

UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 12AM 30 APRIL

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One in seven Australian adults report engaging in workplace technology-facilitated sexual harassment new study finds

The first national study to investigate workplace technology-facilitated sexual harassment (WTFSH) has revealed one in seven Australian adults surveyed admit to engaging in this form of sexual harassment at work. Workplace technology-facilitated sexual harassment encompasses unwelcome or harassing sexual behaviour utilising mobile, online and digital technologies within a workplace setting. It includes a wide range of behaviours and can occur during or after working hours.

ANROWS research, led by Associate Professor Asher Flynn from Monash University and Professor Anastasia Powell from RMIT University, highlights the role of gender in perpetration of WTFSH, with 24% of surveyed men admitting to using technology to engage in workplace sexual harassment, compared to 7% of women.

Other key findings included:

- 45% of WTFSH perpetrators worked in male-dominated workplaces.
- Perpetrators minimised the severity of WTFSH, believing victim-survivors would be "okay with it" (52%), flattered (45%) or find it humorous (42%). Others said they wanted to pursue a sexual or personal relationship with the victim-survivor (41%).
- 1 in 4 perpetrators reported malintent, aiming to annoy (31%), humiliate (30%), frighten (30%), hurt the feelings of (30%) or express their anger towards (31%) the victim-survivor.
- People surveyed were over 15 times more likely to engage in WTFSH if strong sexist and discriminatory attitudes were held, making these attitudes the strongest predictor of such behaviour.
- The most common devices and platforms for WTFSH included work email (31%), personal phone or mobile (29%), personal email (27%) and work phone or mobile (25%).
- Despite the prevalence of WTFSH, less than half (39%) of perpetrators had any formal reports or complaints made against them.

Dr Tessa Boyd-Caine, CEO at ANROWS, said, "New technologies in the workplace create new avenues for abuse, making the need to address this sexual harassment gap all the more urgent. Employers need to build safety into workplace cultures and technologies to protect their staff. Likewise, policymakers must prioritise implementing effective measures to prevent and address these behaviours."

Asher Flynn, Associate Professor of Criminology at Monash University, emphasised, "These findings underscore the pervasive nature of workplace technology-facilitated sexual harassment, revealing not only its extent, but also the troubling attitudes and motivations behind such behaviours. It's imperative that we address these issues comprehensively to foster safer and more respectful work environments for all."

The report is among the first from ANROWS's Sexual Harassment Research Program (SHRP) and offers crucial

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insights to aid Australian employers and policymakers in combatting tech-based sexual harassment in the workplace effectively.

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About ANROWS

Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety Limited (ANROWS) is a not-for-profit independent national research organisation.

ANROWS is an initiative of Australia's National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022. 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.