Preventing sexual harassment

Impact evaluation guide

Preventing sexual harassment impact evaluation guide

This resource is designed to support employers, people and culture professionals, and workplace leaders to evaluate the impact of their initiatives to prevent sexual harassment and promote gender equality.

It provides practical tools, guiding questions, and evaluation methods to help workplaces understand what is changing, where improvement is needed, and how to strengthen their efforts over time. The guide encourages the use of both qualitative and quantitative data, with an emphasis on collecting and analysing information through an intersectional lens. It promotes embedding evaluation from the outset of any prevention strategy, helping organisations to reflect on progress, identify barriers, and measure outcomes at various stages. In doing so, workplaces can build a culture of learning, accountability, and continuous improvement in line with their legal obligations and positive duty requirements.

If you would like information about training by Working Women's Centre Victoria on preventing sexual harassment in your workplace, contact us info@wwcvic.org.au

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Working Women's Centre Victoria acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land where we work, and First Peoples language groups and communities across Victoria and Australia. We pay our respects to Elders past and present. We celebrate the people, traditions, culture and strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the fight for survival, justice and Country. We thank the Traditional custodians for caring for Country for thousands of generations. Working Women's Centre Victoria recognises the ongoing impact of colonisation, dispossession and racism. As a Centre focused on work place rights, we acknowledge the history of exploitation Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have suffered working in the colony, denied access to their wages which were often simply stolen by corrupt officials and employers, and the ongoing exploitation and discrimination many First Nation people still experience at work today. We recognise that Sovereignty was never ceded and that this always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

The Working Women's Centre Victoria understands the term 'working women' means all women (this includes cis and trans women) and non-binary people (this includes people who are gender diverse, gender fluid, masculine or feminine) who meet our service eligibility criteria.

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Collecting data and evaluating the impact of your policy and systems

It is important to monitor uptake and feedback on initiatives implemented. An initial data set is necessary to understand the change and impact of action. Start by understanding what information you have to help set a baseline. Secondly, data and insights captured to measure the impact of your work should be examined within the broader organisational context, alongside or in addition to cases of bullying, harassment and discrimination.

Establishing a baseline

Before launching an evaluation framework, it is vital to consider what data insights you have available to help establish a baseline. Once the evaluation framework has been established, consider how progress will be measured over time and support regular reflection.

Building your data baseline

Capturing data about staff experiences and wellbeing is essential to understanding is the organisation's current state, and what can be improved. Below is a list of resources you can draw from to help build your understanding of the current state, and a data baseline for employee engagement.

This approach consider a range of diversity and inclusion methods, recognising that many workplaces will be undertaking additional work to address systemic inequality, such as a Reconciliation Action Plan or work to address discrimination and harassment.

We encourage organisations that undertake a workplace survey to disaggregate data by gender, and other key equality monitoring characteristics, where possible, to see if there are trends or concerns from different cohorts of staff.

It is important to provide information on available specialist support when staff are responding to the survey. You can find a list at the end of this resource.

When conducting the survey, clearly communicate the purpose of the survey, what will be collected and how the information will be used: this includes how equality monitoring data will be used. This will help increase the survey response rate. If your response rate is 60% or below, then there is work to be undertaken to improve the response rate; an ideal target to aim for is an 80% voluntary completion rate.

> **Intersectional practice tip**
>
> **Collecting and analysing quantitative and qualitative data means considering a range of lived experiences and views, and how these characteristics may compound staff experiences in the workplace.**
>
> 1. **Examine what data you collect and how it can be disaggregated.**
> 2. **If there are gaps in collection or analysis, or potential 'missing perspectives' seek qualitative data through additional surveys, interviews or focus groups to help address the gaps.**
> 3. **Develop a baseline understanding and monitor staff experiences and feedback over time.**

Example data analysis

There is a range of ways to collect and analyse data. However, we recommend that data be collected and analysed by gender, role, and where possible other equality monitoring data insights – such as ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation – if the organisations size allows for such insights. We understand in smaller workplaces this data may not be collected or available.

If you are looking for benchmarking data with relation to gender equality, you can utilise the Workplace Gender Equality Agency Data Explorer to see data by industry.

The importance of understanding the experience of your employees

Collecting and analysing qualitative data is crucial for understanding workplace culture and identifying barriers to gender equality. Unlike quantitative data, qualitative data offers a deeper and more nuanced understanding of employee experiences, attitudes, and perceptions. It uncovers the underlying factors that contribute to issues like gender bias, discrimination, and exclusion, which may not be apparent through metrics alone.

Example qualitative interview and focus group questions

Below is a series of questions that can be asked during interviews or focus groups to surface what needs to change in order to prevent sexual harassment (culture, behaviour, system barriers and safety).

Workplace culture and environment:

- How would you describe the overall culture of our organisation?

- Can you share examples of behaviours or practices that promote inclusivity and respect in our organisation?

- Have you witnessed or experienced any behaviours that you feel contradicted the values of respect and inclusivity?

- How do you perceive the level of psychological safety within our team/organisation?

- On a scale from 1 to 10, how respected do you feel in the workplace? Follow up question with free text field: What could improve this rating?

Individual behaviours and support:

- What behaviours or actions do you believe contribute to a positive and respectful workplace?

- Have you ever felt unsupported in your role? If so, can you describe the circumstances?

- How do you think we can better support individuals from diverse backgrounds or underrepresented groups?

- What role does leadership play in fostering a respectful and inclusive workplace?

Barriers to progression:

- Do you feel any barriers hinder career progression or advancement opportunities within our organisation?

- Have you observed or experienced any instances where biases have influenced decisions related to promotions or career development?

- What strategies or changes could enhance opportunities for career growth and advancement for everyone?

Improvement areas to foster a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment:

- Do you feel the current workplace policies are implemented in accordance with our values? If not, what could be improved?

- Are there any areas where you believe our organisation needs to improve to ensure a more inclusive environment?

- How can we encourage open and respectful communication among teams and individuals? Do

Evaluating the impact of your work

Evaluation is critical to determining the success of any strategy. Evaluating the impact of interventions focused on addressing gender inequality and preventing sexual harassment does not have to be difficult. The best time to think about evaluation is when you are designing your strategy and identifying initiatives, so that you and colleagues can help determine from the start - 'what does good look like' and 'how might we measure this over time?'

An effective evaluation uses a clear timeframe and a range of data collection and analysis methods. This means that there needs to be times blocked out to pause, reflect and evaluate in the strategy implementation period.

Methodologies

By using a diverse range of evaluation methods, your organisation will gain a full understanding of the impact of your initiatives, capturing changes in culture, employee attitudes and behaviours, as well as changes in systems, and processes.

Surveys are useful to provide statistical data, whilst qualitative methods such as interviews and focus groups delve deeper into employees experiences and perceptions, providing context to the survey results.

- **Short surveys:** Surveys can provide statistical insights into broad trends within the organisation as well as short reflections or comments on the questions being considered. Short surveys are concise questionnaires designed to gather specific information from respondents quickly. Short surveys are ideal for capturing immediate feedback, gauging employee satisfaction, or assessing the impact of a recent change or initiative. They can also be effective for pulse checks to track changes over time in a particular area.

- **Focus groups:** Focus groups involve a small group of participants exploring a particular theme, usually in a semi-structured environment to allow participants to share their views, feelings, and experiences in depth. Focus groups can provide rich, qualitative data and insights into attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions. Focus groups are best used for medium term outcomes, such as measuring the impact of a program or initiative after it has had time to take effect and gaining a deeper understanding of the reason for particular behaviours or opinions in a workplace.

- **Strength Weakness Opportunities Threats (SWOT) analysis or self-assessment:** SWOT analysis is a strategic planning tool used to identify and evaluate the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats related to a specific project, or workplace initiative. This is particularly useful for long-term strategic planning. Assessment tools, such as the Women's Legal Service Victoria Starts with Us Self-Assessment tool, can help to understand the current state, and periodic reviews for medium to long-term outcomes to monitor the impact of prevention[1] strategies and initiatives.

- **Benchmarking:** Benchmarking provides insight into processes, performance metrics, or outcomes against those of peers or industry standards, and highlighting areas for improvement. Benchmarking can be used to track medium to long-term outcomes and assess the impact of improvement initiatives against industry standards, and for competitive analysis.

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[1] Prevention means any activities to understand and address gender inequality, discrimination and sexual harassment within the organisation.

- **Longitudinal staff surveys:** Longitudinal staff surveys are surveys administered to the same group of employees at multiple points in time. Longitudinal surveys are particularly effective for assessing how employee attitudes and experiences change over time, which can be crucial for understanding the long-term impact of workplace policies or initiatives. They can identify trends and patterns or shifts in employee engagement and satisfaction, in addition to helping to understand the sustained impact of specific interventions or programs.
- **External review:** An external review involves an independent assessment of the workplace, strategy or initiative by external experts or reviewers. This methodology is often used for assessing medium to long-term outcomes. External reviews provide an objective evaluation and can offer insights and recommendations based on the reviewers' expertise and industry standards. This methodology is often used for accreditation and compliance processes.

Impact indicators

There are a range of ways to monitor the impact of the actions taken. It is helpful to set indicators for progress when you are designing your action plan. You'll see example indicators in the Starts with Us Action Plan, and Action Plan Library. However, these are some helpful indicators that you can use on the short-, medium- and long-term.

Short-term (1-2 years)

- Increased awareness of sexual harassment reporting tools including the role of workplace training and resources in increasing awareness and confidence in use of tools.
- Increased awareness and confidence to lead organisational change programs.
- Increased awareness on how to respond to disclosures in a person-centred and trauma-informed manner.

Medium term (3-4 years)

- An increase in reporting of gendered violence (including sexual harassment) in the workplace to rebalance underreporting.
- Increased engagement in workplace prevention activities and confidence to engage in prevention initiatives.
- Increased confidence in leadership to respond to disclosures.
- Increased leadership/allyship from senior leaders.
- The workplace understands Occupational Health and Safety obligations and how to manage the risk of work-related gendered violence including sexual harassment.
- The workplace is taking initiative to embed the experience of people affected by discrimination and violence into their prevention activities and evaluation.

Long-term (5+ years)

- A decline in reporting of workplace gendered violence and sexual harassment in the workplace, reflecting the impact of action taken.

- Embedded and sustainable commitment from senior leadership to address unacceptable behaviours early and effectively.

- Improved workplace response to disclosures and increased reports of gendered violence and sexual harassment, contributing to increased trust and confidence among employees in workplaces to support victim-survivors.

- Reported increased confidence and implementation of active bystander and allyship skills across the workplace.

- Increased confidence in the workplace to remove and address barriers to gender equality.

- Engagement with inclusion and equity initiatives related to gendered violence has become 'mainstream' in the workplace.

Example of impact evaluation questions

- To what extend have reporting processes and policies improved?

- To what extent are employees more knowledgeable and able to identify risk in relation to work-related gendered violence including sexual harassment?

- To what extent has the project resulted in cultural changes in the workplace? If so, what are these?

- Have the prevention strategies/interventions contributed to harm minimisation for employees? If so, how? If not, why not?

- Has employee awareness of work-related gendered violence including sexual harassment as an Occupational Health and Safety issue increased? If so, what has been the impact? If not, why not?

- Have employees seen an increase of role-modelling inclusive leadership, and greater commitment to equity and respect?

- To what extent is your workplace taking action to prevent incidents of work-related gendered violence including sexual harassment?

- To what extent is your workplace innovating new practices to solve problems in relation to work-related gendered violence including sexual harassment?

- Has there been any observable impacts on your workplace culture in relation to work-related gendered violence including sexual harassment?

- Has there been any observable impacts on reducing harm in workplaces for work-related gendered violence including sexual harassment?

Other evaluation resources

The following resources can further support your organiastions evaluation approach:

- <u>Victorian Government Measuring Our Impact – Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan 2023 – 2027</u> (this method uses domains similar to the Starts with Us Framework).

- <u>Respect Victoria Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework for prevention practitioners</u>

- <u>ANROWS A life course approach to determining the prevalence and impact of sexual violence in Australia</u>

- <u>Our Watch Tracking Progress in Prevention and Report Card</u>

Support services in Victoria

If you or a colleague have experienced sexual harassment or other unacceptable behaviours, there are both internal and external support services. You can select a range of support services listed below and are also free to seek advice from someone at work, a friend, or a health professional.

Internal Support

Internal support mechanisms can include trained HR or OHS staff as well as confidential counselling and support for personal or professional matters through your workplace's Employee Assistance Program provider (if your workplace has one).

Employee Assistance Program (EAP): If your workplace offers an EAP, this service can provide short-term support and general strategies for managing stress, personal issues, or workplace concerns. However, EAP practitioners may not always have specialised training in responding to gendered violence or sexual harassment.

Note: Not all workplaces provide an EAP, particularly smaller businesses or casualised environments. If an EAP is not available, or if you would prefer to speak with someone external, you can contact any of the services below.

External Support Services

1800 Respect 24/7 counselling for anyone affected by family violence or sexual assault.
Phone: 1800 737 732 **Website:** 1800respect.org.au

Lifeline 24/7 crisis support and suicide prevention service.

Phone: 13 11 14 **Website:** lifeline.org.au

13Yarn 24/7 culturally safe crisis support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
Phone: 13 92 76 **Website:** 13yarn.org.au

Mensline counselling and support for men.
Phone 1300 78 99 78 **Website:** mensline.org.au

Headspace support for young people aged between 12 and 25 years.

Phone: 1800 650 890 **Website:** headspace.org.au

Sexual Assault Crisis Line after-hours, crisis counselling service for sexual assault victims.
Phone: 1800 806 292 **Website:** sacl.com.au

Legal Services

Working Women's Centre Victoria free legal assistance about workplace issues for working women and non-binary people.
Phone: 1800 992 842 **Website:** wwcvic.org.au

Q+ Law a safe entry point to access legal assistance for all Victorians who identify as part of the LGBTIQA+ community. **Website:** www.qlaw.org.au

Victoria Legal Aid assistance for people with legal problems including sexual harassment and discrimination. **Phone:** 1300 792 387 **Website**: legalaid.vic.gov.au/sexual-harassment

External reporting to regulatory bodies

If you would prefer to report the behaviour to someone outside of your current workplace, you can speak with:

- **Australian Human Rights Commission** – **Website:** humanrights.gov.au/our-work/sex-discrimination

- **Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission** – **Phone:** 1300 292 153 Email: complaints@veohrc.vic.gov.au. **Website:** humanrights.vic.gov.au.
  People who have experienced sexual harassment may lodge a complaint to try and resolve the dispute via a dispute resolution process.

- **Fair Work Commission** support with workplace disputes. **Website:** fwc.gov.au/apply-or-lodge

- **WorkSafe** free OHS support and advice, reporting of sexual harassment including doing so anonymously. **Phone:** 1800 136 089. **Website:** worksafe.vic.gov.au/report-incident

In addition to the national and state-based regulators, your profession may have industry-based regulators, professional bodies or councils you can report to.

Victoria Police

If you are concerned for someone's safety, or in an emergency situation, call 000 for urgent police assistance.

Acts such as indecent exposure, stalking, sexual assault and obscene or threatening communications (for example phone calls, letters, emails, text messages and posts on social networking sites) may also be offences under criminal law. A person who has experienced sexual harassment or sexual violence may want to report to the police by contacting local Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Team. police.vic.gov.au/sexual-offence-child-abuse-teams-centres