

Sexual Harassment in Academia: The NASEM Report and Recommendations

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Study Statement of Task

The Committee will undertake a study of the influence of sexual harassment in academia on the career advancement of women in the scientific, technical, and medical workforce, which will include the following:

- Review of the research on the extent to which women in the fields of science, engineering, and medicine are victimized by sexual harassment on college and university campuses, in research labs and field sites, at hospitals/medical centers, and in other academic environments;
- Examination of existing information on the extent to which sexual harassment in academia negatively impacts the recruitment, retention, and advancement of women pursuing scientific, engineering, technical, and medical careers, with comparative evidence drawn from other sectors such as the military, government, and the private sector;
- Identification and analysis of policies, strategies, and practices that have been the most successful in preventing and addressing sexual harassment in these settings.

Study Committee Members

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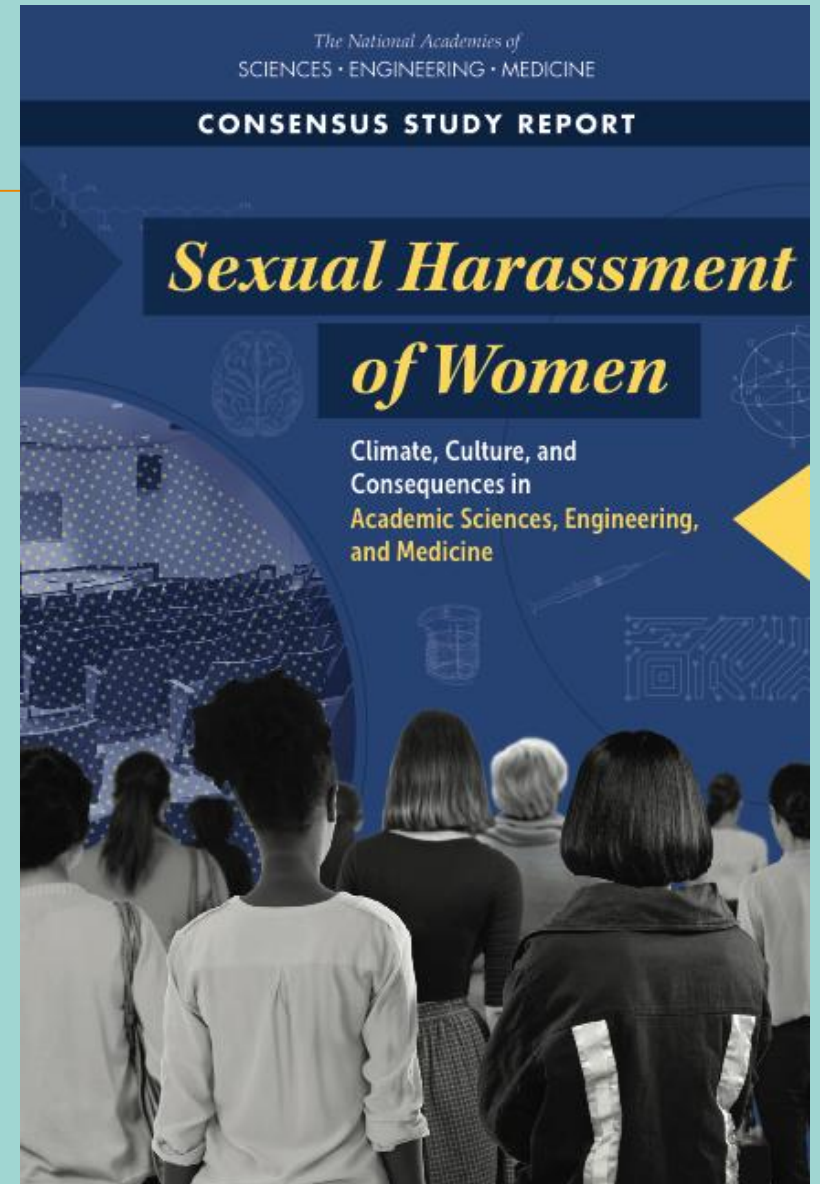
Billy M. Williams

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Overview

- Key findings
- Recommendations
- Responses to the report





Key findings

Summary

- Current climate permits extensive sexual harassment
- That climate undermines research integrity, reduces talent pool, and harms targets
- Legal compliance has not reduced harassment
- Changing climate and culture can reduce, deter, and address harassment

Basis

- Surveys
- Experiments
- Interviews, case studies, and qualitative analysis
- Cases, doctrines, and sociolegal methods

Nearly *four decades* of research on sexual harassment

Preventing
Sexual Harassment
in Academia

Together we can do better by creating a climate that discourages all forms of sexual harassment. Here is what we need to do:

- 1. Integrate values** into the system.
Policies and procedures must embody the institutional values of diversity, inclusion, and respect.
- 2. Change the power dynamics.**
Institutions need to diffuse advisor-trainee relationship dependencies by:
 - ▶ encouraging advisor networks
 - ▶ providing independent funding
- 3. Support targets** of sexual harassment.
Institutions must do more by providing alternative ways to:
 - access support services
 - record information about an incident
 - report an incident without fear of retaliation
- 4. Improve transparency & accountability.**
Institutions need to make their communities aware of the consequences sexual harassers will face and demonstrate that the institution is investigating and holding people accountable.

Learn more about these recommendations and the evidence behind them.

SEXUAL COERCION

using professional threats or rewards to get sexual favors

UNWANTED SEXUAL ATTENTION

sexual assault

rape

unwanted groping or stroking

~~~~~ PUBLIC CONSCIOUSNESS ~~~~~

**GENDER HARASSMENT**

relentless pressure for sex or dates

nude images posted at work

unwanted sexual discussions

sexually humiliating acts

sexual insults, gender slurs, and vulgar name calling  
e.g. "whore," "pu\*\*y," "slut," "bitch"

offensive sexual teasing or remarks about bodies

sexist insults  
e.g. *women don't belong in science*

sabotage of women's equipment

obscene gestures

# Prevalence

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- Sexual harassment remains common
- Women of color experience more sexual harassment than white women, white men, or men of color
- Sexual- and gender-minority people experience more sexual harassment than heterosexual women

# Impact

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- Undermines women's professional and educational success
- Degrades the physical and mental health of targets
- Affects bystanders, co-workers, and organizations negatively

# Organizational climate

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Sexual harassment is most likely to take place in workplaces that are:

- Male-dominated in number, leaders, and culture
- Tolerant of sexual harassment
  - Reporting is perceived as risky
  - Reports not taken seriously
  - Offenders escape sanction

*Perceived tolerance for sexual harassment is, by far, the greatest predictor of its occurrence.*



# Recommendations

# Gender harassment

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- Leaders in academic institutions and research and training sites must pay increased attention to and enact policies that cover gender harassment as a means of addressing the most common form of sexual harassment and of preventing other types of sexually harassing behavior.

# Compliance

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- Move beyond legal compliance to address culture and climate. Academic institutions, research and training sites, and federal agencies should move beyond interventions or policies that represent basic legal compliance and that rely solely on formal reports made by targets.

# Institutions

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- Create diverse, inclusive, and respectful environments
- Diffuse the hierarchical and dependent relationship between trainees and faculty
- Provide support for targets
- Improve transparency and accountability
- Strive for strong and diverse leadership
- Make the entire academic community responsible for reducing and preventing sexual harassment



# Professional societies

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- Professional societies should accelerate their efforts to be viewed as organizations that are helping to create culture changes that reduce or prevent the occurrence of sexual harassment.
- Academic institutions and federal agencies should consider sexual harassment equally important as research misconduct in terms of its effect on the integrity of research.

# Policy makers

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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).

# Policy makers (cont.)

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- 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.

# Federal agencies

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- 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.

# Federal agencies (cont.)

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- 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.



# **Responses to the report**

# Visibility

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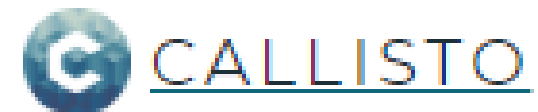
- Restoring women to science history
- Publications and lectures
- New incentives, apps, and studies
- Campus events



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**Athena SWAN**



# Accountability

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- Proposed federal legislation
- Revised policies
- Announcements and studies



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# INTERVENTIONS FOR PREVENTING SEXUAL HARASSMENT

## Create Diverse, Inclusive, and Respectful Environments

**Hiring and Promotion:** Take explicit steps to achieve greater gender and racial equity in hiring and promotions, and improve the representation of women at every level.

- The University of Michigan Committee on Strategies and Tactics for Recruiting to Improve Diversity and Excellence (STRIDE) offers Faculty Recruitment Workshops for faculty members with an important role in faculty recruitment.

**Civility-Promotion:** Combine anti-harassment efforts with programs to promote civility.

- The 2016 EEOC Task Force on the Study of Harassment in the Workplace recommends workplace training focused on respect and civility.
- The Civility, Respect, and Engagement at Work (CREW) program is an intensive 6-month intervention geared to enhance employees' interpersonal awareness and communication skills.

## Interrupt and Intervene in Inappropriate Behavior:

Utilize training approaches that develop skills among participants to interrupt and intervene when inappropriate behavior occurs.

- Bystander intervention training such as Confronting Prejudiced Responses (CPR) and Behavior Modeling Training (BMT) is designed to train participants to recognize and report problematic behavior.

## Training that Aims to Change Behavior:

Training should focus on changing behavior, not on changing beliefs.

- Programs should clearly communicate behavioral expectations and specify consequences for failing to meet those expectations. Training programs should not be based on the avoidance of legal liability.

## Improve Transparency and Accountability

**Clear Policies:** Develop and share clear, accessible, and consistent policies on sexual harassment and standards of behavior. Make clear that people will be held accountable for violating the policies.

- Include a range of clear disciplinary actions that correspond with the severity of the harassment.
- Engage the academic community in policy and practice reviews. Some institutions have created student advisory boards and forums for students to meet with the Title IX Steering Committee.

## Transparency about Handling Reports:

Be as transparent as possible about how the institution is handling reports of sexual harassment.

- Yale University publishes a semiannual Report of Complaints of Sexual Misconduct and an annual campus safety report to inform the campus community.

**Assess Climate:** Utilize climate surveys to further investigate and address systemic sexual harassment.

- The results of climate surveys should be shared publicly to demonstrate to the campus community that the institution takes the issue seriously. The Administrator-Researcher Campus Climate Collaborative (ARC3) survey has been used by more than 150 higher education institutions.

**Research Integrity:** Consider sexual harassment equally important as research misconduct in terms of its effect on the integrity of research.

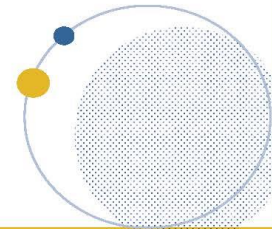
- The U.S. Geological Survey and the Department of the Interior have broad scientific integrity policies that apply to employees, appointees, volunteers, grantees, and contractors. Some scientific societies such as the American Geophysical Union have developed new ethics policies that explicitly call out sexual harassment and discrimination.

## Diffuse the Hierarchical and Dependent Relationship Between Trainees and Faculty

**Mentoring Networks:** Adopt mentoring networks or committee-based advising that allows for a diversity of potential pathways for advice, funding, support, and informal reporting of harassment.

## Independent Research Funding:

Develop ways research funding can be provided to the trainee rather than just the principal investigator.



## Provide Support for the Target

**Access to Support Services:** Provide means for the target of harassment to access support services (social services, health care, legal, career/professional).

**Informal Reporting:** Provide alternative and less formal means of recording information about the experience and reporting the experience.

- Provide anonymous, confidential reporting systems. Callisto is an online system that allows targets to control the disclosure of information, access supportive services, and share information on alleged perpetrators.
- Provide confidential reporting channels outside of the faculty or usual workplace hierarchy, such as an ombudsperson.
- Explore the use of restorative justice processes. The Campus PRISM (Promoting Restorative Initiatives for Sexual Misconduct) Project calls for accountability through collaboration and prevention through education.

**Prevent Retaliation:** Develop approaches to prevent the target from experiencing or fearing retaliation in academic settings.

- Be prepared to take action to ensure the target of the harassment is able to continue his/her academic work. This could include using mutual no contact orders between the accused and accuser, changing class schedules, changing the locks at the housing facility or workplace, rescinding building access for the accused, and reassigning advisors, mentees, and supervisors.

## Strive for Strong and Diverse Leadership

**Make it an Explicit Goal:** College and university presidents, provosts, deans, department chairs, and program directors must make the reduction and prevention of sexual harassment an explicit goal of their tenure.

**Develop Leadership Skills:** Support and facilitate leaders at every level (university, school/college, department, lab) in developing skills in leadership, conflict resolution, mediation, negotiation, and de-escalation, and ensure a clear understanding of policies and procedures for handling sexual harassment issues.

**Move Beyond Legal Liability:** Leadership training programs should include training on how to recognize and handle sexual harassment issues, and how to take explicit steps to create a culture and climate to reduce and prevent sexual harassment—and not just protect the institution against liability.

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This brief is based on the findings and recommendations in *Sexual Harassment of Women: Climate, Culture, and Consequences in Academic Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine* (2018). 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).

# Report recommendations video

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<https://youtu.be/juJu2mg5y5M>

<http://nationalacademies.org/SexualHarassment>  
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CONSENSUS STUDY REPORT

# *Sexual Harassment of Women*

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



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