Sexual Harassment of Women

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

#ScienceToo

www.nationalacademies.org/sexualharassment

The National Academies of | SCIENCES ENGINEERING MEDICINE

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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

SEXUAL COERCION

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

Recommendation on Gender Harassment

Recommendation: Leaders in academic institutions and research and training sites must pay increased attention to and enact policies that cover gender harassment as a means of addressing the most common form of sexual harassment and of preventing other types of sexually harassing behavior.

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 prevalent

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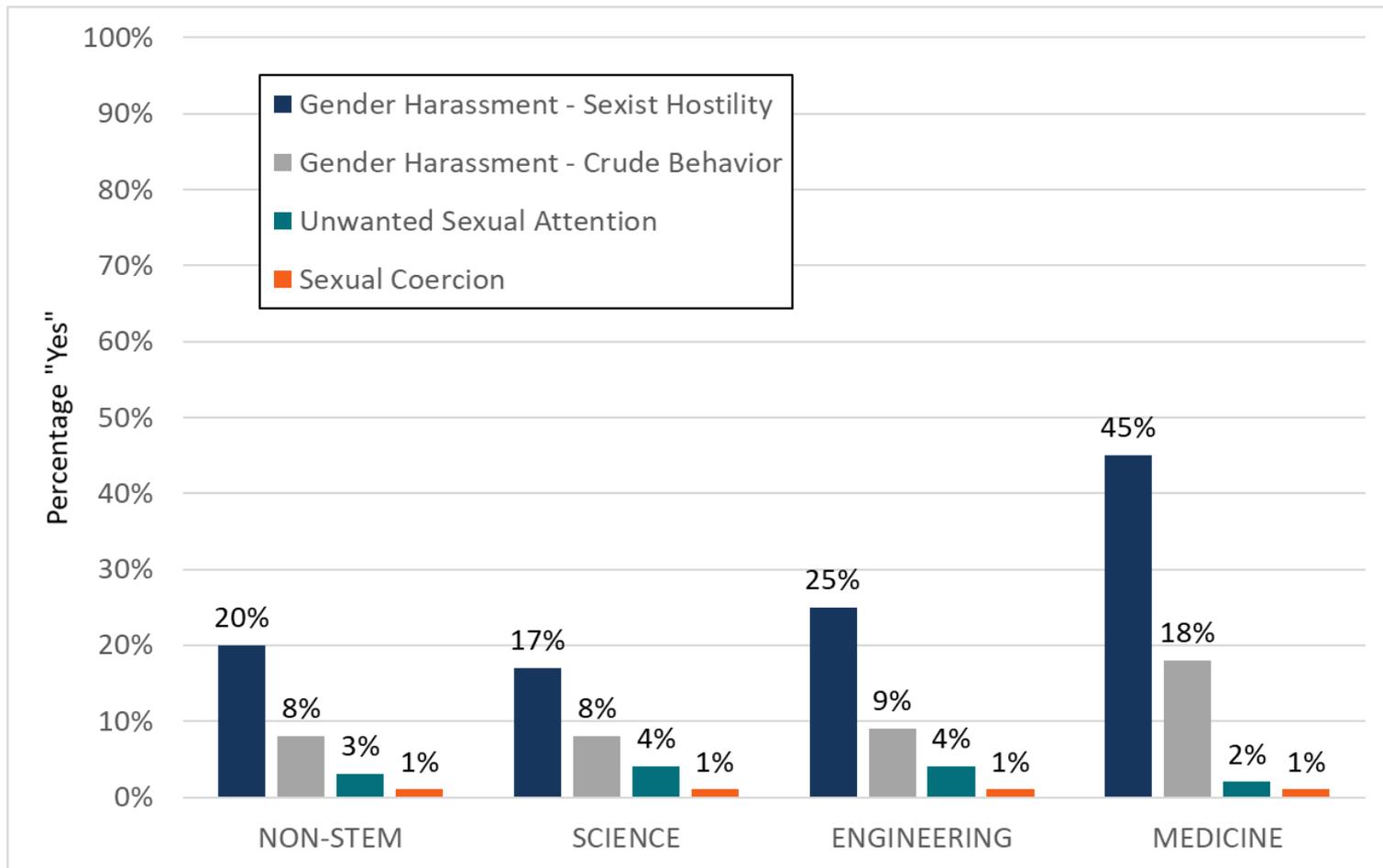
Findings: Race, Sexuality, and Gender Identity

Women of color experience more harassment (sexual, racial/ethnic, or combination of the two) than white women, white men, and men of color do. Women of color often experience sexual harassment that includes racial harassment.

Sexual- and gender-minority people experience more sexual harassment than heterosexual women do.

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: Legal System

Judicial interpretation of Title IX and Title VII has incentivized organizations to create policies, procedures, and training on sexual harassment that focus on symbolic compliance with current law and avoiding liability, and not on preventing sexual harassment.

Title IX, Title VII, and case law reflect the inaccurate assumption that a target of sexual harassment will promptly report the harassment without worrying about retaliation.

Findings: Predictors of Sexual Harassment

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

- Male-dominated in number, leaders, and culture

- Organizational tolerance of sexual harassment

    o Reporting is perceived as risky

    o Reports not taken seriously

    o Offenders escape sanction

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

Recommendations for Institutions

1. Create diverse, inclusive, and respectful environments

2. Diffuse the hierarchical and dependent relationship between trainees and faculty

3. Provide support for targets

4. Improve transparency and accountability

5. Strive for strong and diverse leadership

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.

- **Alternative and 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 and using a range of escalating disciplinary consequences.

- **Transparency about Handling Reports**: Be as transparent as possible about how the institution is handling reports of sexual harassment, such as by providing annual report.

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

Key Recommendations

Strive for strong and diverse leadership

- **Make it an Explicit Goal:** make the reduction and prevention of sexual harassment an explicit goal of your leadership tenure.

- **Develop Leadership Skills:** Support and facilitate leaders at every level 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 that is not just about protecting institutional liability.

Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

ACTION COLLABORATIVE ON
**Preventing Sexual Harassment
in Higher Education**

http://nationalacademies.org/SexualHarassmentCollaborative
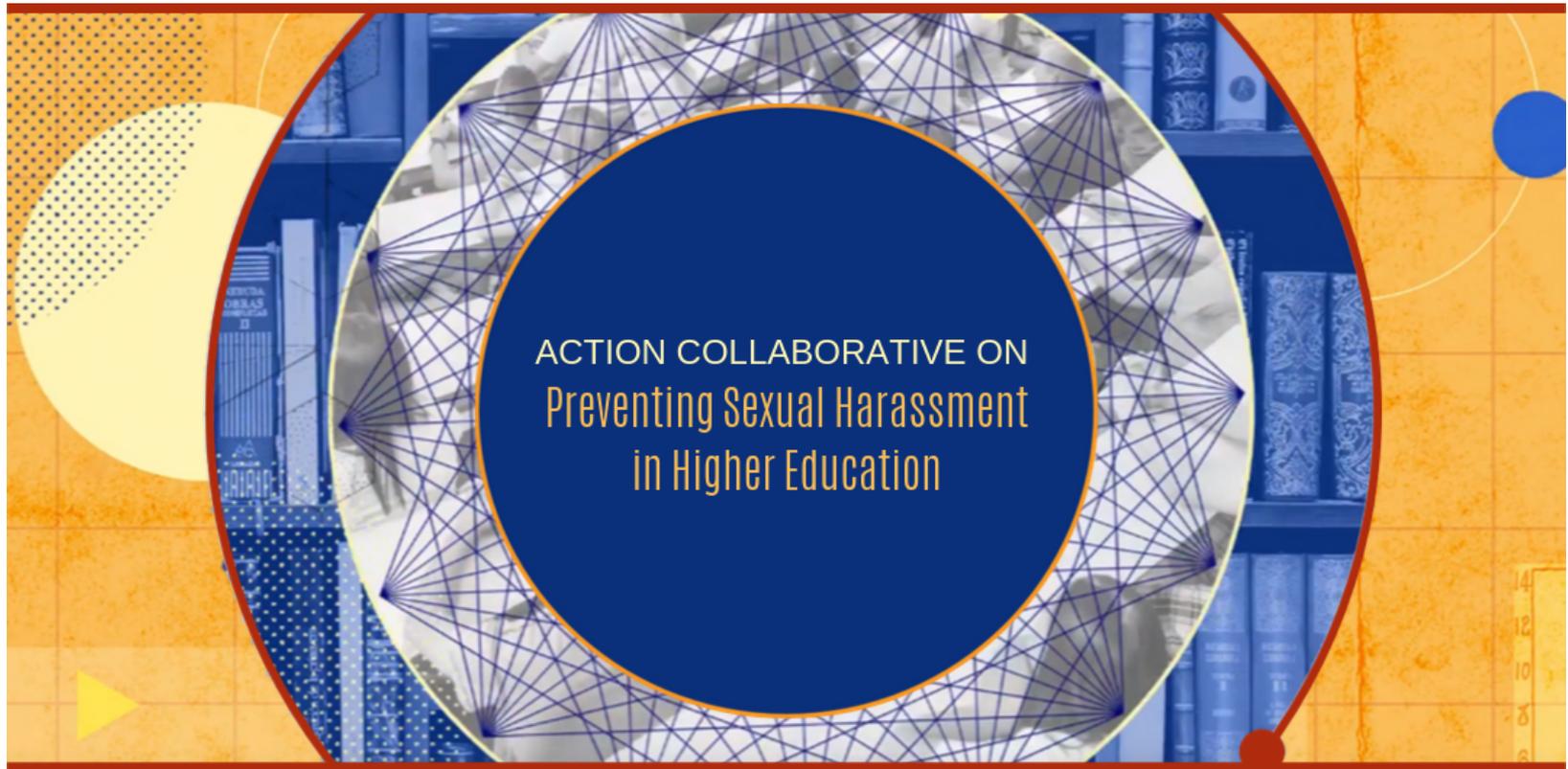
Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

Main goals:

1. Raise awareness about sexual harassment, its consequences, and preventing it

2. Share and elevate evidence-based policies and strategies for reducing and preventing sexual harassment

3. Contribute to setting a research agenda, and gather and apply research results across institutions

4. Develop a standard for measuring progress toward reducing and preventing sexual harassment in higher education

First Annual Summit of the Action Collaborative

ACTION COLLABORATIVE ON
Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

2019 Public Summit

November 19-20, 2019 at the University of Washington

http://www.nas.edu/ACSummit2019