More gender segregation in jobs means more harassment, lower pay

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A new paper in *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, published by Oxford University Press, indicates that people who are the gender minority in their workplace are more likely to experience sexual harassment. This harassment discourages people from taking jobs in workplaces where they would be a gender minority. It also leads current minorities to leave their jobs for new ones with lower pay.

Women and men are segregated across workplaces, and previous research indicates that such segregation may explain 15 to 20% of the gender wage gap. Researchers here studied how gender discrimination in work conditions contributes to such inequality. Using information from the bi-annual Swedish Work Environment Survey, the study shows that women's and men's harassment risks grow with the share of opposite-sex people in their workplace. Women are about three times as likely as men to experience sexual harassment, but in the most male-dominated workplaces, they are nearly six times more likely than men to do so. Meanwhile, men's risk is almost twice as high as women's in the most female-dominated workplaces.

The research used a survey experiment to measure workers' aversion to taking jobs in workplaces where a sexual harassment incident had occurred. Both women and men had a high aversion to jobs in such workplaces, but their aversion was three times larger if the harassment victim had the same sex as themselves. These findings imply that harassment deters women from taking jobs in male-dominated workplaces, where women are the main harassment victims, and vice versa for men.

Workplaces with a larger share of men pay more. A workplace with more than 80% men offers a 9% higher wage for the same work as a workplace with 80% female employees.

The researchers here find that harassment produces gender inequality through job changes among harassment victims. Investigators found that women who report sexual harassment are 25 percent more likely to have left for a new job in the three years after the harassment. Men who report sexual harassment are 15 percent more likely to have left for a new job. The study indicates women who experience sexual harassment are more likely to leave for a job at a company with a lower share of men and a lower wage premium.

"By deterring women from taking jobs in male-dominated workplaces, harassment also keeps women away from the highest-paying employers in the labor market, and men from the lowest-paying ones," said Johanna Rickne, one of the paper's authors. "In this way, sexual harassment contributes to the gender wage gap."
