

NIH Workplace and Harassment Survey **Key Results Summary**

National Human Genome Research Institute

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NIH Workplace and Harassment Survey: Key Results Summary

Key Takeaways

Below are key takeaways from the NIH Workplace and Harassment Survey:

- One-fifth of NIH employees have experienced sexual or gender harassment in the past 12 months.
- Certain groups (e.g., women, trainees, sexual/gender minorities and people with disabilities) are more vulnerable to sexual harassment. These groups might benefit from more targeted or intensive harassment prevention efforts.
- Certain elements of the organizational climate are related to harassment, such as perceived supervisor fairness or the extent to which supervisors consider the opinions of others in the work unit.
- Sexual harassment is inconsistently reported or talked about by victims. When victims do not report or talk about these experiences, reasons include the futility of reporting or concern about potential negative repercussions.
- Sexual harassment impacts not only work outcomes but also affects a victim's physical and mental health outcomes.
- It is essential for NIH to continue its efforts to address the organizational and workplace climate factors associated with harassment identified in this survey.

Survey Goals and Content

The NIH Workplace and Harassment Survey was developed in 2018 and fielded from January 26 to March 25, 2019. The primary goals of the survey were to:

1. Understand the landscape of harassment at NIH, including how frequently it occurs, who is most affected, and what the surrounding circumstances are.
2. Understand the circumstances of harassment reporting, including channels, outcomes, and repercussions.
3. Identify elements of the NIH workplace climate that may be associated with harassment.
4. Understand the impact of harassment on employees' psychological and physical health.

During the survey, respondents were asked about their experiences with sexual harassment and other types of harassment (e.g., bullying, incivility) in the past 12 months, the circumstances surrounding the harassment incident that had the most impact on them, their perceptions of NIH's workplace climate, their knowledge and understanding of NIH's anti-harassment policies and procedures, and a number of demographic characteristics.

Survey Development

Many questions were based on validated survey items or scales. Following cognitive testing, the survey was pilot tested using 5,000 test participants (non-NIH employees).

Some survey questions were related to sensitive topics, as well as personal characteristics (e.g., sexual orientation or gender identity). Therefore, the following steps were taken to ensure the survey results remained confidential:

1. The survey was sent, collected, and analyzed by an independent contractor. No individual-level response data were sent to NIH during or after the survey.
2. The contractor deleted all personally identifiable information (e.g., email addresses) immediately after the survey was closed.

- The contractor did not provide NIH with breakdowns of any subgroups with fewer than 15 participants. For this reason, any analyses with fewer than 15 participants are labeled as *not reportable* (NR) in this report.

Survey Implementation and Response

From January 26 to March 25, 2019, the survey was sent via email to NIH employees, trainees, and contractors (if permitted by their contracting agency). A link in the email connected respondents to the online survey.

Of the 36,228 survey invitations sent to valid NIH email addresses, 15,794 individuals completed the survey—an overall response rate of 44 percent.

Within the National Human Genome Institute (NHGRI), 772 survey invitations were sent to valid email addresses. Of those, 392 individuals completed the survey, yielding a response rate of 50.8 percent.

Key Results

Sexual Harassment Occurs at NIH

Sexual harassment experiences were assessed using 25 items of the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ),¹ which asks about personal experiences, ranging from “something insulting about your gender” to having “sex against your will.”

Respondents were instructed to indicate unwanted or offensive experiences in the last 12 months while working at NIH and with whom they interacted because of their NIH work, regardless of whether these unwanted or offensive experiences occurred while on NIH property or elsewhere (see table 1). From the 25 items of the SEQ, this report used the following key sexual harassment indicators:

- Any sexual harassment:* One or more experiences on any of the SEQ items in the past 12 months.
- Any gender harassment:* One or more experiences on any of the gender harassment SEQ items in the past 12 months.
- Any unwanted sexual attention:* One or more experiences on any of the unwanted sexual attention SEQ items in the past 12 months
- Any sexual coercion:* One or more experiences on any of the sexual coercion SEQ items in the past 12 months. Across all of NIH, there were 41 respondents who experienced sexual coercion. Since breakdowns of sexual coercion by other variables would produce cells <15, this form of sexual harassment is not described in the analyses that follow.

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage of Respondents with Any Harassment Experiences in the Past 12 Months

| Harassment Type | ICO-Specific | Trans-NIH (All ICOs) |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| Any Sexual Harassment | 76 (20.1%) | 3,319 (21.6%) |
| Any Gender Harassment | 67 (17.7%) | 2,765 (18.0%) |
| Any Unwanted Sexual Attention | 30 (7.9%) | 1,579 (10.3%) |

These results indicate similar frequencies of any sexual harassment experience among NHGRI respondents compared to trans-NIH data.

¹ Fitzgerald, Louise F., Magley, Vicki J., Drasgow, Fritz, Waldo, Craig R. "Measuring sexual harassment in the military: the sexual experiences questionnaire (SEQ—DoD)." *Military Psychology* 11, no. 3 (1999): 243-263.

Women, Sexual and Gender Minorities, Individuals with Disabilities, and Trainees Are More Vulnerable to Harassment

Harassment experiences are not limited to any one group; however, certain populations are more likely to experience harassment than others. To identify those more at risk for experiencing sexual harassment and who, therefore, might benefit from more targeted or intensive harassment prevention efforts, the survey assessed the prevalence of harassment by vulnerable groups (see table 2).

Table 2. Percentage of Respondents with Any Harassment Experiences in the Past 12 Months, by Most Vulnerable Groups

| Group | | ICO-Specific | Trans-NIH (All ICOs) |
|---------------------------|---|--------------|----------------------|
| Gender | Other Gender Identity² | NA | 44.8% |
| | Prefer Not To Disclose | NA | 33.1% |
| | Women | 23.6% | 26.9% |
| | Men | 13.3% | 12.0% |
| Sexual Orientation | Bisexual | NA | 41.2% |
| | Other Sexual Orientation³ | NA | 30.9% |
| | Lesbian, Gay, or Homosexual | NA | 28.6% |
| | Heterosexual or Straight | NA | 20.2% |
| Disability | Has a Disability | NA | 29.5% |
| | Does Not Have a Disability | NA | 20.6% |
| Appointment Type | Trainee | NA | 35.0% |

Note: 'NA' denotes analyses currently unavailable due to small sample sizes.

In the survey, trainees were classified as those identifying as trainees, fellows, or students. Due to small sample sizes (i.e., fewer than 15 respondents per cell), results are inconclusive when assessing any sexual harassment experienced among NGHRI respondents compared to trans-NIH data.

Non-Sexual Harassment: Bullying and Incivility

To capture the full extent of the harassment landscape at NIH, the survey also assessed respondents' experiences of non-sexual harassment in the past 12 months (see table 3), using validated scales of bullying and incivility.

For the purpose of this summary, we report data from all respondents indicating whether in the past 12 months they had experienced one or more **bullying experiences**, referring to situations in which the respondents had been exposed to harassing behavior from one or more colleagues and were unable to defend themselves against systematic mistreatment. Similarly, reported here are the survey results which

² *Other gender identity* includes respondents who identified their gender as transgender man; transgender woman; genderqueer; or gender non-conforming, questioning, or something else.

³ *Other sexual orientation* includes respondents who identified their sexual orientation as asexual, questioning, or something else.

asked respondents about one or more experiences of rude, disrespectful, or condescending behaviors from supervisors or coworkers (i.e., **workplace incivility**).

These data indicate that among NHGRI respondents, bullying and incivility were more frequently experienced by those who had experienced any sexual harassment.

Table 3. Percentage of Respondents Experiencing Any Workplace Incivility in the Past 12 Months, Among Respondents with and Without Sexual Harassment Experiences

| Bullying or Incivility | ICO-Specific | | Trans-NIH (All ICOs) | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| | Respondents Not Experiencing Any Sexual Harassment | Respondents Experiencing Any Sexual Harassment | Respondents Not Experiencing Any Sexual Harassment | Respondents Experiencing Any Sexual Harassment |
| Respondents Experiencing Any Bullying | 6.4% | 19.7% | 6.6% | 26.2% |
| Respondents Experiencing Any Workplace Incivility | 36.5% | 73.7% | 41.6% | 85.1% |

Organizational Climate Is Associated with Harassment

To determine factors within the work unit that contribute to sexual harassment, the survey compared various organizational climate factors between respondents who experienced sexual harassment and those who had not experienced sexual harassment in the past 12 months.

Table 4 presents response percentages for the following two key organizational climate factors:

1. **Supervisor Fairness:** *“When your supervisor makes decisions that affect salaries, other professional rewards, evaluations, promotions, and work assignments of people in your work unit, how fair are those decisions?”*
2. **Consideration of Opinions:** *“When your supervisor/NIH point of contact makes decisions that affect salaries, other professional rewards, evaluations, promotions, and work assignments of people in your work unit, how much does he or she take into account the opinions of people in the work unit?”*

Due to small sample sizes (i.e., fewer than 15 respondents per cell), results are inconclusive when assessing supervisor fairness and consideration of opinions among NHGRI respondents.

Table 4. Response Percentages for Supervisor Fairness and Consideration of Opinions

| Response Option | ICO-Specific | | Trans-NIH (All ICOs) | |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| | Respondents Not Experiencing Any Sexual Harassment | Respondents Experiencing Any Sexual Harassment | Respondents Not Experiencing Any Sexual Harassment | Respondents Experiencing Any Sexual Harassment |
| Supervisor Is <u>Slightly Fair</u> or <u>Not Fair at All</u> | 6.0% | NR | 8.1% | 22.2% |

| Response Option | ICO-Specific | | Trans-NIH (All ICOs) | |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| | Respondents Not Experiencing Any Sexual Harassment | Respondents Experiencing Any Sexual Harassment | Respondents Not Experiencing Any Sexual Harassment | Respondents Experiencing Any Sexual Harassment |
| Supervisor Considers the Opinions of Others a Little or Not at All | 10.2% | NR | 12.7% | 26.2% |

Sexual Harassment Is Not Consistently Reported or Talked About

The NIH Workplace and Harassment Survey sought to determine whether sexual harassment is reported or talked about with anyone at NIH, to whom it is reported or talked about, and the victim’s experiences following the incident. To this end, survey respondents who experienced any sexual harassment were asked a series of follow-up questions about an incident in the past 12 months that **had the greatest effect on them**. Table 5 presents percentages of those respondents with any sexual harassment experience.

Among NHGRI respondents experiencing sexual harassment in the past 12 months, the majority did not talk to any entity listed about it, while approximately one-third talked to a coworker.

Table 5. Respondent Follow Up to the Sexual Harassment Experience

| Person or Entity | ICO-Specific | Trans-NIH (All ICOs) |
|--|--------------|----------------------|
| Talked to a Coworker | 34.2% | 37.7% |
| Talked to NIH Supervisor or Manager | NR | 14.7% |
| Talked to NIH Office of Human Resources or the NIH Civil Program | NR | 3.0% |
| Talked to an Organization or Agency Outside of NIH | NR | 2.0% |
| Talked to Someone at the NIH Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion | NR | 1.5% |
| None of the Above | 56.6% | 54.4% |

Note: Respondents could select more than one response option.

Of respondents who did not report or talk to someone about the sexual harassment experience that had the greatest effect on them, table 6 includes top reasons they chose not to report or talk to someone.

These data indicate that approximately 86 percent of NHGRI respondents who experienced sexual harassment chose not to talk about it or to report the experience because they didn’t think it was serious enough. Approximately 40 percent did not think anything would come from reporting or talking with someone about the experience.

Table 6. Top Reasons for Not Talking About or Reporting the Sexual Harassment Experience, Among Those Who Did Not Talk About or Report It

| Reasons for Not Reporting | ICO-Specific | Trans-NIH (All ICOs) |
|---|--------------|----------------------|
| Didn’t Think the Experience Was Serious Enough To Report | 85.7% | 77.6% |

| Reasons for Not Reporting | ICO-Specific | Trans-NIH (All ICOs) |
|--|--------------|----------------------|
| Your Career Might Suffer if You Reported | NR | 64.9% |
| Didn't Think Anything Helpful Would Come From Reporting or Talking With Someone | 40.5% | 38.4% |

Note: Respondents could select more than one response option.

Table 7 lists percentages of work-related outcomes experienced or perceived by respondents, following the sexual harassment experience that had the greatest effect on them.

Due to small sample sizes (i.e., fewer than 15 respondents per cell), results are inconclusive when assessing the work-related outcomes experienced or perceived by NHGRI respondents following the sexual harassment experience that had the most impact on them compared to trans-NIH data.

Table 7. Perceived Outcomes of Talking About or Reporting the Sexual Harassment Experience

| Perceived Outcomes or Repercussions | ICO-Specific | Trans-NIH (All ICOs) |
|---|--------------|----------------------|
| Overall Working Conditions Got Worse | NR | 50.2% |
| Work Assignments Got Worse | NR | 22.4% |
| Did Not Receive a Promotion | NR | 16.6% |
| Reassigned, Detailed, or Transferred Against My Wishes | NR | 6.8% |
| Reassigned, Detailed, or Transferred at My Request | NR | 5.9% |
| Coworkers Gossip About Me in an Unkind Way | NR | 42.5% |
| Lose Perks or Privileges at Work | NR | 13.2% |
| Denied Training Opportunities | NR | 12.0% |
| Work Performance Evaluated Unfairly | NR | 30.3% |
| Disciplined Unfairly at Work | NR | 14.9% |
| Slighted, Ignored, or Ridiculed by Others at Work | NR | 39.1% |
| No Longer Feel a Part of Work Unit | NR | 51.8% |
| Humiliated Around Co-Workers | NR | 27.8% |
| Lost Respect from Co-Workers | NR | 27.5% |
| Considered a Troublemaker at Work | NR | 31.5% |

Note: Respondents could select more than one response option.

Sexual Harassment Is Associated with Physical and Mental Health Outcomes

The survey assessed respondents' mental and physical health outcomes to identify differences between respondents who experienced any sexual harassment and respondents who experienced no sexual harassment in the past 12 months.

Physical health was assessed using the **Patient-Reported Outcome Measurement Information System (PROMIS) Physical Scale**.⁴ Results indicate that NIH respondents who experienced sexual harassment were less likely to rate their physical health as excellent or good, compare to those respondents who had not experienced any sexual harassment.

At NHGRI, of respondents who did experience any sexual harassment in the past 12 months, **69.8 percent** rated their physical health as excellent or good compared to **77.2 percent** among respondents who did not experience any sexual harassment in the past 12 months.

Mental health was assessed using the **PROMIS Mental Health score**⁴ which incorporates a 5-point scale, from *Excellent (1)* to *Poor (5)* to yield a total score on the following two items:

1. *In general, how would you rate your mental health, including your mood and your ability to think?*
2. *In general, how would you rate your satisfaction with your social activities and relationships?*

Due to small sample sizes (i.e., fewer than 15 respondents per cell), results are inconclusive when assessing the relationship between sexual harassment experiences and the mental health of NHGRI respondents (see Appendix for detail).

⁴ Hays, Ron D., Jakob B. Bjorner, Dennis A. Revicki, Karen L. Spritzer, and David Cella. "Development of physical and mental health summary scores from the patient-reported outcomes measurement information system (PROMIS) global items." *Quality of Life Research* 18, no. 7 (2009): 873-880.

APPENDIX: Additional ICO-Specific Survey Findings

PART A: PROMIS Mental Health Scores

Mental health was assessed using the **PROMIS Mental Health score** which incorporates a 5-point scale, from *Excellent (1)* to *Poor (5)* to yield a total score on the following two items:

3. *In general, how would you rate your mental health, including your mood and your ability to think?*
4. *In general, how would you rate your satisfaction with your social activities and relationships?*

Due to small sample sizes (i.e., fewer than 15 respondents per cell), results are inconclusive when assessing the relationship between sexual harassment experiences and the mental health of NHGRI respondents.

In this scale, lower numbers indicate better health, and higher numbers indicate worse health.

PROMIS Mental Health Scores, Among Respondents with and Without Sexual Harassment Experiences

| PROMIS Score | Respondents Not Experiencing Any Sexual Harassment | Respondents Experiencing Any Sexual Harassment |
|--------------|--|--|
| 2 | 26.8% | NR |
| 3 | 15.2% | NR |
| 4 | 26.2% | NR |
| 5 | 14.2% | NR |
| 6 | 8.6% | 23.7% |
| 7 | NR | NR |
| 8 | NR | NR |
| 9 | NR | NR |
| 10 | NR | NR |

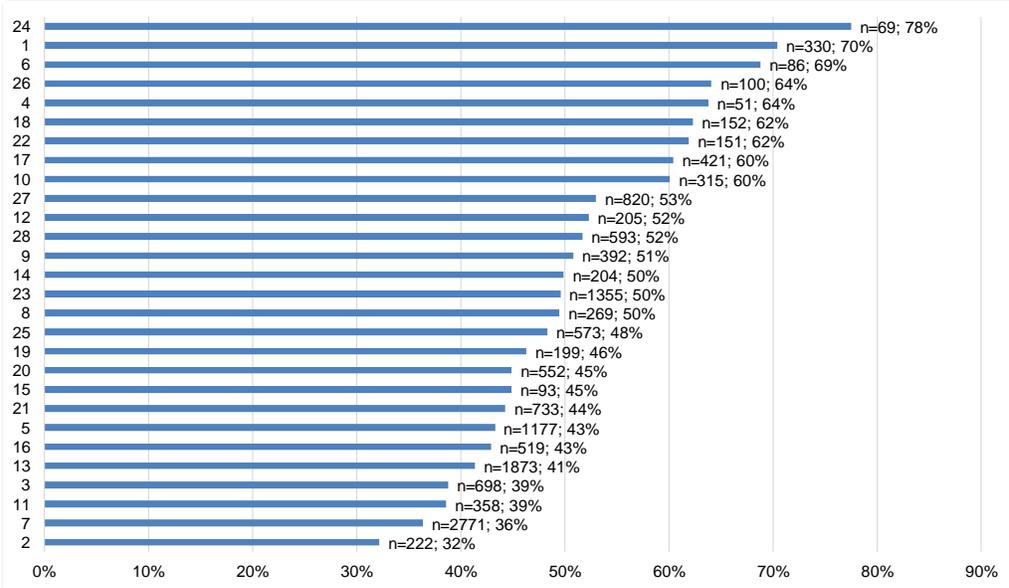
PART B: Additional ICO-Specific Findings

The following figures represent each NIH ICO as a single number. The purpose of the figures is to show trends and ranges in survey findings across ICOs.

In these figures, NHGRI respondents are represented by the number 9.

Survey Response Rate by ICO

Rate of Survey Completion Among Eligible NIH Employees.

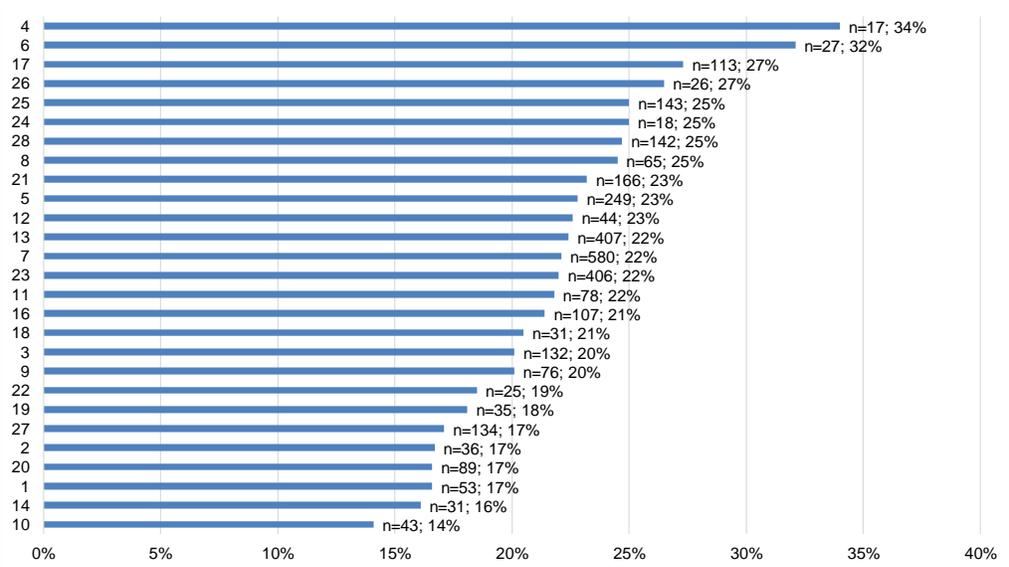


Note: ICOs are not shown in this figure if the subgroup size (n) was less than 15

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Any Sexual Harassment

Prevalence of Experiencing One or More Sexual Harassment Incidents in the Past 12 Months.

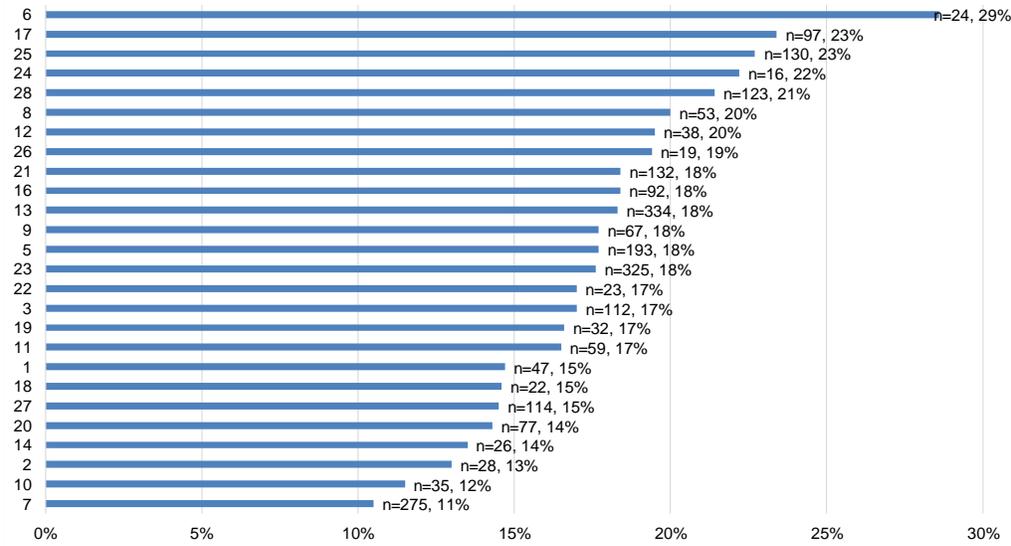


Note: ICOs are not shown in this figure if the subgroup size (n) was less than 15

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Any Gender Harassment

Prevalence of Experiencing One or More Gender Harassment Incidents in the Past 12 Months.

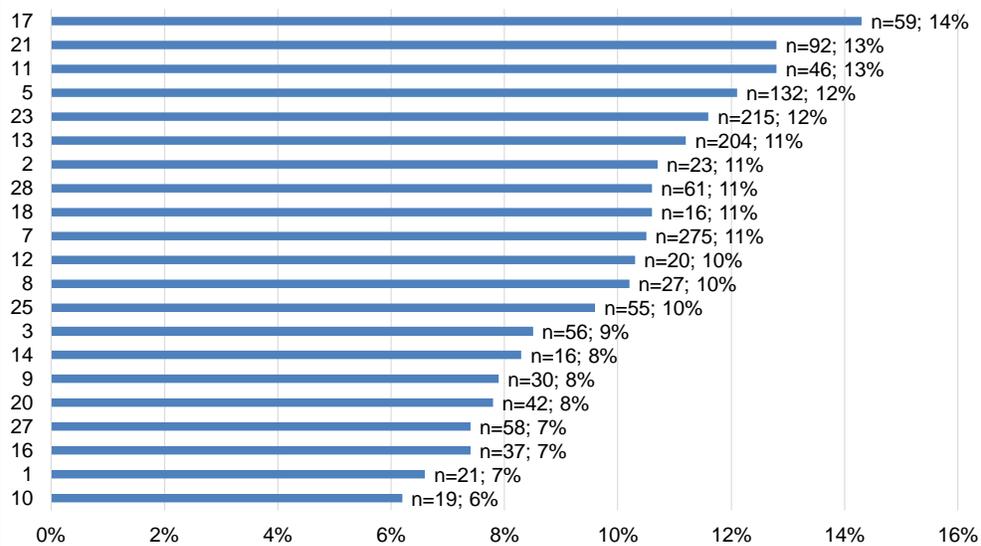


Note: ICOs are not shown in this figure if the subgroup size (n) was less than 15

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Any Unwanted Sexual Attention

Prevalence of Experiencing One or More Incidents of Unwanted Sexual Attention in the Past 12 Months.

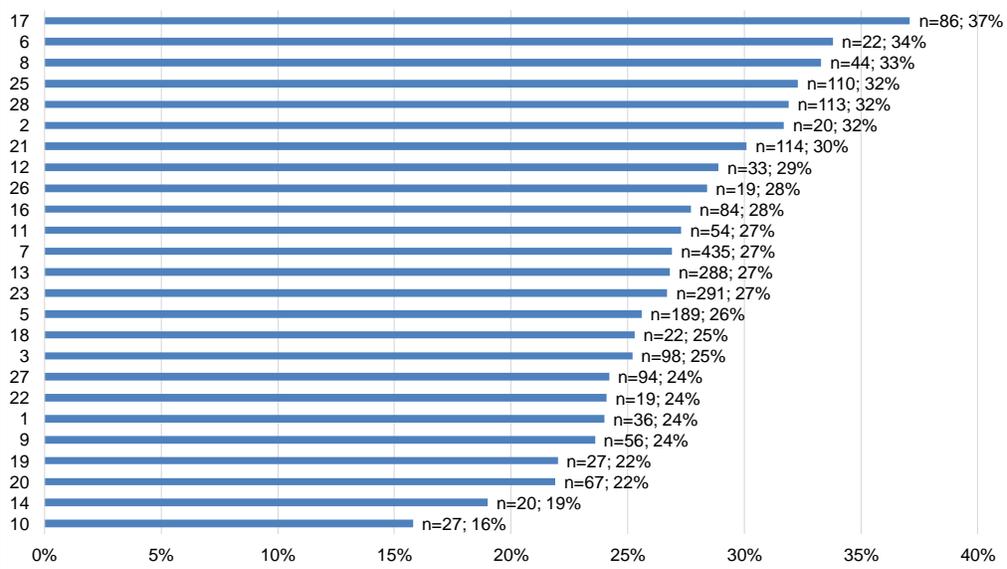


Note: ICOs are not shown in this figure if the subgroup size (n) was less than 15

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Any Sexual Harassment in Female Respondents

Prevalence of Female Respondents Experiencing One or More Sexual Harassment Incidents in the Past 12 Months.

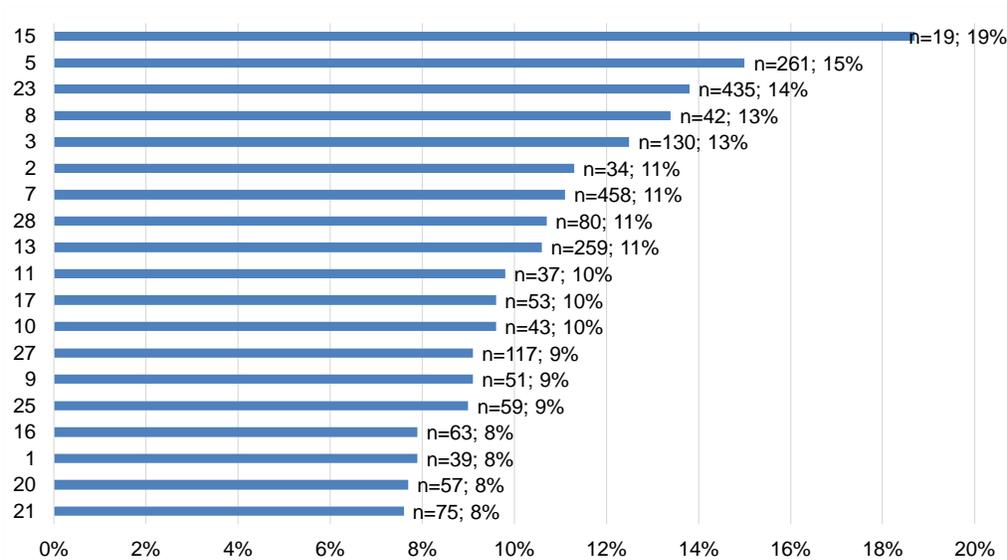


Note: ICOs are not shown in this figure if the subgroup size (n) was less than 15

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Any Bullying Incidents

Prevalence of Experiencing One or More Bullying Incidents in the Past 12 Months.

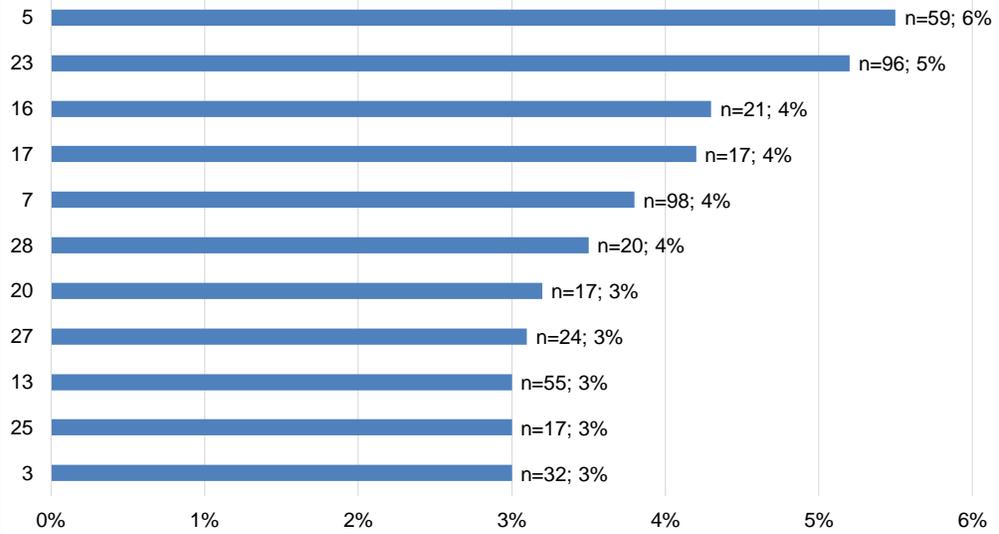


Note: ICOs are not shown in this figure if the subgroup size (n) was less than 15

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Two to Four Bullying Incidents

Prevalence of Experiencing Between Two and Four Bullying Incidents in the Past 12 Months.

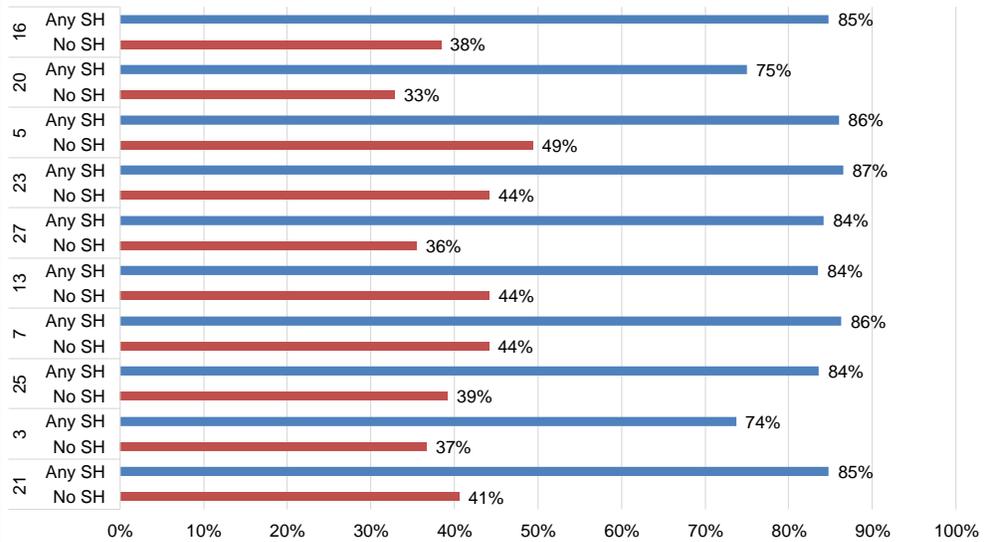


Note: ICOs are not shown in this figure if the subgroup size (n) was less than 15

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Any Workplace Incivility

Frequency of Any Incivility Experiences in Respondents With Any/No Sexual Harassment Experiences in the Past 12 Months.

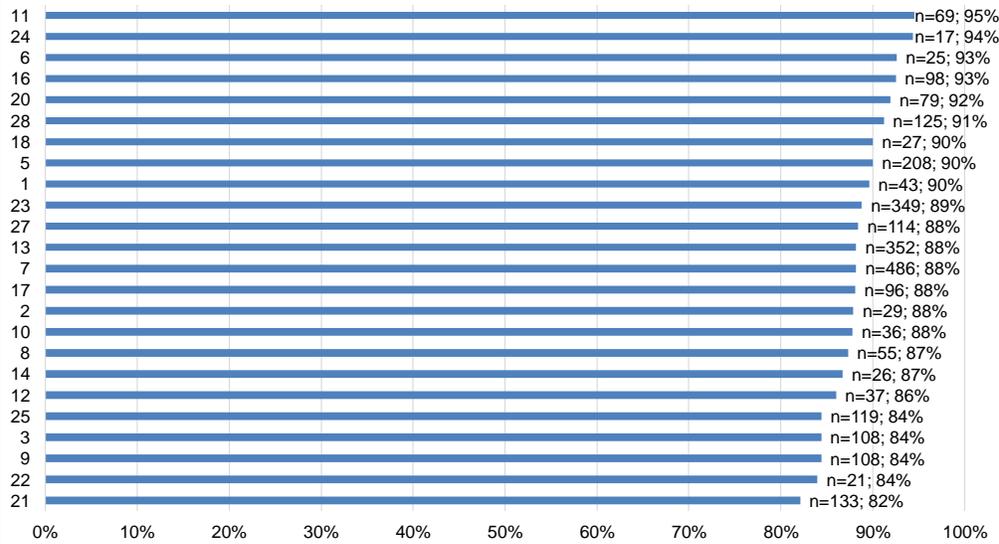


Note: ICOs are not shown in this figure if the subgroup size (n) was less than 15

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Location of Harassment

Frequency of Sexual Harassment Experiences Occurring at Facilities Owned or Leased by NIH.

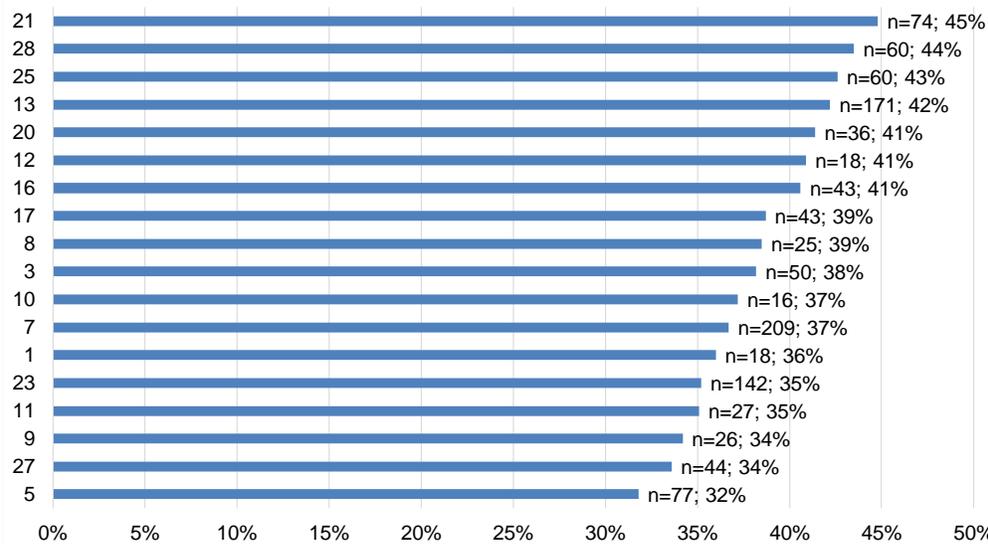


Note: ICOs are not shown in this figure if the subgroup size (n) was less than 15

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Talking to a Coworker

Frequency of Discussing Sexual Harassment Experience of Most Impact with a Coworker.

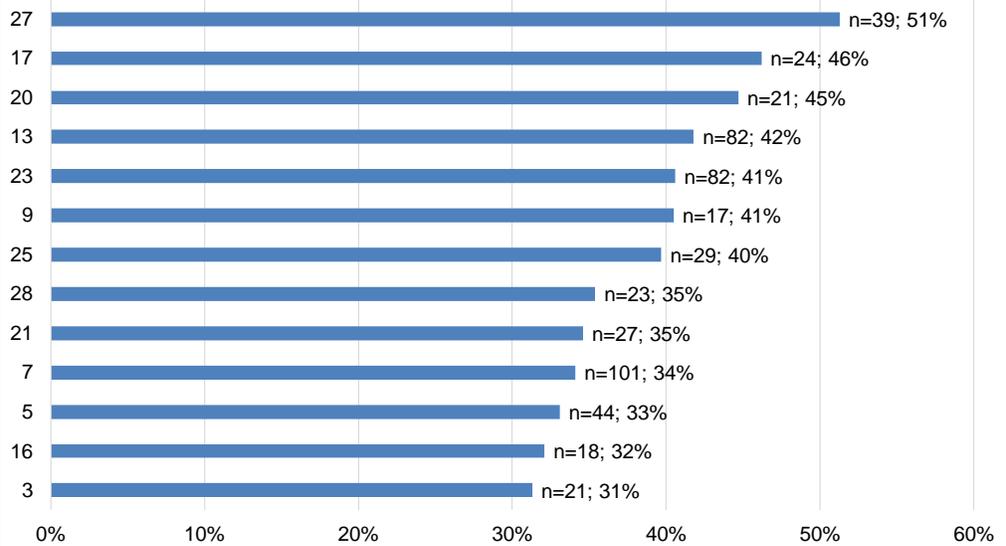


Note: ICOs are not shown in this figure if the subgroup size (n) was less than 15

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Reasons for Not Talking to Someone or Reporting SH

Respondents Indicating That They Did Not Talk to Someone or Report Harassment Because They Didn't Think Anything Helpful Would Come of It.

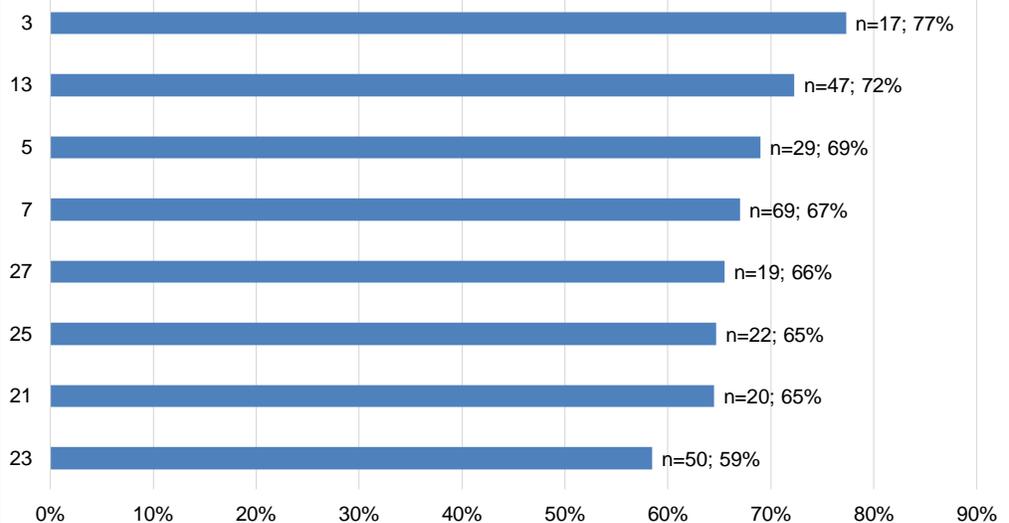


Note: ICOs are not shown in this figure if the subgroup size (n) was less than 15

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Reasons for Not Talking to Someone or Reporting SH

Respondents Indicating That Did Not Talk to Someone or Report Harassment Because of Concerns That Their Career Might Suffer.

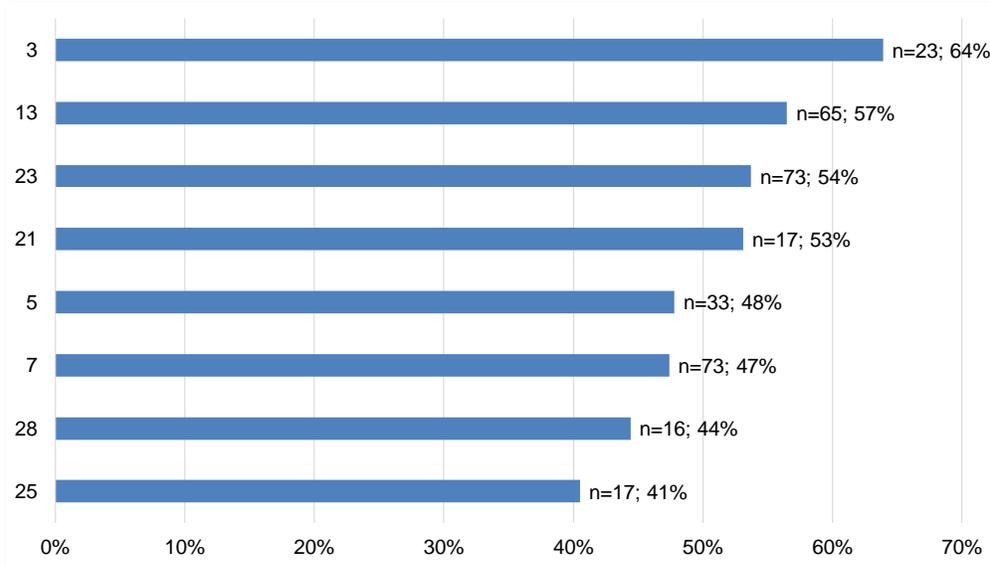


Note: ICOs are not shown in this figure if the subgroup size (n) was less than 15

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Outcomes of Talking to Someone or Reporting SH

Respondents Indicating That Their Overall Working Conditions Got Worse After Talking to Someone or Reporting Sexual Harassment.

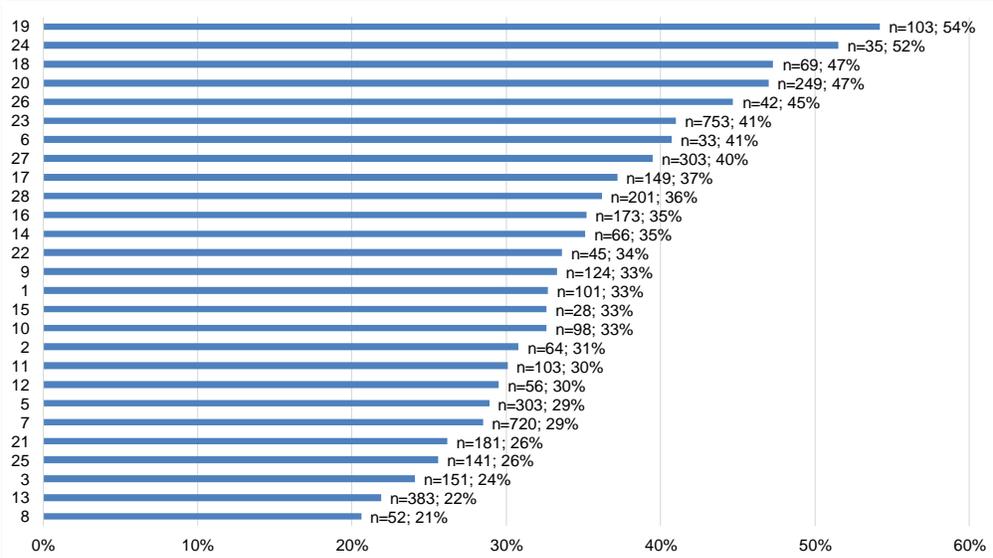


Note: ICOs are not shown in this figure if the subgroup size (n) was less than 15

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Supervisor Anti-Harassment Activities

Respondents Indicating That Their Supervisors Encouraged The Work Unit to Take an NIH Anti-Harassment Training in the Past 12 Months.

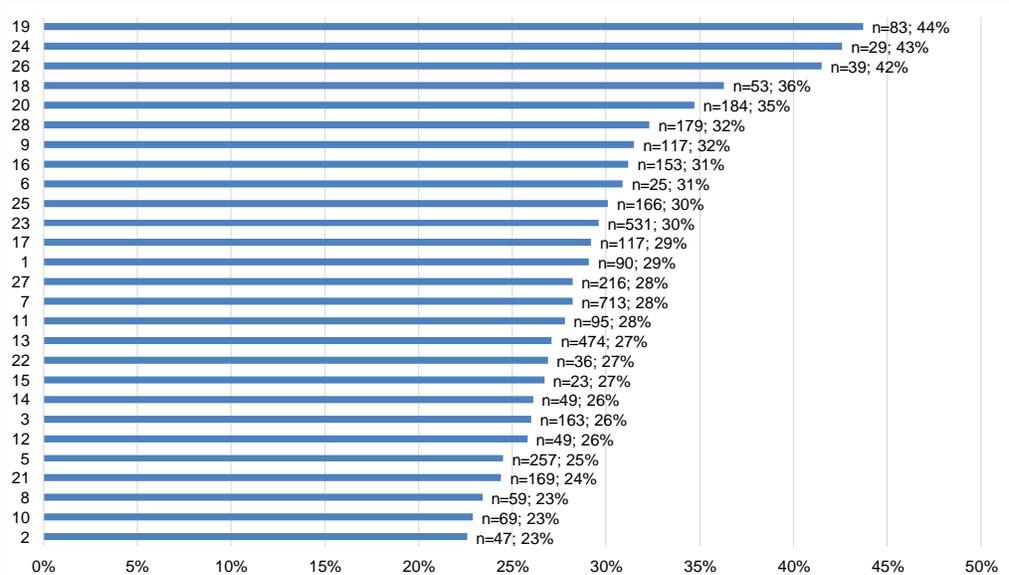


Note: ICOs are not shown in this figure if the subgroup size (n) was less than 15

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Supervisor Follow-Up to Harassment

Respondents Indicating That Their Supervisors Served As An Example of How To Treat Co-workers Respectfully Without Harassment in the Past 12 Months.

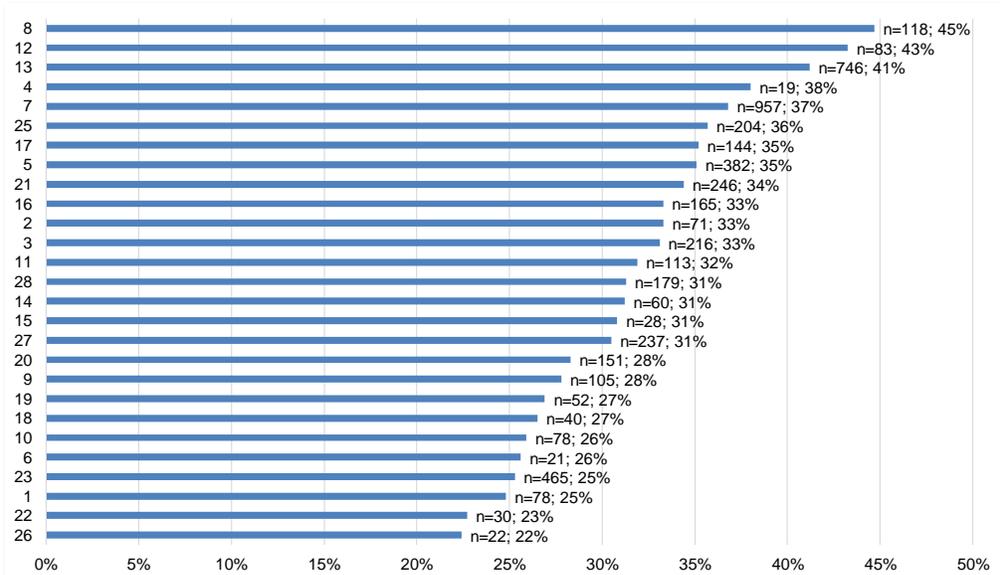


Note: ICOs are not shown in this figure if the subgroup size (n) was less than 15

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Awareness of NIH Policies/Procedures

Respondents Read Neither the NIH Policy Statement nor NIH Manual Chapter on Harassment.

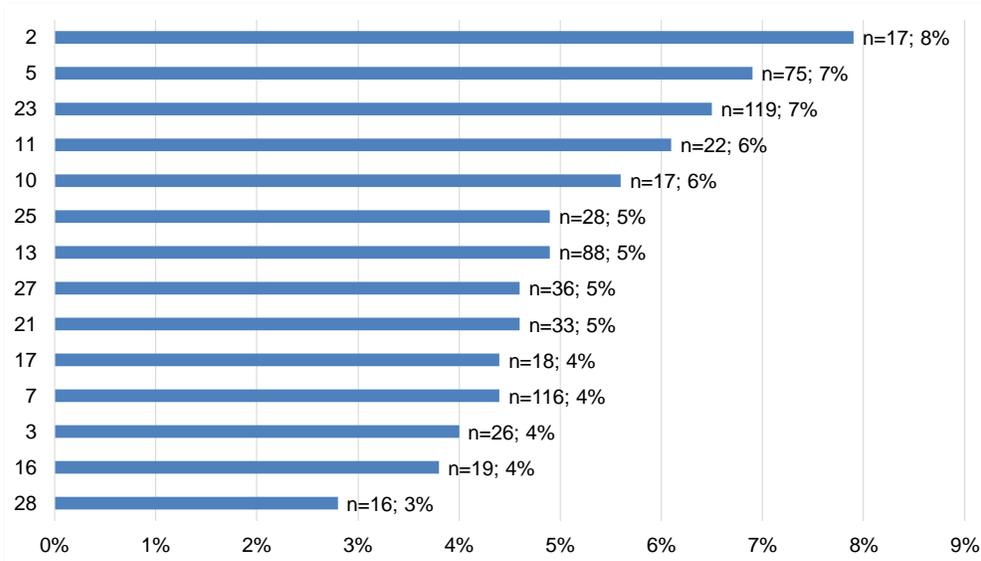


Note: ICOs are not shown in this figure if the subgroup size (n) was less than 15

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Organizational Climate

Supervisor is Not Fair at All with Decisions that Affect the Work Unit.

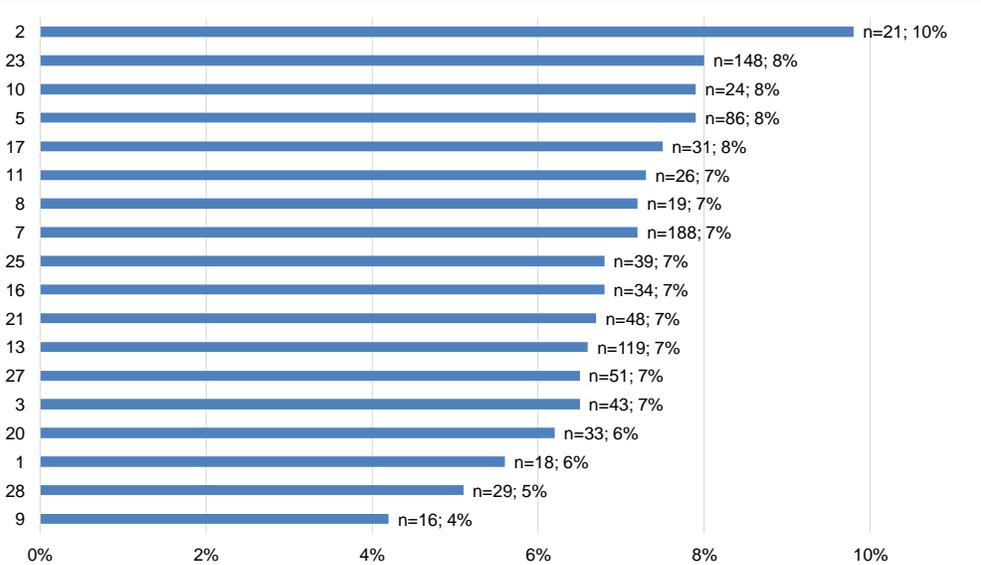


Note: ICOs are not shown in this figure if the subgroup size (n) was less than 15

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Organizational Climate

Supervisor Does Not at All Take Into Account Opinions of Others in the Work Unit.



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