



#ChescoKnows

June 2019

A report on workplace sexual harassment in Chester County

BY THE NUMBERS

Sexual harassment is **common in current workplaces in Chester County**. People assess, interpret, handle and respond to sexual harassment in different ways, making it a complicated issue.



Nearly **1 in 5** workers have experienced sexual harassment from a client, customer or contractor in their current workplace.



Nearly **2 of 3** people have witnessed or experienced sexual harassment at some point in their career.



1 in 3 workers do not have a process at work to report concerning behavior or are not aware of any process in their current workplace.

1 in 4 people in Chester County have witnessed or experienced sexual harassment in their current workplace.

Though awareness has increased, tolerance for harassment has decreased and employer responsiveness has improved, only **43% are confident that workplace sexual harassment will decrease** in the future.

KEY INSIGHTS

People experience a **range and breadth of impacts** as a result of sexual harassment; some perceive it as not a big deal, and others experience impacts for years.

- Many are **hesitant to talk about sexual harassment** because it is too depressing and seems like nothing can be done about it, while others believe it is overblown.
- Definitions and **interpretations about situations, comments or interactions often differ**, which creates confusion and complicates how to address sexual harassment.
- **Experiences differ as much as workplaces differ**: nurses, customer service workers, hospitality workers, nonprofit employees, government employees, and professional service providers have similar, yet different, experiences.
- The prevalence of sexual harassment does not vary much across demographics, position, tenure and sector – though **options for what people can do about it are shaped by socioeconomic factors**, and experiences are often compounded by other forms of discrimination.
- Incidents often go **unreported** – often it falls on the person who is harassed to do something about it or just accept it because it is commonly perceived that:
 - Sexual harassment is the norm
 - Reporting sexual harassment will hurt one's career
 - It is better to confront a harasser oneself

- It is hard to know what to do when one witnesses someone being sexually harassed since these are **complex issues with potential repercussions** for oneself, for one's employer and workplace, and for the person who was harassed.
- Supportive **leadership, women in management positions, training, and policies** appear to result in decreases in sexual harassment.

Sampling of survey responses

"If I didn't ignore 99% of what I hear or what has been said to me, I would be out of a job. I do not have the luxury of complaining since I am head of my household."

"In my experience, most people in my workplace are upstanding, respectful people. However, it is also my experience that most supervisors and managers avoid difficult topics and situations which, in effect, provides the space for inappropriate workplace behaviors."

"My experiences and what I witnessed seemed to almost reach the descriptions you provide here but never crossed that line. I would absolutely describe it as manipulative and abusive behavior but it was subtle enough that it made it hard to define as sexual harassment."

"I have and will continue to come to the aid of others who are being harassed- at the very least, it lets the perpetrator know that there is a witness. There will always be safety and power in numbers."

"All of the incidents I have witnessed or experienced came through interactions with members of the public, not with coworkers or managers."

Chester County, PA

WHO TOOK THE SURVEY?

739  106 

908

individuals completed at least part of the survey; 97% made it to the end of the survey but skipped some questions.

84%

reside in Chester County and 91% work in Chester County

WHAT'S NEXT?

Now that we know what's happening in Chester County workplaces, it is time to act.

The Chester County Women's Commission and the Chester County Fund for Women and Girls are committed to facilitating constructive dialogues and leveraging resources that will contribute to improved workplace environments in Chester County. These efforts will benefit everyone who lives, works, visits and attends school in Chester County.

Overall, workplace environments have improved, yet we know that we can make Chester County workplaces safer, more respectful, and more productive for everyone.

What We Can All Do



Attend our #ChescoKnows Summit

September 24th

8:00 am-11:00 am

Penn State Great Valley

30 Swedesford Road in Malvern

We will be holding a **Workplace Summit** on September 24th to present survey results to the public. Don't miss this opportunity to contribute to an important conversation about workplace sexual harassment and what we can do together to address it.

RESOURCES

Free Hotlines in Chester County (Available 24/7)

The Crime Victims' Center of Chester County
(610) 692-7273 or www.cvcofcc.org

The Domestic Violence Center of Chester County
(610) 431-1430 or www.dvccc.com

Free National Hotlines (Available 24/7)

National Sexual Assault Telephone Hotline
(800) 656-4673

National Sexual Violence Resource Center Hotline
(877) 739-3895

Other Resources

Reporting Workplace Sexual Harassment in PA
<https://www.pa.gov/guides/reporting-workplace-sexual-harassment-in-pennsylvania/>

Know Your Rights
<https://www.equalrights.org/legal-help/know-your-rights/sexual-harassment-at-work/>

Bystander Intervention Tips
<https://www.nsvrc.org/bystander-intervention-tips-and-strategies>

Teach



- Raise awareness about what is happening right now in Chester County workplaces by sharing these study results
- Start conversations about what is possible
- Talk about each other's experiences
- Share resources to support individuals and workplaces

Act



- Put in place practices and policies that prevent and address sexual harassment in workplaces
- Build workplace cultures of respect

Learn



- Continue to explore the issues to better understand and address intersection of socioeconomic and discrimination with sexual harassment
- Identify specific strategies effective in different sectors and workplaces
- Know what is acceptable and expected in the workplace
- Learn to intervene in situations, speak up for oneself, and support others
- Be a "champion" for change



www.chescowc.org



www.ccfwg.org