

One in seven Australian adults admits to workplace technology-facilitated sexual harassment, new study finds

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The first [national study](#) to investigate workplace technology-facilitated sexual harassment (WTFSH) has revealed 1 in 7 Australian adults

surveyed admit to engaging in this form of sexual harassment at work.

Workplace technology-facilitated sexual harassment encompasses unwelcome or harassing sexual behavior utilizing mobile, online and [digital technologies](#) within a workplace setting. It includes a wide range of behaviors and can occur during or after working hours.

The study was led by Australia's National Research Organization for Women's Safety (ANROWS), together with Associate Professor Asher Flynn from Monash University and Professor Anastasia Powell from RMIT University. The research highlights the role of gender in perpetration of WTFSH, with 24% of surveyed men admitting to using technology to engage in workplace sexual harassment, compared to 7% of women.

Other key findings included:

- Nearly half (45%) of WTFSH perpetrators worked in male-dominated workplaces.
- Perpetrators minimized the severity of WTFSH, believing victim-survivors would be "okay with it" (52%), flattered (45%) or find it humorous (42%). Others said they wanted to pursue a sexual or [personal relationship](#) with the victim-survivor (41%).
- One in four perpetrators reported malintent, aiming to annoy (31%), humiliate (30%), frighten (30%), hurt the feelings of (30%) or express their anger towards (31%) the victim-survivor.
- People surveyed were over 15 times more likely to engage in WTFSH if strong sexist and discriminatory attitudes were held, making these attitudes the strongest predictor of such behavior.
- The most common devices and platforms for WTFSH included work email (31%), personal phone or mobile (29%), personal email (27%) and work phone or mobile (25%).
- Despite the prevalence of WTFSH, less than half (39%) of

perpetrators had any formal reports or complaints made against them.

Associate Professor of Criminology at Monash University, Dr. Asher Flynn, emphasized the importance of the findings.

"These findings underscore the pervasive nature of workplace technology-facilitated sexual harassment, revealing not only its extent, but also the troubling attitudes and motivations behind such behaviors. It's imperative that we address these issues comprehensively to foster safer and more respectful work environments for all," Associate Professor Flynn said.

CEO at ANROWS, Dr. Tessa Boyd-Caine, explained how new technologies in the workplace were creating new avenues for abuse.

"The need to address this sexual harassment gap is all the more urgent. Employers need to build safety into workplace cultures and technologies to protect their staff. Likewise, policymakers must prioritize implementing effective measures to prevent and address these behaviors," said Dr. Boyd-Caine.

The report is among the first from ANROWS's Sexual Harassment Research Program (SHRP) and offers crucial insights to aid Australian employers and policymakers in combating tech-based [sexual harassment](#) in the [workplace](#) effectively.

More information: Study: [Workplace technology-facilitated sexual harassment: Perpetration, responses and prevention](#)

Provided by Monash University

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