

Tuesday 29 August 2023

Forty-six per cent of migrant and refugee women have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace in the last five years, national study has found.

The first national study to investigate migrant and refugee women's understanding of experiences and responses to sexual harassment has found alarming rates of sexual harassment, with women more likely to be in temporary or casual roles when they experienced workplace sexual harassment.

The *Migrant and Refugee Women's Attitudes, Experiences and Responses to Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Study*, released today by ANROWS and led by Professor Marie Segrave, Monash University, in partnership with Harmony Alliance and Griffith University, surveyed over 700 migrant and refugee women from across Australia.

The national survey found that not only were migrant and refugee women experiencing high rates of sexual harassment, but many respondents perceived their race or religion to be one of the motivations for the harassment.

The research also found that of the migrant and refugee women who experienced sexual harassment, 37% told no one about the sexual harassment, and in a third of the incidents women had been threatened or warned not to report, including receiving advice from family, friends and colleagues that reporting would not help their situation.

Padma Raman PSM, CEO of ANROWS, said this research highlighted the necessity of recognising that race and religion must also be carefully considered when addressing workplace sexual harassment.

"The reality is that for many migrant and refugee women who experience sexual harassment, it is not only sexist, but racist. These compounding forms of discrimination cannot be separated," Ms Raman said.

"We must consider how all women experience sexual harassment in the workplace, recognising that race, gender identity, religion, sexual orientation and ability, as well as sex, all intersect."

"This research shows it's time to have a national conversation on the experiences of all women who experience sexual harassment in the workplace and to recognise that migrant and refugee women have unique experiences that require unique solutions."

Lead researcher Professor Marie Segrave from the Monash Gender and Family Violence Prevention Centre stated that this research highlights the importance of asking migrant and refugee women about their experiences in detailed ways.

“Broadly, 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,” Ms Segrave said.

“The findings reinforce the importance of paying careful attention to the conditions of work, including employment security and recognising that across Australia women are managing unsafe work conditions that will not be improved with a one-size-fits all response.”

“This is the first national study that investigates the specific sexual harassment experiences of migrant and refugee women in Australian workplaces. And while we expected the results to be confronting, we now have a clear picture of first-hand experiences that are marked by both gendered and racial elements,” Nyadol Nyuon OAM said.

“The results show that over two thirds of migrant and refugee women in Australia have experienced at least one form of sexual harassment in just the last five years. This is a staggering amount and demonstrates exactly why it’s so important to directly involve migrant and refugee women when looking to address unacceptable workplace behaviour.”

“While we were able to engage a cohort of women that have previously been left out of sexual harassment research, we need to make sure that this area continues to receive funding and attention. Refugee and migrant women in more precarious forms of employment need a specific focus – only with continuous and rigorous research can we make sure that diverse women’s experiences are heard, understood, and addressed.”

Minister for Social Services, Amanda Rishworth said all governments across Australia are committed to the goal of ending violence against women and children in one generation and have agreed to concrete actions with the release of two Action Plans under the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032.

“The plans recognise that violence against women and children intersects with other forms of disadvantage and discrimination, and women and children from culturally diverse, migrant and refugee backgrounds can also face specific barriers in seeking help and reporting harassment,” Minister Rishworth said.

“That is why we are building the evidence base for migrant and refugee women so we can use it to improve action to prevent and address sexual violence and harassment across different settings, and to improve community attitudes.”

Support is available, and I encourage anyone experiencing violence to contact 1800RESPECT on 1800 737 732 or visit [1800RESPECT.org.au](https://www.1800respect.org.au).”

To read the full report visit <https://www.anrows.org.au/publication/migrant-and-refugee-women-in-australia-a-study-of-sexual-harassment-in-the-workplace/>

ANROWS

AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL RESEARCH
ORGANISATION FOR WOMEN'S SAFETY

to Reduce Violence against Women & their Children

MEDIA:

Meagan Prabhakar | ANROWS | 0498 005 642

Nuria Alarcon Lopez | Harmony Alliance | 0427 732 073

About ANROWS

Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety Limited ([ANROWS](#)) is a not-for-profit independent national research organisation. ANROWS was established as an initiative of Australia's *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022* and is continuing under the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032*. ANROWS was established by the Commonwealth and all state and territory governments of Australia to produce, disseminate, and assist in applying evidence for policy and practice addressing violence against women and their children. ANROWS is the only such research organisation in Australia.