



### SEXUAL HARASSMENT OF WOMEN

#### Climate, Culture, and Consequences in Academic Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine undertook the most comprehensive examination to date of sexual harassment in academic sciences, engineering, and medicine, and its effects on women’s well-being, their careers, and the scientific enterprise.

The study committee’s report finds that sexual harassment in academic sciences, engineering, and medicine is common. There is no evidence that current policies, procedures, and approaches have resulted in a significant reduction in sexual harassment. The cumulative result of sexual harassment is significant damage to research integrity and a costly loss of talent in academic sciences, engineering, and medicine.

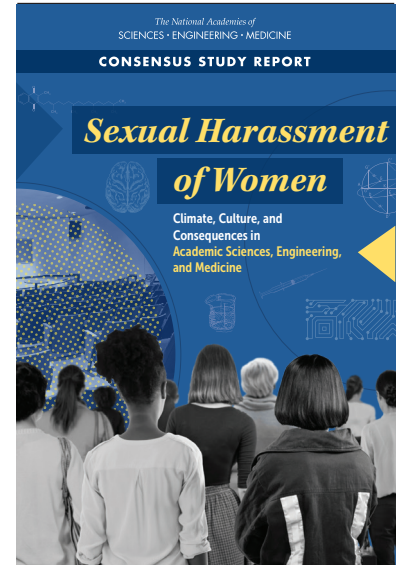
A system-wide change to the culture and climate in higher education is needed to prevent and effectively respond to sexual harassment, concludes the report. It recommends that colleges, universities, and federal agencies adopt holistic, evidence-based policies and practices to address sexual harassment. For example, sexual harassment occurs at lower rates in systems in which prohibitions against unacceptable behaviors are clear and which hold members of the community accountable for meeting behavioral expectations established by leadership. Sexual harassment is also less likely to occur when organizational systems and structures support diversity, inclusion, and respect. Sexual harassment is also less likely to occur if targets of sexual harassment are supported.

The legal system alone is not an adequate mechanism for reducing or eliminating sexual harassment, the report stresses. Adherence to legal requirements is necessary but not sufficient to drive the change needed to address sexual harassment. As such, academic institutions and federal agencies should treat the legal obligations for addressing sexual harassment under Title IX and Title VII law as a floor, not a ceiling, and work to move beyond basic legal compliance to promote sustainable, holistic, evidence-based policies and practices.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONGRESS AND FEDERAL AGENCIES

The report recommends that state legislatures and Congress consider new and additional legislation with the following goals:

- Better protecting sexual harassment claimants from retaliation.
- Prohibiting confidentiality in settlement agreements that currently enable harassers to move to another institution and conceal past adjudications.
- Banning mandatory arbitration clauses for discrimination claims.



- Allowing lawsuits to be filed against alleged harassers directly (instead of or in addition to their academic employers).
- Requiring institutions receiving federal funds to publicly disclose results from campus climate surveys and/or the number of sexual harassment reports made to campuses.
- Requesting that the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health devote research funds to doing a follow-up analysis on the topic of sexual harassment in science, engineering, and medicine in 3 to 5 years to determine 1) whether research has shown that the prevalence of sexual harassment has decreased; 2) whether progress has been made on implementing these recommendations; and 3) where to focus future efforts.

**The report recommends that federal agencies:**

- Increase support for research and evaluation of the effectiveness of policies, procedures, and training on sexual harassment.
- Attend to sexual harassment with at least the same level of attention and resources devoted to research misconduct. They should increase collaboration among offices that oversee the integrity of research (i.e., those that cover ethics, research misconduct, diversity, and harassment issues); centralize resources, information, and expertise; provide more resources for handling complaints and working with targets; and implement sanctions on researchers found guilty of sexual harassment.
- Require institutions to report to federal agencies when individuals on grants have been found to have violated sexual harassment policies or have been put on administrative leave related to sexual harassment, as the National Science Foundation has proposed doing. Agencies should also hold accountable the perpetrator and the institution by using a range of disciplinary actions that limit the negative effects on other grant personnel who were either the target of the harassing behavior or innocent bystanders.
- Reward and incentivize colleges and universities for implementing policies, programs, and strategies that research shows are most likely to and are succeeding in reducing and preventing sexual harassment.

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**For More Information . . .** This Consensus Study Report Highlights was prepared by the Committee on Women in Science, Engineering, and Medicine based on the Report *Sexual Harassment of Women: Climate, Culture, and Consequences in Academic Science, Engineering, and Medicine* (2018). The study was sponsored by the National Science Foundation, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the National Institutes of Health, the National Institute of Standards and Technology, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Burroughs Wellcome Fund, the Henry Luce Foundation, and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of any organization or agency that provided support for the project. Copies of the Report are available from the National Academies Press, (800) 624-6242; <http://www.nap.edu> or at [www.nationalacademies.org/sexualharassment](http://www.nationalacademies.org/sexualharassment).

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