

Acas urges employers to act now on sexual harassment

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Workplace expert Acas is encouraging employers and their staff to create a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment at work ahead of a change in law next week.

The Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023 comes into effect on 26 October 2024, introducing a legal duty for employers to proactively take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment.

Acas is suggesting employers create a culture where sexual harassment is understood to be unacceptable, including anyone in a position of authority.

This includes developing a policy on sexual harassment, training managers on their responsibilities, and creating an environment where people feel safe to report incidents of sexual harassment and situations where they felt unsafe.

According to a recent Acas survey, 14% of employers and 6% of employees said they had witnessed sexual harassment in their workplace.

Acas Head of Inclusive Workplaces Julie Dennis said:

"Sexual harassment is unacceptable at work or anywhere else. We want everyone to understand this, and we are urging employers to take a proactive approach to stamping it out.

"Proper policies and training for managers can help eliminate the potential for sexual harassment to occur. They can also help foster environments where staff feel empowered to report any harassment and avoid it before it occurs."

Sexual harassment is unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature.

Under the new law, employers must take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment. They must not wait until something has happened before they take action.

This covers harassment from colleagues, whether at work or in settings connected to work, and also harassment from third parties such as customers, service users or members of the public.

In order to identify and address risks, employers need to:

- consider the risks of sexual harassment happening in their organisation
- consider steps they could take to reduce the risks of sexual harassment happening
- consider which of those steps are reasonable for them to take

[Find out more about sexual harassment](#)

Media enquiries

Background notes

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size for employers was 1,025 employees and 1,016 senior decision makers. Fieldwork was undertaken between 29 August to 9 September 2024 for employees and 27 August to 5 September 2024 for senior decision makers. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of British business size and region.

Participants were asked: Have you ever witnessed sexual harassment in your organisation? The results were, for employers:

- Yes, I have 14%
- No, I haven't 85%
- Don't know 1%
- Prefer not to say 1%

For employees:

- Yes, I have 6%
- No, I haven't 91%
- Don't know 2%
- Prefer not to say 1%