

**SEXUAL HARASSMENT
IN THE FEDERAL WORKPLACE
IS IT A PROBLEM?**



March 1981

**A REPORT OF THE U.S. MERIT SYSTEMS PROTECTION BOARD
OFFICE OF MERIT SYSTEMS REVIEW AND STUDIES**

**THE CHAIRWOMAN OF THE MERIT SYSTEMS PROTECTION BOARD
Washington, D.C. 20419**

March 1981

THE PRESIDENT
THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE
THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Dear Sirs:

The Merit Systems Protection Board presents this report pursuant to a request by the Subcommittee on Investigations, Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, United States House of Representatives.

This report conveys the findings of a survey of the extent of sexual harassment in the Federal workplace conducted by the Board's Office of Merit Systems Review and Studies.

We urge your consideration of the facts presented here and the use of your good offices to ensure that the Federal personnel system is free from prohibited practices and honors merit principles.

Respectfully,
FOR THE BOARD

Ruth T. Prokop, Chairwoman

PREFACE

A little over a year ago the Subcommittee on Investigations of the House Committee on Post Office and Civil Service asked the Merit Systems Protection Board to conduct a study to determine the extent, if any, of sexual harassment in the Federal workplace. This task was assigned to the Board's Office of Merit

Systems Review and Studies (MSRS) which, at that time, was in its infancy--barely two months old with a staff of four.

The study of sexual harassment was to become a landmark study of a complex social issue with Federal-wide implications. To conduct such a study, MSRS had to develop systems to address the issues at hand and survey the entire Federal population in a manner honoring the scientific standards for a study of such scope.

My colleagues and I began to shape the project along the lines of the Congressional mandate in late December **1979**. Daniel Wojcik, Associate Director for Operations, brought to the assignment his multi-discipline experience in personnel research, survey design and personnel operations. George Raub, the office's newly recruited Statistician-Computer Scientist was able to borrow from his previous Federal experience in analyzing complex data bases and began to set in place the myriad of systems required to ensure an unbiased analysis. Cynthia Shaughnessy was chosen to coordinate the day-to-day operations of this project, to contribute her substantial knowledge of Federal women's issues which had grown out of her leadership in the Federal Women's Program, and to oversee the drafting of the final report.

Our initial task was the development of a questionnaire to search out answers to the concerns raised by the Congress. Although several informal studies had been conducted in recent years, none of them met the standards we believed we must honor to ensure a balanced and objective review of this area of human behavior.

With this pioneership much in mind we sought the counsel of those experts we believed could contribute to our understanding. At the time we developed the questionnaire, Dr. Sandra Tangri, Dr. Martha Burt, and Dr. Leanor Johnson were identified as expert researchers in various aspects of sexual behavior and they took a brief leave of absence from The Urban Institute to help us identify the critical issues and develop the questionnaire. During this phase of the project, Dr. Suzanne S. Ageton of the Behavioral Research Institute of Boulder, Colorado, Dr. Hubert Feild of Auburn University and Dr. Barbara Gutek of the University of California at Los Angeles gave us the benefit of their research experiences as did many others.

Over 20,000 Federal employees completed the questionnaire--an 85% response rate which far exceeded the minimum standards for reliability. Once the results were tabulated and analyzed a preliminary report of the statistical results was presented to the Subcommittee on Investigations of the House Committee on Post Office and Civil Service on September 25, 1980.

Our final report identifies sexual harassment as an important concern in the workplace. Although we know of no comparable research in the private sector,

our findings in the Federal study--that people of all ages, salary levels, education backgrounds and hometowns are potential victims--lead us to the observation that sexual harassment cannot be uniquely associated with Federal employment. We encourage private sector understanding of other employee experiences with sexual harassment and encourage private sector leaders to pursue a comparable course of self-analysis as the first step in eliminating this form of sex discrimination.

Patricia A. Mathis
Director, Office of Merit Systems Review and Studies

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The senior group identified in the Director's Preface was supported by dozens of Federal employees and private citizens who contributed their experiences and ideas.

The National Institute of Mental Health provided its early support by helping us enlist able researchers and by providing the initial funding support for the questionnaire development.

Before the questionnaire was developed, an advisory panel was convened to define critical issues and explore alternative study approaches. These advisors included: Mr. Louis Nunez, U.S. Commission on Civil Rights; Ms. Ellis McNeil, Office of Personnel Management; Mr. Robert Walker, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission; Dr. Hubert S. Feild, Jr., Auburn University; Ms. Stewart Oneglia, U.S. Department of Justice; Mr. Willard Mitchell, U.S. Department of the Air Force; Ms. Louise Smothers, American Federation of Government Employees; and Ms. Freada Klein, Alliance Against Sexual Coercion.

Assistance in the preparation of the preliminary report to the Congress of the results of the study in September 1980 was provided by Dr. Barbara Kaster of Bowdoin College and Dr. Carol Duncan of Maine Medical Center.

The legal commentary of current case law for this report was prepared by Susan Cornelius under the supervision of Stewart Oneglia, U.S. Department of Justice.

Additional research, writing, and editing was provided by Sherrell Varner and Carolyn Heinrich of the Blue Pencil Group, Reston, Virginia.

Several members of the Office of Merit Systems Review and Studies were central players at various stages of this project. Dr. Joel D. Chananie developed the model for estimating the cost impact of sexual harassment; a team of support staff headed by Gene Browning, included Elaine Latimer, Margaret Wilson, Sandra Stewart and Karen Elliott; Mercer Jones of the Board's Office of

Legislative Counsel provided audio-visual assistance for the Congressional testimony.

We were also assisted by the following individuals who gave us their advice and assistance in the design, implementation, and reporting of this study: Daniel M. Geller, Department of Psychology, George Washington University; William A. Blakey, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare; Emilio Abeyta, U.S. Department of Justice; Rosemary Storey and Todd Buchta, Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, U.S. House of Representatives; Dr. Nancy Barrett, U.S. Department of Labor; Diane Herrmann, Office of Personnel Management; Donald Moore, U.S. Department of Treasury; Dr. Philip A. D. Schneider, Office of Personnel Management; Dr. John Dirkse, George Washington University; Mary Jo Aagerstoun, Small Business Administration; Betty Hart, Connie Price, and Dr. Sandra Carey, U.S. Department of the Navy; Mary Ann Largen, New Responses, Inc.; Dr. Gloria Levin, National Institute of Mental Health; and Leonard Slobodin and Betty Caplis of the MSPB Chicago office.

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Executive Summary

This Executive Summary provides in condensed form a summary of major recommendations and a review of the major findings on the views of Federal employees about sexual harassment, the extent of sexual harassment in the Federal workplace, a description of characteristics of victims and perpetrators of sexual harassment, a discussion of the perceptions and responses of victims to their incidents of sexual harassment, the impact of the behavior on the victims and the estimated dollar cost of sexual harassment to the Federal Government, and views of Federal employees about potential remedies and their effectiveness.

The full Final Report represents the culmination of approximately one year of original research and evaluation of the nature and extent of sexual harassment in the Federal Government. This study is the first scientifically controlled survey of this depth and breadth ever to be conducted on the subject of sexual harassment. To our knowledge it is also the first of its kind to be conducted with the full cooperation of the employer--in this case the Federal Government.

The full report contains many recommendations that can be implemented by agency heads quickly and at relatively minimum cost. Copies of this study should be made available to all agency personnel offices, training officers, Equal Employment Opportunity officers and Federal Women's Program managers, to aid implementation of the recommendations.

Background

" Managers should be put on notice that a 'boys will be boys' atmosphere will not be condoned in any Federal agency. " James M. Hanley, former Chairman, Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, U.S. House of Representatives.

In recent years there has been growing discussion about the existence of sexual harassment at the workplace. Some maintain that it is an age-old problem, while others feel that it is a relatively new phenomenon that has emerged as more women enter the working world. There has been controversy about what constitutes sexual harassment, how widespread harassment is, and how serious its consequences are for employee well-being and productivity.

Against this background, Chairman James M. Hanley and the Subcommittee on Investigations of the Committee on Post Office and Civil Service of the United States House of Representatives conducted a preliminary investigation on sexual harassment in October and November of 1979. Although the investigation was limited to an examination of 100 complaints, the findings were serious enough to prompt the Subcommittee to ask the Merit Systems Protection Board to conduct a thorough and scientific survey of sexual harassment in the Federal workplace. The Subcommittee wanted to find out if the results of their limited investigation would be borne out by a more extensive study.

The preliminary results of the MSPB study were presented at follow-up hearings held by the House Subcommittee on September 25, 1980. The preliminary briefing focused on the series of questions mandated by the Subcommittee to be addressed in the survey. These were:

What kinds of behavior constitute sexual harassment? Do the attitudes of men and women differ in this regard?

1. To what degree does sexual harassment occur within the Federal workplace? What is the frequency? What are the manifestations?

2. Are victims or perpetrators of sexual harassment found in disproportionate numbers within certain agencies, job classifications, geographic locations, racial categories, age brackets, educational levels, grade levels, etc.?
3. What forms of express or implied leverage have been used by harassers to reward or punish their victims?
4. What has been the impact of sexual harassment on its victims in terms of job turnover, work performance, physical and emotional condition, financial and career well-being?
5. What effect has sexual harassment had on the morale or productivity of the immediate work group?
6. Are victims of sexual harassment aware of available remedies? Do they have confidence in those remedies?

Research Methodology

To develop the study, the MSPB's Office of Merit Systems Review and Studies:

- surveyed the current literature on the subject of sexual harassment,
- consulted with a group of community workers, academic researchers, Federal officials, and a union representative on the content of the study,
- reviewed applicable case law and Government regulations and related policy directives, plans, and training programs, and
- reviewed various case testimonies, Congressional testimony, and previous research studies that had addressed the subject of sexual harassment.

After extensive field testing on over 300 Federal employees and after making numerous revisions, the research team constructed a questionnaire designed to elicit answers to questions in the Congressional mandate. As directed by the House Subcommittee, the research team prepared the questionnaire on the basis of the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) definition of sexual harassment, i.e., deliberate or repeated unsolicited verbal comments, gestures or physical contact of a sexual nature that is considered to be unwelcome by the recipient.

With the assistance of OPM, a disproportionately stratified random sample^[1] was drawn from OPM's Central Personnel Data File (CPDF) consisting of civilian employees in the Executive Branch. Four variables were selected to stratify the population. These were: sex, minority status, salary, and organization. Over 23,000 men and women were surveyed in May 1980. Questionnaires were sent to respondents' homes to preserve their confidentiality and anonymity. The members of the sample were asked to base most of their answers on their work experience during the 24-month period from May 1978 to May 1980. A reminder postcard was sent one week later and a follow-up questionnaire was sent to non respondents three weeks after that. The rate of return of 85%--was considerably higher than usually expected on mail surveys.^[2]

Explanations of Frequently Used Terms

Victims. In this executive summary, victims of sexual harassment are defined as those respondents who indicated (in either Survey Question 17 or Question 20) that they had experienced one or more forms of sexual harassment on the job during the preceding 24 months. All data is computed on the basis of Question 17 except for those parts of the Questionnaire where respondents were asked to provide detailed data on one critical sexual harassment incident. For questions involving this critical incident, the data on victims was computed on the basis of Survey Question 20. In the final report, the victims who chose to describe their critical incident are referred to as "narrator-victims."

Level of severity of sexual harassment. On the basis of preliminary analysis, sexual harassment experiences (identified by respondents to Survey Question 17 or Question Survey 20) were classified as "most severe," "severe," or "less severe." Those considered "most severe" --were actual or attempted rape or assault; "severe"--included letters, phone calls or materials of a sexual nature; pressure for sexual favors; and deliberate touching, leaning over, cornering or pinching; and "less severe" included pressure for dates; sexually suggestive looks or gestures; and sexual teasing, jokes, remarks or questions.

Findings

Summary

The following major findings emerged from the study:

- Both men and women Federal workers generally agree that uninvited behaviors of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment.
- The incidence rate of sexual harassment in the Federal workforce is widespread--42% of all female employees and 15% of all male employees reported being sexually harassed.
- Many sexual harassment incidents occur repeatedly and are of relatively long duration.
- The majority of Federal employees who had worked elsewhere feel sexual harassment is no worse in the Federal workplace than in state and local governments or in the private sector.
- Sexual harassment is widely distributed among women and men of various backgrounds, positions and locations; however individuals with certain personal and organizational characteristics are more likely to be sexually harassed than others.
- The characteristics of harassers differ for women and men victims--for example, women report almost always being harassed by a man, whereas men report usually being harassed by a woman.
- Many harassers are reported to have bothered more than one victim at work.

- Few employees report having been accused of sexually harassing others.
- Those who are sexually harassed by supervisors and those who experience the more severe forms of sexual harassment are more likely than other victims to foresee penalties or possible benefits from the sexual harassment.
- Most victims neither anticipated nor receive adverse consequences as a result of their sexual harassment, although a sizeable minority did, particularly women.
- A number of informal actions were found by victims to be effective in stopping sexual harassment, particularly the most direct and assertive responses.
- Few victims pursue formal remedies, but many who do find them helpful.
- The impact and cost of sexual harassment in dollars to the Federal Government is sizeable--an estimated minimum of \$189 million over the 2-year period covered by the study.
- Although their experiences do not change the careers and work situations of most victims, a sizeable number of women and men do leave their jobs or suffer adverse consequences.
- Victims are more likely to think the sexual harassment negatively affected their personal well-being or morale than their work performance or that of their immediate work group.
- Victims and supervisors are generally unaware of available formal remedies and are skeptical about their effectiveness.
- Assertive informal actions are thought to be the most effective way employees can make others stop bothering them sexually.
- Most victims and supervisors think there is much management can do to reduce sexual harassment.
- In conclusion, the data show that sexual harassment is widespread, is costly, deeply felt by many of the victims, and that the 1979 Congressional investigation was indicative of a significant problem; however, the data also indicated that there is much that can be done to reduce that problem.

View of Federal Workers Toward Sexual Harassment

To determine whether men and women defined sexual harassment differently, they were asked whether they considered uninvited sexually-oriented behaviors to be sexual harassment. These behaviors, ranked in order of agreement were:

Severe

1. Letters, phone calls or materials of a sexual nature
2. Pressure for sexual favors
3. Touching, leaning over, cornering or pinching

Less Severe

4. Pressure for dates
5. Sexually suggestive looks or gestures
6. Sexual teasing, jokes, remarks or questions

From the responses, we found that most men and women agreed that behaviors 1-4 constituted sexual harassment. However, men were less likely to think that "sexual looks" and "sexual comments," the more ambiguous and prevalent forms of sexual behavior on the job, were sexual harassment, particularly when perpetrated by a coworker. Respondents were not asked whether they thought that actual or attempted rape or assault was sexual harassment. Since this behavior is potentially criminal, we assumed that it is the most severe form of sexual harassment.

Generally, men and women were more likely to think that a behavior was sexual harassment if the perpetrator was a supervisor rather than a coworker. Thus, it would appear that a higher standard of conduct exists for supervisors to exhibit proper behavior in the office, arguably because of their official authority and responsibilities.

Although in the abstract men and women were likely to agree that uninvited sexual behavior at work is sexual harassment, responses may indicate that sexual harassment is sometimes situational. For most workers, including those who identified themselves as victims, the perceived motive or demeanor of the initiator made a difference as to whether the behavior was viewed as sexual harassment.

A number of questions were asked to find how respondents viewed sexual behavior at work. We found that both men and women believed that sexual activity, whether voluntary or otherwise, should not occur between people who work together, although women were less likely to approve of sexual affairs among coworkers than were men. We found that men, including supervisors, showed a greater tendency than women to think that victims are somewhat responsible for bringing sexual harassment on themselves and are inclined to believe that sexual harassment has been exaggerated. However, men and women agreed that sexual harassment is behavior that people should not have to tolerate.

Extent of Sexual Harassment

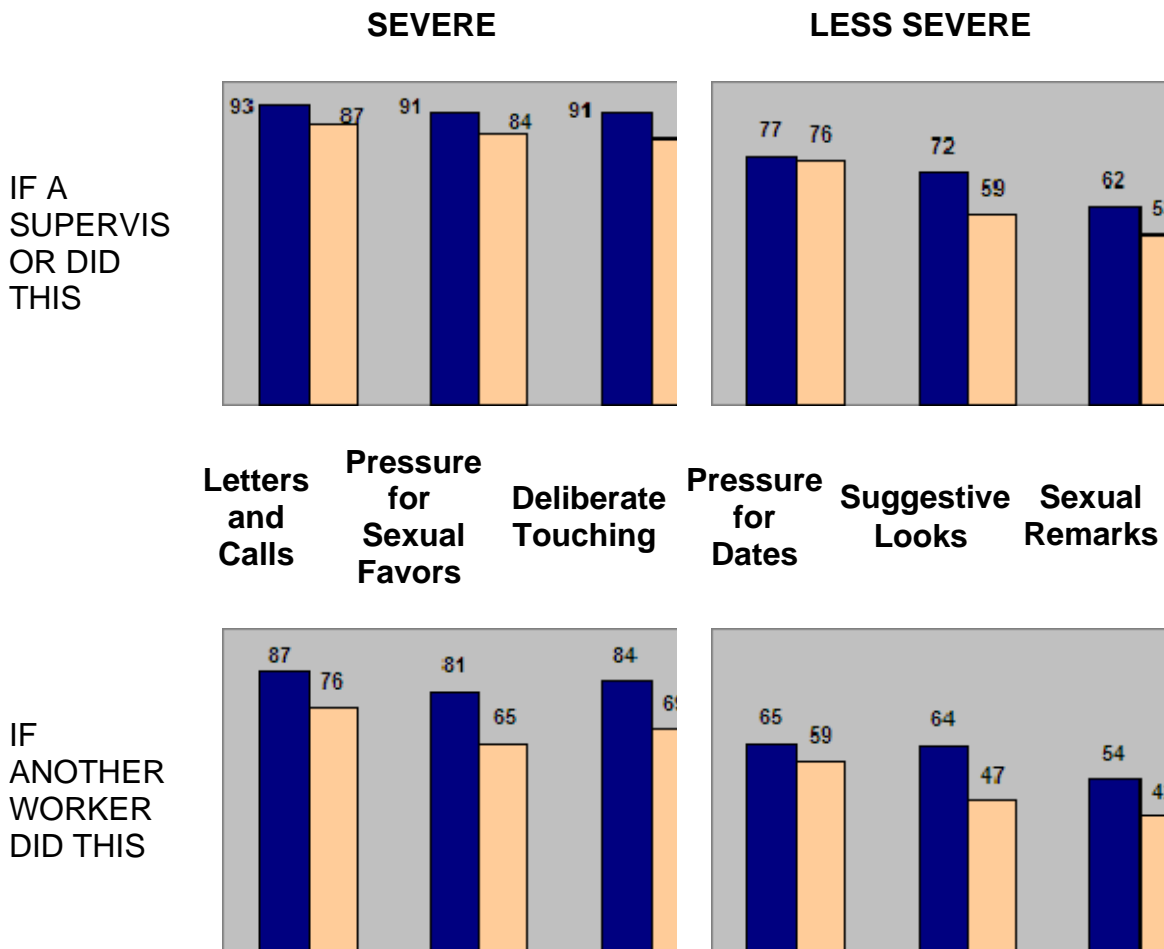
To determine how widespread sexual harassment is in the Federal workplace, respondents were asked whether they had experienced any of the seven listed behaviors within the finite time frame of the previous 24 months (May 1978 to May 1980), and how often the experience occurred.

From this we found that one in four Federal employees reported receiving uninvited and unwanted sexual attention, and that women, as expected, were

much more likely to be victims than were men. Almost half--(42%) of all female Federal employees and only 15% of all male employees reported being sexually harassed. Although the percentage for men is lower in comparison to women, it nevertheless is much higher than previously expected.

Definition of Sexual Harassment

Percentage of Male and Female Federal Employees Who Agreed that Each of Six Forms of Unwanted, Uninvited Sexual Attention Constitutes Sexual Harassment (Questions 2-7, b & d) ([text alternative](#))



NOTE: Percentages are based on "Probably Yes" and "Definitely Yes" responses to questions.

WOMEN

MEN

Whether both men and women define the unwanted behavior that they received in the same way is debatable. Other studies have shown that men and women view their sex roles very differently and use language in different ways to describe sexual behavior. Again, it should be pointed out that the sexual harassment as reported here is based upon data provided by the victims themselves. If sexual attention was neither unwanted (nor uninvited) by the recipient, it presumably was not reported.

The sexual harassment as reported by the victims took many forms. Every form except actual or attempted rape or sexual assault was experienced by a sizeable percentage of both men and women. The more ambiguous forms of sexual harassment--"sexual comments" and "suggestive looks "--were reported most often. These forms were more likely to be repeated.

However, with the exception of actual or attempted rape or assault, most of the victims reported experiencing all forms of sexual harassment repeatedly. In addition, many reported experiencing more than one form of sexual harassment. We also found that the incidents of sexual harassment were not just passing events--most lasted more than a week, and many lasted longer than 6 months. Thus, not only did the sexual harassment occur repeatedly, it was of relatively long duration as well.

Incidence Rate Among Various Forms of Sexual Harassment
 Percentage of Female and Male Federal Employees Who Experienced Each
 Form of Sexual Harassment
 Between May 1978 and May 1980 (Question 17)

LESS SEVERE	Sexual Remarks	Reported by 33% of Women
		Reported by 10% of Men
	Suggestive Looks	Reported by 28% of Women
		Reported by 8% of Men
	Pressure for Dates	Reported by 26% of Women
		Reported by 7% of Men
SEVERE	Deliberate Touching	Reported by 15% of Women
		Reported by 3% of Men

	Pressure for Sexual Favors	Reported by 9% of Women
		Reported by 2% of Men
	Letters and Calls	Reported by 9% of Women
		Reported by 3% of Men
MOST SEVERE	Actual or Attempted Rape or Assault	Reported by 1% of Women
		Reported by 0.3% of Men
Note: Many respondents indicated that they experience more than one form of sexual harassment.		

To view the incidence rate of sexual harassment in context, we asked respondents who had worked outside the Federal Government to compare the Federal Government with other workplaces. The majority of respondents stated that they felt sexual harassment was no worse in the Federal workplace than in state and local government or in the private sector.

Victims of Sexual Harassment

To determine who is sexually harassed and whether certain personal and organizational factors contributed to the likelihood of harassment, we looked at a number of demographic variables. Demographic characteristics of victims that seem to have a strong bearing on whether or not an individual is harassed are: age, marital status, and sexual (male-female) composition of the workgroup. Those factors that seem to have a somewhat weaker bearing are education level, race, ethnic background, job classification, nontraditional nature of job, and sex of immediate supervisor. Based on these factors, we found that the typical men and women who are likely to be harassed are:

- young,
- not married,
- higher educated,
- members of a minority, racial or ethnic group (if male),
- hold trainee positions (or office/clerical positions, if male),
- hold nontraditional positions, for their sex, (e.g., female law enforcement officers, male secretaries),
- have an immediate supervisor of the opposite sex,
- have an immediate work group composed predominately of the opposite sex.

We also found that certain agencies have a greater incidence rate than do others. Women in the Departments of Labor, Transportation, Justice, certain Defense Department agencies[3] (other than the Air Force, Army, Navy and Marine Corps), Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Air Force, Navy/Marine Corps, Veterans Administration and other smaller agencies[4] had a higher rate of sexual harassment than those in other agencies. Men (as well as women) in the Departments of Justice and HUD and the Veterans Administration, and men in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare and the General Services Administration also reported rates higher than the Federal-wide average.

Age of Victims
Percentage of Federal Employees of Different Ages Who Experienced Sexual Harassment (Question 61)

Ages 16-19	Who Experienced Sexual Harassment	Reported by 67% of Women Reported by 27% of Men
Ages 20-24		Reported by 59% of Women Reported by 20% of Men
Ages 25-34		Reported by 53% of Women Reported by 18% of Men
Ages 35-44		Reported by 43% of Women Reported by 14% of Men
Ages 45-54		Reported by 33% of Women Reported by 13% of Men
Ages 55 and older		Reported by 22% of Women Reported by 12% of Men

Marital Status of Victims
Percentage of Federal Employees Who Experienced Sexual Harassment, by Marital Status (Question 62)

Single	Who Experienced Sexual Harassment	Reported by 53% of Women Reported by 22% of Men
Divorced		Reported by 49% of Women Reported by 21% of Men
Married		Reported by 37% of Women Reported by 13% of Men
Widowed		Reported by 31% of Women Reported by 30% of Men

Education Level of Victims

Percentage of Federal Employees of Different Education Levels Who Experienced Sexual Harassment (Question 60)

Less than high school diploma	Who Experienced Sexual Harassment	Reported by 31% of Women Reported by 8% of Men
High School diploma or GED (Graduate Equivalency Degree)		Reported by 35% of Women Reported by 11% of Men
High school diploma plus technical training or apprenticeship		Reported by 39% of Women Reported by 13% of Men
Some college		Reported by 45% of Women Reported by 17% of Men
Graduated from college (B.A., B.S., or other		Reported by 50% of Women Reported by 14% of Men

bachelor's degree		Men
Some graduate school		Reported by 53% of Women Reported by 15% of Men
Graduate or professional degree		Reported by 48% of Women Reported by 17% of Men

Racial and Ethnic Background of Victims
Percentage of Federal Employees of Different Racial and Ethnic Backgrounds
Who Experienced Sexual Harassment (Question 59)

Other	Who Experienced Sexual Harassment	Reported by 48% of Women Reported by 27% of Men
Hispanic		Reported by 45% of Women Reported by 19% of Men
White, not of Hispanic origin		Reported by 43% of Women Reported by 13% of Men
Black, not of Hispanic origin		Reported by 43% of Women Reported by 21% of Men
Asian or Pacific Islander		Reported by 36% of Women Reported by 16% of Men
American Indian or Alaskan native		Reported by 35% of Women Reported by 22% of Men

Job Classification of Victims
Percentage of Federal Employees of Different Job Classifications Who
Experienced Sexual Harassment (Question 57)

Trainee	Who Experienced Sexual Harassment	Reported by 51% of Women Reported by 16% of Men
Professional, technical		Reported by 45% of Women Reported by 15% of Men
Administration, management		Reported by 42% of Women Reported by 15% of Men
Other		Reported by 42% of Women Reported by 14% of Men
Office, clerical		Reported by 40% of Women Reported by 17% of Men
Blue collar, service		Reported by 38% of Women Reported by 12% of Men

Traditionality of Jobs of Victims
Percentage of Federal Employees in Traditional and Nontraditional Jobs For
Their Sex Who Experienced Sexual Harassment (Question 52)

Nontraditional job	Who Experienced Sexual Harassment	Reported by 53% of Women Reported by 20% of Men
Traditional job		Reported by 41% of Women Reported by 14% of Men

Sex of Supervisor(s) of Victims

Percentage of Federal Employees Who Experienced Sexual Harassment, by Sex of Immediate Supervisor(s) (Question 50)

Male supervisor	Reported by 45% of Women Reported by 13% of Men	Who Experienced Sexual Harassment
Male and female supervisors	Reported by 44% of Women Reported by 25% of Men	
Female supervisor	Reported by 38% of Women Reported by 23% of Men	

Sexual Composition of Victims' Work Groups

Percentage of Federal Employees in Different Kinds of Work Groups Who Experienced Sexual Harassment (Question 51)

All men	Reported by 55% of Women Reported by 8% of Men	Who Experienced Sexual Harassment
Predominately men	Reported by 49% of Women Reported by 13% of Men	
Equal number of men and women	Reported by 43% of Women Reported by 19% of Men	
Predominately women	Reported by 37% of Women Reported by 22% of Men	
All women	Reported by 22% of Women	

	Reported by 22% of Men	
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Sex of Harasser

Percentage of Narrator Victims Who Indicated the Sex of the Person(s) Who Bothered Them Sexually (Question 32a)

TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Male	Who Bothered Them Sexually	Reported by 79% of Women Reported by 18% of Men
	Two or more males		Reported by 16% of Women Reported by 4% of Men
	Both males and females		Reported by 2% of Women Reported by 6% of Men
	Female		Reported by 2% of Women Reported by 60% of Men
	Two or more females		Reported by 1% of Women Reported by 12% of Men
	Unknown		Reported by 1% of Women Reported by 0.3% of Men

In addition, we found that certain work environments were more conducive to sexual harassment than were others.

Victims were more likely to report being in work environments where employees did not perceive open communications or a good relationship with their supervisors, felt pressure to engage in sexual activity such as flirting or making

comments about the opposite sex, and observed others using sex for professional advancement.

In addition, victims were much more likely than supervisors to perceive that sexual harassment is a problem in their offices and to think that management is not making every effort to stop sexual harassment.

Perpetrators of Sexual Harassment

We found that most women reported that their harassers were male and that most men indicated that their harassers were female. However, men were far more likely than women to report being harassed by someone of their same sex.

Most harassers of women and men reportedly acted alone rather than in concert with another person. However, most women identified their harasser as being older than they, whereas men usually indicated that their harasser was usually younger than they. Although both women and men reported that their harasser was usually married, men were more likely to indicate that their harasser was divorced or single. Most victims in general reported being harassed by someone of their same race or ethnic background, although minority women were more likely to report that their harasser was of a different race or ethnicity.

Age of Harasser

Percentage of Narrator Victims Who Indicated the Age of the Person(s) Who Bothered Them Sexually (Question 32b)

TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Older	Who Bothered Them Sexually	Reported by 68% of Women Reported by 29% of Men
	Younger		Reported by 12% of Women Reported by 38% of Men
	Same		Reported by 11% of Women Reported by 18% of Men
	Various Ages		Reported by 7% of Women Reported by 12% of Men

	Unknown		Reported by 2% of Women Reported by 3% of Men
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Marital Status of Harasser

Percentage of Narrator Victims Who Indicated the Marital Status of the Person(s)
Who Bothered Them Sexually (Question 32d)

TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Married	Who Bothered Them Sexually	Reported by 67% of Women Reported by 35% of Men
	Mixed		Reported by 9% of Women Reported by 14% of Men
	Unknown		Reported by 9% of Women Reported by 7% of Men
	Single		Reported by 8% of Women Reported by 20% of Men
	Divorced, Separated, Widowed		Reported by 7% of Women Reported by 25% of Men

One surprising finding was that women and men reported being harassed by fellow employees more often than by supervisors. This finding was surprising in that, before the study, most sexual harassment was thought to be perpetrated by the more powerful supervisors against their more vulnerable employees. However, a sizeable number of women also reported being harassed by supervisors. Thus, supervisors were found to be personally responsible for a number of sexual harassment incidents, although not the principal cause of the problem. However, supervisors as part of their duties have a responsibility to assure that their subordinates work in an environment free from sexual harassment in keeping with Federal policy prohibiting sexual harassment in the Federal workplace.

Another major finding was that many women and men reported that their harasser had also bothered others at work. This somewhat negates the view that sexual harassment is principally a matter of isolated instances of personal sexual attraction. Thus it appears that some individuals are more likely to harass than others and that sexual harassment is not necessarily normal interaction among men and women on the job, or that all men and women engage in it as has been intimated by some.

Only a handful of respondents indicated that they had been accused of sexually bothering someone else at work, and most thought that the charge was unfair. This could indicate that few victims confront their harassers or that many accused harassers are unwilling to identify themselves even in the privacy of an anonymous questionnaire.

Ethnic Status of Harasser

Percentage of Narrator Victims Who Indicated the Ethnic Status of the Person(s) Who Bothered Them Sexually (Question 32c)

TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Same	Who Bothered Them Sexually	Reported by 63% of Women Reported by 68% of Men
	Different		Reported by 26% of Women Reported by 17% of Men
	Some the Same and Some Different		Reported by 9% of Women Reported by 12% of Men
	Unknown		Reported by 2% of Women Reported by 3% of Men

Organizational Level of Harasser

Percentage of Narrator Victims Who Identified the Organizational Level of the Person(s) Who Bothered Them Sexually (Question 33)

TOTAL VICTIMS OF	Coworker or Other	Who Bothered Them Sexually	Reported by 63% of
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SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Employee	Women Reported by 76% of Men
	Immediate Supervisor or Other Supervisor	Reported by 37% of Women Reported by 14% of Men
	Unknown	Reported by 6% of Women Reported by 5% of Men
	Subordinate	Reported by 4% of Women Reported by 16% of Men

NOTE: Some respondents indicated that more than one party bothered them.

Incidents of Sexual Harassment

We found that although most victims did not foresee consequences for resisting or complying with the sexual harassment, both the organizational level of the harasser in relation to the victim and the severity of the sexual harassment made a major difference in the victims' perceptions of the use of leverage.

Victims who were harassed by immediate or higher level supervisors were more likely to foresee negative consequences for refusing to comply and incentives for complying with the sexual harassment than those who were harassed by coworkers or other employees. Likewise, those who were victims of "most severe" and "severe" sexual harassment were much more likely than those who were victims of "less severe" harassment to perceive that carrots and sticks were being used against them to comply with the behavior.

We also looked at how victims responded to their sexual harassment. Most victims stated that they responded to the sexual harassment by passively ignoring it. However, the most effective actions for most victims to take were found to be the most assertive actions--"asking or telling the person to stop" or "reporting the behavior to the supervisor or other officials." The least effective actions were found to be the most passive--"going along with the behavior" or "ignoring it." The effectiveness level for various actions differed somewhat with the sex of the victim and severity of the sexual harassment.

However, it should be pointed out that although reporting the behavior to a supervisor or other officials was found to produce better results compared with other informal actions, around half of the women and only one-third of the men who tried this found that it made no difference or made things worse. This indicates that much still needs to be done to make supervisors and other officials accountable for resolving these problems informally.

Another indication of the need to make supervisors and other officials more responsive to the problem of sexual harassment is the finding that talking with these officials did not help the situation in the majority of cases. Talking with a party outside the agency such as a lawyer, civil rights group, someone from Congress, or other agency official, was found to be most successful for the few male and female victims of "most severe" sexual harassment and female victims of "less severe" sexual harassment who tried it. Most workers did not talk with any one about their incident and when they did, they usually spoke with friends and relatives or other workers.

Narrators' Informal Responses to Sexual Harassment

Percentage of Narrators Who Indicated that Taking These Informal Actions
"Made Things Better" (Question 23)

VICTIMS OF MOST SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Transferred, disciplined or gave a poor performance rating to the person	reported by 72% of women and 9% of men
	Asked or told the person(s) to stop	reported by 40% of women and 13% of men
	Reported the behavior to the supervisor or other officials	reported by 57% of women and 11% of men
	Avoided the person(s)	reported by 20% of women and 32% of men
	Made a joke of the behavior	reported by 52% of women and 7% of men
	Threatened to tell or told other workers	reported by 30% of women and 19% of men
	Ignored the behavior or did nothing	reported by 12% of women and 27% of men
	Went along with the behavior	reported by 14% of women and 46% of men

VICTIMS OF SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Transferred, disciplined or gave a poor performance rating to the person	reported by 79% of women and 87% of men
	Asked or told the person(s) to stop	reported by 53% of women and 69% of men
	Reported the behavior to the supervisor or other officials	reported by 54% of women and 46% of men
	Avoided the person(s)	reported by 42% of women and 51% of men
	Made a joke of the behavior	reported by 32% of women and 45% of men
	Threatened to tell or told other workers	reported by 36% of women and 29% of men
	Ignored the behavior or did nothing	reported by 24% of women and 41% of men
	Went along with the behavior	reported by 3% of women and 32% of men
VICTIMS OF LESS SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Transferred, disciplined or gave a poor performance rating to the person	reported by 59% of women and 33% of men
	Asked or told the person(s) to stop	reported by 60% of women and 68% of men
	Reported the behavior to the supervisor or other officials	reported by 52% of women and 17% of men
	Avoided the person(s)	reported by 54% of women and 58% of men
	Made a joke of the behavior	reported by 43% of women and 57% of men
	Threatened to tell or told other workers	reported by 36% of women and 21% of men
	Ignored the behavior or did	reported by 36%

	nothing	of women and 45% of men
	Went along with the behavior	reported by 18% of women and 13% of men
TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Transferred, disciplined or gave a poor performance rating to the person	reported by 74% of women and 56% of men
	Asked or told the person(s) to stop	reported by 54% of women and 67% of men
	Reported the behavior to the supervisor or other officials	reported by 53% of women and 35% of men
	Avoided the person(s)	reported by 45% of women and 53% of men
	Made a joke of the behavior	reported by 36% of women and 49% of men
	Threatened to tell or told other workers	reported by 35% of women and 24% of men
	Ignored the behavior or did nothing	reported by 28% of women and 42% of men
	Went along with the behavior	reported by 8% of women and 25% of men

NOTE: Some respondents indicated that they took more than one formal action.

Narrators' Informal Responses to Sexual Harassment

Percentage of Narrators Who Indicated that Taking These Informal Actions
"Made Things Better" (Question 28)

VICTIMS OF MOST SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Requested an investigation by victim's organization	reported by 84% of women and 28% of men
	Filed a discrimination complaint or lawsuit	reported by 81% of women

		and 26% of men
	Requested an investigation by an outside agency	reported by 92% of women and 100% of men
	Filed a grievance or adverse action appeal	reported by 0% of women and 26% of men
VICTIMS OF SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Requested an investigation by victim's organization	reported by 73% of women and 50% of men
	Filed a discrimination complaint or lawsuit	reported by 52% of women and 15% of men
	Requested an investigation by an outside agency	reported by 27% of women and 0% of men
	Filed a grievance or adverse action appeal	reported by 31% of women and 43% of men
VICTIMS OF LESS SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Requested an investigation by victim's organization	reported by 44% of women and 0% of men
	Filed a discrimination complaint or lawsuit	reported by 90% of women and 0% of men
	Requested an investigation by an outside agency	reported by 52% of women and 100% of men
	Filed a grievance or adverse action appeal	reported by 85% of women and 0% of men
TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Requested an investigation by victim's organization	reported by 70% of women and 29% of men
	Filed a discrimination complaint or lawsuit	reported by 66% of women and 12% of men
	Requested an investigation by an outside agency	reported by 58% of women and 100% of men

	Filed a grievance or adverse action appeal	reported by 45% of women and 33% of men
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NOTE: Some respondents indicated that they took more than one formal action.

Costs of Sexual Harassment

Job Turnover	Women	Men	Total
Cost to offer a job[1]	\$ 6.4	\$ 1.2	\$ 7.6
Background checks[2]	2.0	0.4	2.4
Training[3]	24.1	2.7	26.8
Total Cost of Job Turnover	\$ 22.5	\$ 4.3	\$ 26.8
Emotional Stress	3.9	2.1	5.0
Individual Productivity	37.7	34.4	72.1
Absenteeism	5.3	2.6	7.9
Work Group Productivity	32.6	44.3	76.9
TOTALS	\$ 102.0	\$ 86.7	\$ 188.7

1 Source: Office of Program Management and Evaluation, Office of Personnel Management

2 Source: Division of Personnel Investigations, Office of Personnel Management

3 Source: "Employee Training in the Federal Service- FY 1979," published by the Office of Personnel Management, Workforce Effectiveness and Development Office.

We found that very few victims took formal institutional remedies against the sexual harassment--only 2 to 3%. The majority who took formal actions reported that their doing so made things better. This would indicate that in contrast to the lack of faith in formal remedies expressed by most respondents in Chapter 8, the

system does work for some. However, a sizeable minority (41%) indicated that filing the formal action either had no effect or in fact made things worse.

In addition, victims in general reported a mixed response from management to their formal complaints, although the response of management seemed to depend somewhat on the sex of victim and the severity of the harassment. Generally, victims were more likely to find a favorable management response than a hostile one. However, male victims were more likely to encounter hostility than were women and few victims of either sex reported that management "corrected the damage done to them."

Impact and Cost of Sexual Harassment

We found that a conservative estimate of the cost to the Federal Government due to sexual harassment over the two-year period was \$189 million--a sum equivalent to the total salaries of all 465 agency heads and all 7000 senior Federal executives (members of the Senior Executive Service) for six months. The greatest costs were associated with the loss of individual and workgroup productivity as reported by the victims. These figures are conservative for three reasons:

- Victims were far less likely to report a decline in their productivity than a decline in their physical or emotional well-being. Since physical or emotional well-being may in fact affect productivity, the number of victims who reported a drop in productivity may actually be closer to the larger number who stated that their emotional or physical condition declined. Thus, the numbers used to compute the loss due to individual productivity are probably low.
- We assumed that where reported, individual productivity declined by only 10%.
- We assumed that where reported, work group productivity declined by only 1%.

We also found that most victims reported that their careers and work situations did not change as a result of their sexual harassment experience, although a sizeable minority of women and men reported adverse consequences, such as leaving their jobs. Although most women and men victims in general indicated that their sexual harassment experience did not negatively affect their personal well-being or work performance, this varied with the severity of the harassment. Victims of the more severe forms of sexual harassment were more likely to report adverse effects. The adverse effects were particularly dramatic for the victims of "most severe" sexual harassment.

As stated above, most women and men were much more likely to perceive that their sexual harassment experience affected their personal well-being or morale

than their work performance or productivity. Again, this finding may be one of perception.

In contrast to the reported effect on the individuals themselves, we found that few victims felt that the morale or productivity of their immediate work groups were negatively affected by their sexual harassment experiences. One reason for this may be that few coworkers knew about the experience and its effects on the victim since only about one-third of the victims reported that they spoke with coworkers about the incident.

Awareness of Remedies and Their Effectiveness

To discover whether victims and supervisors were even aware of formal remedies for sexual harassment, we asked whether they believed that the following actions were available to those who had been sexually bothered by others:

- requesting an investigation by the organization
- requesting an investigation by an outside organization
- filing a grievance or adverse action appeal
- filing a discrimination complaint
- filing a complaint through special channels set up for sexual harassment complaints

Although most of these actions are in fact available to most employees, we found that most victims and supervisors were relatively unaware of them. The one remedy about which the respondents were most knowledgeable was "filing a discrimination complaint."

When we asked respondents whether they thought those same formal remedies were effective in helping victims of sexual harassment, we found that relatively few victims or supervisors thought that the formal remedies would definitely be effective.

However, to the largest number of victims, particularly those who have not experienced the most severe form of sexual harassment, filing a formal complaint simply may not be an appropriate response. They prefer to handle the situation informally. Most victims indicated that they "saw no need to report" the incident as a reason for not filing a formal complaint. However, the female and to a lesser extent the male victims of the more severe forms of sexual harassment were much less likely to cite this reason for not taking a formal action than fear of adverse consequences or belief that nothing would be done.

In contrast to the somewhat pessimistic view of formal remedies, most Federal workers believe that employees successfully can take informal steps to stop the unwanted sexual attention. Both victims and supervisors most often endorsed

direct assertive actions by the employees as being effective in stopping unwanted sexual attention. In contrast, few respondents thought that there was little an employee could do about the situation.

In addition, most Federal workers also think that there is much that management can do to reduce sexual harassment. Management actions involving tougher sanctions and enforcement generally were endorsed most often. However, a majority of victims and supervisors also endorsed actions involving publicizing management policies on sexual harassment. Women were more likely than men to endorse actions intended to help victims cope with the problem, such as setting up a special counseling service.

Conclusions

From these findings the following five general conclusions can be drawn about sexual harassment in the Federal workplace. This Final Report provides explanations for these conclusions.

1. Sexual harassment is a legitimate problem in the Federal workplace.
2. In the past, agency managers have not been as successful as they could be in resolving problems of sexual harassment.
3. There is much that management can do about the problem of sexual harassment in the future.
4. There are effective actions that victims can take to solve the problem of sexual harassment.
5. Sexual harassment by its nature and in its various forms has differing effects on victims.

Perceived Effectiveness of Individual Actions

Percentage of Victims and Supervisors Who Thought Employee Actions Would Stop Sexual Harassment (Question 10)

VICTIMS OF MOST SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Asking or telling the person(s) to stop	Reported by 78% of women and 61% of men
	Reporting the behavior to the supervisor or other officials	Reported by 66% of women and 59% of men
	Filing a formal complaint	Reported by 48% of women and 48% of men
	Ignoring the	Reported by 50%

	behavior	of women and 50% of men
	Avoiding the person(s)	Reported by 50% of women and 34% of men
	There is very little employees can do	Reported by 19% of women and 28% of men
	Threatening to tell or telling other workers	Reported by 17% of women and 18% of men
VICTIMS OF SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Asking or telling the person(s) to stop	Reported by 87% of women and 82% of men
	Reporting the behavior to the supervisor or other officials	Reported by 68% of women and 70% of men
	Filing a formal complaint	Reported by 52% of women and 61% of men
	Ignoring the behavior	Reported by 48% of women and 44% of men
	Avoiding the person(s)	Reported by 48% of women and 42% of men
	There is very little employees can do	Reported by 10% of women and 5% of men
	Threatening to tell or telling other workers	Reported by 15% of women and 17% of men
VICTIMS OF LESS SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Asking or telling the person(s) to stop	Reported by 83% of women and 84% of men
	Reporting the behavior to the supervisor or other officials	Reported by 71% of women and 72% of men
	Filing a formal complaint	Reported by 55% of women and 56% of men

	Ignoring the behavior	Reported by 45% of women and 45% of men
	Avoiding the person(s)	Reported by 44% of women and 39% of men
	There is very little employees can do	Reported by 5% of women and 5% of men
	Threatening to tell or telling other workers	Reported by 16% of women and 21% of men
VICTIMS OF ALL FORMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND SUPERVISORS	Asking or telling the person(s) to stop	Reported by 85% of women, 83% of men, 86% of supervisory women, and 85% of supervisory men
	Reporting the behavior to the supervisor or other officials	Reported by 69% of women, 71% of men, 71% of supervisory women, and 78% of supervisory men
	Filing a formal complaint	Reported by 53% of women, 59% of men, 49% of supervisory women, and 57% of supervisory men
	Ignoring the behavior	Reported by 47% of women, 45% of men, 49% of supervisory women, and 42% of supervisory men
	Avoiding the person(s)	Reported by 47% of women, 41% of men, 45% of supervisory women, and 40% of supervisory men
	There is very little employees can do	Reported by 9% of women, 5% of

		men, 6% of supervisory women, and 2% of supervisory men
	Threatening to tell or telling other workers	Reported by 16% of women, 19% of men, 13% of supervisory women, and 19% of supervisory men

NOTE: Many respondents indicated more than one action would be effective.

Perceived Effectiveness of Management Actions

Percentage of Victims and Supervisors Who Thought Management Actions Regarding Sexual Harassment Would Be Effective (Question 11)

IMPOSING TOUGHER SANCTIONS AND STRICTER ENFORCEMENT	Conduct swift and thorough investigations of complaints of sexual harassment	Perceived effective action by 77% of women, 71% of men, 81% of female supervisors, and 78% of male supervisors
	Enforce penalties against managers who knowingly allow this behavior to continue	Perceived effective action by 59% of workmen, 61% of men, 62% of female supervisors, and 60% of male supervisors
	Enforce penalties against those who sexually bother others	Perceived effective action by 74% of workmen, 71% of men, 71% of female supervisors, and 74% of male supervisors
	Publicize the availability of formal complaint channels	Perceived effective action by 63% of workmen, 63% of men, 67% of female supervisors, and

		60% of male supervisors
PUBLICIZING MANAGEMENT POLICY	There is very little that management can do to reduce sexual harassment on the job	Perceived effective action by 69% of workmen, 69% of men, 75% of female supervisors, and 73% of male supervisors
	Provide training for managers and EEO officials on their responsibilities for decreasing sexual harassment	Perceived effective action by 61% of workmen, 57% of men, 65% of female supervisors, and 57% of male supervisors
HELPING VICTIMS COPE	Establish a special counseling service for those who experience sexual harassment	Perceived effective action by 44% of workmen, 37% of men, 44% of female supervisors, and 37% of male supervisors
	Provide awareness training for employees on sexual harassment	Perceived effective action by 53% of workmen, 43% of men, 54% of female supervisors, and 43% of male supervisors
NOTHING CAN BE DONE	Establish and publicize policies which prohibit sexual harassment	Perceived effective action by 6% of workmen, 5% of men, 3% of female supervisors, and 4% of male supervisors

NOTE: Many respondents indicated more than one action would be effective.

Recommendations

The final report goes into more detail regarding the recommendations that are summarized here. It is strongly urged that these recommendations be implemented as both a cost savings measure and one designed to produce a

positive work atmosphere where morale and productivity can prosper. These recommendations can be incorporated within current mechanisms without undue expense to the Government.

For the few who choose to pursue formal remedies, the complaint channels need to be responsive to their needs. However, because of the sensitivity of the issue, most victims have not and probably will not in the future take formal actions to stop sexual harassment. The most effective way to aid these individuals and have the greatest impact on reducing most instances of sexual harassment is to take steps to prevent sexual harassment in the first place and to help victims handle the situation informally.

Of the following recommendations, the first two are remedial in nature, the second two preventive, the fifth, designed to assist victims and the last designed to monitor compliance and provide follow-up.

1. Agencies should provide strong and effective enforcement against sexual harassment and issue sanctions where appropriate.
2. Complaint channels for sexual harassment should be clarified and streamlined.
3. Managers and other agency officials should be made aware of their responsibilities and held accountable for enforcing Federal Government and agency policy prohibiting sexual harassment at the Federal workplace.
4. Agencies should develop a training strategy to aid in preventing sexual harassment.
5. Agencies should provide information to victims on effective techniques for resolving incidents of sexual harassment.
6. A number of other activities should be instituted to assure compliance with law and regulation, as well as to provide follow up to this study both within the Federal Government and in the other public and private sectors.

Conclusion

The Federal Government has a responsibility to be a model employer that maintains "high standards of honesty, integrity, impartiality and conduct to assure proper performance of the Government's business and the maintenance of confidence of the American people ... Sexual harassment is a form of employee misconduct which undermines the integrity of the employment relationship. All employees must be allowed to work in an environment free from unsolicited and unwelcome sexual overtures. "[5]

To mount a strong campaign to reduce sexual harassment is in keeping with this policy and is cost-effective.

Footnotes -- Executive Summary

1 A "disproportionately stratified " sample is one in which certain categories of participants are selected to be in the sample in greater numbers than they occur in the general population. These categories of participants are intentionally oversampled to ensure adequate numbers for statistical analysis within each category. The sample is "random" in that, within a given category (or stratum), each member has an equal chance of being selected. A random sample enables the researcher to make predictions about the whole population based upon the sample. All final results in this final report are expressed in "weighted " terms, which means that all numbers and percentages are adjusted to reflect each category's actual size in the Federal population.

2 See *Babbie, Earl R. Survey Research Methods*, Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc. Belmont, California, 1973, p. 165.

3 Such as the Defense Mapping Agency and Office of the Secretary of Defense.

4 Such as the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and the Office of Personnel Management.

5. OPM Policy Statement, see Appendix E.

1. Introduction

Sexual harassment in the workplace is a subject about which much discussion is currently taking place. Do any of these statements sound familiar?

- Sexual harassment is just another example of what men do to women to keep them from advancing in the workplace.
- The issue of sexual harassment has been greatly exaggerated--because of all the publicity men will be afraid to talk to women for fear of being accused of sexual harassment.
- Women in low-pay and low-status positions are more likely to be harassed than others and are afraid to make waves about it for fear of losing their jobs.
- The Government should not try to legislate love--it has no business interfering in the personal (sex) lives of employees.

As statements such as these suggest, there have been disagreements about what constitutes sexual harassment, how widespread it is and its consequences for employees in their careers, morale, and work performance.

As a result of this publicity about the issue of sexual harassment, the Subcommittee on Investigations of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, under the leadership of Chairman

James M. Hanley, conducted a preliminary investigation of sexual harassment in the Federal Government and held hearings in October and November, 1979. The findings from the investigation, which included an examination of 100 employee allegations, were serious enough to cause the Subcommittee to request that the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) conduct a thorough and authoritative study of sexual harassment in the Federal workplace. Since no such thorough study had ever been conducted on this subject in either the private or public sectors, the Subcommittee wanted to discover whether the results of their preliminary investigation would be borne out by a scientific study.

To establish a Federal Government-wide approach to sexual harassment the Subcommittee also asked the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to (1) prepare a policy statement about sexual harassment, (2) prepare a training module on sexual harassment issues, and (3) encourage agencies to issue policy statements and provide training. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) was also asked to (1) develop and issue interpretive guidelines clarifying the status of sexual harassment under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII), (2) require agencies as part of their affirmative action plans to inform Federal agencies that sexual harassment is prohibited by Title VII, and (3) require agencies to take steps to make the work environment free of sexual intimidation.[\[1\]](#)

MSPB was directed to examine the following questions using the definition of sexual harassment already developed by OPM:

1. What kinds of behavior constitute sexual harassment? Do the attitudes of men and women differ in this regard?
2. To what degree does sexual harassment occur within the Federal workplace? What is the frequency? What are the manifestations?
3. Are victims or perpetrators of sexual harassment found in disproportionate numbers within certain agencies, job classifications, geographic locations, racial categories, age brackets, educational levels, grade levels, etc.?
4. What forms of express or implied leverage have been used by harassers to reward or punish their victims?
5. What has been the impact of sexual harassment on its victims in terms of job turn-over, work performance, physical and emotional condition, financial and career well-being?
6. What effect has sexual harassment had on the morale or productivity of the immediate work group?
7. Are victims of sexual harassment aware of available remedies? Do they have confidence in those remedies?

Top agency officials of the MSPB, OPM, and EEOC reported the status of their charges regarding sexual harassment at a hearing held by the Subcommittee on September 25, 1980. The Chairwoman of the MSPB and the Director of the Office of Merit Systems Review and Studies (MSRS), the MSPB office given

responsibility for conducting the study, reported on the preliminary findings at the hearing. These findings were preliminary in that they included information only on women victims and only for some of the data. This Final Report considerably expands the preliminary study, notably by including data on male victims and providing policy recommendations.

In developing the plan for the study, the MSRS research team first examined the relevant issues by reviewing the legal case law and the relevant available literature.

Review of Relevant Case Law

We reviewed the OPM policy statement prohibiting sexual harassment as well as the limited but growing case law on sexual harassment in order to observe the legal basis for prohibiting sexual harassment. OPM defines sexual harassment as: "deliberate or repeated unsolicited verbal comments, gestures or physical contact of a sexual nature which are unwelcome."^[2] This definition allows the recipient of the behavior to determine whether the contact is "unwelcome" and is more broadly defined than other interpretations construed by the courts and EEOC.

Under recently published EEOC interpretive guidelines, sexual harassment is considered to be sex discrimination under certain conditions: (1) when submission to it is a term or condition of employment, (2) when it is used as the basis of employment decisions, or (3) when it creates an intimidating or hostile work environment.^[3] With the exception of the recent Court of Appeals decision in the case of *Bundy v. Jackson*, D.C. Civil Action No. 77-1359 (D.C. Cir., January 12, 1981), most courts have found that prohibited sex discrimination has occurred only when submission to the sexual harassment is a term or condition of the victim's employment.^[4] The OPM definition is broader than these interpretations in that it expands the definition of sexual harassment to include unacceptable behavior that, although not necessarily sex discrimination, may be a prohibited personnel practice or a violation of the standards of conduct in the Federal workplace. Thus, unwelcome sexual attention, however defined, is seen at most as a form of sex discrimination that is prohibited by law and at least as a violation of the standards of conduct in the Federal workplace that is prohibited by Government policy or regulation.

Survey of the Literature

To conceptualize the study, we wanted to determine whether any of the questions posed in the Congressional mandate had been addressed in the available literature on sexual harassment.

We found that only within the last six years has sexual harassment gained public notice both as a catch-word to describe a situation and as a work related

issue.^[5] Since that time a number of authors have examined the issue and several common patterns have emerged from their writings. First, most of the literature has been descriptive in nature with little or no explanation for the underlying social process involved. Second, most of the writers have been feminists who have focused on the behavior almost exclusively as it affects women, and not men, the larger society, or the work organization. Third, there has been no common denominator in the literature about what behaviors constitute sexual harassment. Fourth, much of the literature has drawn upon individual case studies to generalize about the victims of sexual harassment, how the experience affects them and how they have responded.^[6]

Most of the studies that did attempt to discern the extent of sexual harassment and to explore other factors such as the characteristics of victims and perpetrators, are not scientifically valid.^[7] Therefore they are not useful to measure the actual pervasiveness of sexual harassment in the workplace.

The groups surveyed in most of these studies were small and self-selected.^[8] In addition, in none of these studies was sexual harassment defined in the same way, making comparison of results difficult. Another drawback was that most of these studies asked about experiences of sexual harassment over the respondent's lifetime (relying on their recall ability), rather than using a conceptually stronger finite and more immediate period of time.

However a few studies have had some degree of scientific control.^[9] Although they shed some light on the topic, none have addressed all of the issues covered in the Congressional mandate, none have involved Federal employees, all have been restricted to a particular geographic region and/or work setting, only one has included men as well as women as potential victims, and most have restricted harassment to heterosexual behavior.

Major Views of Sexual Harassment

Three major views of sexual harassment have emerged from most of this literature: one concerning the underlying social-political basis for the behavior, the second concerning the vulnerability of particular groups to sexual harassment and the third, concerning the motivation behind the behavior.

The three views are:

1. That sexual harassment is an abuse of power that is exercised by those with power, usually male supervisors, over low-status employees, usually women.
2. That individuals with certain low-status, low-power characteristics, such as youth and low salaries and who are tied economically to their jobs, are more vulnerable to sexual harassment than others.

3. That sexual harassment is an expression of personal attraction between men and women that cannot and should not be stopped.

The first two views are closely related. They grow out of a belief that sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination and abuse of power used to keep women in their place at the low end of the economic scale. This view is based on the fact that on average women earn only 59 cents for every dollar that a man earns and that sexual harassment is one example of the sex discrimination that maintains this disparity.

The first view sees sexual harassment primarily as an expression of power (see for example, Backhouse and Cohen, 1978; Farley, 1978; Appendix H.). One example of this perspective sees sexual harassment as a form of violence or threat of violence used as a mechanism of social control over women to limit their access to certain jobs or their job success and mobility (Bularzik, 1978). Others emphasize that sexual harassment is used as a powerful lever to maintain the status quo in traditional economic and social relationships (Silverman, 1976-77).

The second major view about sexual harassment that emerges from the analytic literature has to do with the vulnerability of particular groups of women working in particular kinds of jobs. It has been suggested that women, particularly women from minority groups, working for low wages in low-status jobs are particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment because of their economic dependence on their jobs (see for example, Hooven and McDonald, 1978). Another group considered to be particularly vulnerable to harassment are women working in traditionally male occupations because they have invaded a private male preserve (Silverman, 1976-77; also see Martin, 1978, on harassment among women police officers).

The third view reflects a fundamentally different view of the sex roles of men and women and the impact that these roles have on their relationships to each other on the job. This theory grows out of a belief that rather than being a source of power of men over women, the vagueness and broad nature of the definitions of sexual harassment used by both OPM and EEOC will undoubtedly lead to a barrage of trivial and unfounded complaints against men. Followers of this view also might be inclined to believe that the sexual relationships between men and women are expressions of personal attraction, and that although some of the consequences of these relationships may involve harassment, it is not appropriate for an employer to become involved (Berns, 1980). This study will review the evidence for these three views.

Study Design

Of primary concern in developing the study was the desire to develop a scientifically valid survey instrument that would determine whether sexual harassment was a problem in the Federal workplace and address the questions

posed in the Congressional mandate. Secondly, we wanted to gather information that would permit examination of the major views about sexual harassment in order to make appropriate policy recommendations.[\[10\]](#)

With the assistance of OPM, a disproportionately stratified random sample" of civilian employees in the Executive Branch was selected to be in the study. The four variables on which the sample was stratified were: (1) sex, (2) minority status, (3) salary, and (4) organization.

As a result of revising the survey instrument through pretests on a cross section of Washington, D.C.-based Federal employees, the final product contained 12 pages with 63 questions. Over 23,000 men and women received questionnaires in May 1980, which were sent to the respondents' homes to preserve their confidentiality and anonymity. The rate of return from two mailings of the questionnaire was 85%--a rate considerably higher than is usually required for statistical reliability.[\[11\]](#) The members of the sample were asked to base most of their answers on their work experience during the 24-month period from May 1978 to May 1980. Both the preliminary findings presented at the Congressional hearing in September 1980 and the Final Report were prepared by the MSRS research team based upon the data gathered from the survey.

Disclaimers and Cautions in Interpreting the Data

In reading this report and interpreting the data, some issues should be kept in mind. First, the incidence data is based upon the number of respondents who personally indicated that they had received what they believed to be unwanted and unwelcome sexual attention. Thus, the method of identifying victims for this report involved a self-defining process on the part of the respondents. This approach seemed to be a reasonable way to measure incidence of sexual harassment and in line with the OPM definition of sexual harassment, which also relies on self-identification of victims. This method of determining incidence cannot measure whether the initiator believed that the behavior was sexually harassing, although the questionnaire afforded some opportunity for those who had been accused of sexual harassment to describe their experiences.

A second major caution in interpreting the data concerns the perceptual and language differences that may have been operating on the men and women who took this questionnaire. That men and women look at sexual behavior differently is important to keep in mind when looking at the reported experiences of men victims in the following chapters.[\[12\]](#) There is an indication from the data that the behavior that is referred to as unwanted and unwanted sexual attention, particularly for reported cases of actual or attempted rape or sexual assault, may be different for men and women respondents.[\[13\]](#)

Also, men and women may have different reactions to the unwanted behavior. Sexual behavior that may be offensive to women may be more or less offensive

to men when they are the recipients. Social norms have encouraged men to be sexually aggressive and women to be sexually passive (Faltzman, 1974). As modern attitudes have altered these stereotypical expectations, it is not surprising that stress or confusion often results when these sex roles reverse.

For example, one study that was conducted on young adults found that when men and women were asked their views about sexual behavior that could happen to them, the men were much more likely to see less severe behaviors, such as pressure for dates, as more offensive than did women. The men felt uncomfortable as the recipients of these actions since their typical sex role was reversed, whereas, the women, were not as offended since they saw the unwanted attention as part of normal dating behavior.[\[14\]](#)

In addition, the degree to which victims felt bothered by their sexual harassment could not be measured closely in this study. There is reason to believe that men who indicate that they have been sexually harassed are not only talking about different behavior (language difference) than women victims, but are affected in very different ways. The only other scientific study on sexual harassment that involved male respondents found that in general male victims were more likely to think that sexual harassment was flattering or ego-enhancing and the women victims were more likely to think that the experience was threatening or interfered with the effective conduct of their work (Gutek and Nakamura, 1980).

A final caution in interpreting the data in terms of the experiences of male and female victims is raised. That is the belief that it is not reasonable to equate the sexual harassment of men with the sexual harassment of women, since men traditionally have had more opportunities for advancement in the workplace. This view states that since this is a society where laws have had to be enacted to ensure women their rights, the sexual intimidation of men is not logically as severe or discriminatory as that of women (McKinnon, 1979).

Presentation of the Report

The Final Report is organized into eight additional Chapters plus Appendices. The Chapters are as follows:

Chapter 2: View of Federal Workers Toward Sexual Harassment--the attitudes of men and women toward sexual behavior in the Federal workplace.

Chapter 3: Extent of Sexual Harassment in the Federal Workplace--the overall incidence level of such behaviors among women and men.

Chapter 4: Victims of Sexual Harassment--the personal and organizational characteristics of women and men victims and their work environment.

Chapter 5: Perpetrators of Sexual Harassment--the characteristics of those who initiate sexual harassment.

Chapter 6: Incidents of Sexual Harassment --the perceived use of leverage by harassers, as well as victims' responses to the sexual harassment.

Chapter 7: Impact and Cost of Sexual Harassment--actual dollar cost of sexual harassment to the Federal Government, as well as the perceived consequences to victims.

Chapter 8: Awareness of Remedies and their Effectiveness--opinions of victims and their supervisors toward informal and formal institutional remedies for stopping sexual harassment.

Chapter 9: Summary of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations.

The Appendices are as follows:

Appendix A: Methodology--explanation of the methodology used in preparing the study, including the development of the questionnaire, the selection and design of the sample, conduct of the study, the preparation and analysis of the data, and the confidentiality and anonymity of participants.

Appendix B: Definitions of Terms--definitions of commonly used terms that appear in this report.

Appendix C: Survey Questionnaire--a copy of the cover letters and questionnaire used in the survey.

Appendix D: Additional Statistical Analyses--back-up data for figures and tables that appear in the report, as well as additional figures and tables.

Appendix E: Official Policy Documents--copies of Memoranda of Understanding Between the Investigations Subcommittee and MSPB, EEOC, and OPM; OPM Policy Statement and Definition of Sexual Harassment; EEOC Guidelines on Discrimination Because of Sex; and EEOC Instructions for Prevention of Sexual Harassment in the Workforce Plans.

Appendix F: Agency Actions Regarding Sexual Harassment--recent steps taken by agencies to reduce sexual harassment.

Appendix G: Survey of Literature--a review of the current literature on the subject of sexual harassment.

Appendix H: Annotated Bibliography--an annotated listing of major or useful works classified as general theory and analysis, studies and surveys, mass media articles, legal commentaries, miscellaneous reports, booklets and guides, and bibliographies.

Footnotes -- Introduction

1 Memoranda of Understanding between the Subcommittee on Investigations of the House Committee on Post Office and Civil Service and the Merit Systems Protection Board, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Office of Personnel Management concerning the Problem of Sexual Harassment of Federal Employees; see Appendix E.

2 Office of Personnel Management Policy Statement and Definition of Sexual Harassment; see Appendix E.

3 Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Guidelines on Discrimination Because of Sex, November 10, 1980, 29 CFR Part 1604.11, 45 FR 25024; see Appendix E.

4 For a further discussion of this case law see Appendix H.

5 For a fuller review of the literature see Appendix G.

6 For example, see Backhouse and Cohen, 1978; Farley, 1978; Martin, 1978; Appendix H.

7 Since the results were not based on information derived from a scientifically selected probability sample, predictions for the population at large are usually not valid.

8 See for example, Kelber, 1979; Lang, 1979; New Responses, Inc., 1979; Safran, 1976; Working Women's Institute, 1979; Appendix H.

9 See Benson and Thompson, 1979; Gutek and Nakamura, 1980; Livingston, 1979; Appendix H.

10 A more detailed description of the methodology employed by the research team is given in Appendix A.

11 See footnotes 1 and 2 in Executive Summary for explanation.

12 Janet Faltzman Chafetz, *Masculine-Feminine or Human?* Overview of the Sociology of Sex Roles, F.E. Peacock Publishers, Inc., Itasca, Illinois, 1974.

13 See Chapter 3.

14 Martha R. Burt and Rhoda E. Estep, "Assessing the Impact of Sexually Intrusive Events," unpublished manuscript, University of Minnesota, 1976.

2. View of Federal Workers Toward Sexual Harassment

- Both men and women Federal workers generally agree that uninvited behaviors of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment.
- Federal workers believe supervisors should be held to a higher standard of conduct than other workers regarding sexually oriented behavior on the job.
- Both men and women Federal workers believe sexual activity, whether voluntary or otherwise, should not occur between people who work together.

- Men show a greater tendency than women to think victims are somewhat responsible for bringing sexual harassment on themselves and are inclined to believe the issue of sexual harassment has been exaggerated.
- Both men and women Federal workers think sexual harassment is something people should not have to tolerate.

The "playing around" many of us engage in is mutually agreeable between consenting adults and greatly relieves tension in a tense environment. No one who didn't want to join in has ever been bothered.

There is a great deal of sexual innuendo and joking that goes on in my office It is uncomfortable to me, and I consider it a kind of sexual harassment.

Two views of sexually oriented behavior on the job.^[1] Which is more typical of Federal workers? Do Federal workers think behavior of a sexual nature should go on in the office? At what point does such conduct cease being acceptable or tolerable and begin to seem like sexual harassment? Do different groups of employees view these things differently?

These were some of the questions that came to mind when the Subcommittee on Investigations directed the Merit Systems Protection Board to determine "what kinds of behavior are perceived to constitute sexual harassment and whether the attitudes of men and women differ in this respect."^[2] They were interested in learning not only how Federal workers define sexual harassment, but also how they feel generally about sexually oriented behaviors on the job--such things as affairs between people in the same office and people using sexuality to get ahead on the job.

We anticipated that men and women would differ not only in how they define sexual harassment, but also in how they feel about sex in the office, since research has shown that the perceptions of men about sexuality in general and sexual activity differ from those of women and that men tend to use different language to describe sexual experiences.^[3] We also thought people who had experienced what they considered to be sexual harassment might feel differently about sexually oriented activity in the office than would people who had not.

We found substantial agreement among Federal workers in the way they defined sexual harassment. We also observed a tendency to hold supervisors to a higher standard of conduct than non supervisors. The majority of women considered all of the six forms of uninvited and unwanted behaviors they were asked about to be sexual harassment, whether initiated by a supervisor or another worker. The majority of men regarded all the forms of behaviors as sexual harassment when initiated by a supervisor but did not consider sexually suggestive looks, gestures, remarks, joking, teasing, or questioning to be harassment when coming from a coworker.

As to their general attitudes, Federal workers indicated that they believe sex, whether engaged in voluntarily or otherwise, has no place in the office. Most respondents also thought that sexual harassment is a behavior that should not be tolerated. The majority of women thought people should not have affairs with people they work with, and nearly all felt unwanted sexual attention is something people should not have to put up with. The majority of men also disapproved of affairs between people who work together and believed workers should not have to put up with sexual harassment. However, men differed from women in showing a greater tendency to hold victims responsible for their own harassment and thinking the issue of sexual harassment has been exaggerated.

Federal Workers' Definition of Sexual Harassment

To learn how Federal workers define sexual harassment, we listed six forms of behavior and asked whether they would consider each form to be sexual harassment "if (this) happened to you or someone else at work."[\[4\]](#)

The six forms of behavior were:[\[5\]](#)

- Uninvited pressure for sexual favors;
- Uninvited and deliberate touching, leaning over, cornering, or pinching ("deliberate touching");
- Uninvited sexually suggestive looks or gestures ("suggestive looks");
- Uninvited letters, phone calls, or materials of a sexual nature ("letters and calls");
- Uninvited pressure for dates; and
- Uninvited sexual teasing, jokes, remarks, or questions ("sexual remarks").

These behaviors for the most part were taken from the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) definition of sexual harassment, as had been directed by the Subcommittee on Investigations. One behavior not mentioned in the definition but referred to in the literature on sexual harassment was included in the survey: "uninvited letters, phone calls, or materials of a sexual nature."

It seemed possible that Federal workers would view sexually oriented behaviors differently depending on the job status of the person demonstrating the behavior. Thus, for each of the six forms of behavior, we posed two questions: If a *supervisor* did this, would you consider this sexual harassment? If *another worker* did this would you consider this sexual harassment? The possible responses were: "definitely not," "probably not," "probably yes," "definitely yes," and "don't know."

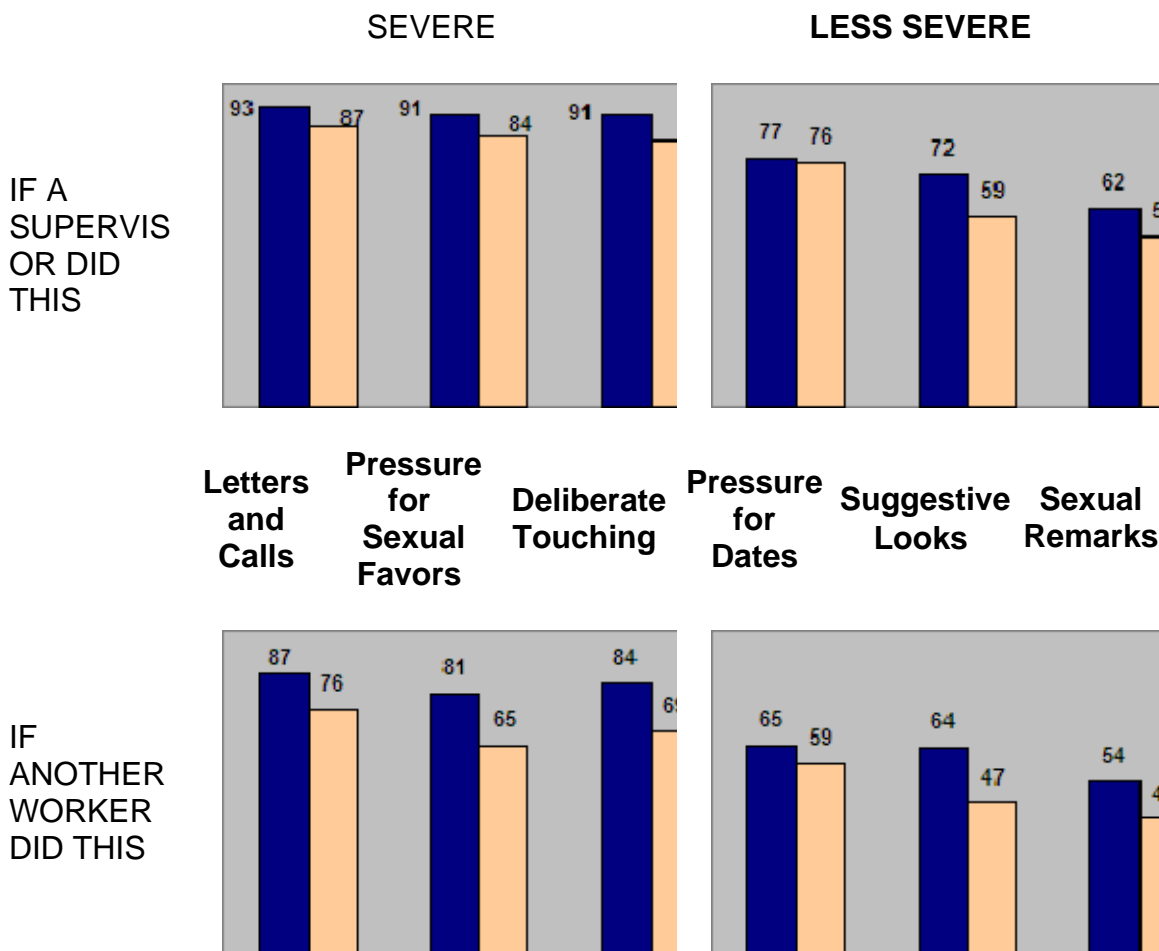
Many Uninvited Behaviors Constitute Sexual Harassment

Substantial agreement existed among Federal workers that uninvited behaviors of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment. We had expected to find that

men and women view sexual harassment somewhat differently, that women consider all of the six behaviors sexual harassment but that men regard only the most direct, most obvious conduct as harassment. Instead, we found considerable agreement between the two groups.

FIGURE 2-1
Definition of Sexual Harassment

Percentage of Male and Female Federal Employees Who Agreed that Each of Six Forms of Unwanted, Uninvited Sexual Attention Constitutes Sexual Harassment (Questions 2-7, b & d) ([text alternative](#))



NOTE: Percentages are based on "Probably Yes" and "Definitely Yes" responses to questions.

WOMEN

MEN

As Figure 2-1 shows, the majority of women considered all six uninvited behaviors to be sexual harassment,^[6] regardless of whether the perpetrator is a supervisor or another worker. Although men were somewhat less likely to think

that any one of the behaviors constituted sexual harassment, the majority of men considered the behaviors to be sexual harassment--with two exceptions. Somewhat fewer than half (but still sizeable percentages) thought "suggestive looks" or "sexual remarks," when coming from another worker, constituted sexual harassment. Since these are two behaviors that are thought to be somewhat indirect and subject to different interpretations, our expectation that men would regard only the most obvious behaviors as sexual harassment was partially borne out.

As can be seen in Figure 2-1, both men and women showed a pattern in their responses. For both groups there, was clear agreement that three behaviors--"letters and calls," "pressure for sexual favors," and "deliberate touching"--constituted sexual harassment. There was somewhat less agreement about the other behaviors--"pressure for dates," "suggestive looks," and "sexual remarks."

It is worth noting that two of these latter behaviors--"suggestive looks" and "sexual remarks"--tend to be indirect and subject to different interpretations. Another group of actions that might be regarded as ambiguous--"deliberate touching"--fell about the seeming demarcation between considerable agreement and general agreement, while a rather overt behavior--"pressure for dates"--fell below.

It is also interesting to note that the majority of Federal workers considered all of the behaviors listed in the Office of Personnel Management's definition as harassment. Moreover, the form of behavior not included in the OPM definition--"letters and calls"--was the behavior about which there was most agreement. Nine of every 10 women thought such behavior constituted sexual harassment, whether the perpetrator was a supervisor (93%) or another worker (87%), and at least 3 of 4 men agreed (87% if a supervisor did it and 76% if another worker did it).

For purposes of later analysis, the behaviors about which there was considerable agreement were grouped in a category designated "severe" harassment, and those about which there was general agreement were termed "less severe" harassment. On this basis, we can say that the majority of men and women who work for the Federal Government believe that "severe" forms of uninvited behavior are sexual harassment, whether initiated by a supervisor or another worker. The majority of men and women also think "less severe" behavior is sexual harassment when engaged in by a supervisor.

Supervisors Generally Agree with Definition

Male and female supervisors^[7] defined sexual harassment substantially the same way as did men and women in general. The majority of female supervisors felt all of the behaviors, regardless of whether initiated by a supervisor or another worker, constitute sexual harassment. The majority of male supervisors agreed,

with the same two exceptions as men in general--"suggestive looks" and "sexual remarks" coming from another worker--but, again, substantial percentages (46% and 42%) thought these behaviors constitute harassment.

Like men in general, male supervisors were somewhat less likely than women to agree that any of the uninvited behaviors constituted sexual harassment. Male supervisors also were less likely to regard a behavior as harassment than were female supervisors. Since most supervisors are men,[\[8\]](#) these findings raise some questions: Are supervisors generally able to identify sexual harassment in their organizations, particularly the less severe behaviors demonstrated by non supervisory personnel? Will the 12% to 58% of male supervisors who do not consider the various behaviors sexual harassment be able to be assertive in enforcing sanctions against those behaviors?

Motives and Sensitivity to Sexual Overtures

Whether a behavior is considered sexual harassment is related to some extent to the perceived motive of the person exhibiting the behavior. We learned this by asking Federal workers how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the statement, "I would call something sexual harassment even if the person doing it did not mean to be offensive."[\[9\]](#)

As Table 2-1 indicates, few Federal workers, regardless of gender, supervisory status, or victim status, would consider an act sexual harassment had the initiator not intended to be offensive. For most workers, the perceived motive or demeanor of the initiator does make a difference.

To learn something about sensitivity to the issue of sexual harassment, we also asked Federal workers how they felt about the statement, "People shouldn't be so quick to take offense when someone expresses a sexual interest in them."[\[10\]](#) We thought that since men are usually the ones to be accused of sexual harassment,[\[11\]](#) they would identify with the harasser and think people shouldn't be so quick to take offense. We expected men would think most behavior was not intended to be offensive and thus the recipient should not take offense. On the other hand, we expected that women would tend to identify with the victim, and, showing a greater sensitivity to sexual overtures, would be less likely to believe people shouldn't take offense so quickly. This difference was somewhat reflected in the responses. As Table 2-1 shows, half the men, but only about one-third of the women, agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Thus, it appears that women would be more likely to be offended when someone expresses a sexual interest in them.

Table 2-1
Sexual Attitudes
(Question No. 1)

These are the opinions that Federal workers have expressed about different

kinds of sexual behavior that can happen at work. Percentages are of Federal workers--men, women, supervisors, non supervisors., victims and nonvictims--who *agreed* with the following statements.

		Respondents					
		Women	Men	Supervisors	Non supervisors	Victims	Non victims
Definition of Sexual Harassment:	(i) I would call something sexual harassment even if the person doing it did not mean to be offensive.	26%	28%	30%	27%	31%	26%
	(g) People shouldn't be so quick to take offense when someone expresses a sexual interest in them.	36%	48%	45%	43%	44%	43%
Sexual Activity in the Office:	(b) Morale at work suffers when some employees seem to get ahead by using their sexuality.	93%	90%	92%	91%	94%	90%
	(d) There's nothing wrong when women use their sexuality to get ahead on the job.	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%
	(k) There's	3%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%

Responsibility Of Victims For their Own Harassment:	nothing wrong when men use their sexuality to get ahead on the job.						
	(a) I think it's all right for people to have sexual affairs with people they work with.	17%	26%	21%	23%	23%	23%
	(j) When people say they've been sexually harassed, they're usually trying to get the person they accuse into trouble.	7%	13%	11%	11%	9%	12%
	(f) People who receive annoying sexual attention have usually asked for it.	22%	31%	30%	27%	23%	29%
	(m) The issue of sexual harassment has been exaggerated --most incidents are simply normal sexual attraction between	23%	44%	43%	34%	28%	39%

	people.						
Policy Implications:	(e) Unwanted sexual attention on the job is something people should <i>not</i> have to put up with.	97%	95%	96%	95%	96%	95%

Note: Percentages are based on "Agree " and "Strongly Agree" responses to statements.

Different Behavior Is Expected of Supervisors

Federal workers think supervisors should be held to a higher standard of conduct when it comes to sexual behavior on the job than should other workers. As Figure 2-1 shows, for every one of the six forms of uninvited, unwanted sexual attention, both men and women were more likely to consider a behavior sexual harassment if initiated by a supervisor than if initiated by another worker. There are no data to suggest why workers felt this way. The discrepancy may imply that since supervisors hold positions of power, their behavior should be exemplary. Uninvited sexual attention may be seen as less threatening and coercive when initiated by a coworker, who usually has little power over the recipient. This assumption was borne out by findings presented in Chapter 6.

Federal Workers' Attitudes Toward Sexuality in the Workplace

The late Margaret Mead felt that there is no place in the work environment for sexuality, and she called for a general societal taboo against mixing business and sex.^[12] Other people just as sincerely regard this as an unnecessarily harsh solution to the problem of sexual harassment, whatever its extent. They note that since most people spend most of their working hours on the job, that is where they form many of their meaningful and long-lasting relationships, including social sexual relationships. We wondered how Federal workers felt about this and related issues. Do they think mutually agreeable sexual activity between people who work together is all right? What about people who use their sexuality to get ahead on the job? Do Federal workers think the problem of sexual harassment is really as great as it has been made out to be? And is it just part of the job, something that many people bring on themselves?

Several questions were designed to shed some light on these issues.

Sex Does Not Belong in the Office

Voluntary sexual affairs on the job. Federal workers were asked whether they thought "it's all right for people to have sexual affairs with people they work with." [13] As Table 2-1 suggests, there was considerable agreement that even such voluntary activities should not go on. The finding that supervisors, along with women, were even less likely than other groups to approve of voluntary sexual affairs is noteworthy, particularly since most supervisors are men. This result, together with the fact that only 22% of male supervisors questioned approved of this behavior, [14] may help answer a question raised earlier.

Since most supervisors, both male and female, do not approve of such relationships, they may not hesitate to enforce sanctions against sexual harassment out of fear of interfering with possible voluntary relationships.

Using sexuality to get ahead on the job is wrong. Federal workers were asked three questions about the use of sexuality to get ahead on the job. [15] As can be seen in Table 2-1, there was almost universal agreement among Federal workers, regardless of gender, supervisory status, or victim status, that morale at work suffers when employees seem to get ahead by using their sexuality. Likewise, Federal workers--be they men or women, supervisors or non-supervisors., self-reported victims of sexual harassment or nonvictims--overwhelmingly disapproved of employees using their sexuality to get ahead on the job. The fact that very few approved of this behavior whether used by a man or a woman, indicates that Federal workers do not apply a double standard to the sexes in this regard. Responses to these three questions seem to indicate that Federal workers feel people should not mix business with pleasure.

That sexual favoritism (as such use of sexuality to get ahead on the job is usually called) was censured by 9 of every 10 Federal workers, men and women alike, is interesting in light of recent Government statements on this matter. In interpretive guidelines issued in November 1980, [16] the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) affirmed that sexual harassment under certain conditions is a form of discrimination on the basis of sex. The EEOC did not regard sexual favoritism specifically as a form of sexual harassment, but did caution that when such favoritism occurs, the employer may be liable for unlawful sex discrimination against other employees who were qualified but did not receive the employment opportunity or benefit. This survey did not address the issue of sexual favoritism beyond the three questions seeking employee attitudes toward it, however, this would be an interesting topic for subsequent research.

Victims May Bear Some Responsibility

Three items in the Questionnaire [17] were designed to discover whether Federal employees hold victims responsible for their own harassment, that is, whether they tend to blame the victim. These questions, again presented in the form of

statements with which the respondent could agree or disagree, were: "People who receive annoying sexual attention have usually asked for it," "When people say they've been sexually harassed, they're usually trying to get the person in trouble," and "The issue of sexual harassment has been exaggerated--most incidents are simply normal sexual attraction between people." Partial responses are shown in Table 2-1.

Few women agreed with any of the three statements. The responses of men were mixed. Although less than a majority of men thought that victims ask for attention or are vindictive in accusing their harassers, the percentages were greater than those of women. Further, almost half of the men thought that the issue of sexual harassment has been exaggerated (compared with less than one-fourth of the women). Looked at in another way, men were about twice as likely as women to think the issue has been exaggerated (44% of men, but only 23% of women agreed or strongly agreed with the statement).

In summary, for all the "blame the victim" attitudes, substantially smaller percentages of women than men agreed with the statements. This would indicate that men are more inclined to believe that victims bring sexual harassment on themselves, to think accusers are trying to get people in trouble, and to think the issue of sexual harassment has been exaggerated.

Supervisors as a group tended to see things as men in general saw them. While this may not be surprising, since most supervisors are men, it is noteworthy. Of particular interest is the fact that almost half (43%) of the supervisors agreed that the issue of sexual harassment has been exaggerated. Might this indicate a lack of understanding on the part of supervisors as to the actual incidence rates of sexual harassment in their own agencies and in the Federal Government as a whole?

Not surprisingly, since most victims are women, victims of sexual harassment tend to hold views similar to those of women in general. This may be because people who have experienced a behavior usually are more sensitive to that behavior than others. In contrast, non-victims tend to think more like men in general and like supervisors on these issues.

Sexual Harassment is a Problem and Should not be Tolerated

Several additional questions were asked to get an overall picture of how Federal workers view sexual harassment as a problem. Is it just part of the job, something people have to learn to put up with? Or is it a real problem? Is enough being done about it?

Federal workers--be they men or women, supervisors or non supervisors., victims or non victims--strongly agree that people should not have to put up with unwanted sexual attention on the job^[18] (see Table 2-1). Nevertheless, a great

many apparently must, for some 197,900 Federal workers (3 in 20 women and 2 in 20 men) say unwanted, uninvited attention is a problem where they work.[\[19\]](#) The finding that around one-fourth of both male and female victims think unwanted, uninvited attention is a problem where they work (See Table 4-3, Chapter 4) suggests that victims feel they are not the only ones in their organization who have been sexually harassed--and in fact their responses to another question bears this out:[\[20\]](#) 43% of female narrators[\[21\]](#) and 31% of male narrators reported that the person who had harassed them had also sexually bothered others at work.

Are organizations doing enough to eliminate the problem? About two in every twenty non-victims (18% of men and 13% of women) said no.[\[22\]](#) The perceptions of victims were strikingly different: one in three victims--32% of males and 34% of females--apparently felt their organizations could be doing more to stop sexual harassment.

Conclusion

Federal workers think sexual activity, even voluntary affairs between people who work together, has no place in the office and believe people should not have to put up with uninvited sexual attention. They consider a number of forms of unwanted, uninvited sexual attention to be sexual harassment, particularly when the person exhibiting the behavior is a supervisor. However, most men and women would take the motives of the person into account and would not consider it sexual harassment if the person did not mean to be offensive.

That men and supervisors tend to think like each other but differently than women and victims about expressions of sexual interest and the responsibility of victims for their own harassment is not surprising, since most supervisors are men and most victims are women. The differences are worthy of note, however, and may have implications for efforts to reduce sexual harassment in the offices of the nearly 200,000 men and women who recognized it as a problem where they work. When even 4 in every 10 supervisors (43%) believe the issue of harassment has been exaggerated, 3 in 10 (30%) believe people who receive annoying sexual attention have usually asked for it, and 4 in 10 supervisors (45%) believe people should not be so quick to take offense when someone expresses a sexual interest in them, can we feel confident that sanctions against sexual harassment will be enforced? And when men and women are inclined to differ on these points, with men more than women showing a tendency to blame the victim and believe people shouldn't be so quick to take offense, is a need for better understanding between men--usually the "harassers"--and women--usually the "victims"--indicated?

In this chapter we learned that both men and women regard many forms of uninvited, unwanted sexual attention as sexual harassment and that 3 in every 20 women and 2 in every 20 men see such behavior as a problem where they

work. Since these figures indicate only the number of respondents who see sexual harassment as an organizational problem rather than a personal problem they have had to face, the figures do not indicate the actual incidence of sexual harassment of Federal employees. The incidence of sexual harassment is examined in the next chapter.

Footnotes -- Chapter 2

1 These and other comments that appear in this report were provided by Federal workers on their questionnaires or through a sexual harassment " hot-line" in a Federal agency.

2 Congressional Memorandum of Understanding; see Appendix E.

3 Burt and Estep, 1976; Gutek and Nakamura, 1980; Chafetz, 1974 (Chapter 1, footnote 12).

4 Survey Questions 2-7, b, d; see Appendix C.

5 A seventh form of behavior--actual or attempted raped or sexual assault--appears in later discussions. However, since rape and sexual assault are criminal offenses, Federal workers were not asked whether they considered these sexual harassment.

6 That is, they responded "definitely yes" or "probably yes" that they considered the behavior to be sexual harassment. See Appendix D for more complete statistical information for this and other figures and tables.

7 See Appendix B for a definition of supervisor and other terms used in this report; See Appendix D, Figure A for data.

8 Approximately 322,800 men and 88,000 women are supervisors according to the survey data.

9 Survey Question 1(i).

10 Survey Question 1(g).

11 See Chapter 5.

12 Mead, 1978; see Appendix H, General Theory and Analysis.

13 Survey Question 1(a).

14 See Appendix D, Table A.

15 Survey Question 1(b), 1(d), and 1(k).

16 See Appendix E for the full text of the EEOC Guidelines.

17 Survey questions 1(f), 1(j), and 1(m).

18 That is, they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "Unwanted sexual attention on the job is something people should not have to put up with"; see Survey Question 1(e).

19 Concluded from responses to Survey Question 44(e) Appendix D, Table 0. Other data on Survey Question 44 are reported and discussed more fully in Chapter 4.

20 Concluded from response to Survey Question 34; see Figure 5-6 in Chapter 5.

21 Narrators are victims who chose to describe one incident of sexual harassment in some detail; see Appendix B for a full description of narrators.

22 That is, they disagreed with the statement, "My organization makes every effort to stop unwanted sexual attention among its employees"; see Survey Question 44(g); and see Table 4-3, Chapter 4.

3. Extent of Sexual Harassment in the Federal Workplace

- One out of every four Federal employees was sexually harassed on the job over a 2-year period.
- Women are much more likely to be victims than men--42% of all female Federal employees, but only 15% of male employees, reported being sexually harassed.
- Sexual harassment can take many forms, and every form except attempted or actual rape or sexual assault was experienced by a sizeable percentage of both men and women.
- Sexual harassment is not just a one-time experience--many victims were repeatedly subjected to harassing behaviors, particularly the less severe forms.
- incidents of harassment are not just passing events--most lasted more than a week, and many lasted longer than 6 months.
- The majority of Federal employees who had worked elsewhere feel sexual harassment is no worse in the Federal workplace than in state and local government or in the private sector.

"I said no, I simply was not going out with him after work and no, I simply was not going to have an affair with him because I thought I could rely on my job skills . . ." and eventually "I was fired with 25 minutes notice on a Friday."^[1] Stories like this from dozens of Federally-employed women led the Subcommittee on Investigations to ask the Merit Systems Protection Board to determine the "degree to which sexual harassment is occurring within the Federal workplace, its manifestation and frequency"^[2] We wanted to learn how widespread harassment of Federal workers is, whether it happens to men as well as women, whether it is a one-time event or happens to some victims more than once, how long the incidents go on, and if harassment is worse in the Federal Government than in other work settings.

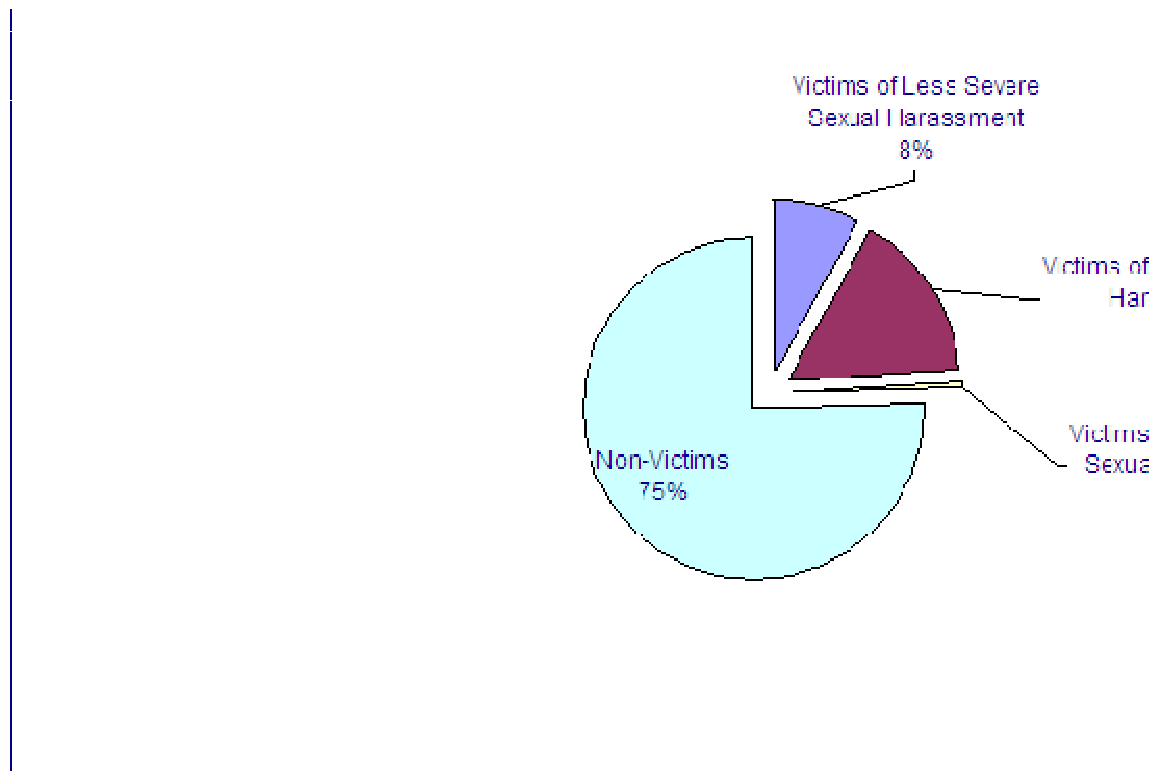
We found that sexual harassment is a problem for a large number of Federal workers--approximately 294,000 women and 168,000 men. For many of the women, harassment occurred repeatedly and frequently lasted a relatively long time. The men, though fewer in number, representing only one in every three victims, had similar experiences; relatively few reported their experiences to be one-time-only events that were soon over.

FIGURE 3-1 ([alternate text](#))

Overall Incidence Rate of Sexual Harassment

Percentage of Federal Employees Who Experienced Sexual Harassment
Between May 1978 and May 1980, by Severity of Harassment (Question 17)

**TOTAL FEDERAL WORKFORCE: 1,862,000 -- TOTAL VICTIMS:
462,000(25%)**



NOTE: These figures indicate the number of people harassed, classified by their most severe experience. Since many people reported they had had more than one experience, the number of harassment incidents is considerably larger.

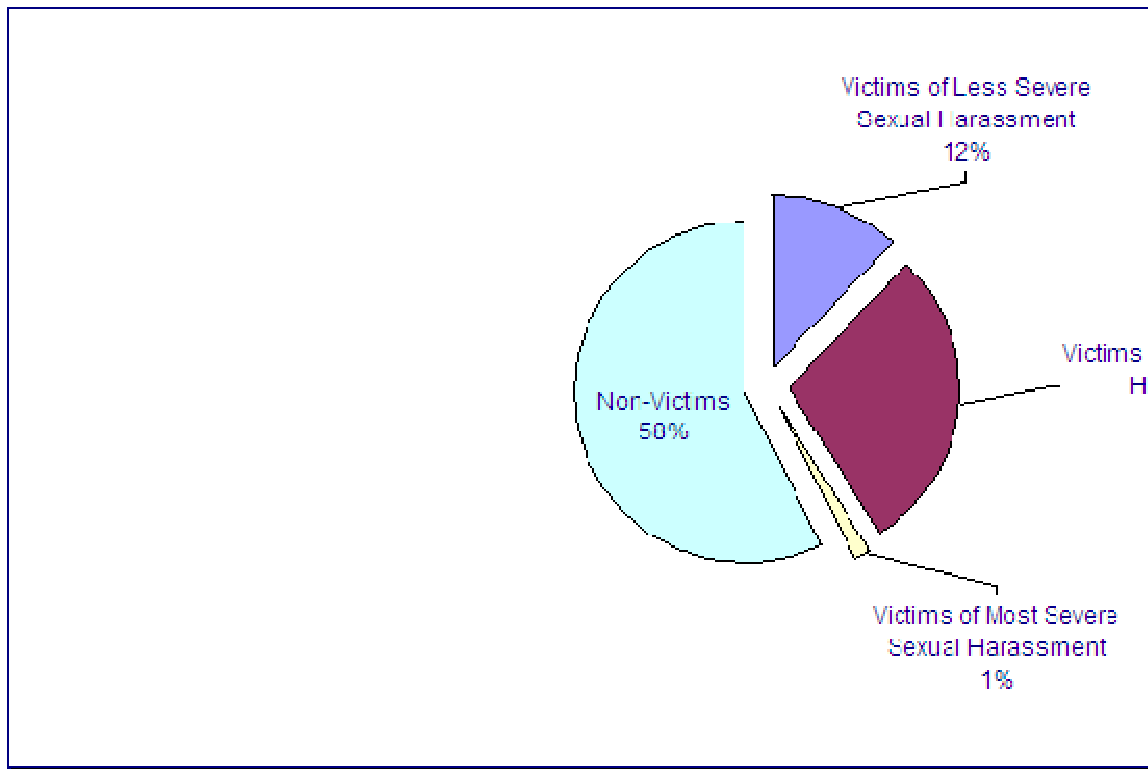
Sexual Harassment Is Widespread

To learn how common sexual harassment is, we asked Federal workers whether they had received, during the past 24 months (approximately May 1978 to May 1980), any of seven forms of uninvited and unwanted sexual attention from someone where they worked in the Federal Government.^[3] The forms of behavior were:

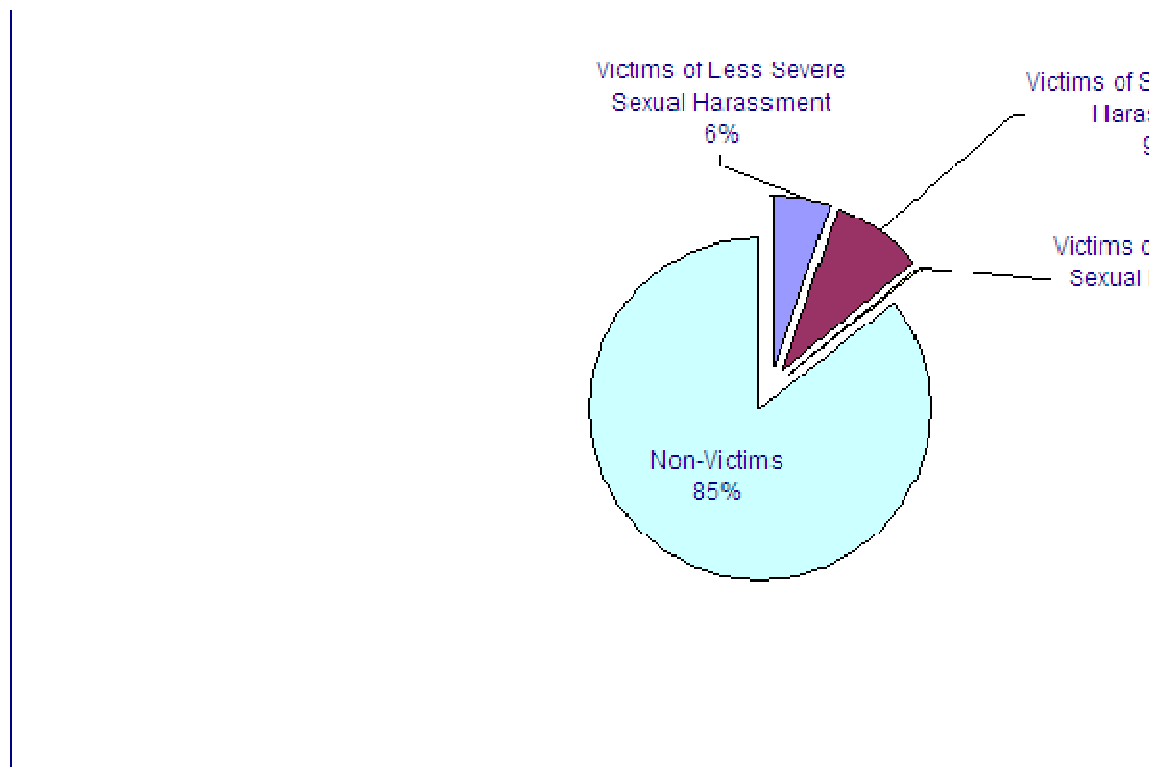
- Actual or attempted rape or sexual assault; Pressure for sexual behaviors;
- Deliberate touching, leaning over, cornering, or pinching ("touching");
- Sexually suggestive looks or gestures ("suggestive looks");
- Letters, phone calls, or materials of a sexual nature ("letters and calls");
- Pressure for dates; and
- Sexual teasing, jokes, remarks, or questions ("sexual remarks").

FIGURE 3-2
Incidence Rate of Sexual Harassment Among Women and Men
 Percentage of Female and Male Federal Employees Who Experienced Sexual Harassment Between May 1978 and May 1980, by Severity of Harassment (Question 17)

Total Women: 694,000 -- Total Female Victims: 294,000 (42%) ([alternate text](#))



Total Men: 1,168,000 -- Total Male Victims: 168,000 (15%) ([alternate text](#))



NOTE: These figures indicate the number of people harassed, classified by their most severe experience. Since many people reported they had had more than one experience, the number of harassment incidents is considerably larger.

As the earlier but limited Congressional investigation had indicated, we found that sexual harassment in the Federal workplace is wide-spread.

Approximately 462,000 Federal employees--a number roughly equal to the population of Denver, Colorado--reported being sexually harassed on the job between May 1978 and May 1980 (see Figure 3-1). These victims--about one in every four Federal employees--faced all kinds of problems. One woman was called into her Division Chief's office and "after a verbal shakedown, he threatened me, became more violent, lunged over the desk at me, offered promotions in exchange for sexual behaviors, and threatened to fire me if I didn't go along." A woman whose only access to a telephone is in her superintendent's office says that whenever she (or other women) uses the phone "the superintendent persists in putting his arm around me, kissing me, making obscene suggestions about what I should do with him, suggesting I go away for long weekends with him and his buddies so they can show me a really 'good' time." The male supervisor of a sandblaster grabs him while he's working on a scaffold. Another man finds his 'apartment and car broken into and packages of women's undergarments left there.

Less direct behaviors are also common. One Federal worker reported that her District Director "practically sits in my lap when I ask a question, embarrassing

me with his constant twisting of every word I say into some sexual connotation." Another complains, "I resent being asked into someone's 'private office' to confer on legitimate business and then being confronted with walls papered with nudes." She adds: "No government office is so 'private' that such a display can be justified." A third worker felt harassed by her supervisor's excessive interest in her personal life, his questioning in "private little chats" about her marital plans, family planning, and other matters she feels are none of his business.

The "most severe" form of harassment--attempted or actual rape or sexual assault-- was also the least common experience, faced by only about 1% of Federal workers (see Figure 3-1). Still, this means that around 12,000 people had to deal with this problem. At least 300,000 victims were subjected to "severe" sexual harassment, while at least half that number experienced "less severe" harassment."[\[4\]](#)

We say "at least" that many workers faced "severe" and "less severe" harassment because many people indicated they had experienced more than one of the seven forms of behavior asked about. When this happened, the victim was counted only once, on the basis of the most severe form of harassment he or she had encountered.[\[5\]](#) Thus, the number of incidents was considerably larger than the number of people experiencing harassment, as reported on Figure 3-1.

As the next section shows, there we're marked differences between male and female Federal workers.

Women Are Sexually Harassed More Than Men

Sexual harassment of women is far more common than harassment of men. While about twice as many men as women hold Federal jobs (1,168,000 vs. 694,000), two out of three victims were women (294,000 women out of a total of 462,000 victims).

Eight in every 20 women (42%), but only 3 in every 20 men (15%), were subjected to harassment on the job over the 2-year period (see Figure 3-2). While far more women than men were harassed (294,000 women compared with 168,000 men), the patterns for the two groups were similar. The largest group of victims had experienced at least one form of severe harassment, and only a small percentage--though still a significant number considering the seriousness of the behavior--had faced attempted or actual rape or assault.

Most Forms of Harassment Are Common

Every form of sexual harassment except actual or attempted rape or sexual assault was experienced by a sizeable number of men and women.

Figure 3-3
Incidence Rate Among Various Forms of Sexual Harassment
 Percentage of Female and Male Federal Employees Who Experienced Each
 Form of Sexual Harassment
 Between May 1978 and May 1980 (Question 17)

LESS SEVERE	Sexual Remarks	Reported by 33% of Women
		Reported by 10% of Men
	Suggestive Looks	Reported by 28% of Women
		Reported by 8% of Men
	Pressure for Dates	Reported by 26% of Women
		Reported by 7% of Men
SEVERE	Deliberate Touching	Reported by 15% of Women
		Reported by 3% of Men
	Pressure for Sexual Favors	Reported by 9% of Women
		Reported by 2% of Men
	Letters and Calls	Reported by 9% of Women
		Reported by 3% of Men
MOST SEVERE	Actual or Attempted Rape or Assault	Reported by 1% of Women
		Reported by 0.3% of Men
Note: Many respondents indicated that they experience more than one form of sexual harassment.		

As Figure 3-3 shows, 1 in every 3 women employed by the Federal Government reported having been subjected to unwanted sexual remarks, 1 in 4 had been deliberately touched or cornered, 1 in 10 had been pressured for sexual favors, and 1 in 100 had faced actual or attempted rape or sexual assault. Since

respondents were allowed to report more than one kind of behavior, many are counted more than once in these figures.

What kinds of experiences are these women talking about when they say they've been sexually harassed? A woman who works in a production area reports that she and other women employees are constantly subjected to suggestive remarks and propositions as they go about their jobs. She added that supervisors participate in this and frequently send women on unnecessary errands through the area just to give the men another opportunity to act this way. Another woman writes that a great deal of sexual innuendo and joking goes on in her office and everyone feels obligated to contribute or tolerate it. "It is very uncomfortable to me," she says, "so I consider it a kind of harassment." A clerical worker says her boss stands touching her while she works. When his "buddies" stop by his desk, he makes remarks that imply that she cooperates sexually with him. He offers to share her "services" with his buddies, in a tone and manner that make clear it is not clerical services he's talking about.

Suggestive looks and gestures often accompany the joking and remarks. One woman, for example, says that her fellow employees make obscene gestures and remarks to and about her. Her supervisor thinks it's funny and does nothing about it.

Deliberate touching and cornering is cited by a large number of women. A supervisor stands so close to a female subordinate while giving instructions or looking over her work that he touches her-and while so doing makes suggestive body movements. "The last time the Regional Director was here," writes another victim, "the head secretary had to come to my rescue as the Director was practically breathing down my shirt. "

Many women find materials of a sexual nature bothersome. One woman dislikes the way her male coworkers pass around and put up pornographic cartoons in work spaces. When she objects, her boss tells her she's too sensitive.

Pressure for dates and sexual favors are also cited by women. Their descriptions indicate that their experiences not only were bother some, but sometimes had serious consequences. One woman says when she ignored her boss' advances, he began to treat her cruelly; for example, he made her take 4 hours of dictation, made her stay late to transcribe it, then in her presence threw it all away because "He didn't need it." Another woman's boss kept pestering her for dates and for favors and kept making personal remarks. When she would not change her mind and play around with him, he had her transferred to a less desirable job. During her first week on the job, reports a temporary trainee, her supervisor kept rubbing her back and shoulders while she typed and filed. Later he made a point blank advance, which she refused. Within a week she was let go on the grounds that she could not adapt to the office. The woman described earlier, whose Division Chief became violent when she refused to grant sexual favors sought medical

help to calm her nerves but finally quit working altogether because of the experience. "I'm afraid to go back," she says.

Far smaller percentages of men have been the object of these unwanted attentions, but the pattern is similar. Generally, the less severe the behavior, the more likely the worker was to experience it, with sexual remarks and suggestive looks leading the list for both men and women and actual or attempted rape or sexual assault being relatively rare. It is more difficult to discern what kinds of experiences men are talking about when they say they've been sexually harassed, because few chose to describe their experiences in the open-ended comment section provided in the questionnaire. Information from other sources indicates that men tend to describe homosexual harassment, such as the experiences cited earlier.

It is interesting that the three most common forms of harassment—"sexual remarks," "suggestive looks," and "deliberate touching"--are the least direct and perhaps the most subject to different interpretations. One person's appreciative glance might be another person's suggestive look. Questioning about personal life might be intended as an expression of concern or caring but felt as an invasion of privacy. Writes one Federal worker, "the sexual harassment that goes on in my office is supposed to be in jest, but is very offensive and embarrassing." Another notes that the man in her office who tells sexual jokes and teases thinks the women enjoy his attention and remarks. Regardless of the possible ambiguity of some behavior, however, the important point is that a large number of Federal workers had found themselves the objects of this uninvited attention and *had not wanted* it—however innocent it had been or however innocuous it might have seemed to the initiator.

Sexual Harassment Occurs Repeatedly

To learn whether harassment is a one-time only experience or occurs repeatedly, we asked Federal workers how often they had been the object of the seven forms of uninvited, unwanted attention during the 2-year period—once, once a month or less, or once a week or more often.^[6] Their responses made it clear that harassment is not a one-time-only phenomenon.

Generally, the less severe the harassment the more likely women were to experience it more than once. However, more than half the female victims of five of the seven forms of harassment (all of the less severe forms and two of the three severe forms) had been subjected to that behavior more than once (see Figure 3-4). Only for female victims of actual or attempted rape did the experience tend strongly to occur only once.

The experiences of men were similar, though for most forms a smaller percentage of male victims had experienced the behavior repeatedly. A marked difference between men and women was the frequency of actual or attempted

rape or assault. More than half the men who reported this experience, but only one-fifth of the women, said they had faced it more than once. The experiences of men are somewhat surprising, as it was not anticipated that such serious behavior would occur repeatedly in more than half the reported cases. The sharp difference between men and women may reflect a difference in perceptions about what constitutes attempted rape or sexual assault. Further research might shed some light on this.

Incidents May Last Several Weeks or More

To add to the picture of harassment of Federal workers, victims were asked to describe in detail one particular incident, either their only experience, their most recent experience, or the one that had had the greatest effect on them. Victims who did so were termed "narrators, " and the episodes they reported on were termed their "critical incidents."[\[7\]](#)

One question asked of these narrators was "How long did this unwanted attention last?"[\[8\]](#)

FIGURE 3-4
Frequency of Sexual Harassment Incidents
 Percentage of Female and Male Victims of Each Form of Harassment Who Experienced That Form of Sexual Harassment More Than Once* (Question 17)

LESS SEVERE	Sexual Remarks	Reported by 77% of Women
		Reported by 71% of Men
	Suggestive Looks	Reported by 73% of Women
		Reported by 61% of Men
	Pressure for Dates	Reported by 55% of Women
		Reported by 45% of Men
SEVERE	Deliberate Touching	Reported by 62% of Women
		Reported by 54% of Men
	Pressure for Sexual Favors	Reported by 52% of Women

		Reported by 40% of Men
	Letters and Calls	Reported by 42% of Women
		Reported by 38% of Men
MOST SEVERE	Actual or Attempted Rape or Assault	Reported by 20% of Women
		Reported by 56% of Men
* Once a month or less, 2-4 times a month, or once a week or more.		

Their responses indicated that incidents of harassment can last varying lengths of time, but that most go on a week or more--and a sizeable percentage persist for more than 6 months.

Responses of female narrators were some-what evenly distributed among the closed choices presented in the questionnaire--less than 1 week (31%), several weeks (19%), 1 to 6 months (22%), and more than 6 months (28%). For one-third of the female victims of actual or attempted rape (33%), the incident was over in less than a week--but for an equal number the incident lasted a fairly lengthy time, from 1 to 6 months.

The incidents of male narrators also lasted varying lengths of time, but a somewhat larger percentage indicated their critical incidents were over in less than a week (39% compared with 31% for women). As with females, for one-third of the male victims of actual or attempted rape (32%) the experience lasted less than a week. In contrast with women, however, the largest group of these male victims (38%, compared with 17% of females) said their experience went on longer than 6 months. Again, this finding is somewhat surprising, one that might warrant further examination.

Sexual Harassment Is No Worse in Federal Workplace

The findings that large numbers of men and women are sexually harassed, that many are harassed more than once, and that the incidents last a relatively long time indicate that sexual harassment is a problem in the Federal work force. But is it any worse a problem in the Federal workplace than in the private sector, or for employees of state and local governments? Since we could not conduct a comprehensive survey of non-Federal workers, we sought to shed some light on this question by asking Federal workers who had held jobs outside the Federal Government what they thought.[\[9\]](#)

Their responses suggest that harassment is not worse in the Federal workplace. Of the men and women who had held jobs outside the Federal Government and had an opinion on the subject, around two-thirds (68% of the women and 61% of the men) thought there is about the same amount of sexual harassment in Federal and non-Federal jobs. An additional 20% of the women and 29% of the men thought there is more harassment in non-Federal jobs. The remainder thought there is less harassment in non-Federal jobs.

Although we have no data with which to validate this overwhelming consensus that sexual harassment is no worse in the Federal workplace, there seems no reason to dispute the opinion, since Federal workers probably reflect the cultural values and behavior of the larger U.S. society.

Conclusion

Clearly, sexual harassment is a problem for many women working for the Federal Government, and to a lesser extent for men. Indeed, evidence presented later (see Chapter 5) indicates that many harassers bother more than one person. Thus, a picture of the experiences of Federal workers begins to emerge: sexual harassment occurs repeatedly, frequently lasts a month or longer, occurs in multiple forms for many victims, and is part of an overall pattern of sexual harassment perpetrated by the harasser.

Footnotes -- Chapter 3

1 Hearings before the Subcommittee on Investigations of the House Committee on Post Office and Civil Service on Sexual Harassment in the Federal Government, 1st sess., October 23, November 1, 13, 1979, pp. 71-74.

2 Congressional Memorandum of Understanding, Appendix E.

3 Survey Question 17; see Appendix C.

4 See Appendix B for explanation of levels of severity of sexual harassment.

5 For example, a person who reported both deliberate touching, a form of "severe" harassment, and pressure for dates, a "less severe" behavior, was treated as a victim of "severe" harassment.

6 See Survey Question 17.

7 See Appendix B for a complete discussion of narrators.

8 Survey Question 22; see Appendix D, Figure 0 for data.

9 See Survey Question 8; see Appendix D, Table B for data.

4. Victims of Sexual Harassment

- Age, marital status, and sexual composition of the employee's work group have a relatively strong effect on whether a Federal employee is sexually harassed.
- Factors having a somewhat weaker relationship are employee educational level, race or ethnic background, and job classification, traditionality of the employee's job, and sex of the employee's immediate supervisor.
- Some Federal agencies have a greater incidence of sexual harassment than do others.
- Sexual harassment is more likely to occur in work environments where employees have poor communications with their supervisors and feel pressured to participate in activities of a sexual nature.

One in every four Federal employees reports having to deal with uninvited, unwanted sexual attention on the job.

One in 20 has been pressured for sexual favors.

One in 100 has faced actual or attempted rape or assault.

Who are these 462,000 men and women who have had to deal with sexual harassment on the job? And who are the people bothering them? This and the following chapter look at the victims and perpetrators of sexual harassment, at the same time exploring what are thought to be some of the causes of the problem.

Many people see sexual harassment as an expression of power, specifically a tool used (primarily by men) to keep other workers (typically women) in their place--and an expression of hostility toward workers (again, typically women) intruding in a world once exclusively the domain of the other sex.^[1] This chapter addresses a corollary theory--that the people most likely to be sexually harassed are the powerless (those working in low-status jobs) or the pioneers (those working in jobs traditionally reserved for the opposite sex).

We hoped to determine whether victims of sexual harassment are found in disproportionate numbers within certain Federal agencies, job classifications, geographic locations, racial categories, age brackets, educational levels, and grade levels.^[2] We also wanted to learn whether there are any personal or job characteristics

related to the incidence of sexual harassment that management could change to reduce the incidence of the problem. Such information is useful in framing remedies appropriate for different target groups.

The factors that showed a relatively strong relationship with experience of sexual harassment were employee age, marital status, and sexual composition of the employee's immediate work group (see Table 4-1). Factors that showed a somewhat weaker relationship were education level, race and ethnic background, job classification, traditionality of job, and sex of supervisor. In addition, the rate of incidence of sexual harassment varied somewhat from agency to agency.

A detailed discussion of these personal and organizational characteristics and a brief look at general work environments follow.

Table 4-1
Characteristics of Federal Workers Most Likely To Be Sexually Harassed On the Job

Women Most Likely To Be Sexually Harassed Are...

- Young (under 34)
- Single or divorced
- Well educated (college degree or higher)
- Members of either a minority or non minority group (black, Hispanic, other minority, or white)
- Very dependent on their jobs

Men Most Likely To Be Sexually Harassed Are...

- Young (under 34)
- Widowed, single, or divorced
- Relatively well educated (at least some college)
- Members of a minority group (black, Hispanic, American Indian, Alaskan Native, or other minority)
- Very dependent on their jobs

And the Women are Working ...

- For the Departments of Labor, Transportation, or Justice, "Other Defense Department" agencies, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Air Force, Navy, or Marine Corps, the Veterans Administration, or other agencies
- In any geographic region, but particularly in the North Central and Upper Midwest
- At any salary level, but particularly for less than \$11,000 annually
- As a GS-1 through GS-15 or in

And the Men are Working ...

- For the Departments of Health, Education and Welfare; Justice; or Housing and Urban Development; the Veterans Administration; or the General Services Administration
- In any geographic region, but particularly in the Pacific region
- At lower salary levels (under \$15,000 annually)
- As a GS-1 through GS-8 or

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>pay classification "Other"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In any occupation, but particularly as a trainee or in a professional/technical position • In a nontraditional position (though most victims hold traditional positions) • For an immediate supervisor who is male, or for several supervisors, both male and female • In a predominately or completely male immediate work group | <p>in an ungraded job</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In any occupation, but particularly as a trainee or in an office/clerical position • In a nontraditional position (though most victims hold traditional positions) • For an immediate supervisor who is female, or for several supervisors, both male and female • In a predominately or completely female immediate work group |
|--|--|

Female Victims Also Tend To...

- Have varying degrees of privacy in their workspaces, but particularly to have no workspace to call their own, to have a workspace that can be seen from one to three sides, or to have only a semi-private office
- Be working in a non supervisory capacity
- Have worked for the Federal Government for varying numbers of years
- Be working full time on a permanent basis
- Be working either regular daytime hours or on other schedules
- Be working in immediate work groups of all sizes, from groups of 1-5 persons to groups of 25 or more

Male Victims Also Tend To...

- Have varying degrees of privacy in their workspaces, but particularly to have no workspace to call their own
- Be working in either a supervisory or non-supervisory capacity
- Have worked for the Federal Government less than 1 year
- Be working full time on a permanent basis or to be a part time, seasonal, or temporary employee or a consultant
- Be working on a schedule other than regular daytime hours (e.g., nights, weekends, alternating shifts)
- Be working in immediate work groups of all sizes, from groups of 1-5 persons to group of 25 or more

FIGURE 4-1
Age of Victims

Percentage of Federal Employees of Different Ages Who Experienced Sexual Harassment (Question 61)

Ages 16-19	Who Experienced Sexual Harassment	Reported by 67% of Women Reported by 27% of Men
Ages 20-24		Reported by 59% of Women Reported by 20% of Men
Ages 25-34		Reported by 53% of Women Reported by 18% of Men
Ages 35-44		Reported by 43% of Women Reported by 14% of Men
Ages 45-54		Reported by 33% of Women Reported by 13% of Men
Ages 55 and older		Reported by 22% of Women Reported by 12% of Men

Several Personal Characteristics Are Related to Sexual Harassment

Since few studies have looked at men as potential victims, we had few expectations about the characteristics of male victims. We anticipated that most female victims would have similar personal and organizational characteristics that would make them more vulnerable to being harassed, and that generally they would have less power and lower status than women who are not harassed. We found that in some ways women with relatively little power and status, as measured by certain personal and organizational characteristics, were more vulnerable to sexual harassment and in some ways they were not.

We expected to find that young, unmarried Federal workers, those less educated, very dependent on their jobs, and members of minority groups, were more vulnerable than others to sexual harassment. We found that age and marital status have a relatively strong relationship with sexual harassment, and

educational level and race or ethnic background a somewhat weaker relationship.

Younger Workers Are More Vulnerable

Age makes a difference in whether a Federal worker, particularly a woman, is sexually harassed^[3] (see Figure 4-1). Although men and women in all age brackets were victims, generally the lower the age bracket, the more likely the experience. The youngest workers (aged 16-19) had the highest incidence rates. These young workers, though they represented the fewest number of victims, were far more likely than workers in the oldest age bracket (aged 55 and older) to be sexually harassed--younger women were more than three times as likely and younger men twice as likely.

Single and Divorced Workers Are Likely Victims

Generally, unmarried workers were more likely than married workers to have been sexually bothered by others, but there were some differences between women and men^[4] (see Figure 4-2).

FIGURE 4 - 2
Marital Status of Victims
Percentage of Federal Employees Who Experienced Sexual Harassment, by Marital Status (Question 62)

Single	Who Experienced Sexual Harassment	Reported by 53% of Women Reported by 22% of Men
Divorced		Reported by 49% of Women Reported by 21% of Men
Married		Reported by 37% of Women Reported by 13% of Men
Widowed		Reported by 31% of Women Reported by 30% of Men

Single and divorced women were more likely than married women to have been sexually harassed, but widowed women were least likely to have had the experience. The reason for their lower rate is uncertain. One might speculate that

widows, as a group, tend to be older than other groups, as are widowed victims (88% were 45 years or older). Their relatively greater age may have made them less vulnerable to sexual harassment.

Like women, single and divorced men were more likely than married men to report sexual harassment. But, in contrast to women, widowers had the highest incidence rate among men (though the majority, like women, were 45 or older). Despite their relatively high incidence rate, however, widowed men accounted for only a very small percentage of male victims, only 2% (or approximately 3,000) out of 168,000 male victims. The reasons for this might be a subject for further research.

Education Level Shows a Weaker Relationship

Contrary to expectations, higher educated men and women had a greater likelihood of reporting they had been sexually harassed than their less educated counterparts^[5] (see Figure 4-3). Of the 74,000 women with at least a college degree, around half--48% to 53% reported having been bothered by uninvited sexual attention. Incidence rates for the 221,000 women with less than a college degree were lower, ranging from 31% to 45%.

Somewhat surprised by this finding, we examined the responses of these women victims to several other survey questions. It seemed possible that the higher incidence rates reported by higher educated women might be attributable to greater awareness or sensitivity on their part or to some other factor. Higher educated women victims (those with at least a college degree) generally were not more likely than lower educated women victims (those lacking a college degree) to label uninvited sexual attention sexual harassment,^[6] but there were differences in attitudes that may indicate greater sensitivity on their part.

For instance, higher educated women victims were considerably more likely than lower educated women victims to call something sexual harassment even if the person doing it did not mean to be offensive (47% compared with 25%).^[7] This could indicate that higher educated women are more likely to view with suspicion the perceived motive or demeanor of the person initiating a behavior, and thus more likely than their lower educated counterparts to regard that behavior as sexual harassment.

As relevant as this difference in attitudes seems, it may not be great enough to explain the difference in incidence rates between the higher and lower educated women. Another explanation may lie in the types of jobs these women hold. As data presented later in this chapter show, women who are among the first of their sex in a job report higher rates of harassment than women who are not. On this factor--traditionality of job--the higher and lower educated female victims differed considerably.^[8] The more educated victims were more than 2 1/2 times more likely than their lower educated counterparts to hold nontraditional jobs (23%

compared with 9%). These additional findings--that higher educated women are more likely to be the first of their sex in their jobs and more sensitive to offensive behavior than are lower educated women--may help explain the difference in rate of harassment between the two groups.

Higher educated men also tended to be more likely than their lower educated counterparts to report unwanted sexual attention. Men with a high school diploma, Graduate Equivalency Degree (GED), or less were less likely to be sexually harassed than those with more than a high school diploma. Further, men with some college experience or with graduate degrees were more than twice as likely to be harassed as those with less than a high school diploma.

FIGURE 4-3
Education Level of Victims

Percentage of Federal Employees of Different Education Levels Who Experienced Sexual Harassment (Question 60)

Less than high school diploma	Who Experienced Sexual Harassment	Reported by 31% of Women Reported by 8% of Men
High School diploma or GED (Graduate Equivalency Degree)		Reported by 35% of Women Reported by 11% of Men
High school diploma plus technical training or apprenticeship		Reported by 39% of Women Reported by 13% of Men
Some college		Reported by 45% of Women Reported by 17% of Men
Graduated from college (B.A., B.S., or other bachelor's degree)		Reported by 50% of Women Reported by 14% of Men
Some graduate school		Reported by 53% of Women Reported by 15% of Men
Graduate or		Reported by 48% of

professional degree		Women Reported by 17% of Men
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FIGURE 4-4
Racial and Ethnic Background of Victims
 Percentage of Federal Employees of Different Racial and Ethnic Backgrounds
 Who Experienced Sexual Harassment (Question 59)

Other	Who Experienced Sexual Harassment	Reported by 48% of Women Reported by 27% of Men
Hispanic		Reported by 45% of Women Reported by 19% of Men
White, not of Hispanic origin		Reported by 43% of Women Reported by 13% of Men
Black, not of Hispanic origin		Reported by 43% of Women Reported by 21% of Men
Asian or Pacific Islander		Reported by 36% of Women Reported by 16% of Men
American Indian or Alaskan native		Reported by 35% of Women Reported by 22% of Men

In summary, there does appear to be a relationship between education level and experience of sexual harassment. Higher educated men and women tend to be more likely than their lower educated counterparts to report harassment, but for women, some of the difference may be explained by other factors. Despite these differences, it is clear that the problem of unwanted sexual attention affects a sizeable number of Federal workers of all education levels, particularly women.

Racial or Ethnic Background Makes Some Difference

Although unwanted sexual attention is a problem for women and men of all racial and ethnic backgrounds, there does appear to be some relationship between incidence rates and this personal characteristic, particularly for men.[\[9\]](#)

As can be seen in Figure 4-4, incidence rates for Hispanic, black, and non-minority white women--the categories representing the greatest number of female Federal workers--10,100, 59,300, and 212,800 respectively--were similar. While women in other minority categories were both more likely or less likely than these three groups to report harassment, they accounted for a relatively small number of victims. For example, women who classified themselves as "other," had the highest rate of sexual harassment, but only accounted for 2,400 of the women victims. Likewise, Asian and American Indian women had lower rates of sexual harassment but accounted for only 3,500 and 4,300 of the women victims.

Unlike women, men who are members of minority groups did report higher incidence rates than non minority men. The lowest rate of sexual harassment for men of any racial or ethnic group was found among non-minorities (13%). Minority men, however, had higher rates of harassment ranging from 16% to 27%. As with women, the men with the highest rate of sexual harassment--those classified as "other"--were also the fewest in number (2,200).

Thus it appears that racial or ethnic background has some effect ,on whether men are sexually harassed, but less on women.

Most Victims are Very Dependent on Their Jobs

Perhaps not surprisingly, we found that most victims were very dependent on their jobs. This showed clearly in the responses of narrator victims to the question, "At the time of this experience, how much did you need this job?"[\[10\]](#)

Nearly 7 in 10 female narrators said that at that time they needed their job a great deal (the other four possible responses ranged from "quite a bit" to "not at all "). It is interesting that women who had faced actual or attempted rape or assault were more likely than others to have needed their jobs a great deal at the time of harassment (79% compared with 70% of female narrators who described "severe" experiences and 66% of those who had "less severe" sexual harassment).[\[11\]](#)

The responses of male narrators were similar to those of women.

Personal Characteristics Do Have an Impact on Incidence of Sexual Harassment

In summary, we found that age and marital status have a strong relationship with experience of sexual harassment, and educational level and racial or ethnic background have a somewhat weaker relationship. Although sizeable numbers of

women of various backgrounds experience sexual harassment, young, unmarried, and relatively well educated women appear to be more vulnerable to sexual harassment than others. This pattern holds true for men, as well, but racial or ethnic background also plays a role for men. Male minorities are more likely than non minorities to report having been sexually harassed.

Several Organizational Characteristics Are Related to Sexual Harassment

Continuing our investigation by looking at whether victims with certain organizational characteristics were more likely to be bothered by unwanted sexual attention, we explored the popular theories about sexual harassment.^[12] The literature suggests that victims tend to be working in low status jobs with little power. Based on this we expected that typical victims would be non supervisors who were relatively new to the Federal work force, working for a low annual salary (or perhaps as a part time or temporary employee), or working in a job traditionally held by a member of the opposite sex.

To some extent these expectations were realized. Organizational characteristics that had some relationship with rates of sexual harassment were job classification (e.g., trainee, office/clerical or administration/ management), traditionality of job, sex of victim's supervisor, and sexual composition of victim's workgroup.

Incidence Rates Vary By Agency

For both men and women, incidence rates varied considerably from agency to agency^[13] (see Table 4-2). For women, incidence rates ranged from a high of 56% (nearly 6 women in every 10) in the Department of Labor to a lower rate of 31% (3 women in 10) in the Department of Agriculture. In nine agencies the incidence rate exceeded the 42% overall rate for women in the Federal workforce, and in four of these agencies at least half of the female employees indicated that they had been sexually harassed.

Table 4-2
Incidence Rate of Sexual Harassment In Each Agency
 Percentage of Federal Employees in Different Agencies Who Experienced Sexual Harassment (Question 55)

Agency[1]	Female Victims			
	Most Severe	Severe	Less Severe	Total Victims
Department Labor	2%	47%	8%	56%
Department of Transportation	1%	45%	9%	55%
Department of Justice	4%	33%	16%	53%
All Other Department of	3%	37%	10%	50%

Defense Agencies[2]

All Other Agencies[2]	1%	30%	16%	48%
Department of Housing and Urban Development	1%	29%	18%	47%
Department of the Air Force	1%	34%	12%	46%
Veterans Administration	2%	33%	12%	46%
Department of the Navy, including the Marine Corps	2%	30%	12%	44%
Department of Interior	1%	28%	12%	41%
Department of the Army	1%	31%	9%	41%
Department of Commerce	0.3%	20%	20%	40%
Department of Energy	1%	27%	10%	38%
Department of Treasury	0	22%	15%	37%
Department of Health, Education and Welfare[3]	1%	25%	9%	35%
General Services Administration	0	22%	13%	35%
Department of Agriculture	2%	18%	11%	31%
Federal Government wide	1%	29%	12%	42%

Male Victims

Agency[1]	Most Severe	Severe	Less Severe	Total Victims
Department of Health, Education and Welfare[3]	1%	13%	9%	22%
Veterans Administration	0.4%	13%	8%	22%
Department of Justice	0.3%	10%	6%	16%
Department of Housing and Urban Development	0	11%	5%	16%
General Services Administration	0	9%	7%	16%
Department of the Army	0.4%	9%	5%	15%
Department of Treasury	0.2%	9%	5%	14%
Department of Interior	0.1%	6%	7%	14%
Department of Energy	0	7%	6%	14%
Department of the Navy, including the Marine Corps	0.3%	9%	5%	14%
All Other Department of Defense Agencies[2]	0	7%	6%	13%
Department of the Air Force	0.1%	9%	4%	12%
Department of Agriculture	0.2%	7%	5%	12%

Department of Commerce	1%	3%	8%	12%
All Other Agencies[2]	0.3%	5%	5%	10%
Department of Labor	1%	7%	2%	10%
Department of Transportation	0	5%	4%	9%
Federal Government wide	0.3%	9%	6%	15%

Note: All figures for each agency may not add up due to rounding. Percentages in bold are higher than Federal Government wide percentages.

Table 4-2 footnotes:

1 Ranked in order of highest percentage of sexual harassment among total victims for each sex.

2 See Appendix B for explanation.

3 The Department of Health, Education and Welfare was abolished and two new agencies (Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Education) were formed in May 1980.

Incidence rates also varied somewhat by severity of harassment experience: women in six agencies reported having faced actual or attempted rape or sexual assault at a rate higher than that of the Federal work force as a whole; in nine agencies, the rate of "severe" sexual harassment was higher than the national average for that level of severity, and in six agencies the rate of "less severe" sexual harassment exceeded the Federal average.

Incidence rates for men also varied by agency, but the agencies having rates exceeding the 15% average rate for men in the Federal work force--five agencies in the case of men--were somewhat different. Again, incidence rates also varied by severity of harassment experience: in five agencies the rate for men who faced actual or attempted rape or sexual assault exceeded the Government wide average, in four the rate for "severe" sexual harassment exceeded the Federal average, and in five the rate of "less severe" harassment was higher.

Although the specific agencies with higher overall incidence rates differ somewhat for men and women, in three agencies--Justice, Housing and Urban Development, and the Veterans Administration--the rates for both men and women were higher than the Federal rate.

We also found that the majority of narrators in the Federal Government--83% of women and 86% of men--reported that the harassment incident occurred on their current job as of May 1980.[\[14\]](#)

For both men and women, this finding varied somewhat by agency and with the severity of the experience. For example, 98% of female narrators who experienced some form of harassment at the Department of Housing and Urban Development were in the same jobs where the harassment occurred compared

with 65% at the Department of Energy. Moreover, all female and male narrator victims of actual or attempted rape or assault at the Department of Justice reported that they had left the job where they had been working at the time of harassment.

In summary, the incidence rate of sexual harassment varies substantially from agency to agency, and the majority of victims are still working in the jobs they held when they were harassed.

Regional Differences Are Minor

Sexual harassment is not limited to any particular geographic region or regions, and what regional differences were found are judged to be small^[15] (see Figure 4-5). In 6 of the 11 geographic regions, the incidence rate for women exceeded the Federal average for women, the highest rates being in the North Central and Upper Midwest regions^[16] (48% and 47% compared with the Federal average of 42%). In three regions the rate was lower than the Federal average, the lowest being in the Pacific Northwest (37%) and the Southeast (38%).

FIGURE 4-5
Geographic Location of Victims

Percentage of Federal Employees in Each Geographic Region Who Experienced Sexual Harassment (Question 56)

Geographic Location	Percent of Federal Employees
North Central	Reported by 48% of Women Reported by 14% of Men
Upper Midwest	Reported by 47% of Women Reported by 13% of Men
Midwest	Reported by 45% of Women Reported by 15% of Men
Pacific	Reported by 44% of Women Reported by 20% of Men
Washington DC area	Reported by 44% of Women Reported by 14% of Men
New York	Reported by 43% of Women Reported by 14% of Men
Southwest	Reported by 42% of Women Reported by 12% of Men
Mid Atlantic	Reported by 42% of Women Reported by 16% of Men
New England	Reported by 40% of Women Reported by 12% of Men

Southeast	Reported by 38% of Women Reported by 142% of Men
Pacific Northwest	Reported by 37% of Women Reported by 14% of Men

For men, the highest rates were in the Pacific and Mid-Atlantic regions and the lowest were in the Southeast, New England, and Southwest regions (20%, 16%, and 12% compared with a Federal average for men of 15%).

Differences Among Salary and Grade Levels Vary Slightly

Contrary to what might have been expected, sexual harassment is not concentrated in any particular salary level. Although incidence rates did vary somewhat by salary bracket, the differences were small.^[17] As Figure 4-6 shows, women in the lowest salary bracket (which comprised 39% of all women victims) were somewhat more likely (47%) than others to be sexually harassed, but generally the rates were similar for all income groups.

Having expected to find a greater contrast among income groups, and suspecting that salary level might not reflect job status as well as grade level, we looked closer at the women in white collar jobs, classified under the General Schedule pay plan.^[18] Since most women employed by the Federal Government are classified under the General Schedule, we thought this might be an appropriate measure of job status. The incidence of sexual harassment was pretty much the same among most white collar workers, those in grades GS 1-15.^[19] Women in the "other" category had a somewhat higher incidence rate, and those in Executive positions (GS 16 or above or in the Senior Executive Service) were somewhat lower, but those two groups account for a very small number of women.

As Figure 4-6 indicates, men in the two lowest salary brackets were somewhat more likely than other men to be sexually harassed (19% compared to 11% to 14%). However, it should be noted that a relatively small number and proportion of victims fall into these two lower salary brackets (34% or 56,800 men) compared with women (72% or 212,800 women). The finding that men in lower salary brackets are somewhat more likely to be sexually harassed is supported by an analyses of incidence among men in General Schedule grades. The incidence rates ranged from a high of 54% for men in ungraded positions to a low of 9% for men in the executive positions (GS 16 or above, or Senior Executive Service).

FIGURE 4-6
Annual Salary of Victims
Percentage of Federal Employees in Different Annual Salary Brackets Who Experienced Sexual Harassment

Annual Salary	Percent of Federal Employees
Low Income (\$1 to \$10,999)	Reported by 47% of Women Reported by 19% of Men
Low medium Income (\$11,000 to \$14,999)	Reported by 39% of Women Reported by 19% of Men
Medium income (\$15,000 to \$19,999)	Reported by 42% of Women Reported by 14% of Men
Medium high income (\$20,000 to \$23,999)	Reported by 42% of Women Reported by 11% of Men
High income (\$24,000 and up)	Reported by 42% of Women Reported by 13% of Men

In summary, the problem of sexual harassment is not concentrated in any particular salary or grade level, but men in lower income brackets and grade levels are more likely than others to experience harassment.

Job Classification Shows a **Relatively Weak Relationship**

While there were some variations in incidence rates, it is clear that sexual harassment is not concentrated in any category of job [\[20\]](#) (see Figure 4-7). Contrary to expectations arising from popular theory, there was no clear pattern that women in low-status jobs having little power were generally more vulnerable to sexual harassment than were other women. As Figure 4-7 shows, the incidence rate was highest for trainees, but was next highest for women in professional/technical positions.

FIGURE 4-7
Job Classification of Victims
 Percentage of Federal Employees of Different Job Classifications Who Experienced Sexual Harassment (Question 57)

Trainee	Who Experienced Sexual Harassment	Reported by 51% of Women Reported by 16% of Men
Professional, technical		Reported by 45% of Women Reported by 15% of Men
Administration, management		Reported by 42% of Women Reported by 15% of Men

		Men
Other		Reported by 42% of Women Reported by 14% of Men
Office, clerical		Reported by 40% of Women Reported by 17% of Men
Blue collar, service		Reported by 38% of Women Reported by 12% of Men

The finding for trainees was not unexpected since trainees, being new on the job, usually have little power or control over their work situation. Further, they tend to be young (81% of female trainee victims were 16-34 years old).[\[21\]](#) As data presented earlier in this chapter show, younger victims are more likely to be sexually harassed. In addition, female trainee victims were more likely than female victims in other job classifications to be in nontraditional jobs (35% of female trainee victims were in nontraditional positions compared with around 20% in administrative, blue collar, and professional/technical positions).[\[22\]](#) However, very few female victims--only 3%--were trainees.

Contrary to what might have been expected, female office/clerical workers were not more likely to be sexually harassed than women in higher status positions. Also contrary to findings of other studies, women in blue collar/service occupations had a relatively low incidence rate (38%). The relatively low incidence rate may be attributable to the fact that few of these women were in nontraditional positions for their sex (only 17%, or 5,200 of 31,600 female blue collar workers); in the private sector more female workers in blue collar/service occupations may be holding nontraditional jobs.

Results for men tended to be as anticipated. As Figure 4-7 shows, incidence rates for men were highest in office/clerical positions (typically female jobs) and lowest in blue collar/service positions (typically held by men). However, only 6% of all male victims (approximately 9,600 men) held office/clerical positions, compared with 17% (or 28,500) in blue collar/service positions. It is noteworthy that male office/clerical workers who reported sexual harassment were almost twice as likely to be one of the first of their sex in their jobs compared to male office/clerical workers who were not harassed (13% compared with 7%).

In summary, although most sexual harassment is not concentrated in any particular job classification, women trainees are considerably more likely to be harassed than are those in other jobs.

Working in a Nontraditional Job Makes a Difference

We expected that workers who were among the first of their sex in their job (i.e., in nontraditional jobs) would be more likely to be sexually harassed than those in more traditional jobs for their sex. Examples of nontraditional jobs are female law enforcement officers and construction workers and male secretaries and nurses. The literature does not address this issue for men, but suggests that this occurs to women because men see women entering their "territory" as a threat, and respond by using sexual harassment to try to limit the women's' success or to get them to leave. We found the expected relationship present to some extent: men and women in nontraditional jobs for their sex were somewhat more likely to be sexually harassed than others.[\[23\]](#)

FIGURE 4-8
Traditionality of Jobs of Victims
Percentage of Federal Employees in Traditional and Nontraditional Jobs For
Their Sex Who Experienced
Sexual Harassment (Question 52)

Nontraditional job	Who Experienced Sexual Harassment	Reported by 53% of Women Reported by 20% of Men
Traditional job		Reported by 41% of Women Reported by 14% of Men

As Figure 4-8 shows, fully 5 in every 10 women in nontraditional jobs reported unwanted sexual attention on the job, compared with 4 in 10 women in other jobs. However, few women--only 12%, or 35,800 in 291,700--reported working in nontraditional positions. As with women, men in nontraditional jobs were somewhat more likely to experience harassment than others, but this group comprises an even smaller percentage of male victims--5%, or 8,700 out of 164,700.

Sex of Immediate Supervisor a Factor

We had expected to find that women workers with supervisors of the opposite sex were more vulnerable to sexual harassment, since the literature suggests that most incidents of sexual harassment are perpetrated or tolerated by supervisors.[\[24\]](#) This expectation that the sex of the immediate supervisor makes a difference was borne out for both men and women.[\[25\]](#)

FIGURE 4-9
Sex of Supervisor(s) of Victims
 Percentage of Federal Employees Who Experienced Sexual Harassment, by Sex
 of Immediate Supervisor(s) (Question 50)

Male supervisor	Reported by 45% of Women Reported by 13% of Men	Who Experienced Sexual Harassment
Male and female supervisors	Reported by 44% of Women Reported by 25% of Men	
Female supervisor	Reported by 38% of Women Reported by 23% of Men	

As Figure 4-9 shows, women were somewhat more likely to be sexually harassed if their immediate supervisor was a man than if the supervisor was a woman. Even more consistent with expectations, we found that men were almost twice as likely to be sexually harassed if their supervisor was a woman, than if the supervisor was a man.[\[26\]](#)

These findings--that women are somewhat more likely to be harassed if their supervisor is male and men are almost twice as likely to be harassed if their supervisor is female--implies that sex of supervisor has some bearing on whether an employee is likely to be sexually harassed, although most incidents of sexual harassment are perpetrated by coworkers. It also may suggest that supervisors are more likely to allow sexual harassment to occur to their subordinates if those employees are of the opposite sex.

Male-Female Ratio in Immediate Workgroup Is Strongly Related

We expected to find that most sexual harassment occurs between members of the opposite sex and is greater where the victims have fewer same sex coworkers who might serve as a support system. We thought women in primarily male work groups might be especially vulnerable because they could be seen as outsiders who threaten the "old boy network " in the workgroup.

As expected, both men and women were more likely to be bothered by unwanted sexual attention if they worked in work groups composed wholly or primarily of members of the opposite sex.[\[27\]](#) As Figure 4-10 shows, the greater the

proportion of men in the work group, the likelier women were to be sexually harassed. More than half the women who worked in all male workgroups, and nearly half who worked in predominately male workgroups, reported having had to deal with unwanted sexual attention, compared with just over one-third of women in predominately female work groups, and one-fifth of women in all female groups. A sizeable percentage of female victims--44% or 127,700 out of 292,800--were working in wholly or predominately male work groups at the time they were harassed.

FIGURE 4-10
Sexual Composition of Victims' Work Groups
 Percentage of Federal Employees in Different Kinds of Work Groups Who Experienced Sexual Harassment (Question 51)

All men	Reported by 55% of Women Reported by 8% of Men	Who Experienced Sexual Harassment
Predominately men	Reported by 49% of Women Reported by 13% of Men	
Equal number of men and women	Reported by 43% of Women Reported by 19% of Men	
Predominately women	Reported by 37% of Women Reported by 22% of Men	
All women	Reported by 22% of Women Reported by 22% of Men	

Men also were more likely to be bothered by unwanted sexual attention if they worked in groups composed wholly or predominately of members of the opposite sex. However, relatively few male victims--only 20% or 33,600 out of 167,000--were working in mostly or all female groups when they were harassed; the largest number (62%) were working in all or predominately male workgroups, where the incidence rate is relatively low (8% to 13%).

Thus, it appears that sexual composition of work groups does affect the likelihood of women and men becoming victims of sexual harassment. The greater the concentration of members of the opposite sex in the work group, the

greater the incidence of harassment. This has a greater impact on women since a greater proportion of women than men are likely to work in groups composed wholly or primarily of members of the opposite sex.

The finding that sexual composition of the work group, like sex of the supervisor, has a relationship to incidence rate of sexual harassment also may be attributable to the finding reported in the next chapter--that Federal employees are sexually harassed by coworkers more often than by supervisors.

Other Organizational Characteristics Showed Little Relationship with Sexual Harassment

Six other organizational characteristics examined showed little relationship to the incidence of sexual harassment. Four were expected to shed some light on the theory that people with the least status and power are most vulnerable: level of privacy, supervisory status, length of Federal service, and work schedule. The other two--work hours and size of workgroup--were designed to explore workplace characteristics.

Relationship between privacy on the job and likelihood of bothersome attention is uncertain. Some observers have speculated that workers having no personal workspace or an open workspace would be more vulnerable to harassment since their working conditions do not afford a sense of privacy; others have suggested just the opposite, that those having private workspaces would be more vulnerable since much sexual harassment, particularly in its more severe forms, occurs in private. Thus, we asked victims whether, at the time they were harassed, they had a workspace they could call their own, and if they did, what it was like: open (worker could be seen from all sides); semi-open (seen from 1 to 3 sides); semi-private (with door that can be closed); or private (with door that can be closed).[\[28\]](#) We found that no one type of workspace was typical of victims of sexual harassment.

While there were some differences for women, there was not a clear pattern. Women having no workspace, a semi-open space, or a semi-private space were somewhat more likely to be bothered with unwanted sexual attention than those with open workspaces or a private office (44% to 46% compared with 39%).

The slightly greater likelihood of harassment of women who had no personal workspace might be due to their lack of privacy. The slightly greater vulnerability of women having semi-private offices might reflect the finding (discussed in the next chapter) that most women were bothered by coworkers in the same office; the semi-private office would seem to afford a relatively greater freedom to harass. Any conclusions on the question would be premature, but the findings would seem a fruitful area for future research.

Men experienced sexual harassment at about the same rate, regardless of the degree of privacy of their workspaces (13%-16%).

Nonsupervisors were not found to be more vulnerable to sexual harassment than supervisors.[\[29\]](#) Although female nonsupervisors were somewhat more likely than female supervisors to report unwanted sexual attention (43% compared with 39%), and male nonsupervisors slightly more likely than supervisors (15% compared with 14%), these differences are judged to be small. While it is true that most victims--88% of female victims and 73% of male victims--are nonsupervisors, there are also far more people working in a nonsupervisory capacity for the Federal Government.

The relationship between length of Federal service and likelihood of unwanted sexual attention was different for men and women.[\[30\]](#) Women on probation (i.e., with less than 1 year of Federal service) were somewhat more likely to report sexual harassment than those not on probation (i.e., more than 1 year of Federal service) (45% compared with 42%), but this difference was judged small. The difference in incidence rates for men was more marked: 20% of men on probation, but only 14% of those not on probation, reported having been harassed. The overall impact of any true differences is probably insignificant since relatively small numbers of Federal workers have less than 1 year of Federal service and most victims are women, who show only slight differences in incidence rates. Most victims of sexual harassment, both men and women, had been working for the Federal Government for more than 1 year when they were harassed.

Work schedule--permanent, full-time or another arrangement such as parttime, temporary, or seasonal--showed only a slight relationship with incidence of sexual harassment, and then only for women.[\[31\]](#) Women working in permanent full time jobs were somewhat more likely than others to be bothered with unwanted attention (43% compared with 37%) but men showed the same rate regardless of work schedule (15%).

The typical working hours of an employee--day time or other arrangements such as night time, weekends, shifts, or frequent overtime--seems to bear no important relationship to whether the employee is subjected to bothersome sexual harassment.[\[32\]](#) Women working regularly in the day time were just about as likely to be bothered as working nights, weekends, shifts, or a lot of overtime. Although men working "other" hours were a little more vulnerable than day time workers to being harassed (17% compared with 14%), this disparity probably is not great enough to make a real difference.

The size of the immediate work group of the employee--small (1-5 people), medium (6-15 people), large (16-25 people), or very large (more than 25)--had no relationship with likelihood of sexual harassment.[\[33\]](#) The largest group of female victims were working in medium sized work groups (40%), but the

incidence rates for the four different sized groups were about the same (41% to 45%). The range of incidence rates for men was even smaller (13% to 15%).

Organizational Characteristics Have an Impact on the Incidence of Sexual Harassment

In summary, of the 13 characteristics of an employee's job or work place examined, one clearly showed a relatively strong relationship with incidence of sexual harassment: male-female ratio in the immediate workgroup. Women working in work groups composed completely or primarily of men were more likely to be subjected to unwanted sexual attention, and conversely, men in wholly or primarily female workgroups were more likely to be sexually harassed.

Three other organizational characteristics showed some relationship with harassment: sex of immediate supervisor, traditionality of job, and job classification. Generally a worker whose immediate supervisor was of the opposite sex, or who had more than one supervisor, both male and female, was more vulnerable than a worker whose supervisor was of the same sex. Although most victims, both male and female, were working in traditional jobs when they were harassed, the likelihood of being harassed was greater for those in jobs usually held by the opposite sex. This effect may have been seen somewhat in the slightly greater vulnerability to harassment of men in office/clerical positions--but relatively few male victims were working in such jobs when they were harassed.

Women working in professional/technical jobs, and both female and male trainees, were somewhat more likely to be bothered with unwanted attention--but it is clear that Federal workers in all job classifications, particularly women, experience harassment.

Victims See Their Work Environments Differently Than Nonvictims

We also were interested in whether the general atmosphere in a work place had any relationship with sexual harassment. Are some work environments more conducive to sexual harassment than others? To explore this issue we compared the responses of victims[\[34\]](#) by sex (i.e., female victims with female nonvictims, etc.) to two sets of attitudinal questions, one that attempted to assess general relations with supervisors and one designed to measure the general level of sexual activity in the office. 35

We expected to find that victims had worse relations with their supervisors, felt more pressured to engage in sexually oriented behavior, and generally felt their organization was not as helpful as it might be in curtailing sexual harassment of its employees. This turned out to be true.

Perhaps not surprisingly, victims, particularly women, were considerably more likely than nonvictims to feel uninvited, unwanted sexual attention was a problem where they worked. (See Table 4-3) Specifically, male and female victims were more inclined to feel they were expected to flirt and make sexual comments about the opposite sex and to think employees in their offices use (or used) sexual favors to advance on the job.

Victims also were more likely to indicate employee-supervisor relationships in their immediate workgroups were not what they might be. They were twice as likely as their nonvictim counterparts to feel unable to bring work related concerns to their immediate supervisors and to feel, if they did, that their supervisors would not do anything about the situation, even if it were possible. Finally, victims were more likely than nonvictims to feel their organization was not doing everything it could to stop unwanted sexual attention among its employees.

While there could be several explanations for these differences in attitudes between victims and nonvictims, one possibility is that work atmosphere does have some affect on the incidence of sexual harassment. Further research on this issue would be interesting and helpful in designing means of eliminating the problem.

Conclusion

We have reviewed in detail the personal and organizational characteristics of victims and how they affect the vulnerability of women and men to sexual harassment. Some characteristics affect the rate of sexual harassment more than others, and some characteristics are more subject to control by managers who wish to reduce the rate of sexual harassment in their organization.

Table 4-3
Perceptions of Work Environment

These are statements used to describe the general work setting in the immediate work group. Percentages are of Federal workers who agreed or disagreed with the following statements. (Question 44)

General Relations with Supervisors	Respondents			
	Female Victims	Female Nonvictims	Male Victims	Male Nonvictims
a. Disagreed with: I feel free to bring up general work related concerns or suggestions to my immediate supervisor.	21%	8%	26%	7%
b. Disagreed with: I feel that my supervisor would correct	24%	20%	20%	21%

general work related concerns or suggestions if possible.

Level of Sexual Activity

c. Agreed with: Where I work, I feel I am expected to flirt.	23%	2%	21%	2%
d. Agreed with: Where I work, I feel I am expected to make sexual comments about the opposite sex.	9%	2%	28%	5%
e. Agreed with: Uninvited and unwanted sexual attention is a problem for employees where I work.	27%	4%	22%	7%
f. Agreed with: Where I work, employees use their sexual favors for advancement on the job.	30%	23%	27%	22%
g. Disagreed with: My organization makes every effort to stop unwanted sexual attention among its employees.	34%	23%	32%	28%

Note: Percentages are based on "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" and "Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree" responses to statements.

Sexual harassment is a problem of virtually all Federal agencies studied. Variation in incidence rates suggests the problem is more salient in some agencies than in others, but in none is it absent. As noted, a number of generic demographic characteristics are related to sexual harassment. As the composition of the workforce varies from agency to agency, so too may the incidence of sexual harassment. Although this has not been investigated, agency managers need to be aware of the composition in their workforce to identify the workers in their agency most likely to be victims. This is a first step toward reducing the problem.

In addition, certain working conditions appear related to sexual harassment, and many of these conditions can be changed by management in an effort to reduce sexual harassment. Consequently, managers need to be made aware that sexual harassment is a problem and that they are held accountable for dealing with it.

Footnotes -- Chapter 4

[1](#) See Chapter 1.

- 2 See Congressional Memorandum of Understanding; see Appendix E.
- 3 Based on responses to Survey Question 61; see Appendix C.
- 4 Based on responses to Survey Question 62; see Appendix D, Table P for data on marital status by age of victim.
- 5 Based on responses to Survey Question 60.
- 6 Based on responses to Survey Questions 2-7, b, d; see Appendix D, Table C, for data.
- 7 Based on responses to Survey Question 1 (i); see Appendix D, Table D, for data.
- 8 Based on responses to Survey Question 52; see Appendix D, Figure B, for data.
- 9 Based on responses to Survey Question 59; see Appendix B for an explanation of racial or ethnic categories.
- 10 Survey Question 35.
- 11 See Appendix D, Figure C for data.
- 12 See Appendix G for a survey of the literature on sexual harassment.
- 13 Based on responses to Survey Question 55; the State Department was not included in this analysis because the response rate from those employees was too low to provide reliable data.
- 14 Based on responses to Survey Question 19; see Appendix D, Table E for data.
- 15 Based on responses to Survey Question 56; see Appendix C.
- 16 See Appendix B for list of states included in each region. Regional breakdowns are those used by the Office of Personnel Management.
- 17 Based on responses by group or stratum number; see Appendix B for explanation of salary levels.
- 18 That is, those who gave the first response to Survey Question 53.
- 19 See Appendix D, Figure D for data.
- 20 Based on responses to Survey Question 57.

21 See Appendix D, Figure E for data.

22 See Appendix D, Table F for data.

23 Based on responses to Survey Question 52.

24 However, as the next chapter shows, most Federal workers were harassed by other workers rather than supervisors.

25 Based on responses to Survey Question 50.

26 However, as the next chapter shows, of the men who report being harassed, only about 7% are harassed by female supervisors.

27 Based on responses to Survey Question 51.

28 Question 49; see Appendix B for explanation of terms; See Appendix D, Figure F for data.

29 Based on responses to Survey Question 58; see Appendix D, Figure G for data.

30 Based on responses to Survey Question 45; see Appendix D, Figure H for data.

31 Based on responses to Survey Question 46; see Appendix D, Figure I for data.

32 Based on responses to Survey Question 47; see Appendix D, Figure J for data.

33 Based on responses to Survey Question 48; see Appendix D, Figure K for data.

34 As determined by responses to Survey Question 17; see Appendix C. Victims responded in terms of the offices they were in when they were harassed; nonvictims described their current jobs.

35 Based on responses to Survey Questions 44a-44g.

5. Perpetrators of Sexual Harassment

- Most victims are sexually harassed by people of the opposite sex.
- Most harassers act alone rather than in concert with another person.

- Most harassers of women are older than their victims, and most harassers of men are younger.
- Most harassers are married, but many men report being harassed by divorced or single women as well.
- Most harassers are of the same race or ethnic background as their victims, but most minority men report being harassed by those of a different race or ethnic background.
- Most harassers are coworkers, but many women are harassed by supervisors.
- Many harassers are reported to have bothered more than one person at work.
- Few employees report having been accused of sexually harassing others.

More than half the women in four Federal agencies ... one-fifth of the men ,in another agency ... two-thirds of all women aged 16 to 19 ... nearly one-third of all divorced men .. . half of all female trainees ... one-fifth of all men working in nontraditional jobs...

These are the victims of sexual harassment in the Federal workforce. The next step is identifying the perpetrators of these incidents, the people who are offending others with their sexual comments and deliberate touching, are pressuring others for sexual favors, and in some cases are committing the criminal offense of rape or sexual assault.

We were interested in learning a number of things about the perpetrators of sexual harassment: whether they are found in disproportionate numbers within certain job classifications, racial categories, age brackets, educational levels, and grade levels;[\[1\]](#) whether harassers of men and women are similar in most ways or differ markedly; whether certain types of victims typically are bothered by certain types of harassers; and whether incidents tend to be one time acts, or whether some harassers show a pattern of sexually bothering others.

Such information would indicate what remedies might--or might not--work and would help in developing remedies appropriate for different target groups. It seemed especially important to look at the harassers of women since the problem of sexual harassment affects women in far greater numbers, at greater rates, and with greater severity than it does men.

We found that women typically are harassed by a male coworker who is married, older than the victim, of the same race or ethnic background (or a different background if the victim is a minority), and likely to have harassed others at work (see Figure 5-1).

FIGURE 5-1
Sex of Harasser

Percentage of Narrator Victims Who Indicated the Sex of the Person(s) Who Bothered Them Sexually (Question 32a)

TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Male	Who Bothered Them Sexually	Reported by 79% of Women Reported by 18% of Men
	Two or more males		Reported by 16% of Women Reported by 4% of Men
	Both males and females		Reported by 2% of Women Reported by 6% of Men
	Female		Reported by 2% of Women Reported by 60% of Men
	Two or more females		Reported by 1% of Women Reported by 12% of Men
	Unknown		Reported by 1% of Women Reported by 0.3% of Men

Men typically are harassed by a female coworker who is married (but frequently is divorced or single), younger than the victim, of the same race or ethnic background, and somewhat likely to have harassed others at work.

More detailed descriptions of perpetrators of sexual harassment are given in the sections that follow. Descriptions are based on the responses of narrators (i.e., victims who described one incident of harassment in detail) to survey questions 32-34. Most findings presented represent the responses of victims of all forms of sexual harassment. Analysis of responses by severity of harassment experience revealed that in most cases the harassers were similar regardless of severity of experience. Only the notable exceptions are described.

FIGURE 5-2
Age of Harasser

Percentage of Narrator Victims Who Indicated the Age of the Person(s) Who Bothered Them Sexually (Question 32b)

TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Older	Who Bothered Them Sexually	Reported by 68% of Women Reported by 29% of Men
	Younger		Reported by 12% of Women Reported by 38% of Men
	Same		Reported by 11% of Women Reported by 18% of Men
	Various Ages		Reported by 7% of Women Reported by 12% of Men
	Unknown		Reported by 2% of Women Reported by 3% of Men

Harassers of Women Are Strikingly Similar

The harasser of a woman is usually a man. In 95 cases of sexual harassment out of every 100, the incident was perpetrated by a man--in 79 incidents by a lone man and in 16 incidents by two or more men. Few women were harassed by other women.

The harasser of a woman usually acts alone. In 81 incidents out of every 100 the harasser acted alone rather than in concert with others--in 79 incidents as a lone male and 2 incidents as a lone female.

The harasser of a woman is usually older than the victim. In 68 incidents out of every 100 the harasser was older than the victim, in 12 incidents younger, and in 11 incidents of the same age. In 7% of the incidents there were several harassers, of various ages, and in 2%, the women did not know their harasser's age. (See Figure 5-2)

FIGURE 5-3

Marital Status of Harasser

Percentage of Narrator Victims Who Indicated the Marital Status of the Person(s) Who Bothered Them Sexually (Question 32d)

TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Married	Who Bothered Them Sexually	Reported by 67% of Women Reported by 35% of Men
	Mixed		Reported by 9% of Women Reported by 14% of Men
	Unknown		Reported by 9% of Women Reported by 7% of Men
	Single		Reported by 8% of Women Reported by 20% of Men
	Divorced, Separated, Widowed		Reported by 7% of Women Reported by 25% of Men

The harasser of a woman usually is married. Two-thirds (67%) of all incidents were perpetrated by someone who was married; only 15% were initiated by an unmarried person (8% single and 7% divorced, separated, or widowed). In 9% of the incidents there was more than one harasser, of different marital statuses, and in an equal number the woman did not know her harasser's marital status. (See Figure 5-3)

The harasser of a woman usually is someone of the same race or ethnic background. In 63% of all incidents the harasser was of the same race or ethnic background as the victim. (See Figure 5-4) However, there were some striking differences in the experiences of minority and nonminority women harassed by men.^[2] While most nonminority female narrators (75%) and most women in some minority groups were harassed by a man of the same race or ethnic background, most black, Hispanic, and Asian or Pacific Islander women (53%, 62%, and 88%, respectively) were bothered by men of different backgrounds.

The harasser of a woman usually has no supervisory authority over her, but sometimes is a supervisor. Harassers of women usually (in 65% of all incidents) are coworkers or "other" Federal employees having no supervisory authority over the victim. In a sizeable number of incidents (37%), however, women were harassed by their immediate supervisor or a higher level supervisor. Subordinates were harassers in only 4% of the incidents; in 6% of the incidents the supervisory status of the harasser was unknown.^[3] Victims of the relatively

uncommon most severe form of harassment, actual or attempted rape or sexual assault, were harassed by an immediate or higher level supervisor almost as often as by a coworker or "other " Federal employee (51% of the incidents perpetrated by a supervisor compared with 57% by a coworker or other employee). In many incidents involving more than one harasser, both supervisors and coworkers were identified. (See Figure 5-5)

FIGURE 5-4
Ethnic Status of Harasser

Percentage of Narrator Victims Who Indicated the Ethnic Status of the Person(s) Who Bothered Them Sexually (Question 32c)

TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Same	Who Bothered Them Sexually	Reported by 63% of Women Reported by 68% of Men
	Different		Reported by 26% of Women Reported by 17% of Men
	Some the Same and Some Different		Reported by 9% of Women Reported by 12% of Men
	Unknown		Reported by 2% of Women Reported by 3% of Men

FIGURE 5-5
Organizational Level of Harasser

Percentage of Narrator Victims Who Identified the Organizational Level of the Person(s) Who Bothered Them Sexually (Question 33)

TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Coworker or Other Employee	Who Bothered Them Sexually	Reported by 65% of Women Reported by 76% of Men
	Immediate Supervisor or Other		Reported by 37% of Women

	Supervisor		Reported by 14% of Men
	Unknown		Reported by 6% of Women Reported by 5% of Men
	Subordinate		Reported by 4% of Women Reported by 16% of Men

NOTE: Some respondents indicated that more than one party bothered them.

Many women are harassed by someone who has harassed others on the job. While the majority of female narrators (53%) did not know whether the harasser had bothered others, 43% did know this to be the case and only 3% knew it not to be true. Victims of the most severe and severe forms of sexual harassment were more likely to be bothered by repeat offenders than were victims of less severe harassment (38% and 49% compared with 32%). (See Figure 5-6)

FIGURE 5-6

Has the Harasser Sexually Bothered Others at Work?

Percentage of Narrator Victims Who Were Sexually Harassed and Who Indicated Whether the Person(s) Who Bothered Them Sexually Had Sexually Bothered Others at Work (Question 34)

TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Did not know	Who Bothered Them Sexually	Reported by 53% of Women Reported by 61% of Men
	Harasser had bothered others		Reported by 43% of Women Reported by 31% of Men
	Harasser had not bothered others		Reported by 3% of Women Reported by 8% of Men

Harassers of Men Also Are Similar

The harasser of a man usually is a woman. In 72 out of every 100 cases, the incident was perpetrated by a woman--in 60 incidents by a lone woman and in 12 cases by two or more women. Men were more likely than women to be victims of homosexual harassment; 22% reported being harassed by one or more men, while only 3% of the women reported harassment by one or more women.

The harasser of a man usually acts alone. In 78 out of every 100 incidents the harasser acted alone rather than in concert with others--in 60 out of 100 incidents as a lone female and in 18 as a lone male.

The harasser of a man most often is younger than the victim. In 39% of the incidents the harasser was younger than the victim, but in 29% the harasser was older, and in 18% the two were the same age.

The harasser of a man most often is married. Slightly over one-third of the male narrators (35%) said their harasser was married, but a larger proportion was currently unmarried--either divorced, separated, or widowed (25%) or single and never married (20%).

The harasser of a man usually is someone of the same race or ethnic background. This was true in 68% of all incidents, but, as in the case of female victims, race or ethnic background of the victim made a difference. In nearly 9 in every 10 (89%) incidents involving a non minority male victim and a female harasser, the harasser was of the same background (i.e., also a nonminority). Black men were about as likely to be harassed by a woman of a different background as by a black woman (46% of the cases involving female harassers compared with 51%), and Hispanic and Asian or Pacific Islander men were more likely to be bothered by a woman of a different race than by one of their own race (69% and 100% of the cases involving female harassers, respectively).

The harasser of a man usually has no supervisory authority over him. Three-fourths of the male victims (76%) reported their harasser was a coworker or another Federal worker having no supervisory authority over the victim. In addition, the harasser was more likely to be subordinate than a supervisor (16% of all cases compared with 14%).

A number of men are harassed by someone who has bothered others on the job. While most male narrators (61%) did not know whether their harasser had bothered others, 31% did know this to be the case, and 8% were certain it was not the case.

Experiences of Men and Women Differ

In some ways the harassers of female and male victims were quite similar. For instance, most harassers of men and women acted alone rather than with others. In other ways, the experiences of men and women were noticeably different. For

example, while most harassers were of the opposite sex of the victim, men were considerably more likely to be victims of homosexual harassment (22% of male narrators were bothered by one or more men, but only 3% of female victims reported homosexual harassment).

Most harassers of women (68%) were older than the victim, but the pattern for men was less obvious. The largest group of men (39%) were bothered by someone younger, but a sizeable number (29%) were bothered by an older person. Most harassers of women (67% of the incidents). While men were most likely to be bothered by a married person, this was true in only 35% of the incidents described. Thus, women were nearly twice as likely as men to have been harassed by someone who was married.

Most harassers of men and women were coworkers or other Federal employees who had no supervisory authority over the victim. This finding is particularly significant in the case of women since it appears to contradict the popular notion that the greatest part of the problem of sexual harassment originates with (male) supervisors who wield formal power over their (female) victims. It may be, however, that some supervisors, while not themselves readily identifiable as the perpetrators of specific sexual harassment incidents, may be giving tacit approval to the behavior and thus creating an environment wherein sexual harassment is not *only* tolerated but encouraged. As one Federal employee wrote on the survey questionnaire: "A major problem is that the major portion of 'management' is male, and if they do not participate in the games themselves, there is tacit approval of activity. Any objection is met with a wry smile and the reaction that maybe you are imagining things and perhaps overemphasizing your own charms."

It appears that the "coercive," or "shake down" element of sexual harassment--to the extent that it was present--operated more in the case of women. While both men and women were most likely to have been harassed by work associates or peers, this was more true for male victims (76%) than for females (65%). Likewise, while both men and women were less likely to be harassed by an immediate or higher level supervisor, this was also more true for men (14%) than for women (37%). The finding that the majority of sexual harassment incidents are perpetrated by coworkers or other work peers does suggest that any institutional efforts to eliminate the problem of sexual harassment might need to involve Federal workers at all levels rather than only supervisors. However, since supervisors ultimately are responsible for the conduct in their workplaces, training for them regarding sexual harassment should certainly be stressed.

Of the men and women who knew, most said their harassers had also bothered others. That 43% of all female victims could with certainty state that their harasser had bothered others at work^[4] suggests that the problem of sexual harassment should not be viewed solely as a number of isolated instances of personal sexual attraction. For a sizeable number of women (98,000), their

experience was part of an overall pattern exhibited by a harasser. Since most harassers of women are men, it seems fair to assume that the majority of repeat offenders in harassment of women are men. Thus, it appears that certain men are more likely to harass than others and that sexual harassment is not necessarily part of the normal interaction among men and women on the job, or that all men and women engage in it, as has been intimated by some.

A similar case could be made for the harassers of men. For 31% of male victims, their experiences were part of an overall pattern exhibited by the harasser. Thus it seems likely that a number of female harassers were also repeat offenders. However, since the number of men harassed is far smaller than the number of women, it seems fair to conclude that the problem of repeat offenders among male harassers is far more significant.

Some Harassers Reported on Themselves

It is important to note that we attempted only to construct a general profile of harassers in terms of general personal and job characteristics; obviously a more in depth examination, including investigation of psychological variables, was beyond the scope of this study. However, we did attempt to gain more information about harassers by asking several questions of people willing to identify themselves as harassers.

Only 10,500 men and 1,100 women indicated that during the 24-month period they had been accused of sexually bothering someone. Since most of the accused were men, we looked only at their responses, not at the women's. The vast majority of those men, 82%, felt they had been unjustly accused by their victim--and 8% thought the accusation had been fair (the remaining 10% were not sure whether the charge was fair or not).[\[5\]](#)

Few Federal workers admitted they have been accused of sexual harassment--far fewer than the numbers who claim to have been harassed. Most men who do report having been accused felt the charge was unfair. When asked why they considered the charge unfair, 48% said the accuser had misunderstood their motives, 45% said the accuser wanted to create trouble, 29% felt they had done nothing wrong.[\[6\]](#) Only one-third indicated that management subsequently found the charge to be false, although there is no indication of how many of these cases were reported to management. Since far fewer men report being accused of sexual harassment, whether fairly or not, than the number of women who report being harassed by men, it would appear that few women victims confront their harassers. This absence of confrontation may perpetuate the problem of sexual harassment.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented a profile of typical perpetrators of sexual harassment as described by their victims. We have seen that the typical harasser of women differs from the typical harasser of men, principally in terms of sex and age, and, to a lesser extent, in marital status and race or ethnic background. We have also seen that few individuals admit to having been accused of sexual harassment.

The next chapter explores in more depth the sexual harassment incidents.

Footnotes -- Chapter 5

1 Congressional Memorandum of Understanding; see Appendix E.

2 Too few women in some minority groups reported harassment by more than one man or by women to allow separate analysis in regard to background of those harassers. See Appendix D, Table G for data on the race or ethnic background of victims and their harassers.

3 Since respondents harassed by more than one person were allowed to give more than one answer to this question (Survey Question 33), percentages total more than 100%.

4 This is particularly telling in that, as shown in Chapter 6, the survey found that most victims do not talk to others in their offices about their experiences.

5 Based on responses to Survey Questions 36 and 37; see Appendix D, Table H for data.

6 Based on responses to Survey Question 38; see Appendix D, Table Q for data.

6. Incidents of Sexual Harassment

- Those who are sexually harassed by supervisors and those who experience the more severe forms of sexual harassment are more likely than other victims to foresee penalties or possible benefits for not going along or for going along with the unwanted sexual attention.
- Most victims respond to sexual harassment by ignoring it, but few find that technique improves the situation. The most assertive actions are found to be the most effective.
- Few victims talk about their experiences with others but those who do find talking to someone with independent authority or organizational responsibility to be more helpful than talking with coworkers, family, or friends.
- Few victims take formal actions, but many who do find them helpful.

- The reported response of agency officials to informal and formal charges of sexual harassment has been mixed.

462,000 people having to deal with uninvited, unwanted sexual attention while working at their jobs for the Federal Government, two thirds of them women ... 300,000 confronted by behaviors that a minimum of two-thirds of the Federal workforce considers sexual harassment ... 12,000 facing actual or attempted rape or sexual assault, a criminal offense ... most of them bothered by coworkers of the opposite sex, but a sizeable number harassed by people with supervisory authority over them...

The picture of sexual harassment in the Federal workplace is taking shape. We know who the victims are, how many are facing what kinds of unwanted attention, and who is perpetrating the offensive behavior. To complete the picture we needed to know more about the episodes themselves, the details of the individual incidents that, when taken together, would place the many facts and figures in context. Only then would the picture be a clear image of the problem of sexual harassment as it affects Federal workers.

We wanted to know about the element of coercion--or enticement--in sexual harassment incidents: Do harassers use explicit or implied leverage to ensure cooperation from their victims?[\[1\]](#) Do victims think something harmful will happen if they don't go along, or something beneficial if they do? How do victims deal with the unwanted behavior? Do they simply ignore the situation, hoping it will go away? Does any particular response seem most effective in getting the behavior stopped? Is management helpful in this regard? Such information is essential in developing remedies that are likely to reduce the incidence of sexual harassment.

We found that the answers to these questions depended somewhat on the sex of the victim, who was perpetrating the offensive behavior, and what kind of unwanted attention was involved.

Employees bothered by others who had supervisory authority over them, and those who faced actual or attempted rape or assault, were most likely to see penalties for not going along and rewards for going along. The use and effectiveness of various formal and informal responses, including talking with other people about the situation and filing formal complaints, depended somewhat on the sex of the victim and the severity of the situation. Some victims found management helpful, but many did not.

Again, findings in this chapter are based on the response of narrators--those victims who agreed to describe in detail one experience of sexual harassment, either their only or their most recent experience, or the one that had the greatest effect on them. For simplicity, these people are referred to as victims, although, to be precise, they make up only a subgroup of victims.

Fear of Penalties and Expectation of Rewards

Most victim narrators did not think anything bad would happen to them if they did not go along with the unwanted attention. Nor did most anticipate that something beneficial would happen if they did go along. Men and women tended to agree on these points. The large majority of female victims (70%) thought there would be no adverse consequences if they did not go along with the harasser.^[2] We speculated that the reason for this was that most reported being harassed by presumably less powerful coworkers rather than supervisors (see Chapter 5). Indeed we found that the victims' perceptions of consequences differed somewhat depending on who was bothering them and what kind of unwanted attention they were getting.

Women who were harassed by coworkers having nonsupervisory authority over them were more likely to think nothing adverse would happen to them than were women bothered by immediate supervisors (70% compared with 44%) (see Figure 6-1). Interestingly, women harassed by their immediate supervisors were less likely to think that nothing would happen to them (44%) and thus more likely to fear penalties than those bothered by higher level supervisors (57%); likewise, those harassed by their coworkers were less likely to think that nothing would happen to them (70%) and thus more likely to fear penalties than those bothered by "other" employees (79%). This suggests that harassers having direct organizational contact with the victim are seen as more coercive or threatening than those whose relationship is more distant.

In addition, the more severe the form of harassment the woman was facing, the more likely she was to perceive adverse consequences (see Figure 6-1). Victims of actual or attempted rape or assault were most likely to perceive adverse consequences regardless of whether the harasser was a coworker or a supervisor. Only 15% to 23% of these women thought nothing would happen to them if they did not go along.

FIGURE 6-1

Perceived Penalties for Not Going Along

Percentage of Narrators Who Were Harassed by Their Immediate Supervisor or Coworker Who Thought the Following Would Happen to Them if They Did Not Go Along With the Sexual Harassment (Question 24)

VICTIMS OF MOST SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	My working assignments or conditions would get worse	Reported by 46% of women and 100% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 41% of women and 50% of men who were

			harassed by a co-worker
	The person(s) or other workers would be unpleasant or would embarrass me	Reported by 37% of women and 0% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 67% of women and 45% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I would be unable to get a promotion, step increase, good rating, or reference	Reported by 62% of women and 0% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 30% of women and 55% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I would Lose my job	Reported by 37% of women and 0% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 41% of women and 0% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I did not think anything would happen	Reported by 23% of women and 0% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 15% of women and 18% of men who were harassed

			by a co-worker
VICTIMS OF SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	My working assignments or conditions would get worse	Reported by 45% of women and 44% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 19% of women and 12% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	The person(s) or other workers would be unpleasant or would embarrass me	Reported by 25% of women and 19% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 26% of women and 20% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I would be unable to get a promotion, step increase, good rating, or reference	Reported by 47% of women and 38% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 14% of women and 10% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I would Lose my job	Reported by 6% of women and 12% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 2% of women and 3% of men who were harassed by a co-worker

	I did not think anything would happen	Reported by 40% of women and 49% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 65% of women and 73% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
VICTIMS OF LESS SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	My working assignments or conditions would get worse	Reported by 28% of women and 31% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 7% of women and 9% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	The person(s) or other workers would be unpleasant or would embarrass me	Reported by 23% of women and 13% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 13% of women and 20% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I would be unable to get a promotion, step increase, good rating, or reference	Reported by 17% of women and 37% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 5% of women and 5% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I would Lose my job	Reported by 4% of women and 4% of men	Reported by 0% of women

		who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	and 1% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I did not think anything would happen	Reported by 56% of women and 40% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 82% of women and 77% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	My working assignments or conditions would get worse	Reported by 41% of women and 38% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 16% of women and 12% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	The person(s) or other workers would be unpleasant or would embarrass me	Reported by 25% of women and 16% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 22% of women and 20% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I would be unable to get a promotion, step increase, good rating, or	Reported by 39% of women and 37% of men who were harassed by	Reported by 11% of women and 9%

	reference	their immediate supervisor	of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I would Lose my job	Reported by 6% of women and 8% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 2% of women and 3% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I did not think anything would happen	Reported by 44% of women and 44% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 70% of women and 74% of men who were harassed by a co-worker

For the women who did perceive adverse consequences, the difficulties they foresaw, not unsurprisingly, were related to who was harassing them. Women harassed by their supervisors were more likely to fear consequences related to job status and pay--being unable to get a promotion or losing their jobs, for example. On the other hand, women bothered by coworkers or other employees were more likely to feel the quality of their personal relationships would suffer if they did not go along (for example, "the person(s) or other workers would be unpleasant or would embarrass me").

Women harassed by their supervisors also were more likely to perceive benefits for going along with the unwanted behavior; the majority harassed by coworkers (81%) foresaw no benefits.[\[3\]](#) This difference in perceptions held true for victims of all forms of sexual harassment except the few who experienced actual or attempted rape or assault. For this group, those harassed by immediate supervisors were more likely than those victimized by coworkers and other workers to foresee no benefits (71% compared with 47%). A reason for this difference in perceptions might be in the nature of the behavior itself: those confronted by super visors in this most assaultive way felt extremely threatened

and could see no benefits, only penalties, whereas other victims, not being in direct control of their harasser, felt less threatened and could foresee possible rewards for going along.

The perceptions of men about leverage used to secure compliance were similar to that of women. Again, most men did not think anything bad would happen if they did not go along, but men harassed by immediate supervisors and those experiencing the more severe forms of harassment were more likely than others to fear penalties. Men were somewhat more likely than women to perceive benefits in going along with the unwanted attention; but, like women, those harassed by supervisors were more likely than others to foresee possible rewards for their compliance.

In summary, most victims do not perceive any penalties for not going along with the harasser or rewards for going along. The supervisory status of the harasser and the type of behavior they were confronted with seems to have an effect on their perceptions of leverage. Men and women bothered by individuals having direct organizational control over them--their supervisors, and particularly their immediate supervisors--are much more likely to feel leverage is being used against them. In addition, workers harassed by their supervisors are much more likely to see good working conditions and job betterment as more powerful incentives for going along than improved relations with their harassers.

FIGURE 6-2
Perceived Benefits for Going Along

Percentage of Narrators Who Were Harassed by Their Immediate Supervisor or Coworker Who Thought the Following Would Happen to Them if They Did Go Along With the Sexual Harassment (Question 25)

VICTIMS OF MOST SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	My working assignments or conditions would get better	Reported by 16% of women and 0% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 53% of women and 32% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	The person(s) would become more pleasant	Reported by 13% of women and 0% of men who were harassed by their immediate	Reported by 2% of women and 26% of men who

		supervisor	were harassed by a co-worker
	I would get a promotion, step increase, good rating, or reference	Reported by 24% of women and 0% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 52% of women and 0% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I would get a better job	Reported by 16% of women and 0% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 41% of women and 0% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I did not think anything would happen	Reported by 71% of women and 0% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 47% of women and 42% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
VICTIMS OF SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	My working assignments or conditions would get better	Reported by 26% of women and 54% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 10% of women and 13% of men who were

			harassed by a co-worker
	The person(s) would become more pleasant	Reported by 24% of women and 37% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 17% of women and 27% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I would get a promotion, step increase, good rating, or reference	Reported by 36% of women and 37% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 11% of women and 6% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I would get a better job	Reported by 15% of women and 31% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 6% of women and 4% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I did not think anything would happen	Reported by 55% of women and 30% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 77% of women and 66% of men who were harassed by a co-

			worker
VICTIMS OF LESS SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	My working assignments or conditions would get better	Reported by 13% of women and 15% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 5% of women and 3% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	The person(s) would become more pleasant	Reported by 24% of women and 23% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 8% of women and 13% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I would get a promotion, step increase, good rating, or reference	Reported by 11% of women and 17% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 3% of women and 2% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I would get a better job	Reported by 2% of women and 9% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 2% of women and 1% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I did not think anything would happen	Reported by 67% of women and 59% of men who were	Reported by 89% of women

		harassed by their immediate supervisor	and 84% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	My working assignments or conditions would get better	Reported by 23% of women and 35% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 9% of women and 9% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	The person(s) would become more pleasant	Reported by 24% of women and 30% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 14% of women and 21% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I would get a promotion, step increase, good rating, or reference	Reported by 29% of women and 27% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 9% of women and 5% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I would get a better job	Reported by 12% of women and 20% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 5% of women and 2% of men who were

			harassed by a co- worker
	I did not think anything would happen	Reported by 58% of women and 44% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 81% of women and 74% of men who were harassed by a co- worker

Assertive Responses Are the Most Effective

To find out how victims deal with incidents of sexual harassment, we asked which of nine possible responses they had made and what the effect of each had been.^[4] The effectiveness of these informal efforts varied, depending on the sex of the victim and the severity of the harassment experience.

Most women responded passively to the unwanted attention, by ignoring it (61%) or^[5] avoiding the harasser (48%). Their reasons for doing this may have been similar to those of the victim whose situation was related by a supervisor in another unit: "She was afraid to report the incident for fear her supervisor would not allow her to work overtime. She refused his advances and began to avoid him whenever possible, hoping it would 'blow over'."

The women's next most frequent response to sexual harassment was taking direct action by asking or telling the harasser to stop; half the women reported doing this. Although most women ignored the behavior, they found this one of the least effective actions to take (see Figure 6-3). Only 28% of those who did so found it "made things better," and a number found it made the situation worse.

The small number of women who went along with the behavior indicated that this was by far the least effective course to take; only 8% reported that things improved as a result. On the other hand, direct, assertive responses such as "asking or telling the person to stop" and "reporting the behavior to a supervisor or other officials" were found to be effective by the majority of women who took those actions (54% and 53%, respectively). However, since many women did not find these actions made things better, it cannot be assumed that most women could get sexual harassment to stop simply by reporting it or asking the offender to stop.

Although the relatively rare action of disciplining the harasser^[6] was found to be the most effective response (74% of the women who did this found it made things better) few women are in a position to discipline their harasser since relatively few women work in supervisory capacity.

Like women, most male victims (65%) ignored the unwanted attention. However, proportionately fewer men avoided the offender or asked or told the person to stop. For men, the most effective actions were "asking or telling the person to stop," "disciplining the harasser" (also a rare response for men), and "avoiding the person(s)"; (67%, 56%, and 53% of men who took those actions found them to make things better).

As with women, the effectiveness of the various actions for men differed according to the form of sexual harassment being faced. The few male victims of actual or attempted rape or sexual assault found direct responses ineffective. For them, the most effective response was going along with the behavior (46% of those who went along with the situation found that to make things better), whereas this was relatively ineffective for men dealing with other forms of unwanted behavior. That such a large proportion of men but so few women, would find going along with such assaultive behavior to "make things better" raises some questions. Perhaps the difference is based in cultural and perceptual differences of opinion about what constitutes an instance of actual or attempted rape or assault.

FIGURE 6-3
Narrators' Informal Responses to Sexual Harassment
 Percentage of Narrators Who Indicated that Taking These Informal Actions
 "Made Things Better" (Question 23)

VICTIMS OF MOST SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Transferred, disciplined or gave a poor performance rating to the person	Reported by 72% of women and 9% of men
	Asked or told the person(s) to stop	Reported by 40% of women and 13% of men
	Reported the behavior to the supervisor or other officials	Reported by 57% of women and 11% of men
	Avoided the person(s)	Reported by 20% of women and 32% of men
	Made a joke of the	Reported by 52%

	behavior	of women and 7% of men
	Threatened to tell or told other workers	Reported by 30% of women and 19% of men
	Ignored the behavior or did nothing	Reported by 12% of women and 27% of men
	Went along with the behavior	Reported by 14% of women and 46% of men
VICTIMS OF SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Transferred, disciplined or gave a poor performance rating to the person	Reported by 79% of women and 87% of men
	Asked or told the person(s) to stop	Reported by 53% of women and 69% of men
	Reported the behavior to the supervisor or other officials	Reported by 54% of women and 46% of men
	Avoided the person(s)	Reported by 42% of women and 51% of men
	Made a joke of the behavior	Reported by 32% of women and 45% of men
	Threatened to tell or told other workers	Reported by 35% of women and 29% of men
	Ignored the behavior or did nothing	Reported by 24% of women and 41% of men
	Went along with the behavior	Reported by 3% of women and 32% of men
VICTIMS OF LESS SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Transferred, disciplined or gave a poor performance rating to the person	Reported by 59% of women and 33% of men

	Asked or told the person(s) to stop	Reported by 60% of women and 68% of men
	Reported the behavior to the supervisor or other officials	Reported by 52% of women and 17% of men
	Avoided the person(s)	Reported by 54% of women and 58% of men
	Made a joke of the behavior	Reported by 43% of women and 57% of men
	Threatened to tell or told other workers	Reported by 36% of women and 21% of men
	Ignored the behavior or did nothing	Reported by 36% of women and 45% of men
	Went along with the behavior	Reported by 18% of women and 13% of men
TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Transferred, disciplined or gave a poor performance rating to the person	Reported by 74% of women and 56% of men
	Asked or told the person(s) to stop	Reported by 54% of women and 67% of men
	Reported the behavior to the supervisor or other officials	Reported by 53% of women and 35% of men
	Avoided the person(s)	Reported by 45% of women and 53% of men
	Made a joke of the behavior	Reported by 36% of women and 49% of men
	Threatened to tell or told other workers	Reported by 35% of women and 24% of men

	Ignored the behavior or did nothing	Reported by 28% of women and 42% of men
	Went along with the behavior	Reported by 8% of women and 25% of men

NOTE: Many respondents indicated that they took more than one action.

In summary, many informal responses to sexual harassment made things better for some victims--even making a joke of the behavior and telling, or threatening to tell, other workers. The responses that generally proved most effective were:

- reporting the behavior to a supervisor or other officials,
- asking or telling the person(s) to stop, and
- avoiding the person(s).

Other more specific techniques for victims to take to stop sexual harassment are discussed in publications listed in Appendix H. In addition, Mary P. Rowe, a prominent and knowledgeable observer in the field, has found that one of the most effective techniques is for the victim to write a personal confidential letter to the harasser outlining the offense and asking that the behavior be stopped. According to Dr. Rowe, this technique has the advantage of stopping the harassment quickly and effectively, preventing recurrence, and enabling the victims to take assertive action on their own.[\[7\]](#)

Actions that generally proved least effective (and in many instances had a deleterious effect) were:

- going along with the behavior, and
- ignoring the behavior or doing nothing.

Talking with Others

To understand more about how people respond to sexual harassment, we asked victims whether they had discussed their experiences with anyone and, if so, with whom and with what result.[\[8\]](#)

About half the women and one-third of the men who answered this question[\[9\]](#) had talked with someone about their experience. Women most frequently had talked to other workers or to friends and relatives (68% and 60%, respectively, of the women who answered this question). Men also most frequently spoke to those groups of people (of those who answered this question, 65% spoke to other workers, and 53% talked to friends or relatives).

It should be mentioned however, that relatively few of the men and women we have been calling "narrators" do in fact talk to anyone. For example, although other workers were the most likely to be told, only 37% of the women we have termed "narrators"--83,700 out of 223,700--and 20% of the 97,500 male narrators indicated they had talked with other workers. It appears that victims prefer to keep their experiences private.

The benefit of talking to various parties depended on the type of harassment and the sex of the victim (see Figure 6-4). When asked whether their discussions made things better or worse, or made no difference, women generally indicated they found talking to outside contacts (lawyers, civil rights group, Congress, or officials in another agency) or a supervisor or other officials more effective than talking with other workers; of those who had talked with those groups, 44%, 48% and 23%, respectively, said the action made things better.

However, female victims of severe harassment found talking to the various parties about equally effective, while the small number of women who had faced actual or attempted rape found talking to EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) or union officials to be harmful or to have no effect.

The results for male victims were even more mixed. As a group they found the best results from talking to personnel officials (41% who did so said it made things better) and the worst results from talking to union officials (18%). Male victims of actual or attempted rape or assault found talking with outside contacts helpful and talking to unions to have no effect, whereas victims of less severe harassment found neither of these actions to have an effect, but did find talking to EEO officials useful.

While these findings are so mixed that few generalizations can be made, it might be noted that although talking with other people can make things better (sometimes just in the victim's ability to endure the situation), the best people to talk to are those who can do something to change the situation--not coworkers, friends, or relatives. Since relatively few victims talk to agency officials, publicizing the availability of both organizational and outside parties may be indicated. In addition, training may be indicated to help agency officials resolve problems of sexual harassment.

FIGURE 6-4
Parties Contacted by Narrators
Percentage of Narrators Who Indicated That Talking to These Parties "Made Things Better" (Question 27)

VICTIMS OF MOST SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Supervisor(s) or other officials	Reported by 51% of women and 17% of men
	Outside contact	Reported by 80%

	(lawyer, civil rights group, Congress, other agency, etc.)	of women and 100% of men
	Personnel office	Reported by 41% of women and 48% of men
	Equal Employment Opportunity official (EEO counselor, Federal Women's Program manager, etc.)	Reported by 0% of women and 0% of men
	Freinds, relatives	Reported by 39% of women and 46% of men
	Union	Reported by 0% of women and 0% of men
	Other workers	Reported by 42% of women and 51% of men
	Supervisor(s) or other officials	Reported by 47% of women and 23% of men
	Outside contact (lawyer, civil rights group, Congress, other agency, etc.)	Reported by 32% of women and 26% of men
	Personnel office	Reported by 35% of women and 38% of men
VICTIMS OF SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Equal Employment Opportunity official (EEO counselor, Federal Women's Program manager, etc.)	Reported by 33% of women and 25% of men
	Freinds, relatives	Reported by 29% of women and 33% of men
	Union	Reported by 28% of women and 26% of men
	Other workers	Reported by 24%

		of women and 21% of men
VICTIMS OF LESS SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Supervisor(s) or other officials	Reported by 51% of women and 13% of men
	Outside contact (lawyer, civil rights group, Congress, other agency, etc.)	Reported by 70% of women and 0% of men
	Personnel office	Reported by 15% of women and 43% of men
	Equal Employment Opportunity official (EEO counselor, Federal Women's Program manager, etc.)	Reported by 39% of women and 100% of men
	Freinds, relatives	Reported by 32% of women and 22% of men
	Union	Reported by 49% of women and 0% of men
	Other workers	Reported by 20% of women and 21% of men
TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Supervisor(s) or other officials	Reported by 48% of women and 20% of men
	Outside contact (lawyer, civil rights group, Congress, other agency, etc.)	Reported by 44% of women and 26% of men
	Personnel office	Reported by 33% of women and 41% of men
	Equal Employment Opportunity official (EEO counselor, Federal Women's Program manager, etc.)	Reported by 33% of women and 39% of men
	Freinds, relatives	Reported by 30%

		of women and 30% of men
	Union	Reported by 30% of women and 18% of men
	Other workers	Reported by 23% of women and 22% of men

NOTE: Many respondents indicated that they contacted more than one party.

Few File Formal Complaints

Only 6,600 women (approximately 3% of all Federally employed women who described their sexual harassment incidents) and 1,700 men (2% of all male narrators) indicated that they filed formal complaints.^[10] Of the 8,300 formal actions taken, most were requests for an investigation by the organization (2,800) or adverse action appeals (2,500).^[11] Filing a discrimination complaint, the most widely known remedy, was chosen somewhat less often than other formal remedies except for "requesting an investigation by an outside agency," which is the least known remedy. Infrequent use of the discrimination complaint system may be explained by the fact that until recently sexual harassment generally was not considered to fall under the jurisdiction of the EEO complaint system.^[12]

The majority (59%) of the 8,300 men and women who took formal action found these actions were effective (i.e., they "made things better") Conversely, 3,400 men and women found their effort had no effect--or made things worse.^[13]

Most of the women who requested an investigation by their agency or filed a discrimination complaint found those actions effective (70% and 66%, respectively). However, the effectiveness of remedies differed somewhat depending on the severity of the behavior involved (see Figure 6-5).

FIGURE 6-5
Narrators' Formal Responses to Sexual Harassment
 Percentage of Narrators Who Indicated That Taking These Formal Actions "made things better" (Question 28)

VICTIMS OF MOST SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Requested an investigation by victim's organization	Reported by 84% of women and 28% of men
	Filed a discrimination	Reported by 81% of women and

	complaint or lawsuit	26% of men
	Requested an investigation by an outside agency	Reported by 92% of women and 100% of men
	Filed a grievance or adverse action appeal	Reported by 0% of women and 26% of men
VICTIMS OF SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Requested an investigation by victim's organization	Reported by 73% of women and 50% of men
	Filed a discrimination complaint or lawsuit	Reported by 52% of women and 15% of men
	Requested an investigation by an outside agency	Reported by 27% of women and 0% of men
	Filed a grievance or adverse action appeal	Reported by 31% of women and 43% of men
VICTIMS OF LESS SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Requested an investigation by victim's organization	Reported by 44% of women and 0% of men
	Filed a discrimination complaint or lawsuit	Reported by 90% of women and 0% of men
	Requested an investigation by an outside agency	Reported by 52% of women and 100% of men
	Filed a grievance or adverse action appeal	Reported by 85% of women and 0% of men
TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Requested an investigation by victim's organization	Reported by 70% of women and 29% of men
	Filed a discrimination complaint or lawsuit	Reported by 66% of women and 12% of men

Requested an investigation by an outside agency	Reported by 58% of women and 100% of men
Filed a grievance or adverse action appeal	Reported by 45% of women and 33% of men

NOTE: Some respondents indicated that they took more than one formal action.

Men who requested an investigation by an outside agency were most likely to think their action had made things better, but, in contrast with women, few who filed a discrimination complaint found that action useful. Again, the effectiveness of remedies varied somewhat depending on the severity of the behavior the men had experienced.

In summary, the type of formal action taken and the perceived effectiveness of the action varied with the sex of the victim and the severity of the behavior the victim faced. However, the perceived success rate was only 59% (i.e., 4 victims in every 10 who took formal action did not find their efforts made things better). This middling success rate was cited by Congresswoman Gladys Spellman during Congressional hearings[14] as a possible reason so many employees consider formal actions ineffective or think nothing would be done if incidents of sexual harassment were reported. Said Spellman: "If the success rate is only 50%, it isn't going to be a great incentive to moving ahead" (i.e., to changing attitudes so more Federal workers will have confidence that something will happen if incidents are reported).

For a number of Federal workers, filing a formal complaint not only did not make things better, but actually made matters worse.[15] One survey respondent related on her questionnaire what happened when she filed a grievance, which eventually went to arbitration: "My supervisor was found to have sexually harassed--but the end result was I was literally forced by my supervisor and management to transfer to another installation. The action I took against my supervisor cost me psychologically as well as prevented promotions. "

Response of Management

In general, the response of agency officials to formal and informal actions was reported to be mixed[16] (see Figure 6-6).

FIGURE 6-6
Organizations' Responses to Formal Actions Taken by Narrators
 Percentage of Narrators Who Indicated That Their Organizations Responded as Follows (Question 29)

VICTIMS OF MOST SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Took action against the harasser	Reported by 74% of women and 20% of men
	Found narrator victim's charge to be true	Reported by 49% of women and 14% of men
	Did not know whether management did anything	Reported by 0% of women and 46% of men
	Corrected the damage done to narrator victim	Reported by 17% of women and 5% of men
	The action is still being processed	Reported by 0% of women and 0% of men
	Did nothing	Reported by 17% of women and 0% of men
	Were hostile or took action against narrator victim	Reported by 2% of women and 0% of men
	Found charge to be false	Reported by 0% of women and 15% of men
VICTIMS OF SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Took action against the harasser	Reported by 44% of women and 38% of men
	Found narrator victim's charge to be true	Reported by 44% of women and 37% of men
	Did not know whether management did anything	Reported by 17% of women and 23% of men
	Corrected the damage done to narrator victim	Reported by 20% of women and 0% of men
	The action is still being processed	Reported by 8% of women and 16% of men
	Did nothing	Reported by 5% of women and 0% of men

		men
	Were hostile or took action against narrator victim	Reported by 4% of women and 23% of men
	Found charge to be false	Reported by 0.2% of women and 0% of men
VICTIMS OF LESS SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Took action against the harasser	Reported by 31% of women and 0% of men
	Found narrator victim's charge to be true	Reported by 40% of women and 0% of men
	Did not know whether management did anything	Reported by 36% of women and 0% of men
	Corrected the damage done to narrator victim	Reported by 0% of women and 0% of men
	The action is still being processed	Reported by 10% of women and 0% of men
	Did nothing	Reported by 4% of women and 0% of men
	Were hostile or took action against narrator victim	Reported by 6% of women and 16% of men
	Found charge to be false	Reported by 3% of women and 0% of men
TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Took action against the harasser	Reported by 44% of women and 27% of men
	Found narrator victim's charge to be true	Reported by 43% of women and 25% of men
	Did not know whether management did anything	Reported by 19% of women and 25% of men
	Corrected the	Reported by 16%

damage done to narrator victim	of women and 4% of men
The action is still being processed	Reported by 8% of women and 9% of men
Did nothing	Reported by 6% of women and 0% of men
Were hostile or took action against narrator victim	Reported by 4% of women and 16% of men
Found charge to be false	Reported by 1% of women and 4% of men

NOTE: Many respondents indicated that management responded in more than one way.

Although female narrator-victims who did pursue formal remedies were more likely to encounter a favorable and corrective response than apathy or hostility, the results depended on the severity of the experience they had faced. More than 8 out of every 20 female narrators who answered this question said management found the charge to be true or took action against the offender, and only around 1 in 20 said management was hostile or did nothing. The more severe the harassment experience, the more likely management was to do something about it. However, only 16% of the group of female narrators (and none of the victims of less severe harassment) reported the damage had been corrected--and for some it may have taken awhile. Wrote one woman who had been bothered by a Branch Chief: "My harasser's supervisors took no action until they were ordered to by outside sources. The sexual harassment continued over several years with several different women, two of whom resigned under pressure from this man. The situation eventually was rectified by removing him from a management position."

The finding that no female victims of "less severe" harassment reported that damage from the harassment had been corrected may reflect the difficulty in correcting damage caused by ambiguous behavior such as unwanted sexual comments, and suggestive looks and pressure for dates. The negative consequences for these victims may be more in the realm of the psychological.

Although men who took formal action also were more likely to find a favorable rather than a hostile management response, they were less likely than women to do so and four times more likely than women to encounter hostility, particularly if they had experienced the less severe forms of sexual harassment. Thus, it would seem that men who allege sexual harassment are less likely than women to be taken seriously by management, possibly because sexual harassment often is

seen as a problem that happens only to women. There is other evidence that the complaints of men are not taken as seriously as those of women in the low number who found reporting the behavior and talking to a supervisor or other agency officials to be effective. Around half the women found reporting (53%) or talking (48%) to these officials to make things better, but only one-third (35%) of the men found reporting the behavior helpful, and only one-fifth (20%) found talking to officials useful (see Figures 6-3 and 6-4).

The comments respondents wrote on their questionnaires clearly indicate that some managers approach the problem more seriously than do others. One victim reported that when she attempted to get help from her harasser's superior officer, she was told she should be more tolerant of him and make allowance for him. Another wrote of taking a complaint to the top administrator, who said he was powerless to admonish for "hearsay." In contrast, a supervisor reported, "My deputy tried sexual harassment pressure on my secretary until I dealt with the matter rather bluntly for the future of his work record." Adds this respondent: "I have advised counseling for the victims and filing charges against the perpetrators."

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the behavior of victims and harassers during sexual harassment incidents and the attempts of victims to stop the harassment. Few victims talk to organizational officials about their problems and only a handful file formal complaints. It may be that most victims simply want the harassment to stop and see no need to escalate the situation by filing a formal complaint.

Thus, informal actions carried out by victims or those with organizational or independent authority to correct the situation are seen as the most effective available remedies. Exploration of this possibility continues in the next chapter.

Clearly, the findings reported in this chapter indicate that there is much management can do to improve its effectiveness in reducing sexual harassment. Agency officials must be clearly informed of their responsibilities in this regard. In addition, victims need to be informed of the most effective informal responses to stop sexual harassment. They also need information on formal remedies so that option is open to those who choose to take it.

Footnotes -- Chapter 6

1 Congressional Memorandum of Understanding; see Appendix E.

2 Based on responses to Survey Question 24; also see Appendix D, Table R for additional data.

3 Based on responses to Survey Question 25.

4 See Survey Questions 23a and 23b; see Appendix D, Figure L for additional data.

5 Respondents were asked to indicate all actions they had taken, and many did.

6 Fewer than 4,000 women, or 2% of all female narrators who answered this question, took this action.

7 Mary P. Rowe, Ph.D., Assistant to the President, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, conversation, March 1981.

8 See Survey Questions 27a and 27b; see Appendix D, Figure M for additional data.

9 A number of narrators, i.e., those who responded to Survey Question 20, did not answer Question 27.

10 Based on responses to Survey Question 28b, see Appendix D, for additional data.

11 See Chapter 8 for a description of the various formal complaint procedures.

12 In November 1980 the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission helped to clarify the issue by adopting guidelines in which sexual harassment under certain conditions was interpreted to be a form of discrimination on the basis of sex; see Appendix E.

13 See Appendix D, Table I for data.

14 Hearings before the Subcommittee on Investigations of the House Committee on Post Office and Civil Service on Sexual Harassment in the Federal Government, 2nd Sess., September 25, 1980, p. 28.

15 See Appendix D, for additional data.

16 Based on responses to Survey Question 29.

7. Impact and Cost of Sexual Harassment

- The cost of sexual harassment to the Federal Government between May 1978 and May 1980 is conservatively estimated to have been \$189 million.

- Although their experiences do not change the careers or work situations of most victims, a sizeable number of men and women do leave their jobs or suffer other adverse job consequences.
- A majority of victims do not think their personal well-being or work performance declined as a result of their experiences, but a sizeable minority do.
- Victims are much more likely to think sexual harassment negatively affected their personal wellbeing or morale than to believe that their work performance or productivity suffered.
- Most victims report that as far as they know the morale and productivity of their immediate workgroups are little affected by their personal experience of sexual harassment.

"I really stored a lot of feelings over one particular sexual advance."

"My boss kept pestering me for dates and kept making personal remarks. When I wouldn't change my mind and play around with him, he had me transferred to a less desirable job."

" Because I will not cooperate with my supervisor, he is giving me bad references so I can 't get another job in order to get out of the situation."

The problem of sexual harassment does not end when the harasser walks out of the room or when a new day begins in the office. Victims are affected by their interpersonal problems and crisis experiences just as all people are. How strongly and in what way they are affected undoubtedly depends on a complex combination of personal variables--who they are, how they view the world, how many options they have--and situational variables--what sort of experience they had, what sort of office they were working in.

Nor does the problem of sexual harassment necessarily end with the victim. The problems of the victim or between the victim and the harasser may spill over into the workgroup, becoming a distraction if not a cause of additional office problems. In extreme cases, the impact of individual incidents may extend far beyond the office--to the Federal Women's Program manager called in to hear a complaint, or to the personnel specialist called on to write a vacancy notice for a job left by a victim.

Thus, while the picture of sexual harassment incidents is fairly complete, more questions must be asked to gain an understanding of the true extent of the problem of sexual harassment in the Federal work force. What is the impact of sexual harassment on a victim's physical and emotional condition, work performance, career well-being, and job turnover? What effect does sexual harassment have on, the morale and productivity of the victim's immediate workgroup?[\[1\]](#) And how do all these things--each of them costly to some extent in some way--add up to a total cost to the Federal Government?

While most victims did not think their experiences had had a negative effect on their work performance or productivity, or on that of their work group, enough did report these and other negative consequences to bring the estimated cost of sexual harassment to the Federal Government over the 2-year period of the study to \$189 million. This overall cost is discussed first, and then the responses of the victims on which the estimates were based are examined in greater detail.

Sexual Harassment Is Costly to the Federal Government

Sexual harassment of its employees cost the Federal Government an estimated \$189 million during the period May 1978 to May 1980--\$102 million for the harassment of women and \$87 million for the harassment of men. These figures represent the costs of:

- replacing employees who left their jobs because of sexual harassment,
- paying medical insurance claims for service to employees who sought professional help because of physical or emotional stress brought on by their experiences,
- paying sick leave to employees who missed work, and
- absorbing the costs associated with reduced individual and work group productivity.

The starting point for making cost estimates derives from those victims who agreed to describe at least one harassment incident they experienced in greater detail. We term these individuals narrators. The incident they describe may be a "most recent" experience or one they felt had the greatest impact on them.

Obtaining the cost estimates on sexual harassment required that several general assumptions be made. Fundamental among these is that those respondents defined as narrators are representative of all victims and that we may generalize from them to the total population of victims. A second important set of assumptions concerns the derivation of costs of harassment. Largely, cost was calculated by inferential extrapolations from questions included in the survey. This was necessary since no direct questions were included in the survey which would provide information about the nature and amount of medical benefits used as a consequence of sexual harassment, the reason for or the amount of sick leave taken, work time missed, or estimated amount of work time devoted to harassment reduction activity.

Cost of Job Turnover: \$26.8 million

Projecting figures for the entire groups of victims, not just narrators, we estimated that 29,350 Federal employees--24,660 women and 4,690 men--left their jobs over the 2-year study period as a result of being sexually harassed.^[2] Replacing an employee usually involves three types of measurable costs: personnel costs associated with offering the job to a replacement; costs of a background check

on the replacement; and the cost of training the replacement. Assuming that each person who left the job due to sexual harassment was replaced, that a background check of some type was made on each replacement, and each replacement received formal training in the new position, the loss to the Federal Government due to job turnover resulting from sexual harassment is estimated to have been \$26.8 million--\$22.5 million for women and \$4.3 for men (see Table 7-1).

These figures are conservative in that they assume that the first person offered the job accepted it. They also do not include the costs associated with having a job vacant (e.g., work not done or overtime for other employees) and with taking one employee off, and putting another on, the payroll. The estimated number of Federal employees who quit because of sexual harassment also is conservative in that the survey, by its nature, did not reach the people who left the Federal Government altogether as a result of their sexual harassment experience.

Table 7-1
Costs of Sexual Harassment

	Women	Men	Total
Job Turnover			
Cost to offer a job[1]	\$ 6.4	\$ 1.2	\$ 7.6
Background checks[2]	2.0	0.4	2.4
Training[3]	24.1	2.7	26.8
Total Cost of Job Turnover	\$ 22.5	\$ 4.3	\$ 26.8
Individual Productivity	37.7	34.4	72.1
Emotional Stress	3.9	2.1	5.0
Absenteeism	5.3	2.6	7.9
Work Group Productivity	32.6	44.3	76.9
TOTALS	\$ 102.0	\$ 86.7	\$ 188.7

[1] Source: Office of Program Management and Evaluation, Office of Personnel Management

[2] Source: Division of Personnel Investigations, Office of Personnel Management

[3] Source: "Employee Training in the Federal Service--FY 1979," published by the Office of Personnel Management, Workforce Effectiveness and Development Office.

Cost of Emotional and Physical Stress: \$5 million

Dollar loss due to emotional and physical stress was measured in terms of estimated use of Governmental health benefits plans. An estimated 128,200

victims indicated that their experience of sexual harassment had a negative impact on their emotional and physical health.^[3] We assumed that such physical and emotional stress would result in symptoms for which some victims would seek professional services--and that the employees' Government health benefit plans would cover 40% of the cost of these services. We also assumed that the need for medical help would vary by the severity of the harassment experience of the victim. Thus, we assumed that the victims of the "most severe" form of sexual harassment who said their emotional or physical condition had declined (7,560 women and 1,590 men) would seek on the average \$200 worth of medical services, that victims of "severe" forms of sexual harassment (74,000 women and 22,000 men) would seek on the average \$100 in services, and that each victim of "less severe" sexual harassment (17,850 women and 5,200 men) would seek on the average \$50 in services. On this basis we estimate the loss to the Government in use of health benefits plans due to emotional and physical stress to have been \$5 million--\$3.9 million for women and \$1.1 million for men.

Cost of Absenteeism: \$7.9 million

Dollar cost to the Government due to absenteeism was measured in terms of extra sick leave paid to the estimated 50,430 Federal employees whose time and attendance at work suffered as a result of their sexual harassment experiences.^[4] We assumed that victims of "most severe" sexual harassment (4,320 women and 660 men) took 5 days on the average of sick leave, while victims of "severe" sexual harassment (28,000 women and 8,000 men) took 3 days on the average, and those victims of "less severe" harassment (4,250 women and 5,200 men) took 1 day on the average. Furthermore, assuming that the average daily salary of men and women is \$80 and \$48, respectively,^[5] we project the approximate work time lost due to sick leave absenteeism to cost \$8 million (\$5.3 million for women and \$2.6 million for men). Note, this estimate does not reflect tardiness at work or absenteeism not due to sick leave.

Cost of Decline in Individual Productivity: \$72.1 million

Dollar cost of diminished victim productivity was measured in terms of self reported decreases in quality and quantity of work. First we assumed that the productivity of the estimated 47,290 employees whose work quality and quantity became worse^[6] declined by 10%, and that this loss translates into a loss to the Government of 10% of the workers' annual salaries. Figures are based on calculations of average annual salaries of male and female victims of each of the three levels of severity of sexual harassment experience.^[7] On this basis we estimate the loss to the Federal Government due to decreased productivity of victims of sexual harassment to have been \$72.1 million--\$37.7 million for female victims and \$34.4 million for male victims (see Table 7-1).

We believe a 10% loss in productivity to be a very conservative figure. In 1970, the General Accounting Office estimated that lost productivity of individual

workers due to alcoholism was at least 25%.^[8] It seems possible that the problems generated by sexual harassment, at least in severe cases or when, as is commonly the case, the harassment continues over a 'lengthy period,^[9] could approach in severity the problems associated with employee alcoholism.

If the 25% GAO figure were used to estimate loss due to decreased worker productivity, the cost to the Federal Government over the 2-year study period would amount to \$180.2 million. It should be mentioned that the estimated loss does not take into account any decline in productivity of the harasser, who might be assumed also to have been less productive during the duration of the harassment incidents.

Cost of Decline in Workgroup Productivity: \$76.9 million

Decrease in workgroup productivity was measured in terms of victims' assessment of this factor.^[10] We estimated that 30,680 workgroups were affected.^[11] If workgroup productivity can be assumed to decline by 1%, dollar costs for this decreased productivity are likely to be at least 1% of the average salaries of members of the workgroup. These average workgroup salaries were estimated on the basis of sizes^[12] and sexual composition of workgroups^[13] reported by narrator-victims. Again on the basis of calculations from survey data, women in the workgroups were assigned an average annual salary of \$12,000, and men an average annual salary of \$20,000. On this basis, the loss to the Federal Government due to decreased productivity of employees who worked in close association with the victims of sexual harassment is estimated to have been \$76.9 million--\$32.6 million for workgroups containing female victims and \$44.3 million for workgroups containing male victims.

The General Accounting Office study cited earlier estimates that the productivity of an alcoholic employee 's workgroup could decline as much as 5% to 10%. If these percentages were applied to the workgroups of victims of sexual harassment, the loss to the Federal Government over the 2-year study period would have amounted to \$384.5 million (5% loss) or \$769 million (10% loss) (see Table 7-1).

Total Cost of Sexual Harassment of Federal Employees: \$189 million

The cost to the Federal Government of sexual harassment of Federal workers was estimated on the basis of what victims said about how their experiences affected them personally and their coworkers. Estimates of dollar losses due to job turnover, increased absenteeism, physical and emotional stress, and decreased individual and workgroup productivity were based on seemingly reasonable sets of assumptions and deliberately were conservative. The estimated overall cost, \$189 million, while likely a minimum amount, is still enough to pay the salaries of all the executives in the Federal Government--both

the 465 top agency executives and the 7,000 members of the Senior Executive Service--for 6 months.[\[14\]](#)

As indicated, these cost estimates were based on the negative consequences of sexual harassment on victims and their workgroups as perceived by victim-narrators. The overall impact, as indicated by this group, is discussed in detail in the sections that follow.

Work Situation of Most Victims Did Not Change

The job status and working conditions of the majority of victims did not change as a result of sexual harassment, but this clearly depended on the severity of the experience[\[15\]](#) (see Figure 7-1). Nearly half (49%) of the women who experienced actual or attempted rape or sexual assault, compared with 1 in 5 female victims of "severe" forms of sexual harassment (22%) and 1 in 10 victims of "less severe" sexual harassment (10%), reported some change in their working conditions or careers as a result of sexual harassment, that is, did not indicate "no changes happened in (their) work situation." Most of the changes were for the worse. Wrote one victim: "I transferred out of state because of sexual harassment I received from my immediate supervisor because I chose not to tell her of my social life off the job." Another reported: "Because of my refusal to grant favors to my immediate supervisor I have been prevented from obtaining the fulltime status I had prior to my graduate studies in management."

FIGURE 7-1
Changes in Narrators' Work Situations as a Result of Sexual Harassment
Percentage of Narrators Who Indicated These Changes Actually Occurred
(Question 26)

VICTIMS OF MOST SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	No changes happened in work situation	Reported by 51% of women and 52% of men
	Working assignments or conditions got worse	Reported by 22% of women and 25% of men
	Was denied a promotion, step increase, good performance rating, or reference	Reported by 14% of women and 7% of men
	Transferred or quit to take another job	Reported by 12% of women and 4% of men
	Was reassigned or	Reported by 2% of

	fired	women and 9% of men
	Received a promotion, step increase, good performance rating, or reference	Reported by 9% of women and 7% of men
	Working assignments or conditions got better	Reported by 6% of women and 9% of men
	Quit without having another job	Reported by 0% of women and 0% of men
VICTIMS OF SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	No changes happened in work situation	Reported by 78% of women and 85% of men
	Working assignments or conditions got worse	Reported by 10% of women and 9% of men
	Was denied a promotion, step increase, good performance rating, or reference	Reported by 8% of women and 6% of men
	Transferred or quit to take another job	Reported by 7% of women and 2% of men
	Was reassigned or fired	Reported by 2% of women and 1% of men
	Received a promotion, step increase, good performance rating, or reference	Reported by 2% of women and 0.4% of men
	Working assignments or conditions got better	Reported by 1% of women and 1% of men
	Quit without having another job	Reported by 1% of women and 0.3% of men

VICTIMS OF LESS SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	No changes happened in work situation	Reported by 90% of women and 91% of men
	Working assignments or conditions got worse	Reported by 5% of women and 5% of men
	Was denied a promotion, step increase, good performance rating, or reference	Reported by 3% of women and 2% of men
	Transferred or quit to take another job	Reported by 3% of women and 2% of men
	Was reassigned or fired	Reported by 1% of women and 0.3% of men
	Received a promotion, step increase, good performance rating, or reference	Reported by 0.3% of women and 0.2% of men
	Working assignments or conditions got better	Reported by 1% of women and 1% of men
	Quit without having another job	Reported by 0.3% of women and 0% of men
ALL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	No changes happened in work situation	Reported by 81% of women and 87% of men
	Working assignments or conditions got worse	Reported by 9% of women and 8% of men
	Was denied a promotion, step increase, good performance rating, or reference	Reported by 7% of women and 5% of men
	Transferred or quit to take another job	Reported by 6% of women and 2% of men

		men
	Was reassigned or fired	Reported by 2% of women and 1% of men
	Received a promotion, step increase, good performance rating, or reference	Reported by 1% of women and 0.4% of men
	Working assignments or conditions got better	Reported by 1% of women and 1% of men
	Quit without having another job	Reported by 1% of women and 0.1% of men
NOTE: Many respondents indicated that management responded in more than one way.		

It is interesting that many of the relatively few women who anticipated penalties would occur if they did not go along^[16] did in fact report negative consequences, i.e., their fear of negative consequences was found to be justified. These women were much more likely to report adverse consequences than the women who had thought that nothing would happen if they did not go along.

Of the women narrators who reported adverse consequences as a result of their sexual harassment experience, approximately 18,200 indicated they left their jobs (by quitting, transferring, being reassigned or fired) at some point during the 2-year period of the study.

The experiences of men were similar to those of women. Most men reported that no changes had occurred in their work situations, but this again depended on severity of experience, with male victims of the "most severe" form of sexual harassment most likely to experience changes (48% did) and victims of "severe" and "less severe" sexual harassment far less likely to report changes (15% and 9%, respectively). Around 2,700 men reported they had left their jobs (voluntarily or involuntarily) over the 2-year study period as a result of unwanted sexual attention. As with women, men who foresaw penalties or benefits for not going along or going along with the sexual harassment were more likely to experience changes in their work situations than those who did not anticipate any consequences.

Well-Being and Morale of Many Victims Suffered

Again, although the personal well-being and job morale of most victims apparently did not suffer as a result of their experiences, many did report suffering these negative consequences, and their experiences were strongly related to the type of unwanted attention they had faced.[\[17\]](#) (see Figure 7-2). Approximately 65,500 women (33% of the women who responded to this question) said their emotional or physical condition became worse as a result of their experiences. Negative physical and emotional consequences were far more common among women who had faced actual or attempted rape or sexual assault: 82% of the female victims of this most severe form of harassment reported worsened emotional or physical conditions, compared with 37% and 21% of the victims of severe and less severe forms of unwanted attention. One woman, whose Division Chief had become violent in his persistent pressuring of her for sexual favors, described her experience in this way: "It was so upsetting I finally went to a doctor for help in calming my nerves. Finally I quit. I've been a housewife since then. I'm afraid to go back--it was like being raped."

FIGURE 7-2
Impact of Sexual Harassment on Narrators
 Percentage of Narrators Who Indicated These Aspects of Their Lives "Became Worse" (Question 31a)

VICTIMS OF MOST SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Feelings about work	Reported by 62% of women and 27% of men
	Emotional or physical condition	Reported by 82% of women and 53% of men
	Ability to work with others on the job	Reported by 32% of women and 24% of men
	time and attendance at work	Reported by 48% of women and 22% of men
	The quantity of work	Reported by 28% of women and 10% of men
	The quality of work	Reported by 21% of women and 6% of men
VICTIMS OF SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Feelings about work	Reported by 41% of women and 20% of men
	Emotional or physical condition	Reported by 37% of women and 22% of men

	Ability to work with others on the job	Reported by 18% of women and 16% of men
	time and attendance at work	Reported by 14% of women and 8% of men
	The quantity of work	Reported by 13% of women and 12% of men
	The quality of work	Reported by 12% of women and 13% of men
VICTIMS OF LESS SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Feelings about work	Reported by 24% of women and 17% of men
	Emotional or physical condition	Reported by 21% of women and 17% of men
	Ability to work with others on the job	Reported by 10% of women and 14% of men
	time and attendance at work	Reported by 5% of women and 8% of men
	The quantity of work	Reported by 6% of women and 8% of men
	The quality of work	Reported by 4% of women and 6% of men
TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Feelings about work	Reported by 36% of women and 19% of men
	Emotional or physical condition	Reported by 33% of women and 21% of men
	Ability to work with others on the job	Reported by 15% of women and 15% of men
	time and attendance at work	Reported by 11% of women and 8% of men
	The quantity of	Reported by 11%

	work	of women and 10% of men
	The quality of work	Reported by 10% of women and 10% of men

An even larger number of women--74,300, or 36% of all female narrators--said their feelings about work (i.e., their "morale") became worse as a result of the unwanted sexual attention. Again, women who faced actual or attempted rape or sexual assault were considerably more likely than victims of "less severe " harassment to report this negative consequence (62% compared with 24%).

Men were less likely than women to report having been adversely affected by their experiences. Only 1 in 5 male narrators (21% or 17,500 men), compared with 1 in 3 women, reported worse emotional or physical conditions attributed to the unwanted attention they received, and only 1 in 5 (19%, or 16,800 male narrators), compared with 1 in 3 women, reported their feelings about work became worse. Like women, the subsequent physical and emotional condition of male narrator-victims was strongly related to the severity of the experience they had had. More than half of the men who had faced actual attempted rape or sexual assault (53%) reported worsened emotional or physical health, compared with only 22% and 17% of male victims of severe and less severe forms of harassment. The feelings of men toward work were less dependent than women on type of experience: 27% who had experienced the most severe form of harassment, compared with 17% of victims of "less severe" behavior, reported lowered morale.

Victims Judged Their Own Work Performance and Productivity to Be Unaffected

The impact of sexual harassment on victims' work performance and productivity was examined in terms of the victims' own assessments of changes in their time and attendance at work, their ability to work with others, and the quantity and quality of their work.[\[18\]](#) As Figure 7-2 shows, very few victims reported their work had suffered in any of these ways.

That only 10% to 15% of women who had received sexual attention they did not invite and did not want (attention that in some cases continued 6 months or more) felt their experiences had adversely affected their work performance and productivity seems somewhat surprising. It may be that most of the behavior, while unwanted, was not perceived as coercive enough to affect individual productivity and performance substantially. Some evidence of this (assuming perceived coerciveness is related to severity of experience) shows up in analysis of responses by severity of experience: the more severe the harassment incident, the more likely were female narrators to report diminished performance and productivity. Also interesting is the finding that victims of the two most severe

forms of harassment were likelier to report that their time and attendance and their ability to work with others had suffered than that the quality and quantity of their work had diminished.

While the explanation suggested above may have some validity, the finding that so few women--and men, as well--report their harassment experience had an adverse effect on their work performance warrants further exploration.

Sex Assessments of Work Performance Must be Questioned

When one looks at the victims' self reports of the impact of sexual harassment on personal well-being and work performance, a striking difference emerges. It appears that victims, both male and female, are more inclined to state that their emotional and physical condition was harmed by sexual harassment than that their ability to do their work was diminished. For example, female victims of "most severe" harassment were nearly four times as likely to state that their emotional or physical condition got worse (82%) than that the quality of their work declined (21%). A possible explanation for this difference was suggested by Congresswoman Gladys Spellman (Democrat-Maryland) during hearings on sexual harassment in the Federal workforce called by the Subcommittee on Investigations, Committee on Post Office and Civil Service:[\[19\]](#)

Mrs. Spellman. I am aware of that question on productivity, and I am puzzled over it.

Here people have been harassed and had, in some cases, very severe problems. Yet they say it did not affect their productivity.

I am puzzled over that and wondered if, indeed, they were afraid to say that productivity had changed for fear it would have an adverse effect on them. As we look at some of the graphs we have here, we find that 82 percent of those responding to the survey said their emotional or physical condition was affected; 62 percent said their feelings about work were affected; 48 percent said their time and attendance at work was affected.

Surely, that affects productivity. Thirtytwo percent said that their ability to work with others on the job was affected. Twentyeight percent specified that their quantity of work was affected, while 21 percent specified that the quality of their work was affected. In addition, there are indications that those who have been victims of severe sexual harassment and victims of less severe sexual harassment also were affected in those ways but, then, when you ask "was your productivity affected," they will say, no. That of course, belies the other statistics that we have, so I think that we can look just a little bit beyond that one simple question.

There is far more to it than meets the eye.

In sum, although a sizeable number of women, and to a lesser extent men, report physical or emotional distress or reduced morale, fewer are willing to admit to a decline in productivity. This discrepancy may be perceptual or based on fear of adverse consequences and thus should not necessarily be taken at face value. It may be that those who are experiencing stress are not always the most accurate judges of the effect of that stress on their own performance on the job. Further research may be needed to put this finding in context.

FIGURE 7-3
Impact of Sexual Harassment on the Morale and Productivity of Narrators'
Immediate Work Groups
 Percentage of Narrators Who Indicated These Effects on the Morale and
 Productivity
 of Their Immediate Work Groups (Question 31b)

VICTIMS OF MOST SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	MORALE	
	Became better	Reported by 2% of women and 19% of men
	Became worse	Reported by 26% of women and 42% of men
	Had no effect	Reported by 72% of women and 40% of men
	PRODUCTIVITY	
	Became better	Reported by 1% of women and 3% of men
	Became worse	Reported by 10% of women and 11% of men
	Had no effect	Reported by 89% of women and 87% of men
VICTIMS OF SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	MORALE	
	Became better	Reported by 1% of women and 1% of men
	Became worse	Reported by 13% of women and 13% of men

	Had no effect	Reported by 86% of women and 86% of men
	PRODUCTIVITY	
	Became better	Reported by 0.3% of women and 1% of men
	Became worse	Reported by 6% of women and 11% of men
	Had no effect	Reported by 94% of women and 89% of men
VICTIMS OF LESS SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	MORALE	
	Became better	Reported by 1% of women and 5% of men
	Became worse	Reported by 7% of women and 11% of men
	Had no effect	Reported by 92% of women and 84% of men
	PRODUCTIVITY	
	Became better	Reported by 1% of women and 2% of men
	Became worse	Reported by 3% of women and 6% of men
	Had no effect	Reported by 96% of women and 92% of men
TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	MORALE	
	Became better	Reported by 1% of women and 3% of men
	Became worse	Reported by 11% of women and 12% of men
	Had no effect	Reported by 88% of women and 85% of men

	PRODUCTIVITY	
	Became better	Reported by 0.4% of women and 1% of men
	Became worse	Reported by 5% of women and 9% of men
	Had no effect	Reported by 95% of women and 90% of men

Victims Also Judged Their Workgroups to Be Unaffected

Most male and female narrators thought their personal experiences had no effect on the morale (85% to 88%) and productivity (90% to 95%) of the people they worked with on a day-to-day basis,^[20] but their perceptions depended somewhat on the severity of the behavior they encountered (see Figure 7-3).

Women who faced actual or attempted rape or sexual assault were more likely than other women to perceive a decline in their workgroups' morale and productivity, and women in general were more likely to judge there had been a decline in morale than a decrease in productivity (11% compared with 5%). Men also overwhelmingly reported that their workgroups were affected by their personal experiences. Interestingly, male victims of the most severe form of harassment were more likely than their female counterparts to report a decline in the morale of their coworkers because of the incident.

The finding that the workgroup was unaffected by a member's sexual harassment should be interpreted carefully since the finding is based on the opinions of the victims, not on reports of the coworkers themselves. Victims may or may not have been aware of the effect on their coworkers. Conversely, other members of the workgroup may never have known of the incidents. Most incidents of sexual harassment may occur in private, and as data discussed in Chapter 6 reveal, only around one-third of female narrators and one-fifth of male narrators spoke with other workers about their experiences. Given the data, a generalization about the impact of sexual harassment on the victim's immediate workgroup is unwise.

Conclusion

Although sexual harassment was not perceived by the majority of victims to have an adverse impact on their career, morale, or productivity, a significant number of women and men indicated they suffered serious adverse consequences in the form of job transfers or dismissals, impairment to emotional and physical health, and deteriorated work performance. Aside from compassionate and moral

reasons for reducing sexual harassment, to do so would save the Government a considerable amount of money--\$189 million over a 2-year period, by our conservative estimate.

Footnotes -- Chapter 7

1 Congressional Memorandum of Understanding; see Appendix E.

2 Figures projected from the 20,900 narrators (18,200 women and 2,700 men) who indicated in response to Survey Question 26 (see Figure 7-1 and additional data in Appendix D) that they had left their jobs because of unwanted sexual attention, either by quitting or transferring or because they had been reassigned or fired.

3 Figures projected from the number of narrator-victims who indicated in response to Survey Question 31a (Figure 7-2 and additional data in Appendix D) that their emotional and physical condition declined as a result of unwanted sexual attention.

4 Figures projected from the number of narrator-victims who indicated in response to Survey Question 31a (Figure 7-2 and Appendix D) that their time and attendance at work declined as a result of unwanted sexual attention.

5 Daily salaries were based on approximations that the average annual salaries of women and men working for the Federal Government are \$12,000 and \$20,000 respectively. This assumes 250 working days a year and is based on data derived from the questionnaire.

6 Figures projected from number of narrator-victims who indicated in response to Survey Question 31a (Figure 7-2 and Appendix D) that the quality and quantity of their work became worse as a result of unwanted sexual attention.

7 Rounded average annual salaries of victims of "most severe" sexual harassment were \$12,000 for women and \$15,300 for men; "severe " sexual harassment, \$12,400 for women and \$20,000 for men; "less severe " sexual harassment, \$12,100 for women and \$22,100 for men; see Appendix D, Table J.

8 "Substantial Cost Savings from Establishment of Alcoholism Program for Federal Civilian Employees, " GAO Report to Special Subcommittee on Alcoholism and Narcotics Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, U.S. Senate, September 28, 1970, p. 14. The GAO figure of 25% was at that time, and still is, considered conservative by many people familiar with the problem of alcoholism in the work force. For example, see editorial by Charles Elliott Blackford III, "What Does Employee Alcoholism Really Cost? ", Labor-Management Alcoholism Journal VII (May-June, 1978).

9 See Chapter 9

10 Based on responses to Survey Question 31b.

11 This is composed of 990 workgroups of female victims, and 330 of male victims, of "most severe " sexual harassment; 12,000 and 11,000 workgroups of female and male victims of "severe " sexual harassment respectively; and 2,550 and 3,900 workgroups of female and male victims of "less severe " sexual harassment. See Appendix D, Table K.

12 Average workgroup size of male and female victims of each level of severity of sexual harassment experience was determined on the basis of responses of narrator-victims to Survey Question 48; the average workgroup size for all female victims was calculated to be roughly 13 persons, and for all male victims, 16 persons. See Appendix D, Table N.

13 Sexual composition of workgroups of victims was determined by responses of narrator-victims to Survey Question 51.

14 Figures provided by Ann Andrews, Coordinator of Executive Personnel and Management Development Information Systems, OPM.

15 Based on responses to Survey Question 26.

16 Those who checked one or more items when responding to Survey Question 24; see Appendix D, Table L for data.

17 Based on responses to Survey Question 31(a) and (b).

18 See Survey Question 31a(c)-(f).

19 Congressional Hearings, September 25, 1980, pp- 37-38.

20 Based on responses to Survey Question 31b.

8. Awareness of Remedies and Their Effectiveness

- Most victims and supervisors are relatively unaware of the formal remedies available to victims of sexual harassment.
- Relatively few victims and supervisors consider formal remedies effective in helping victims of sexual harassment.
- Taking assertive informal action is thought to be the most effective way for employees to make others stop bothering them sexually.
- Most victims and supervisors think there is much management can do regarding sexual harassment.

What can a person do to get sexual harassment to stop? Can anything be done when rejection of overtures results in negative job consequences? More important, what could be done to keep sexual harassment from becoming a problem in the first place?

There are a number of formal actions Federal employees can take in instances of sexual harassment, including filing a discrimination complaint or a grievance or adverse action appeal and requesting an investigation by their own or an outside agency. These are the remedies the Subcommittee on Investigations had in mind when it directed that the survey determine "whether victims of sexual harassment are aware of available remedies and whether they have any faith in them"[\[1\]](#) We believed it would also be useful to learn whether Federal employees thought there were any other actions management might take--or any effective ways an individual could get the bothersome behavior to stop. The broad issue of prevention of sexual harassment also seemed important.

Since victims obviously are the most concerned about remedies, and since supervisors not only are often involved in the complaint process but also are responsible for monitoring office behavior, we focused on their responses. There was a great deal of agreement between the two groups. Generally, there was a very low level of awareness of formal remedies. With the exception of filing a discrimination complaint, the majority of victims--male or female--were not aware of formal remedies available to them. Even fewer felt these formal actions would be effective in helping Federal employees who have been sexually bothered by others. Supervisors--Federal employees responsible for advising workers of their rights--were only somewhat more aware of formal remedies; nor were they much more confident in the effectiveness of these remedies. Despite this lack of faith, most victims and supervisors--men and women alike--believe there is much management can do regarding sexual harassment, particularly in the areas of sanctions and penalties.

A large number of victims and supervisors--at least 4 in every 10--did not think filing a formal complaint per se was one of the most effective things employees could do to get sexual harassment to stop. Far greater numbers preferred direct informal actions--asking or telling the offender to stop and reporting the behavior to a supervisor or other official as remedies for the behavior.

In order to provide background information for this chapter, the next section describes the various formal remedies usually available to victims of sexual harassment within the Federal Government.

Explanations of Formal Remedies

Formal actions or remedies are procedures that have been established by agencies in accordance with law or regulation for use by employees to resolve their workrelated complaints. Depending in some cases on the type of formal

remedy used, the complaint may concern any number of matters, such as unfair office practices, demotion, termination, or racial discrimination. These formal institutional remedies are also available to process charges of sexual harassment.

In some cases, such as filing a grievance, the first step in taking formal action may be contacting the supervisor. The subsequent investigation and conclusion of the case remain within the worker's employing agency. In other instances, other agency officials, such as EEO officials in the case of discrimination complaints, process the complaint within the agency and the complainant has appeal rights outside the agency. At other times, the formal action begins with an outside agency, such as the Office of the Special Counsel within the Merit Systems Protection Board. Depending on the circumstances provoking the complaint, more than one channel of formal complaint may be available to an employee who alleges sexual harassment--or only one may be appropriate.

Complainants have a choice of courses of action to take. For example, alleged victims may want to file a *discrimination complaint* if they feel that the sexual harassment was a result of sex discrimination as interpreted by the EEOC Guidelines on sexual harassment.^[2] In summary, these guidelines state that sexual harassment is sex discrimination when going along with the behavior is implicitly or explicitly a term or condition of employment, when going along or not going along is used as the basis of employment decisions affecting the victim or when the behavior has the effect of interfering with the victims' work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.

Victims may choose to *appeal an adverse action* (for example, a removal or demotion based on unacceptable performance) which they feel was a result of refusing to go along with sexual harassment. Employees may appeal the action to the Merit Systems Protection Board where they have a right to a hearing on the merits.^[3]

Victims may file *grievances* with their agency management seeking relief from sexual harassment. There are usually no appeal rights outside the agency for grievances. There are two kinds of grievance systems in the Federal Government--an administrative grievance system provided by each agency under OPM regulation and a negotiated grievance system provided by a collective bargaining agreement between a union and agency management.^[4]

Victims may also request *internal investigations* of their allegations of sexual harassment by their agency Inspectors General if their agency has one and if the allegations involve fraud, waste, or mismanagement of Government funds.

Finally, victims may want to request an *external investigation* from the Special Counsel of the Merit Systems Protection Board if the sexual harassment involves a *prohibited personnel practice* such as "taking or refusing to take a personnel

action, including promotion of employees who submit to sexual advances or refusal to promote employees who resist or protest sexual overtures."[\[5\]](#) The Special Counsel may recommend corrective action or ask the Merit Systems Protection Board to "stay" the personnel action.

FIGURE 8-1
Awareness of Formal Remedies

Percentage of Victims and Supervisors Who Knew the Following Formal Remedies Were Available to Victims of Sexual Harassment (Questions 12a-16a)

VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Filing a discrimination complaint	Reported by 49% of women and 53% of men
	Filing a grievance or adverse action appeal	Reported by 36% of women and 44% of men
	Requesting an investigation by victim's organization	Reported by 18% of women and 26% of men
	Filing a complaint through special channels set up for sexual harassment complaints	Reported by 10% of women and 12% of men
	Requesting an investigation by an outside agency	Reported by 5% of women and 10% of men
SUPERVISORS	Filing a discrimination complaint	Reported by 57% of women and 62% of men
	Filing a grievance or adverse action appeal	Reported by 45% of women and 55% of men
	Requesting an investigation by victim's organization	Reported by 27% of women and 42% of men
	Filing a complaint through special channels set up for sexual harassment complaints	Reported by 12% of women and 18% of men
	Requesting an investigation by an outside agency	Reported by 8% of women and 12% of men

NOTE: Percentages based on "Definitely Yes" responses to questions.

In the survey questionnaire, formal remedies were grouped to form five general types of actions:[\[6\]](#)

- filing a discrimination complaint (if the behavior falls under guidelines set forth by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission);
- filing a grievance or adverse action appeal (that is, using the agency's internal grievance system, following negotiated grievance procedures if a union contract has been violated, or filing an adverse action appeal with the agency, with subsequent appeal rights to the Merit Systems Protection Board);
- requesting an internal investigation by the employing organization (for example, by the agency's Inspector General or Ethics Officer);
- requesting an investigation by an outside agency (such as the Special Counsel of the Merit Systems Protection Board if a prohibited personnel practice, as defined in the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, is involved); and
- filing a complaint through special channels set up for sexual harassment complaints.

For each type of formal actions, workers were asked: (a) Is this remedy available to employees where you work? (b) Would this be effective in helping these employees?

Available responses to each question were: "definitely not," "probably not," "probably yes," "definitely yes," and "don't know."

Awareness of Formal Remedies Is Not Great

Most victims and supervisors were not aware of all the formal remedies available to Federal employees who have been sexually harassed. Since we wanted to know the level of awareness with some degree of certainty, we looked at only the number of workers who said "definitely yes," the remedies are available.[\[7\]](#) On this basis we found that rarely were even half of the victims or supervisors aware that a remedy existed. The Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint system (that is, filing a discrimination complaint) was the most widely known.

As can be seen in Figure 8-1, female victims were relatively unaware of all the formal remedies, particularly investigations by an outside agency or their own. That they were most aware of the EEO discrimination complaint procedure is interesting since that channel was not used as often as other remedies by the victims who did take formal action (see Chapter 6). Since most remedies (except "filing a complaint through special channels") are in fact available to victims, their responses indicate a generally low level of awareness. Male victims were slightly more familiar with the remedies than were females, but their awareness still was generally quite low.

Does unawareness of available remedies keep men and women from taking formal action? Apparently so, for nearly 38,000 victims--31,600 women and 6,200 men--indicated that was the reason they had not taken formal action^[8] (see Figure 8-2). Generally, the more severe the harassing behavior, the more likely narrators were to say this was their reason for not taking formal action.

Supervisors as a group also were relatively unfamiliar with formal remedies available to victims of sexual harassment (see Figure 8-1). More than half did not know employees could request internal or external investigations, and fewer than two-thirds knew about filing an EEO discrimination complaint. As with victims, male supervisors tended to be more knowledgeable about remedies than were female supervisors.

As can be seen in Figure 8-1, for all remedies, both male and female supervisors were more likely to be aware than were female victims--and to some extent than were male victims. Nevertheless, given their responsibilities for advising employees of their rights, supervisors indicate a surprisingly low level of awareness of formal complaint channels, particular avenues other than filing an EEO complaint, or a grievance or adverse action appeal.

To see if awareness of formal remedies is lower in agencies having relatively high rates of sexual harassment, we looked at the responses of victims and supervisors in the 10 agencies "grouped as "other" where rates were higher than rates for the Federal work force as a whole.^[9] We found that in many of these agencies the awareness level of victims and supervisors was lower than for the Federal work force in general. 10 For example, in three agencies (Departments of Labor and Transportation and the Veterans Administration) plus in those agencies grouped as "other," victims and supervisors tended to be less aware than the Governmentwide averages.

In other agencies such as the Departments of Justice and Housing and Urban Development, other Defense agencies, and the General Services Administration, there are sex based differences. For example, in other Defense agencies, male supervisors tended to be more aware of remedies and female victims and supervisors less aware than the Governmentwide averages.

Formal Remedies Are Not Seen as Effective

FIGURE 8-2

Reasons For Not Taking Formal Action

Percentage of Narrator Victims Who Gave the Following Reasons for Not Taking Formal Actions in Response to the Sexual Harassment (Question 30)

VICTIMS OF MOST SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Saw no need to report it	Reported by 16% of women and 36% of men
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	Thought it would make work situation unpleasant	Reported by 50% of women and 22% of men
	Did not think anything would be done	Reported by 50% of women and 31% of men
	Thought it would be held against me or that I would be blamed	Reported by 44% of women and 22% of men
	Did not want to hurt the person who bothered me	Reported by 41% of women and 43% of men
	Was too embarrassed	Reported by 44% of women and 21% of men
	Did not know what actions to take	Reported by 37% of women and 12% of men
	Thought it would take too much time and effort	Reported by 13% of women and 2% of men
VICTIMS OF SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Saw no need to report it	Reported by 54% of women and 65% of men
	Thought it would make work situation unpleasant	Reported by 40% of women and 21% of men
	Did not think anything would be done	Reported by 36% of women and 19% of men
	Thought it would be held against me or that I would be blamed	Reported by 25% of women and 11% of men
	Did not want to hurt the person who bothered me	Reported by 21% of women and 31% of men
	Was too embarrassed	Reported by 16% of women and 10% of men

	Did not know what actions to take	Reported by 17% of women and 6% of men
	Thought it would take too much time and effort	Reported by 6% of women and 3% of men
VICTIMS OF LESS SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Saw no need to report it	Reported by 72% of women and 74% of men
	Thought it would make work situation unpleasant	Reported by 24% of women and 24% of men
	Did not think anything would be done	Reported by 24% of women and 14% of men
	Thought it would be held against me or that I would be blamed	Reported by 14% of women and 9% of men
	Did not want to hurt the person who bothered me	Reported by 15% of women and 13% of men
	Was too embarrassed	Reported by 9% of women and 9% of men
	Did not know what actions to take	Reported by 8% of women and 7% of men
	Thought it would take too much time and effort	Reported by 5% of women and 5% of men
TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Saw no need to report it	Reported by 61% of women and 71% of men
	Thought it would make work situation unpleasant	Reported by 36% of women and 23% of men
	Did not think anything would be done	Reported by 33% of women and 17% of men
	Thought it would	Reported by 23%

be held against me or that I would be blamed	of women and 11% of men
Did not want to hurt the person who bothered me	Reported by 20% of women and 25% of men
Was too embarrassed	Reported by 15% of women and 10% of men
Did not know what actions to take	Reported by 15% of women and 17% of men
Thought it would take too much time and effort	Reported by 6% of women and 4% of men

NOTE: Most respondents gave more than one reason for not taking formal action..

To get a clear picture of the opinions of victims and supervisors about the effectiveness of formal remedies, we again looked only at the "definitely yes" responses." On this basis it must be concluded that little faith is placed in formal remedies. In no case did more than 1 in 5 victims think a remedy would be effective (see Figure 8-3). Supervisors were not much more confident.

The EEO complaint system and the grievance or adverse action appeal process tended to receive the most support, and generally male victims were more confident in the remedies than were female victims. Likewise, a greater percentage of male supervisors than female supervisors rated the remedies effective.

Why so few victims and supervisors indicated they believe formal remedies would be effective is uncertain. The way the question was posed may have been a factor. Perhaps the majority simply thought formal action would not be effective in the circumstances described---helping "persons who have been sexually bothered by others"; more might have thought a formal action would be effective had the situation been more clearcut, for example a worker suffering negative emotional, physical, or job consequences from the harassment.

Some support for this notion, at least in regard to victims, comes from reasons narrators gave for not filing a formal complaint. As Figure 8-2 shows, the most common reason given by narrators reporting severe and less severe harassment was "I saw no need to report it." However, this reason was given by far smaller percentages of narrators who had experienced actual or attempted rape or sexual assault. Clearly, victims of the less intense forms of harassment saw filing a formal complaint as an unnecessary response.

FIGURE 8-3
Perceived Effectiveness of Formal Remedies
 Percentage of Victims and Supervisors Who Thought Formal Remedies Would
 Be Helpful To Victims of Sexual Harassment (Questions 12b-16b)

VICTIMS OF MOST SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Filing a discrimination complaint	Reported by 18% of women and 23% of men
	Requesting an investigation by victim's organization	Reported by 22% of women and 26% of men
	Fileing a grievance or adverse action appeal	Reported by 18% of women and 30% of men
	Filing a complaint through special channels set up for sexual harassment complaints	Reported by 15% of women and 19% of men
	Requesting an investigation by an outside agency	Reported by 8% of women and 19% of men
VICTIMS OF SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Filing a discrimination complaint	Reported by 14% of women and 20% of men
	Requesting an investigation by victim's organization	Reported by 11% of women and 18% of men
	Fileing a grievance or adverse action appeal	Reported by 13% of women and 21% of men
	Filing a complaint through special channels set up for sexual harassment complaints	Reported by 10% of women and 15% of men
	Requesting an investigation by an outside agency	Reported by 7% of women and 14% of men
VICTIMS OF LESS SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Filing a discrimination complaint	Reported by 13% of women and 20% of men

	Requesting an investigation by victim's organization	Reported by 10% of women and 15% of men
	Fileing a grievance or adverse action appeal	Reported by 11% of women and 19% of men
	Filing a complaint through special channels set up for sexual harassment complaints	Reported by 10% of women and 14% of men
	Requesting an investigation by an outside agency	Reported by 9% of women and 11% of men
TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND SUPERVISORS	Filing a discrimination complaint	Reported by 14% of women and 20% of men
		Reported by 16% of female supervisors and 28% of male supervisors
	Requesting an investigation by victim's organization	Reported by 11% of women and 17% of men
		Reported by 13% of female supervisors and 27% of male supervisors
	Fileing a grievance or adverse action appeal	Reported by 13% of women and 20% of men
		Reported by 15% of female supervisors and 28% of male supervisors
	Filing a complaint through special channels set up for	Reported by 10% of women and 14% of men

	sexual harassment complaints	Reported by 12% of female supervisors and 16% of male supervisors
	Requesting an investigation by an outside agency	Reported by 8% of women and 12% of men
		Reported by 8% of female supervisors and 11% of male supervisors

NOTE: Percentages are based on "Definitely Yes" responses to questions.

Another explanation for the lack of confidence in formal remedies might be unfamiliarity with available courses of action. The fact that supervisors were both more aware of remedies and more favorable toward them might suggest this is the case. A third possible explanation for the low ratings given the formal remedies is that victims and supervisors generally do not think that taking an informal action is the most effective course of action for any work related problem. When asked which of six actions they thought were the most effective actions employees could take to make others stop bothering them sexually,^[12] fewer than 6 in 10 victims and supervisors chose "filing a formal complaint" (see Figure 8-4). Whether these responses indicate a true lack of faith in the available formal remedies or simply a belief that other actions are more effective for remedying sexual harassment is unknown.

Certainly some amount of dissatisfaction and distrust was expressed by narrator victims who took no formal action (97% of the female narrators and 98% of the male narrators). As Figure 8-2 shows, a substantial percentage of female narrators gave as their reason--or one of their reasons--for not filing a formal complaint that it would make the work situation unpleasant, nothing would be done, or filing would be held against the accuser.

Smaller percentages, but still representative of a large number of male narrators, also gave those reasons. Contrast these beliefs with the results of the small number of victims who actually took formal actions. Although a majority (59%) of these female and male victims found the formal actions effective (see Chapter 6), a sizeable number (41%) did not. This middling success rate may contribute to a lack of faith in available remedies.

FIGURE 8-4
Perceived Effectiveness of Individual Actions

Percentage of Victims and Supervisors Who Thought Employee Actions Would Stop Sexual Harassment (Question 10)

VICTIMS OF MOST SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Asking or telling the person(s) to stop	Reported by 78% of women and 61% of men
	Reporting the behavior to the supervisor or other officials	Reported by 66% of women and 59% of men
	Filing a formal complaint	Reported by 48% of women and 48% of men
	Ignoring the behavior	Reported by 50% of women and 50% of men
	Avoiding the person(s)	Reported by 50% of women and 34% of men
	There is very little employees can do	Reported by 19% of women and 28% of men
	Threatening to tell or telling other workers	Reported by 17% of women and 18% of men
VICTIMS OF SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Asking or telling the person(s) to stop	Reported by 87% of women and 82% of men
	Reporting the behavior to the supervisor or other officials	Reported by 68% of women and 70% of men
	Filing a formal complaint	Reported by 52% of women and 61% of men
	Ignoring the behavior	Reported by 48% of women and 44% of men
	Avoiding the person(s)	Reported by 48% of women and 42% of men
	There is very little employees can do	Reported by 10% of women and 5% of men

	Threatening to tell or telling other workers	Reported by 15% of women and 17% of men
VICTIMS OF LESS SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Asking or telling the person(s) to stop	Reported by 83% of women and 84% of men
	Reporting the behavior to the supervisor or other officials	Reported by 71% of women and 72% of men
	Filing a formal complaint	Reported by 55% of women and 56% of men
	Ignoring the behavior	Reported by 45% of women and 45% of men
	Avoiding the person(s)	Reported by 44% of women and 39% of men
	There is very little employees can do	Reported by 5% of women and 5% of men
	Threatening to tell or telling other workers	Reported by 16% of women and 21% of men
VICTIMS OF ALL FORMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND SUPERVISORS	Asking or telling the person(s) to stop	Reported by 85% of women and 83% of men
		Reported by 86% of female supervisors and 85% of male supervisors
	Reporting the behavior to the supervisor or other officials	Reported by 69% of women and 71% of men
		Reported by 71% of female supervisors and 78% of male supervisors
	Filing a formal	Reported by 53%

	complaint	of women and 59% of men Reported by 49% of female supervisors and 57% of male supervisors
	Ignoring the behavior	Reported by 47% of women and 45% of men Reported by 49% of female supervisors and 42% of male supervisors
	Avoiding the person(s)	Reported by 47% of women and 41% of men Reported by 45% of female supervisors and 40% of male supervisors
	There is very little employees can do	Reported by 9% of women and 5% of men Reported by 6% of female supervisors and 2% of male supervisors
	Threatening to tell or telling other workers	Reported by 16% of women and 19% of men Reported by 13% of female supervisors and 19% of male supervisors

NOTE: Many respondents indicated more than one action would be effective.

Perhaps the men and women who thought filing a formal complaint would make their work situations unpleasant had heard of an incident similar to that reported by a victim whose sex discrimination complaint was in process: "My supervisor continues to make remarks which are just on the 'safe' side of the line. I have been followed while leaving work by coworkers who get away with making suggestive remarks to me on the job." Perhaps those who felt filing a complaint would be held against them agreed with comments written on questionnaires returned by two survey respondents: "At my station," wrote one, "you will find very few complaints of sexual harassment, not because it isn't there, but because there is fear of consequences." Observed the other, "If you file a complaint against someone harassing you, you will be eased out of your job or your working conditions will become so miserable you will quit or transfer."

Maybe those who feel nothing would be done had observed, as had one respondent who wrote on the questionnaire, that "managers either ignore or squash the complaint." The concerns of even the small percentage of narrators who thought filing a complaint would take too much time and effort may be justified. Wrote one survey respondent: "The discrimination complaint process is ineffective for handling problems in areas it was designed to cover because the process takes too long." Another survey respondent noted an additional problem related to formal remedies: "Sexual harassment can be very subtle and difficult to prove."

Whatever their reasons, it is clear few victims of sexual harassment or supervisors believe formal remedies would be effective in helping people who have been sexually bothered by others. It also should be mentioned that most of the men and women who do file complaints are victims of the more severe forms of sexual harassment, actual and attempted rape and assault or "severe" sexual harassment. It may be that they tend to use the formal complaint procedures because of the severity of their harassment or because *they* believe that they have strong cases which have a greater chance of success.

In summary, taking formal action is not necessarily the best course of action for all victims. Few victims of "severe" and "less severe" harassment filed formal complaints. Their most common reason was that they saw no need to report it. The system of formal remedies may be less effective in some agencies than in others. Some victims may be unable to document their cases. Others may prefer to handle the harassment informally. As the next section shows, there is general agreement that other types of action are more effective in getting harassment stopped.

Assertive Informal Remedies Are Seen as Most Effective

Their reasons for not doing so indicate that a sizeable number of narrator-victims do not see filing a formal complaint as a viable option (see Figure 8-2). Many worry that the solution might add to the problem by making the work situation

unpleasant, or that filing a complaint might backfire, with them ending up being blamed. Many would be too embarrassed to make the matter known. An even larger number seem to feel it would be an empty exercise (nothing would be done), perhaps requiring too much time and energy. Hurting the offending person is also a concern.

To the largest number of victims, however, particularly those who have not faced the most severe form of harassment, filing a formal complaint simply is not an appropriate response.

We were interested in what victims would consider the most effective things employees can do--not necessarily to get relief from negative job consequences, but simply to get others to stop bothering them. Would they agree with the victim who transferred jobs because "you just don't make a big racket when the attainment of your doctorate depends on your evaluations." Would they approve the directness, if not the technique, of the victim who wrote: "When he made one of his comments, I told him if I heard him say something like that again to me, I would 'haul off' and belt him in the mouth." Would they think it best to ask a third party to intervene? Or would their response reflect the hopelessness one respondent seemed to feel when she wrote, "Sexual harassment is (widespread) and is now a problem I cannot handle."

Most victims believe people *can* do something to stop the unwanted behavior; as can be seen in Figure 8-4 only 2 in 20 women and 1 in 20 men felt there is little employees can do. More female victims endorsed the most direct informal response, "asking or telling the person(s) to stop," as being more effective than any other action. The next most frequent response was "reporting the behavior to the supervisor or other officials." Fewer than half the female victims endorsed the most passive actions, "ignoring the behavior" and "avoiding the person(s)." The most coercive direct response, "threatening to tell or telling other workers," was regarded as effective by the fewest number, presumably because other workers, as opposed to supervisors, rarely have authority over the annoying person. Thus female victims consider the most effective actions to be those involving direct confrontation with either the annoying person or someone who has authority over that person. These actions were judged most effective in getting the harassment stopped by more victims than the direct formal action, filing a formal complaint. As with females, more male victims endorse the most direct responses, with fewer, but still a large percentage, regarding a formal complaint as most effective.

That direct informal action can be effective in getting offensive behavior stopped was confirmed by several respondents who commented on their personal experiences. Wrote one victim: "I put a stop to the situation by speaking to the individual concerned. Some (people) ... (do) not realiz(e) that they are offensive. Only with me (or others) saying something to them will they realize they are being offensive...." The offending party may even find this the best approach.

Wrote one man: "The lady confronted me and requested that I stop as my gestures were sexy. Her request was granted and the lady and I are good friends."

Several respondents also indicated that re-*porting* to a supervisor or higher authority can be a successful tactic. One described how an incident was reported to a higher authority (informally) and an apology was given publicly. Said the commentor: "The initiator of the unwanted advances lost esteem among fellow workers, and this action effectively nipped in the bud any further complications."

Supervisors tended to agree with victims about the most effective ways to get unwanted sexual attention stopped, with the largest number endorsing the direct informal actions (see Figure 8-4). That male supervisors were more likely than others to endorse reporting the behavior to the supervisor may indicate that supervisors (the majority of whom are men) wish to be informed about sexual harassment problems. Another finding, that male supervisors seemed to have more faith in the complaint system than did female supervisors, is consistent with the finding reported in Figure 8-3 that greater percentages of male supervisors than female supervisors endorsed specific avenues of formal complaint.

Although more victims and supervisors--male or female--considered asking or telling the person(s) to stop an effective action, this does not necessarily indicate that is all they think is needed to get the behavior stopped. Indeed, many believe it is not enough.[\[13\]](#) While the majority felt "nearly all instances of unwanted sexual attention can be stopped if the person receiving the attention simply tells the other person to stop," a sizeable number--approximately 1 in every 4 men and supervisors and 1 in 3 women and victims--disagreed. That the responses break down this way, with men (22%) and supervisors (24%) being less likely to disagree that telling the person to stop will stop the behavior than women (35%) and victims (37%) is not surprising, since most supervisors are men and most victims are women. Nevertheless, it is clear that a majority of Federal workers feel telling a person to stop is adequate and effective in getting unwanted sexual attention stopped.

Management Can Help

Most victims and supervisors think there is much an organization's management can do to reduce the rate of sexual harassment. Their optimism showed through clearly in their responses to the question, "Which are the most effective actions for an organization's management to take regarding sexual harassment?"[\[14\]](#) As Figure 8-5 shows, only around 1 in 20 men, women, and supervisors felt there is little management can do to reduce sexual harassment on the job. Management actions involving tougher sanctions and enforcement generally were endorsed more often than other management actions. A majority of victims and supervisors also endorsed actions involving publicizing management policy regarding sexual harassment. Actions intended to help victims cope with sexual harassment were

less popular, with women noticeably more likely than men to think a special counseling service would be effective.

The importance of effective management involvement can be seen in the comments that respondents wrote on their questionnaires. Few were as cynical as the Federal worker who said there is very little management can do because "management does not want to reduce sexual harassment on the job"--or as discouraged as the person who wrote, "upper management in my agency is generally unconcerned about subjects like sexual harassment; senior executives feel they have more important things to do." But a number implied that greater support from management is indicated. Wrote one person: "A major problem is that among management there is tacit approval."

Swifter investigations and action against managers who knowingly allow behavior to continue might seem appropriate to the Federal worker who wrote that supervisors took no action against the offender, a Branch Chief, until they were ordered to by outside sources. Noted the respondent: "The sexual harassment continued over several years with several different women, two of whom resigned under pressure from the harasser." Awareness training on management responsibilities for decreasing sexual harassment might seem like a good idea to the Federal worker who observed: "When one complains to the supervisor about an employee whose comments and filthy jokes are annoying and embarrassing, she always says, 'Oh, I know, he's always been like that,' but she never does anything about it."

FIGURE 8-5

Perceived Effectiveness of Management Actions

Percentage of Victims and Supervisors Who Thought Management Actions Regarding Sexual Harassment Would Be Effective (Question 11)

IMPOSING TOUGHER SANCTIONS AND STRICTER ENFORCEMENT	
Conduct swift and thorough investigations of complaints of sexual harassment	Reported by 77% of women and 71% of men Reported by 81% of female supervisors and 78% of male supervisors
Enforce penalties against managers who knowingly allow this behavior to continue	Reported by 59% of women and 61% of men Reported by 62% of female supervisors and 60% of male supervisors
Enforce penalties against those	Reported by 74% of women

who sexually bother others	and 71% of men Reported by 71% of female supervisors and 74% of male supervisors
Publicize the availability of formal complaint channels	Reported by 63% of women and 63% of men Reported by 67% of female supervisors and 60% of male supervisors

PUBLICIZING MANAGEMENT POLICY

Establish and publicize policies which prohibit sexual harassment	Reported by 69% of women and 69% of men Reported by 75% of female supervisors and 73% of male supervisors
Provide training for managers and EEO officials on their responsibilities for decreasing sexual harassment	Reported by 61% of women and 57% of men Reported by 65% of female supervisors and 57% of male supervisors

HELPING VICTIMS COPE

Establish a special counseling service for those who experience sexual harassment	Reported by 44% of women and 37% of men Reported by 44% of female supervisors and 37% of male supervisors
Provide awareness training for employees on sexual harassment	Reported by 53% of women and 43% of men Reported by 54% of female supervisors and 43% of male supervisors

NOTHING CAN BE DONE

There is very little that management can do to reduce sexual harassment on the job	Reported by 6% of women and 5% of men Reported by 3% of female supervisors and 4% of male supervisors
--	--

NOTE: Many respondents indicated more than one action would be effective.

Respondents' comments also indicated that management action can be--or is thought likely to be--helpful. As cited above, management investigation and discipline of the offending person "effectively nipped in the bud" any further problem. Publishing a policy "along the vein of 'you don't have to put up with this' could go a long way toward encouraging people to speak up," wrote another Federal worker. However, a third cautions, "the Federal Government spends a lot on developing policy and providing training, but *they* are not very serious about doing anything practical to correct the problem." One reports that agency employees are "... periodically given memoranda citing the section of the law so we will know how to report or file a complaint if we encounter sexual harassment."

Conclusion

Although few victims and supervisors considered current formal remedies for sexual harassment effective, many thought a number of management actions regarding sexual harassment would be helpful, and most endorsed management actions involving sanctions and enforcement of penalties. Awareness of existing complaint channels is relatively low (particularly in a number of agencies having high rates of harassment), and most victims and supervisors felt publicizing the availability of these channels would be helpful. A number of victims and supervisors indicated that filing a formal complaint is not one of the most effective actions employees can take to stop sexual harassment, and a number of victims indicated that their reasons for not taking formal action are related to the system itself. The overwhelming support for management action involving sanctions and penalties, but lack of faith in current formal remedies, may reflect unfamiliarity of dissatisfaction with the existing complaint system.

Footnotes -- Chapter 8

1 Congressional Memorandum of Understanding; see Appendix E.

2 See Appendix E.

3 See Section 204, of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, Pub. Law 94-454, 92 Stat. 1111, codified at 5 U.S.C. 1201 et seq. and 7501 et seq.

4 See 5 C.F.R. Part 771.

5 See Section 202 of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 cited in footnote 3 and the OPM Policy Statement, Appendix E.

6 See Survey Questions 12-16.

7 See Survey Questions 12a-16a.

8 Based on responses to Survey Question 30.

9 See Chapter 4 for a discussion of incidence of sexual harassment in individual Government agencies.

10 See Appendix D, Table M for data.

11 See Survey Questions 12b-16b.

12 Based on responses to Survey Question 10.

13 Based on disagree/strongly disagree and agree/ strongly agree responses to Survey Question 1(h). See Appendix D, Table N for data.

14 See Survey Question 11.

9. Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The findings, conclusions, and recommendations that follow grow directly out of the discussions in the preceding eight chapters. The major findings are summarized and conclusions drawn to facilitate the development of the policy recommendations on ways to remedy sexual harassment in the Federal work force.

The recommendations are directed to those institutions--Congress, Federal agencies, OPM, EEOC--that have responsibility for assuring that the Federal workplace is free from unsolicited and unwelcome sexual overtones. Each of these institutions can play an important role in bringing this about by effectively implementing the recommended actions. Most of these actions do not require extensive outlays of funds and resources and are cost effective when compared to the dollar, psychic, and productivity costs of prohibited sexual harassment on the job.

Summary of Findings

View Of Federal Workers Toward Sexual Harassment

1. A variety of uninvited sexual behaviors are considered to be sexual harassment by both men and women.

- Both men and women Federal workers generally agree that uninvited behaviors of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment.

- Federal workers believe supervisors should be held to a higher standard of conduct than other workers regarding sexually oriented behavior on the job.

2. The attitudes of men and women Federal workers about sexual behavior at work vary.

- Both men and women Federal workers believe sexual activity, whether voluntary or otherwise, should not occur between people who work together.
- Men show a greater tendency than women to think victims are somewhat responsible for bringing sexual harassment on themselves and are inclined to believe the issue of sexual harassment has been exaggerated.
- Both men and women Federal workers think sexual harassment is something people should not have to tolerate.

Extent Of Sexual Harassment In The Federal Workplace

3. The incidence rate of sexual harassment in the Federal workforce is widespread.

- One out of every four Federal employees reported being sexually harassed on the job over a 2-year period.
- Women are much more likely to be victims than men--42% of all female Federal employees, but only 15% of male employees, reported being sexually harassed.
- Sexual harassment can take many forms, and every form except attempted or actual rape or sexual assault was experienced by a sizeable percentage of both men and women.

4. Many sexual harassment incidents occur repeatedly and are of relatively long duration.

- Sexual harassment is not just a one-time experience--many victims were repeatedly subjected to harassing behaviors, particularly the less severe forms.
- Incidents of sexual harassment are not just passing events--most lasted more than a week, and many lasted longer than 6 months.

5. The majority of Federal employees who had worked elsewhere feel sexual harassment is no worse in the Federal workplace than in state and local government or in the private sector.

Victims Of Sexual Harassment

6. Individuals with certain personal and organizational characteristics are more likely to be sexually harassed than others.

- Age, marital status, and sexual composition of the employee's work group have a relatively strong effect on whether a Federal employee is sexually harassed.
- Factors having a somewhat weaker relationship are employee education level, race or ethnic background, job classification, traditionality of the employee's job, and sex of the employee's immediate supervisor.

7. Sexual harassment is widely distributed among women and men of various backgrounds, positions, and locations.

- Some agencies have a greater incidence of sexual harassment than do others.
- Sexual harassment is more likely to occur in work environments where employees have poor communications with their supervisors and feel pressured to participate in activities of a sexual nature.

Perpetrators Of Sexual Harassment

8. The personal and organizational characteristics of those who harass women are somewhat different from those who harass men.

- Most victims are harassed by people of the opposite sex.
- Most harassers act alone rather than in concert with another person.
- Most harassers of women are older than their victims, and most harassers of men are younger.
- Most harassers are married, but many men report being harassed by divorced or single women as well.
- Most harassers are of the same race or ethnic background as their victims but minority men report being harassed by those of a different race or ethnic background.
- Most harassers are coworkers, but many women are harassed by supervisors.

9. Many harassers are reported to have bothered more than one victim at work.

10. Few employees report having been accused of sexually harassing others.

Incidents Of Sexual Harassment

11. Those who are sexually harassed by supervisors and those who experience the more severe forms of sexual harassment are more likely

than other victims to foresee penalties or possible benefits for not going along or going along with the unwanted sexual attention.

12. A number of informal actions were found by victims to be effective in stopping the sexual harassment.

- Most victims respond to the sexual harassment by ignoring it, but few find that technique improves the situation.
- The most direct and assertive informal responses, such as telling the harasser to stop, are reported to be the most effective actions to take.
- Few victims talk about their experiences with others, but those who do find talking to someone with independent authority or organizational responsibility to be more helpful than talking to coworkers, family, or friends.

13. Filing a formal complaint was also found to be relatively effective for the few who tried it.

- Few victims take formal actions, but many who do find them helpful.
- The reported response of agency officials to informal and formal charges of sexual harassment has been mixed.

The Impact And Cost Of Sexual Harassment

14. The cost of sexual harassment to the Federal Government between May 1978 and May 1980 is conservatively estimated to have been \$189 million.

15. Although their experiences do not change the careers and work situations of most victims, a sizeable number of women and men do leave their jobs or suffer other adverse consequences.

- A majority of victims did not think their personal wellbeing or work performance declined as a result of their experience, but a sizeable minority do.
- Victims are much more likely to think sexual harassment negatively affected their personal wellbeing or morale than to believe that their work performance or productivity suffered.

16. Most victims report that, as far as they know, the morale and productivity of their immediate workgroup are little affected by their personal experience of sexual harassment.

Awareness Of Remedies And Their Effectiveness

17. Federal workers are generally unaware of formal remedies and even fewer are convinced of their effectiveness.

- Most victims and supervisors are relatively unaware of the formal remedies available to victims of sexual harassment.
- Relatively few victims and supervisors consider formal remedies effective in helping victims of sexual harassment.

18. Taking assertive informal action is thought to be the most effective way for employees to make others stop bothering them sexually.

19. Most victims and supervisors think there is much management can do regarding sexual harassment.

Conclusions

These findings lead to five general conclusions that can be drawn about the sexual harassment in the Federal workplace. In addition, several views about the nature of sexual harassment are discussed.

1. Sexual harassment is a legitimate problem in the Federal workplace.

We have seen that sexual harassment is indeed a widespread and legitimate problem. As shown in Chapter 2, the vast majority of both supervisors and others alike agreed that sexual harassment is behavior that should not be tolerated and a sizeable number of victims indicated that it was a problem where they worked. Chapters 3 and 4 provided information on how widespread and prevalent sexual harassment is among female and male Federal workers. Another indication that sexual harassment is a legitimate problem is the sizeable dollar cost to the Federal Government of the effects of sexual harassment, as conservatively estimated in Chapter 7.

2. In the past, agency managers and supervisors have not been as successful as they could be in resolving problems of sexual harassment.

We found that in the past, management overall has been somewhat less than effective in " resolving issues of sexual harassment that have been raised. Chapter 5 shows that few victims talked to supervisors for advice or reported the behavior formally and when they did, they had only a 60-40 chance of having the problem resolved.

Problems may also arise when supervisors who do not actually participate in the sexual harassment give tacit approval to the subordinates who engage in the behavior. Since these supervisors have responsibility for employee conduct in their offices, they should take charge in eliminating it from their workplaces rather than approving or ignoring it. The basis for this lack of commitment may be partially explained by the findings, in Chapter 2 that a number of supervisors think that the problem of sexual harassment has been exaggerated and that victims are somewhat to blame for bringing the sexual harassment on

themselves. Clearly, these attitudes of supervisors tend to undermine the authority and force of agency policy statements prohibiting sexual harassment and have the effect of thwarting their implementation.

3. There is much that management can do about the problem of sexual harassment in the future.

We found that there is much management can do about the problem of sexual harassment in the future to both prevent its occurrence and remedy the effects. Chapter 8 contains information on a number of actions which respondents felt would be helpful in reducing sexual harassment. Chapters 4 and 5 provide data on the characteristics of individuals most likely to be harassed and to do the harassing.

Some of these characteristics are under the control of management and can be adjusted to reduce the rate of sexual harassment. For example, individuals in nontraditional jobs, such as women law enforcement officers, have been shown to experience sexual harassment at somewhat higher rates than others. Supervisors of these employees as well as the employees themselves can be made aware of this fact and appropriate preventive and remedial steps implemented.

4. There are effective actions that victims can take to resolve the problem of sexual harassment.

A number of actions have been discussed that victims themselves can take regarding the sexual harassment. As shown in Chapter 5, the most assertive informal actions are the most effective: talking to someone with either outside or organizational responsibility sometimes helps, and filing a formal complaint as noted above has an average chance of helping the victims. Chapter 8 indicates that victims as well as supervisors need to be made aware of the existence of available remedies so that they can use them if needed. However, Chapter 5 indicates that most victims would prefer to settle the matter informally rather than taking a formal action that would tend to escalate this highly personal matter. Appendix H lists publications that offer additional advice on effective techniques for dealing with sexual harassment.

5. Sexual harassment has varying effects on victims, which probably account for the differences in repercussions.

In studying the effects of sexual harassment on its victims, we found variance in the repercussions, depending on a number of factors. It appears that some victims experience dramatic consequences as a result of this experience and others do not. The causes are various, but contributing factors appear to be the level of severity of the sexual harassment, personal and organizational

characteristics of the victim, the organizational level of the harasser, and the perceived motive or demeanor of the harasser.

Some victims were more likely to be sexually harassed than others, and some reported suffering greater consequences, particularly when the harasser had greater power. For example, women victims of actual or attempted rape or assault who were harassed by their supervisors were more likely than other victims to report fearing and suffering negative job consequences as a result of their sexual harassment experience. These victims of "most severe" sexual harassment were also much more likely to report experiencing emotional or physical problems or reductions in their work performance.

However, it should be pointed out that the findings indicate the level of severity by itself does not control whether adverse consequences will occur. Some victims of seemingly mild forms of sexual harassment have reported adverse consequences. For example, an individual who received repeated lewd comments ("less severe" behavior) from her supervisor might suffer greater consequences than an individual who was pressured for sexual favors ("severe" behavior) by a coworker.

What Is the Nature of Sexual Harassment?

Although sexual harassment has been demonstrated to be a problem that management can combat, the question still remains: what is the underlying nature of sexual harassment in the first place? Three explanations that were discussed in Chapter 1 have been raised in the literature. The first two views are somewhat interrelated in that those who have low power are thought to be more vulnerable to those with greater power. Based upon the findings in the study, we concluded that the first two explanations appear valid under some circumstances and we rejected the last. The three views are:

1. That sexual harassment is a form of power that is exercised by those in control, usually men, over low status employees, usually women.
2. That individuals with certain low power characteristics, such as youth and low, salaries, are more subject to sexual harassment than others.
3. That sexual harassment is an expression of personal attraction between men and women that is widespread and cannot and should not be stopped.

The following briefly discusses these views in light of the findings from the study.

Sexual Harassment is an Abuse of Power

This theory grows out of the view that sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination designed to keep women from advancing from low paid, powerless, jobs. Women do comprise only about one-third (31%) of the jobs in

the Federal workforce and most women occupy the lowest paid jobs compared to men.[\[1\]](#)

However, the findings show that most victims, both men and women, are harassed by coworkers rather than supervisors who presumably have more power. On its face this finding would tend to disprove the power theory, however, one must look closer at the data. The findings also show that victims, regardless of severity of the harassment, were more likely to perceive and experience adverse consequences if their harasser was a supervisor rather than a coworker. This seems to indicate that, although not all harassment is an outgrowth of organizational power, those cases where consequences are greater are more likely to be examples of abuse of organizational power. The sexual harassment by coworkers probably has more to do with personal power and sex roles than with organizationally derived power. In any event, further research would be helpful in exploring this issue.

Individuals with Certain Characteristics are More Vulnerable to Sexual Harassment

The view that those with low status and power characteristics are more vulnerable to sexual harassment has been proved in some respects and disproved in others. Some with low power and status, such as younger men and women and trainees, did report receiving sexual harassment disproportionately, but others, such as those in low salary levels, low education levels, and women office and clerical workers, did not.

Sexual Harassment is Not an Expression of Personal Sexual Attraction

The theory that sexual harassment is an expression of personal sexual attraction grows out of a view that sexual harassment is part of standard behavior between the sexes and that employers have no business interfering with these matters of love or personal attraction. This theory has been disproved on several counts.

That many harassers were reported to have harassed more than one victim casts doubt on the idea that sexual harassment is simply a matter of unique personal attraction. The finding that the rate of sexual harassment is not constant among all Federal agencies also somewhat negates the idea that sexual harassment is appropriate sexual behavior that occurs everywhere; that many victims report severe consequences also tends to negate that this behavior is and should be standard practice. In addition, the vast majority of respondents stated that sexual harassment is not something that "people should have to put up with." All of this indicates that sexual harassment should not be considered standard behavior at the workplace and is very much a matter of concern for employers such as the Federal Government.

Implications

Understanding that sexual harassment does not affect all victims in the same way is important in developing recommendations on ways to effectively reduce sexual harassment in the Federal workplace.

To help reduce most instances of sexual harassment, where the effects are not so adverse or presumably debilitating, an awareness campaign that focuses on prevention would be the most effective. This campaign should advise managers of their responsibilities and hold them accountable, as well as provide aid to victims in informally resolving these matters.

For the smaller number of instances where the sexual harassment has an extremely adverse or punitive affect, the response of management should be swift and thorough in imposing sanctions against the behavior and in aiding the victim.

These concepts are more thoroughly explored below.

Recommendations

Since sexual harassment has been clearly shown to be a problem in the Federal Government, managerial policies should be instituted stating sexual harassment is unacceptable conduct that will not be condoned. A number of agencies have already begun to do this.^[2] The Federal courts and Federal regulations^[3] have also stated that under many circumstances, sexual harassment is a violation of both civil law and criminal law. Therefore, it is both cost-effective and managerially responsible to take effective steps to reduce the amount of sexual harassment in the Federal Government.

Sanctions and Enforcement

1. Agencies should provide strong and effective enforcement against sexual harassment and issue sanctions where appropriate. To do this:

- Agencies should conduct swift and thorough investigations to discover evidence of sexual harassment and take appropriate action.
- Agencies should emphasize their strong commitment to prohibiting sexual harassment on the job by imposing sanctions where appropriate against the behavior, including:
 - enforcing penalties against those who sexually bother others, and
 - enforcing penalties against managers who knowingly allow this behavior to continue.

2. Complaint channels for allegations of sexual harassment should be clarified and streamlined.

Agency management has a responsibility to investigate and eliminate prohibited behavior, such as sexual harassment. The sanctions imposed and the remedial action taken, as with other violations of the law, should be commensurate with the violation. What is key, however, to render this recommendation effective is that allegations be taken seriously so that forceful and fair resolutions result. This will help to restore the faith of victims as well as supervisors in formal channels for processing complaints or grievances.

No additional legal or regulatory mechanisms appear to be necessary to enforce sanctions against sexual harassment if strong enforcement can be accomplished within current channels. However, the channels must be made more efficient and responsive to the fact that sexual harassment is a legitimate problem that must be handled as seriously as other violations of the law, standards of conduct, or prohibited personnel practices.

Publicizing Managerial Policy and Commitment

3. Managers and other agency officials should be made aware of their responsibility and held accountable for enforcing Government and agency policy prohibiting sexual harassment at the workplace. This can best be accomplished by agency managers:

- issuing strong policy statements
- otherwise clarifying acceptable behavior for supervisors, and
- holding supervisors responsible for the conduct of their offices with regard to sexual harassment through the performance appraisal system.

Agencies should emphasize the use of preventive measures and informal resolution of complaints as a means of combating sexual harassment since processing formal complaints is both time consuming and costly. Since most victims do not file complaints, these measures will also affect the largest number of victims and harassers. The costs of preventing sexual harassment may be more than offset by the savings to the Government in reducing sexual harassment and, thus, reducing job turnover and increasing job productivity and morale.

It is also important to note that a knowledgeable observer with a widespread clinical practice for the last decade finds that enunciating regulations clearly and specifically can be very effective in reducing sexual harassment.[\[4\]](#) Buttressing this argument is the finding in Appendix F that the agency with the highest rate of sexual harassment for women also had not issued a policy statement of sexual harassment at the time this survey was conducted.

However, Dr. Rowe cautions that because of heightened awareness caused by publicizing the policy, the number of informal and formal complaints of sexual harassment may temporarily increase in the short run.

4. Agencies should develop a training strategy to aid in preventing sexual harassment; this strategy will be instrumental in targeting those groups that should receive training on a priority basis to best utilize limited training resources.

This training can include inservice classroom training either as a separate course or as part of other courses, publishing pamphlets or handbooks for employees and supervisors on the subject, and providing other awareness activities through lectures and short workshops. An effective training strategy should include at least three target audiences:

- (a) managers and supervisors whose responsibility is the conduct of the workplace;
- (b) other agency personnel such as personnel and EEO officials who have responsibility to advise victims and supervisors on procedural and other matters regarding sexual harassment, and
- (c) victims or potential victims requiring information on their rights as well as useful techniques on coping with the sexual harassment informally.

Providing Assistance to Victims

5. Agencies should provide information to victims on effective techniques for resolving incidents of sexual harassment.

Agencies should provide all employees with information (in pamphlet or other written format) regarding:

- what the most effective actions are for them to take to stop sexual harassment,
- what their rights of redress of sexual harassment are, including the availability of formal complaint channels,
- which agency officials have responsibility for processing complaints or assisting with problems associated with incidents of sexual harassment; officials may include Federal Women's Program managers, EEO counselors, EEO officers or personnel officers, and

The study indicates that most victims try to resolve their sexual harassment incidents by ignoring the behavior but that this very rarely solves the problem. Victims should be advised that the most assertive responses are the most effective. Since a sizeable number of victims report suffering negative personal effects that result in losses to the Federal Government, steps should be taken to mitigate some of these effects.

6. Outside agencies, such as the Office of the Special Counsel in the MSPB, should also publicize the availability of their services as resources allow.

7. Federal employee labor unions should be encouraged to instruct shop stewards and other union officials about counseling techniques and legal redress for union member victims of sexual harassment who seek assistance from the union.

Followup

8. A number of other activities should be instituted to assure compliance with law and regulation as well as to provide followup to this study both within the Federal Government and in the private sector.

Steps that should be taken include:

- Copies of the MSPB Final Report documenting the incidence of sexual harassment should receive wide distribution among the agencies.
- The Congress should continue to monitor the activities of the various Federal agencies regarding sexual harassment.
- Agencies should ensure that their training courses developed to prevent sexual harassment are effective.
- EEOC should continue its review of actions taken by agencies to combat sexual harassment.
- Other research groups, both public and private, should be encouraged to do further analysis on this subject using the MSPB data tape in order to increase understanding and awareness of the problem; agencies should be encouraged to use the MSPB questionnaire to conduct research of organizations within the agencies for purposes of comparison.
- State and local governments, universities, as well as companies in the private sector should be encouraged to conduct research on sexual harassment among their own employees or students. The MSPB survey questionnaire should be made available to use as a model.

As with the laws that the Federal Government enforces against the private sector, the laws and policies regarding sexual harassment in the Federal workplace should also be monitored and enforced. The most cost effective approach is to include the monitoring of sexual harassment policies in conjunction with evaluation programs already in place.

Footnotes -- Chapter 9

1 See Office of Personnel Management, Federal Civilian Work Force Statistics, *Equal Employment Opportunity Statics*, November 1978, p. xv.

2 See Appendix F for data on these agencies.

3 See Appendix H for a discussion of the legal analysis of sexual harassment.

4 Mary P. Rowe, Ph.D. Assistant to the President, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, conversation March 1981.

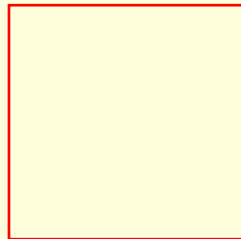
Text Alternatives

Definition of Sexual Harassment: Percentage of Male and Female Federal Employees Who Agreed that Each of Six Forms of Unwanted, Uninvited Sexual Attention Constitutes Sexual Harassment (Questions 2-7, b & d) Actions that male and female employees agreed constitute severe sexual harassment are making letters and calls, pressure for sexual favors, and deliberate touching. Less severe actions are pressure for dates, suggestive looks, and sexual remarks. If a supervisor took these actions; 93% of women and 87% of men agreed that letters and calls constitute severe sexual harassment; 91% of women and 84% of men agreed that pressure for sexual favors constitute severe sexual harassment; 91% of women and 83% of men agreed that deliberate touching constitute severe sexual harassment; 77% of women and 76% of men agreed that pressure for dates constitute less severe sexual harassment; 72% of women and 59% of men agreed that suggestive looks constitute less severe sexual harassment; and, 62% of women and 53% of men agreed that sexual remarks constitute less severe sexual harassment. If another worker took these actions; 87% of women and 76% of men agreed that letters and calls constitute severe sexual harassment; 81% of women and 65% of men agreed that pressure for sexual favors constitute severe sexual harassment; 84% of women and 69% of men agreed that deliberate touching constitute severe sexual harassment; 65% of women and 59% of men agreed that pressure for dates constitute less severe sexual harassment; 64% of women and 47% of men agreed that suggestive looks constitute less severe sexual harassment; and, 54% of women and 42% of men agreed that sexual remarks constitute less severe sexual harassment.

Figure 3-1: Pie chart shows of the total federal workforce of 1,862,000, non-victims comprised 75% or 1,400,000; victims of less severe sexual harassment comprised 8% or 150,000; victims of severe sexual harassment comprised 16% or 300,000; and, victims of most severe sexual harassment comprised 1% or 12,000 employees.

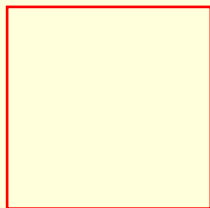
Figure 3-2: Pie chart 1 shows of the total federal female workforce of 694,000, non-victims comprised 58% or 400,000; victims of less severe sexual harassment comprised 12% or 85,000; victims of severe sexual harassment comprised 29% or 200,000; and, victims of most severe sexual harassment comprised 1% or 9,000 employees. Pie chart 2 shows of the total federal male workforce of 1,168,000, non-victims comprised 85% or 1,000,000; victims of less severe sexual harassment comprised 6% or 65,000; victims of severe sexual harassment comprised 9% or 100,000; and, victims of most severe sexual harassment comprised .3% or 3,000 employees.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE FEDERAL WORKPLACE IS IT A PROBLEM?



March 1981

**A REPORT OF THE U.S. MERIT SYSTEMS PROTECTION BOARD
OFFICE OF MERIT SYSTEMS REVIEW AND STUDIES**



**THE CHAIRWOMAN OF THE MERIT SYSTEMS PROTECTION BOARD
Washington, D.C. 20419**

March 1981

THE PRESIDENT
THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE
THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Dear Sirs:

The Merit Systems Protection Board presents this report pursuant to a request by the Subcommittee on Investigations, Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, United States House of Representatives.

This report conveys the findings of a survey of the extent of sexual harassment in the Federal workplace conducted by the Board's Office of Merit Systems Review and Studies.

We urge your consideration of the facts presented here and the use of your good offices to ensure that the Federal personnel system is free from prohibited practices and honors merit principles.

Respectfully,
FOR THE BOARD

Ruth T. Prokop, Chairwoman

PREFACE

A little over a year ago the Subcommittee on Investigations of the House Committee on Post Office and Civil Service asked the Merit Systems Protection Board to conduct a study to determine the extent, if any, of sexual harassment in the Federal workplace. This task was assigned to the Board's Office of Merit Systems Review and Studies (MSRS) which, at that time, was in its infancy--barely two months old with a staff of four.

The study of sexual harassment was to become a landmark study of a complex social issue with Federal-wide implications. To conduct such a study, MSRS had to develop systems to address the issues at hand and survey the entire Federal population in a manner honoring the scientific standards for a study of such scope.

My colleagues and I began to shape the project along the lines of the Congressional mandate in late December **1979**. Daniel Wojcik, Associate Director for Operations, brought to the assignment his multi-discipline experience in personnel research, survey design and personnel operations. George Raub, the office's newly recruited Statistician-Computer Scientist was able to borrow from his previous Federal experience in analyzing complex data bases and began to set in place the myriad of systems required to ensure an unbiased analysis. Cynthia Shaughnessy was chosen to coordinate the day-to-day operations of this project, to contribute her substantial knowledge of Federal women's issues which had grown out of her leadership in the Federal Women's Program, and to oversee the drafting of the final report.

Our initial task was the development of a questionnaire to search out answers to the concerns raised by the Congress. Although several

informal studies had been conducted in recent years, none of them met the standards we believed we must honor to ensure a balanced and objective review of this area of human behavior.

With this pioneership much in mind we sought the counsel of those experts we believed could contribute to our understanding. At the time we developed the questionnaire, Dr. Sandra Tangri, Dr. Martha Burt, and Dr. Leanor Johnson were identified as expert researchers in various aspects of sexual behavior and they took a brief leave of absence from The Urban Institute to help us identify the critical issues and develop the questionnaire. During this phase of the project, Dr. Suzanne S. Ageton of the Behavioral Research Institute of Boulder, Colorado, Dr. Hubert Feild of Auburn University and Dr. Barbara Gutek of the University of California at Los Angeles gave us the benefit of their research experiences as did many others.

Over 20,000 Federal employees completed the questionnaire--an 85% response rate which far exceeded the minimum standards for reliability. Once the results were tabulated and analyzed a preliminary report of the statistical results was presented to the Subcommittee on Investigations of the House Committee on Post Office and Civil Service on September 25, 1980.

Our final report identifies sexual harassment as an important concern in the workplace. Although we know of no comparable research in the private sector, our findings in the Federal study--that people of all ages, salary levels, education backgrounds and hometowns are potential victims--lead us to the observation that sexual harassment cannot be uniquely associated with Federal employment. We encourage private sector understanding of other employee experiences with sexual harassment and encourage private sector leaders to pursue a comparable course of self-analysis as the first step in eliminating this form of sex discrimination.

Patricia A. Mathis
Director, Office of Merit Systems Review and Studies

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The senior group identified in the Director's Preface was supported by dozens of Federal employees and private citizens who contributed their experiences and ideas.

The National Institute of Mental Health provided its early support by helping us enlist able researchers and by providing the initial funding support for the questionnaire development.

Before the questionnaire was developed, an advisory panel was convened to define critical issues and explore' alternative study approaches. These advisors included: Mr. Louis Nunez, U.S. Commission on Civil Rights; Ms. Ellis McNeil, Office of Personnel Management; Mr. Robert Walker, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission; Dr. Hubert S. Feild, Jr., Auburn University; Ms. Stewart Oneglia, U.S. Department of Justice; Mr. Willard Mitchell, U.S. Department of the Air Force; Ms. Louise Smothers, American Federation of Government Employees; and Ms. Freada Klein, Alliance Against Sexual Coercion.

Assistance in the preparation of the preliminary report to the Congress of the results of the study in September 1980 was provided by Dr. Barbara Kaster of Bowdoin College and Dr. Carol Duncan of Maine Medical Center.

The legal commentary of current case law for this report was prepared by Susan Cornelius under the supervision of Stewart Oneglia, U.S. Department of Justice.

Additional research, writing, and editing was provided by Sherrell Varner and Carolyn Heinrich of the Blue Pencil Group, Reston, Virginia.

Several members of the Office of Merit Systems Review and Studies were central players at various stages of this project. Dr. Joel D. Chananie developed the model for estimating the cost impact of sexual harassment; a team of support staff headed by Gene Browning, included Elaine Latimer, Margaret Wilson, Sandra Stewart and Karen Elliott; Mercer Jones of the Board 's Office of Legislative Counsel provided audio-visual assistance for the Congressional testimony.

We were also assisted by the following individuals who gave us their advice and assistance in the design, implementation, and reporting of this study: Daniel M. Geller, Department of Psychology, George Washington University; William A. Blakey, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare; Emilio Abeyta, U.S. Department of Justice; Rosemary Storey and Todd Buchta, Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, U.S. House of Representatives; Dr. Nancy Barrett, U.S. Department of Labor; Diane Herrmann, Office of Personnel Management; Donald Moore, U.S. Department of Treasury; Dr. Philip A. D. Schneider, Office of Personnel Management; Dr. John Dirkse, George Washington University; Mary Jo Aagerstoun, Small Business Administration; Betty Hart, Connie Price, and Dr. Sandra Carey, U.S. Department of the Navy; Mary Ann Largen, New Responses, Inc.; Dr. Gloria Levin, National Institute of Mental Health; and Leonard Slobodin and Betty Caplis of the MSPB Chicago office.

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Executive Summary

This Executive Summary provides in condensed form a summary of major recommendations and a review of the major findings on the views of Federal employees about sexual harassment, the extent of sexual harassment in the Federal workplace, a description of characteristics of victims and perpetrators of sexual harassment, a discussion of the perceptions and responses of victims to their incidents of sexual harassment, the impact of the behavior on the victims and the estimated dollar cost of sexual harassment to the Federal Government, and views of Federal employees about potential remedies and their effectiveness.

The full Final Report represents the culmination of approximately one year of original research and evaluation of the nature and extent of sexual harassment in the Federal Government. This study is the first scientifically controlled survey of this depth and breadth ever to be conducted on the subject of sexual harassment. To our knowledge it is also the first of its kind to be conducted with the full cooperation of the employer--in this case the Federal Government.

The full report contains many recommendations that can be implemented by agency heads quickly and at relatively minimum cost. Copies of this study should be made available to all agency personnel offices, training officers, Equal Employment Opportunity officers and Federal Women's Program managers, to aid implementation of the recommendations.

Background

" Managers should be put on notice that a 'boys will be boys' atmosphere will not be condoned in any Federal agency. " **James M. Hanley,**

former Chairman, Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, U.S. House of Representatives.

In recent years there has been growing discussion about the existence of sexual harassment at the workplace. Some maintain that it is an age-old problem, while others feel that it is a relatively new phenomenon that has emerged as more women enter the working world. There has been controversy about what constitutes sexual harassment, how widespread harassment is, and how serious its consequences are for employee well-being and productivity.

Against this background, Chairman James M. Hanley and the Subcommittee on Investigations of the Committee on Post Office and Civil Service of the United States House of Representatives conducted a preliminary investigation on sexual harassment in October and November of 1979. Although the investigation was limited to an examination of 100 complaints, the findings were serious enough to prompt the Subcommittee to ask the Merit Systems Protection Board to conduct a thorough and scientific survey of sexual harassment in the Federal workplace. The Subcommittee wanted to find out if the results of their limited investigation would be borne out by a more extensive study.

The preliminary results of the MSPB study were presented at follow-up hearings held by the House Subcommittee on September 25, 1980. The preliminary briefing focused on the series of questions mandated by the Subcommittee to be addressed in the survey. These were:

What kinds of behavior constitute sexual harassment? Do the attitudes of men and women differ in this regard?

1. To what degree does sexual harassment occur within the Federal workplace? What is the frequency? What are the manifestations?
2. Are victims or perpetrators of sexual harassment found in disproportionate numbers within certain agencies, job classifications, geographic locations, racial categories, age brackets, educational levels, grade levels, etc.?
3. What forms of express or implied leverage have been used by harassers to reward or punish their victims?
4. What has been the impact of sexual harassment on its victims in terms of job turnover, work performance, physical and emotional condition, financial and career well-being?
5. What effect has sexual harassment had on the morale or productivity of the immediate work group?
6. Are victims of sexual harassment aware of available remedies? Do they have confidence in those remedies?

Research Methodology

To develop the study, the MSPB's Office of Merit Systems Review and Studies:

- surveyed the current literature on the subject of sexual harassment,
- consulted with a group of community workers, academic researchers, Federal officials, and a union representative on the content of the study,
- reviewed applicable case law and Government regulations and related policy directives, plans, and training programs, and
- reviewed various case testimonies, Congressional testimony, and previous research studies that had addressed the subject of sexual harassment.

After extensive field testing on over 300 Federal employees and after making numerous revisions, the research team constructed a questionnaire designed to elicit answers to questions in the Congressional mandate. As directed by the House Subcommittee, the research team prepared the questionnaire on the basis of the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) definition of sexual harassment, i.e., deliberate or repeated unsolicited verbal comments, gestures or physical contact of a sexual nature that is considered to be unwelcome by the recipient.

With the assistance of OPM, a disproportionately stratified random sample^[1] was drawn from OPM's Central Personnel Data File (CPDF) consisting of civilian employees in the Executive Branch. Four variables were selected to stratify the population. These were: sex, minority status, salary, and organization. Over 23,000 men and women were surveyed in May 1980. Questionnaires were sent to respondents' homes to preserve their confidentiality and anonymity. The members of the sample were asked to base most of their answers on their work experience during the 24-month period from May 1978 to May 1980. A reminder postcard was sent one week later and a follow-up questionnaire was sent to non respondents three weeks after that. The rate of return of 85%--was considerably higher than usually expected on mail surveys.^[2]

Explanations of Frequently Used Terms

Victims. In this executive summary, victims of sexual harassment are defined as those respondents who indicated (in either Survey Question 17 or Question 20) that they had experienced one or more forms of sexual harassment on the job during the preceding 24 months. All data is computed on the basis of Question 17 except for those parts of the Questionnaire where respondents were asked to provide detailed data on one critical sexual harassment incident. For questions involving this critical incident, the data on victims was computed on the basis of Survey Question 20. In the final report, the victims who chose to describe their critical incident are referred to as "narrator-victims."

Level of severity of sexual harassment. On the basis of preliminary analysis, sexual harassment experiences (identified by respondents to Survey Question 17 or Question Survey 20) were classified as "most severe," "severe," or "less severe." Those considered "most severe" -- were actual or attempted rape or assault; "severe"--included letters, phone calls or materials of a sexual nature; pressure for sexual favors; and deliberate touching, leaning over, cornering or pinching; and "less severe" included pressure for dates; sexually suggestive looks or gestures; and sexual teasing, jokes, remarks or questions.

Findings

Summary

The following major findings emerged from the study:

- Both men and women Federal workers generally agree that uninvited behaviors of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment.
- The incidence rate of sexual harassment in the Federal workforce is widespread--42% of all female employees and 15% of all male employees reported being sexually harassed.
- Many sexual harassment incidents occur repeatedly and are of relatively long duration.
- The majority of Federal employees who had worked elsewhere feel sexual harassment is no worse in the Federal workplace than in state and local governments or in the private sector.
- Sexual harassment is widely distributed among women and men of various backgrounds, positions and locations; however individuals with certain personal and organizational characteristics are more likely to be sexually harassed than others.
- The characteristics of harassers differ for women and men victims--for example, women report almost always being harassed by a man, whereas men report usually being harassed by a woman.
- Many harassers are reported to have bothered more than one victim at work.
- Few employees report having been accused of sexually harassing others.
- Those who are sexually harassed by supervisors and those who experience the more severe forms of sexual harassment are more likely than other victims to foresee penalties or possible benefits from the sexual harassment.
- Most victims neither anticipated nor receive adverse consequences as a result of their sexual harassment, although a sizeable minority did, particularly women.
- A number of informal actions were found by victims to be effective in stopping sexual harassment, particularly the most direct and assertive responses.
- Few victims pursue formal remedies, but many who do find them helpful.
- The impact and cost of sexual harassment in dollars to the Federal Government is sizeable--an estimated minimum of \$189 million over the 2-year period covered by the study.
- Although their experiences do not change the careers and work situations of most victims, a sizeable number of women and men do leave their jobs or suffer adverse consequences.
- Victims are more likely to think the sexual harassment negatively affected their personal well-being or morale than their work performance or that of their immediate work group.
- Victims and supervisors are generally unaware of available formal remedies and are skeptical about their effectiveness.
- Assertive informal actions are thought to be the most effective way employees can make others stop bothering them sexually.
- Most victims and supervisors think there is much management can do to reduce sexual harassment.
- In conclusion, the data show that sexual harassment is widespread, is costly, deeply felt by many of the victims, and that the 1979 Congressional investigation was indicative of a significant problem; however, the data also indicated that there is much that can be done to reduce that problem.

View of Federal Workers Toward Sexual Harassment

To determine whether men and women defined sexual harassment differently, they were asked whether they considered uninvited sexually-oriented behaviors to be sexual harassment. These behaviors, ranked in order of agreement were:

Severe

1. Letters, phone calls or materials of a sexual nature
2. Pressure for sexual favors
3. Touching, leaning over, cornering or pinching

Less Severe

4. Pressure for dates
5. Sexually suggestive looks or gestures
6. Sexual teasing, jokes, remarks or questions

From the responses, we found that most men and women agreed that behaviors 1-4 constituted sexual harassment. However, men were less likely to think that "sexual looks" and "sexual comments," the more ambiguous and prevalent forms of sexual behavior on the job, were sexual harassment, particularly when perpetrated by a coworker. Respondents were not asked whether they thought that actual or attempted rape or assault was sexual harassment. Since this behavior is potentially criminal, we assumed that it is the most severe form of sexual harassment.

Generally, men and women were more likely to think that a behavior was sexual harassment if the perpetrator was a supervisor rather than a coworker. Thus, it would appear that a higher standard of conduct exists for supervisors to exhibit proper behavior in the office, arguably because of their official authority and responsibilities.

Although in the abstract men and women were likely to agree that uninvited sexual behavior at work is sexual harassment, responses may indicate that sexual harassment is sometimes situational. For most workers, including those who identified themselves as victims, the perceived motive or demeanor of the initiator made a difference as to whether the behavior was viewed as sexual harassment.

A number of questions were asked to find how respondents viewed sexual behavior at work. We found that both men and women believed that sexual activity, whether voluntary or otherwise, should not occur between people who work together, although women were less likely to approve of sexual affairs among coworkers than were men. We found that men, including supervisors, showed a greater tendency than women to think that victims are somewhat responsible for bringing sexual harassment on themselves and are inclined to believe that sexual harassment has been exaggerated. However, men and women agreed that sexual harassment is behavior that people should not have to tolerate.

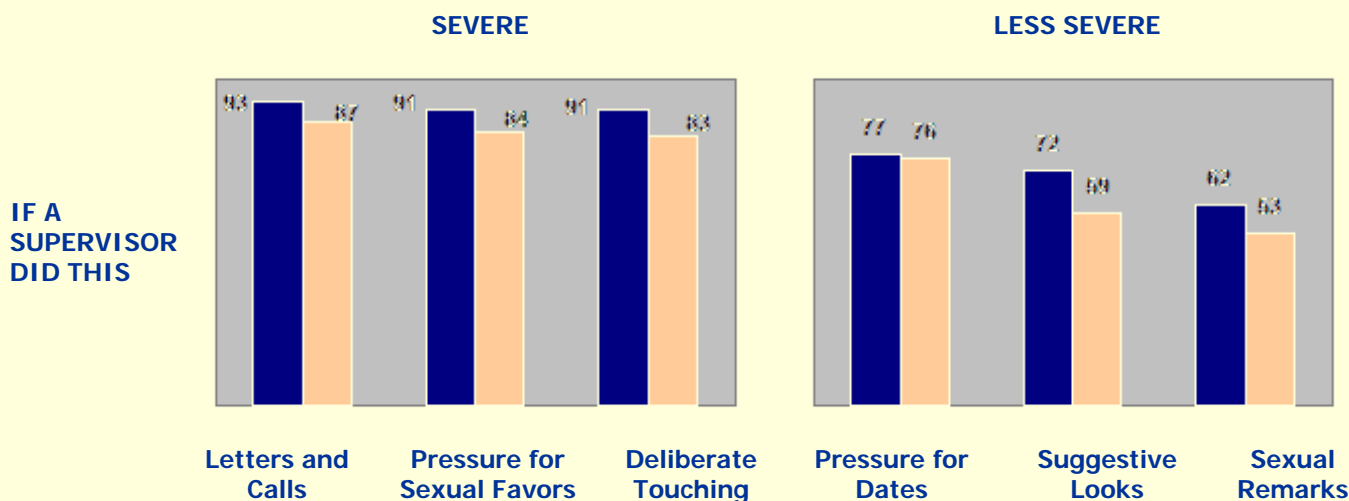
Extent of Sexual Harassment

To determine how widespread sexual harassment is in the Federal workplace, respondents were asked whether they had experienced any of the seven listed behaviors within the finite time frame of the previous 24 months (May 1978 to May 1980), and how often the experience occurred.

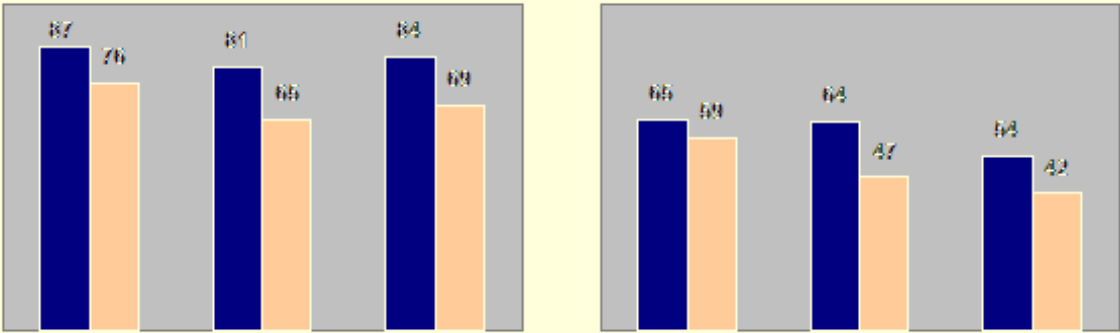
From this we found that one in four Federal employees reported receiving uninvited and unwanted sexual attention, and that women, as expected, were much more likely to be victims than were men. Almost half--(42%) of all female Federal employees and only 15% of all male employees reported being sexually harassed. Although the percentage for men is lower in comparison to women, it nevertheless is much higher than previously expected.

Definition of Sexual Harassment

Percentage of Male and Female Federal Employees Who Agreed that Each of Six Forms of Unwanted, Uninvited Sexual Attention Constitutes Sexual Harassment (Questions 2-7, b & d) [\(text alternative\)](#)



IF ANOTHER
WORKER
DID THIS



NOTE: Percentages are based on "Probably Yes" and "Definitely Yes" responses to questions.

WOMEN

MEN

Whether both men and women define the unwanted behavior that they received in the same way is debatable. Other studies have shown that men and women view their sex roles very differently and use language in different ways to describe sexual behavior. Again, it should be pointed out that the sexual harassment as reported here is based upon data provided by the victims themselves. If sexual attention was neither unwanted (nor uninvited) by the recipient, it presumably was not reported.

The sexual harassment as reported by the victims took many forms. Every form except actual or attempted rape or sexual assault was experienced by a sizeable percentage of both men and women. The more ambiguous forms of sexual harassment--"sexual comments" and "suggestive looks "--were reported most often. These forms were more likely to be repeated.

However, with the exception of actual or attempted rape or assault, most of the victims reported experiencing all forms of sexual harassment repeatedly. In addition, many reported experiencing more than one form of sexual harassment. We also found that the incidents of sexual harassment were not just passing events--most lasted more than a week, and many lasted longer than 6 months. Thus, not only did the sexual harassment occur repeatedly, it was of relatively long duration as well.

Incidence Rate Among Various Forms of Sexual Harassment
Percentage of Female and Male Federal Employees Who Experienced Each Form of Sexual Harassment
Between May 1978 and May 1980 (Question 17)

LESS SEVERE	Sexual Remarks	Reported by 33% of Women
		Reported by 10% of Men
	Suggestive Looks	Reported by 28% of Women
		Reported by 8% of Men
	Pressure for Dates	Reported by 26% of Women
		Reported by 7% of Men
SEVERE	Deliberate Touching	Reported by 15% of Women
		Reported by 3% of Men
	Pressure for Sexual Favors	Reported by 9% of Women
		Reported by 2% of Men
	Letters and Calls	Reported by 9% of Women
		Reported by 3% of Men
MOST SEVERE	Actual or Attempted Rape or Assault	Reported by 1% of Women
		Reported by 0.3% of Men
Note: Many respondents indicated that they experience more than one form of sexual harassment.		

To view the incidence rate of sexual harassment in context, we asked respondents who had worked outside the Federal Government to compare the Federal Government with other workplaces. The majority of respondents stated that they felt sexual harassment was no worse in the Federal workplace than in state and local government or in the private sector.

Victims of Sexual Harassment

To determine who is sexually harassed and whether certain personal and organizational factors contributed to the likelihood of harassment, we looked at a number of demographic variables. Demographic characteristics of victims that seem to have a strong bearing on whether or not an individual is harassed are: age, marital status, and sexual (male-female) composition of the workgroup. Those factors that seem to have a somewhat weaker bearing are education level, race, ethnic background, job classification, nontraditional nature of job, and sex of immediate supervisor. Based on these factors, we found that the typical men and women who are likely to be harassed are:

- young,
- not married,
- higher educated,
- members of a minority, racial or ethnic group (if male),
- hold trainee positions (or office/clerical positions, if male),
- hold nontraditional positions, for their sex, (e.g., female law enforcement officers, male secretaries),
- have an immediate supervisor of the opposite sex,
- have an immediate work group composed predominately of the opposite sex.

We also found that certain agencies have a greater incidence rate than do others. Women in the Departments of Labor, Transportation, Justice, certain Defense Department agencies^[3] (other than the Air Force, Army, Navy and Marine Corps), Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Air Force, Navy/Marine Corps, Veterans Administration and other smaller agencies^[4] had a higher rate of sexual harassment than those in other agencies. Men (as well as women) in the Departments of Justice and HUD and the Veterans Administration, and men in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare and the General Services Administration also reported rates higher than the Federal-wide average.

Age of Victims

Percentage of Federal Employees of Different Ages Who Experienced Sexual Harassment (Question 61)

Ages 16-19	Who Experienced Sexual Harassment	Reported by 67% of Women Reported by 27% of Men
Ages 20-24		Reported by 59% of Women Reported by 20% of Men
Ages 25-34		Reported by 53% of Women Reported by 18% of Men
Ages 35-44		Reported by 43% of Women Reported by 14% of Men
Ages 45-54		Reported by 33% of Women Reported by 13% of Men
Ages 55 and older		Reported by 22% of Women Reported by 12% of Men

Marital Status of Victims

Percentage of Federal Employees Who Experienced Sexual Harassment, by Marital Status (Question 62)

Single	Who Experienced Sexual Harassment	Reported by 53% of Women Reported by 22% of Men
Divorced		Reported by 49% of Women Reported by 21% of Men
Married		Reported by 37% of Women Reported by 13% of Men
Widowed		Reported by 31% of Women Reported by 30% of Men

Education Level of Victims

Percentage of Federal Employees of Different Education Levels Who Experienced Sexual Harassment (Question 60)

Less than high school diploma		Reported by 31% of Women Reported by 8% of Men
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High School diploma or GED (Graduate Equivalency Degree)	Who Experienced Sexual Harassment	Reported by 35% of Women Reported by 11% of Men
High school diploma plus technical training or apprenticeship		Reported by 39% of Women Reported by 13% of Men
Some college		Reported by 45% of Women Reported by 17% of Men
Graduated from college (B.A., B. S., or other bachelor's degree		Reported by 50% of Women Reported by 14% of Men
Some graduate school		Reported by 53% of Women Reported by 15% of Men
Graduate or professional degree		Reported by 48% of Women Reported by 17% of Men

Racial and Ethnic Background of Victims

Percentage of Federal Employees of Different Racial and Ethnic Backgrounds Who Experienced Sexual Harassment (Question 59)

Other	Who Experienced Sexual Harassment	Reported by 48% of Women Reported by 27% of Men
Hispanic		Reported by 45% of Women Reported by 19% of Men
White, not of Hispanic origin		Reported by 43% of Women Reported by 13% of Men
Black, not of Hispanic origin		Reported by 43% of Women Reported by 21% of Men
Asian or Pacific Islander		Reported by 36% of Women Reported by 16% of Men
American Indian or Alaskan native		Reported by 35% of Women Reported by 22% of Men

Job Classification of Victims

Percentage of Federal Employees of Different Job Classifications Who Experienced Sexual Harassment (Question 57)

Trainee	Who Experienced Sexual Harassment	Reported by 51% of Women Reported by 16% of Men
Professional, technical		Reported by 45% of Women Reported by 15% of Men
Administration, management		Reported by 42% of Women Reported by 15% of Men
Other		Reported by 42% of Women Reported by 14% of Men
Office, clerical		Reported by 40% of Women Reported by 17% of Men
Blue collar, service		Reported by 38% of Women Reported by 12% of Men

Traditionality of Jobs of Victims

Percentage of Federal Employees in Traditional and Nontraditional Jobs For Their Sex Who Experienced Sexual Harassment (Question 52)

Nontraditional job	Who Experienced Sexual Harassment	Reported by 53% of Women Reported by 20% of Men
Traditional job		Reported by 41% of Women Reported by 14% of Men

Sex of Supervisor(s) of Victims

Percentage of Federal Employees Who Experienced Sexual Harassment, by Sex of Immediate Supervisor(s) (Question 50)

Male supervisor	Reported by 45% of Women Reported by 13% of Men	Who Experienced Sexual Harassment
Male and female supervisors	Reported by 44% of Women Reported by 25% of Men	
Female supervisor	Reported by 38% of Women Reported by 23% of Men	

Sexual Composition of Victims' Work Groups

Percentage of Federal Employees in Different Kinds of Work Groups Who Experienced Sexual Harassment (Question 51)

All men	Reported by 55% of Women Reported by 8% of Men	Who Experienced Sexual Harassment
Predominately men	Reported by 49% of Women Reported by 13% of Men	
Equal number of men and women	Reported by 43% of Women Reported by 19% of Men	
Predominately women	Reported by 37% of Women Reported by 22% of Men	
All women	Reported by 22% of Women Reported by 22% of Men	

Sex of Harasser

Percentage of Narrator Victims Who Indicated the Sex of the Person(s) Who Bothered Them Sexually (Question 32a)

TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Male	Who Bothered Them Sexually	Reported by 79% of Women Reported by 18% of Men
	Two or more males		Reported by 16% of Women Reported by 4% of Men
	Both males and females		Reported by 2% of Women Reported by 6% of Men
	Female		Reported by 2% of Women Reported by 60% of Men
	Two or more females		Reported by 1% of Women Reported by 12% of Men
	Unknown		Reported by 1% of Women Reported by 0.3% of Men

In addition, we found that certain work environments were more conducive to sexual harassment than were others.

Victims were more likely to report being in work environments where employees did not perceive open communications or a good relationship with their supervisors, felt pressure to engage in sexual activity such as flirting or making comments about the opposite sex, and observed others using sex for professional advancement.

In addition, victims were much more likely than supervisors to perceive that sexual harassment is a problem in their offices and to think that management is not making every effort to stop sexual harassment.

Perpetrators of Sexual Harassment

We found that most women reported that their harassers were male and that most men indicated that their harassers were female. However, men were far more likely than women to report being harassed by someone of their same sex.

Most harassers of women and men reportedly acted alone rather than in concert with another person. However, most women identified their harasser as being older than they, whereas men usually indicated that their harasser was usually younger than they. Although both women and men reported that their harasser was usually married, men were more likely to indicate that their harasser was divorced or single. Most

victims in general reported being harassed by someone of their same race or ethnic background, although minority women were more likely to report that their harasser was of a different race or ethnicity.

Age of Harasser

Percentage of Narrator Victims Who Indicated the Age of the Person(s) Who Bothered Them Sexually (Question 32b)

TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Older	Who Bothered Them Sexually	Reported by 68% of Women Reported by 29% of Men
	Younger		Reported by 12% of Women Reported by 38% of Men
	Same		Reported by 11% of Women Reported by 18% of Men
	Various Ages		Reported by 7% of Women Reported by 12% of Men
	Unknown		Reported by 2% of Women Reported by 3% of Men

Marital Status of Harasser

Percentage of Narrator Victims Who Indicated the Marital Status of the Person(s) Who Bothered Them Sexually (Question 32d)

TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Married	Who Bothered Them Sexually	Reported by 67% of Women Reported by 35% of Men
	Mixed		Reported by 9% of Women Reported by 14% of Men
	Unknown		Reported by 9% of Women Reported by 7% of Men
	Single		Reported by 8% of Women Reported by 20% of Men
	Divorced, Separated, Widowed		Reported by 7% of Women Reported by 25% of Men

One surprising finding was that women and men reported being harassed by fellow employees more often than by supervisors. This finding was surprising in that, before the study, most sexual harassment was thought to be perpetrated by the more powerful supervisors against their more vulnerable employees. However, a sizeable number of women also reported being harassed by supervisors. Thus, supervisors were found to be personally responsible for a number of sexual harassment incidents, although not the principal cause of the problem. However, supervisors as part of their duties have a responsibility to assure that their subordinates work in an environment free from sexual harassment in keeping with Federal policy prohibiting sexual harassment in the Federal workplace.

Another major finding was that many women and men reported that their harasser had also bothered others at work. This somewhat negates the view that sexual harassment is principally a matter of isolated instances of personal sexual attraction. Thus it appears that some individuals are more likely to harass than others and that sexual harassment is not necessarily normal interaction among men and women on the job, or that all men and women engage in it as has been intimated by some.

Only a handful of respondents indicated that they had been accused of sexually bothering someone else at work, and most thought that the charge was unfair. This could indicate that few victims confront their harassers or that many accused harassers are unwilling to identify themselves even in the privacy of an anonymous questionnaire.

Ethnic Status of Harasser

Percentage of Narrator Victims Who Indicated the Ethnic Status of the Person(s) Who Bothered Them Sexually (Question 32c)

TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Same	Who Bothered Them Sexually	Reported by 63% of Women Reported by 68% of Men
	Different		Reported by 26% of Women Reported by 17% of Men
	Some the Same and Some Different		Reported by 9% of Women Reported by 12% of Men
	Unknown		Reported by 2% of Women Reported by 3% of Men

Organizational Level of Harasser

Percentage of Narrator Victims Who Identified the Organizational Level of the Person(s) Who Bothered Them Sexually (Question 33)

TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Coworker or Other Employee	Who Bothered Them Sexually	Reported by 63% of Women Reported by 76% of Men
	Immediate Supervisor or Other Supervisor		Reported by 37% of Women Reported by 14% of Men
	Unknown		Reported by 6% of Women Reported by 5% of Men
	Subordinate		Reported by 4% of Women Reported by 16% of Men

NOTE: Some respondents indicated that more than one party bothered them.

Incidents of Sexual Harassment

We found that although most victims did not foresee consequences for resisting or complying with the sexual harassment, both the organizational level of the harasser in relation to the victim and the severity of the sexual harassment made a major difference in the victims' perceptions of the use of leverage.

Victims who were harassed by immediate or higher level supervisors were more likely to foresee negative consequences for refusing to comply and incentives for complying with the sexual harassment than those who were harassed by coworkers or other employees. Likewise, those who were victims of "most severe" and "severe" sexual harassment were much more likely than those who were victims of "less severe" harassment to perceive that carrots and sticks were being used against them to comply with the behavior.

We also looked at how victims responded to their sexual harassment. Most victims stated that they responded to the sexual harassment by passively ignoring it. However, the most effective actions for most victims to take were found to be the most assertive actions--"asking or telling the person to stop" or "reporting the behavior to the supervisor or other officials." The least effective actions were found to be the most passive--"going along with the behavior" or "ignoring it." The effectiveness level for various actions differed somewhat with the sex of the victim and severity of the sexual harassment.

However, it should be pointed out that although reporting the behavior to a supervisor or other officials was found to produce better results compared with other informal actions, around half of the women and only one-third of the men who tried this found that it made no difference or made things worse. This indicates that much still needs to be done to make supervisors and other officials accountable for resolving these problems informally.

Another indication of the need to make supervisors and other officials more responsive to the problem of sexual harassment is the finding that talking with these officials did not help the situation in the majority of cases. Talking with a party outside the agency such as a lawyer, civil rights group, someone from Congress, or other agency official, was found to be most successful for the few male and female victims of "most severe" sexual harassment and female victims of "less severe" sexual harassment who tried it. Most workers did not talk with any one about their incident and when they did, they usually spoke with friends and relatives or other workers.

Narrators' Informal Responses to Sexual Harassment

Percentage of Narrators Who Indicated that Taking These Informal Actions "Made Things Better" (Question 23)

VICTIMS OF MOST SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Transferred, disciplined or gave a poor performance rating to the person	reported by 72% of women and 9% of men
	Asked or told the person(s) to stop	reported by 40% of women and 13% of men
	Reported the behavior to the supervisor or other officials	reported by 57% of women and 11% of men
	Avoided the person(s)	reported by 20% of women and 32% of men
	Made a joke of the behavior	reported by 52% of women and 7% of men
	Threatened to tell or told other workers	reported by 30% of women and 19% of men
	Ignored the behavior or did nothing	reported by 12% of women and 27% of men
	Went along with the behavior	reported by 14% of women and 46% of men
	Transferred, disciplined or gave a poor performance rating to the person	reported by 79% of women and 87% of men

VICTIMS OF SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Asked or told the person(s) to stop	reported by 53% of women and 69% of men
	Reported the behavior to the supervisor or other officials	reported by 54% of women and 46% of men
	Avoided the person(s)	reported by 42% of women and 51% of men
	Made a joke of the behavior	reported by 32% of women and 45% of men
	Threatened to tell or told other workers	reported by 36% of women and 29% of men
	Ignored the behavior or did nothing	reported by 24% of women and 41% of men
	Went along with the behavior	reported by 3% of women and 32% of men
VICTIMS OF LESS SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Transferred, disciplined or gave a poor performance rating to the person	reported by 59% of women and 33% of men
	Asked or told the person(s) to stop	reported by 60% of women and 68% of men
	Reported the behavior to the supervisor or other officials	reported by 52% of women and 17% of men
	Avoided the person(s)	reported by 54% of women and 58% of men
	Made a joke of the behavior	reported by 43% of women and 57% of men
	Threatened to tell or told other workers	reported by 36% of women and 21% of men
	Ignored the behavior or did nothing	reported by 36% of women and 45% of men
TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Transferred, disciplined or gave a poor performance rating to the person	reported by 74% of women and 56% of men
	Asked or told the person(s) to stop	reported by 54% of women and 67% of men
	Reported the behavior to the supervisor or other officials	reported by 53% of women and 35% of men
	Avoided the person(s)	reported by 45% of women and 53% of men
	Made a joke of the behavior	reported by 36% of women and 49% of men
	Threatened to tell or told other workers	reported by 35% of women and 24% of men
	Ignored the behavior or did nothing	reported by 28% of women and 42% of men
	Went along with the behavior	reported by 8% of women and 25% of men

NOTE: Some respondents indicated that they took more than one formal action.

Narrators' Informal Responses to Sexual Harassment

Percentage of Narrators Who Indicated that Taking These Informal Actions "Made Things Better" (Question 28)

VICTIMS OF MOST SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Requested an investigation by victim's organization	reported by 84% of women and 28% of men
	Filed a discrimination complaint or lawsuit	reported by 81% of women and 26% of men
	Requested an investigation by an outside agency	reported by 92% of women and 100% of men
	Filed a grievance or adverse action appeal	reported by 0% of women and 26% of men
VICTIMS OF SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Requested an investigation by victim's organization	reported by 73% of women and 50% of men
	Filed a discrimination complaint or lawsuit	reported by 52% of women and 15% of men
	Requested an investigation by an outside agency	reported by 27% of women and 0% of men

	Filed a grievance or adverse action appeal	reported by 31% of women and 43% of men
VICTIMS OF LESS SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Requested an investigation by victim's organization	reported by 44% of women and 0% of men
	Filed a discrimination complaint or lawsuit	reported by 90% of women and 0% of men
	Requested an investigation by an outside agency	reported by 52% of women and 100% of men
	Filed a grievance or adverse action appeal	reported by 85% of women and 0% of men
TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Requested an investigation by victim's organization	reported by 70% of women and 29% of men
	Filed a discrimination complaint or lawsuit	reported by 66% of women and 12% of men
	Requested an investigation by an outside agency	reported by 58% of women and 100% of men
	Filed a grievance or adverse action appeal	reported by 45% of women and 33% of men

NOTE: Some respondents indicated that they took more than one formal action.

Costs of Sexual Harassment

Job Turnover	Women	Men	Total
Cost to offer a job [1]	\$ 6.4	\$ 1.2	\$ 7.6
Background checks[2]	2.0	0.4	2.4
Training[3]	24.1	2.7	26.8
Total Cost of Job Turnover	\$ 22.5	\$ 4.3	\$ 26.8
Emotional Stress	3.9	2.1	5.0
Individual Productivity	37.7	34.4	72.1
Absenteeism	5.3	2.6	7.9
Work Group Productivity	32.6	44.3	76.9
TOTALS	\$ 102.0	\$ 86.7	\$ 188.7
1 Source: Office of Program Management and Evaluation, Office of Personnel Management	3 Source: "Employee Training in the Federal Service- FY 1979," published by the Office of Personnel Management, Workforce Effectiveness and Development Office.		
2 Source: Division of Personnel Investigations, Office of Personnel Management			

We found that very few victims took formal institutional remedies against the sexual harassment--only 2 to 3%. The majority who took formal actions reported that their doing so made things better. This would indicate that in contrast to the lack of faith in formal remedies expressed by most respondents in Chapter 8, the system does work for some. However, a sizeable minority (41%) indicated that filing the formal action either had no effect or in fact made things worse.

In addition, victims in general reported a mixed response from management to their formal complaints, although the response of management seemed to depend somewhat on the sex of victim and the severity of the harassment. Generally, victims were more likely to find a favorable management response than a hostile one. However, male victims were more likely to encounter hostility than were women and few victims of either sex reported that management "corrected the damage done to them."

Impact and Cost of Sexual Harassment

We found that a conservative estimate of the cost to the Federal Government due to sexual harassment over the two-year period was \$189

million--a sum equivalent to the total salaries of all 465 agency heads and all 7000 senior Federal executives (members of the Senior Executive Service) for six months. The greatest costs were associated with the loss of individual and workgroup productivity as reported by the victims. These figures are conservative for three reasons:

- Victims were far less likely to report a decline in their productivity than a decline in their physical or emotional well-being. Since physical or emotional well-being may in fact affect productivity, the number of victims who reported a drop in productivity may actually be closer to the larger number who stated that their emotional or physical condition declined. Thus, the numbers used to compute the loss due to individual productivity are probably low.
- We assumed that where reported, individual productivity declined by only 10%.
- We assumed that where reported, work group productivity declined by only 1%.

We also found that most victims reported that their careers and work situations did not change as a result of their sexual harassment experience, although a sizeable minority of women and men reported adverse consequences, such as leaving their jobs. Although most women and men victims in general indicated that their sexual harassment experience did not negatively affect their personal well-being or work performance, this varied with the severity of the harassment. Victims of the more severe forms of sexual harassment were more likely to report adverse effects. The adverse effects were particularly dramatic for the victims of "most severe" sexual harassment.

As stated above, most women and men were much more likely to perceive that their sexual harassment experience affected their personal well-being or morale than their work performance or productivity. Again, this finding may be one of perception.

In contrast to the reported effect on the individuals themselves, we found that few victims felt that the morale or productivity of their immediate work groups were negatively affected by their sexual harassment experiences. One reason for this may be that few coworkers knew about the experience and its effects on the victim since only about one-third of the victims reported that they spoke with coworkers about the incident.

Awareness of Remedies and Their Effectiveness

To discover whether victims and supervisors were even aware of formal remedies for sexual harassment, we asked whether they believed that the following actions were available to those who had been sexually bothered by others:

- requesting an investigation by the organization
- requesting an investigation by an outside organization
- filing a grievance or adverse action appeal
- filing a discrimination complaint
- filing a complaint through special channels set up for sexual harassment complaints

Although most of these actions are in fact available to most employees, we found that most victims and supervisors were relatively unaware of them. The one remedy about which the respondents were most knowledgeable was "filing a discrimination complaint."

When we asked respondents whether they thought those same formal remedies were effective in helping victims of sexual harassment, we found that relatively few victims or supervisors thought that the formal remedies would definitely be effective.

However, to the largest number of victims, particularly those who have not experienced the most severe form of sexual harassment, filing a formal complaint simply may not be an appropriate response. They prefer to handle the situation informally. Most victims indicated that they "saw no need to report" the incident as a reason for not filing a formal complaint. However, the female and to a lesser extent the male victims of the more severe forms of sexual harassment were much less likely to cite this reason for not taking a formal action than fear of adverse consequences or belief that nothing would be done.

In contrast to the somewhat pessimistic view of formal remedies, most Federal workers believe that employees successfully can take informal steps to stop the unwanted sexual attention. Both victims and supervisors most often endorsed direct assertive actions by the employees as being effective in stopping unwanted sexual attention. In contrast, few respondents thought that there was little an employee could do about the situation.

In addition, most Federal workers also think that there is much that management can do to reduce sexual harassment. Management actions involving tougher sanctions and enforcement generally were endorsed most often. However, a majority of victims and supervisors also endorsed actions involving publicizing management policies on sexual harassment. Women were more likely than men to endorse actions intended to help victims cope with the problem, such as setting up a special counseling service.

Conclusions

From these findings the following five general conclusions can be drawn about sexual harassment in the Federal workplace. This Final Report

provides explanations for these conclusions.

1. Sexual harassment is a legitimate problem in the Federal workplace.
2. In the past, agency managers have not been as successful as they could be in resolving problems of sexual harassment.
3. There is much that management can do about the problem of sexual harassment in the future.
4. There are effective actions that victims can take to solve the problem of sexual harassment.
5. Sexual harassment by its nature and in its various forms has differing effects on victims.

Perceived Effectiveness of Individual Actions

Percentage of Victims and Supervisors Who Thought Employee Actions Would Stop Sexual Harassment (Question 10)

VICTIMS OF MOST SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Asking or telling the person(s) to stop	Reported by 78% of women and 61% of men
	Reporting the behavior to the supervisor or other officials	Reported by 66% of women and 59% of men
	Filing a formal complaint	Reported by 48% of women and 48% of men
	Ignoring the behavior	Reported by 50% of women and 50% of men
	Avoiding the person(s)	Reported by 50% of women and 34% of men
	There is very little employees can do	Reported by 19% of women and 28% of men
	Threatening to tell or telling other workers	Reported by 17% of women and 18% of men
VICTIMS OF SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Asking or telling the person(s) to stop	Reported by 87% of women and 82% of men
	Reporting the behavior to the supervisor or other officials	Reported by 68% of women and 70% of men
	Filing a formal complaint	Reported by 52% of women and 61% of men
	Ignoring the behavior	Reported by 48% of women and 44% of men
	Avoiding the person(s)	Reported by 48% of women and 42% of men
	There is very little employees can do	Reported by 10% of women and 5% of men
	Threatening to tell or telling other workers	Reported by 15% of women and 17% of men
VICTIMS OF LESS SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Asking or telling the person(s) to stop	Reported by 83% of women and 84% of men
	Reporting the behavior to the supervisor or other officials	Reported by 71% of women and 72% of men
	Filing a formal complaint	Reported by 55% of women and 56% of men
	Ignoring the behavior	Reported by 45% of women and 45% of men
	Avoiding the person(s)	Reported by 44% of women and 39% of men
	There is very little employees can do	Reported by 5% of women and 5% of men
	Threatening to tell or telling other workers	Reported by 16% of women and 21% of men
VICTIMS OF ALL FORMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND SUPERVISORS	Asking or telling the person(s) to stop	Reported by 85% of women, 83% of men, 86% of supervisory women, and 85% of supervisory men
	Reporting the behavior to the supervisor or other officials	Reported by 69% of women, 71% of men, 71% of supervisory women, and 78% of supervisory men
	Filing a formal complaint	Reported by 53% of women, 59% of men, 49% of supervisory women, and 57% of supervisory men

	Ignoring the behavior	Reported by 47% of women, 45% of men, 49% of supervisory women, and 42% of supervisory men
	Avoiding the person(s)	Reported by 47% of women, 41% of men, 45% of supervisory women, and 40% of supervisory men
	There is very little employees can do	Reported by 9% of women, 5% of men, 6% of supervisory women, and 2% of supervisory men
	Threatening to tell or telling other workers	Reported by 16% of women, 19% of men, 13% of supervisory women, and 19% of supervisory men

NOTE: Many respondents indicated more than one action would be effective.

Perceived Effectiveness of Management Actions

Percentage of Victims and Supervisors Who Thought Management Actions Regarding Sexual Harassment Would Be Effective (Question 11)

IMPOSING TOUGHER SANCTIONS AND STRICTER ENFORCEMENT	Conduct swift and thorough investigations of complaints of sexual harassment	Perceived effective action by 77% of women, 71% of men, 81% of female supervisors, and 78% of male supervisors
	Enforce penalties against managers who knowingly allow this behavior to continue	Perceived effective action by 59% of workmen, 61% of men, 62% of female supervisors, and 60% of male supervisors
	Enforce penalties against those who sexually bother others	Perceived effective action by 74% of workmen, 71% of men, 71% of female supervisors, and 74% of male supervisors
	Publicize the availability of formal complaint channels	Perceived effective action by 63% of workmen, 63% of men, 67% of female supervisors, and 60% of male supervisors
PUBLICIZING MANAGEMENT POLICY	There is very little that management can do to reduce sexual harassment on the job	Perceived effective action by 69% of workmen, 69% of men, 75% of female supervisors, and 73% of male supervisors
	Provide training for managers and EEO officials on their responsibilities for decreasing sexual harassment	Perceived effective action by 61% of workmen, 57% of men, 65% of female supervisors, and 57% of male supervisors
HELPING VICTIMS COPE	Establish a special counseling service for those who experience sexual harassment	Perceived effective action by 44% of workmen, 37% of men, 44% of female supervisors, and 37% of male supervisors
	Provide awareness training for employees on sexual harassment	Perceived effective action by 53% of workmen, 43% of men, 54% of female supervisors, and 43% of male supervisors
NOTHING CAN BE DONE	Establish and publicize policies which prohibit sexual harassment	Perceived effective action by 6% of workmen, 5% of men, 3% of female supervisors, and 4% of male supervisors

NOTE: Many respondents indicated more than one action would be effective.

Recommendations

The final report goes into more detail regarding the recommendations that are summarized here. It is strongly urged that these recommendations be implemented as both a cost savings measure and one designed to produce a positive work atmosphere where morale and productivity can prosper. These recommendations can be incorporated within current mechanisms without undue expense to the Government.

For the few who choose to pursue formal remedies, the complaint channels need to be responsive to their needs. However, because of the sensitivity of the issue, most victims have not and probably will not in the future take formal actions to stop sexual harassment. The most

effective way to aid these individuals and have the greatest impact on reducing most instances of sexual harassment is to take steps to prevent sexual harassment in the first place and to help victims handle the situation informally.

Of the following recommendations, the first two are remedial in nature, the second two preventive, the fifth, designed to assist victims and the last designed to monitor compliance and provide follow-up.

1. Agencies should provide strong and effective enforcement against sexual harassment and issue sanctions where appropriate.
2. Complaint channels for sexual harassment should be clarified and streamlined.
3. Managers and other agency officials should be made aware of their responsibilities and held accountable for enforcing Federal Government and agency policy prohibiting sexual harassment at the Federal workplace.
4. Agencies should develop a training strategy to aid in preventing sexual harassment.
5. Agencies should provide information to victims on effective techniques for resolving incidents of sexual harassment.
6. A number of other activities should be instituted to assure compliance with law and regulation, as well as to provide follow up to this study both within the Federal Government and in the other public and private sectors.

Conclusion

The Federal Government has a responsibility to be a model employer that maintains "high standards of honesty, integrity, impartiality and conduct to assure proper performance of the Government's business and the maintenance of confidence of the American people ... Sexual harassment is a form of employee misconduct which undermines the integrity of the employment relationship. All employees must be allowed to work in an environment free from unsolicited and unwelcome sexual overtures. "[5]

To mount a strong campaign to reduce sexual harassment is in keeping with this policy and is cost-effective.

Footnotes -- Executive Summary

1 A "disproportionately stratified " sample is one in which certain categories of participants are selected to be in the sample in greater numbers than they occur in the general population. These categories of participants are intentionally oversampled to ensure adequate numbers for statistical analysis within each category. The sample is "random" in that, within a given category (or stratum), each member has an equal chance of being selected. A random sample enables the researcher to make predictions about the whole population based upon the sample. All final results in this final report are expressed in "weighted " terms, which means that all numbers and percentages are adjusted to reflect each category's actual size in the Federal population.

2 See *Babbie*, Earl R. *Survey Research Methods*, Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc. Belmont, California, 1973, p. 165.

3 Such as the Defense Mapping Agency and Office of the Secretary of Defense.

4 Such as the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and the Office of Personnel Management.

5. OPM Policy Statement, see Appendix E.

1. Introduction

Sexual harassment in the workplace is a subject about which much discussion is currently taking place. Do any of these statements sound familiar?

- Sexual harassment is just another example of what men do to women to keep them from advancing in the workplace.
- The issue of sexual harassment has been greatly exaggerated--because of all the publicity men will be afraid to talk to women for fear of being accused of sexual harassment.
- Women in low-pay and low-status positions are more likely to be harassed than others and are afraid to make waves about it for fear of losing their jobs.
- The Government should not try to legislate love--it has no business interfering in the personal (sex) lives of employees.

As statements such as these suggest, there have been disagreements about what constitutes sexual harassment, how widespread it is and its consequences for employees in their careers, morale, and work performance.

As a result of this publicity about the issue of sexual harassment, the Subcommittee on Investigations of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, under the leadership of Chairman James M. Hanley, conducted a preliminary investigation of sexual harassment in the Federal Government and held hearings in October and November, 1979. The findings from the investigation, which included an examination of 100 employee allegations, were serious enough to cause the Subcommittee to request that the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) conduct a thorough and authoritative study of sexual harassment in the Federal workplace. Since no such thorough study had ever been conducted on this subject in either the private or public sectors, the Subcommittee wanted to discover whether the results of their preliminary investigation would be borne out by a scientific study.

To establish a Federal Government-wide approach to sexual harassment the Subcommittee also asked the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to (1) prepare a policy statement about sexual harassment, (2) prepare a training module on sexual harassment issues, and (3) encourage agencies to issue policy statements and provide training. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) was also asked to (1) develop and issue interpretive guidelines clarifying the status of sexual harassment under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII), (2) require agencies as part of their affirmative action plans to inform Federal agencies that sexual harassment is prohibited by Title VII, and (3) require agencies to take steps to make the work environment free of sexual intimidation.^[1]

MSPB was directed to examine the following questions using the definition of sexual harassment already developed by OPM:

1. What kinds of behavior constitute sexual harassment? Do the attitudes of men and women differ in this regard?
2. To what degree does sexual harassment occur within the Federal workplace? What is the frequency? What are the manifestations?
3. Are victims or perpetrators of sexual harassment found in disproportionate numbers within certain agencies, job classifications, geographic locations, racial categories, age brackets, educational levels, grade levels, etc.?
4. What forms of express or implied lever age have been used by harassers to reward or punish their victims?
5. What has been the impact of sexual harassment on its victims in terms of job turn-over, work performance, physical and emotional condition, financial and career well-being?
6. What effect has sexual harassment had on the morale or productivity of the immediate work group?
7. Are victims of sexual harassment aware of available remedies? Do they have confidence in those remedies?

Top agency officials of the MSPB, OPM, and EEOC reported the status of their charges regarding sexual harassment at a hearing held by the Subcommittee on September 25, 1980. The Chairwoman of the MSPB and the Director of the Office of Merit Systems Review and Studies (MSRS), the MSPB office given responsibility for conducting the study, reported on the preliminary findings at the hearing. These findings were preliminary in that they included information only on women victims and only for some of the data. This Final Report considerably expands the preliminary study, notably by including data on male victims and providing policy recommendations.

In developing the plan for the study, the MSRS research team first examined the relevant issues by reviewing the legal case law and the relevant available literature.

Review of Relevant Case Law

We reviewed the OPM policy statement prohibiting sexual harassment as well as the limited but growing case law on sexual harassment in order to observe the legal basis for prohibiting sexual harassment. OPM defines sexual harassment as: "deliberate or repeated unsolicited verbal comments, gestures or physical contact of a sexual nature which are un welcome."^[2] This definition allows the recipient of the behavior to determine whether the contact is "unwelcome" and is more broadly defined than other interpretations construed by the courts and EEOC.

Under recently published EEOC interpretive guidelines, sexual harassment is considered to be sex discrimination under certain conditions: (1) when submission to it is a term or condition of employment, (2) when it is used as the basis of employment decisions, or (3) when it creates an intimidating or hostile work environment.^[3] With the exception of the recent Court of Appeals decision in the case of *Bundy v. Jackson*, D. C. Civil Action No. 77-1359 (D.C. Cir., January 12, 1981), most courts have found that prohibited sex discrimination has occurred only when submission to the sexual harassment is a term or condition of the victim's employment.^[4] The OPM definition is broader than these interpretations in that it expands the definition of sexual harassment to include unacceptable behavior that, although not necessarily sex discrimination, may be a prohibited personnel practice or a violation of the standards of conduct in the Federal workplace. Thus, unwelcome sexual attention, however defined, is seen at most as a form of sex discrimination that is prohibited by law and at least as a violation of the standards of conduct in the Federal workplace that is prohibited by Government policy or regulation.

Survey of the Literature

To conceptualize the study, we wanted to determine whether any of the questions posed in the Congressional mandate had been addressed in the available literature on sexual harassment.

We found that only within the last six years has sexual harassment gained public notice both as a catch-word to describe a situation and as a

work related issue.^[5] Since that time a number of authors have examined the issue and several common patterns have emerged from their writings. First, most of the literature has been descriptive in nature with little or no explanation for the underlying social process involved. Second, most of the writers have been feminists who have focused on the behavior almost exclusively as it affects women, and not men, the larger society, or the work organization. Third, there has been no common denominator in the literature about what behaviors constitute sexual harassment. Fourth, much of the literature has drawn upon individual case studies to generalize about the victims of sexual harassment, how the experience affects them and how they have responded.^[6]

Most of the studies that did attempt to discern the extent of sexual harassment and to explore other factors such as the characteristics of victims and perpetrators, are not scientifically valid.^[7] Therefore they are not useful to measure the actual pervasiveness of sexual harassment in the workplace.

The groups surveyed in most of these studies were small and self-selected.^[8] In addition, in none of these studies was sexual harassment defined in the same way, making comparison of results difficult. Another drawback was that most of these studies asked about experiences of sexual harassment over the respondent's lifetime (relying on their recall ability), rather than using a conceptually stronger finite and more immediate period of time.

However a few studies have had some degree of scientific control.^[9] Although they shed some light on the topic, none have addressed all of the issues covered in the Congressional mandate, none have involved Federal employees, all have been restricted to a particular geographic region and/or work setting, only one has included men as well as women as potential victims, and most have restricted harassment to heterosexual behavior.

Major Views of Sexual Harassment

Three major views of sexual harassment have emerged from most of this literature: one concerning the underlying social-political basis for the behavior, the second concerning the vulnerability of particular groups to sexual harassment and the third, concerning the motivation behind the behavior.

The three views are:

1. That sexual harassment is an abuse of power that is exercised by those with power, usually male supervisors, over low-status employees, usually women.
2. That individuals with certain low-status, low-power characteristics, such as youth and low salaries and who are tied economically to their jobs, are more vulnerable to sexual harassment than others.
3. That sexual harassment is an expression of personal attraction between men and women that cannot and should not be stopped.

The first two views are closely related. They grow out of a belief that sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination and abuse of power used to keep women in their place at the low end of the economic scale. This view is based on the fact that on average women earn only 59 cents for every dollar that a man earns and that sexual harassment is one example of the sex discrimination that maintains this disparity.

The first view sees sexual harassment primarily as an expression of power (see for example, Backhouse and Cohen, 1978; Farley, 1978; Appendix H.). One example of this perspective sees sexual harassment as a form of violence or threat of violence used as a mechanism of social control over women to limit their access to certain jobs or their job success and mobility (Bularzik, 1978). Others emphasize that sexual harassment is used as a powerful lever to maintain the status quo in traditional economic and social relationships (Silverman, 1976-77).

The second major view about sexual harassment that emerges from the analytic literature has to do with the vulnerability of particular groups of women working in particular kinds of jobs. It has been suggested that women, particularly women from minority groups, working for low wages in low-status jobs are particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment because of their economic dependence on their jobs (see for example, Hooven and McDonald, 1978). Another group considered to be particularly vulnerable to harassment are women working in traditionally male occupations because they have invaded a private male preserve (Silverman, 1976-77; also see Martin, 1978, on harassment among women police officers).

The third view reflects a fundamentally different view of the sex roles of men and women and the impact that these roles have on their relationships to each other on the job. This theory grows out of a belief that rather than being a source of power of men over women, the vagueness and broad nature of the definitions of sexual harassment used by both OPM and EEOC will undoubtedly lead to a barrage of trivial and unfounded complaints against men. Followers of this view also might be inclined to believe that the sexual relationships between men and women are expressions of personal attraction, and that although some of the consequences of these relationships may involve harassment, it is not appropriate for an employer to become involved (Berns, 1980). This study will review the evidence for these three views.

Study Design

Of primary concern in developing the study was the desire to develop a scientifically valid survey instrument that would determine whether sexual harassment was a problem in the Federal workplace and address the questions posed in the Congressional mandate. Secondly, we wanted to gather information that would permit examination of the major views about sexual harassment in order to make appropriate policy recommendations.[\[10\]](#)

With the assistance of OPM, a disproportionately stratified random sample" of civilian employees in the Executive Branch was selected to be in the study. The four variables on which the sample was stratified were: (1) sex, (2) minority status, (3) salary, and (4) organization.

As a result of revising the survey instrument through pretests on a cross section of Washington, D.C.-based Federal employees, the final product contained 12 pages with 63 questions. Over 23,000 men and women received questionnaires in May 1980, which were sent to the respondents' homes to preserve their confidentiality and anonymity. The rate of return from two mailings of the questionnaire was 85%--a rate considerably higher than is usually required for statistical reliability.[\[11\]](#) The members of the sample were asked to base most of their answers on their work experience during the 24-month period from May 1978 to May 1980. Both the preliminary findings presented at the Congressional hearing in September 1980 and the Final Report were prepared by the MSRS research team based upon the data gathered from the survey.

Disclaimers and Cautions in Interpreting the Data

In reading this report and interpreting the data, some issues should be kept in mind. First, the incidence data is based upon the number of respondents who personally indicated that they had received what they believed to be unwanted and unwanted sexual attention. Thus, the method of identifying victims for this report involved a self-defining process on the part of the respondents. This approach seemed to be a reasonable way to measure incidence of sexual harassment and in line with the OPM definition of sexual harassment, which also relies on self-identification of victims. This method of determining incidence cannot measure whether the initiator believed that the behavior was sexually harassing, although the questionnaire afforded some opportunity for those who had been accused of sexual harassment to describe their experiences.

A second major caution in interpreting the data concerns the perceptual and language differences that may have been operating on the men and women who took this questionnaire. That men and women look at sexual behavior differently is important to keep in mind when looking at the reported experiences of men victims in the following chapters.[\[12\]](#) There is an indication from the data that the behavior that is referred to as unwanted and unwanted sexual attention, particularly for reported cases of actual or attempted rape or sexual assault, may be different for men and women respondents.[\[13\]](#)

Also, men and women may have different reactions to the unwanted behavior. Sexual behavior that may be offensive to women may be more or less offensive to men when they are the recipients. Social norms have encouraged men to be sexually aggressive and women to be sexually passive (Faltzman, 1974). As modern attitudes have altered these stereotypical expectations, it is not surprising that stress or confusion often results when these sex roles reverse.

For example, one study that was conducted on young adults found that when men and women were asked their views about sexual behavior that could happen to them, the men were much more likely to see less severe behaviors, such as pressure for dates, as more offensive than did women. The men felt uncomfortable as the recipients of these actions since their typical sex role was reversed, whereas, the women, were not as offended since they saw the unwanted attention as part of normal dating behavior.[\[14\]](#)

In addition, the degree to which victims felt bothered by their sexual harassment could not be measured closely in this study. There is reason to believe that men who indicate that they have been sexually harassed are not only talking about different behavior (language difference) than women victims, but are affected in very different ways. The only other scientific study on sexual harassment that involved male respondents found that in general male victims were more likely to think that sexual harassment was flattering or ego-enhancing and the women victims were more likely to think that the experience was threatening or interfered with the effective conduct of their work (Gutek and Nakamura, 1980).

A final caution in interpreting the data in terms of the experiences of male and female victims is raised. That is the belief that it is not reasonable to equate the sexual harassment of men with the sexual harassment of women, since men traditionally have had more opportunities for advancement in the workplace. This view states that since this is a society where laws have had to be enacted to ensure women their rights, the sexual intimidation of men is not logically as severe or discriminatory as that of women (McKinnon, 1979).

Presentation of the Report

The Final Report is organized into eight additional Chapters plus Appendices. The Chapters are as follows:

Chapter 2: View of Federal Workers Toward Sexual Harassment--the attitudes of men and women toward sexual behavior in the Federal

workplace.

Chapter 3: Extent of Sexual Harassment in the Federal Workplace--the overall incidence level of such behaviors among women and men.

Chapter 4: Victims of Sexual Harassment--the personal and organizational characteristics of women and men victims and their work environment.

Chapter 5: Perpetrators of Sexual Harassment--the characteristics of those who initiate sexual harassment.

Chapter 6: Incidents of Sexual Harassment --the perceived use of leverage by harassers, as well as victims' responses to the sexual harassment.

Chapter 7: Impact and Cost of Sexual Harassment--actual dollar cost of sexual harassment to the Federal Government, as well as the perceived consequences to victims.

Chapter 8: Awareness of Remedies and their Effectiveness--opinions of victims and their supervisors toward informal and formal institutional remedies for stopping sexual harassment.

Chapter 9: Summary of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations.

The Appendices are as follows:

Appendix A: Methodology--explanation of the methodology used in preparing the study, including the development of the questionnaire, the selection and design of the sample, conduct of the study, the preparation and analysis of the data, and the confidentiality and anonymity of participants.

Appendix B: Definitions of Terms--definitions of commonly used terms that appear in this report.

Appendix C: Survey Questionnaire--a copy of the cover letters and questionnaire used in the survey.

Appendix D: Additional Statistical Analyses--back-up data for figures and tables that appear in the report, as well as additional figures and tables.

Appendix E: Official Policy Documents--copies of Memoranda of Understanding Between the Investigations Subcommittee and MSPB, EEOC, and OPM; OPM Policy Statement and Definition of Sexual Harassment; EEOC Guidelines on Discrimination Because of Sex; and EEOC Instructions for Prevention of Sexual Harassment in the Workforce Plans.

Appendix F: Agency Actions Regarding Sexual Harassment--recent steps taken by agencies to reduce sexual harassment.

Appendix G: Survey of Literature--a review of the current literature on the subject of sexual harassment.

Appendix H: Annotated Bibliography--an annotated listing of major or useful works classified as general theory and analysis, studies and surveys, mass media articles, legal commentaries, miscellaneous reports, booklets and guides, and bibliographies.

Footnotes -- Introduction

1 Memoranda of Understanding between the Subcommittee on Investigations of the House Committee on Post Office and Civil Service and the Merit Systems Protection Board, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Office of Personnel Management concerning the Problem of Sexual Harassment of Federal Employees; see Appendix E.

2 Office of Personnel Management Policy Statement and Definition of Sexual Harassment; see Appendix E.

3 Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Guidelines on Discrimination Because of Sex, November 10, 1980, 29 CFR Part 1604.11, 45 FR 25024; see Appendix E.

4 For a further discussion of this case law see Appendix H.

5 For a fuller review of the literature see Appendix G.

6 For example, see Backhouse and Cohen, 1978; Farley, 1978; Martin, 1978; Appendix H.

7 Since the results were not based on information derived from a scientifically selected probability sample, predictions for the population at large are usually not valid.

8 See for example, Kelber, 1979; Lang, 1979; New Responses, Inc., 1979; Safran, 1976; Working Women's Institute, 1979; Appendix H.

9 See Benson and Thompson, 1979; Gutek and Nakamura, 1980; Livingston, 1979; Appendix H.

10 A more detailed description of the methodology employed by the research team is given in Appendix A.

11 See footnotes 1 and 2 in Executive Summary for explanation.

12 Janet Faltzman Chafetz, *Masculine-Feminine or Human?* Overview of the Sociology of Sex Roles, F.E. Peacock Publishers, Inc., Itasca, Illinois, 1974.

13 See Chapter 3.

14 Martha R. Burt and Rhoda E. Estep, "Assessing the Impact of Sexually Intrusive Events," unpublished manuscript, University of Minnesota, 1976.

2. View of Federal Workers Toward Sexual Harassment

- Both men and women Federal workers generally agree that uninvited behaviors of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment.
- Federal workers believe supervisors should be held to a higher standard of conduct than other workers regarding sexually oriented behavior on the job.
- Both men and women Federal workers believe sexual activity, whether voluntary or otherwise, should not occur between people who work together.
- Men show a greater tendency than women to think victims are somewhat responsible for bringing sexual harassment on themselves and are inclined to believe the issue of sexual harassment has been exaggerated.
- Both men and women Federal workers think sexual harassment is something people should not have to tolerate.

The "playing around" many of us engage in is mutually agreeable between consenting adults and greatly relieves tension in a tense environment. No one who didn't want to join in has ever been bothered.

There is a great deal of sexual innuendo and joking that goes on in my office It is uncomfortable to me, and I consider it a kind of sexual harassment.

Two views of sexually oriented behavior on the job.^[1] Which is more typical of Federal workers? Do Federal workers think behavior of a sexual nature should go on in the office? At what point does such conduct cease being acceptable or tolerable and begin to seem like sexual harassment? Do different groups of employees view these things differently?

These were some of the questions that came to mind when the Subcommittee on Investigations directed the Merit Systems Protection Board to determine "what kinds of behavior are perceived to constitute sexual harassment and whether the attitudes of men and women differ in this respect."^[2] They were interested in learning not only how Federal workers define sexual harassment, but also how they feel generally about sexually oriented behaviors on the job--such things as affairs between people in the same office and people using sexuality to get ahead on the job.

We anticipated that men and women would differ not only in how they define sexual harassment, but also in how they feel about sex in the office, since research has shown that the perceptions of men about sexuality in general and sexual activity differ from those of women and that men tend to use different language to describe sexual experiences.^[3] We also thought people who had experienced what they considered to be sexual harassment might feel differently about sexually oriented activity in the office than would people who had not.

We found substantial agreement among Federal workers in the way they defined sexual harassment. We also observed a tendency to hold supervisors to a higher standard of conduct than non supervisors. The majority of women considered all of the six forms of uninvited and unwanted behaviors they were asked about to be sexual harassment, whether initiated by a supervisor or another worker. The majority of men regarded all the forms of behaviors as sexual harassment when initiated by a supervisor but did not consider sexually suggestive looks, gestures, remarks, joking, teasing, or questioning to be harassment when coming from a coworker.

As to their general attitudes, Federal workers indicated that they believe sex, whether engaged in voluntarily or otherwise, has no place in the office. Most respondents also thought that sexual harassment is a behavior that should not be tolerated. The majority of women thought people should not have affairs with people they work with, and nearly all felt unwanted sexual attention is something people should not have to put up with. The majority of men also disapproved of affairs between people who work together and believed workers should not have to put up with sexual harassment. However, men differed from women in showing a greater tendency to hold victims responsible for their own harassment and thinking the issue of sexual harassment has been exaggerated.

Federal Workers' Definition of Sexual Harassment

To learn how Federal workers define sexual harassment, we listed six forms of behavior and asked whether they would consider each form to be sexual harassment "if (this) happened to you or someone else at work."^[4]

The six forms of behavior were:^[5]

- Uninvited pressure for sexual favors;
- Uninvited and deliberate touching, leaning over, cornering, or pinching ("deliberate touching");
- Uninvited sexually suggestive looks or gestures ("suggestive looks");
- Uninvited letters, phone calls, or materials of a sexual nature ("letters and calls");
- Uninvited pressure for dates; and
- Uninvited sexual teasing, jokes, remarks, or questions ("sexual remarks").

These behaviors for the most part were taken from the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) definition of sexual harassment, as had been directed by the Subcommittee on Investigations. One behavior not mentioned in the definition but referred to in the literature on sexual harassment was included in the survey: "uninvited letters, phone calls, or materials of a sexual nature."

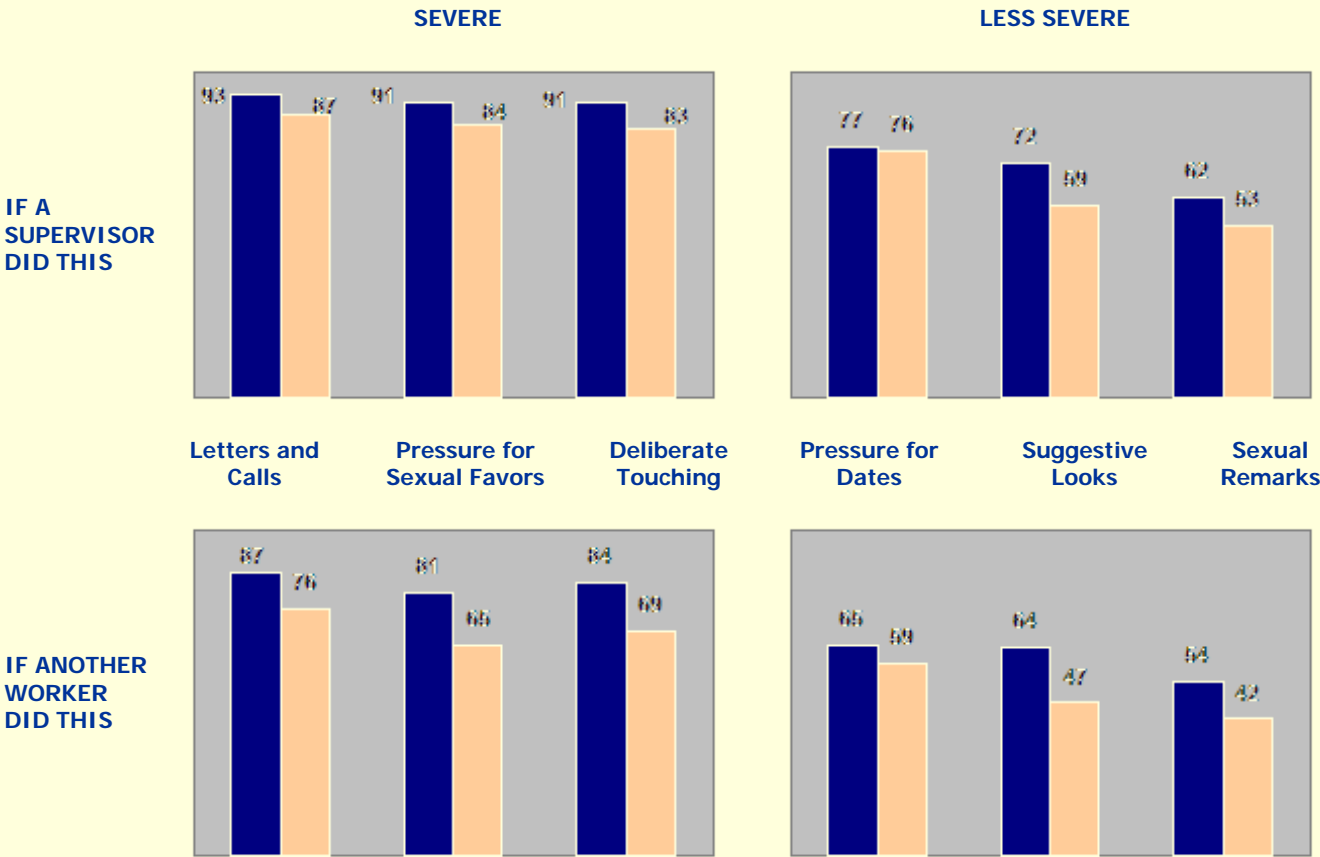
It seemed possible that Federal workers would view sexually oriented behaviors differently depending on the job status of the person demonstrating the behavior. Thus, for each of the six forms of behavior, we posed two questions: If a *supervisor* did this, would you consider this sexual harassment? If *another worker* did this would you consider this sexual harassment? The possible responses were: "definitely not," "probably not," "probably yes," "definitely yes," and "don't know."

Many Uninvited Behaviors Constitute Sexual Harassment

Substantial agreement existed among Federal workers that uninvited behaviors of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment. We had expected to find that men and women view sexual harassment somewhat differently, that women consider all of the six behaviors sexual harassment but that men regard only the most direct, most obvious conduct as harassment. Instead, we found considerable agreement between the two groups.

FIGURE 2-1
Definition of Sexual Harassment

Percentage of Male and Female Federal Employees Who Agreed that Each of Six Forms of Unwanted, Uninvited Sexual Attention Constitutes Sexual Harassment (Questions 2-7, b & d) [\(text alternative\)](#)



NOTE: Percentages are based on "Probably Yes" and "Definitely Yes" responses to questions.

WOMEN

MEN

As Figure 2-1 shows, the majority of women considered all six uninvited behaviors to be sexual harassment,^[6] regardless of whether the perpetrator is a supervisor or another worker. Although men were somewhat less likely to think that any one of the behaviors constituted sexual harassment, the majority of men considered the behaviors to be sexual harassment--with two exceptions. Somewhat fewer than half (but still sizeable percentages) thought "suggestive looks" or "sexual remarks," when coming from another worker, constituted sexual harassment. Since these are two behaviors that are thought to be somewhat indirect and subject to different interpretations, our expectation that men would regard only the most obvious behaviors as sexual harassment was partially borne out.

As can be seen in Figure 2-1, both men and women showed a pattern in their responses. For both groups there, was clear agreement that three behaviors--"letters and calls," "pressure for sexual favors," and "deliberate touching"--constituted sexual harassment. There was somewhat less agreement about the other behaviors--"pressure for dates," "suggestive looks," and "sexual remarks."

It is worth noting that two of these latter behaviors--"suggestive looks" and "sexual remarks"--tend to be indirect and subject to different interpretations. Another group of actions that might be regarded as ambiguous--"deliberate touching"--fell about the seeming demarcation between considerable agreement and general agreement, while a rather overt behavior--"pressure for dates"--fell below.

It is also interesting to note that the majority of Federal workers considered all of the behaviors listed in the Office of Personnel Management's definition as harassment. Moreover, the form of behavior not included in the OPM definition--"letters and calls"--was the behavior about which there was most agreement. Nine of every 10 women thought such behavior constituted sexual harassment, whether the perpetrator was a supervisor (93%) or another worker (87%), and at least 3 of 4 men agreed (87% if a supervisor did it and 76% if another worker did it).

For purposes of later analysis, the behaviors about which there was considerable agreement were grouped in a category designated "severe" harassment, and those about which there was general agreement were termed "less severe" harassment. On this basis, we can say that the majority of men and women who work for the Federal Government believe that "severe" forms of uninvited behavior are sexual harassment, whether initiated by a supervisor or another worker. The majority of men and women also think "less severe" behavior is sexual harassment when engaged in by a supervisor.

Supervisors Generally Agree with Definition

Male and female supervisors^[7] defined sexual harassment substantially the same way as did men and women in general. The majority of female supervisors felt all of the behaviors, regardless of whether initiated by a supervisor or another worker, constitute sexual harassment. The majority of male supervisors agreed, with the same two exceptions as men in general--"suggestive looks" and "sexual remarks" coming from another worker--but, again, substantial percentages (46% and 42%) thought these behaviors constitute harassment.

Like men in general, male supervisors were somewhat less likely than women to agree that any of the uninvited behaviors constituted sexual harassment. Male supervisors also were less likely to regard a behavior as harassment than were female supervisors. Since most supervisors are men,^[8] these findings raise some questions: Are supervisors generally able to identify sexual harassment in their organizations, particularly the less severe behaviors demonstrated by non supervisory personnel? Will the 12% to 58% of male supervisors who do not consider the various behaviors sexual harassment be able to be assertive in enforcing sanctions against those behaviors?

Motives and Sensitivity to Sexual Overtures

Whether a behavior is considered sexual harassment is related to some extent to the perceived motive of the person exhibiting the behavior. We learned this by asking Federal workers how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the statement, "I would call something sexual harassment even if the person doing it did not mean to be offensive."^[9]

As Table 2-1 indicates, few Federal workers, regardless of gender, supervisory status, or victim status, would consider an act sexual harassment had the initiator not intended to be offensive. For most workers, the perceived motive or demeanor of the initiator does make a difference.

To learn something about sensitivity to the issue of sexual harassment, we also asked Federal workers how they felt about the statement, "People shouldn't be so quick to take offense when someone expresses a sexual interest in them."^[10] We thought that since men are usually the ones to be accused of sexual harassment,^[11] they would identify with the harasser and think people shouldn't be so quick to take offense. We expected men would think most behavior was not intended to be offensive and thus the recipient should not take offense. On the other hand, we expected that women would tend to identify with the victim, and, showing a greater sensitivity to sexual overtures, would be less likely to believe people shouldn't take offense so quickly. This difference was somewhat reflected in the responses. As Table 2-1 shows, half the men, but only about one-third of the women, agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Thus, it appears that women would be more likely to be offended when someone expresses a sexual interest in them.

Table 2-1
Sexual Attitudes
 (Question No. 1)

These are the opinions that Federal workers have expressed about different kinds of sexual behavior that can happen at work. Percentages are of Federal workers--men, women, supervisors, non supervisors., victims and nonvictims--who *agreed* with the following statements.

		Respondents					
		Women	Men	Supervisors	Non supervisors.	Victims	Non victims
Definition of Sexual Harassment:	(i) I would call something sexual harassment even if the person doing it did not mean to be offensive.	26%	28%	30%	27%	31%	26%
	(g) People shouldn't be so quick to take offense when someone expresses a sexual interest in them.	36%	48%	45%	43%	44%	43%
Sexual Activity in the Office:	(b) Morale at work suffers when some employees seem to get ahead by using their sexuality.	93%	90%	92%	91%	94%	90%
	(d) There's nothing wrong when women use their sexuality to get ahead on the job.	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%
	(k) There's nothing wrong when men use their sexuality to get ahead on the job.	3%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%
	(a) I think it's all right for people to have sexual affairs with people they work with.	17%	26%	21%	23%	23%	23%
Responsibility Of Victims For their Own Harassment:	(j) When people say they've been sexually harassed, they 're usually trying to get the person they accuse into trouble.	7%	13%	11%	11%	9%	12%
	(f) People who receive annoying sexual attention have usually asked for it.	22%	31%	30%	27%	23%	29%
	(m) The issue of sexual harassment has been exaggerated--most incidents are simply normal sexual attraction between people.	23%	44%	43%	34%	28%	39%
Policy Implications:	(e) Unwanted sexual attention on the job is something people should <i>not</i> have to put up with.	97%	95%	96%	95%	96%	95%

Note: Percentages are based on "Agree " and "Strongly Agree" responses to statements.

Different Behavior Is Expected of Supervisors

Federal workers think supervisors should be held to a higher standard of conduct when it comes to sexual behavior on the job than should other workers. As Figure 2-1 shows, for every one of the six forms of uninvited, unwanted sexual attention, both men and women were more likely to consider a behavior sexual harassment if initiated by a supervisor than if initiated by another worker. There are no data to suggest why workers felt this way. The discrepancy may imply that since supervisors hold positions of power, their behavior should be exemplary. Uninvited sexual attention may be seen as less threatening and coercive when initiated by a coworker, who usually has little power over the recipient. This assumption was borne out by findings presented in Chapter 6.

Federal Workers' Attitudes Toward Sexuality in the Workplace

The late Margaret Mead felt that there is no place in the work environment for sexuality, and she called for a general societal taboo against mixing business and sex.^[12] Other people just as sincerely regard this as an unnecessarily harsh solution to the problem of sexual harassment, whatever its extent. They note that since most people spend most of their working hours on the job, that is where they form many of their meaningful and long-lasting relationships, including social sexual relationships. We wondered how Federal workers felt about this and related issues. Do they think mutually agreeable sexual activity between people who work together is all right? What about people who use their sexuality to get ahead on the job? Do Federal workers think the problem of sexual harassment is really as great as it has been made out to be? And is it just part of the job, something that many people bring on themselves?

Several questions were designed to shed some light on these issues.

Sex Does Not Belong in the Office

Voluntary sexual affairs on the job. Federal workers were asked whether they thought "it's all right for people to have sexual affairs with people they work with." [13] As Table 2-1 suggests, there was considerable agreement that even such voluntary activities should not go on. The finding that supervisors, along with women, were even less likely than other groups to approve of voluntary sexual affairs is noteworthy, particularly since most supervisors are men. This result, together with the fact that only 22% of male supervisors questioned approved of this behavior, [14] may help answer a question raised earlier.

Since most supervisors, both male and female, do not approve of such relationships, they may not hesitate to enforce sanctions against sexual harassment out of fear of interfering with possible voluntary relationships.

Using sexuality to get ahead on the job is wrong. Federal workers were asked three questions about the use of sexuality to get ahead on the job. [15] As can be seen in Table 2-1, there was almost universal agreement among Federal workers, regardless of gender, supervisory status, or victim status, that morale at work suffers when employees seem to get ahead by using their sexuality. Likewise, Federal workers--be they men or women, supervisors or non supervisors., self-reported victims of sexual harassment or nonvictims--overwhelmingly disapproved of employees using their sexuality to get ahead on the job. The fact that very few approved of this behavior whether used by a man or a woman, indicates that Federal workers do not apply a double standard to the sexes in this regard. Responses to these three questions seem to indicate that Federal workers feel people should not mix business with pleasure.

That sexual favoritism (as such use of sexuality to get ahead on the job is usually called) was censured by 9 of every 10 Federal workers, men and women alike, is interesting in light of recent Government statements on this matter. In interpretive guidelines issued in November 1980, [16] the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) affirmed that sexual harassment under certain conditions is a form of discrimination on the basis of sex. The EEOC did not regard sexual favoritism specifically as a form of sexual harassment, but did caution that when such favoritism occurs, the employer may be liable for unlawful sex discrimination against other employees who were qualified but did not receive the employment opportunity or benefit. This survey did not address the issue of sexual favoritism beyond the three questions seeking employee attitudes toward it, however, this would be an interesting topic for subsequent research.

Victims May Bear Some Responsibility

Three items in the Questionnaire [17] were designed to discover whether Federal employees hold victims responsible for their own harassment, that is, whether they tend to blame the victim. These questions, again presented in the form of statements with which the respondent could agree or disagree, were: "People who receive annoying sexual attention have usually asked for it," "When people say they've been sexually harassed, they're usually trying to get the person in trouble," and "The issue of sexual harassment has been exaggerated--most incidents are simply normal sexual attraction between people." Partial responses are shown in Table 2-1.

Few women agreed with any of the three statements. The responses of men were mixed. Although less than a majority of men thought that victims ask for attention or are vindictive in accusing their harassers, the percentages were greater than those of women. Further, almost half of the men thought that the issue of sexual harassment has been exaggerated (compared with less than one-fourth of the women). Looked at in another way, men were about twice as likely as women to think the issue has been exaggerated (44% of men, but only 23% of women agreed or strongly agreed with the statement).

In summary, for all the "blame the victim" attitudes, substantially smaller percentages of women than men agreed with the statements. This would indicate that men are more inclined to believe that victims bring sexual harassment on themselves, to think accusers are trying to get people in trouble, and to think the issue of sexual harassment has been exaggerated.

Supervisors as a group tended to see things as men in general saw them. While this may not be surprising, since most supervisors are men, it is noteworthy. Of particular interest is the fact that almost half (43%) of the supervisors agreed that the issue of sexual harassment has been exaggerated. Might this indicate a lack of understanding on the part of supervisors as to the actual incidence rates of sexual harassment in their own agencies and in the Federal Government as a whole?

Not surprisingly, since most victims are women, victims of sexual harassment tend to hold views similar to those of women in general. This may be because people who have experienced a behavior usually are more sensitive to that behavior than others. In contrast, non-victims tend to think more like men in general and like supervisors on these issues.

Sexual Harassment is a Problem and Should not be Tolerated

Several additional questions were asked to get an overall picture of how Federal workers view sexual harassment as a problem. Is it just part of the job, something people have to learn to put up with? Or is it a real problem? Is enough being done about it?

Federal workers--be they men or women, supervisors or non supervisors., victims or non victims--strongly agree that people should not have to put up with unwanted sexual attention on the job[18] (see Table 2-1). Nevertheless, a great many apparently must, for some 197,900 Federal workers (3 in 20 women and 2 in 20 men) say unwanted, uninvited attention is a problem where they work.[19] The finding that around one-fourth of both male and female victims think unwanted, uninvited attention is a problem where they work (See Table 4-3, Chapter 4) suggests that victims feel they are not the only ones in their organization who have been sexually harassed--and in fact their responses to another question bears this out:[20] 43% of female narrators[21] and 31% of male narrators reported that the person who had harassed them had also sexually bothered others at work.

Are organizations doing enough to eliminate the problem? About two in every twenty non-victims (18% of men and 13% of women) said no.[22] The perceptions of victims were strikingly different: one in three victims--32% of males and 34% of females--apparently felt their organizations could be doing more to stop sexual harassment.

Conclusion

Federal workers think sexual activity, even voluntary affairs between . people who work together, has no place in the office and believe people should not have to put up with uninvited sexual attention. They consider a number of forms of unwanted, uninvited sexual attention to be sexual harassment, particularly when the person exhibiting the behavior is a supervisor. However, most men and women would take the motives of the person into account and would not consider it sexual harassment if the person did not mean to be offensive.

That men and supervisors tend to think like each other but differently than women and victims about expressions of sexual interest and the responsibility of victims for their own harassment is not surprising, since most supervisors are men and most victims are women. The differences are worthy of note, however, and may have implications for efforts to reduce sexual harassment in the offices of the nearly 200,000 men and women who recognized it as a problem where they work. When even 4 in every 10 supervisors (43%) believe the issue of harassment has been exaggerated, 3 in 10 (30%) believe people who receive annoying sexual attention have usually asked for it, and 4 in 10 supervisors (45%) believe people should not be so quick to take offense when someone expresses a sexual interest in them, can we feel confident that sanctions against sexual harassment will be enforced? And when men and women are inclined to differ on these points, with men more than women showing a tendency to blame the victim and believe people shouldn't be so quick to take offense, is a need for better understanding between men--usually the "harassers"--and women--usually the "victims"--indicated?

In this chapter we learned that both men and women regard many forms of uninvited, unwanted sexual attention as sexual harassment and that 3 in every 20 women and 2 in every 20 men see such behavior as a problem where they work. Since these figures indicate only the number of respondents who see sexual harassment as an organizational problem rather than a personal problem they have had to face, the figures do not indicate the actual incidence of sexual harassment of Federal employees. The incidence of sexual harassment is examined in the next chapter.

Footnotes -- Chapter 2

1 These and other comments that appear in this report were provided by Federal workers on their questionnaires or through a sexual harassment " hot-line" in a Federal agency.

2 Congressional Memorandum of Understanding; see Appendix E.

3 Burt and Estep, 1976; Gutek and Nakamura, 1980; Chafetz, 1974 (Chapter 1, footnote 12).

4 Survey Questions 2-7, b, d; see Appendix C.

5 A seventh form of behavior--actual or attempted rape or sexual assault--appears in later discussions. However, since rape and sexual assault are criminal offenses, Federal workers were not asked whether they considered these sexual harassment.

6 That is, they responded "definitely yes" or "probably yes" that they considered the behavior to be sexual harassment. See Appendix D for more complete statistical information for this and other figures and tables.

7 See Appendix B for a definition of supervisor and other terms used in this report; See Appendix D, Figure A for data.

8 Approximately 322,800 men and 88,000 women are supervisors according to the survey data.

9 Survey Question 1(i).

10 Survey Question 1(g).

11 See Chapter 5.

12 Mead, 1978; see Appendix H, General Theory and Analysis.

13 Survey Question 1(a).

14 See Appendix D, Table A.

15 Survey Question 1(b), 1(d), and 1(k).

16 See Appendix E for the full text of the EEOC Guidelines.

17 Survey questions 1(f), 1(j), and 1(m).

18 That is, they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "Unwanted sexual attention on the job is something people should not have to put up with"; see Survey Question 1(e).

19 Concluded from responses to Survey Question 44(e) Appendix D, Table 0. Other data on Survey Question 44 are reported and discussed more fully in Chapter 4.

20 Concluded from response to Survey Question 34; see Figure 5-6 in Chapter 5.

21 Narrators are victims who chose to describe one incident of sexual harassment in some detail; see Appendix B for a full description of narrators.

22 That is, they disagreed with the statement, "My organization makes every effort to stop unwanted sexual attention among its employees"; see Survey Question 44(g); and see Table 4-3, Chapter 4.

3. Extent of Sexual Harassment in the Federal Workplace

- One out of every four Federal employees was sexually harassed on the job over a 2-year period.
- Women are much more likely to be victims than men--42% of all female Federal employees, but only 15% of male employees, reported being sexually harassed.
- Sexual harassment can take many forms, and every form except attempted or actual rape or sexual assault was experienced by a sizeable percentage of both men and women.
- Sexual harassment is not just a one-time experience--many victims were repeatedly subjected to harassing behaviors, particularly the less severe forms.
- incidents of harassment are not just passing events--most lasted more than a week, and many lasted longer than 6 months.
- The majority of Federal employees who had worked elsewhere feel sexual harassment is no worse in the Federal workplace than in state and local government or in the private sector.

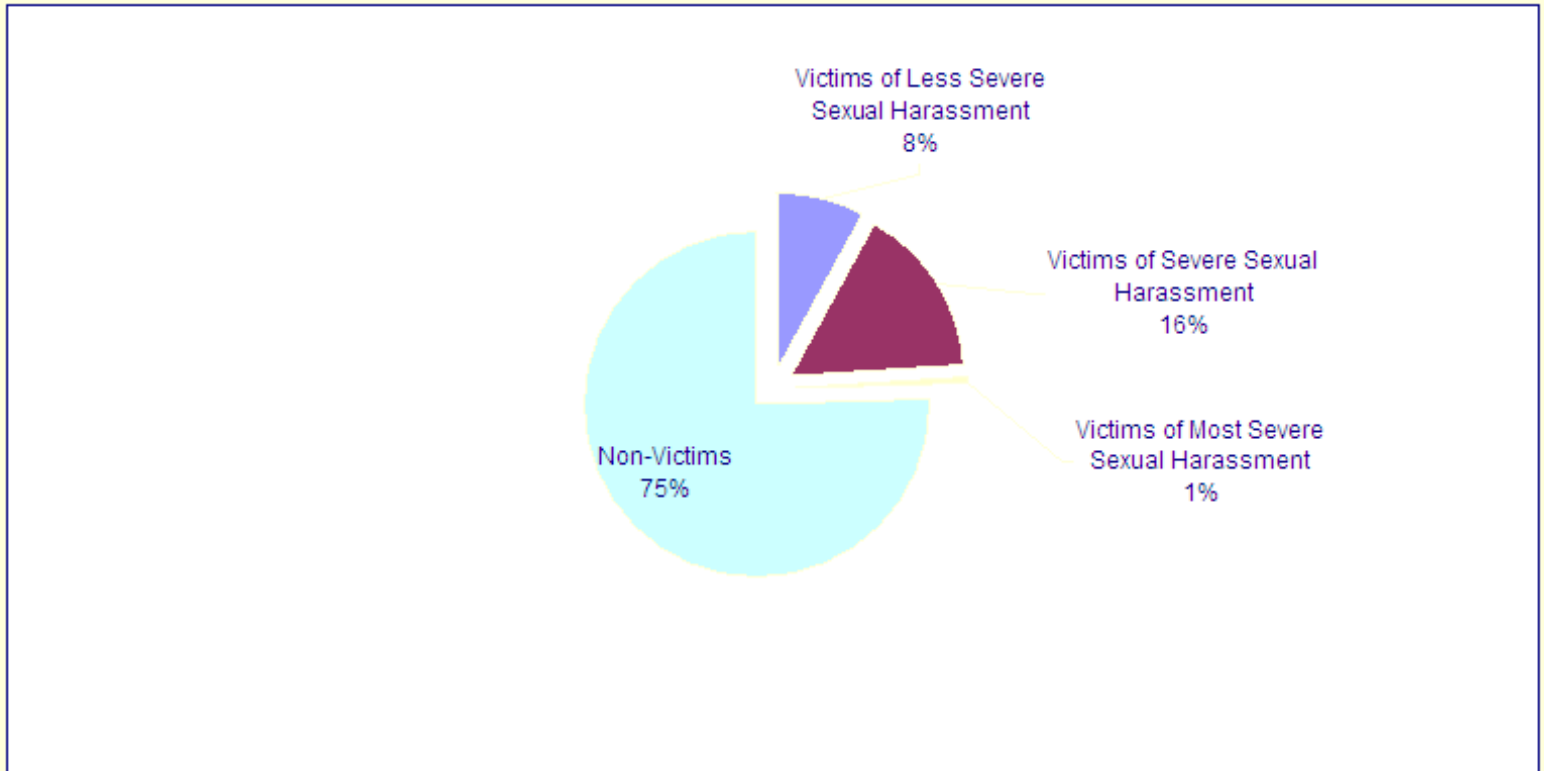
"I said no, I simply was not going out with him after work and no, I simply was not going to have an affair with him because I thought I could rely on my job skills . . ." and eventually "I was fired with 25 minutes notice on a Friday."^[1] Stories like this from dozens of Federally-employed women led the Subcommittee on Investigations to ask the Merit Systems Protection Board to determine the "degree to which sexual harassment is occurring within the Federal workplace, its manifestation and frequency"^[2] We wanted to learn how widespread harassment of Federal workers is, whether it happens to men as well as women, whether it is a one-time event or happens to some victims more than once, how long the incidents go on, and if harassment is worse in the Federal Government than in other work settings.

We found that sexual harassment is a problem for a large number of Federal workers--approximately 294,000 women and 168,000 men. For many of the women, harassment occurred repeatedly and frequently lasted a relatively long time. The men, though fewer in number, representing only one in every three victims, had similar experiences; relatively few reported their experiences to be one-time-only events that were soon over.

FIGURE 3-1 (alternate text)
Overall Incidence Rate of Sexual Harassment

Percentage of Federal Employees Who Experienced Sexual Harassment Between May 1978 and May 1980, by Severity of Harassment (Question 17)

TOTAL FEDERAL WORKFORCE: 1,862,000 -- TOTAL VICTIMS: 462,000(25%)



NOTE: These figures indicate the number of people harassed, classified by their most severe experience. Since many people reported they had had more than one experience, the number of harassment incidents is considerably larger.

Sexual Harassment Is Widespread

To learn how common sexual harassment is, we asked Federal workers whether they had received, during the past 24 months (approximately May 1978 to May 1980), any of seven forms of uninvited and unwanted sexual attention from someone where they worked in the Federal Government.[3] The forms of behavior were:

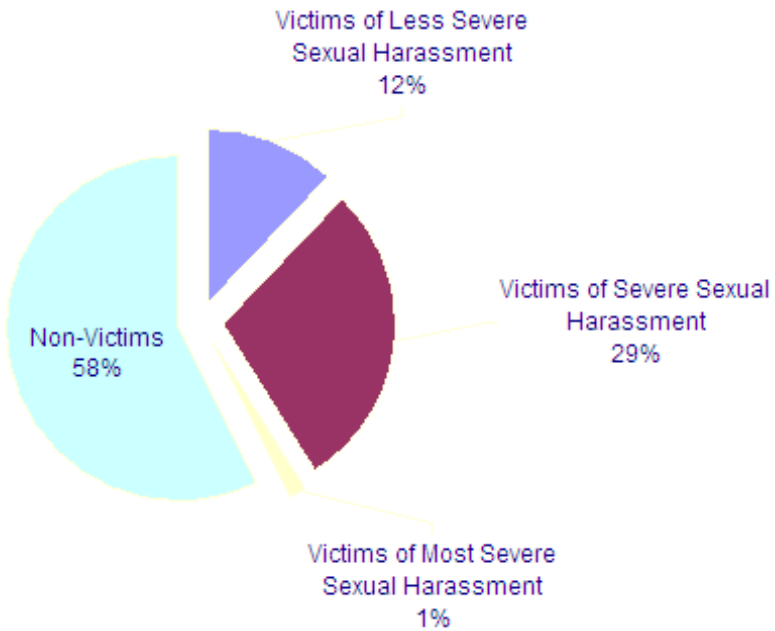
- Actual or attempted rape or sexual assault; Pressure for sexual behaviors;
- Deliberate touching, leaning over, cornering, or pinching ("touching");
- Sexually suggestive looks or gestures ("suggestive looks");
- Letters, phone calls, or materials of a sexual nature ("letters and calls");
- Pressure for dates; and
- Sexual teasing, jokes, remarks, or questions ("sexual remarks").

FIGURE 3-2

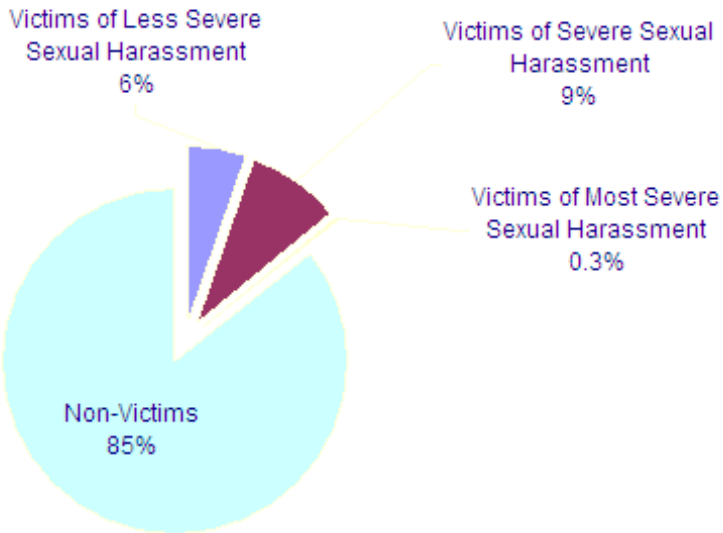
Incidence Rate of Sexual Harassment Among Women and Men

Percentage of Female and Male Federal Employees Who Experienced Sexual Harassment Between May 1978 and May 1980, by Severity of Harassment (Question 17)

Total Women: 694,000 -- Total Female Victims: 294,000 (42%) ([alternate text](#))



Total Men: 1,168,000 -- Total Male Victims: 168,000 (15%) ([alternate text](#))



NOTE: These figures indicate the number of people harassed, classified by their most severe experience. Since many people reported they had had more than one experience, the number of harassment incidents is considerably larger.

As the earlier but limited Congressional investigation had indicated, we found that sexual harassment in the Federal workplace is wide-spread.

Approximately 462,000 Federal employees-a number roughly equal to the population of Denver, Colorado-reported being sexually harassed on the job between May 1978 and May 1980 (see Figure 3-1). These victims--about one in every four Federal employees--faced all kinds of problems. One woman was called into her Division Chief's office and "after a verbal shakedown, he threatened me, became more violent,

lunged over the desk at me, offered promotions in exchange for sexual behaviors, and threatened to fire me if I didn't go along." A woman whose only access to a telephone is in her superintendent's office says that whenever she (or other women) uses the phone "the superintendent persists in putting his arm around me, kissing me, making obscene suggestions about what I should do with him, suggesting I go away for long weekends with him and his buddies so they can show me a really 'good' time." The male supervisor of a sandblaster grabs him while he's working on a scaffold. Another man finds his 'apartment and car broken into and packages of women's undergarments left there.

Less direct behaviors are also common. One Federal worker reported that her District Director "practically sits in my lap when I ask a question, embarrassing me with his constant twisting of every word I say into some sexual connotation." Another complains, "I resent being asked into someone 's 'private office' to confer on legitimate business and then being confronted with walls papered with nudes." She adds: "No government office is so 'private' that such a display can be justified." A third worker felt harassed by her supervisor's excessive interest in her personal life, his questioning in "private little chats" about her marital plans, family planning, and other matters she feels are none of his business.

The "most severe" form of harassment--attempted or actual rape or sexual assault-- was also the least common experience, faced by only about 1% of Federal workers (see Figure 3-1). Still, this means that around 12,000 people had to deal with this problem. At least 300,000 victims were subjected to "severe" sexual harassment, while at least half that number experienced "less severe" harassment."[\[4\]](#)

We say "at least" that many workers faced "severe" and "less severe" harassment because many people indicated they had experienced more than one of the seven forms of behavior asked about. When this happened, the victim was counted only once, on the basis of the most severe form of harassment he or she had encountered.[\[5\]](#) Thus, the number of incidents was considerably larger than the number of people experiencing harassment, as reported on Figure 3-1.

As the next section shows, there we're marked differences between male and female Federal workers.

Women Are Sexually Harassed More Than Men

Sexual harassment of women is far more common than harassment of men. While about twice as many men as women hold Federal jobs (1,168,000 vs. 694,000), two out of three victims were women (294,000 women out of a total of 462,000 victims).

Eight in every 20 women (42%), but only 3 in every 20 men (15%), were subjected to harassment on the job over the 2-year period (see Figure 3-2). While far more women than men were harassed (294,000 women compared with 168,000 men), the patterns for the two groups were similar. The largest group of victims had experienced at least one form of severe harassment, and only a small percentage--though still a significant number considering the seriousness of the behavior--had faced attempted or actual rape or assault.

Most Forms of Harassment Are Common

Every form of sexual harassment except actual or attempted rape or sexual assault was experienced by a sizeable number of men and women.

Figure 3-3
Incidence Rate Among Various Forms of Sexual Harassment
Percentage of Female and Male Federal Employees Who Experienced Each Form of Sexual Harassment
Between May 1978 and May 1980 (Question 17)

LESS SEVERE	Sexual Remarks	Reported by 33% of Women
		Reported by 10% of Men
	Suggestive Looks	Reported by 28% of Women
		Reported by 8% of Men
	Pressure for Dates	Reported by 26% of Women
		Reported by 7% of Men
SEVERE	Deliberate Touching	Reported by 15% of Women
		Reported by 3% of Men
	Pressure for Sexual Favors	Reported by 9% of Women
		Reported by 2% of Men
	Letters and Calls	Reported by 9% of Women
		Reported by 3% of Men
		Reported by 1% of Women

MOST SEVERE	Actual or Attempted Rape or Assault	Reported by 0.3% of Men
Note: Many respondents indicated that they experience more than one form of sexual harassment.		

As Figure 3-3 shows, 1 in every 3 women employed by the Federal Government reported having been subjected to unwanted sexual remarks, 1 in 4 had been deliberately touched or cornered, 1 in 10 had been pressured for sexual favors, and 1 in 100 had faced actual or attempted rape or sexual assault. Since respondents were allowed to report more than one kind of behavior, many are counted more than once in these figures.

What kinds of experiences are these women talking about when they say they've been sexually harassed? A woman who works in a production area reports that she and other women employees are constantly subjected to suggestive remarks and propositions as they go about their jobs. She added that supervisors participate in this and frequently send women on unnecessary errands through the area just to give the men another opportunity to act this way. Another woman writes that a great deal of sexual innuendo and joking goes on in her office and everyone feels obligated to contribute or tolerate it. "It is very uncomfortable to me," she says, "so I consider it a kind of harassment." A clerical worker says her boss stands touching her while she works. When his "buddies" stop by his desk, he makes remarks that imply that she cooperates sexually with him. He offers to share her "services" with his buddies, in a tone and manner that make clear it is not clerical services he's talking about.

Suggestive looks and gestures often accompany the joking and remarks. One woman, for example, says that her fellow employees make obscene gestures and remarks to and about her. Her supervisor thinks it's funny and does nothing about it.

Deliberate touching and cornering is cited by a large number of women. A supervisor stands so close to a female subordinate while giving instructions or looking over her work that he touches her-and while so doing makes suggestive body movements. "The last time the Regional Director was here," writes another victim, "the head secretary had to come to my rescue as the Director was practically breathing down my shirt."

Many women find materials of a sexual nature bothersome. One woman dislikes the way her male coworkers pass around and put up pornographic cartoons in work spaces. When she objects, her boss tells her she's too sensitive.

Pressure for dates and sexual favors are also cited by women. Their descriptions indicate that their experiences not only were bother some, but sometimes had serious consequences. One woman says when she ignored her boss' advances, he began to treat her cruelly; for example, he made her take 4 hours of dictation, made her stay late to transcribe it, then in her presence threw it all away because "He didn't need it." Another woman's boss kept pestering her for dates and for favors and kept making personal remarks. When she would not change her mind and play around with him, he had her transferred to a less desirable job. During her first week on the job, reports a temporary trainee, her supervisor kept rubbing her back and shoulders while she typed and filed. Later he made a point blank advance, which she refused. Within a week she was let go on the grounds that she could not adapt to the office. The woman described earlier, whose Division Chief became violent when she refused to grant sexual favors sought medical help to calm her nerves but finally quit working altogether because of the experience. "I'm afraid to go back," she says.

Far smaller percentages of men have been the object of these unwanted attentions, but the pattern is similar. Generally, the less severe the behavior, the more likely the worker was to experience it, with sexual remarks and suggestive looks leading the list for both men and women and actual or attempted rape or sexual assault being relatively rare. It is more difficult to discern what kinds of experiences men are talking about when they say they've been sexually harassed, because few chose to describe their experiences in the open-ended comment section provided in the questionnaire. Information from other sources indicates that men tend to describe homosexual harassment, such as the experiences cited earlier.

It is interesting that the three most common forms of harassment-"sexual remarks," "suggestive looks," and "deliberate touching"--are the least direct and perhaps the most subject to different interpretations. One person's appreciative glance might be another person's suggestive look. Questioning about personal life might be intended as an expression of concern or caring but felt as an invasion of privacy. Writes one Federal worker, "the sexual harassment that goes on in my office is supposed to be in jest, but is very offensive and embarrassing." Another notes that the man in her office who tells sexual jokes and teases thinks the women enjoy his attention and remarks. Regardless of the possible ambiguity of some behavior, however, the important point is that a large number of Federal workers had found themselves the objects of this uninvited attention and *had not wanted* it-however innocent it had been or however innocuous it might have seemed to the initiator.

Sexual Harassment Occurs Repeatedly

To learn whether harassment is a one-time only experience or occurs repeatedly, we asked Federal workers how often they had been the object of the seven forms of uninvited, unwanted attention during the 2-year period--once, once a month or less, or once a week or more often.^[6] Their responses made it clear that harassment is not a one-time-only phenomenon.

Generally, the less severe the harassment the more likely women were to experience it more than once. However, more than half the female victims of five of the seven forms of harassment (all of the less severe forms and two of the three severe forms) had been subjected to that behavior more than once (see Figure 3-4). Only for female victims of actual or attempted rape did the experience tend strongly to occur only once.

The experiences of men were similar, though for most forms a smaller percentage of male victims had experienced the behavior repeatedly. A marked difference between men and women was the frequency of actual or attempted rape or assault. More than half the men who reported this experience, but only one-fifth of the women, said they had faced it more than once. The experiences of men are somewhat surprising, as it was not anticipated that such serious behavior would occur repeatedly in more than half the reported cases. The sharp difference between men and women may reflect a difference in perceptions about what constitutes attempted rape or sexual assault. Further research might shed some light on this.

Incidents May Last Several Weeks or More

To add to the picture of harassment of Federal workers, victims were asked to describe in detail one particular incident, either their only experience, their most recent experience, or the one that had had the greatest effect on them. Victims who did so were termed "narrators," and the episodes they reported on were termed their "critical incidents."[\[7\]](#)

One question asked of these narrators was "How long did this unwanted attention last?"[\[8\]](#)

FIGURE 3-4
Frequency of Sexual Harassment Incidents
 Percentage of Female and Male Victims of Each Form of Harassment Who Experienced That Form of Sexual Harassment More Than Once* (Question 17)

LESS SEVERE	Sexual Remarks	Reported by 77% of Women
		Reported by 71% of Men
	Suggestive Looks	Reported by 73% of Women
		Reported by 61% of Men
	Pressure for Dates	Reported by 55% of Women
		Reported by 45% of Men
SEVERE	Deliberate Touching	Reported by 62% of Women
		Reported by 54% of Men
	Pressure for Sexual Favors	Reported by 52% of Women
		Reported by 40% of Men
	Letters and Calls	Reported by 42% of Women
		Reported by 38% of Men
MOST SEVERE	Actual or Attempted Rape or Assault	Reported by 20% of Women
		Reported by 56% of Men
* Once a month or less, 2-4 times a month, or once a week or more.		

Their responses indicated that incidents of harassment can last varying lengths of time, but that most go on a week or more--and a sizeable percentage persist for more than 6 months.

Responses of female narrators were some-what evenly distributed among the closed choices presented in the questionnaire--less than 1 week (31%), several weeks (19%), 1 to 6 months (22%), and more than 6 months (28%). For one-third of the female victims of actual or attempted rape (33%), the incident was over in less than a week--but for an equal number the incident lasted a fairly lengthy time, from 1 to 6 months.

The incidents of male narrators also lasted varying lengths of time, but a somewhat larger percentage indicated their critical incidents were over in less than a week (39% compared with 31% for women). As with females, for one-third of the male victims of actual or attempted rape (32%) the experience lasted less than a week. In contrast with women, however, the largest group of these male victims (38%, compared with 17% of females) said their experience went on longer than 6 months. Again, this finding is somewhat surprising, one that might warrant further examination.

Sexual Harassment Is No Worse in Federal Workplace

The findings that large numbers of men and women are sexually harassed, that many are harassed more than once, and that the incidents last a relatively long time indicate that sexual harassment is a problem in the Federal work force. But is it any worse a problem in the Federal workplace than in the private sector, or for employees of state and local governments? Since we could not conduct a comprehensive survey of non-Federal workers, we sought to shed some light on this question by asking Federal workers who had held jobs outside the Federal Government what they thought.^[9]

Their responses suggest that harassment is not worse in the Federal workplace. Of the men and women who had held jobs outside the Federal Government and had an opinion on the subject, around two-thirds (68% of the women and 61% of the men) thought there is about the same amount of sexual harassment in Federal and non-Federal jobs. An additional 20% of the women and 29% of the men thought there is more harassment in non-Federal jobs. The remainder thought there is less harassment in non-Federal jobs.

Although we have no data with which to validate this overwhelming consensus that sexual harassment is no worse in the Federal workplace, there seems no reason to dispute the opinion, since Federal workers probably reflect the cultural values and behavior of the larger U.S. society.

Conclusion

Clearly, sexual harassment is a problem for many women working for the Federal Government, and to a lesser extent for men. Indeed, evidence presented later (see Chapter 5) indicates that many harassers bother more than one person. Thus, a picture of the experiences of Federal workers begins to emerge: sexual harassment occurs repeatedly, frequently lasts a month or longer, occurs in multiple forms for many victims, and is part of an overall pattern of sexual harassment perpetrated by the harasser.

Footnotes -- Chapter 3

1 Hearings before the Subcommittee on Investigations of the House Committee on Post Office and Civil Service on Sexual Harassment in the Federal Government, 1st sess., October 23, November 1, 13, 1979, pp. 71-74.

2 Congressional Memorandum of Understanding, Appendix E.

3 Survey Question 17; see Appendix C.

4 See Appendix B for explanation of levels of severity of sexual harassment.

5 For example, a person who reported both deliberate touching, a form of "severe" harassment, and pressure for dates, a "less severe" behavior, was treated as a victim of "severe" harassment.

6 See Survey Question 17.

7 See Appendix B for a complete discussion of narrators.

8 Survey Question 22; see Appendix D, Figure 0 for data.

9 See Survey Question 8; see Appendix D, Table B for data.

4. Victims of Sexual Harassment

- Age, marital status, and sexual composition of the employee's work group have a relatively strong effect on whether a Federal employee is sexually harassed.
- Factors having a somewhat weaker relationship are employee educational level, race or ethnic background, and job classification, traditionality of the employee's job, and sex of the employee's immediate supervisor.
- Some Federal agencies have a greater incidence of sexual harassment than do others.
- Sexual harassment is more likely to occur in work environments where employees have poor communications with their supervisors and feel pressured to participate in activities of a sexual nature.

One in every four Federal employees reports having to deal with uninvited, unwanted sexual attention on the job.

One in 20 has been pressured for sexual favors.

One in 100 has faced actual or attempted rape or assault.

Who are these 462,000 men and women who have had to deal with sexual harassment on the job? And who are the people bothering them? This and the following chapter look at the victims and perpetrators of sexual harassment, at the same time exploring what are thought to be some of the causes of the problem.

Many people see sexual harassment as an expression of power, specifically a tool used (primarily by men) to keep other workers (typically women) in their place--and an expression of hostility toward workers (again, typically women) intruding in a world once exclusively the domain of the other sex.^[1] This chapter addresses a corollary theory--that the people most likely to be sexually harassed are the powerless (those working in low-status jobs) or the pioneers (those working in jobs traditionally reserved for the opposite sex).

We hoped to determine whether victims of sexual harassment are found in disproportionate numbers within certain Federal agencies, job classifications, geographic locations, racial categories, age brackets, educational levels, and grade levels.^[2] We also wanted to learn whether there are any personal or job characteristics

related to the incidence of sexual harassment that management could change to reduce the incidence of the problem. Such information is useful in framing remedies appropriate for different target groups.

The factors that showed a relatively strong relationship with experience of sexual harassment were employee age, marital status, and sexual composition of the employee's immediate work group (see Table 4-1). Factors that showed a somewhat weaker relationship were education level, race and ethnic background, job classification, traditionality of job, and sex of supervisor. In addition, the rate of incidence of sexual harassment varied somewhat from agency to agency.

A detailed discussion of these personal and organizational characteristics and a brief look at general work environments follow.

Table 4-1
Characteristics of Federal Workers Most Likely To Be Sexually Harassed On the Job

Women Most Likely To Be Sexually Harassed Are...

- Young (under 34)
- Single or divorced
- Well educated (college degree or higher)
- Members of either a minority or non minority group (black, Hispanic, other minority, or white)
- Very dependent on their jobs

Men Most Likely To Be Sexually Harassed Are...

- Young (under 34)
- Widowed, single, or divorced
- Relatively well educated (at least some college)
- Members of a minority group (black, Hispanic, American Indian, Alaskan Native, or other minority)
- Very dependent on their jobs

And the Women are Working ...

- For the Departments of Labor, Transportation, or Justice, "Other Defense Department" agencies, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Air Force, Navy, or Marine Corps, the Veterans Administration, or other agencies
- In any geographic region, but particularly in the North Central and Upper Midwest
- At any salary level, but particularly for less than \$11,000 annually
- As a GS-1 through GS-15 or in pay classification "Other"
- In any occupation, but particularly as a trainee or in a professional/ technical position
- In a nontraditional position (though most victims hold traditional positions)
- For an immediate supervisor who is male, or for several supervisors, both male and female
- In a predominately or completely male immediate work group

And the Men are Working ...

- For the Departments of Health, Education and Welfare; Justice; or Housing and Urban Development; the Veterans Administration; or the General Services Administration
- In any geographic region, but particularly in the Pacific region
- At lower salary levels (under \$15,000 annually)
- As a GS-1 through GS-8 or in an ungraded job
- In any occupation, but particularly as a trainee or in an office/clerical position
- In a nontraditional position (though most victims hold traditional positions)
- For an immediate supervisor who is female, or for several supervisors, both male and female
- In a predominately or completely female immediate work group

Female Victims Also Tend To...

- Have varying degrees of privacy in their workspaces, but particularly to have no workspace to call their own, to have a workspace that can be seen from one to three sides, or to have only a semi-private office
- Be working in a non supervisory capacity
- Have worked for the Federal Government for varying numbers of years
- Be working full time on a permanent basis
- Be working either regular daytime hours or on other schedules
- Be working in immediate work groups of all sizes, from groups of 1-5 persons to groups of 25 or more

Male Victims Also Tend To...

- Have varying degrees of privacy in their workspaces, but particularly to have no workspace to call their own
- Be working in either a supervisory or non-supervisory capacity
- Have worked for the Federal Government less than 1 year
- Be working full time on a permanent basis or to be a part time, seasonal, or temporary employee or a consultant
- Be working on a schedule other than regular daytime hours (e.g., nights, weekends, alternating shifts)
- Be working in immediate work groups of all sizes, from groups of 1-5 persons to group of 25 or more

FIGURE 4-1
Age of Victims

Percentage of Federal Employees of Different Ages Who Experienced Sexual Harassment (Question 61)

Ages 16-19	Who Experienced Sexual Harassment	Reported by 67% of Women Reported by 27% of Men
Ages 20-24		Reported by 59% of Women Reported by 20% of Men
Ages 25-34		Reported by 53% of Women Reported by 18% of Men
Ages 35-44		Reported by 43% of Women Reported by 14% of Men
Ages 45-54		Reported by 33% of Women Reported by 13% of Men
Ages 55 and older		Reported by 22% of Women Reported by 12% of Men

Several Personal Characteristics Are Related to Sexual Harassment

Since few studies have looked at men as potential victims, we had few expectations about the characteristics of male victims. We anticipated that most female victims would have similar personal and organizational characteristics that would make them more vulnerable to being harassed, and that generally they would have less power and lower status than women who are not harassed. We found that in some ways women with relatively little power and status, as measured by certain personal and organizational characteristics, were more vulnerable to sexual harassment and in some ways they were not.

We expected to find that young, unmarried Federal workers, those less educated, very dependent on their jobs, and members of minority groups, were more vulnerable than others to sexual harassment. We found that age and marital status have a relatively strong relationship with sexual harassment, and educational level and race or ethnic background a somewhat weaker relationship.

Younger Workers Are More Vulnerable

Age makes a difference in whether a Federal worker, particularly a woman, is sexually harassed^[3] (see Figure 4-1). Although men and women in all age brackets were victims, generally the lower the age bracket, the more likely the experience. The youngest workers (aged 16-19) had the highest incidence rates. These young workers, though they represented the fewest number of victims, were far more likely than workers in the oldest age bracket (aged 55 and older) to be sexually harassed--younger women were more than three times as likely and younger men twice as likely.

Single and Divorced Workers Are Likely Victims

Generally, unmarried workers were more likely than married workers to have been sexually bothered by others, but there were some differences between women and men^[4] (see Figure 4-2).

FIGURE 4 - 2
Marital Status of Victims

Percentage of Federal Employees Who Experienced Sexual Harassment, by Marital Status (Question 62)

Single	Who Experienced Sexual Harassment	Reported by 53% of Women Reported by 22% of Men
Divorced		Reported by 49% of Women Reported by 21% of Men
Married		Reported by 37% of Women Reported by 13% of Men
Widowed		Reported by 31% of Women Reported by 30% of Men

Single and divorced women were more likely than married women to have been sexually harassed, but widowed women were least likely to have had the experience. The reason for their lower rate is uncertain. One might speculate that widows, as a group, tend to be older than other groups, as are widowed victims (88% were 45 years or older). Their relatively greater age may have made them less vulnerable to sexual harassment.

Like women, single and divorced men were more likely than married men to report sexual harassment. But, in contrast to women, widowers had the highest incidence rate among men (though the majority, like women, were 45 or older). Despite their relatively high incidence rate, however, widowed men accounted for only a very small percentage of male victims, only 2% (or approximately 3,000) out of 168,000 male victims. The reasons for this might be a subject for further research.

Education Level Shows a Weaker Relationship

Contrary to expectations, higher educated men and women had a greater likelihood of reporting they had been sexually harassed than their less educated counterparts^[5] (see Figure 4-3). Of the 74,000 women with at least a college degree, around half--48% to 53% reported having been bothered by uninvited sexual attention. Incidence rates for the 221,000 women with less than a college degree were lower, ranging from 31% to 45%.

Somewhat surprised by this finding, we examined the responses of these women victims to several other survey questions. It seemed possible that the higher incidence rates reported by higher educated women might be attributable to greater awareness or sensitivity on their part or to some other factor. Higher educated women victims (those with at least a college degree) generally were not more likely than lower educated women victims (those lacking a college degree) to label uninvited sexual attention sexual harassment,^[6] but there were differences in attitudes that may indicate greater sensitivity on their part.

For instance, higher educated women victims were considerably more likely than lower educated women victims to call something sexual harassment even if the person doing it did not mean to be offensive (47% compared with 25%).^[7] This could indicate that higher educated women are more likely to view with suspicion the perceived motive or demeanor of the person initiating a behavior, and thus more likely than their lower educated counterparts to regard that behavior as sexual harassment.

As relevant as this difference in attitudes seems, it may not be great enough to explain the difference in incidence rates between the higher and lower educated women. Another explanation may lie in the types of jobs these women hold. As data presented later in this chapter show, women who are among the first of their sex in a job report higher rates of harassment than women who are not. On this factor--traditionality of job--the higher and lower educated female victims differed considerably.^[8] The more educated victims were more than 2 1/2 times more likely than their lower educated counterparts to hold nontraditional jobs (23% compared with 9%). These additional findings--that higher educated women are more likely to be the first of their sex in their jobs and more sensitive to offensive behavior than are lower educated women--may help explain the difference in rate of harassment between the two groups.

Higher educated men also tended to be more likely than their lower educated counterparts to report unwanted sexual attention. Men with a high school diploma, Graduate Equivalency Degree (GED), or less were less likely to be sexually harassed than those with more than a high school diploma. Further, men with some college experience or with graduate degrees were more than twice as likely to be harassed as those with less than a high school diploma.

FIGURE 4-3
Education Level of Victims

Percentage of Federal Employees of Different Education Levels Who Experienced Sexual Harassment (Question 60)

Less than high school diploma		Reported by 31% of Women Reported by 8% of Men
High School diploma or GED (Graduate Equivalency Degree)		Reported by 35% of Women Reported by 11% of Men

High school diploma plus technical training or apprenticeship	Who Experienced Sexual Harassment	Reported by 39% of Women Reported by 13% of Men
Some college		Reported by 45% of Women Reported by 17% of Men
Graduated from college (B.A., B.S., or other bachelor's degree)		Reported by 50% of Women Reported by 14% of Men
Some graduate school		Reported by 53% of Women Reported by 15% of Men
Graduate or professional degree		Reported by 48% of Women Reported by 17% of Men

FIGURE 4-4
Racial and Ethnic Background of Victims

Percentage of Federal Employees of Different Racial and Ethnic Backgrounds Who Experienced Sexual Harassment (Question 59)

Other	Who Experienced Sexual Harassment	Reported by 48% of Women Reported by 27% of Men
Hispanic		Reported by 45% of Women Reported by 19% of Men
White, not of Hispanic origin		Reported by 43% of Women Reported by 13% of Men
Black, not of Hispanic origin		Reported by 43% of Women Reported by 21% of Men
Asian or Pacific Islander		Reported by 36% of Women Reported by 16% of Men
American Indian or Alaskan native		Reported by 35% of Women Reported by 22% of Men

In summary, there does appear to be a relationship between education level and experience of sexual harassment. Higher educated men and women tend to be more likely than their lower educated counterparts to report harassment, but for women, some of the difference may be explained by other factors. Despite these differences, it is clear that the problem of unwanted sexual attention affects a sizeable number of Federal workers of all education levels, particularly women.

Racial or Ethnic Background Makes Some Difference

Although unwanted sexual attention is a problem for women and men of all racial and ethnic backgrounds, there does appear to be some relationship between incidence rates and this personal characteristic, particularly for men.^[9]

As can be seen in Figure 4-4, incidence rates for Hispanic, black, and non-minority white women--the categories representing the great-est number of female Federal workers--10,100, 59,300, and 212,800 respectively--were similar. While women in other minority categories were both more likely or less likely than these three groups to report harassment, they accounted for a relatively small number of victims. For example, women who classified themselves as "other," had the highest rate of sexual harassment, but only accounted for 2,400 of the women victims. Likewise, Asian and American Indian women had lower rates of sexual harassment but accounted for only 3,500 and 4,300 of the women victims.

Unlike women, men who are members of minority groups did report higher incidence rates than non minority men. The lowest rate of sexual harassment for men of any racial or ethnic group was found among non-minorities (13%). Minority men, however, had higher rates of harassment ranging from 16% to 27%. As with women, the men with the highest rate of sexual harassment--those classified as "other"--were also the fewest in number (2,200).

Thus it appears that racial or ethnic background has some effect ,on whether men are sexually harassed, but less on women.

Most Victims are Very Dependent on Their Jobs

Perhaps not surprisingly, we found that most victims were very dependent on their jobs. This showed clearly in the responses of narrator victims to the question, "At the time of this experience, how much did you need this job?"^[10]

Nearly 7 in 10 female narrators said that at that time they needed their job a great deal (the other four possible responses ranged from "quite a bit" to "not at all "). It is interesting that women who had faced actual or attempted rape or assault were more likely than others to have needed their jobs a great deal at the time of harassment (79% compared with 70% of female narrators who described "severe"

experiences and 66% of those who had "less severe" sexual harassment).[11]

The responses of male narrators were similar to those of women.

Personal Characteristics Do Have an Impact on Incidence of Sexual Harassment

In summary, we found that age and marital status have a strong relationship with experience of sexual harassment, and educational level and racial or ethnic background have a somewhat weaker relationship. Although sizeable numbers of women of various backgrounds experience sexual harassment, young, unmarried, and relatively well educated women appear to be more vulnerable to sexual harassment than others. This pattern holds true for men, as well, but racial or ethnic background also plays a role for men. Male minorities are more likely than non minorities to report having been sexually harassed.

Several Organizational Characteristics Are Related to Sexual Harassment

Continuing our investigation by looking at whether victims with certain organizational characteristics were more likely to be bothered by unwanted sexual attention, we explored the popular theories about sexual harassment.[12] The literature suggests that victims tend to be working in low status jobs with little power. Based on this we expected that typical victims would be non supervisors who were relatively new to the Federal work force, working for a low annual salary (or perhaps as a part time or temporary employee), or working in a job traditionally held by a member of the opposite sex.

To some extent these expectations were realized. Organizational characteristics that had some relationship with rates of sexual harassment were job classification (e.g., trainee, office/clerical or administration/ management), traditionality of job, sex of victim's supervisor, and sexual composition of victim's workgroup.

Incidence Rates Vary By Agency

For both men and women, incidence rates varied considerably from agency to agency[13] (see Table 4-2). For women, incidence rates ranged from a high of 56% (nearly 6 women in every 10) in the Department of Labor to a lower rate of 31% (3 women in 10) in the Department of Agriculture. In nine agencies the incidence rate exceeded the 42% overall rate for women in the Federal workforce, and in four of these agencies at least half of the female employees indicated that they had been sexually harassed.

Table 4-2
Incidence Rate of Sexual Harassment In Each Agency
Percentage of Federal Employees in Different Agencies Who Experienced Sexual Harassment (Question 55)

Agency[1]	Female Victims			
	Most Severe	Severe	Less Severe	Total Victims
Department Labor	2%	47%	8%	56%
Department of Transportation	1%	45%	9%	55%
Department of Justice	4%	33%	16%	53%
All Other Department of Defense Agencies[2]	3%	37%	10%	50%
All Other Agencies[2]	1%	30%	16%	48%
Department of Housing and Urban Development	1%	29%	18%	47%
Department of the Air Force	1%	34%	12%	46%
Veterans Administration	2%	33%	12%	46%
Department of the Navy, including the Marine Corps	2%	30%	12%	44%
Department of Interior	1%	28%	12%	41%
Department of the Army	1%	31%	9%	41%
Department of Commerce	0.3%	20%	20%	40%
Department of Energy	1%	27%	10%	38%
Department of Treasury	0	22%	15%	37%

Department of Health, Education and Welfare [3]	1%	25%	9%	35%
General Services Administration	0	22%	13%	35%
Department of Agriculture	2%	18%	11%	31%
Federal Government wide	1%	29%	12%	42%
	Male Victims			
Agency[1]	Most Severe	Severe	Less Severe	Total Victims
Department of Health, Education and Welfare [3]	1%	13%	9%	22%
Veterans Administration	0.4%	13%	8%	22%
Department of Justice	0.3%	10%	6%	16%
Department of Housing and Urban Development	0	11%	5%	16%
General Services Administration	0	9%	7%	16%
Department of the Army	0.4%	9%	5%	15%
Department of Treasury	0.2%	9%	5%	14%
Department of Interior	0.1%	6%	7%	14%
Department of Energy	0	7%	6%	14%
Department of the Navy, including the Marine Corps	0.3%	9%	5%	14%
All Other Department of Defense Agencies[2]	0	7%	6%	13%
Department of the Air Force	0.1%	9%	4%	12%
Department of Agriculture	0.2%	7%	5%	12%
Department of Commerce	1%	3%	8%	12%
All Other Agencies[2]	0.3%	5%	5%	10%
Department of Labor	1%	7%	2%	10%
Department of Transportation	0	5%	4%	9%
Federal Government wide	0.3%	9%	6%	15%

Note: All figures for each agency may not add up due to rounding. Percentages in bold are higher than Federal Government wide percentages.

Table 4-2 footnotes:

1 Ranked in order of highest percentage of sexual harassment among total victims for each sex.

2 See Appendix B for explanation.

3 The Department of Health, Education and Welfare was abolished and two new agencies (Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Education) were formed in May 1980.

Incidence rates also varied somewhat by severity of harassment experience: women in six agencies reported having faced actual or attempted rape or sexual assault at a rate higher than that of the Federal work force as a whole; in nine agencies, the rate of "severe" sexual harassment was higher than the national average for that level of severity, and in six agencies the rate of "less severe" sexual harassment exceeded the Federal average.

Incidence rates for men also varied by agency, but the agencies having rates exceeding the 15% average rate for men in the Federal work force--five agencies in the case of men--were somewhat different. Again, incidence rates also varied by severity of harassment experience: in five agencies the rate for men who faced actual or attempted rape or sexual assault exceeded the Government wide average, in four the rate for "severe" sexual harassment exceeded the Federal average, and in five the rate of "less severe" harassment was higher.

Although the specific agencies with higher overall incidence rates differ somewhat for men and women, in three agencies--Justice, Housing and Urban Development, and the Veterans Administration--the rates for both men and women were higher than the Federal rate.

We also found that the majority of narrators in the Federal Government--83% of women and 86% of men--reported that the harassment incident occurred on their current job as of May 1980.[\[14\]](#)

For both men and women, this finding varied somewhat by agency and with the severity of the experience. For example, 98% of female narrators who experienced some form of harassment at the Department of Housing and Urban Development were in the same jobs where the harassment occurred compared with 65% at the Department of Energy. Moreover, all female and male narrator victims of actual or attempted rape or assault at the Department of Justice reported that they had left the job where they had been working at the time of harassment.

In summary, the incidence rate of sexual harassment varies substantially from agency to agency, and the majority of victims are still working in the jobs they held when they were harassed.

Regional Differences Are Minor

Sexual harassment is not limited to any particular geographic region or regions, and what regional differences were found are judged to be small^[15] (see Figure 4-5). In 6 of the 11 geographic regions, the incidence rate for women exceeded the Federal average for women, the highest rates being in the North Central and Upper Midwest regions^[16] (48% and 47% compared with the Federal average of 42%). In three regions the rate was lower than the Federal average, the lowest being in the Pacific Northwest (37%) and the Southeast (38%).

FIGURE 4-5
Geographic Location of Victims

Percentage of Federal Employees in Each Geographic Region Who Experienced Sexual Harassment (Question 56)

Geographic Location	Percent of Federal Employees
North Central	Reported by 48% of Women Reported by 14% of Men
Upper Midwest	Reported by 47% of Women Reported by 13% of Men
Midwest	Reported by 45% of Women Reported by 15% of Men
Pacific	Reported by 44% of Women Reported by 20% of Men
Washington DC area	Reported by 44% of Women Reported by 14% of Men
New York	Reported by 43% of Women Reported by 14% of Men
Southwest	Reported by 42% of Women Reported by 12% of Men
Mid Atlantic	Reported by 42% of Women Reported by 16% of Men
New England	Reported by 40% of Women Reported by 12% of Men
Southeast	Reported by 38% of Women Reported by 14% of Men
Pacific Northwest	Reported by 37% of Women Reported by 14% of Men

For men, the highest rates were in the Pacific and Mid-Atlantic regions and the lowest were in the Southeast, New England, and Southwest regions (20%, 16%, and 12% compared with a Federal average for men of 15%).

Differences Among Salary and Grade Levels Vary Slightly

Contrary to what might have been expected, sexual harassment is not concentrated in any particular salary level. Although incidence rates did vary somewhat by salary bracket, the differences were small.^[17] As Figure 4-6 shows, women in the lowest salary bracket (which comprised 39% of all women victims) were somewhat more likely (47%) than others to be sexually harassed, but generally the rates were similar for all income groups.

Having expected to find a greater contrast among income groups, and suspecting that salary level might not reflect job status as well as grade level, we looked closer at the women in white collar jobs, classified under the General Schedule pay plan.^[18] Since most women employed by the Federal Government are classified under the General Schedule, we thought this might be an appropriate measure of job status. The incidence of sexual harassment was pretty much the same among most white collar workers, those in grades GS 1-15.^[19] Women in the "other" category had a somewhat higher incidence rate, and those in Executive positions (GS 16 or above or in the Senior Executive Service) were somewhat lower, but those two groups account for a very small number of women.

As Figure 4-6 indicates, men in the two lowest salary brackets were somewhat more likely than other men to be sexually harassed (19% compared to 11% to 14%). However, it should be noted that a relatively small number and proportion of victims fall into these two lower salary brackets (34% or 56,800 men) compared with women (72% or 212,800 women). The finding that men in lower salary brackets are somewhat more likely to be sexually harassed is supported by an analyses of incidence among men in General Schedule grades. The incidence rates ranged from a high of 54% for men in ungraded positions to a low of 9% for men in the executive positions (GS 16 or above, or Senior Executive Service).

FIGURE 4-6
Annual Salary of Victims
 Percentage of Federal Employees in Different Annual Salary Brackets Who Experienced Sexual Harassment

Annual Salary	Percent of Federal Employees
Low Income (\$1 to \$10,999)	Reported by 47% of Women Reported by 19% of Men
Low medium Income (\$11,000 to \$14,999)	Reported by 39% of Women Reported by 19% of Men
Medium income (\$15,000 to \$19,999)	Reported by 42% of Women Reported by 14% of Men
Medium high income (\$20,000 to \$23,999)	Reported by 42% of Women Reported by 11% of Men
High income (\$24,000 and up)	Reported by 42% of Women Reported by 13% of Men

In summary, the problem of sexual harassment is not concentrated in any particular salary or grade level, but men in lower income brackets and grade levels are more likely than others to experience harassment.

Job Classification Shows a Relatively Weak Relationship

While there were some variations in incidence rates, it is clear that sexual harassment is not concentrated in any category of job^[20] (see Figure 4-7). Contrary to expectations arising from popular theory, there was no clear pattern that women in low-status jobs having little power were generally more vulnerable to sexual harassment than were other women. As Figure 4-7 shows, the incidence rate was highest for trainees, but was next highest for women in professional/technical positions.

FIGURE 4-7
Job Classification of Victims
 Percentage of Federal Employees of Different Job Classifications Who Experienced Sexual Harassment (Question 57)

Trainee	Who Experienced Sexual Harassment	Reported by 51% of Women Reported by 16% of Men
Professional, technical		Reported by 45% of Women Reported by 15% of Men
Administration, management		Reported by 42% of Women Reported by 15% of Men
Other		Reported by 42% of Women Reported by 14% of Men
Office, clerical		Reported by 40% of Women Reported by 17% of Men
Blue collar, service		Reported by 38% of Women Reported by 12% of Men

The finding for trainees was not unexpected since trainees, being new on the job, usually have little power or control over their work situation. Further, they tend to be young (81% of female trainee victims were 16-34 years old).^[21] As data presented earlier in this chapter show, younger victims are more likely to be sexually harassed. In addition, female trainee victims were more likely than female victims in other job classifications to be in nontraditional jobs (35% of female trainee victims were in nontraditional positions compared with around 20% in administrative, blue collar, and professional/technical positions).^[22] However, very few female victims--only 3%--were trainees.

Contrary to what might have been expected, female office/clerical workers were not more likely to be sexually harassed than women in higher status positions. Also contrary to findings of other studies, women in blue collar/service occupations had a relatively low incidence rate (38%). The relatively low incidence rate may be attributable to the fact that few of these women were in nontraditional positions for their sex (only 17%, or 5,200 of 31,600 female blue collar workers); in the private sector more female workers in blue collar/service occupations may

be holding nontraditional jobs.

Results for men tended to be as anticipated. As Figure 4-7 shows, incidence rates for men were highest in office/clerical positions (typically female jobs) and lowest in blue collar/service positions (typically held by men). However, only 6% of all male victims (approximately 9,600 men) held office/clerical positions, compared with 17% (or 28,500) in blue collar/service positions. It is noteworthy that male office/clerical workers who reported sexual harassment were almost twice as likely to be one of the first of their sex in their jobs compared to male office/clerical workers who were not harassed (13% compared with 7%).

In summary, although most sexual harassment is not concentrated in any particular job classification, women trainees are considerably more likely to be harassed than are those in other jobs.

Working in a Nontraditional Job Makes a Difference

We expected that workers who were among the first of their sex in their job (i.e., in nontraditional jobs) would be more likely to be sexually harassed than those in more traditional jobs for their sex. Examples of nontraditional jobs are female law enforcement officers and construction workers and male secretaries and nurses. The literature does not address this issue for men, but suggests that this occurs to women because men see women entering their "territory" as a threat, and respond by using sexual harassment to try to limit the women's' success or to get them to leave. We found the expected relationship present to some extent: men and women in nontraditional jobs for their sex were somewhat more likely to be sexually harassed than others.[\[23\]](#)

FIGURE 4-8
Traditionality of Jobs of Victims
Percentage of Federal Employees in Traditional and Nontraditional Jobs For Their Sex Who Experienced Sexual Harassment (Question 52)

Nontraditional job	Who Experienced Sexual Harassment	Reported by 53% of Women Reported by 20% of Men
Traditional job		Reported by 41% of Women Reported by 14% of Men

As Figure 4-8 shows, fully 5 in every 10 women in nontraditional jobs reported unwanted sexual attention on the job, compared with 4 in 10 women in other jobs. However, few women--only 12%, or 35,800 in 291,700--reported working in nontraditional positions. As with women, men in nontraditional jobs were somewhat more likely to experience harassment than others, but this group comprises an even smaller percentage of male victims--5%, or 8,700 out of 164,700.

Sex of Immediate Supervisor a Factor

We had expected to find that women workers with supervisors of the opposite sex were more vulnerable to sexual harassment, since the literature suggests that most incidents of sexual harassment are perpetrated or tolerated by supervisors.[\[24\]](#) This expectation that the sex of the immediate supervisor makes a difference was borne out for both men and women.[\[25\]](#)

FIGURE 4-9
Sex of Supervisor(s) of Victims
Percentage of Federal Employees Who Experienced Sexual Harassment, by Sex of Immediate Supervisor(s) (Question 50)

Male supervisor	Reported by 45% of Women Reported by 13% of Men	Who Experienced Sexual Harassment
Male and female supervisors	Reported by 44% of Women Reported by 25% of Men	
Female supervisor	Reported by 38% of Women Reported by 23% of Men	

As Figure 4-9 shows, women were somewhat more likely to be sexually harassed if their immediate supervisor was a man than if the supervisor was a woman. Even more consistent with expectations, we found that men were almost twice as likely to be sexually harassed if their supervisor was a woman, than if the supervisor was a man.[\[26\]](#)

These findings--that women are somewhat more likely to be harassed if their supervisor is male and men are almost twice as likely to be harassed if their supervisor is female--implies that sex of supervisor has some bearing on whether an employee is likely to be sexually

harassed, although most incidents of sexual harassment are perpetrated by coworkers. It also may suggest that supervisors are more likely to allow sexual harassment to occur to their subordinates if those employees are of the opposite sex.

Male-Female Ratio in Immediate Workgroup Is Strongly Related

We expected to find that most sexual harassment occurs between members of the opposite sex and is greater where the victims have fewer same sex coworkers who might serve as a support system. We thought women in primarily male work groups might be especially vulnerable because they could be seen as outsiders who threaten the "old boy network " in the workgroup.

As expected, both men and women were more likely to be bothered by unwanted sexual attention if they worked in work groups composed wholly or primarily of members of the opposite sex. [27] As Figure 4-10 shows, the greater the proportion of men in the work group, the likelier women were to be sexually harassed. More than half the women who worked in all male workgroups, and nearly half who worked in predominately male workgroups, reported having had to deal with unwanted sexual attention, compared with just over one-third of women in predominately female work groups, and one-fifth of women in all female groups. A sizeable percentage of female victims--44% or 127,700 out of 292,800--were working in wholly or predominately male work groups at the time they were harassed.

FIGURE 4-10

Sexual Composition of Victims' Work Groups

Percentage of Federal Employees in Different Kinds of Work Groups Who Experienced Sexual Harassment (Question 51)

All men	Reported by 55% of Women Reported by 8% of Men	Who Experienced Sexual Harassment
Predominately men	Reported by 49% of Women Reported by 13% of Men	
Equal number of men and women	Reported by 43% of Women Reported by 19% of Men	
Predominately women	Reported by 37% of Women Reported by 22% of Men	
All women	Reported by 22% of Women Reported by 22% of Men	

Men also were more likely to be bothered by unwanted sexual attention if they worked in groups composed wholly or predominately of members of the opposite sex. However, relatively few male victims--only 20% or 33,600 out of 167,000--were working in mostly or all female groups when they were harassed; the largest number (62%) were working in all or predominately male workgroups, where the incidence rate is relatively low (8% to 13%).

Thus, it appears that sexual composition of work groups does affect the likelihood of women and men becoming victims of sexual harassment. The greater the concentration of members of the opposite sex in the work group, the greater the incidence of harassment. This has a greater impact on women since a greater proportion of women than men are likely to work in groups composed wholly or primarily of members of the opposite sex.

The finding that sexual composition of the work group, like sex of the supervisor, has a relationship to incidence rate of sexual harassment also may be attributable to the finding reported in the next chapter--that Federal employees are sexually harassed by coworkers more often than by supervisors.

Other Organizational Characteristics Showed Little Relationship with Sexual Harassment

Six other organizational characteristics exam-ined showed little relationship to the incidence of sexual harassment. Four were expected to shed some light on the theory that people with the least status and power are most vulnerable: level of privacy, supervisory status, length of Federal service, and work schedule. The other two--work hours and size of workgroup--were designed to explore workplace characteristics.

Relationship between privacy on the job and likelihood of bothersome attention is uncertain. Some observers have speculated that workers having no personal workspace or an open workspace would be more vulnerable to harassment since their working conditions do not afford a sense of privacy; others have suggested just the opposite, that those having private workspaces would be more vulnerable since much sexual harassment, particularly in its more severe forms, occurs in private. Thus, we asked victims whether, at the time they were harassed, they had a workspace they could call their own, and if they did, what it was like: open (worker could be seen from all sides); semi-open (seen from 1 to 3 sides); semi-private (with door that can be closed); or pri-vate (with door that can be closed). [28] We found that no one type of workspace was typical of victims of sexual harassment.

While there were some differences for women, there was not a clear pattern. Women having no workspace, a semi-open space, or a semi-private space were somewhat more likely to be bothered with unwanted sexual attention than those with open workspaces or a private office

(44% to 46% compared with 39%).

The slightly greater likelihood of harassment of women who had no personal workspace might be due to their lack of privacy. The slightly greater vulnerability of women having semi-private offices might reflect the finding (discussed in the next chapter) that most women were bothered by coworkers in the same office; the semi-private office would seem to afford a relatively greater freedom to harass. Any conclusions on the question would be premature, but the findings would seem a fruitful area for future research.

Men experienced sexual harassment at about the same rate, regardless of the degree of privacy of their workspaces (13%-16%).

Nonsupervisors were not found to be more vulnerable to sexual harassment than supervisors.[\[29\]](#) Although female nonsupervisors were somewhat more likely than female supervisors to report unwanted sexual attention (43% compared with 39%), and male nonsupervisors slightly more likely than supervisors (15% compared with 14%), these differences are judged to be small. While it is true that most victims--88% of female victims and 73% of male victims--are nonsupervisors, there are also far more people working in a nonsupervisory capacity for the Federal Government.

The relationship between length of Federal service and likelihood of unwanted sexual attention was different for men and women.[\[30\]](#) Women on probation (i.e., with less than 1 year of Federal service) were somewhat more likely to report sexual harassment than those not on probation (i.e., more than 1 year of Federal service) (45% compared with 42%), but this difference was judged small. The difference in incidence rates for men was more marked: 20% of men on probation, but only 14% of those not on probation, reported having been harassed. The overall impact of any true differences is probably insignificant since relatively small numbers of Federal workers have less than 1 year of Federal service and most victims are women, who show only slight differences in incidence rates. Most victims of sexual harassment, both men and women, had been working for the Federal Government for more than 1 year when they were harassed.

Work schedule--permanent, full-time or another arrangement such as parttime, temporary, or seasonal--showed only a slight relationship with incidence of sexual harassment, and then only for women.[\[31\]](#) Women working in permanent full time jobs were somewhat more likely than others to be bothered with unwanted attention (43% compared with 37%) but men showed the same rate regardless of work schedule (15%).

The typical working hours of an employee--day time or other arrangements such as night time, weekends, shifts, or frequent overtime--seems to bear no important relationship to whether the employee is subjected to bothersome sexual harassment.[\[32\]](#) Women working regularly in the day time were just about as likely to be bothered as working nights, weekends, shifts, or a lot of overtime. Although men working "other" hours were a little more vulnerable than day time workers to being harassed (17% compared with 14%), this disparity probably is not great enough to make a real difference.

The size of the immediate work group of the employee--small (1-5 people), medium (6-15 people), large (16-25 people), or very large (more than 25)--had no relationship with likelihood of sexual harassment.[\[33\]](#) The largest group of female victims were working in medium sized work groups (40%), but the incidence rates for the four different sized groups were about the same (41% to 45%). The range of incidence rates for men was even smaller (13% to 15%).

Organizational Characteristics Have an Impact on the Incidence of Sexual Harassment

In summary, of the 13 characteristics of an employee's job or work place examined, one clearly showed a relatively strong relationship with incidence of sexual harassment: male-female ratio in the immediate workgroup. Women working in work groups composed completely or primarily of men were more likely to be subjected to unwanted sexual attention, and conversely, men in wholly or primarily female workgroups were more likely to be sexually harassed.

Three other organizational characteristics showed some relationship with harassment: sex of immediate supervisor, traditionality of job, and job classification. Generally a worker whose immediate supervisor was of the opposite sex, or who had more than one supervisor, both male and female, was more vulnerable than a worker whose supervisor was of the same sex. Although most victims, both male and female, were working in traditional jobs when they were harassed, the likelihood of being harassed was greater for those in jobs usually held by the opposite sex. This effect may have been seen somewhat in the slightly greater vulnerability to harassment of men in office/clerical positions--but relatively few male victims were working in such jobs when they were harassed.

Women working in professional/technical jobs, and both female and male trainees, were somewhat more likely to be bothered with unwanted attention--but it is clear that Federal workers in all job classifications, particularly women, experience harassment.

Victims See Their Work Environments Differently Than Nonvictims

We also were interested in whether the general atmosphere in a work place had any relationship with sexual harassment. Are some work environments more conducive to sexual harassment than others? To explore this issue we compared the responses of victims[\[34\]](#) by sex (i.e.,

female victims with female nonvictims, etc.) to two sets of attitudinal questions, one that attempted to assess general relations with supervisors and one designed to measure the general level of sexual activity in the office. 35

We expected to find that victims had worse relations with their supervisors, felt more pressured to engage in sexually oriented behavior, and generally felt their organization was not as helpful as it might be in curtailing sexual harassment of its employees. This turned out to be true.

Perhaps not surprisingly, victims, particularly women, were considerably more likely than nonvictims to feel uninvited, unwanted sexual attention was a problem where they worked. (See Table 4-3) Specifically, male and female victims were more inclined to feel they were expected to flirt and make sexual comments about the opposite sex and to think employees in their offices use (or used) sexual favors to advance on the job.

Victims also were more likely to indicate employee-supervisor relationships in their immediate workgroups were not what they might be. They were twice as likely as their nonvictim counterparts to feel unable to bring work related concerns to their immediate supervisors and to feel, if they did, that their supervisors would not do anything about the situation, even if it were possible. Finally, victims were more likely than nonvictims to feel their organization was not doing everything it could to stop unwanted sexual attention among its employees.

While there could be several explanations for these differences in attitudes between victims and nonvictims, one possibility is that work atmosphere does have some affect on the incidence of sexual harassment. Further research on this issue would be interesting and helpful in designing means of eliminating the problem.

Conclusion

We have reviewed in detail the personal and organizational characteristics of victims and how they affect the vulnerability of women and men to sexual harassment. Some characteristics affect the rate of sexual harassment more than others, and some characteristics are more subject to control by managers who wish to reduce the rate of sexual harassment in their organization.

Table 4-3
Perceptions of Work Environment

These are statements used to describe the general work setting in the immediate work group. Percentages are of Federal workers who agreed or disagreed with the following statements. (Question 44)

General Relations with Supervisors	Respondents			
	Female Victims	Female Nonvictims	Male Victims	Male Nonvictims
a. Disagreed with: I feel free to bring up general work related concerns or suggestions to my immediate supervisor.	21%	8%	26%	7%
b. Disagreed with: I feel that my supervisor would correct general work related concerns or suggestions if possible.	24%	20%	20%	21%
Level of Sexual Activity				
c. Agreed with: Where I work, I feel I am expected to flirt.	23%	2%	21%	2%
d. Agreed with: Where I work, I feel I am expected to make sexual comments about the opposite sex.	9%	2%	28%	5%
e. Agreed with: Uninvited and unwanted sexual attention is a problem for employees where I work.	27%	4%	22%	7%
f. Agreed with: Where I work, employees use their sexual favors for advancement on the job.	30%	23%	27%	22%
g. Disagreed with: My organization makes every effort to stop unwanted sexual attention among its employees.	34%	23%	32%	28%

Note: Percentages are based on "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" and "Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree" responses to statements.

Sexual harassment is a problem of virtually all Federal agencies studied. Variation in incidence rates suggests the problem is more salient in some agencies than in others, but in none is it absent. As noted, a number of generic demographic characteristics are related to sexual harassment. As the composition of the workforce varies from agency to agency, so too may the incidence of sexual harassment. Although this

has not been investigated, agency managers need to be aware of the composition in their workforce to identify the workers in their agency most likely to be victims. This is a first step toward reducing the problem.

In addition, certain working conditions appear related to sexual harassment, and many of these conditions can be changed by management in an effort to reduce sexual harassment. Consequently, managers need to be made aware that sexual harassment is a problem and that they are held accountable for dealing with it.

Footnotes -- Chapter 4

¹ See Chapter 1.

² See Congressional Memorandum of Understanding; see Appendix E.

³ Based on responses to Survey Question 61; see Appendix C.

⁴ Based on responses to Survey Question 62; see Appendix D, Table P for data on marital status by age of victim.

⁵ Based on responses to Survey Question 60.

⁶ Based on responses to Survey Questions 2-7, b, d; see Appendix D, Table C, for data.

⁷ Based on responses to Survey Question 1 (i); see Appendix D, Table D, for data.

⁸ Based on responses to Survey Question 52; see Appendix D, Figure B, for data.

⁹ Based on responses to Survey Question 59; see Appendix B for an explanation of racial or ethnic categories.

¹⁰ Survey Question 35.

¹¹ See Appendix D, Figure C for data.

¹² See Appendix G for a survey of the literature on sexual harassment.

¹³ Based on responses to Survey Question 55; the State Department was not included in this analysis because the response rate from those employees was too low to provide reliable data.

¹⁴ Based on responses to Survey Question 19; see Appendix D, Table E for data.

¹⁵ Based on responses to Survey Question 56; see Appendix C.

¹⁶ See Appendix B for list of states included in each region. Regional breakdowns are those used by the Office of Personnel Management.

¹⁷ Based on responses by group or stratum number; see Appendix B for explanation of salary levels.

¹⁸ That is, those who gave the first response to Survey Question 53.

¹⁹ See Appendix D, Figure D for data.

²⁰ Based on responses to Survey Question 57.

²¹ See Appendix D, Figure E for data.

²² See Appendix D, Table F for data.

²³ Based on responses to Survey Question 52.

²⁴ However, as the next chapter shows, most Federal workers were harassed by other workers rather than supervisors.

25 Based on responses to Survey Question 50.

26 However, as the next chapter shows, of the men who report being harassed, only about 7% are harassed by female supervisors.

27 Based on responses to Survey Question 51.

28 Question 49; see Appendix B for explanation of terms; See Appendix D, Figure F for data.

29 Based on responses to Survey Question 58; see Appendix D, Figure G for data.

30 Based on responses to Survey Question 45; see Appendix D, Figure H for data.

31 Based on responses to Survey Question 46; see Appendix D, Figure I for data.

32 Based on responses to Survey Question 47; see Appendix D, Figure J for data.

33 Based on responses to Survey Question 48; see Appendix D, Figure K for data.

34 As determined by responses to Survey Question 17; see Appendix C. Victims responded in terms of the offices they were in when they were harassed; nonvictims described their current jobs.

35 Based on responses to Survey Questions 44a-44g.

5. Perpetrators of Sexual Harassment

- Most victims are sexually harassed by people of the opposite sex.
- Most harassers act alone rather than in concert with another person.
- Most harassers of women are older than their victims, and most harassers of men are younger.
- Most harassers are married, but many men report being harassed by divorced or single women as well.
- Most harassers are of the same race or ethnic background as their victims, but most minority men report being harassed by those of a different race or ethnic background.
- Most harassers are coworkers, but many women are harassed by supervisors.
- Many harassers are reported to have bothered more than one person at work.
- Few employees report having been accused of sexually harassing others.

More than half the women in four Federal agencies ... one-fifth of the men ,in another agency ... two-thirds of all women aged 16 to 19 ... nearly one-third of all divorced men ... half of all female trainees ... one-fifth of all men working in nontraditional jobs...

These are the victims of sexual harassment in the Federal workforce. The next step is identifying the perpetrators of these incidents, the people who are offending others with their sexual comments and deliberate touching, are pressuring others for sexual favors, and in some cases are committing the criminal offense of rape or sexual assault.

We were interested in learning a number of things about the perpetrators of sexual harassment: whether they are found in disproportionate numbers within certain job classifications, racial categories, age brackets, educational levels, and grade levels;^[1] whether harassers of men and women are similar in most ways or differ markedly; whether certain types of victims typically are bothered by certain types of harassers; and whether incidents tend to be one time acts, or whether some harassers show a pattern of sexually bothering others.

Such information would indicate what remedies might--or might not--work and would help in developing remedies appropriate for different target groups. It seemed especially important to look at the harassers of women since the problem of sexual harassment affects women in far greater numbers, at greater rates, and with greater severity than it does men.

We found that women typically are harassed by a male coworker who is married, older than the victim, of the same race or ethnic background (or a different background if the victim is a minority), and likely to have harassed others at work (see Figure 5-1).

FIGURE 5-1

Sex of Harasser

Percentage of Narrator Victims Who Indicated the Sex of the Person(s) Who Bothered Them Sexually (Question 32a)

TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Male	Who Bothered Them Sexually	Reported by 79% of Women Reported by 18% of Men
	Two or more males		Reported by 16% of Women Reported by 4% of Men
	Both males and females		Reported by 2% of Women Reported by 6% of Men
	Female		Reported by 2% of Women Reported by 60% of Men
	Two or more females		Reported by 1% of Women Reported by 12% of Men
	Unknown		Reported by 1% of Women Reported by 0.3% of Men

Men typically are harassed by a female coworker who is married (but frequently is divorced or single), younger than the victim, of the same race or ethnic background, and somewhat likely to have harassed others at work.

More detailed descriptions of perpetrators of sexual harassment are given in the sections that follow. Descriptions are based on the responses of narrators (i.e., victims who described one incident of harassment in detail) to survey questions 32-34. Most findings presented represent the responses of victims of all forms of sexual harassment. Analysis of responses by severity of harassment experience revealed that in most cases the harassers were similar regardless of severity of experience. Only the notable exceptions are described.

FIGURE 5-2**Age of Harasser**

Percentage of Narrator Victims Who Indicated the Age of the Person(s) Who Bothered Them Sexually (Question 32b)

TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Older	Who Bothered Them Sexually	Reported by 68% of Women Reported by 29% of Men
	Younger		Reported by 12% of Women Reported by 38% of Men
	Same		Reported by 11% of Women Reported by 18% of Men
	Various Ages		Reported by 7% of Women Reported by 12% of Men
	Unknown		Reported by 2% of Women Reported by 3% of Men

Harassers of Women Are Strikingly Similar

The harasser of a woman is usually a man. In 95 cases of sexual harassment out of every 100, the incident was perpetrated by a man--in 79 incidents by a lone man and in 16 incidents by two or more men. Few women were harassed by other women.

The harasser of a woman usually acts alone. In 81 incidents out of every 100 the harasser acted alone rather than in concert with others--in 79 incidents as a lone male and 2 incidents as a lone female.

The harasser of a woman is usually older than the victim. In 68 incidents out of every 100 the harasser was older than the victim, in 12 incidents younger, and in 11 incidents of the same age. In 7% of the incidents there were several harassers, of various ages, and in 2%, the women did not know their harasser's age. (See Figure 5-2)

FIGURE 5-3**Marital Status of Harasser**

Percentage of Narrator Victims Who Indicated the Marital Status of the Person(s) Who Bothered Them Sexually (Question 32d)

TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Married	Who Bothered Them Sexually	Reported by 67% of Women Reported by 35% of Men
	Mixed		Reported by 9% of Women Reported by 14% of Men

	Unknown		Reported by 9% of Women Reported by 7% of Men
	Single		Reported by 8% of Women Reported by 20% of Men
	Divorced, Separated, Widowed		Reported by 7% of Women Reported by 25% of Men

The harasser of a woman usually is married. Two-thirds (67%) of all incidents were perpetrated by someone who was married; only 15% were initiated by an unmarried person (8% single and 7% divorced, separated, or widowed). In 9% of the incidents there was more than one harasser, of different marital statuses, and in an equal number the woman did not know her harasser's marital status. (See Figure 5-3)

The harasser of a woman usually is someone of the same race or ethnic background. In 63% of all incidents the harasser was of the same race or ethnic background as the victim. (See Figure 5-4) However, there were some striking differences in the experiences of minority and nonminority women harassed by men.[2] While most nonminority female narrators (75%) and most women in some minority groups were harassed by a man of the same race or ethnic background, most black, Hispanic, and Asian or Pacific Islander women (53%, 62%, and 88%, respectively) were bothered by men of different backgrounds.

The harasser of a woman usually has no supervisory authority over her, but sometimes is a supervisor. Harassers of women usually (in 65% of all incidents) are coworkers or "other" Federal employees having no supervisory authority over the victim. In a sizeable number of incidents (37%), however, women were harassed by their immediate supervisor or a higher level supervisor. Subordinates were harassers in only 4% of the incidents; in 6% of the incidents the supervisory status of the harasser was unknown.[3] Victims of the relatively uncommon most severe form of harassment, actual or attempted rape or sexual assault, were harassed by an immediate or higher level supervisor almost as often as by a coworker or "other" Federal employee (51% of the incidents perpetrated by a supervisor compared with 57% by a coworker or other employee). In many incidents involving more than one harasser, both supervisors and coworkers were identified. (See Figure 5-5)

FIGURE 5-4
Ethnic Status of Harasser

Percentage of Narrator Victims Who Indicated the Ethnic Status of the Person(s) Who Bothered Them Sexually (Question 32c)

TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Same	Who Bothered Them Sexually	Reported by 63% of Women Reported by 68% of Men
	Different		Reported by 26% of Women Reported by 17% of Men
	Some the Same and Some Different		Reported by 9% of Women Reported by 12% of Men
	Unknown		Reported by 2% of Women Reported by 3% of Men

FIGURE 5-5
Organizational Level of Harasser

Percentage of Narrator Victims Who Identified the Organizational Level of the Person(s) Who Bothered Them Sexually (Question 33)

TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Coworker or Other Employee	Who Bothered Them Sexually	Reported by 65% of Women Reported by 76% of Men
	Immediate Supervisor or Other Supervisor		Reported by 37% of Women Reported by 14% of Men
	Unknown		Reported by 6% of Women Reported by 5% of Men
	Subordinate		Reported by 4% of Women Reported by 16% of Men

NOTE: Some respondents indicated that more than one party bothered them.

Many women are harassed by someone who has harassed others on the job. While the majority of female narrators (53%) did not know whether the harasser had bothered others, 43% did know this to be the case and only 3% knew it not to be true. Victims of the most severe and severe forms of sexual harassment were more likely to be bothered by repeat offenders than were victims of less severe harassment (38% and 49% compared with 32%). (See Figure 5-6)

FIGURE 5-6
Has the Harasser Sexually Bothered Others at Work?

Percentage of Narrator Victims Who Were Sexually Harassed and Who Indicated Whether the Person(s) Who Bothered Them Sexually Had Sexually Bothered Others at Work (Question 34)

TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Did not know	Who Bothered Them Sexually	Reported by 53% of Women Reported by 61% of Men
	Harasser had bothered others		Reported by 43% of Women Reported by 31% of Men
	Harasser had not bothered others		Reported by 3% of Women Reported by 8% of Men

Harassers of Men Also Are Similar

The harasser of a man usually is a woman. In 72 out of every 100 cases, the incident was perpetrated by a woman--in 60 incidents by a lone woman and in 12 cases by two or more women. Men were more likely than women to be victims of homosexual harassment; 22% reported being harassed by one or more men, while only 3% of the women reported harassment by one or more women.

The harasser of a man usually acts alone. In 78 out of every 100 incidents the harasser acted alone rather than in concert with others--in 60 out of 100 incidents as a lone female and in 18 as a lone male.

The harasser of a man most often is younger than the victim. In 39% of the incidents the harasser was younger than the victim, but in 29% the harasser was older, and in 18% the two were the same age.

The harasser of a man most often is married. Slightly over one-third of the male narrators (35%) said their harasser was married, but a larger proportion was currently unmarried--either divorced, separated, or widowed (25%) or single and never married (20%).

The harasser of a man usually is someone of the same race or ethnic background. This was true in 68% of all incidents, but, as in the case of female victims, race or ethnic background of the victim made a difference. In nearly 9 in every 10 (89%) incidents involving a non minority male victim and a female harasser, the harasser was of the same background (i.e., also a nonminority). Black men were about as likely to be harassed by a woman of a different background as by a black woman (46% of the cases involving female harassers compared with 51%), and Hispanic and Asian or Pacific Islander men were more likely to be bothered by a woman of a different race than by one of their own race (69% and 100% of the cases involving female harassers, respectively).

The harasser of a man usually has no supervisory authority over him. Three-fourths of the male victims (76%) reported their harasser was a coworker or another Federal worker having no supervisory authority over the victim. In addition, the harasser was more likely to be subordinate than a supervisor (16% of all cases compared with 14%).

A number of men are harassed by someone who has bothered others on the job. While most male narrators (61%) did not know whether their harasser had bothered others, 31% did know this to be the case, and 8% were certain it was not the case.

Experiences of Men and Women Differ

In some ways the harassers of female and male victims were quite similar. For instance, most harassers of men and women acted alone rather than with others. In other ways, the experiences of men and women were noticeably different. For example, while most harassers were of the opposite sex of the victim, men were considerably more likely to be victims of homosexual harassment (22% of male narrators were bothered by one or more men, but only 3% of female victims reported homosexual harassment).

Most harassers of women (68%) were older than the victim, but the pattern for men was less obvious. The largest group of men (39%) were bothered by someone younger, but a sizeable number (29%) were bothered by an older person. Most harassers of women (67% of the incidents). While men were most likely to be bothered by a married person, this was true in only 35% of the incidents described. Thus, women were nearly twice as likely as men to have been harassed by someone who was married.

Most harassers of men and women were coworkers or other Federal employees who had no supervisory authority over the victim. This finding is particularly significant in the case of women since it appears to contradict the popular notion that the greatest part of the problem of sexual harassment originates with (male) supervisors who wield formal power over their (female) victims. It may be, however, that some supervisors, while not themselves readily identifiable as the perpetrators of specific sexual harassment incidents, may be giving tacit approval to the behavior and thus creating an environment wherein sexual harassment is not *only* tolerated but encouraged. As one Federal employee wrote on the survey questionnaire: "A major problem is that the major portion of 'management ' is male, and if they do not participate in the games themselves, there is tacit approval of activity. Any objection is met with a wry smile and the reaction that maybe you are imagining things and perhaps overemphasizing your own charms. "

It appears that the "coercive," or "shake down" element of sexual harassment--to the extent that it was present--operated more in the case of women. While both men and women were most likely to have been harassed by work associates or peers, this was more true for male victims (76%) than for females (65%). Likewise, while both men and women were less likely to be harassed by an immediate or higher level supervisor, this was also more true for men (14%) than for women (37%). The finding that the majority of sexual harassment incidents are perpetrated by coworkers or other work peers does suggest that any institutional efforts to eliminate the problem of sexual harassment might need to involve Federal workers at all levels rather than only supervisors. However, since supervisors ultimately are responsible for the conduct in their workplaces, training for them regarding sexual harassment should certainly be stressed.

Of the men and women who knew, most said their harassers had also bothered others. That 43% of all female victims could with certainty state that their harasser had bothered others at work^[4] suggests that the problem of sexual harassment should not be viewed solely as a number of isolated instances of personal sexual attraction. For a sizeable number of women (98,000), their experience was part of an overall pattern exhibited by a harasser. Since most harassers of women are men, it seems fair to assume that the majority of repeat offenders in harassment of women are men. Thus, it appears that certain men are more likely to harass than others and that sexual harassment is not necessarily part of the normal interaction among men and women on the job, or that all men and women engage in it, as has been intimated by some.

A similar case could be made for the harassers of men. For 31% of male victims, their experiences were part of an overall pattern exhibited by the harasser. Thus it seems likely that a number of female harassers were also repeat offenders. However, since the number of men harassed is far smaller than the number of women, it seems fair to conclude that the problem of repeat offenders among male harassers is far more significant.

Some Harassers Reported on Themselves

It is important to note that we attempted only to construct a general profile of harassers in terms of general personal and job characteristics; obviously a more in depth examination, including investigation of psychological variables, was beyond the scope of this study. However, we did attempt to gain more information about harassers by asking several questions of people willing to identify themselves as harassers.

Only 10,500 men and 1,100 women indicated that during the 24-month period they had been accused of sexually bothering someone. Since most of the accused were men, we looked only at their responses, not at the women's. The vast majority of those men, 82%, felt they had been unjustly accused by ,their victim--and 8% thought the accusation had been fair (the remaining 10% were not sure whether the charge was fair or not).^[5]

Few Federal workers admitted they have been accused of sexual harassment--far fewer than the numbers who claim to have been harassed. Most men who do report having been accused felt the charge was unfair. When asked why they considered the charge unfair, 48% said the accuser had misunderstood their motives, 45% said the accuser wanted to create trouble, 29% felt they had done nothing wrong.^[6] Only one-third indicated that management subsequently found the charge to be false, although there is no indication of how many of these cases were reported to management. Since far fewer men report being accused of sexual harassment, whether fairly or not, than the number of women who report being harassed by men, it would appear that few women victims confront their harassers. This absence of confrontation may perpetuate the problem of sexual harassment.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented a profile of typical perpetrators of sexual harassment as described by their victims. We have seen that the typical harasser of women differs from the typical harasser of men, principally in terms of sex and age, and, to a lesser extent, in marital status and race or ethnic background. We have also seen that few individuals admit to having been accused of sexual harassment.

The next chapter explores in more depth the sexual harassment incidents.

Footnotes -- Chapter 5

1 Congressional Memorandum of Understanding; see Appendix E.

2 Too few women in some minority groups reported harassment by more than one man or by women to allow separate analysis in regard to background of those harassers. See Appendix D, Table G for data on the race or ethnic background of victims and their harassers.

3 Since respondents harassed by more than one person were allowed to give more than one answer to this question (Survey Question 33), percentages total more than 100%.

4 This is particularly telling in that, as shown in Chapter 6, the survey found that most victims do not talk to others in their offices about their

experiences.

5 Based on responses to Survey Questions 36 and 37; see Appendix D, Table H for data.

6 Based on responses to Survey Question 38; see Appendix D, Table Q for data.

6. Incidents of Sexual Harassment

- Those who are sexually harassed by supervisors and those who experience the more severe forms of sexual harassment are more likely than other victims to foresee penalties or possible benefits for not going along or for going along with the unwanted sexual attention.
- Most victims respond to sexual harassment by ignoring it, but few find that technique improves the situation. The most assertive actions are found to be the most effective.
- Few victims talk about their experiences with others but those who do find talking to someone with independent authority or organizational responsibility to be more helpful than talking with coworkers, family, or friends.
- Few victims take formal actions, but many who do find them helpful.
- The reported response of agency officials to informal and formal charges of sexual harassment has been mixed.

462,000 people having to deal with uninvited, unwanted sexual attention while working at their jobs for the Federal Government, two thirds of them women ... 300,000 confronted by behaviors that a minimum of two-thirds of the Federal workforce considers sexual harassment ... 12,000 facing actual or attempted rape or sexual assault, a criminal offense ... most of them bothered by coworkers of the opposite sex, but a sizeable number harassed by people with supervisory authority over them...

The picture of sexual harassment in the Federal workplace is taking shape. We know who the victims are, how many are facing what kinds of unwanted attention, and who is perpetrating the offensive behavior. To complete the picture we needed to know more about the episodes themselves, the details of the individual incidents that, when taken together, would place the many facts and figures in context. Only then would the picture be a clear image of the problem of sexual harassment as it affects Federal workers.

We wanted to know about the element of coercion--or enticement--in sexual harassment incidents: Do harassers use explicit or implied leverage to ensure cooperation from their vic-tims?[1] Do victims think something harmful will happen if they don't go along, or something beneficial if they do? How do victims deal with the unwanted behavior? Do they simply ignore the situation, hoping it will go away? Does any particular response seem most effective in getting the behavior stopped? Is management helpful in this regard? Such information is essential in developing remedies that are likely to reduce the incidence of sexual harassment.

We found that the answers to these questions depended somewhat on the sex of the victim, who was perpetrating the offensive behavior, and what kind of unwanted attention was involved.

Employees bothered by others who had supervisory authority over them, and those who faced actual or attempted rape or assault, were most likely to see penalties for not going along and rewards for going along. The use and effectiveness of various formal and informal responses, including talking with other people about the situation and filing formal complaints, depended somewhat on the sex of the victim and the severity of the situation. Some victims found management helpful, but many did not.

Again, findings in this chapter are based on the response of narrators--those victims who agreed to describe in detail one experience of sexual harassment, either their only or their most recent experience, or the one that had the greatest effect on them. For simplicity, these people are referred to as victims, although, to be precise, they make up only a subgroup of victims.

Fear of Penalties and Expectation of Rewards

Most victim narrators did not think anything bad would happen to them if they did not go along with the unwanted attention. Nor did most anticipate that something beneficial would happen if they did go along. Men and women tended to agree on these points. The large majority of female victims (70%) thought there would be no adverse consequences if they did not go along with the harasser.[2] We speculated that the reason for this was that most reported being harassed by presumably less powerful coworkers rather than supervisors (see Chapter 5). Indeed we found that the victims' perceptions of consequences differed somewhat depending on who was bothering them and what kind of unwanted attention they were getting.

Women who were harassed by coworkers having nonsupervisory authority over them were more likely to think nothing adverse would happen to them than were women bothered by immediate supervisors (70% compared with 44%) (see Figure 6-1). Interestingly, women

harassed by their immediate supervisors were less likely to think that nothing would happen to them (44%) and thus more likely to fear penalties than those bothered by higher level supervisors (57%); likewise, those harassed by their coworkers were less likely to think that nothing would happen to them (70%) and thus more likely to fear penalties than those bothered by "other" employees (79%). This suggests that harassers having direct organizational contact with the victim are seen as more coercive or threatening than those whose relationship is more distant.

In addition, the more severe the form of harassment the woman was facing, the more likely she was to perceive adverse consequences (see Figure 6-1). Victims of actual or attempted rape or assault were most likely to perceive adverse consequences regardless of whether the harasser was a coworker or a supervisor. Only 15% to 23% of these women thought nothing would happen to them if they did not go along.

FIGURE 6-1
Perceived Penalties for Not Going Along

Percentage of Narrators Who Were Harassed by Their Immediate Supervisor or Coworker Who Thought the Following Would Happen to Them if They Did Not Go Along With the Sexual Harassment (Question 24)

VICTIMS OF MOST SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	My working assignments or conditions would get worse	Reported by 46% of women and 100% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 41% of women and 50% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	The person(s) or other workers would be unpleasant or would embarrass me	Reported by 37% of women and 0% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 67% of women and 45% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I would be unable to get a promotion, step increase, good rating, or reference	Reported by 62% of women and 0% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 30% of women and 55% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I would Lose my job	Reported by 37% of women and 0% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 41% of women and 0% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I did not think anything would happen	Reported by 23% of women and 0% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 15% of women and 18% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
VICTIMS OF SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	My working assignments or conditions would get worse	Reported by 45% of women and 44% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 19% of women and 12% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	The person(s) or other workers would be unpleasant or would embarrass me	Reported by 25% of women and 19% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 26% of women and 20% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I would be unable to get a promotion, step increase, good rating, or reference	Reported by 47% of women and 38% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 14% of women and 10% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I would Lose my job	Reported by 6% of women and 12% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 2% of women and 3% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I did not think anything would happen	Reported by 40% of women and 49% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 65% of women and 73% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
VICTIMS OF LESS SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	My working assignments or conditions would get worse	Reported by 28% of women and 31% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 7% of women and 9% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	The person(s) or other workers would be unpleasant or would embarrass me	Reported by 23% of women and 13% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 13% of women and 20% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I would be unable to get a promotion, step increase, good rating, or reference	Reported by 17% of women and 37% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 5% of women and 5% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I would Lose my job	Reported by 4% of women and 4% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 0% of women and 1% of men who were harassed by a co-worker

	I did not think anything would happen	Reported by 56% of women and 40% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 82% of women and 77% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	My working assignments or conditions would get worse	Reported by 41% of women and 38% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 16% of women and 12% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	The person(s) or other workers would be unpleasant or would embarrass me	Reported by 25% of women and 16% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 22% of women and 20% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I would be unable to get a promotion, step increase, good rating, or reference	Reported by 39% of women and 37% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 11% of women and 9% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I would Lose my job	Reported by 6% of women and 8% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 2% of women and 3% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I did not think anything would happen	Reported by 44% of women and 44% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 70% of women and 74% of men who were harassed by a co-worker

For the women who did perceive adverse consequences, the difficulties they foresaw, not unsurprisingly, were related to who was harassing them. Women harassed by their supervisors were more likely to fear consequences related to job status and pay--being unable to get a promotion or losing their jobs, for example. On the other hand, women bothered by coworkers or other employees were more likely to feel the quality of their personal relationships would suffer if they did not go along (for example, "the person(s) or other workers would be unpleasant or would embarrass me").

Women harassed by their supervisors also were more likely to perceive benefits for going along with the unwanted behavior; the majority harassed by coworkers (81%) foresaw no benefits.^[3] This difference in perceptions held true for victims of all forms of sexual harassment except the few who experienced actual or attempted rape or assault. For this group, those harassed by immediate supervisors were more likely than those victimized by coworkers and other workers to foresee no benefits (71% compared with 47%). A reason for this difference in perceptions might be in the nature of the behavior itself: those confronted by super visors in this most assaultive way felt extremely threatened and could see no benefits, only penalties, whereas other victims, not being in direct control of their harasser, felt less threatened and could foresee possible rewards for going along.

The perceptions of men about leverage used to secure compliance were similar to that of women. Again, most men did not think anything bad would happen if they did not go along, but men harassed by immediate supervisors and those experiencing the more severe forms of harassment were more likely than others to fear penalties. Men were somewhat more likely than women to perceive benefits in going along with the unwanted attention; but, like women, those harassed by supervisors were more likely than others to foresee possible rewards for their compliance.

In summary, most victims do not perceive any penalties for not going along with the harasser or rewards for going along. The supervisory status of the harasser and the type of behavior they were confronted with seems to have an effect on their perceptions of leverage. Men and women bothered by individuals having direct organizational control over them--their supervisors, and particularly their immediate supervisors--are much more likely to feel leverage is being used against them. In addition, workers harassed by their supervisors are much more likely to see good working conditions and job betterment as more powerful incentives for going along than improved relations with their harassers.

FIGURE 6-2
Perceived Benefits for Going Along

Percentage of Narrators Who Were Harassed by Their Immediate Supervisor or Coworker Who Thought the Following Would Happen to Them if They Did Go Along With the Sexual Harassment (Question 25)

VICTIMS OF MOST SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	My working assignments or conditions would get better	Reported by 16% of women and 0% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 53% of women and 32% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	The person(s) would become more pleasant	Reported by 13% of women and 0% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 2% of women and 26% of men who were harassed by a co-worker

	I would get a promotion, step increase, good rating, or reference	Reported by 24% of women and 0% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 52% of women and 0% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I would get a better job	Reported by 16% of women and 0% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 41% of women and 0% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I did not think anything would happen	Reported by 71% of women and 0% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 47% of women and 42% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
VICTIMS OF SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	My working assignments or conditions would get better	Reported by 26% of women and 54% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 10% of women and 13% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	The person(s) would become more pleasant	Reported by 24% of women and 37% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 17% of women and 27% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I would get a promotion, step increase, good rating, or reference	Reported by 36% of women and 37% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 11% of women and 6% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I would get a better job	Reported by 15% of women and 31% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 6% of women and 4% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I did not think anything would happen	Reported by 55% of women and 30% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 77% of women and 66% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
VICTIMS OF LESS SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	My working assignments or conditions would get better	Reported by 13% of women and 15% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 5% of women and 3% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	The person(s) would become more pleasant	Reported by 24% of women and 23% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 8% of women and 13% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I would get a promotion, step increase, good rating, or reference	Reported by 11% of women and 17% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 3% of women and 2% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I would get a better job	Reported by 2% of women and 9% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 2% of women and 1% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I did not think anything would happen	Reported by 67% of women and 59% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 89% of women and 84% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	My working assignments or conditions would get better	Reported by 23% of women and 35% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 9% of women and 9% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	The person(s) would become more pleasant	Reported by 24% of women and 30% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 14% of women and 21% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I would get a promotion, step increase, good rating, or reference	Reported by 29% of women and 27% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 9% of women and 5% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I would get a better job	Reported by 12% of women and 20% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 5% of women and 2% of men who were harassed by a co-worker
	I did not think anything would happen	Reported by 58% of women and 44% of men who were harassed by their immediate supervisor	Reported by 81% of women and 74% of men who were harassed by a co-worker

Assertive Responses Are the Most Effective

To find out how victims deal with incidents of sexual harassment, we asked which of nine possible responses they had made and what the effect of each had been.^[4] The effectiveness of these informal efforts varied, depending on the sex of the victim and the severity of the harassment experience.

Most women responded passively to the unwanted attention, by ignoring it (61%) or^[5] avoiding the harasser (48%). Their reasons for doing this may have been similar to those of the victim whose situation was related by a supervisor in another unit: "She was afraid to report the incident for fear her supervisor would not allow her to work overtime. She refused his advances and began to avoid him whenever possible, hoping it would 'blow over'."

The women's next most frequent response to sexual harassment was taking direct action by asking or telling the harasser to stop; half the women reported doing this. Although most women ignored the behavior, they found this one of the least effective actions to take (see Figure 6-3). Only 28% of those who did so found it "made things better," and a number found it made the situation worse.

The small number of women who went along with the behavior indicated that this was by far the least effective course to take; only 8% reported that things improved as a result. On the other hand, direct, assertive responses such as "asking or telling the person to stop" and "reporting the behavior to a supervisor or other officials" were found to be effective by the majority of women who took those actions (54% and 53%, respectively). However, since many women did not find these actions made things better, it cannot be assumed that most women could get sexual harassment to stop simply by reporting it or asking the offender to stop.

Although the relatively rare action of disciplining the harasser^[6] was found to be the most effective response (74% of the women who did this found it made things better) few women are in a position to discipline their harasser since relatively few women work in supervisory capacity.

Like women, most male victims (65%) ignored the unwanted attention. However, proportionately fewer men avoided the offender or asked or told the person to stop. For men, the most effective actions were "asking or telling the person to stop," "disciplining the harasser" (also a rare response for men), and "avoiding the person(s)"; (67%, 56%, and 53% of men who took those actions found them to make things better).

As with women, the effectiveness of the various actions for men differed according to the form of sexual harassment being faced. The few male victims of actual or attempted rape or sexual assault found direct responses ineffective. For them, the most effective response was going along with the behavior (46% of those who went along with the situation found that to make things better), whereas this was relatively ineffective for men dealing with other forms of unwanted behavior. That such a large proportion of men but so few women, would find going along with such assaultive behavior to "make things better" raises some questions. Perhaps the difference is based in cultural and perceptual differences of opinion about what constitutes an instance of actual or attempted rape or assault.

FIGURE 6-3
Narrators' Informal Responses to Sexual Harassment
Percentage of Narrators Who Indicated that Taking These Informal Actions "Made Things Better" (Question 23)

VICTIMS OF MOST SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Transferred, disciplined or gave a poor performance rating to the person	Reported by 72% of women and 9% of men
	Asked or told the person(s) to stop	Reported by 40% of women and 13% of men
	Reported the behavior to the supervisor or other officials	Reported by 57% of women and 11% of men
	Avoided the person(s)	Reported by 20% of women and 32% of men
	Made a joke of the behavior	Reported by 52% of women and 7% of men
	Threatened to tell or told other workers	Reported by 30% of women and 19% of men
	Ignored the behavior or did nothing	Reported by 12% of women and 27% of men
	Went along with the behavior	Reported by 14% of women and 46% of men
	Transferred, disciplined or gave a poor performance rating to the person	Reported by 79% of women and 87% of men
	Asked or told the person(s) to stop	Reported by 53% of women and 69% of men

VICTIMS OF SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Reported the behavior to the supervisor or other officials	Reported by 54% of women and 46% of men
	Avoided the person(s)	Reported by 42% of women and 51% of men
	Made a joke of the behavior	Reported by 32% of women and 45% of men
	Threatened to tell or told other workers	Reported by 35% of women and 29% of men
	Ignored the behavior or did nothing	Reported by 24% of women and 41% of men
	Went along with the behavior	Reported by 3% of women and 32% of men
VICTIMS OF LESS SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Transferred, disciplined or gave a poor performance rating to the person	Reported by 59% of women and 33% of men
	Asked or told the person(s) to stop	Reported by 60% of women and 68% of men
	Reported the behavior to the supervisor or other officials	Reported by 52% of women and 17% of men
	Avoided the person(s)	Reported by 54% of women and 58% of men
	Made a joke of the behavior	Reported by 43% of women and 57% of men
	Threatened to tell or told other workers	Reported by 36% of women and 21% of men
	Ignored the behavior or did nothing	Reported by 36% of women and 45% of men
	Went along with the behavior	Reported by 18% of women and 13% of men
TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Transferred, disciplined or gave a poor performance rating to the person	Reported by 74% of women and 56% of men
	Asked or told the person(s) to stop	Reported by 54% of women and 67% of men
	Reported the behavior to the supervisor or other officials	Reported by 53% of women and 35% of men
	Avoided the person(s)	Reported by 45% of women and 53% of men
	Made a joke of the behavior	Reported by 36% of women and 49% of men
	Threatened to tell or told other workers	Reported by 35% of women and 24% of men
	Ignored the behavior or did nothing	Reported by 28% of women and 42% of men
	Went along with the behavior	Reported by 8% of women and 25% of men

NOTE: Many respondents indicated that they took more than one action.

In summary, many informal responses to sexual harassment made things better for some victims--even making a joke of the behavior and telling, or threatening to tell, other workers. The responses that generally proved most effective were:

- reporting the behavior to a supervisor or other officials,
- asking or telling the person(s) to stop, and
- avoiding the person(s).

Other more specific techniques for victims to take to stop sexual harassment are discussed in publications listed in Appendix H. In addition, Mary P. Rowe, a prominent and knowledgeable observer in the field, has found that one of the most effective techniques is for the victim to write a personal confidential letter to the harasser outlining the offense and asking that the behavior be stopped. According to Dr. Rowe, this technique has the advantage of stopping the harassment quickly and effectively, preventing recurrence, and enabling the victims to take assertive action on their own.^[7]

Actions that generally proved least effective (and in many instances had a deleterious effect) were:

- going along with the behavior, and
- ignoring the behavior or doing nothing.

Talking with Others

To understand more about how people respond to sexual harassment, we asked victims whether they had discussed their experiences with anyone and, if so, with whom and with what result.[\[8\]](#)

About half the women and one-third of the men who answered this question[\[9\]](#) had talked with someone about their experience. Women most frequently had talked to other workers or to friends and relatives (68% and 60%, respectively, of the women who answered this question). Men also most frequently spoke to those groups of people (of those who answered this question, 65% spoke to other workers, and 53% talked to friends or relatives).

It should be mentioned however, that relatively few of the men and women we have been calling "narrators" do in fact talk to anyone. For example, although other workers were the most likely to be told, only 37% of the women we have termed "narrators"--83,700 out of 223,700--and 20% of the 97,500 male narrators indicated they had talked with other workers. It appears that victims prefer to keep their experiences private.

The benefit of talking to various parties depended on the type of harassment and the sex of the victim (see Figure 6-4). When asked whether their discussions made things better or worse, or made no difference, women generally indicated they found talking to outside contacts (lawyers, civil rights group, Congress, or officials in another agency) or a supervisor or other officials more effective than talking with other workers; of those who had talked with those groups, 44%, 48% and 23%, respectively, said the action made things better.

However, female victims of severe harassment found talking to the various parties about equally effective, while the small number of women who had faced actual or attempted rape found talking to EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) or union officials to be harmful or to have no effect.

The results for male victims were even more mixed. As a group they found the best results from talking to personnel officials (41% who did so said it made things better) and the worst results from talking to union officials (18%). Male victims of actual or attempted rape or assault found talking with outside contacts helpful and talking to unions to have no effect, whereas victims of less severe harassment found neither of these actions to have an effect, but did find talking to EEO officials useful.

While these findings are so mixed that few generalizations can be made, it might be noted that although talking with other people can make things better (sometimes just in the victim's ability to endure the situation), the best people to talk to are those who can do something to change the situation--not coworkers, friends, or relatives. Since relatively few victims talk to agency officials, publicizing the availability of both organizational and outside parties may be indicated. In addition, training may be indicated to help agency officials resolve problems of sexual harassment.

FIGURE 6-4
Parties Contacted by Narrators
Percentage of Narrators Who Indicated That Talking to These Parties "Made Things Better" (Question 27)

VICTIMS OF MOST SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Supervisor(s) or other officials	Reported by 51% of women and 17% of men
	Outside contact (lawyer, civil rights group, Congress, other agency, etc.)	Reported by 80% of women and 100% of men
	Personnel office	Reported by 41% of women and 48% of men
	Equal Employment Opportunity official (EEO counselor, Federal Women's Program manager, etc.)	Reported by 0% of women and 0% of men
	Freinds, relatives	Reported by 39% of women and 46% of men
	Union	Reported by 0% of women and 0% of men
	Other workers	Reported by 42% of women and 51% of men
VICTIMS OF SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Supervisor(s) or other officials	Reported by 47% of women and 23% of men
	Outside contact (lawyer, civil rights group, Congress, other agency, etc.)	Reported by 32% of women and 26% of men
	Personnel office	Reported by 35% of women and 38% of men

	Equal Employment Opportunity official (EEO counselor, Federal Women's Program manager, etc.)	Reported by 33% of women and 25% of men
	Freinds, relatives	Reported by 29% of women and 33% of men
	Union	Reported by 28% of women and 26% of men
	Other workers	Reported by 24% of women and 21% of men
VICTIMS OF LESS SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Supervisor(s) or other officials	Reported by 51% of women and 13% of men
	Outside contact (lawyer, civil rights group, Congress, other agency, etc.)	Reported by 70% of women and 0% of men
	Personnel office	Reported by 15% of women and 43% of men
	Equal Employment Opportunity official (EEO counselor, Federal Women's Program manager, etc.)	Reported by 39% of women and 100% of men
	Freinds, relatives	Reported by 32% of women and 22% of men
	Union	Reported by 49% of women and 0% of men
	Other workers	Reported by 20% of women and 21% of men
TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Supervisor(s) or other officials	Reported by 48% of women and 20% of men
	Outside contact (lawyer, civil rights group, Congress, other agency, etc.)	Reported by 44% of women and 26% of men
	Personnel office	Reported by 33% of women and 41% of men
	Equal Employment Opportunity official (EEO counselor, Federal Women's Program manager, etc.)	Reported by 33% of women and 39% of men
	Freinds, relatives	Reported by 30% of women and 30% of men
	Union	Reported by 30% of women and 18% of men
	Other workers	Reported by 23% of women and 22% of men

NOTE: Many respondents indicated that they contacted more than one party.

Few File Formal Complaints

Only 6,600 women (approximately 3% of all Federally employed women who described their sexual harassment incidents) and 1,700 men (2% of all male narrators) indicated that they filed formal complaints.^[10] Of the 8,300 formal actions taken, most were requests for an investigation by the organization (2,800) or adverse action appeals (2,500).^[11] Filing a discrimination complaint, the most widely known remedy, was chosen somewhat less often than other formal remedies except for "requesting an investigation by an outside agency," which is the least known remedy. Infrequent use of the discrimination complaint system may be explained by the fact that until recently sexual harassment generally was not considered to fall under the jurisdiction of the EEO complaint system.^[12]

The majority (59%) of the 8,300 men and women who took formal action found these actions were effective (i.e., they "made things better") Conversely, 3,400 men and women found their effort had no effect--or made things worse.^[13]

Most of the women who requested an investigation by their agency or filed a discrimination complaint found those actions effective (70% and 66%, respectively). However, the effectiveness of remedies differed somewhat depending on the severity of the behavior involved (see Figure 6-5).

FIGURE 6-5
Narrators' Formal Responses to Sexual Harassment
 Percentage of Narrators Who Indicated That Taking These Formal Actions "made things better" (Question 28)

	Requested an investigation by victim's organization	Reported by 84% of women and 28% of men
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VICTIMS OF MOST SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Filed a discrimination complaint or lawsuit	Reported by 81% of women and 26% of men
	Requested an investigation by an outside agency	Reported by 92% of women and 100% of men
	Filed a grievance or adverse action appeal	Reported by 0% of women and 26% of men
VICTIMS OF SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Requested an investigation by victim's organization	Reported by 73% of women and 50% of men
	Filed a discrimination complaint or lawsuit	Reported by 52% of women and 15% of men
	Requested an investigation by an outside agency	Reported by 27% of women and 0% of men
	Filed a grievance or adverse action appeal	Reported by 31% of women and 43% of men
VICTIMS OF LESS SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Requested an investigation by victim's organization	Reported by 44% of women and 0% of men
	Filed a discrimination complaint or lawsuit	Reported by 90% of women and 0% of men
	Requested an investigation by an outside agency	Reported by 52% of women and 100% of men
	Filed a grievance or adverse action appeal	Reported by 85% of women and 0% of men
TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Requested an investigation by victim's organization	Reported by 70% of women and 29% of men
	Filed a discrimination complaint or lawsuit	Reported by 66% of women and 12% of men
	Requested an investigation by an outside agency	Reported by 58% of women and 100% of men
	Filed a grievance or adverse action appeal	Reported by 45% of women and 33% of men
NOTE: Some respondents indicated that they took more than one formal action.		

Men who requested an investigation by an outside agency were most likely to think their action had made things better, but, in contrast with women, few who filed a discrimination complaint found that action useful. Again, the effectiveness of remedies varied somewhat depending on the severity of the behavior the men had experienced.

In summary, the type of formal action taken and the perceived effectiveness of the action varied with the sex of the victim and the severity of the behavior the victim faced. However, the perceived success rate was only 59% (i.e., 4 victims in every 10 who took formal action did not find their efforts made things better). This middling success rate was cited by Congresswoman Gladys Spellman during Congressional hearings [14] as a possible reason so many employees consider formal actions ineffective or think nothing would be done if incidents of sexual harassment were reported. Said Spellman: "If the success rate is only 50%, it isn't going to be a great incentive to moving ahead" (i.e., to changing attitudes so more Federal workers will have confidence that something will happen if incidents are reported).

For a number of Federal workers, filing a formal complaint not only did not make things better, but actually made matters worse.[15] One survey respondent related on her questionnaire what happened when she filed a grievance, which eventually went to arbitration: "My supervisor was found to have sexually harassed--but the end result was I was literally forced by my supervisor and management to transfer to another installation. The action I took against my supervisor cost me psychologically as well as prevented promotions. "

Response of Management

In general, the response of agency officials to formal and informal actions was reported to be mixed[16] (see Figure 6-6).

FIGURE 6-6
Organizations' Responses to Formal Actions Taken by Narrators
 Percentage of Narrators Who Indicated That Their Organizations Responded as Follows (Question 29)

VICTIMS OF MOST SEVERE SEXUAL	Took action against the harasser	Reported by 74% of women and 20% of men
	Found narrator victim's charge to be true	Reported by 49% of women and 14% of men
	Did not know whether management did anything	Reported by 0% of women and 46% of men
	Corrected the damage done to narrator victim	Reported by 17% of women and 5% of men

HARASSMENT	The action is still being processed	Reported by 0% of women and 0% of men
	Did nothing	Reported by 17% of women and 0% of men
	Were hostile or took action against narrator victim	Reported by 2% of women and 0% of men
	Found charge to be false	Reported by 0% of women and 15% of men
VICTIMS OF SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Took action against the harasser	Reported by 44% of women and 38% of men
	Found narrator victim's charge to be true	Reported by 44% of women and 37% of men
	Did not know whether management did anything	Reported by 17% of women and 23% of men
	Corrected the damage done to narrator victim	Reported by 20% of women and 0% of men
	The action is still being processed	Reported by 8% of women and 16% of men
	Did nothing	Reported by 5% of women and 0% of men
	Were hostile or took action against narrator victim	Reported by 4% of women and 23% of men
	Found charge to be false	Reported by 0.2% of women and 0% of men
VICTIMS OF LESS SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Took action against the harasser	Reported by 31% of women and 0% of men
	Found narrator victim's charge to be true	Reported by 40% of women and 0% of men
	Did not know whether management did anything	Reported by 36% of women and 0% of men
	Corrected the damage done to narrator victim	Reported by 0% of women and 0% of men
	The action is still being processed	Reported by 10% of women and 0% of men
	Did nothing	Reported by 4% of women and 0% of men
	Were hostile or took action against narrator victim	Reported by 6% of women and 16% of men
	Found charge to be false	Reported by 3% of women and 0% of men
TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Took action against the harasser	Reported by 44% of women and 27% of men
	Found narrator victim's charge to be true	Reported by 43% of women and 25% of men
	Did not know whether management did anything	Reported by 19% of women and 25% of men
	Corrected the damage done to narrator victim	Reported by 16% of women and 4% of men
	The action is still being processed	Reported by 8% of women and 9% of men
	Did nothing	Reported by 6% of women and 0% of men
	Were hostile or took action against narrator victim	Reported by 4% of women and 16% of men
	Found charge to be false	Reported by 1% of women and 4% of men
NOTE: Many respondents indicated that management responded in more than one way.		

Although female narrator-victims who did pursue formal remedies were more likely to encounter a favorable and corrective response than apathy or hostility, the results depended on the severity of the experience they had faced. More than 8 out of every 20 female narrators who answered this question said management found the charge to be true or took action against the offender, and only around 1 in 20 said management was hostile or did nothing. The more severe the harassment experience, the more likely management was to do something about it. However, only 16% of the group of female narrators (and none of the victims of less severe harassment) reported the damage had been corrected--and for some it may have taken awhile. Wrote one woman who had been bothered by a Branch Chief: "My harasser's supervisors took no action until they were ordered to by outside sources. The sexual harassment continued over several years with several different women, two of whom resigned under pressure from this man. The situation eventually was rectified by removing him from a management position."

The finding that no female victims of "less severe" harassment reported that damage from the harassment had been corrected may reflect the difficulty in correcting damage caused by ambiguous behavior such as unwanted sexual comments, and suggestive looks and pressure for dates. The negative consequences for these victims may be more in the realm of the psychological.

Although men who took formal action also were more likely to find a favorable rather than a hostile management response, they were less likely than women to do so and four times more likely than women to encounter hostility, particularly if they had experienced the less severe forms of sexual harassment. Thus, it would seem that men who allege sexual harassment are less likely than women to be taken seriously by management, possibly because sexual harassment often is seen as a problem that happens only to women. There is other evidence that the complaints of men are not taken as seriously as those of women in the low number who found reporting the behavior and talking to a supervisor or other agency officials to be effective. Around half the women found reporting (53%) or talking (48%) to these officials to make things better, but only one-third (35%) of the men found reporting the behavior helpful, and only one-fifth (20%) found talking to officials useful (see Figures 6-3 and 6-4).

The comments respondents wrote on their questionnaires clearly indicate that some managers approach the problem more seriously than do others. One victim reported that when she attempted to get help from her harasser's superior officer, she was told she should be more tolerant of him and make allowance for him. Another wrote of taking a complaint to the top administrator, who said he was powerless to admonish for "hearsay" In contrast, a supervisor reported, "My deputy tried sexual harassment pressure on my secretary until I dealt with the matter rather bluntly for the future of his work record." Adds this respondent: "I have advised counseling for the victims and filing charges against the perpetrators."

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the behavior of victims and harassers during sexual harassment incidents and the attempts of victims to stop the harassment. Few victims talk to organizational officials about their problems and only a handful file formal complaints. It may be that most victims simply want the harassment to stop and see no need to escalate the situation by filing a formal complaint.

Thus, informal actions carried out by victims or those with organizational or independent authority to correct the situation are seen as the most effective available remedies. Exploration of this possibility continues in the next chapter.

Clearly, the findings reported in this chapter indicate that there is much management can do to improve its effectiveness in reducing sexual harassment. Agency officials must be clearly informed of their responsibilities in this regard. In addition, victims need to be informed of the most effective informal responses to stop sexual harassment. They also need information on formal remedies so that option is open to those who choose to take it.

Footnotes -- Chapter 6

1 Congressional Memorandum of Understanding; see Appendix E.

2 Based on responses to Survey Question 24; also see Appendix D, Table R for additional data.

3 Based on responses to Survey Question 25.

4 See Survey Questions 23a and 23b; see Appendix D, Figure L for additional data.

5 Respondents were asked to indicate all actions they had taken, and many did.

6 Fewer than 4,000 women, or 2% of all female narrators who answered this question, took this action.

7 Mary P. Rowe, Ph.D., Assistant to the President, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, conversation, March 1981.

8 See Survey Questions 27a and 27b; see Appendix D, Figure M for additional data.

9 A number of narrators, i.e., those who responded to Survey Question 20, did not answer Question 27.

10 Based on responses to Survey Question 28b, see Appendix D, for additional data.

11 See Chapter 8 for a description of the various formal complaint procedures.

12 In November 1980 the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission helped to clarify the issue by adopting guidelines in which sexual

harassment under certain conditions was interpreted to be a form of discrimination on the basis of sex; see Appendix E.

13 See Appendix D, Table I for data.

14 Hearings before the Subcommittee on Investigations of the House Committee on Post Office and Civil Service on Sexual Harassment in the Federal Government, 2nd Sess., September 25, 1980, p. 28.

15 See Appendix D, for additional data.

16 Based on responses to Survey Question 29.

7. Impact and Cost of Sexual Harassment

- The cost of sexual harassment to the Federal Government between May 1978 and May 1980 is conservatively estimated to have been \$189 million.
- Although their experiences do not change the careers or work situations of most victims, a sizeable number of men and women do leave their jobs or suffer other adverse job consequences.
- A majority of victims do not think their personal well-being or work performance declined as a result of their experiences, but a sizeable minority do.
- Victims are much more likely to think sexual harassment negatively affected their personal wellbeing or morale than to believe that their work performance or productivity suffered.
- Most victims report that as far as they know the morale and productivity of their immediate workgroups are little affected by their personal experience of sexual harassment.

"I really stored a lot of feelings over one particular sexual advance."

"My boss kept pestering me for dates and kept making personal remarks. When I wouldn't change my mind and play around with him, he had me transferred to a less desirable job."

" Because I will not cooperate with my supervisor, he is giving me bad references so I can 't get another job in order to get out of the situation."

The problem of sexual harassment does not end when the harasser walks out of the room or when a new day begins in the office. Victims are affected by their interpersonal problems and crisis experiences just as all people are. How strongly and in what way they are affected undoubtedly depends on a complex combination of personal variables--who they are, how they view the world, how many options they have--and situational variables--what sort of experience they had, what sort of office they were working in.

Nor does the problem of sexual harassment necessarily end with the victim. The problems of the victim or between the victim and the harasser may spill over into the workgroup, becoming a distraction if not a cause of additional office problems. In extreme cases, the impact of individual incidents may extend far beyond the office--to the Federal Women's Program manager called in to hear a complaint, or to the personnel specialist called on to write a vacancy notice for a job left by a victim.

Thus, while the picture of sexual harassment incidents is fairly complete, more questions must be asked to gain an understanding of the true extent of the problem of sexual harassment in the Federal work force. What is the impact of sexual harassment on a victim's physical and emotional condition, work performance, career well-being, and job turnover? What effect does sexual harassment have on, the morale and productivity of the victim's immediate workgroup?^[1] And how do all these things--each of them costly to some extent in some way--add up to a total cost to the Federal Government?

While most victims did not think their experiences had had a negative effect on their work performance or productivity, or on that of their work group, enough did report these and other negative consequences to bring the estimated cost of sexual harassment to the Federal Government over the 2-year period of the study to \$189 million. This overall cost is discussed first, and then the responses of the victims on which the estimates were based are examined in greater detail.

Sexual Harassment Is Costly to the Federal Government

Sexual harassment of its employees cost the Federal Government an estimated \$189 million during the period May 1978 to May 1980-\$102 million for the harassment of women and \$87 million for the harassment of men. These figures represent the costs of:

- replacing employees who left their jobs because of sexual harassment,
- paying medical insurance claims for service to employees who sought professional help because of physical or emotional stress brought on by their experiences,
- paying sick leave to employees who missed work, and
- absorbing the costs associated with reduced individual and work group productivity.

The starting point for making cost estimates derives from those victims who agreed to describe at least one harassment incident they experienced in greater detail. We term these individuals narrators. The incident they describe may be a "most recent" experience or one they felt had the greatest impact on them.

Obtaining the cost estimates on sexual harassment required that several general assumptions be made. Fundamental among these is that those respondents defined as narrators are representative of all victims and that we may generalize from them to the total population of victims. A second important set of assumptions concerns the derivation of costs of harassment. Largely, cost was calculated by inferential extrapolations from questions included in the survey. This was necessary since no direct questions were included in the survey which would provide information about the nature and amount of medical benefits used as a consequence of sexual harassment, the reason for or the amount of sick leave taken, work time missed, or estimated amount of work time devoted to harassment reduction activity.

Cost of Job Turnover: \$26.8 million

Projecting figures for the entire groups of victims, not just narrators, we estimated that 29,350 Federal employees--24,660 women and 4,690 men--left their jobs over the 2-year study period as a result of being sexually harassed.[2] Replacing an employee usually involves three types of measurable costs: personnel costs associated with offering the job to a replacement; costs of a background check on the replacement; and the cost of training the replacement. Assuming that each person who left the job due to sexual harassment was replaced, that a background check of some type was made on each replacement, and each replacement received formal training in the new position, the loss to the Federal Government due to job turnover resulting from sexual harassment is estimated to have been \$26.8 million--\$22.5 million for women and \$4.3 for men (see Table 7-1).

These figures are conservative in that they assume that the first person offered the job accepted it. They also do not include the costs associated with having a job vacant (e.g., work not done or overtime for other employees) and with taking one employee off, and putting another on, the payroll. The estimated number of Federal employees who quit because of sexual harassment also is conservative in that the survey, by its nature, did not reach the people who left the Federal Government altogether as a result of their sexual harassment experience.

**Table 7-1
Costs of Sexual Harassment**

	Women	Men	Total
Job Turnover			
Cost to offer a job[1]	\$ 6.4	\$ 1.2	\$ 7.6
Background checks[2]	2.0	0.4	2.4
Training[3]	24.1	2.7	26.8
Total Cost of Job Turnover	\$ 22.5	\$ 4.3	\$ 26.8
Individual Productivity	37.7	34.4	72.1
Emotional Stress	3.9	2.1	5.0
Absenteeism	5.3	2.6	7.9
Work Group Productivity	32.6	44.3	76.9
TOTALS	\$ 102.0	\$ 86.7	\$ 188.7

[1] Source: Office of Program Management and Evaluation, Office of Personnel Management

[2] Source: Division of Personnel Investigations, Office of Personnel Management

[3] Source: "Employee Training in the Federal Service--FY 1979," published by the Office of Personnel Management, Workforce Effectiveness and Development Office.

Cost of Emotional and Physical Stress: \$5 million

Dollar loss due to emotional and physical stress was measured in terms of estimated use of Governmental health benefits plans. An estimated 128,200 victims indicated that their experience of sexual harassment had a negative impact on their emotional and physical health.^[3] We assumed that such physical and emotional stress would result in symptoms for which some victims would seek professional services--and that the employees' Government health benefit plans would cover 40% of the cost of these services. We also assumed that the need for medical help would vary by the severity of the harassment experience of the victim. Thus, we assumed that the victims of the "most severe" form of sexual harassment who said their emotional or physical condition had declined (7,560 women and 1,590 men) would seek on the average \$200 worth of medical services, that victims of "severe" forms of sexual harassment (74,000 women and 22,000 men) would seek on the average \$100 in services, and that each victim of "less severe" sexual harassment (17,850 women and 5,200 men) would seek on the average \$50 in services. On this basis we estimate the loss to the Government in use of health benefits plans due to emotional and physical stress to have been \$5 million--\$3.9 million for women and \$1.1 million for men.

Cost of Absenteeism: \$7.9 million

Dollar cost to the Government due to absenteeism was measured in terms of extra sick leave paid to the estimated 50,430 Federal employees whose time and attendance at work suffered as a result of their sexual harassment experiences.^[4] We assumed that victims of "most severe" sexual harassment (4,320 women and 660 men) took 5 days on the average of sick leave, while victims of "severe" sexual harassment (28,000 women and 8,000 men) took 3 days on the average, and those victims of "less severe" harassment (4,250 women and 5,200 men) took 1 day on the average. Furthermore, assuming that the average daily salary of men and women is \$80 and \$48, respectively, ^[5] we project the approximate work time lost due to sick leave absenteeism to cost \$8 million (\$5.3 million for women and \$2.6 million for men). Note, this estimate does not reflect tardiness at work or absenteeism not due to sick leave.

Cost of Decline in Individual Productivity: \$72.1 million

Dollar cost of diminished victim productivity was measured in terms of self reported decreases in quality and quantity of work. First we assumed that the productivity of the estimated 47,290 employees whose work quality and quantity became worse^[6] declined by 10%, and that this loss translates into a loss to the Government of 10% of the workers' annual salaries. Figures are based on calculations of average annual salaries of male and female victims of each of the three levels of severity of sexual harassment experience.^[7] On this basis we estimate the loss to the Federal Government due to decreased productivity of victims of sexual harassment to have been \$72.1 million--\$37.7 million for female victims and \$34.4 million for male victims (see Table 7-1).

We believe a 10% loss in productivity to be a very conservative figure. In 1970, the General Accounting Office estimated that lost productivity of individual workers due to alcoholism was at least 25%.^[8] It seems possible that the problems generated by sexual harassment, at least in severe cases or when, as is commonly the case, the harassment continues over a 'lengthy period,^[9] could approach in severity the problems associated with employee alcoholism.

If the 25% GAO figure were used to estimate loss due to decreased worker productivity, the cost to the Federal Government over the 2-year study period would amount to \$180.2 million. It should be mentioned that the estimated loss does not take into account any decline in productivity of the harasser, who might be assumed also to have been less productive during the duration of the harassment incidents.

Cost of Decline in Workgroup Productivity: \$76.9 million

Decrease in workgroup productivity was measured in terms of victims' assessment of this factor.^[10] We estimated that 30,680 workgroups were affected.^[11] If workgroup productivity can be assumed to decline by 1%, dollar costs for this decreased productivity are likely to be at least 1% of the average salaries of members of the workgroup. These average workgroup salaries were estimated on the basis of sizes^[12] and sexual composition of workgroups^[13] reported by narrator-victims. Again on the basis of calculations from survey data, women in the workgroups were assigned an average annual salary of \$12,000, and men an average annual salary of \$20,000. On this basis, the loss to the Federal Government due to decreased productivity of employees who worked in close association with the victims of sexual harassment is estimated to have been \$76.9 million--\$32.6 million for workgroups containing female victims and \$44.3 million for workgroups containing male victims.

The General Accounting Office study cited earlier estimates that the productivity of an alcoholic employee's workgroup could decline as much as 5% to 10%. If these percentages were applied to the workgroups of victims of sexual harassment, the loss to the Federal Government over the 2-year study period would have amounted to \$384.5 million (5% loss) or \$769 million (10% loss) (see Table 7-1).

Total Cost of Sexual Harassment of Federal Employees: \$189 million

The cost to the Federal Government of sexual harassment of Federal workers was estimated on the basis of what victims said about how

their experiences affected them personally and their coworkers. Estimates of dollar losses due to job turnover, increased absenteeism, physical and emotional stress, and decreased individual and workgroup productivity were based on seemingly reasonable sets of assumptions and deliberately were conservative. The estimated overall cost, \$189 million, while likely a minimum amount, is still enough to pay the salaries of all the executives in the Federal Government--both the 465 top agency executives and the 7,000 members of the Senior Executive Service--for 6 months.[\[14\]](#)

As indicated, these cost estimates were based on the negative consequences of sexual harassment on victims and their workgroups as perceived by victim-narrators. The overall impact, as indicated by this group, is discussed in detail in the sections that follow.

Work Situation of Most Victims Did Not Change

The job status and working conditions of the majority of victims did not change as a result of sexual harassment, but this clearly depended on the severity of the experience[\[15\]](#) (see Figure 7-1). Nearly half (49%) of the women who experienced actual or attempted rape or sexual assault, compared with 1 in 5 female victims of "severe" forms of sexual harassment (22%) and 1 in 10 victims of "less severe" sexual harassment (10%), reported some change in their working conditions or careers as a result of sexual harassment, that is, did not indicate "no changes happened in (their) work situation." Most of the changes were for the worse. Wrote one victim: "I transferred out of state because of sexual harassment I received from my immediate supervisor because I chose not to tell her of my social life off the job." Another reported: "Because of my refusal to grant favors to my immediate supervisor I have been prevented from obtaining the fulltime status I had prior to my graduate studies in management."

FIGURE 7-1
Changes in Narrators' Work Situations as a Result of Sexual Harassment
 Percentage of Narrators Who Indicated These Changes Actually Occurred (Question 26)

VICTIMS OF MOST SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	No changes happened in work situation	Reported by 51% of women and 52% of men
	Working assignments or conditions got worse	Reported by 22% of women and 25% of men
	Was denied a promotion, step increase, good performance rating, or reference	Reported by 14% of women and 7% of men
	Transferred or quit to take another job	Reported by 12% of women and 4% of men
	Was reassigned or fired	Reported by 2% of women and 9% of men
	Received a promotion, step increase, good performance rating, or reference	Reported by 9% of women and 7% of men
	Working assignments or conditions got better	Reported by 6% of women and 9% of men
	Quit without having another job	Reported by 0% of women and 0% of men
VICTIMS OF SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	No changes happened in work situation	Reported by 78% of women and 85% of men
	Working assignments or conditions got worse	Reported by 10% of women and 9% of men
	Was denied a promotion, step increase, good performance rating, or reference	Reported by 8% of women and 6% of men
	Transferred or quit to take another job	Reported by 7% of women and 2% of men
	Was reassigned or fired	Reported by 2% of women and 1% of men
	Received a promotion, step increase, good performance rating, or reference	Reported by 2% of women and 0.4% of men
	Working assignments or conditions got better	Reported by 1% of women and 1% of men
	Quit without having another job	Reported by 1% of women and 0.3% of men
	No changes happened in work situation	Reported by 90% of women and 91% of men
	Working assignments or conditions got worse	Reported by 5% of women and 5% of men

VICTIMS OF LESS SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Was denied a promotion, step increase, good performance rating, or reference	Reported by 3% of women and 2% of men
	Transferred or quit to take another job	Reported by 3% of women and 2% of men
	Was reassigned or fired	Reported by 1% of women and 0.3% of men
	Received a promotion, step increase, good performance rating, or reference	Reported by 0.3% of women and 0.2% of men
	Working assignments or conditions got better	Reported by 1% of women and 1% of men
	Quit without having another job	Reported by 0.3% of women and 0% of men
ALL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	No changes happened in work situation	Reported by 81% of women and 87% of men
	Working assignments or conditions got worse	Reported by 9% of women and 8% of men
	Was denied a promotion, step increase, good performance rating, or reference	Reported by 7% of women and 5% of men
	Transferred or quit to take another job	Reported by 6% of women and 2% of men
	Was reassigned or fired	Reported by 2% of women and 1% of men
	Received a promotion, step increase, good performance rating, or reference	Reported by 1% of women and 0.4% of men
	Working assignments or conditions got better	Reported by 1% of women and 1% of men
	Quit without having another job	Reported by 1% of women and 0.1% of men

NOTE: Many respondents indicated that management responded in more than one way.

It is interesting that many of the relatively few women who anticipated penalties would occur if they did not go along[16] did in fact report negative consequences, i.e., their fear of negative consequences was found to be justified. These women were much more likely to report adverse consequences than the women who had thought that nothing would happen if they did not go along.

Of the women narrators who reported adverse consequences as a result of their sexual harassment experience, approximately 18,200 indicated they left their jobs (by quitting, transferring, being reassigned or fired) at some point during the 2-year period of the study.

The experiences of men were similar to those of women. Most men reported that no changes had occurred in their work situations, but this again depended on severity of experience, with male victims of the "most severe" form of sexual harassment most likely to experience changes (48% did) and victims of "severe" and "less severe" sexual harassment far less likely to report changes (15% and 9%, respectively). Around 2,700 men reported they had left their jobs (voluntarily or involuntarily) over the 2-year study period as a result of unwanted sexual attention. As with women, men who foresaw penalties or benefits for not going along or going along with the sexual harassment were more likely to experience changes in their work situations than those who did not anticipate any consequences.

Well-Being and Morale of Many Victims Suffered

Again, although the personal well-being and job morale of most victims apparently did not suffer as a result of their experiences, many did report suffering these negative consequences, and their experiences were strongly related to the type of unwanted attention they had faced. [17] (see Figure 7-2). Approximately 65,500 women (33% of the women who responded to this question) said their emotional or physical condition became worse as a result of their experiences. Negative physical and emotional consequences were far more common among women who had faced actual or attempted rape or sexual assault: 82% of the female victims of this most severe form of harassment reported worsened emotional or physical conditions, compared with 37% and 21% of the victims of severe and less severe forms of unwanted attention. One woman, whose Division Chief had become violent in his persistent pressuring of her for sexual favors, described her experience in this way: "It was so upsetting I finally went to a doctor for help in calming my nerves. Finally I quit. I've been a housewife since then. I'm afraid to go back--it was like being raped."

FIGURE 7-2
Impact of Sexual Harassment on Narrators
 Percentage of Narrators Who Indicated These Aspects of Their Lives "Became Worse" (Question 31a)

VICTIMS OF MOST SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Feelings about work	Reported by 62% of women and 27% of men
	Emotional or physical condition	Reported by 82% of women and 53% of men
	Ability to work with others on the job	Reported by 32% of women and 24% of men
	time and attendance at work	Reported by 48% of women and 22% of men
	The quantity of work	Reported by 28% of women and 10% of men
	The quality of work	Reported by 21% of women and 6% of men
VICTIMS OF SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Feelings about work	Reported by 41% of women and 20% of men
	Emotional or physical condition	Reported by 37% of women and 22% of men
	Ability to work with others on the job	Reported by 18% of women and 16% of men
	time and attendance at work	Reported by 14% of women and 8% of men
	The quantity of work	Reported by 13% of women and 12% of men
	The quality of work	Reported by 12% of women and 13% of men
VICTIMS OF LESS SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Feelings about work	Reported by 24% of women and 17% of men
	Emotional or physical condition	Reported by 21% of women and 17% of men
	Ability to work with others on the job	Reported by 10% of women and 14% of men
	time and attendance at work	Reported by 5% of women and 8% of men
	The quantity of work	Reported by 6% of women and 8% of men
	The quality of work	Reported by 4% of women and 6% of men
TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Feelings about work	Reported by 36% of women and 19% of men
	Emotional or physical condition	Reported by 33% of women and 21% of men
	Ability to work with others on the job	Reported by 15% of women and 15% of men
	time and attendance at work	Reported by 11% of women and 8% of men
	The quantity of work	Reported by 11% of women and 10% of men
	The quality of work	Reported by 10% of women and 10% of men

An even larger number of women--74,300, or 36% of all female narrators--said their feelings about work (i.e., their "morale") became worse as a result of the unwanted sexual attention. Again, women who faced actual or attempted rape or sexual assault were considerably more likely than victims of "less severe " harassment to report this negative consequence (62% compared with 24%).

Men were less likely than women to report having been adversely affected by their experiences. Only 1 in 5 male narrators (21% or 17,500 men), compared with 1 in 3 women, reported worse emotional or physical conditions attributed to the unwanted attention they received, and only 1 in 5 (19%, or 16,800 male narrators), compared with 1 in 3 women, reported their feelings about work became worse. Like women, the subsequent physical and emotional condition of male narrator-victims was strongly related to the severity of the experience they had had. More than half of the men who had faced actual attempted rape or sexual assault (53%) reported worsened emotional or physical health, compared with only 22% and 17% of male victims of severe and less severe forms of harassment. The feelings of men toward work were less dependent than women on type of experience: 27% who had experienced the most severe form of harassment, compared with 17% of victims of "less severe" behavior, reported lowered morale.

Victims Judged Their Own Work Performance and Productivity to Be Unaffected

The impact of sexual harassment on victims' work performance and productivity was examined in terms of the victims' own assessments of changes in their time and attendance at work, their ability to work with others, and the quantity and quality of their work.^[18] As Figure 7-2

shows, very few victims reported their work had suffered in any of these ways.

That only 10% to 15% of women who had received sexual attention they did not invite and did not want (attention that in some cases continued 6 months or more) felt their experiences had adversely affected their work performance and productivity seems somewhat surprising. It may be that most of the behavior, while unwanted, was not perceived as coercive enough to affect individual productivity and performance substantially. Some evidence of this (assuming perceived coerciveness is related to severity of experience) shows up in analysis of responses by severity of experience: the more severe the harassment incident, the more likely were female narrators to report diminished performance and productivity. Also interesting is the finding that victims of the two most severe forms of harassment were likelier to report that their time and attendance and their ability to work with others had suffered than that the quality and quantity of their work had diminished.

While the explanation suggested above may have some validity, the finding that so few women--and men, as well--report their harassment experience had an adverse effect on their work performance warrants further exploration.

Sex Assessments of Work Performance Must be Questioned

When one looks at the victims' self reports of the impact of sexual harassment on personal well-being and work performance, a striking difference emerges. It appears that victims, both male and female, are more inclined to state that their emotional and physical condition was harmed by sexual harassment than that their ability to do their work was diminished. For example, female victims of "most severe" harassment were nearly four times as likely to state that their emotional or physical condition got worse (82%) than that the quality of their work declined (21%). A possible explanation for this difference was suggested by Congresswoman Gladys Spellman (Democrat-Maryland) during hearings on sexual harassment in the Federal workforce called by the Subcommittee on Investigations, Committee on Post Office and Civil Service:[\[19\]](#)

Mrs. Spellman. I am aware of that question on productivity, and I am puzzled over it.

Here people have been harassed and had, in some cases, very severe problems. Yet they say it did not affect their productivity.

I am puzzled over that and wondered if, indeed, they were afraid to say that productivity had changed for fear it would have an adverse effect on them. As we look at some of the graphs we have here, we find that 82 percent of those responding to the survey said their emotional or physical condition was affected; 62 percent said their feelings about work were affected; 48 percent said their time and attendance at work was affected.

Surely, that affects productivity. Thirtytwo percent said that their ability to work with others on the job was affected. Twentyeight percent specified that their quantity of work was affected, while 21 percent specified that the quality of their work was affected. In addition, there are indications that those who have been victims of severe sexual harassment and victims of less severe sexual harassment also were affected in those ways but, then, when you ask "was your productivity affected," they will say, no. That of course, belies the other statistics that we have, so I think that we can look just a little bit beyond that one simple question.

There is far more to it than meets the eye.

In sum, although a sizeable number of women, and to a lesser extent men, report physicalical or emotional distress or reduced morale, fewer are willing to admit to a decline in productivity. This discrepancy may be perceptual or based on fear of adverse consequences and thus should not necessarily be taken at face value. It may be that those who are experiencing stress are not always the most accurate judges of the effect of that stress on their own performance on the job. Further research may be needed to put this finding in context.

FIGURE 7-3
Impact of Sexual Harassment on the Morale and Productivity of Narrators' Immediate Work Groups
Percentage of Narrators Who Indicated These Effects on the Morale and Productivity
of Their Immediate Work Groups (Question 31b)

	MORALE	
	Became better	Reported by 2% of women and 19% of men
	Became worse	Reported by 26% of women and 42% of men

VICTIMS OF MOST SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Had no effect	Reported by 72% of women and 40% of men
	PRODUCTIVITY	
	Became better	Reported by 1% of women and 3% of men
	Became worse	Reported by 10% of women and 11% of men
	Had no effect	Reported by 89% of women and 87% of men
VICTIMS OF SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	MORALE	
	Became better	Reported by 1% of women and 1% of men
	Became worse	Reported by 13% of women and 13% of men
	Had no effect	Reported by 86% of women and 86% of men
	PRODUCTIVITY	
	Became better	Reported by 0.3% of women and 1% of men
	Became worse	Reported by 6% of women and 11% of men
	Had no effect	Reported by 94% of women and 89% of men
VICTIMS OF LESS SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	MORALE	
	Became better	Reported by 1% of women and 5% of men
	Became worse	Reported by 7% of women and 11% of men
	Had no effect	Reported by 92% of women and 84% of men
	PRODUCTIVITY	
	Became better	Reported by 1% of women and 2% of men
	Became worse	Reported by 3% of women and 6% of men
	Had no effect	Reported by 96% of women and 92% of men
TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	MORALE	
	Became better	Reported by 1% of women and 3% of men
	Became worse	Reported by 11% of women and 12% of men
	Had no effect	Reported by 88% of women and 85% of men
	PRODUCTIVITY	
	Became better	Reported by 0.4% of women and 1% of men
	Became worse	Reported by 5% of women and 9% of men
	Had no effect	Reported by 95% of women and 90% of men

Victims Also Judged Their Workgroups to Be Unaffected

Most male and female narrators thought their personal experiences had no effect on the morale (85% to 88%) and productivity (90% to 95%) of the people they worked with on a day-to-day basis,[\[20\]](#) but their perceptions depended somewhat on the severity of the behavior they encountered (see Figure 7-3).

Women who faced actual or attempted rape or sexual assault were more likely than other women to perceive a decline in their workgroups' morale and productivity, and women in general were more likely to judge there had been a decline in morale than a decrease in productivity (11% compared with 5%). Men also overwhelmingly reported that their workgroups were affected by their personal experiences. Interestingly, male victims of the most severe form of harassment were more likely than their female counterparts to report a decline in the morale of their coworkers because of the incident.

The finding that the workgroup was unaffected by a member's sexual harassment should be interpreted carefully since the finding is based

on the opinions of the victims, not on reports of the coworkers themselves. Victims may or may not have been aware of the effect on their coworkers. Conversely, other members of the workgroup may never have known of the incidents. Most incidents of sexual harassment may occur in private, and as data discussed in Chapter 6 reveal, only around one-third of female narrators and one-fifth of male narrators spoke with other workers about their experiences. Given the data, a generalization about the impact of sexual harassment on the victim's immediate workgroup is unwise.

Conclusion

Although sexual harassment was not perceived by the majority of victims to have an adverse impact on their career, morale, or productivity, a significant number of women and men indicated they suffered serious adverse consequences in the form of job transfers or dismissals, impairment to emotional and physical health, and deteriorated work performance. Aside from compassionate and moral reasons for reducing sexual harassment, to do so would save the Government a considerable amount of money--\$189 million over a 2-year period, by our conservative estimate.

Footnotes -- Chapter 7

1 Congressional Memorandum of Understanding; see Appendix E.

2 Figures projected from the 20,900 narrators (18,200 women and 2,700 men) who indicated in response to Survey Question 26 (see Figure 7-1 and additional data in Appendix D) that they had left their jobs because of unwanted sexual attention, either by quitting or transferring or because they had been reassigned or fired.

3 Figures projected from the number of narrator-victims who indicated in response to Survey Question 31a (Figure 7-2 and additional data in Appendix D) that their emotional and physical condition declined as a result of unwanted sexual attention.

4 Figures projected from the number of narrator-victims who indicated in response to Survey Question 31a (Figure 7-2 and Appendix D) that their time and attendance at work declined as a result of unwanted sexual attention.

5 Daily salaries were based on approximations that the average annual salaries of women and men working for the Federal Government are \$12,000 and \$20,000 respectively. This assumes 250 working days a year and is based on data derived from the questionnaire.

6 Figures projected from number of narrator-victims who indicated in response to Survey Question 31a (Figure 7-2 and Appendix D) that the quality and quantity of their work became worse as a result of unwanted sexual attention.

7 Rounded average annual salaries of victims of "most severe" sexual harassment were \$12,000 for women and \$15,300 for men; "severe " sexual harassment, \$12,400 for women and \$20,000 for men; "less severe " sexual harassment, \$12,100 for women and \$22,100 for men; see Appendix D, Table J.

8 "Substantial Cost Savings from Establishment of Alcoholism Program for Federal Civilian Employees, " GAO Report to Special Subcommittee on Alcoholism and Narcotics Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, U.S. Senate, September 28, 1970, p. 14. The GAO figure of 25% was at that time, and still is, considered conservative by many people familiar with the problem of alcoholism in the work force. For example, see editorial by Charles Elliott Blackford III, "What Does Employee Alcoholism Really Cost? ", Labor-Management Alcoholism Journal VII (May-June, 1978).

9 See Chapter 9

10 Based on responses to Survey Question 31b.

11 This is composed of 990 workgroups of female victims, and 330 of male victims, of "most severe " sexual harassment; 12,000 and 11,000 workgroups of female and male victims of "severe " sexual harassment respectively; and 2,550 and 3,900 workgroups of female and male victims of "less severe " sexual harassment. See Appendix D, Table K.

12 Average workgroup size of male and female victims of each level of severity of sexual harassment experience was determined on the basis of responses of narrator-victims to Survey Question 48; the average workgroup size for all female victims was calculated to be roughly 13 persons, and for all male victims, 16 persons. See Appendix D, Table N.

13 Sexual composition of workgroups of victims was determined by responses of narrator-victims to Survey Question 51.

14 Figures provided by Ann Andrews, Coordinator of Executive Personnel and Management Development Information Systems, OPM.

15 Based on responses to Survey Question 26.

16 Those who checked one or more items when responding to Survey Question 24; see Appendix D, Table L for data.

17 Based on responses to Survey Question 31(a) and (b).

18 See Survey Question 31a(c)-(f).

19 Congressional Hearings, September 25, 1980, pp- 37-38.

20 Based on responses to Survey Question 31b.

8. Awareness of Remedies and Their Effectiveness

- Most victims and supervisors are relatively unaware of the formal remedies available to victims of sexual harassment.
- Relatively few victims and supervisors consider formal remedies effective in helping victims of sexual harassment.
- Taking assertive informal action is thought to be the most effective way for employees to make others stop bothering them sexually.
- Most victims and supervisors think there is much management can do regarding sexual harassment.

What can a person do to get sexual harassment to stop? Can anything be done when rejection of overtures results in negative job consequences? More important, what could be done to keep sexual harassment from becoming a problem in the first place?

There are a number of formal actions Federal employees can take in instances of sexual harassment, including filing a discrimination complaint or a grievance or adverse action appeal and requesting an investigation by their own or an outside agency. These are the remedies the Subcommittee on Investigations had in mind when it directed that the survey determine "whether victims of sexual harassment are aware of available remedies and whether they have any faith in them"[\[1\]](#) We believed it would also be useful to learn whether Federal employees thought there were any other actions management might take--or any effective ways an individual could get the bothersome behavior to stop. The broad issue of prevention of sexual harassment also seemed important.

Since victims obviously are the most concerned about remedies, and since supervisors not only are often involved in the complaint process but also are responsible for monitoring office behavior, we focused on their responses. There was a great deal of agreement between the two groups. Generally, there was a very low level of awareness of formal remedies. With the exception of filing a discrimination complaint, the majority of victims--male or female--were not aware of formal remedies available to them. Even fewer felt these formal actions would be effective in helping Federal employees who have been sexually bothered by others. Supervisors--Federal employees responsible for advising workers of their rights--were only somewhat more aware of formal remedies; nor were they much more confident in the effectiveness of these remedies. Despite this lack of faith, most victims and supervisors--men and women alike--believe there is much management can do regarding sexual harassment, particularly in the areas of sanctions and penalties.

A large number of victims and supervisors--at least 4 in every 10--did not think filing a formal complaint per se was one of the most effective things employees could do to get sexual harassment to stop. Far greater numbers preferred direct informal actions--asking or telling the offender to stop and reporting the behavior to a supervisor or other official as remedies for the behavior.

In order to provide background information for this chapter, the next section describes the various formal remedies usually available to victims of sexual harassment within the Federal Government.

Explanations of Formal Remedies

Formal actions or remedies are procedures that have been established by agencies in accordance with law or regulation for use by employees to resolve their workrelated complaints. Depending in some cases on the type of formal remedy used, the complaint may concern any number of matters, such as unfair office practices, demotion, termination, or racial discrimination. These formal institutional remedies are also available to process charges of sexual harassment.

In some cases, such as filing a grievance, the first step in taking formal action may be contacting the supervisor. The subsequent investigation and conclusion of the case remain within the worker's employing agency. In other instances, other agency officials, such as EEO officials in the case of discrimination complaints, process the complaint within the agency and the complainant has appeal rights outside the agency. At other times, the formal action begins with an outside agency, such as the Office of the Special Counsel within the Merit Systems Protection Board. Depending on the circumstances provoking the complaint, more than one channel of formal complaint may be available to an employee who alleges sexual harassment--or only one may be appropriate.

Complainants have a choice of courses of action to take. For example, alleged victims may want to file a *discrimination complaint* if they feel that the sexual harassment was a result of sex discrimination as interpreted by the EEOC Guidelines on sexual harassment.^[2] In summary, these guidelines state that sexual harassment is sex discrimination when going along with the behavior is implicitly or explicitly a term or condition of employment, when going along or not going along is used as the basis of employment decisions affecting the victim or when the behavior has the effect of interfering with the victims' work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.

Victims may choose to *appeal an adverse action* (for example, a removal or demotion based on unacceptable performance) which they feel was a result of refusing to go along with sexual harassment. Employees may appeal the action to the Merit Systems Protection Board where they have a right to a hearing on the merits.^[3]

Victims may file *grievances* with their agency management seeking relief from sexual harassment. There are usually no appeal rights outside the agency for grievances. There are two kinds of grievance systems in the Federal Government--an administrative grievance system provided by each agency under OPM regulation and a negotiated grievance system provided by a collective bargaining agreement between a union and agency management.^[4]

Victims may also request *internal investigations* of their allegations of sexual harassment by their agency Inspectors General if their agency has one and if the allegations involve fraud, waste, or mismanagement of Government funds.

Finally, victims may want to request an *external investigation* from the Special Counsel of the Merit Systems Protection Board if the sexual harassment involves a *prohibited personnel practice* such as "taking or refusing to take a personnel action, including promotion of employees who submit to sexual advances or refusal to promote employees who resist or protest sexual overtures."^[5] The Special Counsel may recommend corrective action or ask the Merit Systems Protection Board to "stay" the personnel action.

FIGURE 8-1
Awareness of Formal Remedies

Percentage of Victims and Supervisors Who Knew the Following Formal Remedies Were Available to Victims of Sexual Harassment (Questions 12a-16a)

VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Filing a discrimination complaint	Reported by 49% of women and 53% of men
	Filing a grievance or adverse action appeal	Reported by 36% of women and 44% of men
	Requesting an investigation by victim's organization	Reported by 18% of women and 26% of men
	Filing a complaint through special channels set up for sexual harassment complaints	Reported by 10% of women and 12% of men
	Requesting an investigation by an outside agency	Reported by 5% of women and 10% of men
SUPERVISORS	Filing a discrimination complaint	Reported by 57% of women and 62% of men
	Filing a grievance or adverse action appeal	Reported by 45% of women and 55% of men
	Requesting an investigation by victim's organization	Reported by 27% of women and 42% of men
	Filing a complaint through special channels set up for sexual harassment complaints	Reported by 12% of women and 18% of men
	Requesting an investigation by an outside agency	Reported by 8% of women and 12% of men

NOTE: Percentages based on "Definitely Yes" responses to questions.

In the survey questionnaire, formal remedies were grouped to form five general types of actions:^[6]

- filing a discrimination complaint (if the behavior falls under guidelines set forth by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission);
- filing a grievance or adverse action appeal (that is, using the agency 's internal grievance system, following negotiated grievance procedures if a union contract has been violated, or filing an adverse action appeal with the agency, with subsequent appeal rights to the Merit Systems Protection Board);
- requesting an internal investigation by the employing organization (for example, by the agency's Inspector General or Ethics Officer);
- requesting an investigation by an outside agency (such as the Special Counsel of the Merit Systems Protection Board if a prohibited personnel practice, as defined in the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, is involved); and
- filing a complaint through special channels set up for sexual harassment complaints.

For each type of formal actions, workers were asked: (a) Is this remedy available to employees where you work? (b) Would this be effective in helping these employees?

Available responses to each question were: "definitely not," "probably not," "probably yes," "definitely yes," and "don't know."

Awareness of Formal Remedies Is Not Great

Most victims and supervisors were not aware of all the formal remedies available to Federal employees who have been sexually harassed. Since we wanted to know the level of awareness with some degree of certainty, we looked at only the number of workers who said "definitely yes," the remedies are available.^[7] On this basis we found that rarely were even half of the victims or supervisors aware that a remedy existed. The Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint system (that is, filing a discrimination complaint) was the most widely known.

As can be seen in Figure 8-1, female victims were relatively unaware of all the formal remedies, particularly investigations by an outside agency or their own. That they were most aware of the EEO discrimination complaint procedure is interesting since that channel was not used as often as other remedies by the victims who did take formal action (see Chapter 6). Since most remedies (except "filing a complaint through special channels") are in fact available to victims, their responses indicate a generally low level of awareness. Male victims were slightly more familiar with the remedies than were females, but their awareness still was generally quite low.

Does unawareness of available remedies keep men and women from taking formal action? Apparently so, for nearly 38,000 victims--31,600 women and 6,200 men--indicated that was the reason they had not taken formal action^[8] (see Figure 8-2). Generally, the more severe the harassing behavior, the more likely narrators were to say this was their reason for not taking formal action.

Supervisors as a group also were relatively unfamiliar with formal remedies available to victims of sexual harassment (see Figure 8-1). More than half did not know employees could request internal or external investigations, and fewer than two-thirds knew about filing an EEO discrimination complaint. As with victims, male supervisors tended to be more knowledgeable about remedies than were female supervisors.

As can be seen in Figure 8-1, for all remedies, both male and female supervisors were more likely to be aware than were female victims--and to some extent than were male victims. Nevertheless, given their responsibilities for advising employees of their rights, supervisors indicate a surprisingly low level of awareness of formal complaint channels, particular avenues other than filing an EEO complaint, or a grievance or adverse action appeal.

To see if awareness of formal remedies is lower in agencies having relatively high rates of sexual harassment, we looked at the responses of victims and supervisors in the 10 agencies "grouped as "other" where rates were higher than rates for the Federal work force as a whole.^[9] We found that in many of these agencies the awareness level of victims and supervisors was lower than for the Federal work force in general. 10 For example, in three agencies (Departments of Labor and Transportation and the Veterans Administration) plus in those agencies grouped as "other," victims and supervisors tended to be less aware than the Governmentwide averages.

In other agencies such as the Departments of Justice and Housing and Urban Development, other Defense agencies, and the General Services Administration, there are sex based differences. For example, in other Defense agencies, male supervisors tended to be more aware of remedies and female victims and supervisors less aware than the Governmentwide averages.

Formal Remedies Are Not Seen as Effective

FIGURE 8-2
Reasons For Not Taking Formal Action

Percentage of Narrator Victims Who Gave the Following Reasons for Not Taking Formal Actions in Response to the Sexual Harassment (Question 30)

VICTIMS OF MOST SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Saw no need to report it	Reported by 16% of women and 36% of men
	Thought it would make work situation unpleasant	Reported by 50% of women and 22% of men
	Did not think anything would be done	Reported by 50% of women and 31% of men
	Thought it would be held against me or that I would be blamed	Reported by 44% of women and 22% of men
	Did not want to hurt the person who bothered me	Reported by 41% of women and 43% of men
	Was too embarrassed	Reported by 44% of women and 21% of men

	Did not know what actions to take	Reported by 37% of women and 12% of men
	Thought it would take too much time and effort	Reported by 13% of women and 2% of men
VICTIMS OF SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Saw no need to report it	Reported by 54% of women and 65% of men
	Thought it would make work situation unpleasant	Reported by 40% of women and 21% of men
	Did not think anything would be done	Reported by 36% of women and 19% of men
	Thought it would be held against me or that I would be blamed	Reported by 25% of women and 11% of men
	Did not want to hurt the person who bothered me	Reported by 21% of women and 31% of men
	Was too embarrassed	Reported by 16% of women and 10% of men
	Did not know what actions to take	Reported by 17% of women and 6% of men
	Thought it would take too much time and effort	Reported by 6% of women and 3% of men
VICTIMS OF LESS SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Saw no need to report it	Reported by 72% of women and 74% of men
	Thought it would make work situation unpleasant	Reported by 24% of women and 24% of men
	Did not think anything would be done	Reported by 24% of women and 14% of men
	Thought it would be held against me or that I would be blamed	Reported by 14% of women and 9% of men
	Did not want to hurt the person who bothered me	Reported by 15% of women and 13% of men
	Was too embarrassed	Reported by 9% of women and 9% of men
	Did not know what actions to take	Reported by 8% of women and 7% of men
	Thought it would take too much time and effort	Reported by 5% of women and 5% of men
TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Saw no need to report it	Reported by 61% of women and 71% of men
	Thought it would make work situation unpleasant	Reported by 36% of women and 23% of men
	Did not think anything would be done	Reported by 33% of women and 17% of men
	Thought it would be held against me or that I would be blamed	Reported by 23% of women and 11% of men
	Did not want to hurt the person who bothered me	Reported by 20% of women and 25% of men
	Was too embarrassed	Reported by 15% of women and 10% of men
	Did not know what actions to take	Reported by 15% of women and 17% of men
	Thought it would take too much time and effort	Reported by 6% of women and 4% of men
NOTE: Most respondents gave more than one reason for not taking formal action..		

To get a clear picture of the opinions of victims and supervisors about the effectiveness of formal remedies, we again looked only at the "definitely yes" responses." On this basis it must be concluded that little faith is placed in formal remedies. In no case did more than 1 in 5 victims think a remedy would be effective (see Figure 8-3). Supervisors were not much more confident.

The EEO complaint system and the grievance or adverse action appeal process tended to receive the most support, and generally male victims were more confident in the remedies than were female victims. Likewise, a greater percentage of male supervisors than female supervisors rated the remedies effective.

Why so few victims and supervisors indicated they believe formal remedies would be effective is uncertain. The way the question was posed may have been a factor. Perhaps the majority simply thought formal action would not be effective in the circumstances described---helping "persons who have been sexually bothered by others"; more might have thought a formal action would be effective had the situation been more clearcut, for example a worker suffering negative emotional, physical, or job consequences from the harassment.

Some support for this notion, at least in regard to victims, comes from reasons narrators gave for not filing a formal complaint. As Figure 8-2 shows, the most common reason given by narrators reporting severe and less severe harassment was "I saw no need to report it." However, this reason was given by far smaller percentages of narrators who had experienced actual or attempted rape or sexual assault. Clearly, victims of the less intense forms of harassment saw filing a formal complaint as an unnecessary response.

FIGURE 8-3
Perceived Effectiveness of Formal Remedies

Percentage of Victims and Supervisors Who Thought Formal Remedies Would Be Helpful To Victims of Sexual Harassment (Questions 12b-16b)

VICTIMS OF MOST SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Filing a discrimination complaint	Reported by 18% of women and 23% of men
	Requesting an investigation by victim's organization	Reported by 22% of women and 26% of men
	Filing a grievance or adverse action appeal	Reported by 18% of women and 30% of men
	Filing a complaint through special channels set up for sexual harassment complaints	Reported by 15% of women and 19% of men
	Requesting an investigation by an outside agency	Reported by 8% of women and 19% of men
VICTIMS OF SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Filing a discrimination complaint	Reported by 14% of women and 20% of men
	Requesting an investigation by victim's organization	Reported by 11% of women and 18% of men
	Filing a grievance or adverse action appeal	Reported by 13% of women and 21% of men
	Filing a complaint through special channels set up for sexual harassment complaints	Reported by 10% of women and 15% of men
	Requesting an investigation by an outside agency	Reported by 7% of women and 14% of men
VICTIMS OF LESS SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Filing a discrimination complaint	Reported by 13% of women and 20% of men
	Requesting an investigation by victim's organization	Reported by 10% of women and 15% of men
	Filing a grievance or adverse action appeal	Reported by 11% of women and 19% of men
	Filing a complaint through special channels set up for sexual harassment complaints	Reported by 10% of women and 14% of men
	Requesting an investigation by an outside agency	Reported by 9% of women and 11% of men
TOTAL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND SUPERVISORS	Filing a discrimination complaint	Reported by 14% of women and 20% of men Reported by 16% of female supervisors and 28% of male supervisors
	Requesting an investigation by victim's organization	Reported by 11% of women and 17% of men Reported by 13% of female supervisors and 27% of male supervisors
	Filing a grievance or adverse action appeal	Reported by 13% of women and 20% of men Reported by 15% of female supervisors and 28% of male supervisors
	Filing a complaint through special channels set up for sexual harassment complaints	Reported by 10% of women and 14% of men Reported by 12% of female supervisors and 16% of male supervisors

Requesting an investigation by an outside agency	Reported by 8% of women and 12% of men
	Reported by 8% of female supervisors and 11% of male supervisors

NOTE: Percentages are based on "Definitely Yes" responses to questions.

Another explanation for the lack of confidence in formal remedies might be unfamiliarity with available courses of action. The fact that supervisors were both more aware of remedies and more favorable toward them might suggest this is the case. A third possible explanation for the low ratings given the formal remedies is that victims and supervisors generally do not think that taking an informal action is the most effective course of action for any work related problem. When asked which of six actions they thought were the most effective actions employees could take to make others stop bothering them sexually, [12] fewer than 6 in 10 victims and supervisors chose "filing a formal complaint" (see Figure 8-4). Whether these responses indicate a true lack of faith in the available formal remedies or simply a belief that other actions are more effective for remedying sexual harassment is unknown.

Certainly some amount of dissatisfaction and distrust was expressed by narrator victims who took no formal action (97% of the female narrators and 98% of the male narrators). As Figure 8-2 shows, a substantial percentage of female narrators gave as their reason--or one of their reasons--for not filing a formal complaint that it would make the work situation unpleasant, nothing would be done, or filing would be held against the accuser.

Smaller percentages, but still representative of a large number of male narrators, also gave those reasons. Contrast these beliefs with the results of the small number of victims who actually took formal actions. Although a majority (59%) of these female and male victims found the formal actions effective (see Chapter 6), a sizeable number (41%) did not. This middling success rate may contribute to a lack of faith in available remedies.

FIGURE 8-4
Perceived Effectiveness of Individual Actions

Percentage of Victims and Supervisors Who Thought Employee Actions Would Stop Sexual Harassment (Question 10)

VICTIMS OF MOST SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Asking or telling the person(s) to stop	Reported by 78% of women and 61% of men
	Reporting the behavior to the supervisor or other officials	Reported by 66% of women and 59% of men
	Filing a formal complaint	Reported by 48% of women and 48% of men
	Ignoring the behavior	Reported by 50% of women and 50% of men
	Avoiding the person(s)	Reported by 50% of women and 34% of men
	There is very little employees can do	Reported by 19% of women and 28% of men
	Threatening to tell or telling other workers	Reported by 17% of women and 18% of men
VICTIMS OF SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Asking or telling the person(s) to stop	Reported by 87% of women and 82% of men
	Reporting the behavior to the supervisor or other officials	Reported by 68% of women and 70% of men
	Filing a formal complaint	Reported by 52% of women and 61% of men
	Ignoring the behavior	Reported by 48% of women and 44% of men
	Avoiding the person(s)	Reported by 48% of women and 42% of men
	There is very little employees can do	Reported by 10% of women and 5% of men
	Threatening to tell or telling other workers	Reported by 15% of women and 17% of men
VICTIMS OF LESS SEVERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT	Asking or telling the person(s) to stop	Reported by 83% of women and 84% of men
	Reporting the behavior to the supervisor or other officials	Reported by 71% of women and 72% of men
	Filing a formal complaint	Reported by 55% of women and 56% of men
	Ignoring the behavior	Reported by 45% of women and 45% of men

VICTIMS OF ALL FORMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND SUPERVISORS	Avoiding the person(s)	Reported by 44% of women and 39% of men
	There is very little employees can do	Reported by 5% of women and 5% of men
	Threatening to tell or telling other workers	Reported by 16% of women and 21% of men
	Asking or telling the person(s) to stop	Reported by 85% of women and 83% of men
		Reported by 86% of female supervisors and 85% of male supervisors
	Reporting the behavior to the supervisor or other officials	Reported by 69% of women and 71% of men
		Reported by 71% of female supervisors and 78% of male supervisors
	Filing a formal complaint	Reported by 53% of women and 59% of men
		Reported by 49% of female supervisors and 57% of male supervisors
	Ignoring the behavior	Reported by 47% of women and 45% of men
		Reported by 49% of female supervisors and 42% of male supervisors
	Avoiding the person(s)	Reported by 47% of women and 41% of men
		Reported by 45% of female supervisors and 40% of male supervisors
	There is very little employees can do	Reported by 9% of women and 5% of men
		Reported by 6% of female supervisors and 2% of male supervisors
	Threatening to tell or telling other workers	Reported by 16% of women and 19% of men
		Reported by 13% of female supervisors and 19% of male supervisors

NOTE: Many respondents indicated more than one action would be effective.

Perhaps the men and women who thought filing a formal complaint would make their work situations unpleasant had heard of an incident similar to that reported by a victim whose sex discrimination complaint was in process: "My supervisor continues to make remarks which are just on the 'safe' side of the line. I have been followed while leaving work by coworkers who get away with making suggestive remarks to me on the job." Perhaps those who felt filing a complaint would be held against them agreed with comments written on questionnaires returned by two survey respondents: "At my station," wrote one, "you will find very few complaints of sexual harassment, not because it isn't there, but because there is fear of consequences." Observed the other, "If you file a complaint against someone harassing you, you will be eased out of your job or your working conditions will become so miserable you will quit or transfer."

Maybe those who feel nothing would be done had observed, as had one respondent who wrote on the questionnaire, that "managers either ignore or squash the complaint." The concerns of even the small percentage of narrators who thought filing a complaint would take too much time and effort may be justified. Wrote one survey respondent: "The discrimination complaint process is ineffective for handling problems in areas it was designed to cover because the process takes too long." Another survey respondent noted an additional problem related to formal remedies: "Sexual harassment can be very subtle and difficult to prove."

Whatever their reasons, it is clear few victims of sexual harassment or supervisors believe formal remedies would be effective in helping people who have been sexually bothered by others. It also should be mentioned that most of the men and women who do file complaints are victims of the more severe forms of sexual harassment, actual and attempted rape and assault or "severe" sexual harassment. It may be that they tend to use the formal complaint procedures because of the severity of their harassment or because *they* believe that they have strong cases which have a greater chance of success.

In summary, taking formal action is not necessarily the best course of action for all victims. Few victims of "severe" and "less severe"

harassment filed formal complaints. Their most common reason was that they saw no need to report it. The system of formal remedies may be less effective in some agencies than in others. Some victims may be unable to document their cases. Others may prefer to handle the harassment informally. As the next section shows, there is general agreement that other types of action are more effective in getting harassment stopped.

Assertive Informal Remedies Are Seen as Most Effective

Their reasons for not doing so indicate that a sizeable number of narrator-victims do not see filing a formal complaint as a viable option (see Figure 8-2). Many worry that the solution might add to the problem by making the work situation unpleasant, or that filing a complaint might backfire, with them ending up being blamed. Many would be too embarrassed to make the matter known. An even larger number seem to feel it would be an empty exercise (nothing would be done), perhaps requiring too much time and energy. Hurting the offending person is also a concern.

To the largest number of victims, however, particularly those who have not faced the most severe form of harassment, filing a formal complaint simply is not an appropriate response.

We were interested in what victims would consider the most effective things employees can do--not necessarily to get relief from negative job consequences, but simply to get others to stop bothering them. Would they agree with the victim who transferred jobs because "you just don't make a big racket when the attainment of your doctorate depends on your evaluations." Would they approve the directness, if not the technique, of the victim who wrote: "When he made one of his comments, I told him if I heard him say something like that again to me, I would 'haul off' and belt him in the mouth." Would they think it best to ask a third party to intervene? Or would their response reflect the hopelessness one respondent seemed to feel when she wrote, "Sexual harassment is (widespread) and is now a problem I cannot handle."

Most victims believe people *can* do something to stop the unwanted behavior; as can be seen in Figure 8-4 only 2 in 20 women and 1 in 20 men felt there is little employees can do. More female victims endorsed the most direct informal response, "asking or telling the person(s) to stop," as being more effective than any other action. The next most frequent response was "reporting the behavior to the supervisor or other officials." Fewer than half the female victims endorsed the most passive actions, "ignoring the behavior" and "avoiding the person(s)." The most coercive direct response, "threatening to tell or telling other workers," was regarded as effective by the fewest number, presumably because other workers, as opposed to supervisors, rarely have authority over the annoying person. Thus female victims consider the most effective actions to be those involving direct confrontation with either the annoying person or someone who has authority over that person. These actions were judged most effective in getting the harassment stopped by more victims than the direct formal action, filing a formal complaint. As with females, more male victims endorse the most direct responses, with fewer, but still a large percentage, regarding a formal complaint as most effective.

That direct informal action can be effective in getting offensive behavior stopped was confirmed by several respondents who commented on their personal experiences. Wrote one victim: "I put a stop to the situation by speaking to the individual concerned. Some (people) ... (do) not realiz(e) that they are offensive. Only with me (or others) saying something to them will they realize they are being offensive...." The offending party may even find this the best approach. Wrote one man: "The lady confronted me and requested that I stop as my gestures were sexy. Her request was granted and the lady and I are good friends."

Several respondents also indicated that re-orting to a supervisor or higher authority can be a successful tactic. One described how an incident was reported to a higher authority (informally) and an apology was given publicly. Said the commentor: "The initiator of the unwanted advances lost esteem among fellow workers, and this action effectively nipped in the bud any further complications."

Supervisors tended to agree with victims about the most effective ways to get unwanted sexual attention stopped, with the largest number endorsing the direct informal actions (see Figure 8-4). That male supervisors were more likely than others to endorse reporting the behavior to the supervisor may indicate that supervisors (the majority of whom are men) wish to be informed about sexual harassment problems. Another finding, that male supervisors seemed to have more faith in the complaint system than did female supervisors, is consistent with the finding reported in Figure 8-3 that greater percentages of male supervisors than female supervisors endorsed specific avenues of formal complaint.

Although more victims and supervisors--male or female--considered asking or telling the person(s) to stop an effective action, this does not necessarily indicate that is all they think is needed to get the behavior stopped. Indeed, many believe it is not enough.^[13] While the majority felt "nearly all instances of unwanted sexual attention can be stopped if the person receiving the attention simply tells the other person to stop," a sizeable number--approximately 1 in every 4 men and supervisors and 1 in 3 women and victims--disagreed. That the responses break down this way, with men (22%) and supervisors (24%) being less likely to disagree that telling the person to stop will stop the behavior than women (35%) and victims (37%) is not surprising, since most supervisors are men and most victims are women. Nevertheless, it is clear that a majority of Federal workers feel telling a person to stop is adequate and effective in getting unwanted sexual attention stopped.

Management Can Help

Most victims and supervisors think there is much an organization's management can do to reduce the rate of sexual harassment. Their optimism showed through clearly in their responses to the question, "Which are the most effective actions for an organization's management to take regarding sexual harassment?" [14] As Figure 8-5 shows, only around 1 in 20 men, women, and supervisors felt there is little management can do to reduce sexual harassment on the job. Management actions involving tougher sanctions and enforcement generally were endorsed more often than other management actions. A majority of victims and supervisors also endorsed actions involving publicizing management policy regarding sexual harassment. Actions intended to help victims cope with sexual harassment were less popular, with women noticeably more likely than men to think a special counseling service would be effective.

The importance of effective management involvement can be seen in the comments that respondents wrote on their questionnaires. Few were as cynical as the Federal worker who said there is very little management can do because "management does not want to reduce sexual harassment on the job"--or as discouraged as the person who wrote, "upper management in my agency is generally unconcerned about subjects like sexual harassment; senior executives feel they have more important things to do." But a number implied that greater support from management is indicated. Wrote one person: "A major problem is that among management there is tacit approval."

Swifter investigations and action against managers who knowingly allow behavior to continue might seem appropriate to the Federal worker who wrote that supervisors took no action against the offender, a Branch Chief, until they were ordered to by outside sources. Noted the respondent: "The sexual harassment continued over several years with several different women, two of whom resigned under pressure from the harasser." Awareness training on management responsibilities for decreasing sexual harassment might seem like a good idea to the Federal worker who observed: "When one complains to the supervisor about an employee whose comments and filthy jokes are annoying and embarrassing, she always says, 'Oh, I know, he's always been like that,' but she never does anything about it."

FIGURE 8-5
Perceived Effectiveness of Management Actions

Percentage of Victims and Supervisors Who Thought Management Actions Regarding Sexual Harassment Would Be Effective (Question 11)

IMPOSING TOUGHER SANCTIONS AND STRICTER ENFORCEMENT	
Conduct swift and thorough investigations of complaints of sexual harassment	Reported by 77% of women and 71% of men Reported by 81% of female supervisors and 78% of male supervisors
Enforce penalties against managers who knowingly allow this behavior to continue	Reported by 59% of women and 61% of men Reported by 62% of female supervisors and 60% of male supervisors
Enforce penalties against those who sexually bother others	Reported by 74% of women and 71% of men Reported by 71% of female supervisors and 74% of male supervisors
Publicize the availability of formal complaint channels	Reported by 63% of women and 63% of men Reported by 67% of female supervisors and 60% of male supervisors
PUBLICIZING MANAGEMENT POLICY	
Establish and publicize policies which prohibit sexual harassment	Reported by 69% of women and 69% of men Reported by 75% of female supervisors and 73% of male supervisors
Provide training for managers and EEO officials on their responsibilities for decreasing sexual harassment	Reported by 61% of women and 57% of men Reported by 65% of female supervisors and 57% of male supervisors
HELPING VICTIMS COPE	
Establish a special counseling service for those who experience sexual harassment	Reported by 44% of women and 37% of men Reported by 44% of female supervisors and 37% of male supervisors
Provide awareness training for employees on sexual harassment	Reported by 53% of women and 43% of men Reported by 54% of female supervisors and 43% of male supervisors
NOTHING CAN BE DONE	
There is very little that management can do to reduce sexual harassment on the job	Reported by 6% of women and 5% of men Reported by 3% of female supervisors and 4% of male supervisors

NOTE: Many respondents indicated more than one action would be effective.

Respondents' comments also indicated that management action can be--or is thought likely to be--helpful. As cited above, management investigation and discipline of the offending person "effectively nipped in the bud" any further problem. Publishing a policy "along the vein of 'you don't have to put up with this' could go a long way toward encouraging people to speak up," wrote another Federal worker. However, a third cautions, "the Federal Government spends a lot on developing policy and providing training, but *they* are not very serious about doing anything practical to correct the problem." One reports that agency employees are "... periodically given memoranda citing the section of the law so we will know how to report or file a complaint if we encounter sexual harassment."

Conclusion

Although few victims and supervisors considered current formal remedies for sexual harassment effective, many thought a number of management actions regarding sexual harassment would be helpful, and most endorsed management actions involving sanctions and enforcement of penalties. Awareness of existing complaint channels is relatively low (particularly in a number of agencies having high rates of harassment), and most victims and supervisors felt publicizing the availability of these channels would be helpful. A number of victims and supervisors indicated that filing a formal complaint is not one of the most effective actions employees can take to stop sexual harassment, and a number of victims indicated that their reasons for not taking formal action are related to the system itself. The overwhelming support for management action involving sanctions and penalties, but lack of faith in current formal remedies, may reflect unfamiliarity of dissatisfaction with the existing complaint system.

Footnotes -- Chapter 8

1 Congressional Memorandum of Understanding; see Appendix E.

2 See Appendix E.

3 See Section 204, of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, Pub. Law 94-454, 92 Stat. 1111, codified at 5 U.S.C. 1201 et seq. and 7501 et seq.

4 See 5 C.F.R. Part 771.

5 See Section 202 of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 cited in footnote 3 and the OPM Policy Statement, Appendix E.

6 See Survey Questions 12-16.

7 See Survey Questions 12a-16a.

8 Based on responses to Survey Question 30.

9 See Chapter 4 for a discussion of incidence of sexual harassment in individual Government agencies.

10 See Appendix D, Table M for data.

11 See Survey Questions 12b-16b.

12 Based on responses to Survey Question 10.

13 Based on disagree/strongly disagree and agree/ strongly agree responses to Survey Question 1(h). See Appendix D, Table N for data.

14 See Survey Question 11.

9. Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The findings, conclusions, and recommendations that follow grow directly out of the discussions in the preceding eight chapters. The major findings are summarized and conclusions drawn to facilitate the development of the policy recommendations on ways to remedy sexual harassment in the Federal work force.

The recommendations are directed to those institutions--Congress, Federal agencies, OPM, EEOC--that have responsibility for assuring that the Federal workplace is free from unsolicited and unwelcome sexual overtones. Each of these institutions can play an important role in bringing this about by effectively implementing the recommended actions. Most of these actions do not require extensive outlays of funds and resources and are cost effective when compared to the dollar, psychic, and productivity costs of prohibited sexual harassment on the job.

Summary of Findings

View Of Federal Workers Toward Sexual Harassment

1. A variety of uninvited sexual behaviors are considered to be sexual harassment by both men and women.

- Both men and women Federal workers generally agree that uninvited behaviors of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment.
- Federal workers believe supervisors should be held to a higher standard of conduct than other workers regarding sexually oriented behavior on the job.

2. The attitudes of men and women Federal workers about sexual behavior at work vary.

- Both men and women Federal workers believe sexual activity, whether voluntary or otherwise, should not occur between people who work together.
- Men show a greater tendency than women to think victims are somewhat responsible for bringing sexual harassment on themselves and are inclined to believe the issue of sexual harassment has been exaggerated.
- Both men and women Federal workers think sexual harassment is something people should not have to tolerate.

Extent Of Sexual Harassment In The Federal Workplace

3. The incidence rate of sexual harassment in the Federal workforce is widespread.

- One out of every four Federal employees reported being sexually harassed on the job over a 2-year period.
- Women are much more likely to be victims than men--42% of all female Federal employees, but only 15% of male employees, reported being sexually harassed.
- Sexual harassment can take many forms, and every form except attempted or actual rape or sexual assault was experienced by a sizeable percentage of both men and women.

4. Many sexual harassment incidents occur repeatedly and are of relatively long duration.

- Sexual harassment is not just a one-time experience--many victims were repeatedly subjected to harassing behaviors, particularly the less severe forms.
- Incidents of sexual harassment are not just passing events--most lasted more than a week, and many lasted longer than 6 months.

5. The majority of Federal employees who had worked elsewhere feel sexual harassment is no worse in the Federal workplace than in state and local government or in the private sector.

Victims Of Sexual Harassment

6. Individuals with certain personal and organizational characteristics are more likely to be sexually harassed than others.

- Age, marital status, and sexual composition of the employee's work group have a relatively strong effect on whether a Federal employee is sexually harassed.
- Factors having a somewhat weaker relationship are employee education level, race or ethnic background, job classification, traditionality of the employee's job, and sex of the employee's immediate supervisor.

7. Sexual harassment is widely distributed among women and men of various backgrounds, positions, and locations.

- Some agencies have a greater incidence of sexual harassment than do others.
- Sexual harassment is more likely to occur in work environments where employees have poor communications with their supervisors

and feel pressured to participate in activities of a sexual nature.

Perpetrators Of Sexual Harassment

8. The personal and organizational characteristics of those who harass women are somewhat different from those who harass men.

- Most victims are harassed by people of the opposite sex.
- Most harassers act alone rather than in concert with another person.
- Most harassers of women are older than their victims, and most harassers of men are younger.
- Most harassers are married, but many men report being harassed by divorced or single women as well.
- Most harassers are of the same race or ethnic background as their victims but minority men report being harassed by those of a different race or ethnic background.
- Most harassers are coworkers, but many women are harassed by supervisors.

9. Many harassers are reported to have bothered more than one victim at work.

10. Few employees report having been accused of sexually harassing others.

Incidents Of Sexual Harassment

11. Those who are sexually harassed by supervisors and those who experience the more severe forms of sexual harassment are more likely than other victims to foresee penalties or possible benefits for not going along or going along with the unwanted sexual attention.

12. A number of informal actions were found by victims to be effective in stopping the sexual harassment.

- Most victims respond to the sexual harassment by ignoring it, but few find that technique improves the situation.
- The most direct and assertive informal responses, such as telling the harasser to stop, are reported to be the most effective actions to take.
- Few victims talk about their experiences with others, but those who do find talking to someone with independent authority or organizational responsibility to be more helpful than talking to coworkers, family, or friends.

13. Filing a formal complaint was also found to be relatively effective for the few who tried it.

- Few victims take formal actions, but many who do find them helpful.
- The reported response of agency officials to informal and formal charges of sexual harassment has been mixed.

The Impact And Cost Of Sexual Harassment

14. The cost of sexual harassment to the Federal Government between May 1978 and May 1980 is conservatively estimated to have been \$189 million.

15. Although their experiences do not change the careers and work situations of most victims, a sizeable number of women and men do leave their jobs or suffer other adverse consequences.

- A majority of victims did not think their personal wellbeing or work performance declined as a result of their experience, but a sizeable minority do.
- Victims are much more likely to think sexual harassment negatively affected their personal wellbeing or morale than to believe that their work performance or productivity suffered.

16. Most victims report that, as far as they know, the morale and productivity of their immediate workgroup are little affected by their personal experience of sexual harassment.

Awareness Of Remedies And Their Effectiveness

17. Federal workers are generally unaware of formal remedies and even fewer are convinced of their effectiveness.

- Most victims and supervisors are relatively unaware of the formal remedies available to victims of sexual harassment.

- Relatively few victims and supervisors consider formal remedies effective in helping victims of sexual harassment.

18. Taking assertive informal action is thought to be the most effective way for employees to make others stop bothering them sexually.

19. Most victims and supervisors think there is much management can do regarding sexual harassment.

Conclusions

These findings lead to five general conclusions that can be drawn about the sexual harassment in the Federal workplace. In addition, several views about the nature of sexual harassment are discussed.

1. Sexual harassment is a legitimate problem in the Federal workplace.

We have seen that sexual harassment is indeed a widespread and legitimate problem. As shown in Chapter 2, the vast majority of both supervisors and others alike agreed that sexual harassment is behavior that should not be tolerated and a sizeable number of victims indicated that it was a problem where they worked. Chapters 3 and 4 provided information on how widespread and prevalent sexual harassment is among female and male Federal workers. Another indication that sexual harassment is a legitimate problem is the sizeable dollar cost to the Federal Government of the effects of sexual harassment, as conservatively estimated in Chapter 7.

2. In the past, agency managers and supervisors have not been as successful as they could be in resolving problems of sexual harassment.

We found that in the past, management overall has been somewhat less than effective in resolving issues of sexual harassment that have been raised. Chapter 5 shows that few victims talked to supervisors for advice or reported the behavior formally and when they did, they had only a 60-40 chance of having the problem resolved.

Problems may also arise when supervisors who do not actually participate in the sexual harassment give tacit approval to the subordinates who engage in the behavior. Since these supervisors have responsibility for employee conduct in their offices, they should take charge in eliminating it from their workplaces rather than approving or ignoring it. The basis for this lack of commitment may be partially explained by the findings, in Chapter 2 that a number of supervisors think that the problem of sexual harassment has been exaggerated and that victims are somewhat to blame for bringing the sexual harassment on themselves. Clearly, these attitudes of supervisors tend to undermine the authority and force of agency policy statements prohibiting sexual harassment and have the effect of thwarting their implementation.

3. There is much that management can do about the problem of sexual harassment in the future.

We found that there is much management can do about the problem of sexual harassment in the future to both prevent its occurrence and remedy the effects. Chapter 8 contains information on a number of actions which respondents felt would be helpful in reducing sexual harassment. Chapters 4 and 5 provide data on the characteristics of individuals most likely to be harassed and to do the harassing.

Some of these characteristics are under the control of management and can be adjusted to reduce the rate of sexual harassment. For example, individuals in nontraditional jobs, such as women law enforcement officers, have been shown to experience sexual harassment at somewhat higher rates than others. Supervisors of these employees as well as the employees themselves can be made aware of this fact and appropriate preventive and remedial steps implemented.

4. There are effective actions that victims can take to resolve the problem of sexual harassment.

A number of actions have been discussed that victims themselves can take regarding the sexual harassment. As shown in Chapter 5, the most assertive informal actions are the most effective: talking to someone with either outside or organizational responsibility sometimes helps, and filing a formal complaint as noted above has an average chance of helping the victims. Chapter 8 indicates that victims as well as supervisors need to be made aware of the existence of available remedies so that they can use them if needed. However, Chapter 5 indicates that most victims would prefer to settle the matter informally rather than taking a formal action that would tend to escalate this highly personal matter. Appendix H lists publications that offer additional advice on effective techniques for dealing with sexual harassment.

5. Sexual harassment has varying effects on victims, which probably account for the differences in repercussions.

In studying the effects of sexual harassment on its victims, we found variance in the repercussions, depending on a number of factors. It appears that some victims experience dramatic consequences as a result of this experience and others do not. The causes are various, but contributing factors appear to be the level of severity of the sexual harassment, personal and organizational characteristics of the victim, the organizational level of the harasser, and the perceived motive or demeanor of the harasser.

Some victims were more likely to be sexually harassed than others, and some reported suffering greater consequences, particularly when the harasser had greater power. For example, women victims of actual or attempted rape or assault who were harassed by their supervisors were more likely than other victims to report fearing and suffering negative job consequences as a result of their sexual harassment experience. These victims of "most severe" sexual harassment were also much more likely to report experiencing emotional or physical problems or reductions in their work performance.

However, it should be pointed out that the findings indicate the level of severity by itself does not control whether adverse consequences will occur. Some victims of seemingly mild forms of sexual harassment have reported adverse consequences. For example, an individual who received repeated lewd comments ("less severe" behavior) from her supervisor might suffer greater consequences than an individual who was pressured for sexual favors ("severe " behavior) by a coworker.

What Is the Nature of Sexual Harassment?

Although sexual harassment has been demonstrated to be a problem that management can combat, the question still remains: what is the underlying nature of sexual harassment in the first place? Three explanations that were discussed in Chapter 1 have been raised in the literature. The first two views are somewhat interrelated in that those who have low power are thought to be more vulnerable to those with greater power. Based upon the findings in the study, we concluded that the first two explanations appear valid under some circumstances and we rejected the last. The three views are:

1. That sexual harassment is a form of power that is exercised by those in control, usually men, over low status employees, usually women.
2. That individuals with certain low power characteristics, such as youth and low, salaries, are more subject to sexual harassment than others.
3. That sexual harassment is an expression of personal attraction between men and women that is widespread and cannot and should not be stopped.

The following briefly discusses these views in light of the findings from the study.

Sexual Harassment is an Abuse of Power

This theory grows out of the view that sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination designed to keep women from advancing from low paid, powerless, jobs. Women do comprise only about one-third (31%) of the jobs in the Federal workforce and most women occupy the lowest paid jobs compared to men.^[1]

However, the findings show that most victims, both men and women, are harassed by coworkers rather than supervisors who presumably have more power. On its face this finding would tend to disprove the power theory, however, one must look closer at the data. The findings also show that victims, regardless of severity of the harassment, were more likely to perceive and experience adverse consequences if their harasser was a supervisor rather than a coworker. This seems to indicate that, although not all harassment is an outgrowth of organizational power, those cases where consequences are greater are more likely to be examples of abuse of organizational power. The sexual harassment by coworkers probably has more to do with personal power and sex roles than with organizationally derived power. In any event, further research would be helpful in exploring this issue.

Individuals with Certain Characteristics are More Vulnerable to Sexual Harassment

The view that those with low status and power characteristics are more vulnerable to sexual harassment has been proved in some respects and disproved in others. Some with low power and status, such as younger men and women and trainees, did report receiving sexual harassment disproportionately, but others, such as those in low salary levels, low education levels, and women office and clerical workers, did not.

Sexual Harassment is Not an Expression of Personal Sexual Attraction

The theory that sexual harassment is an expression of personal sexual attraction grows out of a view that sexual harassment is part of standard behavior between the sexes and that employers have no business interfering with these matters of love or personal attraction. This theory has been disproved on several counts.

That many harassers were reported to have harassed more than one victim casts doubt on the idea that sexual harassment is simply a matter of unique personal attraction. The finding that the rate of sexual harassment is not constant among all Federal agencies also somewhat negates the idea that sexual harassment is appropriate sexual behavior that occurs everywhere; that many victims report severe consequences also tends to negate that this behavior is and should be standard practice. In addition, the vast majority of respondents stated that sexual harassment is not something that "people should have to put up with." All of this indicates that sexual harassment should not be

considered standard behavior at the workplace and is very much a matter of concern for employers such as the Federal Government.

Implications

Understanding that sexual harassment does not affect all victims in the same way is important in developing recommendations on ways to effectively reduce sexual harassment in the Federal workplace.

To help reduce most instances of sexual harassment, where the effects are not so adverse or presumably debilitating, an awareness campaign that focuses on prevention would be the most effective. This campaign should advise managers of their responsibilities and hold them accountable, as well as provide aid to victims in informally resolving these matters.

For the smaller number of instances where the sexual harassment has an extremely adverse or punitive affect, the response of management should be swift and thorough in imposing sanctions against the behavior and in aiding the victim.

These concepts are more thoroughly explored below.

Recommendations

Since sexual harassment has been clearly shown to be a problem in the Federal Government, managerial policies should be instituted stating sexual harassment is unacceptable conduct that will not be condoned. A number of agencies have already begun to do this.^[2] The Federal courts and Federal regulations^[3] have also stated that under many circumstances, sexual harassment is a violation of both civil law and criminal law. Therefore, it is both cost-effective and managerially responsible to take effective steps to reduce the amount of sexual harassment in the Federal Government.

Sanctions and Enforcement

1. Agencies should provide strong and effective enforcement against sexual harassment and issue sanctions where appropriate. To do this:

- Agencies should conduct swift and thorough investigations to discover evidence of sexual harassment and take appropriate action.
- Agencies should emphasize their strong commitment to prohibiting sexual harassment on the job by imposing sanctions where appropriate against the behavior, including:
 - enforcing penalties against those who sexually bother others, and
 - enforcing penalties against managers who knowingly allow this behavior to continue.

2. Complaint channels for allegations of sexual harassment should be clarified and streamlined.

Agency management has a responsibility to investigate and eliminate prohibited behavior, such as sexual harassment. The sanctions imposed and the remedial action taken, as with other violations of the law, should be commensurate with the violation. What is key, however, to render this recommendation effective is that allegations be taken seriously so that forceful and fair resolutions result. This will help to restore the faith of victims as well as supervisors in formal channels for processing complaints or grievances.

No additional legal or regulatory mechanisms appear to be necessary to enforce sanctions against sexual harassment if strong enforcement can be accomplished within current channels. However, the channels must be made more efficient and responsive to the fact that sexual harassment is a legitimate problem that must be handled as seriously as other violations of the law, standards of conduct, or prohibited personnel practices.

Publicizing Managerial Policy and Commitment

3. Managers and other agency officials should be made aware of their responsibility and held accountable for enforcing Government and agency policy prohibiting sexual harassment at the workplace. This can best be accomplished by agency managers:

- issuing strong policy statements
- otherwise clarifying acceptable behavior for supervisors, and
- holding supervisors responsible for the conduct of their offices with regard to sexual harassment through the performance appraisal system.

Agencies should emphasize the use of preventive measures and informal resolution of complaints as a means of combating sexual

harassment since processing formal complaints is both time consuming and costly. Since most victims do not file complaints, these measures will also affect the largest number of victims and harassers. The costs of preventing sexual harassment may be more than offset by the savings to the Government in reducing sexual harassment and, thus, reducing job turnover and increasing job productivity and morale.

It is also important to note that a knowledgeable observer with a widespread clinical practice for the last decade finds that enunciating regulations clearly and specifically can be very effective in reducing sexual harassment.[4] Buttredding this argument is the finding in Appendix F that the agency with the highest rate of sexual harassment for women also had not issued a policy statement of sexual harassment at the time this survey was conducted.

However, Dr. Rowe cautions that because of heightened awareness caused by publicizing the policy, the number of informal and formal complaints of sexual harassment may temporarily increase in the short run.

4. Agencies should develop a training strategy to aid in preventing sexual harassment; this strategy will be instrumental in targeting those groups that should receive training on a priority basis to best utilize limited training resources.

This training can include inservice classroom training either as a separate course or as part of other courses, publishing pamphlets or handbooks for employees and supervisors on the subject, and providing other awareness activities through lectures and short workshops. An effective training strategy should include at least three target audiences:

- (a) managers and supervisors whose responsibility is the conduct of the workplace;
- (b) other agency personnel such as personnel and EEO officials who have responsibility to advise victims and supervisors on procedural and other matters regarding sexual harassment, and
- (c) victims or potential victims requiring information on their rights as well as useful techniques on coping with the sexual harassment informally.

Providing Assistance to Victims

5. Agencies should provide information to victims on effective techniques for resolving incidents of sexual harassment.

Agencies should provide all employees with information (in pamphlet or other written format) regarding:

- what the most effective actions are for them to take to stop sexual harassment,
- what their rights of redress of sexual harassment are, including the availability of formal complaint channels,
- which agency officials have responsibility for processing complaints or assisting with problems associated with incidents of sexual harassment; officials may include Federal Women's Program managers, EEO counselors, EEO officers or personnel officers, and

The study indicates that most victims try to resolve their sexual harassment incidents by ignoring the behavior but that this very rarely solves the problem. Victims should be advised that the most assertive responses are the most effective. Since a sizeable number of victims report suffering negative personal effects that result in losses to the Federal Government, steps should be taken to mitigate some of these effects.

6. Outside agencies, such as the Office of the Special Counsel in the MSPB, should also publicize the availability of their services as resources allow.

7. Federal employee labor unions should be encouraged to instruct shop stewards and other union officials about counseling techniques and legal redress for union member victims of sexual harassment who seek assistance from the union.

Followup

8. A number of other activities should be instituted to assure compliance with law and regulation as well as to provide followup to this study both within the Federal Government and in the private sector.

Steps that should be taken include:

- Copies of the MSPB Final Report documenting the incidence of sexual harassment should receive wide distribution among the agencies.
- The Congress should continue to monitor the activities of the various Federal agencies regarding sexual harassment.
- Agencies should ensure that their training courses developed to prevent sexual harassment are effective.
- EEOC should continue its review of actions taken by agencies to combat sexual harassment.
- Other research groups, both public and private, should be encouraged to do further analysis on this subject using the MSPB data tape in order to increase understanding and awareness of the problem; agencies should be encouraged to use the MSPB questionnaire to

conduct research of organizations within the agencies for purposes of comparison.

- State and local governments, universities, as well as companies in the private sector should be encouraged to conduct research on sexual harassment among their own employees or students. The MSPB survey questionnaire should be made available to use as a model.

As with the laws that the Federal Government enforces against the private sector, the laws and policies regarding sexual harassment in the Federal workplace should also be monitored and enforced. The most cost effective approach is to include the monitoring of sexual harassment policies in conjunction with evaluation programs already in place.

Footnotes -- Chapter 9

1 See Office of Personnel Management, Federal Civilian Work Force Statistics, *Equal Employment Opportunity Statics*, November 1978, p. xv.

2 See Appendix F for data on these agencies.

3 See Appendix H for a discussion of the legal analysis of sexual harassment.

4 Mary P. Rowe, Ph.D. Assistant to the President, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, conversation March 1981.

Text Alternatives

Definition of Sexual Harassment: Percentage of Male and Female Federal Employees Who Agreed that Each of Six Forms of Unwanted, Uninvited Sexual Attention Constitutes Sexual Harassment (Questions 2-7, b & d) Actions that male and female employees agreed constitute severe sexual harassment are making letters and calls, pressure for sexual favors, and deliberate touching. Less severe actions are pressure for dates, suggestive looks, and sexual remarks. If a supervisor took these actions; 93% of women and 87% of men agreed that letters and calls constitute severe sexual harassment; 91% of women and 84% of men agreed that pressure for sexual favors constitute severe sexual harassment; 91% of women and 83% of men agreed that deliberate touching constitute severe sexual harassment; 77% of women and 76% of men agreed that pressure for dates constitute less severe sexual harassment; 72% of women and 59% of men agreed that suggestive looks constitute less severe sexual harassment; and, 62% of women and 53% of men agreed that sexual remarks constitute less severe sexual harassment. If another worker took these actions; 87% of women and 76% of men agreed that letters and calls constitute severe sexual harassment; 81% of women and 65% of men agreed that pressure for sexual favors constitute severe sexual harassment; 84% of women and 69% of men agreed that deliberate touching constitute severe sexual harassment; 65% of women and 59% of men agreed that pressure for dates constitute less severe sexual harassment; 64% of women and 47% of men agreed that suggestive looks constitute less severe sexual harassment; and, 54% of women and 42% of men agreed that sexual remarks constitute less severe sexual harassment.

Figure 3-1: Pie chart shows of the total federal workforce of 1,862,000, non-victims comprised 75% or 1,400,000; victims of less severe sexual harassment comprised 8% or 150,000; victims of severe sexual harassment comprised 16% or 300,000; and, victims of most severe sexual harassment comprised 1% or 12,000 employees.

Figure 3-2: Pie chart 1 shows of the total federal female workforce of 694,000, non-victims comprised 58% or 400,000; victims of less severe sexual harassment comprised 12% or 85,000; victims of severe sexual harassment comprised 29% or 200,000; and, victims of most severe sexual harassment comprised 1% or 9,000 employees. Pie chart 2 shows of the total federal male workforce of 1,168,000, non-victims comprised 85% or 1,000,000; victims of less severe sexual harassment comprised 6% or 65,000; victims of severe sexual harassment comprised 9% or 100,000; and, victims of most severe sexual harassment comprised .3% or 3,000 employees.