



# It's Not Just Part of the Job

Breaking the Silence on  
Sexual Harassment in the Library



# Presenters

Amanda Civitello

Marketing & Communications Manager  
Waukegan Public Library

Katie McLain

Reference Assistant  
Waukegan Public Library

“We don’t talk about this.”

# Library Literature Review

- A librarian's helpful, approachable demeanor may be misinterpreted by other people, and make it difficult for the librarian to speak out, either to the patron or to management.
- Virtual reference services allow for more complicated interactions between patrons and librarians.
- "I don't know any female librarian who hasn't been harassed or asked out while at work."\*

\*Abrams, Ingrid. "Please Don't Say This to a Librarian," *The Magpie Librarian*, July 9, 2012, <https://magpielibrarian.wordpress.com/2012/07/09/please-dont-say-this-to-a-librarian/>.

# Sexual Harassment

## 101

What is sexual harassment?

How do you identify harassment?

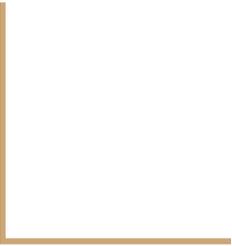
How can we empower staff?

Why should we talk about it?

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What is sexual harassment?





## sexual harassment

*noun*

### Definition of sexual harassment

: **uninvited** and **unwelcome** verbal or physical **behavior of a sexual nature** especially by a person in authority toward a subordinate (such as an employee or student)

"Sexual Harassment." Merriam-Webster.com. Accessed June 18, 2017.  
[https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sexual harassment.](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sexual%20harassment)



Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII), prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. Title VII's broad prohibitions against sex discrimination specifically cover:

**Sexual Harassment:** This includes practices ranging from direct requests for sexual favors to workplace conditions that create a hostile environment for persons of either gender, including same sex harassment.

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), "Federal Laws Prohibiting Job Discrimination Questions & Answers," <https://www.eeoc.gov/facts/qanda.html> (2009).



United Nations Entity for Gender Equality  
and the Empowerment of Women

Sexual harassment includes such **unwelcome sexually determined behaviour** as **physical contact and advances, sexually coloured remarks, showing pornography and sexual demands**, whether by words or actions. Such conduct can be **humiliating** and may constitute a health and safety problem; it is **discriminatory** when the woman has reasonable ground to believe that her objection would **disadvantage her in connection with her employment**, including recruitment or promotion, or when it creates a **hostile working environment**.

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, General Recommendation 19, Violence against women (Eleventh session, 1992), U.N. Doc. A/47/38 at 1 (1993), reprinted in Compilation of General Comments and General Recommendations Adopted by Human Rights Treaty Bodies, U.N. Doc. HRI/GEN/1/Rev.6 at 243 (2003).

# Who's affected by sexual harassment?

- Women are not the only targets of sexual harassment.
- Some studies show people of color experience a higher incidence of sexual harassment than their white colleagues.
- Some studies show LGBTQ people experience a higher incidence of sexual harassment than their straight and/or cisgender colleagues.
- Underage workers (teen employees in grades 9-12) face sexual harassment too.

*Sexual harassment can happen to anyone.*

*For people of color and LGBTQ people, the experience is many-layered.*

*For teens, problems may manifest in different ways.*

# People of Color & Sexual Harassment

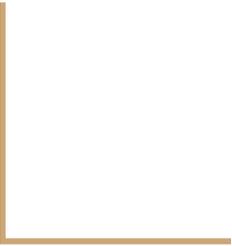
- People of color are frequently stereotyped and sexualized, and these systemic issues affect the frequency and nature of the harassment they experience.
- Perceptions of sexual harassing behaviors differ across cultural groups. This can influence recognition and reporting of unwanted behavior as harassment.
- Sexual harassment of people of color isn't just about sex or gender - it's about race, too.

# LGBTQ People & Sexual Harassment

- Transgender and gender non-conforming individuals experience sexual harassment at a higher incidence.
- Studies suggest intersection between transphobia and racism.
- LGBTQ youth are at particular risk for sexual harassment and violence.
- Sexual harassment may include derogatory remarks about sexual orientation - whether or not the person identifies as LGB+.
- Outing colleagues is never OK.



“Not everyone recognizes  
when they’re being harassed.”



# Three Types of Sexual Harassment

**Gender harassment:** unwelcome and offensive comments and behaviors that discriminate based on the target's gender identity

**Unwanted sexual attention:** unwelcome, persistent comments and behaviors that are driven by sexual innuendo or requests, verbal or tactile

**Sexual coercion:** threats or bribes to coerce the target into sexual activities

# Who can be a sexual harasser?

## Internal

- Colleagues (peers and supervisors)
- Contractors
- Volunteers

## External

- Library patrons
- Members of the public
- Vendors
- Colleagues from other organizations

# Recognizing Harassing Behaviors

“It’s hard to tell the difference between harassment and mental illness.”

Harassing behaviors can include:

- Unwelcome sexual advances
- Requests or bribes for sexual activity
- Direct or indirect threats
- Sexual innuendos, comments, and jokes
- Unwelcome touching, including brushing against a person
- Pervasive displays of materials with sexually illicit or graphic content
- Attempted or completed sexual assault

# What does this behavior look like in the library?

- Referring to library staff as “baby,” “sweetheart,” “gorgeous,” etc.
- Asking staff members on a date
- Staring at a staff member’s chest when they are wearing a name tag
- Asking for a staff member’s personal contact information
- Following a staff member into a secluded area of the library
- Taking photos of a staff member without their permission
- Asking about a staff member’s schedule (what time they take lunch, what time they leave for the day, etc.)
- Making inappropriate and/or suggestive comments about a staff member’s appearance
- Inquiring about a staff member’s marital or relationship status

# Underage Workers & Sexual Harassment

## How do teens experience sexual harassment?

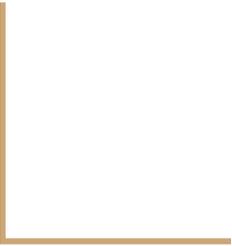
- Being asked out even if they said no
- Repeated requests for social or sexual activity
- Inappropriate touching
- Sexual rumors about them
- Comments about their bodies, clothes, sexual orientation, or sexual behavior
- Intimidation or assault

## How do you spot the signs of sexual harassment?

- Distracted performance or decline in work quality
- Psychomatic stress symptoms (headaches, stomach pains, insomnia, irritability)
- Drop in self-esteem
- Negative emotions (anger, anxiety, betrayal, depression)



“Employees should feel safe, and know that they are supported by managers.”



# Best Practices for Addressing Sexual Harassment

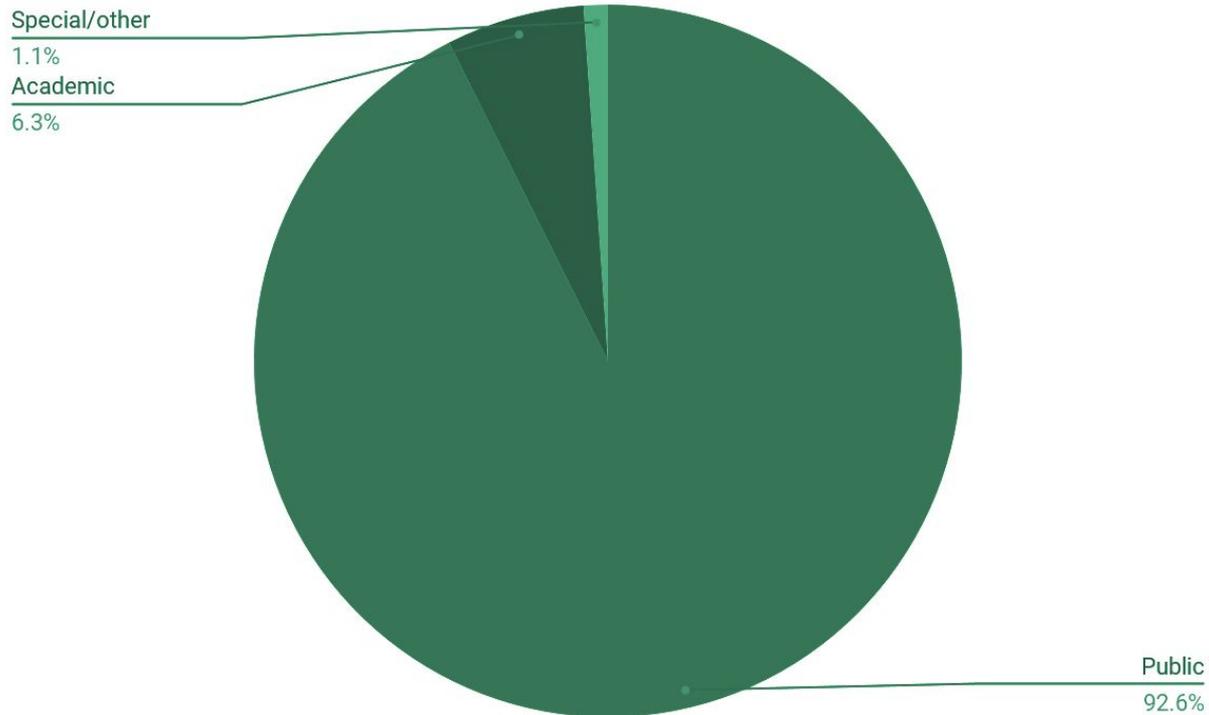
Adopt a strong anti-harassment **policy**, periodically **train** each employee on its contents, and vigorously **follow and enforce** it. The policy should include:

- A clear **explanation** of prohibited conduct, including examples
- Clear assurance that employees who make complaints or provide information related to complaints will be **protected against retaliation**
- A clearly described **complaint process** that provides multiple, accessible avenues of complaint
- Assurance that the employer will protect the **confidentiality** of harassment complaints to the extent possible
- A complaint process that provides a prompt, thorough, and impartial investigation
- Assurance that the employer will take **immediate and appropriate corrective action** when it determines that harassment has occurred.

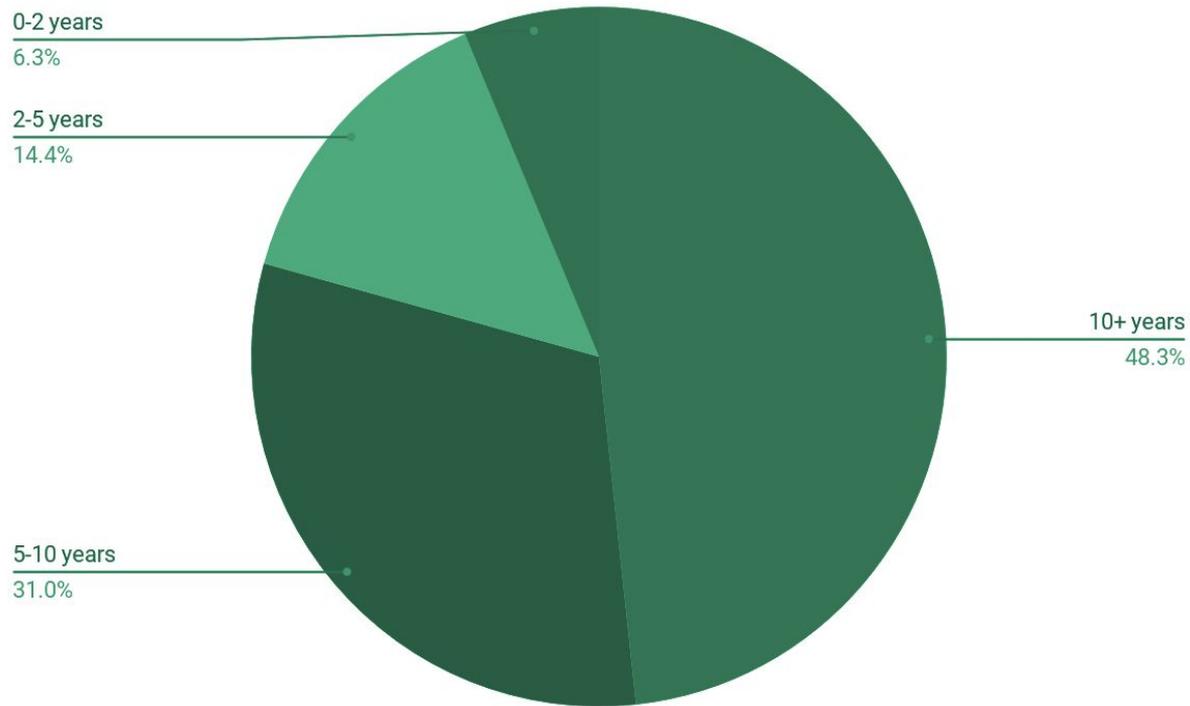
# Survey Results



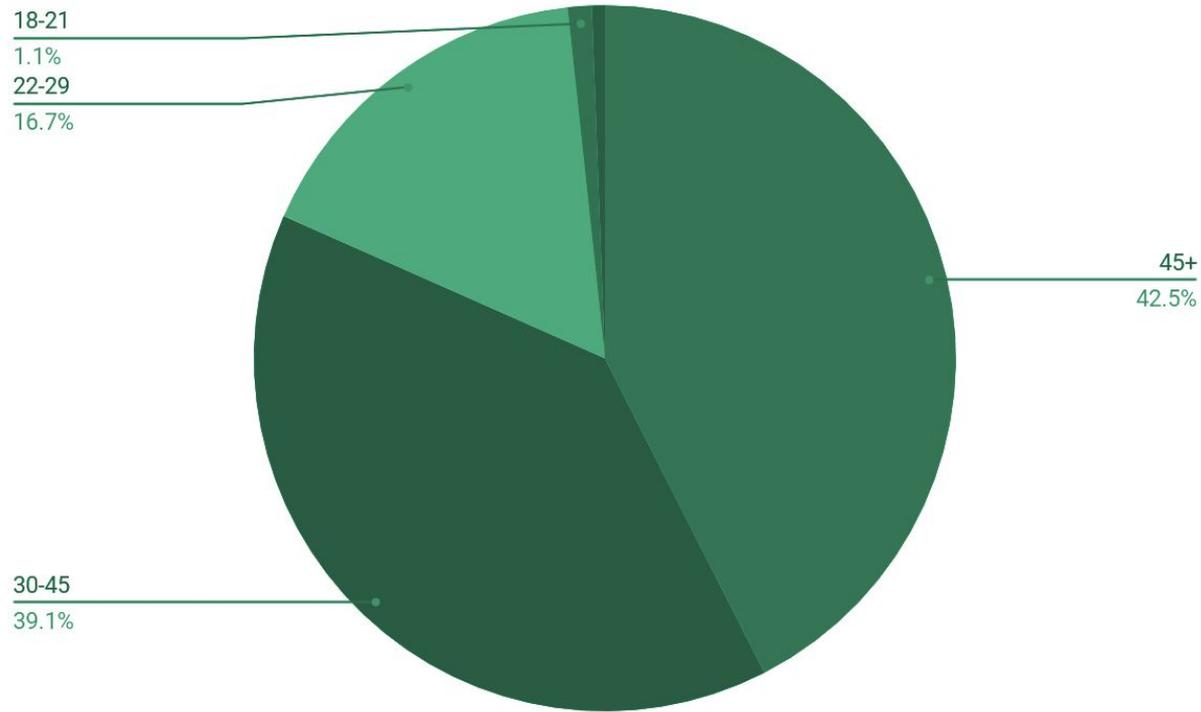
# What kind of library do you work in?



# How many years of experience do you have?



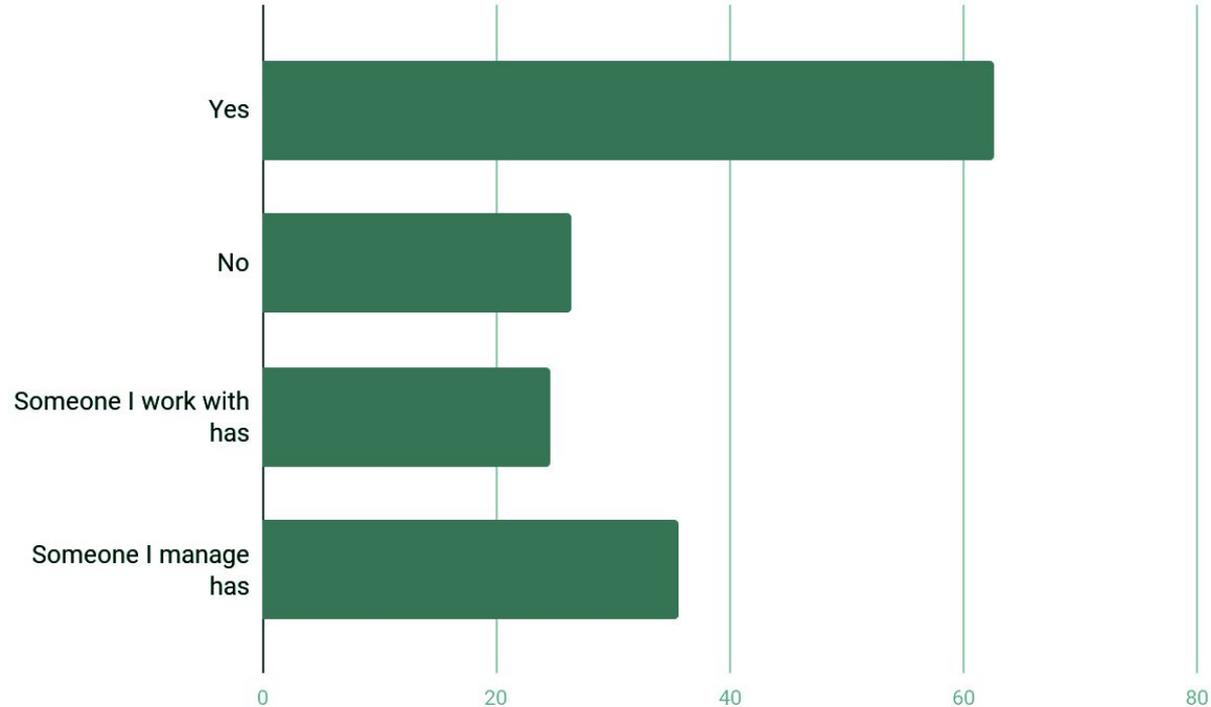
# What's your age range?



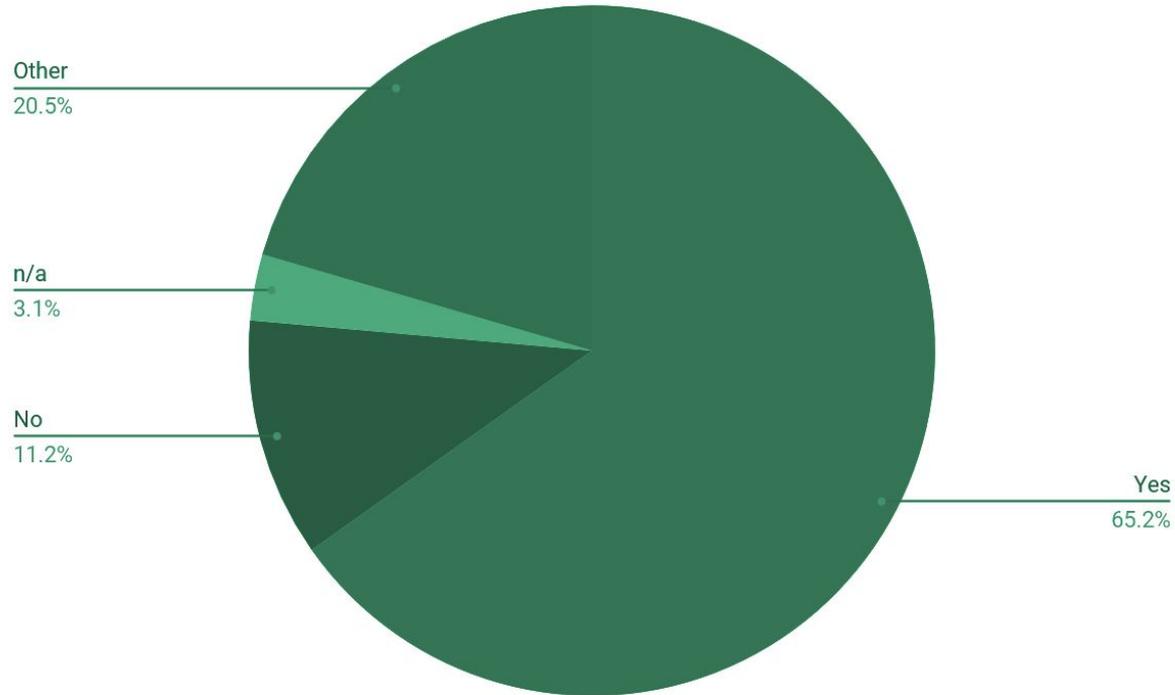
63%

faced sexual harassment from members of the public

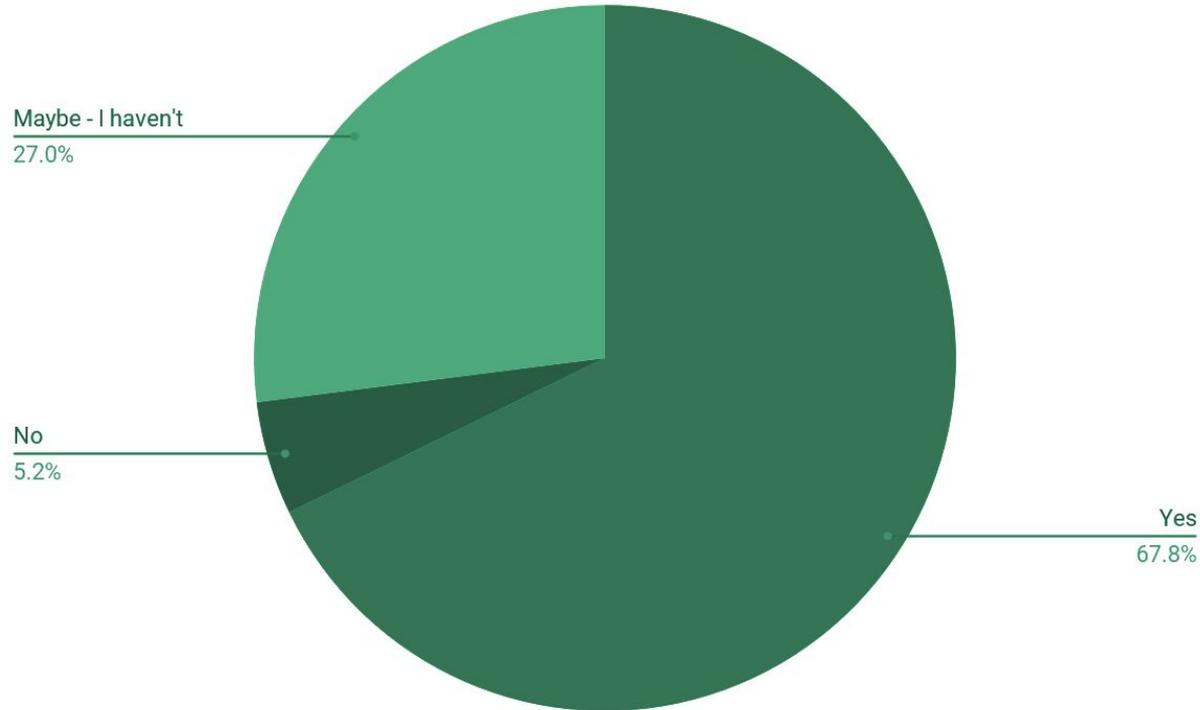
# Have you ever faced sexual harassment by members of the public?



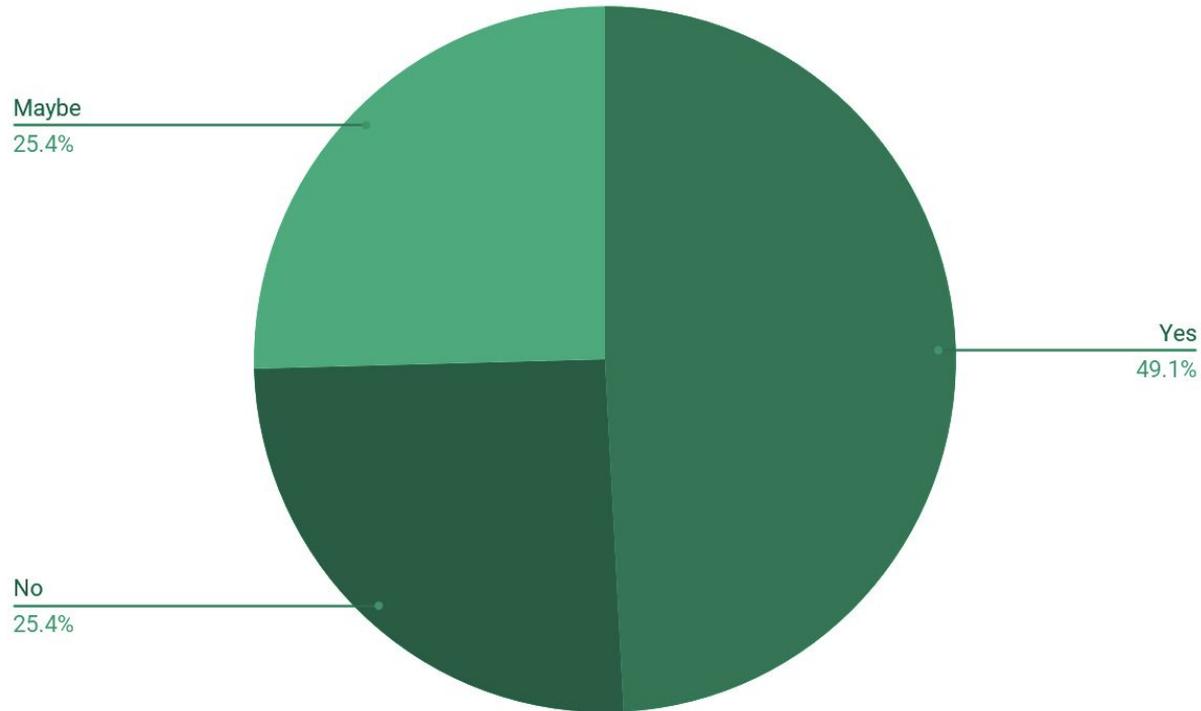
Do you feel that administration and your manager take these experiences seriously?



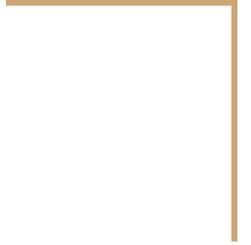
# Have your coworkers experienced sexual harassment?



Do you feel that you've been empowered by administration and given the tools to address these issues when they arise?



Let's talk!



# Resources

## Introductions to sexual harassment

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), "Federal Laws Prohibiting Job Discrimination Questions & Answers," <https://www.eeoc.gov/facts/qanda.html> (2009).

"Best Practices for Employers and Human Resources/EEO Professionals." U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Accessed June 18, 2017. <https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/initiatives/e-race/bestpractices-employers.cfm>.

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, General Recommendation 19, Violence against women (Eleventh session, 1992), U.N. Doc. A/47/38 at 1 (1993), reprinted in Compilation of General Comments and General Recommendations Adopted by Human Rights Treaty Bodies, U.N. Doc. HRI/GEN/1/Rev.6 at 243 (2003).

"Know Your Rights: Workplace Sexual Harassment." American Association of University Women. Accessed June 18, 2017. <http://www.aauw.org/what-we-do/legal-resources/know-your-rights-at-work/workplace-sexual-harassment/>.

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# Resources

## Sexual harassment & diversity

Buchanan, NiCole T. and Carolyn M. West. "Sexual Harassment in the Lives of Women of Color." In Landrine & Russo, Eds. *Handbook of Diversity in Feminist Psychology*. New York: Springer Publishing, 2010. 449-476.

Fogarty, Kate. "Teens and Sexual Harassment: Making a Difference." University of Florida. Accessed June 18, 2017. <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fy850>.

Ontiveros, Maria L. "Three Perspectives on Workplace Harassment of Women of Color." *Golden Gate U. L. Rev* 23:3 (1993).  
<http://digitalcommons.law.ggu.edu/ggulrev/vol23/iss3/4>

"Research Brief: Sexual Violence & Individuals Who Identify As LGBT." National Sexual Violence Research Center and Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape. Accessed June 18, 2017.  
[http://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/Publications\\_NSVRC\\_Research-Brief\\_Sexual-Violence-LGBTQ.pdf](http://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/Publications_NSVRC_Research-Brief_Sexual-Violence-LGBTQ.pdf)

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# Resources

## Sexual harassment in libraries

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Jensen, Karen. "Things They Don't Teach You in Library School: Sexual Harassment? Yes it Can Happen in the Library," *Teen Librarian Toolbox* (blog), March 24, 2013, <http://www.teenlibrariantoolbox.com/2013/03/things-they-dont-teach-you-in-library-school-sexual-harassment-yes-it-can-happen-in-the-library/>

Moore, Victoria. "Sexual Harassment and the Library Don't Mix," *Library Mosaics* 16, no. 6 (2005): 18-19, doi:

Thompson, Samantha H. "Pixelated Problem Patrons: Or, the Trials of Working Virtual Reference and What We've Learned From It," *The Reference Librarian* 50, no. 3 (2009): 291-296, doi: 10.1080/02763870902947125.

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