

Six in ten women in EU hit by workplace sexual harassment or violence

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News

A new survey says that six out of ten women in Europe have endured sexist treatment or suffered sexual violence during their careers.



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The number is significantly higher in Spain (66 percent) and Germany (68 percent), says the study, whose findings coincide with the second anniversary of the Weinstein scandal and the inception of the #MeToo movement.

The survey shows that, in total, nearly one in three (30 percent) French women have been harassed or sexually assaulted in their workplace.

It says that 21 percent of women have been victims of some form of sexist or sexual violence in the past 12 months, with a higher prevalence being in Latin countries such as Spain and Italy.

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Some 9 percent of European women claim to have been pressured at least once for an act of a sexual nature in exchange for a job or a promotion.

The survey also highlights poor reporting of such cases, saying, "resignation is still the most widespread reaction."

Women who have talked to a person likely to solve the problem internally, for example, a supervisor or trade unionist, remain the exception (9 percent to 16 percent).

Nevertheless, the study's authors say that the situation is changing: young women under 25 years of age are three times more likely (27 percent) than older people (10 percent) to have dared to talk to a superior or a union representative.

"The poor reporting of sexual violence is frightening. The question is: how do you make sure that the perpetrators are prosecuted?" **MeTooEP spokesperson**

The survey was conducted by Ifop, the French Institute for Public Opinion, for Fondation Jean Jaurès and FEPS (Foundation for European Progressive Studies) using a self-administered online questionnaire from 11 to 15 April 2019 among a sample of 5,026 females aged 18 years and over and resident in Italy, Spain, France, Germany and the UK.

The survey was conducted to measure the extent of sexist or sexual violence suffered by women in Europe in their workplaces. The authors say the last EU-wide study on the subject dates back seven years, to 2012.

A spokesperson for the "MeTooEP" campaign, which was set up to combat sexual harassment in the European parliament, told this website, "The poor reporting of sexual violence is frightening. The question is: how do you make sure that the perpetrators are prosecuted?"

She added, "This is an urgent matter. MeTooEP has asked for a proper independent and pluralist committee dealing with sexual violence inside the European Parliament. But this proposal has to be spread to political parties and national assemblies plus the private sector. It's a matter of responsibility."

The study found that verbal or visual violence is the most widespread form of abuse in the workplace, saying that whistling or coarse gestures are the most common (26 percent of women said they repeatedly faced it) followed by inappropriate remarks about the victim's figure or clothing (17 percent).

Some women who took part in the survey also said they had suffered sexual violence, with 14 percent reporting to have had repeated physical contact or have been sexually assaulted.

About the author

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