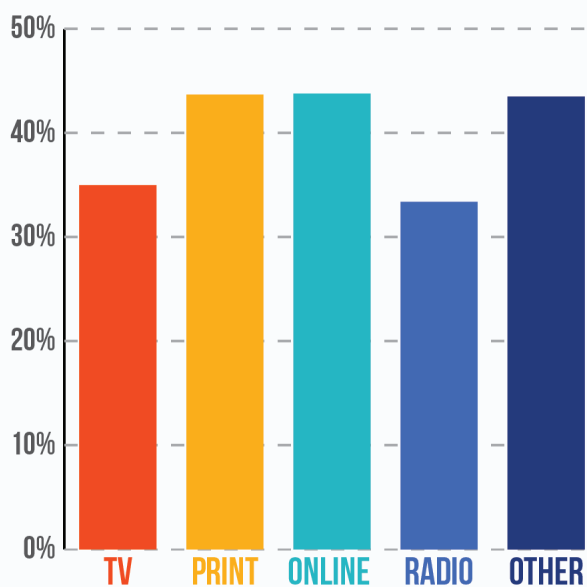
SOURCE & FREQUENCY

The most common source of sexual harassment was a fellow employee (42.9%), followed by a direct supervisor (22.2%), higher management (14.6%), “other” (10.7%) and external news sources (9.5%).

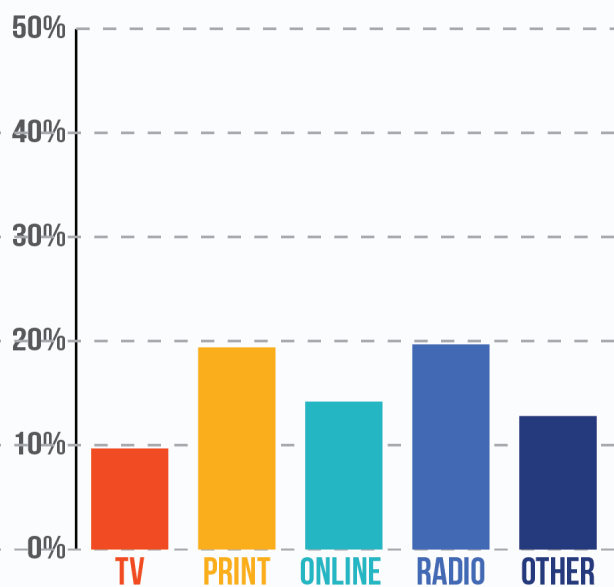
THE PERPETRATORS



PREVALENCE BY MEDIUM



VERBAL



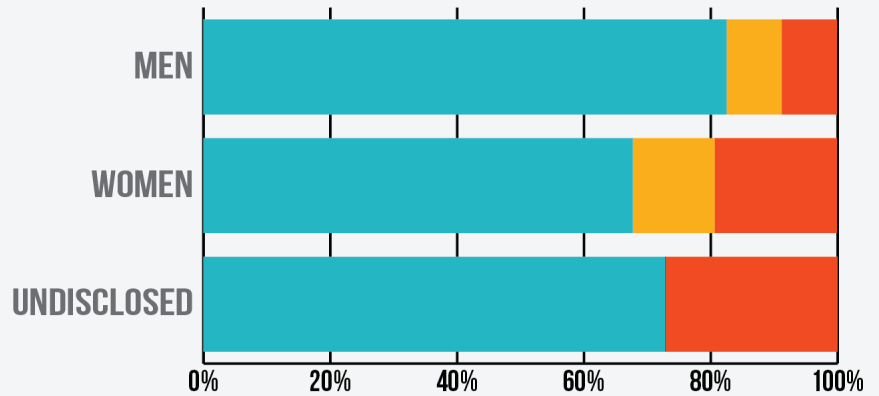
PHYSICAL

When looking at frequencies of sexual harassment experience by medium, participants indicated “Other” for the highest frequency 43.5% and 12.8% for verbal and physical harassment respectively. This was followed by online at 43.8% for verbal harassment and TV at 9.7% for physical.

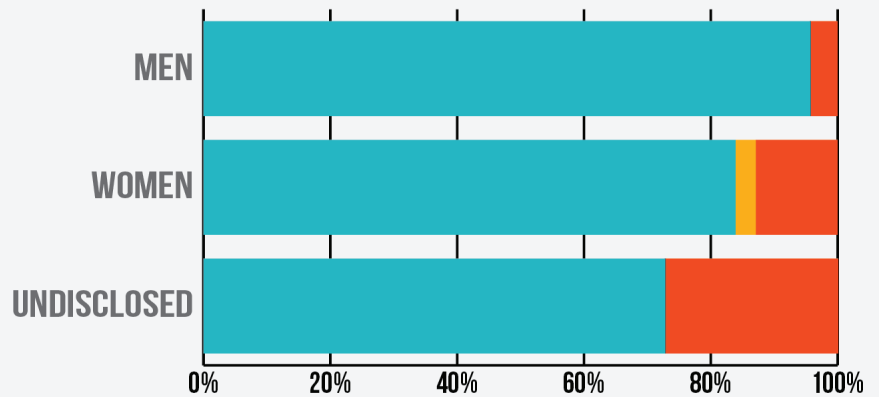
PERSONAL ATTITUDES

■ AGREE
 ■ UNSURE
 ■ DISAGREE

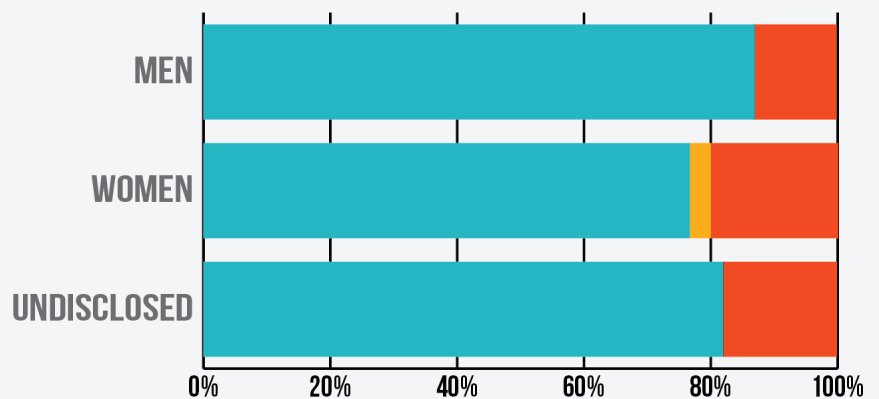
**I CAN TALK TO
MY SUPERVISOR**



**I FEEL SAFE IN
MY NEWSROOM**



**I FEEL LISTENED
TO WHEN I
SPEAK OUT AT
WORK**



*Agree responses reflect those who said "Strongly agree", "agree" and "somewhat agree"

Disagree responses reflect those who said "Strongly disagree", "disagree" and "somewhat disagree"

Unsure responses reflect those who "neither agree nor disagree"

One in two participants had witnessed sexual harassment - 13.5% five or more times.



51.2%

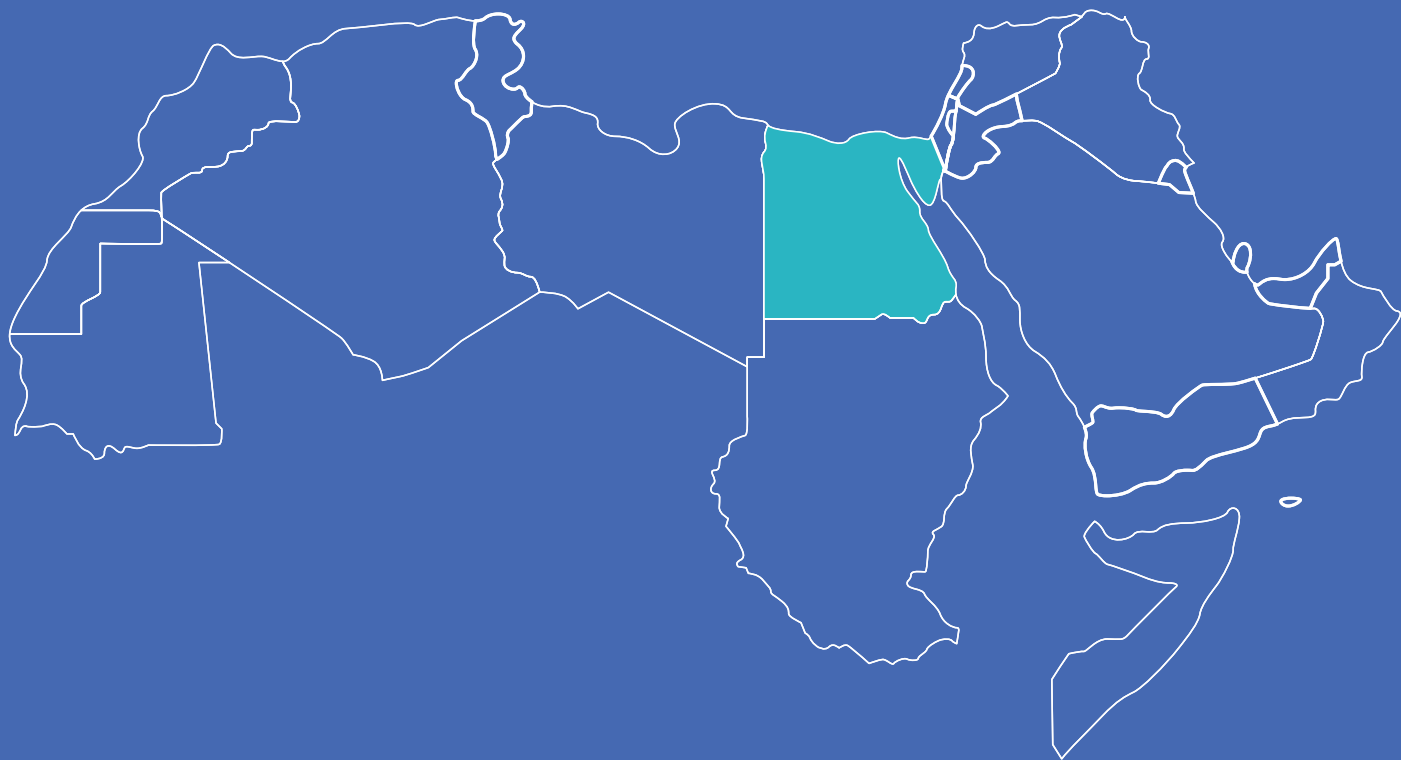
of participants witnessed at least one incident of sexual harassment

We asked: do staff feel safe in the newsroom and able to talk openly to their supervisor?

For men, 82.5% agreed - somewhat to strongly - they could openly talk to their supervisor; 86.9% agreed - somewhat to strongly - they felt listened to at work, and 95.7% agreed - somewhat to strongly - they felt safe in their newsroom.

For women, 67.7% agreed - somewhat to strongly - they could openly talk to their supervisor, 76.7% agreed - somewhat to strongly - agreed they felt listened to at work, and 83.9% somewhat to strongly agreed they felt safe in their newsroom.

COUNTRY FINDINGS



EGYPT

OVERVIEW: 180 ONLINE SURVEY PARTICIPANTS



DEMOGRAPHICS

- Women 64.4% (116), men 29.4% (53) and people who did not disclose 6.1% (11)
- Gender of supervisor: Men 72.8% (131), women 19% (34) and did not specify 8.3% (15)
- Sexual harassment policy: No 71.1%, yes, but not aware what it is 23.3%, yes, I am aware what it is 5.6%.

FINDINGS

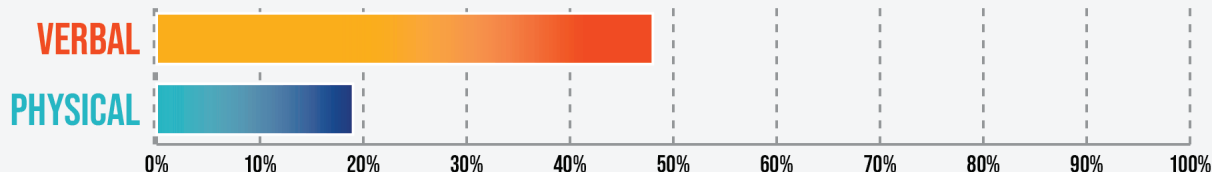
One hundred and eighty participants completed the survey in Egypt. Examining sexual harassment frequencies, for men 15.2% experienced verbal sexual harassment and 5.7% physical sexual harassment. For women, 64.4% experienced verbal sexual harassment (22.4% five times or more) and 25.1% physical sexual harassment.

On average only 12.8% of respondents said they chose to report, which resulted in 33% action taken.

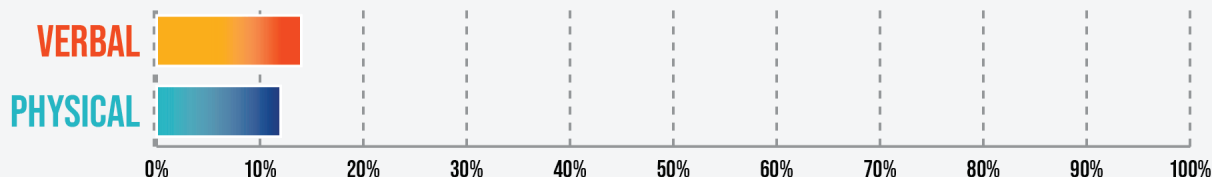
The most common reason for not reporting was no reporting mechanisms available (21.7%).

Action taken by news organizations was limited. The most common response was providing emotional support (35%).

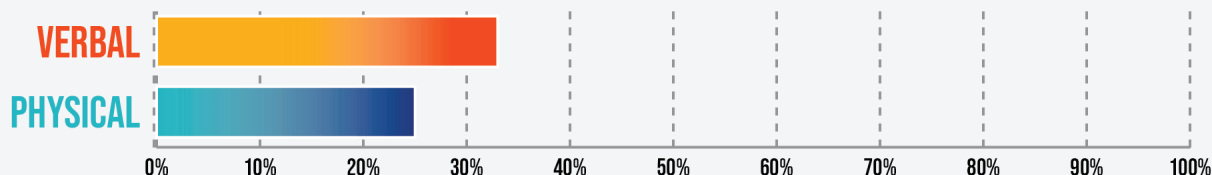
PREVALENCE



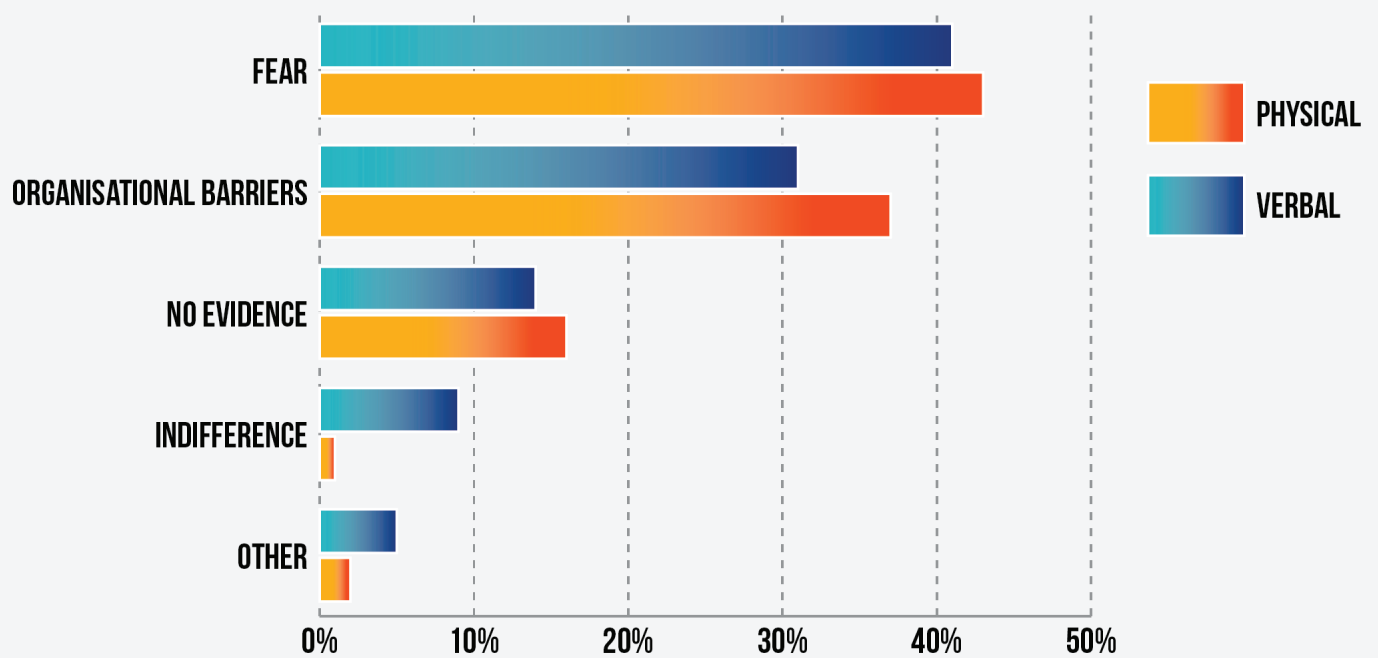
OF THOSE, WHO REPORTED THE INCIDENT

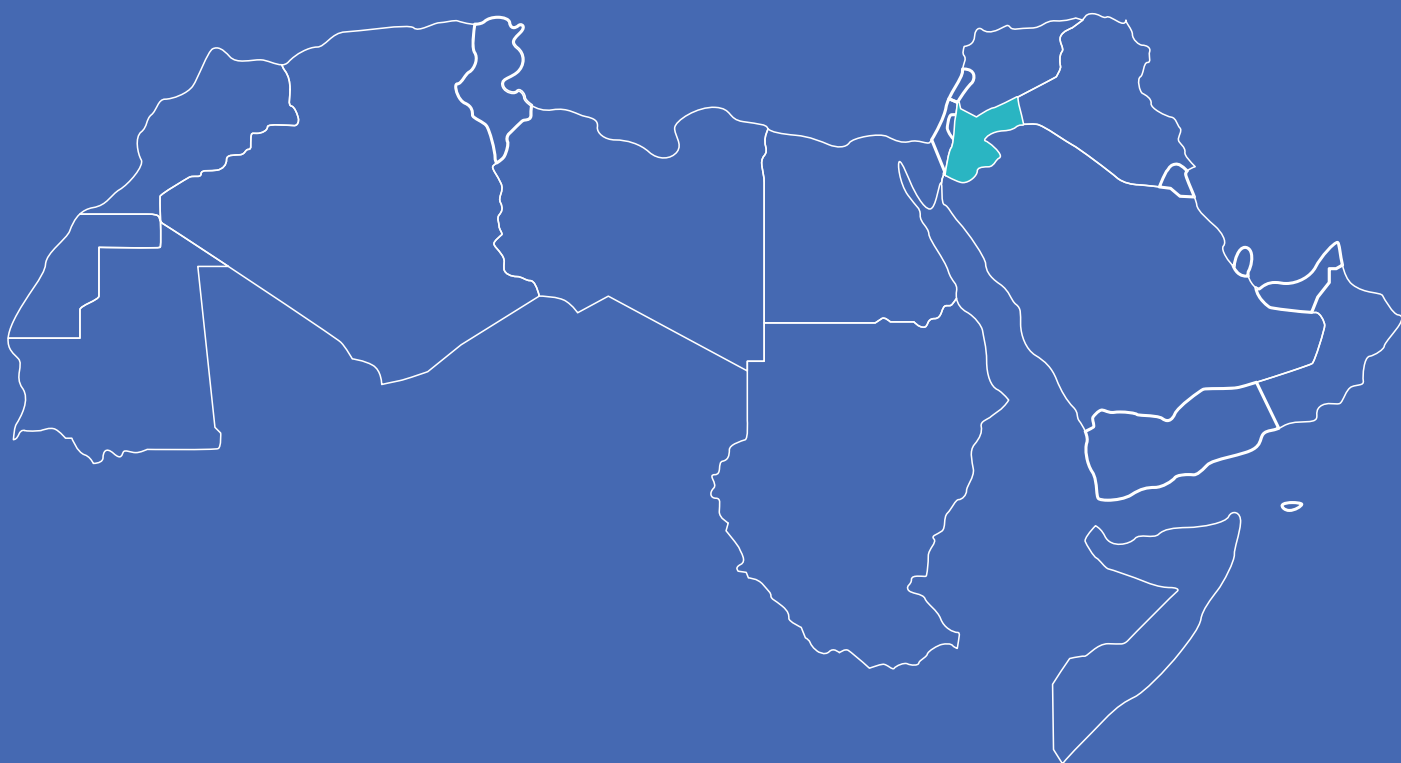


OF THOSE, WHO RECEIVED ACTION



WHY I DID NOT REPORT SEXUAL HARASSMENT





JORDAN

OVERVIEW: 116 ONLINE SURVEY PARTICIPANTS



DEMOGRAPHICS

- Women 56% (65) and men 32.8% (38), and people who did not disclose 11.2% (13)
- Gender of supervisor: Men 63% (73), women 30% (35), and did not specify 7.7% (8)
- Sexual harassment policy: No 57.2%, yes, but not aware what it is 35%, and yes, I am aware what it is 7.7%

FINDINGS

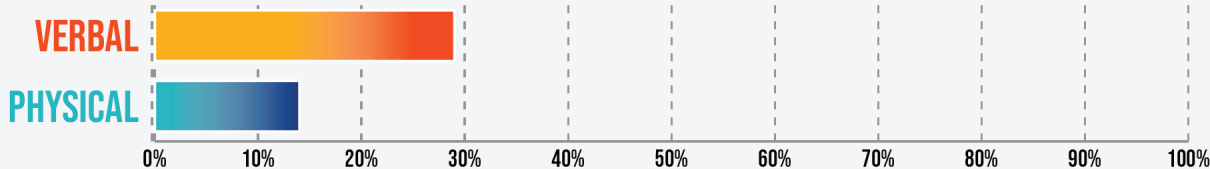
Examining sexual harassment frequencies, for men 26.3% experienced verbal sexual harassment and 7.9% physical sexual harassment. For women, 34% experienced verbal sexual harassment (17% five times or more) and 17% physical sexual harassment.

Only 18% chose to report, which resulted in 56.25% action taken.

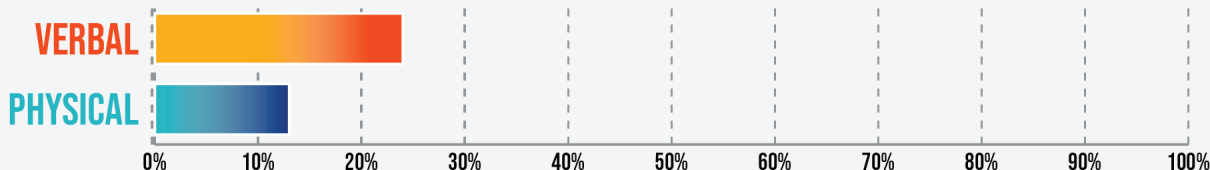
The most common reasons for not reporting were not wanting to be negatively labelled (18.2%), being afraid the perpetrator would retaliate (13%), and no reporting mechanisms (12.2%).

Most often organisations responded by dismissing the case (66.7%).

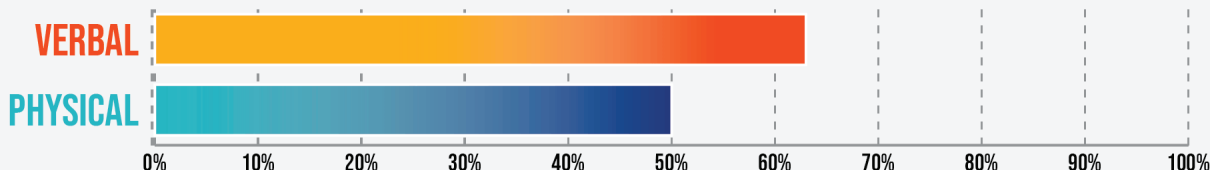
PREVALENCE



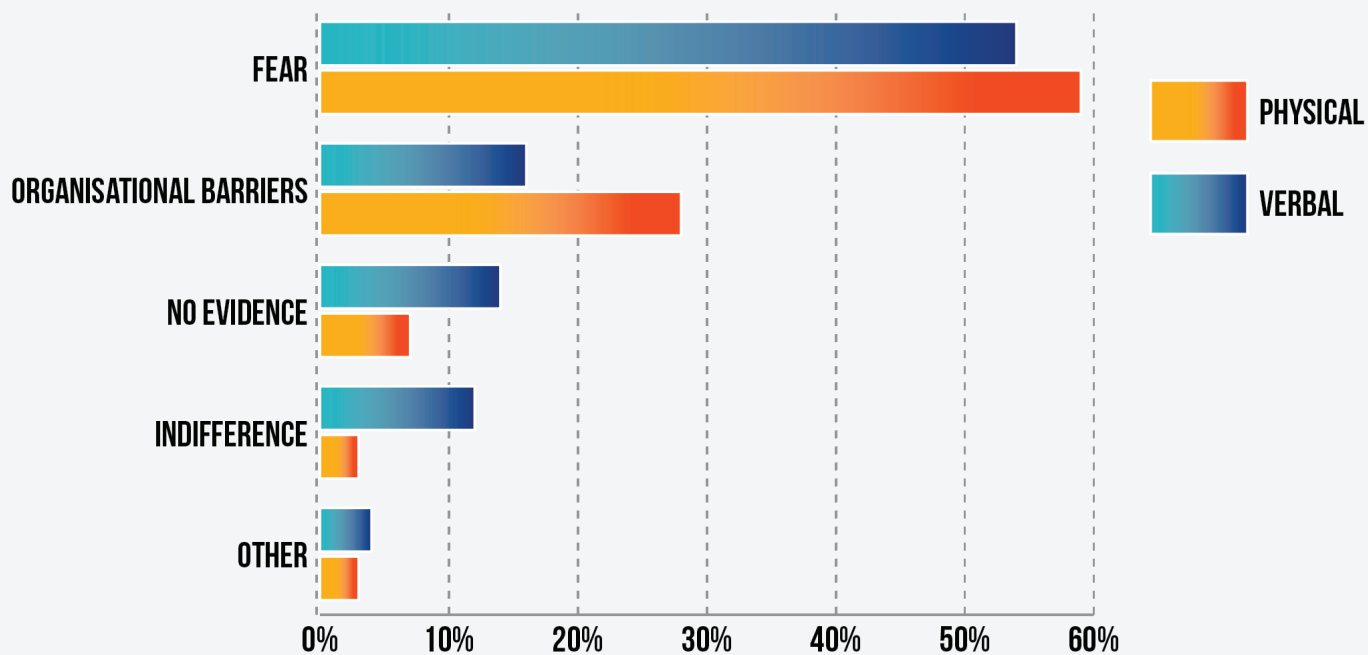
OF THOSE, WHO REPORTED THE INCIDENT



OF THOSE, WHO RECEIVED ACTION



WHY I DID NOT REPORT SEXUAL HARASSMENT





LEBANON

OVERVIEW:

157 ONLINE SURVEY PARTICIPANTS



DEMOGRAPHICS

- Women 42.7% (67), men 31.8% (50), and people who did not disclose 25.5% (40)
- Gender of supervisor: Men 56.1% (88), women 31.2% (49), and other 12.7% (20)
- Sexual harassment policy: No 63.7%, yes, but not aware what it is 27.4%, and yes, I am aware what it is 8.9%

FINDINGS

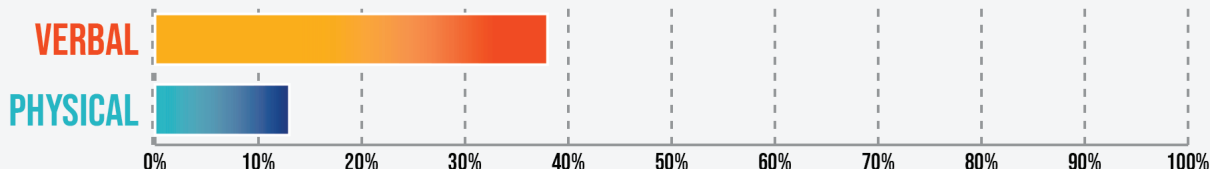
Examining sexual harassment frequencies, for men 32% experienced verbal sexual harassment and 8% physical sexual harassment. For women, 50.8% experienced verbal sexual harassment (10.4% five times or more) and 15% physical sexual harassment.

Only 17% chose to report, which resulted in 61% action taken.

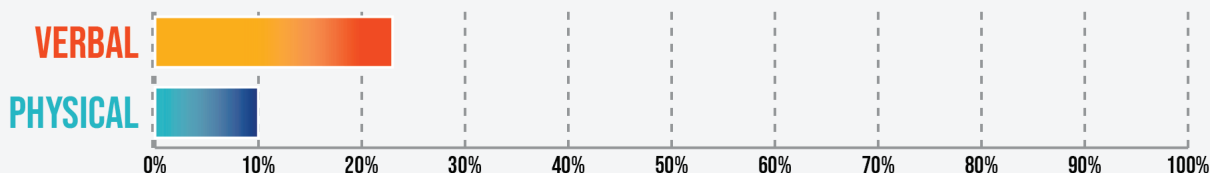
The most common reasons for not reporting were not thinking there was evidence (12.4%), no reporting mechanisms (12.3%), and not knowing how to report (12.2%).

The most common action taken was firing the perpetrator (68.2%).

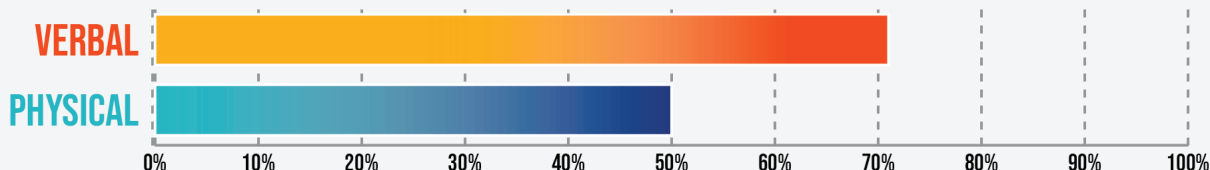
PREVALENCE



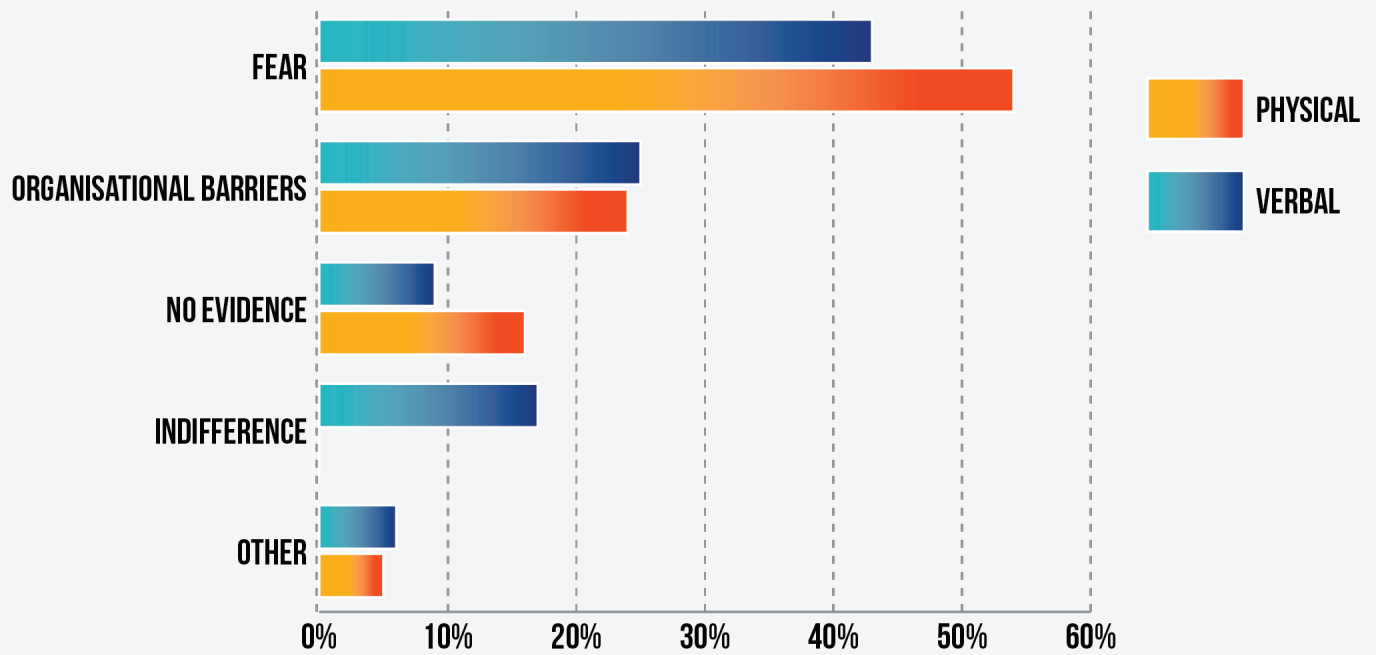
OF THOSE, WHO REPORTED THE INCIDENT



OF THOSE, WHO RECEIVED ACTION



WHY I DID NOT REPORT SEXUAL HARASSMENT





PALESTINE

OVERVIEW:

66 ONLINE SURVEY PARTICIPANTS 

DEMOGRAPHICS

- Women 47% (31), men 36.4% (24), and people who did not disclose 16.7% (11)
- Gender of supervisor: Men 74.2% (49), women 15.2% (10), and other 10.6% (10)
- Sexual harassment policy: No 62.1%, yes, but not aware what it is 30.4%, and yes, I am aware what it is 7.6%

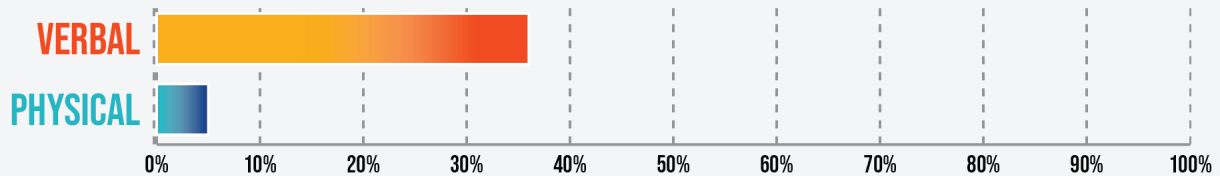
FINDINGS

Examining sexual harassment frequencies, for men 25% experienced verbal sexual harassment and 4.2% physical sexual harassment. For women, 42.1% experienced verbal sexual harassment (9.7% five times or more) and 3.2% physical sexual harassment.

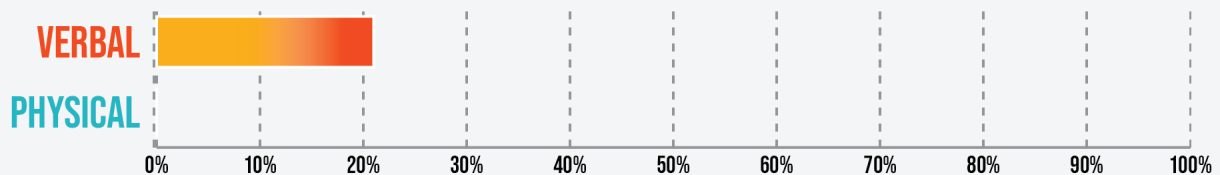
The most common reasons for not reporting were no reporting mechanisms (14.8%), didn't know how to report (14.8%) and not having evidence (14.8%).

Only 10% chose to report, which resulted in 20% action taken.

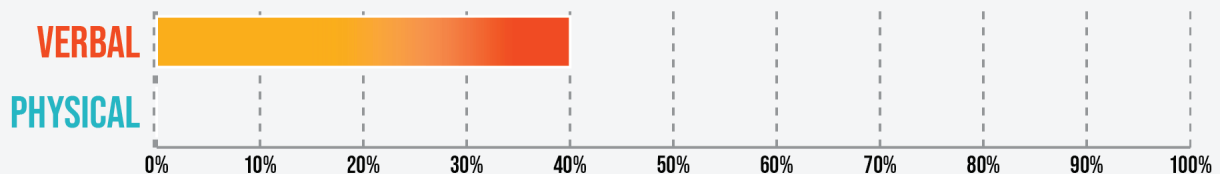
PREVALENCE



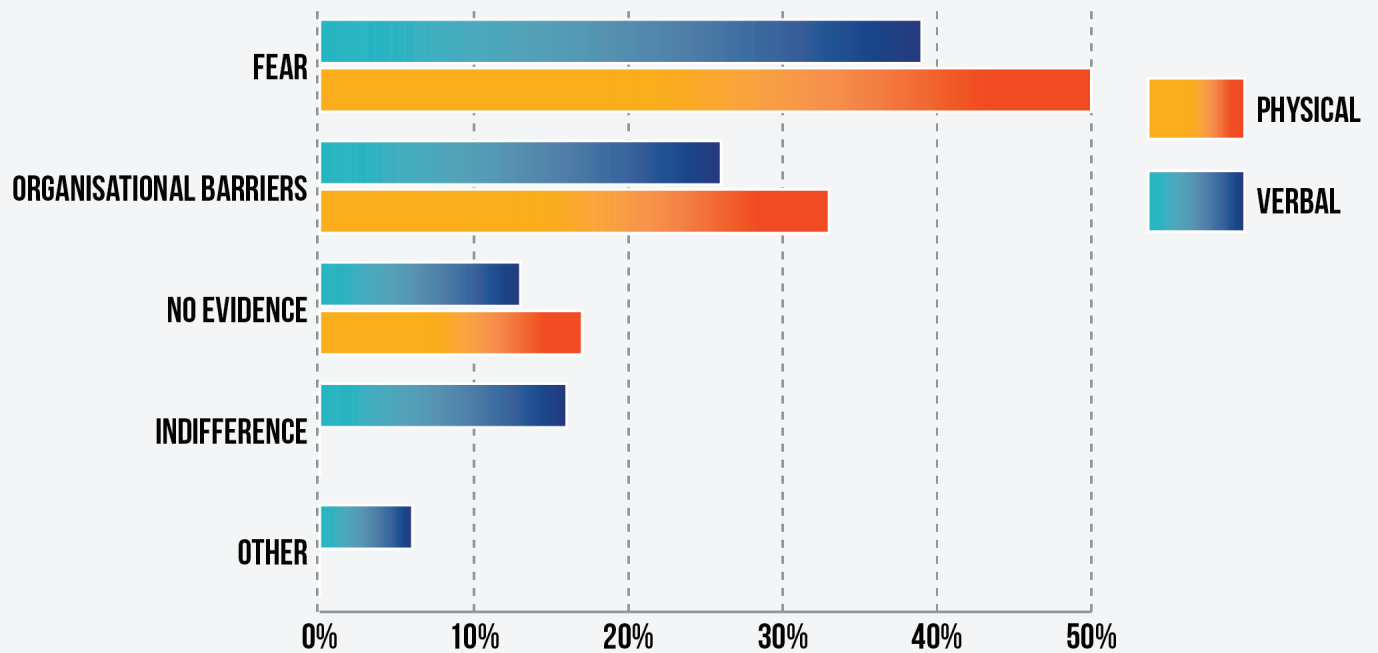
OF THOSE, WHO REPORTED THE INCIDENT



OF THOSE, WHO RECEIVED ACTION



WHY I DID NOT REPORT SEXUAL HARASSMENT



6

**WHAT
ORGANISATIONS
CAN DO**

WHAT MEDIA ORGANISATIONS CAN DO TO MANAGE SEXUAL HARASSMENT

To manage and reduce sexual harassment, clear rules and procedures are needed. Here are some guidelines



THE PRINCIPLE OF CONFIDENTIALITY:

A very central and important aspect of managing sexual harassment is guaranteeing confidentiality. This principle is considered a moral standard as well as a legal commitment and a part of professional ethics. Confidentiality aims to protect all individuals involved in sexual harassment complaints as well as the information that they disclose; only the personnel assigned by the organisation to investigate and manage should be allowed to access this information.

Confidentiality protects all people involved, including the person who experienced harassment, the person accused of harassment, witnesses and any other involved party. This principle also acts as a motivation to report harassment cases by building trust.

And in order to maintain confidentiality, an organisation must make sure that its data storage systems are safe and that the laws related to information and data protection in the country are followed.

1

TAKE ALL COMPLAINTS SERIOUSLY

Consider all sexual harassment complaints seriously and deal with them as soon as possible.

2

ADOPT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES

Give employees the options of filing official and non-official complaints. The steps and results of these two methods can vary, as do the procedures for each.

3

ALLOW ANONYMOUS REPORTING

In fighting harassment, it is useful to allow people to report cases anonymously. This gives employees the ability to expose such cases without having to reveal their own identity. But to perform a proper investigation, the organisation would need to know the identities of all involved parties.

4

ASSIGN TEAM TO INVESTIGATE

Clearly assign a person or a team to investigate and deal with sexual harassment cases. This person should preferably be from the HR department and have knowledge of guiding laws. It is imperative that they receive specialised training for conducting investigations.

5

HIRE EXPERTS WHEN NEEDED

In some cases, it may be necessary to seek external help from someone experienced in managing investigations with objectivity, fairness and integrity.

6

ALERT AUTHORITIES IN SOME CASES

If the case under investigation contains sexual assault (including rape), the authorities must be notified in accordance with law, and the survivor may need immediate medical attention. The organisation needs to cooperate fully with any official investigation by the police, and may require legal assistance or consultation.

7

CONSIDER TEMPORARY SUSPENSION

In grave cases of sexual harassment, including physical assault, it may be necessary to suspend the employee accused of harassment until the investigations (internal or external) are done. Temporary suspension is considered a procedural measure, and not a disciplinary one.

8

CLARIFY PROCEDURES TO ALL

Policies to counter sexual harassment inside the organisation should include clear procedures on how the received complaints are dealt with. This is very important for both managers and employees to avoid any ambiguity about the essence of these procedures. It is always preferable to adapt a step-by-step detailed approach for even higher clarity.



WOMEN IN NEWS'
SEXUAL HARASSMENT
MICROSITE

sexualharassment.womeninnews.org

7

WIN RESOURCES



CLICK [HERE](#) TO VISIT WIN'S SEXUAL HARASSMENT TOOLKIT

or visit this link: sexualharassment.womeninnews.org/en/resources/sexual_harassment_toolkit_win

THE TOOLKIT INCLUDES:

- Practical guide for employers and employees
- Awareness poster (A2) to put up in newsrooms and offices
- Sample sexual harassment policy
- Sample sexual harassment survey
- Sample communications templates
- Sample for interviews during an investigation
- Sample for feedback on a decision
- Informal complaints procedures
- Formal complaints procedures

WWW.WOMENINNEWS.ORG



Women in News