



**CALMUN'25
UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
THIRD COMMITTEE
SOCHUM
STUDY GUIDE**



**Agenda Item: Addressing the Violation of Women's Privacy and Personal
Autonomy in the Workplace**

Academic Assistants: Sude Eylül Özalp

Table of Contents:

1. Letter from the Secretary-General
2. Glossary
3. Introduction to the Committee
4. Introduction to the Agenda Item
5. Background
6. Current Situation
7. Effects of Workplace Harassment
8. Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue
9. Stakeholders and Major Parties Involved
10. Points to Cover
11. Possible Solutions
12. Resources and Links for Further Research

1. Letter from the Secretary-General

Esteemed Participants,

As the Secretary-General of Çağaloğlu Model United Nations, it is my distinct honor to welcome you all to the 7th edition of CALMUN, which will take place on May 16th, 17th, and 18th, 2025. It is with great pleasure that we present the study guide for SOCHUM, which aims to equip you with the essential knowledge and context for the upcoming three days.

After months of preparation and dedicated effort, I am proud to say that we are now just one step away from CALMUN 2025. We hope that, by reading this guide, you will feel as ready and enthusiastic as we are.

Without a doubt, this conference would not be possible without the contributions of our remarkable academic team. I extend my gratitude to our Head of Academy, Özge Öztürk; our Co-Heads of Crisis, Meryem Sultan Çok and Akay Engin; our devoted and hardworking team members; and our motivated trainees. Their commitment and passion have brought this vision to life and elevated CALMUN's academic quality to its peak.

Furthermore, I would also like to extend my best wishes to all delegates participating in CALMUN 2025. Whether this is your first conference or you are a seasoned MUNer, I thank each of you for taking a step forward and joining us. We truly hope that CALMUN will be a special experience that you will remember warmly in the future. From my perspective, MUN is about motivation, enjoyment, meaningful discussion, and connection. I wish each delegate an inspiring, engaging, and memorable experience.

Warm regards,

Ceylin Gürsoy

Secretary-General

2. Glossary

Patriarchy: A social or governmental system in which the father or eldest male is the head of the family, and inheritance or lineage is traced through the male line.

Equal Pay Legislation: The set of laws that aim to eliminate gender pay gap by ensuring that men and women are paid equally for performing the same job with the same level of effort and responsibility.

Allegation: Public statements that are made without giving proof, accusing somebody of doing something that is wrong or illegal.

Reputation: The opinion that people have about what somebody/something is like, based on what has happened in the past.

Due Process: The course of legal proceedings carried out according to established rules and legal principles, designed to enforce and protect private rights within a system of law.

Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA): A Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) is a legally binding contract between two or more parties that establishes a confidential relationship. The parties agree not to disclose sensitive information shared between them to unauthorized individuals or entities.

Whistleblower: The individual who reveals something covert or who informs against another, especially an employee who brings wrongdoing by an employer or by other employees to the attention of a government or law enforcement agency.

Mobbing: Workplace harassment consisting of hostile treatment and unjustified psychological violence systematically carried out by an employee or group of employees towards another colleague in the work environment.

Systemic Discrimination: Procedures, routines, and organizational culture of any organization that, often without intent, contribute to less favorable outcomes for minority groups than for the majority of the population.

Gender Pay Gap: The difference in average gross hourly earnings between women and men, based on salaries paid directly to employees before income tax and social security contributions are deducted.

3. Introduction to the Committee

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) serves as the primary policy-making body of the United Nations, where all 193 Member States are equally represented and entitled to one vote each. It plays a central role in promoting peace, international solidarity, and the resolution of global challenges. The General Assembly is structured into six main committees, each focusing on a distinct area of international concern.

The Third Committee, officially called the Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM), is responsible for dealing with a wide range of humanitarian and social issues.

These include, but are not limited to, the protection of women's rights, the promotion of equitable living conditions, the resolution of cultural conflicts, the rights of refugees, the eradication of racism and gender discrimination, and the combating of social drug-related issues. Furthermore, SOCHUM examines matters relating to youth, family, aging, persons with disabilities, crime prevention, and the promotion of justice in criminal systems.

SOCHUM collaborates with various United Nations bodies, including UNICEF, and operates in close coordination with other Member States. It functions within the framework of the United Nations Charter, aiming to promote international cooperation and safeguard fundamental human rights. Through comprehensive analysis and the formulation of recommendations, the committee contributes to the development of peaceful and inclusive solutions to pressing humanitarian and cultural challenges around the world.

4. Introduction to the Agenda Item

Women in professional environments continue to face significant barriers rooted in systemic gender discrimination. These challenges include mobbing, verbal and psychological abuse, inequitable treatment, and workplace exclusion, often arising solely due to their gender. In many instances, women are not regarded as equals to their male counterparts and are denied the same opportunities for advancement. Men are frequently promoted to higher positions despite equal or even lesser qualifications, which obstructs the career progression of women. Moreover, women often receive lower wages for equivalent work, reflecting the persistence of the gender pay gap.

Such inequalities not only have material consequences but also inflict lasting psychological harm. The constant pressure to prove competence and avoid professional inspection creates an environment in which women feel insecure and undervalued. Some are reluctant to voice their opinions, fearing backlash or professional consequences. The workplace tolerance extended to men is frequently not granted to women, forcing them to act with heightened caution and self-restraint. Although many women continue to assert their rights and participate in decision-making, they are often met with resistance, and their influence within institutional structures is systematically diminished.

Stereotypical perceptions of women as emotional, indecisive, or unprofessional further contribute to their marginalization in the workforce. Such biases discourage women from participating fully in professional life and hinder their long-term advancement. The burden of balancing family responsibilities, especially maternity-related absences, also creates structural disadvantages. Upon returning from maternity leave, women often find their roles altered or their prospects for promotion significantly reduced. These practices demonstrate how institutional norms can unfairly sideline women in the workplace.

Alongside psychological and professional challenges, many women also face sexual harassment. In male-dominated workplaces, power imbalances are often abused by those who see women as less important or easily replaceable. Some people in positions of authority use threats or pressure to control female employees. This abuse isn't limited to managers—male colleagues also play a role in creating a work environment where women are treated as easy targets. Even though such cases are common, many women stay silent out of fear of losing their jobs or facing retaliation. Those who do speak up often face more harm, such as being fired or sued, showing that current systems do not do enough to protect victims or deliver justice.

Discrimination also occurs at the recruitment stage. Women are often overlooked for leadership roles or other positions of responsibility based on assumptions regarding their capability. Even when women possess superior qualifications and experience, men are often perceived as more suitable candidates. These discriminatory hiring practices further deter women from entering or remaining in the workforce.

5. Background

a. 8 March 1857 - Women's Resistance in New York

On March 8, 1857, approximately 40,000 female textile workers in New York initiated a strike to protest excessively long working hours and unfairly low wages. The demonstration, intended as a peaceful demand for improved labor conditions, was met with violent suppression by the police. In a tragic turn of events, 129 women were locked inside the factory where a fire subsequently broke out, resulting in their deaths. This event is recognized as one of the earliest and most significant examples of organized resistance by female industrial workers.

Despite the severity of the incident, media coverage at the time was limited, and the women's demands for justice received minimal attention in the public discourse. More than five decades later, the issue of women's labor rights returned to international focus during the Socialist Women's Conference held in Copenhagen in 1910. There, German activist Clara Zetkin proposed that March 8 be observed as a symbolic day to honor women's struggles and advocate for gender equality. Her proposal received widespread support among the participants.

Although the date was not officially recognized for several decades, the United Nations formally adopted March 8 as International Women's Day in 1977. Today, this day stands as a global symbol of women's resilience and the ongoing pursuit of equality in all spheres of life, particularly in the world of work. The history behind this commemoration highlights the importance of speaking out against injustice, even when there is no official recognition or support.



b. The Fox News Scandals - United States of America

In 2016, several major allegations revealed widespread sexual harassment at Fox News, one of the top media networks in the U.S. The issue gained national attention when former anchor Gretchen Carlson sued then-CEO Roger Ailes, accusing him of harassing her and offering promotions in return for sexual favors. She also claimed that after she refused, she was fired from the network.

Her decision to take legal action marked a turning point. Within two weeks of the lawsuit's filing, Roger Ailes resigned from his position amid mounting public scrutiny. Inspired by Carlson's example, multiple women working at Fox News came forward with similar allegations. Among them was prominent journalist Megyn Kelly, who also accused Ailes of misconduct. In total, more than 20 women reported instances of harassment involving Ailes during this period.

The revelations significantly impacted the reputation of Fox News, as it became apparent that the network had long failed to address inappropriate behavior by senior executives. The crisis deepened when further accusations emerged against another high-profile figure at the network, Bill O'Reilly. A former presenter alleged that O'Reilly had sent inappropriate messages and threatened her professional standing. This was not the first time O'Reilly had faced such accusations, and eventually, due to growing public pressure, he too was dismissed from the organization.

Later investigations revealed that Fox News had privately settled with several accusers, paying large amounts of money to keep the cases out of the public eye. These incidents raised serious concerns about workplace culture, power imbalances, and the lack of accountability in media companies. The scandals at Fox News came to represent the wider struggles many women face in male-dominated workplaces and played an important role in the growing conversation about harassment at work.

c. The #MeToo Movement - Global

The MeToo Movement originated in 2006, founded by activist Tarana Burke with the intention of supporting women who had experienced sexual violence. The movement's central purpose was to create a sense of solidarity and healing among survivors by assuring them that they were not alone. Although the initiative resonated with many individuals over the years, it remained relatively underrepresented in mainstream discourse until 2017.

In October 2017, following allegations of sexual abuse against famous Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein, actress Alyssa Milano published a post on social media encouraging survivors to respond with the phrase “me too” if they had ever been



subjected to sexual harassment or assault. The post went viral, sparking a global conversation and significantly amplifying the movement. While Tarana Burke initially expressed concern about the movement's sudden association with a celebrity figure, Milano quickly acknowledged Burke's foundational role and the two began working together to further MeToo's mission.

As the movement spread, it encouraged millions of women from different jobs and countries to speak up and share their experiences. Many powerful people in politics, law, entertainment, and business were held responsible. The movement also led to real changes in laws and workplace rules. In places like New York City, sexual harassment training at work became required. Some regions also changed their laws to give survivors more time to take legal action. Overall, the MeToo Movement showed how common sexual harassment is, especially at work, and helped bring about important changes in both laws and attitudes.

d. The Gender Pay Gap Strike - Iceland

Despite its global reputation for gender equality, Iceland continues to face measurable disparities in wage distribution. In some sectors, women earn up to 21 percent less than men, highlighting the persistence of systemic inequality. In response, approximately 100,000 women and non-binary individuals across Iceland participated in a nationwide strike on October 24, 2023. The aim was to raise awareness about both the gender pay gap and broader issues related to gender-based violence.

Participants stopped doing all forms of work, both paid and unpaid, including housework, to show how important their role is in keeping society running. The strike had a clear effect, causing some schools, healthcare services, and public offices to partly shut down. Iceland's Prime Minister, Katrín Jakobsdóttir, supported the strike and encouraged the women in her cabinet to take part.

e. The Ford Dagenham Women's Strike - England

The Ford Dagenham Women's Strike began on June 7, 1968, when 187 women sewing machinists at the Ford car factory in Dagenham, UK, walked off the job. They were protesting the company's decision to label them as "unskilled workers," even though their work was just as complex as that of male workers who were called "skilled." Before this change, the women made 92% of what the men earned for similar work. After being reclassified, their pay dropped to 85%, which led them to take collective action.

The strike lasted for three weeks and had a significant economic impact on the company, resulting in an estimated loss of £8 million in orders due to halted vehicle production. The women's protest drew national attention to the issue of pay inequality and contributed directly to broader discussions on workplace discrimination based on gender.

The Dagenham strike played a pivotal role in triggering legislative reform. In 1970, just two years after the protest, the United Kingdom passed the Equal Pay Act, which required equal pay for men and women doing the same job. The strike is widely recognized as a landmark event in the history of the women's rights movement in the UK.

6. Current Situation

a. Harassment in the Workplace

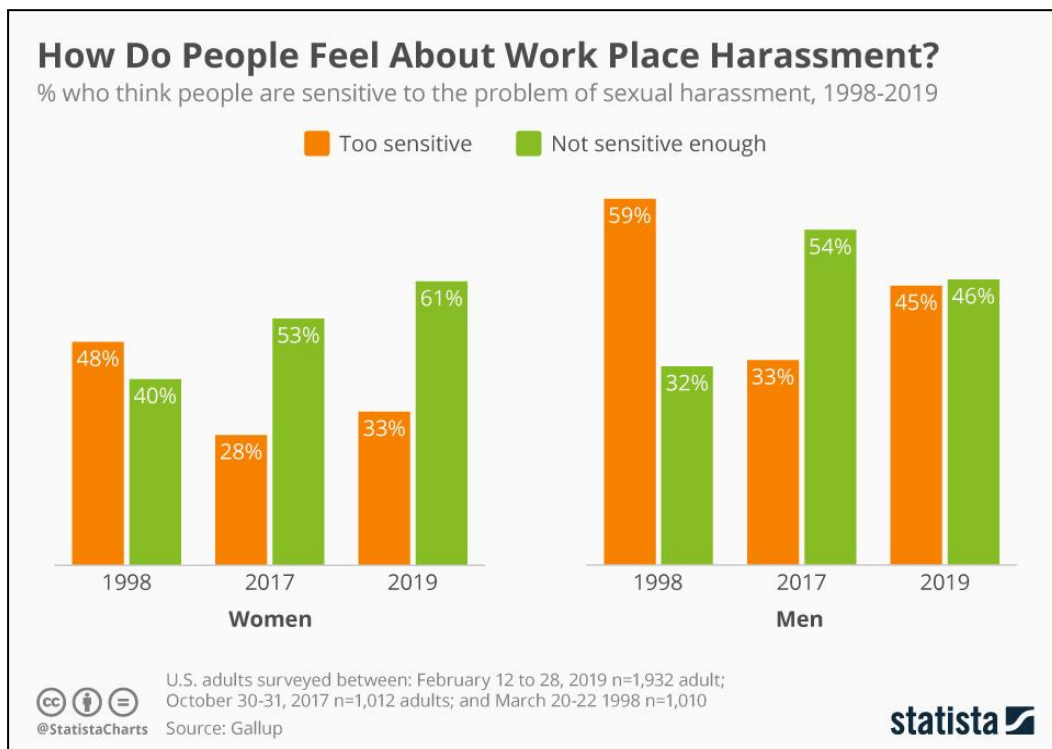
Harassment in the workplace remains a widespread and persistent issue, affecting thousands of women globally on a daily basis. This harassment may take various forms -physical, verbal, written, or digital- and can occur across all sectors and professional levels. Women, regardless of their educational background or occupational status, may encounter harassment during recruitment processes, salary negotiations, performance evaluations, promotions, and in sectors ranging from entertainment to healthcare. Such behavior is closely linked to broader societal norms that reinforce gender inequality. In male-dominated professions in particular, women are often perceived as intruders or threats to the status quo.

Recent [international research](#) underscores the troubling extent of the problem. A study involving 9,408 adults across eight countries (Australia, Ecuador, Egypt, India, South Africa, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Vietnam) revealed that nearly one in four male respondents believed it was sometimes or always acceptable for an employer to expect sexual interactions from an employee or to involve a family member or acquaintance in such expectations.

- According to the [International Labour Organization \(ILO\)](#), 23 percent of people worldwide have experienced workplace harassment, with women being more exposed to sexual violence and harassment
- [A UN Women report](#) found that between 40 and 50 percent of women in the European Union have encountered unwanted sexual advances in professional settings.
- [In Japan](#), over 30 percent of women reported being sexually harassed at work, with many choosing not to report the incidents due to fear of strong negative reaction or professional consequences.

The psychological toll of harassment can be severe. Victims frequently experience anxiety, depression, reduced self-esteem, and other long-term mental health challenges. Many ultimately leave their jobs, not due to performance or preference, but as a means of escaping hostile and toxic work environments.

The emergence of the MeToo Movement served as a powerful global response to the lack of adequate legal protections and institutional support. Through digital platforms, millions of women have shared their experiences, bringing visibility to the issue and prompting broader public and legislative discussions. The movement has gained momentum across continents, including in countries such as India and the United States, emphasizing the need for structural reforms and a cultural shift toward accountability and gender equity in the workplace.



b. The Glass Ceiling

The "glass ceiling" is a metaphor used to describe the unseen barriers that stop women and minorities from reaching top positions in organizations. These barriers often appear in the form of unfair treatment, lower pay, fewer chances for promotion, and workplace harassment.

While the glass ceiling is commonly associated with barriers in front of reaching executive roles, its impact can be seen much earlier in people's careers. Women frequently encounter obstacles during initial promotions, leading to significant [underrepresentation](#) in senior leadership. As of 2022, women held approximately 24.9% of senior leadership roles across OECD countries, highlighting the persistent gender disparity at the top levels of management.

In terms of compensation, [the gender wage gap](#) remains a pressing issue. As of 2023, women working full-time in OECD countries earned, on average, 11.3% less than their male counterparts.

[Labor force participation rates](#) further reflect gender disparities. In 2019, women's average participation in the workforce across OECD countries was 64%, which was 16 percentage points lower than that of men.

Addressing the glass ceiling is not only a matter of equity but also of economic efficiency. [Research](#) indicates that companies with greater gender diversity in leadership roles experience enhanced performance. For instance, firms with higher female representation in senior positions have reported improvements in profitability, productivity, innovation, and company reputation.

c. Legal Work and Lawsuits

Even though many countries have constitutional protections and laws to support women's rights at work, major problems in the legal and justice systems still make it hard to enforce those rights. In some places, laws against gender-based harassment and discrimination are weak, not applied fairly, or made ineffective by slow and complicated legal procedures.

One major challenge is that justice is often hard to access because legal processes take too long, there are bureaucratic delays, and corporate and legal systems lack transparency. In many cases, companies hide incidents of misconduct to protect their image, which prevents those responsible from being held accountable. For example, a 2023 study in the United States revealed that approximately 8 percent of federal court employees reported experiencing workplace misconduct. However, a significant number of these cases went unreported due to widespread distrust in the institutional response and fear of retaliation.

In Australia, efforts to implement reform through the "Respect at Work" legislation were met with resistance and delays, underscoring the challenges that often accompany legislative change. Although the law was meant to strengthen protections against sexual harassment and

introduce obligations for employers, its implementation highlighted the difficulty of translating legal reforms into solid workplace improvements.

Another big problem is the use of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs). These legal contracts often stop victims from sharing their experiences publicly. Although NDAs are meant to protect company secrets and confidentiality, they are often used to hide wrongdoing and avoid public attention, which allows the misconduct to continue.

Additionally, disparities in pay and promotion between men and women further make things more complicated. Structural inequalities in compensation and career advancement reflect broader patterns of gender-based discrimination, reinforcing the systemic nature of workplace injustice.

d. Addressing Harassment

Efforts to combat violence and harassment against women in the workplace must involve a coordinated response from both state and non-state actors. Governments, employers, trade unions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and women's advocacy groups all play essential roles in creating safe, respectful, and equitable working environments. The "UN Handbook on Addressing Violence and Harassment Against Women in the World of Work" emphasizes the responsibilities of state actors in legislating, regulating, and monitoring workplace conduct. At the same time, it recognizes the vital contributions of non-state actors in promoting awareness, offering support services, and holding institutions accountable.

One of the primary challenges in addressing harassment is underreporting. Many women are reluctant to share their experiences due to fear of negative reactions, social stigma, or distrust in existing complaint mechanisms. As a result, detecting and responding to harassment remains difficult. Raising public awareness through education campaigns and workplace training is crucial in fostering a culture where victims feel safe to come forward and where unacceptable behavior is no longer tolerated.

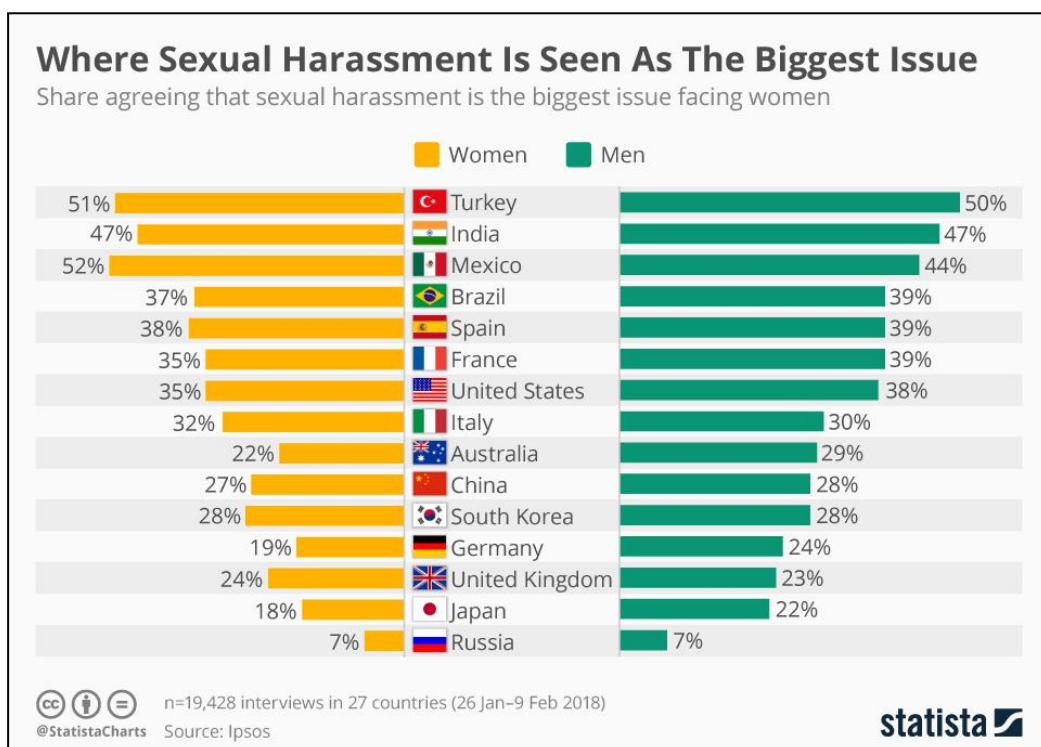
Workplaces need to take active steps, backed by law, to prevent harassment. These steps should include clear anti-harassment rules, safe and private ways to report issues, regular training for staff, and independent bodies to review complaints. Harassment must not be treated as normal, and companies that use non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) to silence victims should face stronger rules and legal consequences. When misused, NDAs block justice and allow bad behavior to continue.

Research conducted by the U.S. government has shown that companies with women in leadership roles or senior management positions tend to report fewer cases of workplace harassment.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of national legal frameworks can often be assessed through the availability of harassment data. Countries with comprehensive legal protections are more likely to collect and publish statistics on workplace harassment. For example:

- [In Iceland](#), 42% of women have reported experiences of workplace harassment.
- [In Sweden](#), the figure stands at approximately 37%.
- [In Canada](#), around 43% of women have reported similar experiences.

By contrast, countries with weaker legal protections often lack reliable data, indicating a gap not only in enforcement but also in acknowledgment of the issue.



e. Intersectionality in Workplace Harassment

The concept of intersectionality is essential for understanding the full scope of workplace harassment. Intersectionality refers to the fact that people have many social identities - like race, gender, class, disability, and sexual orientation - that can overlap and lead to unique and more severe forms of discrimination when combined.

For instance, a black woman in the workplace may face challenges not only based on her gender but also as a result of racial bias. These compounded factors can place her at a greater disadvantage than her male or white counterparts. Traditional labor protections often fail to account for such multi-layered forms of discrimination, leaving individuals with intersecting identities especially vulnerable.

This reality is also evident among other marginalized groups, such as individuals of color, immigrant workers, and women with disabilities may encounter both direct and subtle forms of harassment caused by overlapping biases. These experiences often go unrecognized by workplace systems that are designed to address only singular forms of discrimination, making it more difficult for victims to report incidents or receive adequate protection.

i. Women of Racial or Ethnic Minorities

Women belonging to racial or ethnic minority groups often experience workplace harassment that is compounded by intersecting forms of discrimination. Harassment directed toward minority women frequently carries racialized elements, blending sexual misconduct with stereotypes rooted in historical prejudices. Victims may be subjected to derogatory remarks, racialized sexual comments, and behaviors that target both their gender and their racial or ethnic identity simultaneously.

Refugee and migrant women are especially at risk in these situations. Because of uncertain legal status, language difficulties, and social isolation, they often work in informal jobs with little protection or oversight. Many are afraid to report harassment because they fear being deported, punished, or pushed further to the margins of society. On top of that, feeling like outsiders or that they don't belong makes it even harder for them to speak up. This leads to underreporting and allows the abuse and exploitation to continue.

ii. Employees with Disabilities

Employees with disabilities face unique risks of harassment at work. Their physical, mental, or sensory challenges can make them more dependent on others, like coworkers or supervisors, which can create power imbalances that some people take advantage of. They may experience unwanted touching disguised as help, insulting comments about their disabilities, or be left out of workplace activities in ways that are claimed to be for their "safety." The challenges they face go beyond physical access - many workplaces lack proper systems for handling complaints that meet their specific needs. Communication difficulties and staff who aren't properly trained can also make it harder for disabled employees to report and resolve harassment.

iii. Low-Income Workers

Low-income workers are disproportionately vulnerable to harassment and workplace misconduct due to their financial dependency on employment and their limited bargaining power. Workers in lower-wage sectors often lack access to comprehensive legal protections, union representation, or employer-sponsored grievance procedures. This financial insecurity creates conditions where individuals may endure harassment silently out of fear of job loss, income insecurity, or blacklisting within their industry.

Taking legal action presents additional challenges for low-income workers. The cost of legal representation, court fees, and the potential loss of wages during lawsuit act as significant barriers. In some cases, employers may exploit this vulnerability, confident that victims lack the resources to pursue complaints or endure long legal battles. Consequently, harassment often remains unreported and unaddressed among economically marginalized groups.

f. Digital Harassment and Remote Work Environments

The rise of remote and hybrid work models has fundamentally reshaped the modern professional landscape. While these arrangements have increased participation in the workforce, particularly for women balancing professional and personal responsibilities, they have also introduced new risks to privacy and personal autonomy. One major concern is the rise of digital harassment in online workspaces. This kind of misconduct is often harder to see, more difficult to report, and not well covered by standard workplace rules.

Digital harassment refers to inappropriate or harmful behavior that occurs through electronic communication tools. In a professional setting, digital harassment can include unwanted or sexually suggestive messages, repeated and unwelcome contact, rude comments during virtual meetings, or the sharing of explicit content through email, chat, or video calls. Women working from home may also face cyberstalking, excessive monitoring, or judgment based on how they look or act in video calls. These experiences can lead to long-term stress, anxiety, and feeling unsafe at work.

Another rising concern is the use of invasive surveillance tools by employers to watch how employees work. Some companies install software that tracks things like computer activity, typing, screen time, and even webcam footage. While these tools are often said to help manage performance, they can become unethical - especially when used without clear consent or in ways that unfairly target or pressure women. For example, there have been cases where women were criticized for not looking "presentable" on camera, reinforcing harmful gender stereotypes and reducing their control over how they appear in virtual spaces.

The legal and institutional response to digital harassment remains limited. Many labor laws are designed for physical workplaces and fail to adequately address online misconduct. As a result, women who face harassment in remote settings may find themselves without access to meaningful reporting mechanisms or legal protections. Non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) may also be used in these contexts to silence victims, creating further barriers to justice.

g. Men's Role in Cultural Change

Cultural dynamics within professional environments play a significant role in shaping attitudes toward workplace harassment. In many institutions, men occupy the majority of executive and managerial positions, which places them in influential roles within organizational hierarchies. The behaviors, decisions, and public stances of individuals in such positions often contribute to the normalization or rejection of discriminatory conduct.

[Studies](#) in organizational behavior show that when leadership is mostly male, it can affect how often harassment is reported, how seriously complaints are taken, and how gender issues are handled overall. The way leaders speak publicly, respond to complaints, and carry out disciplinary actions often reflects the organization's true attitude toward gender-based misconduct, and can either support or weaken efforts to address it.

Workplace culture is also informed by broader social norms, which are frequently shaped by gendered expectations. In this context, men have historically held decision-making power across various sectors, shaping policies and practices that impact organizational climates. [Research](#) has examined how traditional workplace norms - often aligned with competitive, hierarchical models - can intersect with gendered power dynamics, contributing to varying patterns of behavior and response across professional environments.

[Institutional data](#) has also explored the presence and impact of gender-focused training programs and bystander frameworks within male-majority organizations. These analyses often investigate how the demographic composition of a workforce, particularly in leadership and upper management, correlates with institutional responses to misconduct, internal accountability processes, and the reporting culture within specific organizations.

7. Effects of Workplace Harassment

Workplace harassment has wide-ranging effects that extend beyond the immediate experiences of the individuals directly targeted. It impacts not only the psychological well-being and professional advancement of victims but also affects organizational performance, public health systems, legal processes, and broader societal structures.

a. Psychological and Emotional Impact on Victims

Harassment in the workplace often results in severe psychological consequences for those affected. Victims frequently experience heightened levels of stress, anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress symptoms, and diminished self-esteem. The continuous exposure to a hostile environment can also lead to chronic mental health conditions, sleep disturbances, and emotional exhaustion. The psychological burden often persists long after the initial incidents, influencing personal relationships and general quality of life.

b. Professional and Economic Consequences

Workplace harassment significantly hinders victims' career progression. Women who face persistent harassment may be overlooked for promotions, assigned less desirable tasks, or marginalized within their organizations. In many cases, victims voluntarily leave hostile work environments, resulting in gaps in employment history, lost income, and stalled professional development. Long-term effects may include difficulty securing new employment, diminished lifetime earnings, and permanent barriers to leadership opportunities. The cumulative economic loss at both individual and societal levels can be substantial.

c. Organizational and Institutional Impact

The effects of workplace harassment extend to organizational performance and reputation. Institutions that tolerate or fail to address harassment face increased employee turnover, absenteeism, reduced productivity, and low employee morale. Organizations may also face financial losses due to legal claims, settlements, and regulatory penalties. Furthermore, public exposure of systemic harassment can severely damage an organization's reputation, undermining trust among clients, partners, and the broader public.

d. Public Health Implications

Workplace harassment also constitutes a public health concern. The psychological and physical health consequences for victims place additional burdens on national healthcare systems, resulting in higher treatment costs and lost economic output due to reduced workforce participation. Studies have shown that environments marked by systemic harassment contribute to a decline in overall employee health guidelines.

e. Legal and Judicial Consequences for Victims

Victims seeking justice often face long and emotionally difficult legal processes. Taking legal action in harassment cases may involve lengthy investigations, strict evidence requirements, and adversarial procedures that can lead to secondary victimization. Many victims also have trouble accessing affordable legal help or fear retaliation, which contributes to underreporting. In addition, the use of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) to settle cases privately can prevent public accountability and support a culture of silence.

f. Societal and Structural Consequences

The normalization of harassment within workplace cultures contributes to the continuation of deeper systemic gender inequalities. Environments that minimize or dismiss reports of harassment reinforce patriarchal structures and limit the participation of women in public and professional life. Intersectional factors, such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disability status, can further worsen the impacts of harassment, creating multiple layers of disadvantage for affected individuals. Over time, these patterns establish socio-economic disparities and weaken efforts to achieve gender equality at the national and international levels.

8. Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW): Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979 and entering into force in 1981, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) marked a significant milestone in the protection of women's rights globally. As a binding international treaty, CEDAW obliges state parties to eliminate discrimination against women in all areas of public and private life, including employment. Article 11 of CEDAW addresses women's rights in the workplace, affirming their entitlement to the same employment opportunities as men, equal remuneration, protection of health and safety, and specific safeguards against harassment. CEDAW remains one of the most comprehensive legal frameworks for the advancement of gender equality and is often cited in both national legislation and judicial decisions.

For further research: [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women New York, 18 December 1979 | OHCHR](#)

European Union Equal Treatment Directive (2006/54/EC): In 2006, the European Union adopted Directive 2006/54/EC on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation. This directive consolidated and modernized previous EU legislation, introducing a more explicit definition of harassment and sexual harassment as forms of discrimination. It also placed a legal obligation on EU Member States to enforce appropriate legal and institutional measures to address gender-based misconduct in the workplace. The directive emphasizes the importance of effective remedies and penalties, and it encourages employers to take preventive action against discriminatory practices.

For further research: [Directive - 2006/54 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, endorsed by the UN Human Rights Council in 2011, outline the responsibilities of both states and corporate entities to prevent human rights abuses within business operations. Although non-binding, the principles have become a global standard for ethical business conduct and are widely referenced by multinational corporations and regulators. The framework rests on three pillars: the state duty to protect human rights, the corporate responsibility to respect human rights, and the need for access to effective remedies. Gender equality and the protection of privacy and dignity in the workplace fall within the scope of these obligations, especially under the corporate responsibility pillar.

For further research: [GUIDING PRINCIPLES ON BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS](#)

ILO Convention No. 190 on Violence and Harassment: In 2019, the International Labour Organization (ILO) adopted Convention No. 190, the first international treaty to specifically address violence and harassment in the world of work. The convention recognizes that such behaviors can constitute a human rights violation and a threat to equal opportunity, health, and dignity.

Convention No. 190 applies to all sectors and forms of employment, whether formal or informal, and provides a broad definition that includes physical, psychological, and sexual harassment. The accompanying Recommendation No. 206 offers detailed guidance on implementation, including preventive measures, victim support, and enforcement mechanisms.

For further research: [Violence and harassment in the world of work:](#)

9. Stakeholders and Major Parties Involved

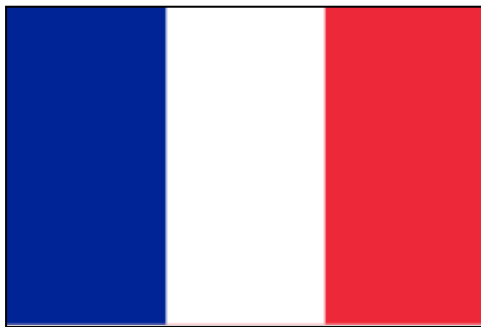


The United States of America: Following the Industrial Revolution, inequalities and challenges faced by women in the workplace significantly intensified in the United States. During this period, women and children were frequently employed for extended hours under harsh conditions and for extremely low wages, as industries sought to maximize production within short timeframes. The working environments were often unsafe and unsuitable for human health and dignity.

Over time, women began to organize in response to these injustices, recognizing the necessity of collective action to address gender-based discrimination and inequality. Strikes, advocacy movements, and labor organizations led by women gained momentum, eventually influencing not only national labor reforms but also international discussions on women's rights in the workplace. In response to increasing public pressure, the United States government introduced several legislative measures aimed at addressing gender inequality in employment. The Equal Pay Act of 1963 mandated equal pay for men and women performing substantially similar work. Shortly thereafter, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited employment discrimination on the basis of sex, race, color, national origin, and religion, establishing legal protections in recruitment, promotion, and compensation practices. The Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978 further strengthened these protections by outlawing discrimination based on pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions.



Sweden: Sweden is internationally recognized for its progressive stance on gender equality, particularly in the workplace. The country has implemented comprehensive legal measures to safeguard women's rights, with the Discrimination Act serving as a cornerstone. This legislation prohibits discrimination based on gender, age, race, ethnicity, and religion, ensuring broad protections for all individuals. To address structural barriers to gender equality, Sweden introduced policies such as equal parental leave, mandating that both parents take at least 90 days of leave. Despite these advancements, a 2021 national survey conducted across 38 Swedish higher education institutions revealed that 38% of respondents reported experiencing unwanted sexual attention at some point during their employment or studies. Notably, over half of female doctoral students reported such experiences.



France: France has established one of the more comprehensive legal frameworks for the protection of women's rights in the workplace. The French Labour Code serves as a central piece of legislation, prohibiting discrimination and harassment on the basis of gender, pregnancy, family status, and sexual orientation. In addition, since 2014, France has mandated regular inspections of workplaces employing more than fifty women, aiming to ensure compliance with equality and anti-harassment standards.

Despite these legal measures, a [2021 study](#) conducted among French women intensivists found that 31 percent believed that being a woman negatively impacted their opportunities for career advancement, while 73 percent stated that pregnancy further hindered their professional progression. The MeToo movement also brought significant attention to these issues in France under the local campaign known as #BalanceTonPorc (Expose Your Pig), which highlighted the prevalence of harassment and the experiences of women within various professional sectors.



China: China has implemented a number of legal regulations to protect women's privacy and autonomy in the workplace. China's Labor Law prohibits sexual harassment and obliges employers to prevent harassment. The Women's Rights Law protects women more comprehensively against harassment in the workplace. These laws aim to prevent harassment and discrimination, and remind employers to develop effective policies to combat harassment. However, rates of harassment in the workplace remain high. Many women are reluctant to report harassment because of social stigma and fear of losing their jobs. In addition, some companies still do not take adequate measures to combat harassment or neglect to report it. The Chinese government has taken some steps to combat harassment and has organized awareness campaigns. It has also provided training on harassment in the workplace and encouraged employers to be more vigilant. However, it is clear that social change and legal enforcement need to be more effective. More steps could be taken to reduce the harassment cases.



Saudi Arabia: Saudi Arabia has faced longstanding challenges regarding gender equality, both within the workplace and in broader societal contexts. Women in Saudi Arabia continue to encounter significant obstacles in exercising their rights, despite notable reforms in recent years. While the government has implemented measures aimed at improving gender equality, these developments have been relatively recent compared to global trends. In 2018, Saudi Arabia introduced a major legal change by allowing women to work without requiring the permission of a male guardian. Additionally, efforts have been made to reduce gender segregation in professional environments by decreasing the number of special offices and designated areas separating men and women. Nevertheless, women often encounter difficulties when seeking legal redress for workplace harassment, and in some cases, individuals reporting harassment have faced accusations of slander.



International Labour Organization(ILO): The International Labour Organization (ILO) holds a significant role in addressing workplace harassment. The organization has conducted numerous studies, published extensive statistics, and inspired many governments to take action on the issue. Founded in 1919, the ILO functions as a specialized agency of the United Nations.

One of the most significant steps taken by the organization is the adoption of Convention No. 190 on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work, which aims to eliminate unfair treatment of women and gender-based inequality. The convention outlines the responsibilities of governments, workplaces, and labor unions worldwide, and specifies recommended precautionary measures. It also provides educational resources to support the implementation of these standards.



gender equality and the empowerment of women globally.

UN Women: In July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly established UN Women, the entity responsible for the protection and promotion of women's rights and welfare. UN Women is one of the leading organizations working to ensure

UN Women contributes to the legislative process of numerous laws aimed at protecting women's rights in the workplace, such as equal pay legislation. It also seeks to prevent gender-based discrimination in professional environments by encouraging national governments to adopt and implement relevant policies. In addition to its advocacy work, UN Women provides extensive training programs to raise awareness among women about their rights and offers financial support to those seeking to establish their own businesses.



The European Union (EU): The European Union (EU) plays a significant role in supporting UN Women's efforts to promote gender equality, as detailed in various UN Women publications. Documents such as the "Working Together for Gender Equality" brochure further elaborate on the EU's contributions to advancing women's rights globally.

The EU collaborates with UN Women on several initiatives, including the Spotlight Initiative, a global partnership launched in 2017 with a €500 million commitment from the EU. This initiative aims to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls and has supported the development and implementation of numerous laws and policies worldwide. In addition, the EU supports the promotion of the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) and the EU Gender Action Plan III, both of which focus on advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women on a global scale.

The European Union also contributes to promoting equality by facilitating employment opportunities for women and supporting legislative measures aimed at protecting women's rights. The influence of the EU, through its institutions and member states, remains significant in shaping global efforts toward achieving gender equality.

10. Points to Cover

1. What additional legal measures could be implemented to enhance the protection of women's safety, privacy, and autonomy in workplaces?
2. How can governments effectively incentivize or regulate companies to adopt stronger workplace protections for women?
3. In what ways can non-state actors, such as NGOs, trade unions, and international organizations, contribute to the prevention of workplace harassment and discrimination?
4. What strategies could be introduced to regulate or limit the misuse of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) in cases of workplace harassment?
5. What measures could be adopted to facilitate women's participation and advancement in male-dominated industries and leadership positions?
6. In what ways can digital harassment and online workplace misconduct be addressed through national or international policies?
7. How should intersectional factors -such as race, disability, immigration status, and sexual orientation- be considered in the development of workplace protections?
8. What role can male leadership and inclusive workplace culture reforms play in reducing gender-based harassment and promoting equality?
9. What challenges arise in the legal and judicial processes for victims of workplace harassment, and how might they be addressed without compromising neutrality and justice?

11. Possible Solutions

- Addressing gender-based inequality in the workplace requires comprehensive and sustained efforts across legal, institutional, and societal levels. One important measure is the implementation of stricter legal frameworks combined with effective enforcement mechanisms. Stronger laws can contribute to creating environments where women feel more secure in reporting harassment and discrimination without fear of professional retaliation. Legal protections serve both a preventive and corrective function by deterring misconduct and ensuring that violations are properly addressed.
- Promotion of women's economic participation through education and targeted financial support is critical as well. Women often face structural barriers to entrepreneurship, including limited access to resources, networks, and funding. Educational programs aimed at enhancing business and leadership skills, alongside financial initiatives provided by governments, non-governmental organizations, and private sector actors, can strengthen women's economic independence. Increasing women's presence in the economy contributes to broader societal development and fosters greater gender equality.
- The establishment of workplace policies, such as the Zero Tolerance Policy, plays a critical role in maintaining safe and inclusive professional environments. Clear internal policies against harassment, mobbing, and other forms of misconduct, supported by transparent reporting mechanisms and regular workplace monitoring, reinforce the message that such behaviors are unacceptable.

12. Resources and Links for Further Research

[Addressing violence and harassment against women in the world of work.](#)

[Protecting the Margins: Intersectional Strategies to Protecting Gender Outlaws from Workplace Harassment | N.Y.U. Review of Law & Social Change](#)

[Harassment | U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#)

[EU | 2024 Report on Gender Equality](#)

[Advancing gender equality in the world of work | UN Women – Headquarters](#)

[Addressing gender-based violence and harassment in a work health and safety framework | International Labour Organization](#)

[Four actions to forge workplaces free from sexual harassment and violence | UN Women – Headquarters](#)