



# Sexual Harassment Summary Report



**SPEAK OUT**

## BACKGROUND

1. Sexual harassment may be defined as 'unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of violating the recipient's dignity, or of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the recipient'. Sexual harassment in organisations is commonplace, with an estimated 68% of women in the UK experiencing sexual harassment in their lifetime. The negative impact it has on both employees and employers can be far reaching, with those who feel that they have been sexually harassed likely to experience both mental and physical health issues such as headaches, nausea, weight loss, depression and anxiety. Individuals are also likely to report losing confidence and experiencing negative emotions such as anger and fear. The impact that this has on an organisation can be significant, with lowered job performance and job satisfaction, lack of commitment, absenteeism and resignation a direct result of sexual harassment. It is vital, therefore, that organisations promote a fair and equal workforce in order to maximise effectiveness and efficiency. Organisations that do not do this are likely to experience unnecessary costs and significant loss of reputation.
2. Organisations that have a higher proportion of men are likely to have higher levels of sexual harassment. The Armed Forces present a unique culture where Service personnel typically work, live and socialise together, sometimes in challenging and diverse environments. The opportunity for sexual harassment to occur may, therefore, be higher in the Army than other workplaces. The negative consequences that sexual harassment has on the Army may be more significant than for other employers, with factors such as reduced team cohesion, job engagement and commitment, having a detrimental impact on operational effectiveness. It is important to gain an understanding of the prevalence of sexual harassment within the Army and the issues that the Army may face as a result in order to promote equality of opportunity within a diverse workforce that upholds the Army's Values and Standards.
3. This research contributes to the Agreement signed between the Ministry of Defence and the Equal Opportunities Commission (now incorporated into the Equality and Human Rights Commission), which concluded on 3 July 2008. It gathered information on the perceived prevalence of sexual harassment within the Army with a view to better understanding both the nature and extent of this issue. It also gathered opinions about the effectiveness of current initiatives in place to prevent and manage sexual harassment. This research will provide the Army with evidence to better understand how successful their efforts in tackling this issue have been to date and what more still needs to be done in order to ensure that the moral, ethical and legal obligations to Service personnel are met.

## METHOD

4. An anonymous postal survey was administered to 24,000 Regular and Reserve Servicemen and Servicewomen. Over 7,000 surveys were returned, making an overall response rate of 30%.
5. People differ in their opinions about what types of behaviour constitute sexual harassment. This can be affected by things such as the work culture and the current social and cultural values, norms and attitudes. Opinions may also vary according to the individuals' own level of awareness and knowledge of their legal rights and the laws around sexual harassment and discrimination. To reduce the potential for subjective variations in what behaviours constitute sexual harassment, participants were asked about their experiences of specific sexualised behaviours to allow an estimate of prevalence based on their personal experience rather than on a pre-defined definition.

6. Focus groups were conducted with 48 randomly selected ORs from different units and cap badges to explore the lived experience of Service personnel and to gain a wider view on sexual harassment in the Army. Participants were asked what kinds of behaviours they thought were unacceptable and for their views on a range of different methods to prevent and manage sexual harassment. They were also asked to evaluate the Army's current strategy to deal with sexual harassment. The data gathered from the focus groups were collated and thematic analysis was applied. The key themes that emerged are integrated into the survey findings to provide a comprehensive picture of sexual harassment in the Army.

## TARGETED SEXUALISED BEHAVIOURS

7. Service personnel were asked if they had experienced a range of unwanted sexualised behaviours directed at them in the last 12 months. The survey found that Servicewomen were more likely than Servicemen to experience the range of unwanted targeted sexualised behaviours, with the exception of being sent sexually explicit material.

Table 7. Percentage of those experiencing targeted sexualised behaviours (sometimes or a lot) by gender (Q8)

Behaviour	Servicemen %	Servicewomen %
Made unwelcome comments about your appearance, body or sexual activities	<u>22</u>	<u>39</u>
Made unwelcome attempts to talk to you about sexual matters	<u>19</u>	<u>33</u>
Sent you sexually explicit material	<u>14</u>	<u>6</u>
Made unwelcome gestures or used body language of a sexual nature that were directed at you	<u>11</u>	<u>19</u>
Made unwelcome attempts to touch you	<u>6</u>	<u>12</u>
Made unwelcome attempts to establish a sexual relationship despite your discouragement	<u>2</u>	<u>10</u>
Said or made you feel that you would be treated better in return for having a sexual relationship with them	<u>1</u>	<u>4</u>
Said or made you feel that you would be treated worse if you did not have a sexual relationship with them	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>
Made a sexual assault on you	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>

8. The percentage of Service personnel who said they had experienced unwanted targeted sexualised behaviours has decreased since 2009. This decrease may be a result of the change in culture of the Army and wider society and of interventions that the Army has introduced since 2009 to reduce bullying, harassment and discrimination. The decrease could also be due to a change in the wording of the question between surveys. In 2009 respondents were asked only if they had experienced the behaviour. In 2014 respondents were asked if that behaviour was 'unwelcome'.
9. The more junior Service personnel are in rank, the more likely they are to experience targeted sexualised behaviours. Junior soldiers were, in some cases, four times more likely than senior Officers to experience these behaviours.

Table 6. Percentage experiencing targeted sexualised behaviours sometimes or a lot by rank (Q8)

Behaviour	Senior Officers (OF3+) %	Junior Officers (OF1-OF2) %	Senior Soldiers (OR6-OR9) %	Junior Soldiers (OR2-OR4) %
Made unwelcome comments about your appearance, body or sexual activities	8	19	20	28
Made unwelcome attempts to talk to you about sexual matters	6	13	18	23
Sent you sexually explicit material	4	8	11	15
Made unwelcome gestures or used body language of a sexual nature that were directed at you	3	6	8	14
Made unwelcome attempts to touch you	2	4	3	8
Made unwelcome attempts to establish a sexual relationship despite your discouragement	1	3	2	4
Said or made you feel that you would be treated better in return for having a sexual relationship with them	<1	1	<1	2
Made a sexual assault on you	<1	<1	1	1

10. Service personnel who had experienced targeted sexualised behaviours were asked where the incident mainly happened. 61% reported that they had occurred in the workplace in their home base or training unit, 23% reported that they had occurred in a communal area in their home base or training unit. Only 3% occurred in the workplace and 4% in a communal area while deployed.

### PARTICULARLY UPSETTING EXPERIENCES

11. Service personnel were asked if they have had an experience in the last 12 months involving any of the targeted sexualised behaviours that had made them feel particularly upset. 4% of respondents (3% of Servicemen and 13% of Servicewomen) stated that they had had a particularly upsetting experience. This is an increase from 2% in 2009, but still lower than the 16% who reported this in 2006. The most common cause of the upsetting experience was unwelcome comments about appearance, body or sexual activities, with 65% of respondents stating that this was the behaviour involved. Junior ranking soldiers and officers are more likely to state that they have had an upsetting experience than their senior counterparts.

### PERCEPTION OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

12. Service personnel were asked which targeted sexualised behaviours they considered to be sexual harassment. This indicates which behaviour they consider to be unacceptable and therefore the degree of tolerance for sexualised behaviours within the Army. At least half of all Service personnel think that all targeted sexualised behaviour counts as sexual harassment, and the more severe the behaviour the more likely it is to be considered sexual harassment. Servicewomen, Officers, and Reserves are most likely to view these behaviours as sexual harassment. Whether sexualised behaviour is considered as sexual harassment will depend on the relationship between the people involved, the context in which incidents occur and the individuals' level of tolerance for the behaviour.

## GENERALISED SEXUALISED BEHAVIOURS

13. Service personnel were asked how often in the last 12 months they had been in situations where UK military personnel or civil servants displayed generalised sexualised behaviours. This includes the use of sexual swear words, sexual jokes and stories and the display of sexually explicit materials such as photographs. Service personnel who answered that they had been in those situations were asked if they found the behaviour offensive. The percentage of Service personnel finding these behaviours offensive is significantly lower than those who experience it. This suggests that whilst these behaviours are common, the majority of Service personnel are unlikely to be offended. However, Servicewomen were consistently more likely to be offended by generalised sexualised behaviours than Servicemen, and in some cases four times more likely.

Table 5. Percentage reporting that they have been in situations sometimes or a lot (Q6)

Type of behaviour	Servicemen %	Servicewomen %
<b>Told sexual jokes and stories</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>92</b>
Did you find this offensive? Yes	11	27
<b>Used sexually explicit language e.g. swear words and suggestive language</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>88</b>
Did you find this offensive? Yes	13	39
<b>Displayed, used or distributed sexually explicit materials e.g. pornographic photos, calendars or other objects of a sexual nature</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>36</b>
Did you find this offensive? Yes	11	36
<b>Made gestures or used body language of a sexual nature</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>54</b>
Did you find this offensive? Yes	9	35

N.B The data for “Did you find this offensive?” is a percentage of those who said they had experienced this behaviour sometimes or a lot only.

## IMPACT OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

14. Individuals who had had a particularly upsetting experience were asked to identify the impact that it had on them. The most common responses from both Servicewomen and Servicemen were a loss of respect for those involved, embarrassment, humiliation and feeling uncomfortable at work. Servicemen also reported that they no longer enjoyed their work. Servicewomen were more likely to experience depression and/or anxiety as a result of their experience. Servicemen were more likely to say that they no longer enjoyed their work, they felt they did not do their job as well as before, were less motivated and received a lower than expected performance evaluation.

## DEALING WITH SEXUAL HARASSMENT

15. Those Service personnel who had had a particularly upsetting experience were asked how they had dealt with the incident. Most Service personnel reported that they ignored the behaviour (62%) and/or tried to avoid the person responsible (53%). Servicewomen and Reserves were much more likely than Servicemen or Regulars to have a colleague or superior intervene on their behalf and this was identified as the most effective strategy for stopping the behaviour. Approximately two thirds of those Service personnel told someone at work what was happening and that person was most likely to be a colleague or their line manager. The most common reason for not telling anyone at work was because Service personnel thought that they could handle the situation themselves.

16. Approximately 3% of those Service personnel who had a particularly upsetting experience involving sexualised behaviours made a formal written complaint. Servicewomen were more likely than Servicemen to make a formal complaint. The main reason given for not making a formal complaint was because the individual believed they could handle the situation themselves. Almost a third of personnel did not make a formal complaint because the situation was resolved informally. Nearly half of Service personnel did not make a formal complaint because they were concerned about the consequences, such as being labelled a troublemaker, and the affect it might have on their career. Over a third of Service personnel were worried about repercussions from the other people involved and did not think anything would be done if they did make a complaint. Servicewomen were more likely than Servicemen to be persuaded not to make a complaint by someone else and to experience negative consequences during or after the complaints process. A number of Service personnel did not know how to make a complaint.

## PREVENTING AND MANAGING SEXUAL HARASSMENT

17. 5% of Service personnel believe that sexual harassment is a problem across the Army and 44% believe that it is only a problem in some parts. Service personnel are much less likely to think that sexual harassment is a problem in their own unit or team. Servicewomen were more likely than Servicemen to believe that sexual harassment is a problem in the Army and in their unit or team. The majority of Service personnel believe that the Army tries to prevent sexual harassment to a large or very large extent and supports those who have been sexually harassed to a large extent.

18. 89% of Service personnel would try to stop sexual harassment if they thought it was happening to someone. Only 2% stated that they would not. The main reasons why those Service personnel stated that they would not try and stop sexual harassment would be if senior people were involved or if the incidents were small or one-off incidents. Servicemen were more likely than Servicewomen to believe that trying to stop sexual harassment was not their responsibility.

19. Service personnel were asked what measures they thought would be most effective in preventing sexual harassment. The most effective measure was believed to be sanctions against those who sexually harass others. Over three quarters of Service personnel believe that a range of other measures would be effective in preventing sexual harassment, including awareness training for all personnel and sanctions against managers who allow sexual harassment to continue.

20. Service personnel stated that the most effective way of dealing with sexual harassment is to have a complaints process that works. Over 80% of personnel also believed that having good information about where to go for help and bespoke training for line managers would be effective measures.

21. The Army should ensure that it clearly defines inappropriate sexual behaviour and communicates this widely, with the consequences of non-compliance made transparent. More needs to be done to make individuals aware of how their behaviour impacts on those around them. Unless individuals understand that they need to take personal responsibility, and feel empowered to do so, the culture of the Army is unlikely to change.

## CONCLUSIONS

22. Generalised sexualised behaviour is a common part of workplace culture and the Army is no exception, with most Service personnel experiencing generalised, non-targeted behaviour on a regular basis. Whilst the majority are unlikely to be offended by this behaviour, a small minority of Service personnel had an upsetting experience of targeted sexualised behaviour which may have a significant psychological and physical impact

on them and the operational effectiveness of the organisation. The experience of sexualised behaviours in the Army varies depending on gender and rank, with female junior ranking soldiers being most at risk.

23. For a variety of reasons, most upsetting experiences do not result in a formal written complaint. Although the main reason for not making a formal complaint was the belief that Service personnel could handle the situation themselves, a significant percentage of Service personnel did not make a complaint because they were worried about the consequences. Some were persuaded not to make a complaint, and some didn't know how. There is a clear need for more education and training on the formal complaints process, and a change in culture whereby Service personnel feel that they are able to make a complaint without fear of repercussions.
24. Approximately half of Service personnel believe that sexual harassment is a problem in some parts of the Army, but the majority are positive about how well the Army prevents and manages it when it happens. The rank structure may in some cases create the conditions in which sexual harassment occurs and may also prevent some from intervening when they see it happening. This research clearly shows, however, that line managers are a vital avenue of support for those that feel sexually harassed and are best placed to help resolve the issue. Service personnel asked for a more effective complaints system and stronger discipline for those who commit sexual harassment or allow it to happen in their area of responsibility.
25. It is important to note that the impact of even a few people having an upsetting experience is likely to be significant, for both the individual and the Army. Evidence suggests that sexual harassment can have a devastating effect on those who experience it, and in an environment such as the Army where Service personnel are working and living closely together and sometimes relying on each other in life and death situations, it is vital that there is trust and respect. Sexual harassment is likely to break that trust and respect between colleagues, severely impacting on the operational effectiveness of the Army. The damage that sexual harassment can cause to an organisations' reputation is also not to be underestimated. A poor reputation will impact on every area of the Army, from procurement, recruitment and talent management to negotiating power, international presence and cooperation and national security goals.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS – THE WAY FORWARD**

26. The survey was commissioned as the Army wishes to fully understand the lived experience of its people. Indeed, the Chief of the General Staff (CGS) is determined that the Army learn from this study and improve issues immediately. CGS has stated that the Army needs a culture where talent can thrive regardless of ethnicity, gender or sexuality. CGS goes on to say that all personnel must live by the Army's Values and Standards and the Service Test must be widely applied.
27. As a result of this research, the Army is recommended to review the selection and training of individuals in key support staff such as Unit Welfare Officers and Equality and Diversity Advisers, and ensure those personnel are known at all levels within the unit. The Army should consider introducing more transparency into the complaints and discipline process to deter inappropriate behaviour and encourage those who lack the confidence to speak up. The Army should review training for leaders to ensure that they are able to lead by example, to implement the Army's policies and know how to handle incidents of sexual harassment in their units. The Army may wish to consider introducing training to give individuals the skills, knowledge and confidence to manage unwanted behaviours themselves. These recommendations will be added to those initiatives already underway to ensure that incidents that have been identified in this report are reduced swiftly. The Army will also repeat the survey in 2 years time to ensure that improvement is being achieved.

28. Since 2010 the Army has implemented a number of measures designed to improve the lived experience of its personnel and resolve issues quickly and at the lowest level. The Respect for Others training package delivers high quality training that challenges the attitudes and perceptions of soldiers. Climate assessments provide senior officers with an honest insight into the lived experience of their personnel. The Army's confidential BH&D helpline provides advice and support to both individuals and the chain of command in resolving issues at the lowest level and the Army Mediation Service is delivering real success in tackling workplace conflict, with over 88% of cases resolved in a single day.
29. The Army has recently launched a number of initiatives to develop a more inclusive culture and improve the lived experience of all personnel. A 1\* project team has been setup to identify the root causes of Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination (BH&D) and develop and implement measures to improve culture, structures, policies and practices to rapidly drive forward with a strategy of reform. The Commandant of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst is developing an Army Leadership Code to ensure that all personnel understand what is required of them.