Sexual harassment: myths & facts

RESPECT. NOW. ALWAYS.

Sexual harassment is any unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature that makes a person feel offended, humiliated, or intimidated. It is not sexual interaction, flirtation or friendship which is mutual or consensual.

**MYTH: SEXUAL HARASSMENT IS UNCOMMON**

FACT: 1 in 5 people over the age of 15 have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace. Sexual harassment commonly affects women more than men. 33% of women compared to less than 9% of men have experienced sexual harassment.

**MYTH: ‘IT’S JUST A JOKE’ – SEXUAL HARASSMENT IS NOT THAT SERIOUS**

FACT: Even if a person intends for their actions to be perceived as funny, flattering, complimentary or a ‘harmless joke’, it may still be offensive or damaging to others. It may make people feel uncomfortable, humiliated, or unsafe, and may affect their wellbeing. Sexual harassment is against the law.

**MYTH: SEXUAL HARASSMENT IS ALWAYS VERBAL**

FACT: A range of actions can constitute sexual harassment. These include – but are not limited to – sexual jokes or remarks, inappropriate touching, asking intrusive questions about a person’s sex life or body, requests for sex or repeated unwanted requests to go out on a date, displaying sexual images or pornography.

**MYTH: ONLY WOMEN CAN BE SEXUALLY HARASSED**

FACT: Sexual harassment can occur between any number of people, regardless of their gender and/or sexual orientation. Anyone can be a target or perpetrator of sexual harassment.

**MYTH: IF I IGNORE THE SEXUAL HARASSMENT, IT WILL GO AWAY**

FACT: Like most harmful or negative behaviours, sexual harassment will not disappear if ignored. In fact, failing to adequately address sexual harassment may make the situation worse, and create an unsafe environment.

**MYTH: I’M NOT THE TARGET, SO I CAN’T MAKE A COMPLAINT**

FACT: People who witness sexual harassment and are not the direct target, may still be impacted by the actions of the harasser. You do not have to be the direct target of sexual harassment to make a complaint. We all have a role to play in speaking up against sexual harassment and other forms of sexual misconduct.