

Purpose:

The purpose of this submission is to make the National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces aware of the findings of a survey into sexual harassment in Tasmanian rural workplaces conducted by Tasmanian Women in Agriculture (TWiA).

Tasmanian Women in Agriculture:

Who we are

TWiA is a volunteer organisation with a membership base representing varied primary industry sectors across the state, as well as women living and working in regional communities. Our drive is for rural women to be recognised and valued for their contribution at all levels.

We exist to connect, support and celebrate Tasmanian rural women.

Our Vision

A valued rural community that is connected, resilient and vibrant.

Our Mission (2016-2019)

We connect, support and celebrate Tasmanian rural women by:

- Providing opportunities to network and support each other;
- Encouraging and empowering them to realise their full potential;
- Advocating for and representing them and their rural communities;
- Providing opportunities to gain and share knowledge at state, national and international levels;
- Raising their profile as part of a forward thinking and vibrant agricultural industry that is vital to the Tasmanian economy; and
- Contributing to the viability and sustainability of agriculture and rural communities.

Our Key Priorities

1. A strong and active membership.
2. Successful projects under the building capacity of Rural Women grant, including core and special projects that align with our mission
3. TWiA as a voice for rural issues.
4. A robust Executive and effective structure.
5. Continuous improvement to processes and building a robust administration.

Trigger for Survey:

TWiA believes there is a huge culture of silence around sexual harassment in rural workplaces. Following a state conference presentation in March 2018 by our Chair, Belinda Hazell, where she raised the personal account of sexual harassment in a rural workplace and how we need to be aware of and act to protect vulnerable workers, TWiA made the decision to survey our stakeholder base to understand how prevalent sexual harassment is in the rural workplace and whether Tasmanian employers address harassment with policies, training and acting on complaints. TWiA aims to use the findings of the survey to feed into the *National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in the Workplace* and ultimately provide support to our stakeholders in reducing workplace sexual harassment.

Limitations to Survey:

The survey was circulated to the TWIA membership and associated network with a limited number of responses received. We did not collect personal data so are unaware of demographics, age, and culture of respondents. Respondents were not randomly selected and chose to complete the survey. Given the membership population size and margin of error we were not able to achieve a statistically relevant sample size. This is a sensitive area for research and the low number of respondents may show the reluctance of women experiencing sexual harassment to report it. These results suggest further research is required.

Summary of Findings:

The TWiA survey found that 3 out of 4 respondents (approximately 78%) had been sexually harassed in some form.

This finding supports recently reported national data¹ (Farm Weekly, 15/11/2018) where 93 percent of women working in agriculture have been sexually harassed in some form.

There is a limited amount of data available about sexual harassment in rural, regional and remote workplaces. Many women (and some men) are placed in isolated and potentially vulnerable positions in an environment where it is expected you will assimilate into the workplace with no complaints. Some women are faced with the decision to permanently leave the sector due to inappropriate behaviour as the harasser is generally a peer or in a position of power; or the women are unable to access resources to help.

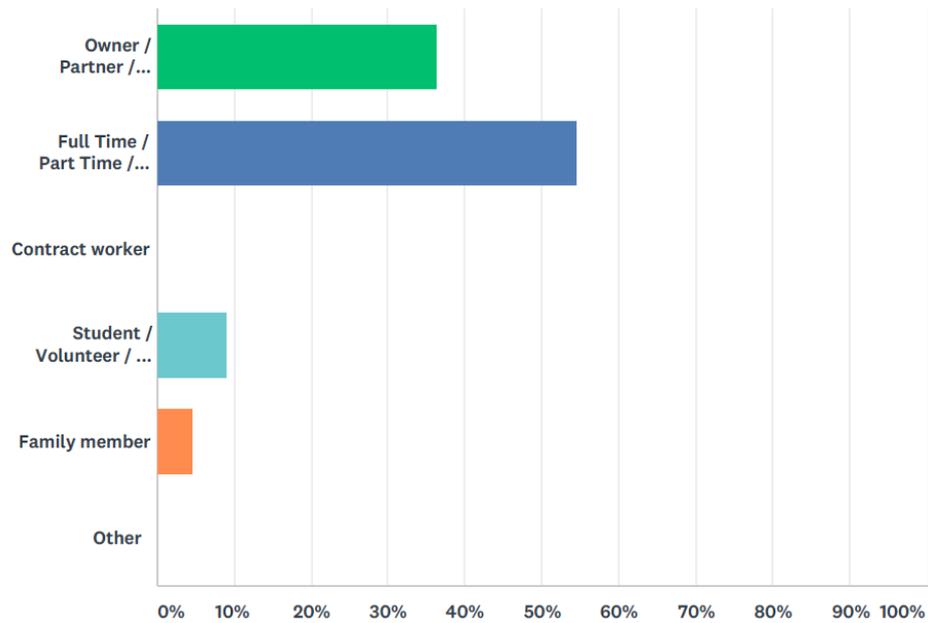
Many agribusinesses do not have any policies or procedures in place as a preventive measure. They have limited to no information on how to respond to complaints, let alone have a contact person available. They are not aware of what is required to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace and can also be worried about the costs of recognising and acting on incidents – or indeed, failing to act.

¹ <https://www.farmweekly.com.au/story/5758413/high-harassment-figures-for-women-in-ag/> viewed on 24 February 2019

Survey Responses:

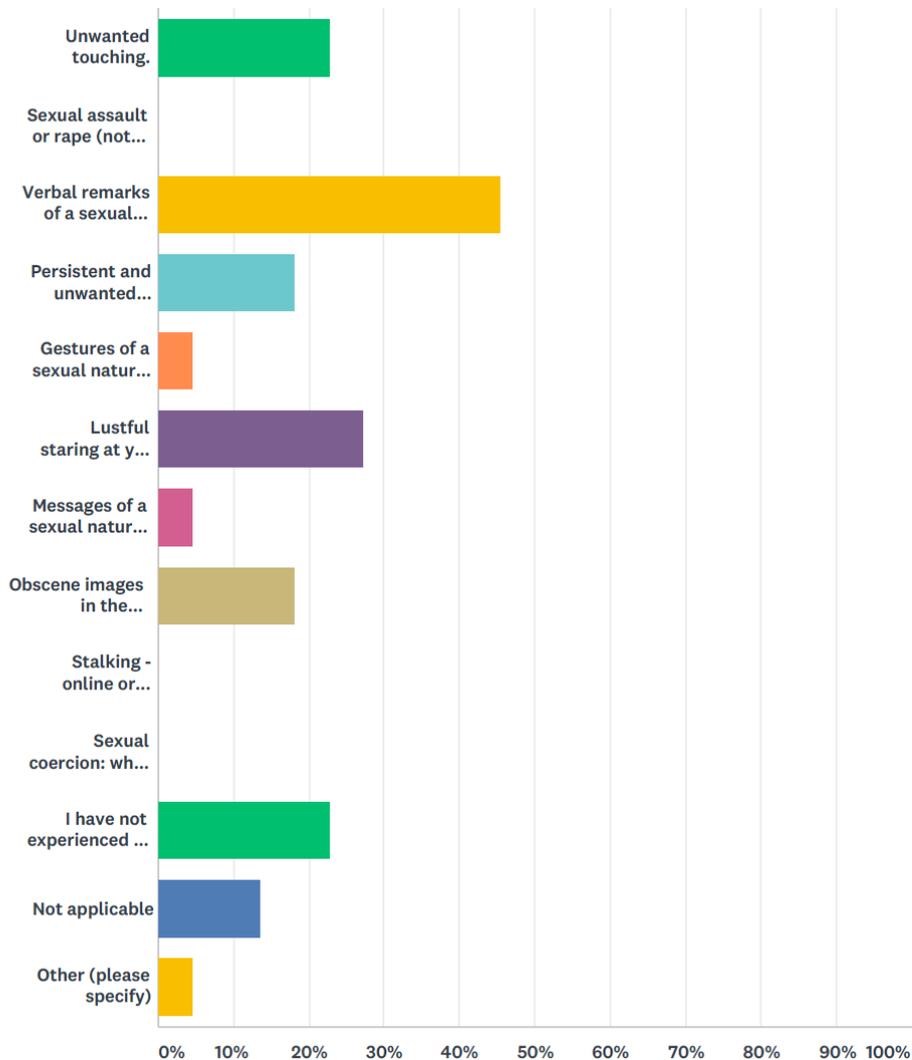
Question 1 – What is your current role?

Respondents to the survey fell into the following groups:



Approximately 55% of respondents were full time, part time or casual workers of an enterprise. Owners, partners or business managers made up approximately 36.46% of respondents. The remaining 8.64% included students, volunteers, not employed or family members.

Question 2 – If you have experienced workplace sexual harassment (definition provided) please indicate the type (you may tick as many that apply). If you have not experienced sexual harassment, please tick in the last box.

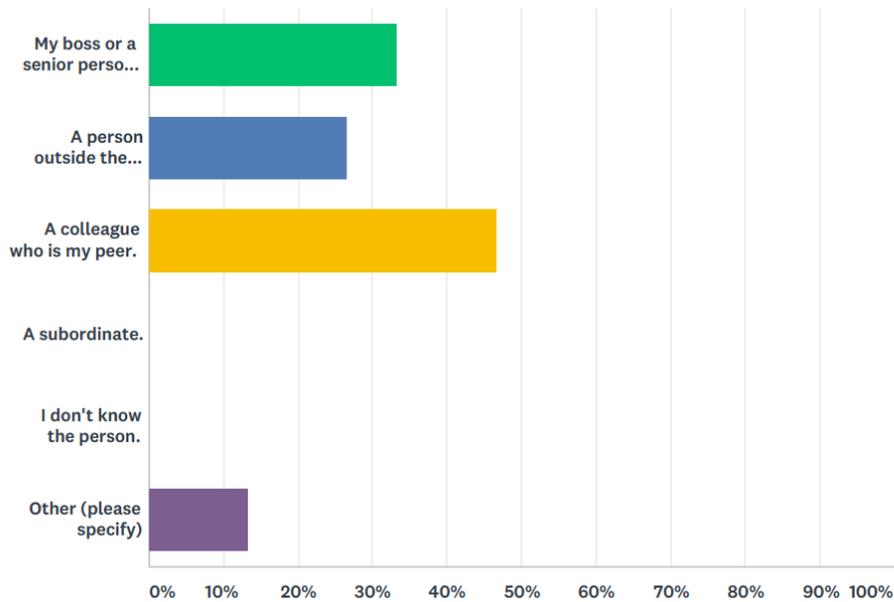


3 out of 4 respondents to the survey (approximately 78%) had been sexually harassed in some form.

This is unacceptable and more needs to be done to prevent incidents from occurring.

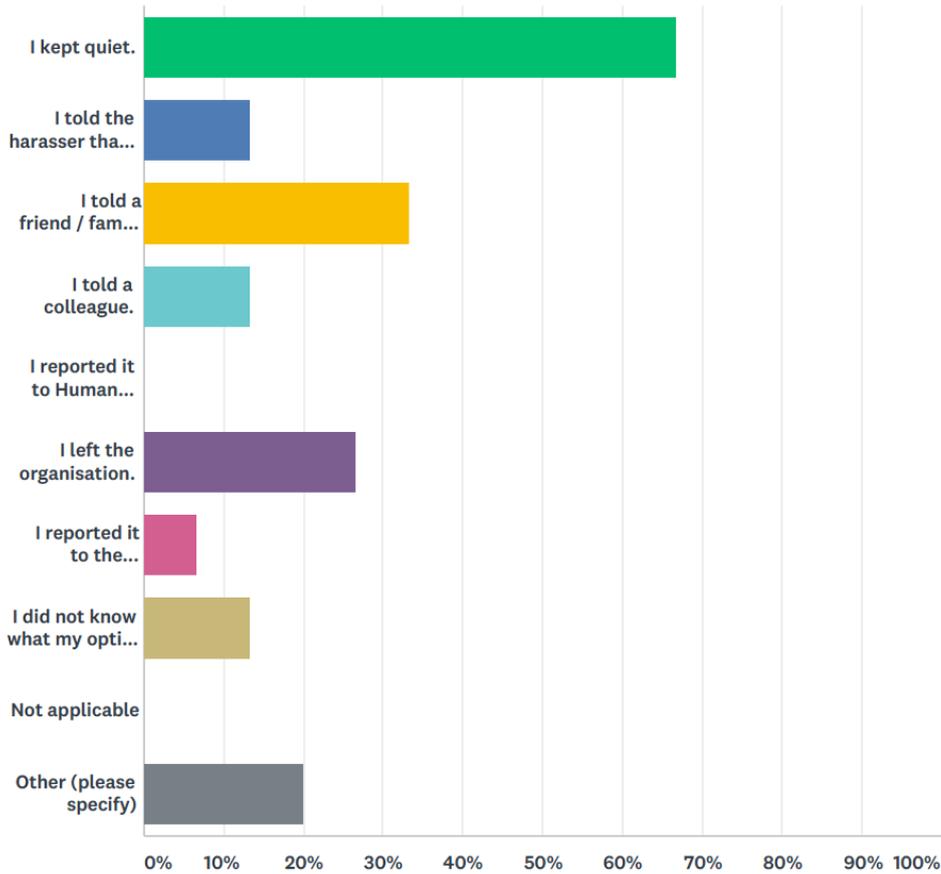
Responses to question 2 indicate that 45.45% of respondents experienced verbal remarks of a sexual nature (including jokes directed toward them or in the presence of them). Approximately 27.27% were the recipients of lustful staring at them or parts of their body. Nearly a quarter (22.73%) of respondents surveyed experienced unwanted touching, with just over 18% receiving persistent and unwanted invitations of a sexual nature and just under 5% receiving gestures of a sexual nature including exposure of private parts. TWiA stakeholders also reported messages of a sexual nature sent by email, direct messaging or via social media (approx. 5%); and obscene images in the workplace including calendars, desktop screens and posters. Only 5 respondents had not been subject to sexual harassment. These results suggest that respondents were subject to some form of sexual harassment in the workplace.

Question 3 – Who has sexually harassed you?



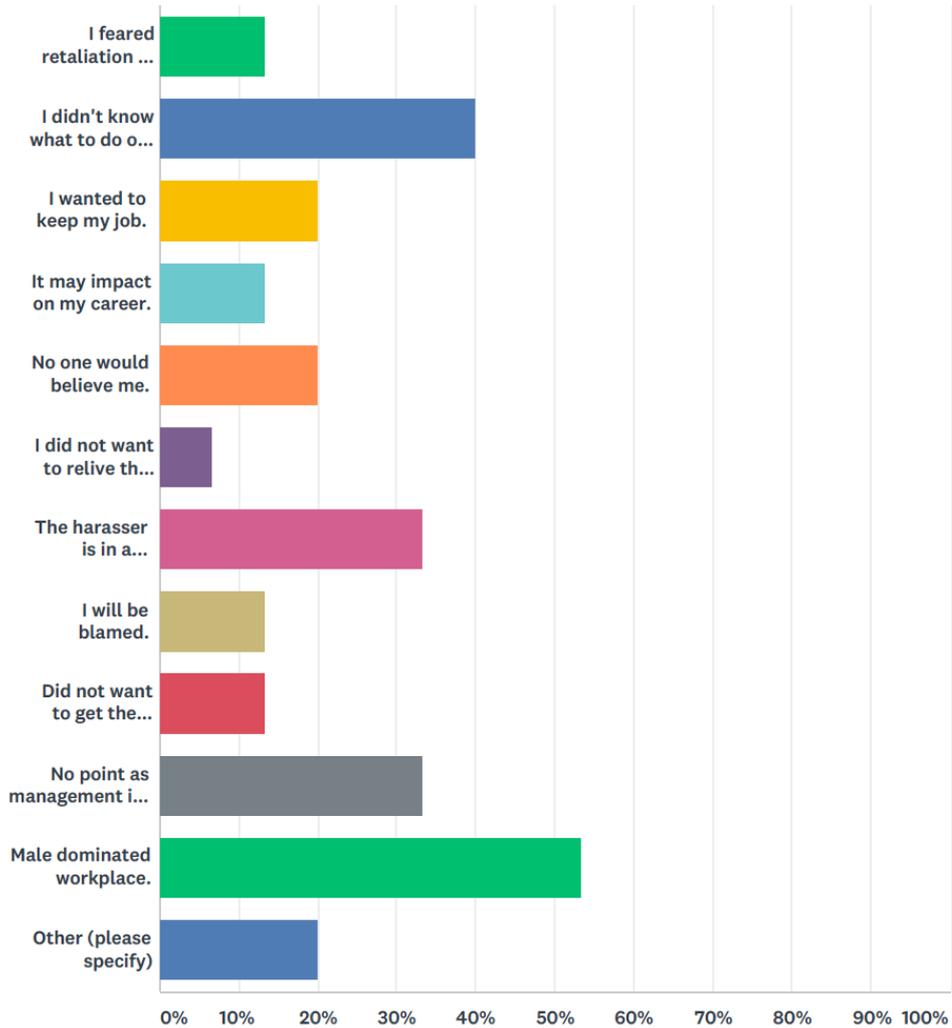
Of those who responded to this question, 46.67% indicated that a colleague who is their peer was the main perpetrator of sexual harassment, with just over 33% indicating their boss or senior person in the organisation was responsible. When considering other potential risk areas, just over 26% indicated a person who is outside the organisation but has influence over the organisation's performance (such as client, contractor) has been responsible. This highlights that the perpetrator is generally a person who holds a position of power over the respondent.

Question 4 – What did you do when you were sexually harassed at work?



Over 66% of respondents remained quiet. This suggests that respondents experienced fear of losing their job or other retaliatory behaviour. 26.67% respondents left the organisation where they had been sexually harassed or did not know what their options were (13.33%). However, some respondents were strong enough to tell the harasser that it was wrong (13%), told a colleague, friend, or family member outside the organisation. Only 6.67% reported the harassment to the authorities which again suggests that respondents feared subsequent retaliatory behaviour if a complaint was made.

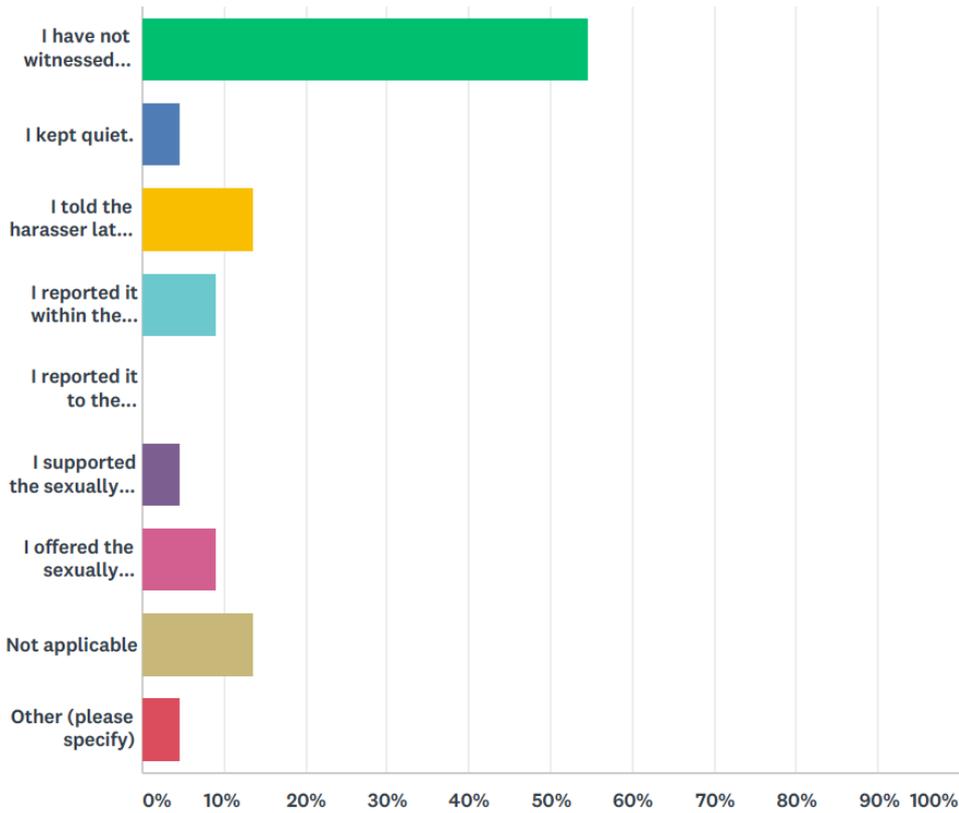
Question 5 – If you did not report sexual harassment, please indicate why?



Many respondents work in a male dominated workplace (approximately 53.55%) or as noted at question 3, the harasser was in a position of power or had influence over others (33.33%). Disappointingly, the results of this question suggest that many respondents felt would be blamed, would impact them in some way or that nothing would be done if they reported an incident.

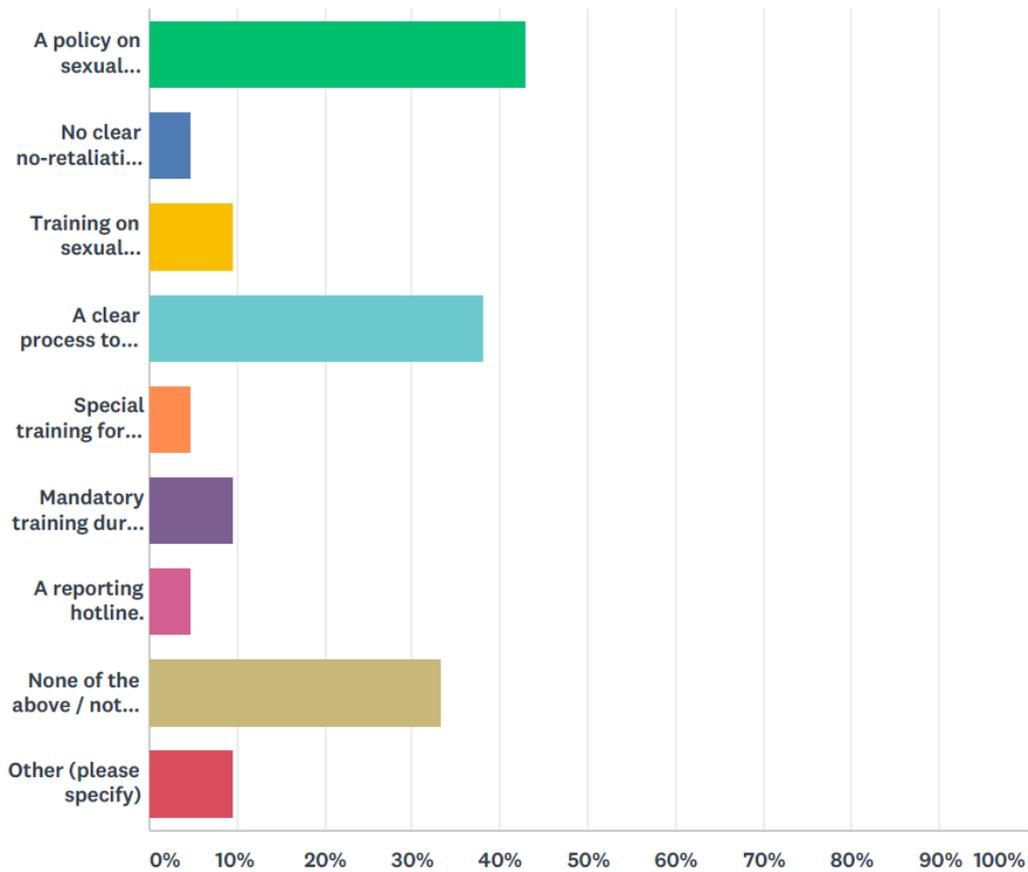
- 40% felt they did not know what to do or who to report to;
- 20% wanted to keep their job;
- 13% felt it may impact on their career;
- 20% felt no one would believe them;
- Nearly 7% did not want to relive the trauma;
- 13% felt they would be blamed; or
- 13% did not want to get their harasser in trouble.

Question 6 – If you witnessed sexual harassment in the workplace, what did you do?



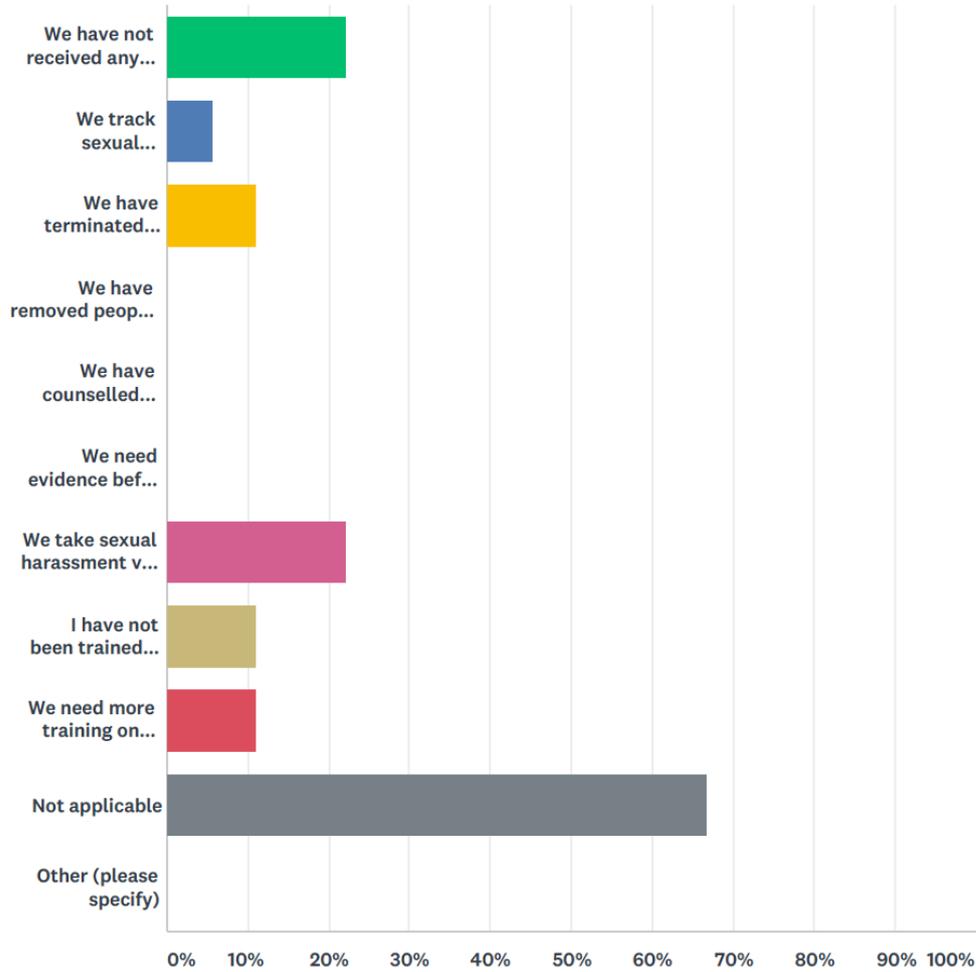
Over 54% of respondents had not witnessed sexual harassment in the workplace. Out of the remaining 56%, only a small number of respondents to this question reported incidents to authorities (2%) or told the harasser that what they were doing was wrong (13%). These findings suggest that even if witnessing an event, respondents felt powerless to act or know what to do.

Question 7 – What does your workplace have in place to address sexual harassment?



Approximately 43% of respondents' workplaces had a policy on sexual harassment or a clear process to report sexual harassment (38.10%). This result suggests that the leadership team are not committed to what the policies or procedures mean given the number of respondents who had been the recipient of sexual harassment in the workplace by a colleague or person of power in the organisation in some form (refer to question 2). Only 9.50% of respondents had received training on sexual harassment or at induction. These findings strongly suggest that proactive measures are required to make management and workers aware of what the policies and expectations are regarding sexual harassment in the workplace and more importantly, what workers can do to report if they have received or witnessed sexual harassment in the workplace.

Question 8 – For those tasked with addressing sexual harassment in the workplace, what have they done?



Approximately 22% asked this question indicated they take sexual harassment very seriously but had also not received any reports of sexual harassment in the organisation. Approximately 22% had not been trained on awareness of the issue or how to handle a sexual harassment report. Only 11% indicated they had terminated employment for people who have committed sexual harassment. This strongly suggests that more training in this area is required to assist workplaces respond in a proactive manner before incidents occur or are escalated to the detriment of workers suffering sexual harassment.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the survey, the following is recommended:

- Report to government and key industry stakeholders the extent of sexual harassment in the rural workplace – awareness of the extent of the issue is the first step.
- Develop tools to educate the rural workplace about what is sexual harassment, have discussions on what is considered unacceptable behaviour and how complaints can be raised and handled.
- Mandatory Induction training – ensure harassment in all forms is included in rural workplace induction including how complaints can be raised and handled.
- Contact people – identify and train contact people to be proactive and/or respond in the event of a workplace incident.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss our survey findings further and trust that they are of benefit to the National Inquiry. TWiA will be promoting the findings of our survey at the Inspire Conference on 13 March 2019 in Launceston Tasmania and will be calling for resources to be developed to assist workers and employers in regional, rural and remote workplaces.

Yours faithfully

Belinda Hazell

Chair

Tasmanian Women in Agriculture Inc