

Sexual Harassment and Inclusion at Work



Sexual harassment is alarmingly common – 1 in 5 workers experience it in their workplace.¹ The good news? Inclusive work environments can prevent sexual harassment and make safer, more respectful workplaces for everyone.

What inclusion looks like in practice



Teams. Workers feel respected, valued, connected, and that they can contribute and progress at work.



People leaders. Leaders value differences, seek out a range of views, treat people fairly, and act on inappropriate behaviour.



Organisations. Workers trust they will be treated fairly; diversity is valued and respected, and senior leaders show visible commitment through actions (not just statements).

What sexual harassment looks like

Sexual harassment can be **physical**, **verbal** or **written** and includes:

- unwelcome physical touching, groping, staring or leering
- showing offensive imagery or conduct of a sexual nature
- sexual comments or jokes, repeated or inappropriate requests to go on dates, or intrusive questions about a person's private life, body, or sexuality.²



When it comes to risk of sexual harassment, inclusion matters

We surveyed 3000 people across Australian workplaces and found workers:

x3.0

in inclusive teams were 3 times less likely to experience sexual harassment than those in non-inclusive teams

x2.5

with inclusive managers were 2.5 times less likely to experience sexual harassment than those with non-inclusive managers

x2.0

in inclusive organisational climates were 2 times less likely to experience sexual harassment than workers in less inclusive climates.

1. Diversity Council Australia, *The Power of Inclusion: Preventing Workplace Sexual Harassment*, Sydney, NSW, 2026.

2. Australian Human Rights Commission, *Work-related sexual harassment - Know your rights*, Australian Human Rights Commission, n.d.



Exclusion drives risk

Sexual harassment is more likely to happen when other exclusionary behaviours occur. Workers who experienced:

x6.0 **discrimination** were 6 times more likely to also experience sexual harassment

x4.0 **everyday exclusion**, such as stereotyping, being ignored, or being left out of social activities, were at least 4 times more likely to experience sexual harassment.

What we can all do

We all have a role in creating workplaces that are inclusive, respectful, and safe for everyone.



Be deliberate about respect. Use inclusive language that isn't gendered (e.g. don't refer to colleagues as "sweetheart", "girls", or "boys".)



Address behaviours that exclude. Notice who gets interrupted, ignored, or left out of meetings and social moments and deliberately make space for them to participate.



Learn how to be an active bystander. Read DCA and Our Watch's [Being an Active Bystander](#) resource to learn how you can interrupt, de-escalate, and support targets of sexual harassment.

What organisations and leaders can do



Treat inclusion as prevention.
Policies and training matter, but inclusion is a key part of reducing risk before harm occurs.



Set clear expectations and act consistently.
People leaders set the tone for inclusion. Be clear about what behaviour is acceptable by role modelling inclusive behaviours and addressing inappropriate ones.



Measure inclusion and find gaps.
Use surveys and other data to understand how inclusive your workplace is and where exclusion shows up.



Build inclusive leadership skills.
Equip leaders to run respectful teams, seek input widely, and treat employees fairly.

Want to learn more?

Read DCA's [The Power of Inclusion: Preventing Workplace Sexual Harassment](#) for more information on how inclusion can prevent sexual harassment at work.