

## KEY FINDINGS

# Migrant and refugee women in Australia:

## A study of sexual harassment in the workplace

### Sexual harassment experiences

#### 46% of respondents

experienced at least one form of sexual harassment in the workplace in the last 5 years

The most frequent experiences included:



Indecent phone calls/ messages of a sexual nature



Sexually suggestive comments or jokes



Intrusive questions about private life or physical appearance



Staring or leering that was intimidating

### Why?

Participants believed the harassment was most often motivated because of their:



Gender and/or sex



Race and/or religion

This finding illuminates the importance of addressing and understanding gendered inequity and sexual harassment as deeply connected to discrimination based on race and religion.

### Men

were most frequently the harassers in the workplace. Harassment was most often perpetrated by men:



In senior positions in the workplace



Who were clients or customers

It is worth noting that for 9 of the 15 reported behaviours, women were more likely to be in temporary and/or casual roles than permanent roles when they experienced workplace sexual harassment.

### Responses to incidents of workplace sexual harassment



37% told no one

The major reasons for not reporting/disclosing sexual harassment were:



Feeling responsible



Feeling uncertain about what to do



Feeling concerned about impact on their employment



88%

of those who told someone only sought informal support and shared the experience with a friend/family/colleague

**Few women reported their experiences formally.**

For women who did formally report their experiences of sexual harassment, approximately half of the sample formally reported the incident to someone in their workplace.

In a third of the incidents of workplace-based sexual harassment, women had been threatened or warned not to report.

In this sample very few women reported to an authority outside of the workplace (15%).

# Implications for policy and practice

- **Capturing detailed accounts of sexual harassment at work for specific nation-wide populations matters.**

The Australian Human Rights Commission's (AHRC) fifth national survey, *Time for Respect* (2022)<sup>1</sup> did not ask about other factors such as cultural diversity, visa status or religion, for example, limiting the possibility of drawing a deep understanding of migrant and refugee women's experience in Australia.

- **Examining the intersections of gendered forms of violence with other forms of discrimination is critical.**

By asking migrant and refugee women in-depth questions about their experiences, these findings illuminate the intersection of gender and racial discrimination. Understanding this intersection is critical for informing the design, implementation and monitoring of workplace sexual harassment initiatives.

- **Diversity of data collection matters.**

Refugee and migrant women in more precarious forms of employment with temporary visas are under-represented in this sample. Phase 2 of the study is designed to reach women to address this under-representation. This reaffirms the importance of investment in large-scale nationally representative samples to build a picture of specificity of experience of key populations in the Australian community.

## Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> Data collected by the AHRC 2022 survey relied only on the single variable of language spoken at home as a marker of cultural and linguistic diversity and on English as the sole language for the telephone and online survey instrument: <https://humanrights.gov.au/time-for-respect-2022>

## Source:

Segrave, M., Wickes, R., Keel, C., & Tan, S. J. (2023). *Migrant and refugee women in Australia: A study of sexual harassment in the workplace* (Research report, 06/2023). ANROWS.

## Suggested citation:

Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety. (2023). *Migrant and refugee women in Australia: A study of sexual harassment in the workplace* [Fact sheet]. ANROWS.

These findings point to the importance of developing a comprehensive picture of the different ways in which workplace-based sexual harassment manifests, as well as diversification of strategies to address it.

Segrave et al., 2023

701

migrant and refugee women were surveyed



## About the survey

### Demographic picture

701 self-identified migrant and refugee women were surveyed from August to September 2022. The survey was available in six languages – Arabic, English, Farsi, Swahili, Chinese (Simplified) and Dari. 11 per cent of respondents completed the survey in a language other than English.

The respondents:

- 63% were Australian citizens, 19% were permanent residents, and 18% were temporary residents
- 88% were born outside of Australia, primarily from countries in Asia
- ages ranged between 18 and 70 years of age. The mean was 40 years of age
- were highly educated. 74% of respondents had bachelor degrees or higher
- 55% worked full time, 24% worked part time, 11% were casual workers, and 10% were not in the labour force at the time they completed the survey
- the majority were in professional employment (48%), followed by technicians and trade workers (15%), and clerical and administrative workers (11%).

### Dynamics surveyed

Every respondent who indicated they had experienced a form of sexual harassment in the last 5 years in Australia was then asked if this harassment occurred in the workplace. They were then asked about:

- the forms of sexual harassment experienced in the workplace
- who the perpetrators were, including their position in the workplace in relation to the respondent
- perceived motivations for the sexual harassment
- responses to incidents of workplace sexual harassment, including reporting and perceptions and feelings about their experiences.