

Young women demand urgent action on sexual harassment

This briefing is based on findings from a survey carried out for Young Women's Trust by Populus Data Solutions from 25th June- 11th July 2019 with approximately 2000 young women aged 18 to 30 in England and Wales, alongside a comparison group of 2000 young men.

Talk but no action on sexual harassment

- A third of young women say that “there has been talk but no action to tackle sexual harassment since the #MeToo movement started”.
- Public discussion around sexual harassment has grown enormously, however young women still feel that urgent action is needed, with a third believing there has been ‘no action’ at all. This rises to 38 percent for young women with a disability or long-term health condition.

Young women are *still* not able to report without fear of losing their job

- A TUC [study](#) found that 63 percent of young women have experienced sexual harassment compared to an average of 52 percent among women of all ages. Our annual survey adds to this picture, showing that, despite its prevalence, **a quarter of young women would be reluctant to report sexual harassment for fear of being fired**. For young women facing intersecting discrimination this fear is even more pronounced at 30 percent for young BAME women and 37 percent for young women with a disability or long term health condition.
- One in five young women say they would be reluctant to report sexual harassment for fear of being given fewer hours. Among 18 to 24 year-olds the percentage was higher, at a quarter of young women.
- Our survey suggested that double the number of young women that have experienced sexual harassment have not reported it to their employer, compared to those that have.

Young women are facing serious repercussions if they do report

- These fears are not without foundation. 16 percent of young women say they “know of cases of sexual harassment at work that have been reported and not dealt with properly”.
- One in 20 young women reported they have had to change job due to sexual harassment, assault or abuse. Eight per cent of young women say they have been treated less well at work because they rejected sexual advances.



Young women report not knowing how to report harassment or challenge employers

- Young women say their employers are not doing enough to tackle the issue but do not feel able to challenge them. 40 percent of young women say they do not feel able to challenge their employer about sexual harassment, rising to 45 percent for young BAME women, and 46 percent would not feel able to challenge them on gender discrimination.
- A third of young women say they would not know how to report sexual harassment at work.

This needs to change! At Young Women's Trust we are calling for the Government to:

- Put a legal duty on employers to take proactive action to prevent sexual harassment in their workplaces.
- Reinstate section 40 of the Equality Act 2010, which made employers liable for harassment of their employees by a third party (e.g. clients and customers).
- Place a legal duty on employers and organisations to protect interns and volunteers from sexual harassment.
- Extend the three-month time limit for employees to bring tribunal cases under the Equality Act to at least six months.

We are calling on employers to:

- Adopt a zero-tolerance policy to sexual harassment and make this clear to all employees.
- Make complaints policies clear to staff and easy to access (e.g. on the intranet) to make it easier to report incidents.
- Put in place unbiased complaints processes that do not penalise victims, bringing in external independent help where possible.
- Improve workplace cultures by valuing, amplifying and acting on young women's voices in the organisation.

Contact Young Women's Trust

Young Women's Trust works to give economic power to young women by raising their voices, challenging sexist stereotypes and rebuilding workplaces free from discrimination. We do this by:

1. Providing free coaching and CV feedback to young women to help them build their skills, identify their talents and develop strong mental health
2. Advising companies how to build equal workplaces
3. Campaigning for young women to be valued – at work and in their unpaid work
4. Training young activists to share their experiences and be the change

If you'd like more information on our research, email esther.sample@youngwomenstrust.org or visit www.youngwomenstrust.org.