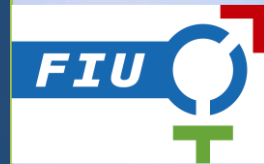


Sexual harassment  
– it comes at a cost



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## The plan and aim for today's course

- To gain knowledge of the direct and indirect economic consequences of sexual harassment
- To motivate change
- Give you tools to argue why this work is important
- Get an idea about how to start preventing and dealing with sexual harassment

And then – a final quiz



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Today we will go through the different direct and indirect economic consequences that are related to sexual harassment so that you – with this knowledge – hopefully will start, or get even further, with preventing and dealing with sexual harassment in your workplace. The aim of the course is to teach you about the economic consequences of sexual harassment and, hopefully, thereby motivate you (or make you able to motivate your boss) to get more actively involved in preventing and dealing with sexual harassment.

Furthermore, you will also get a short overview of what you can do in your workplace, when his economic view on sexual harassment has hopefully motivated you to start actively preventing and dealing with sexual harassment.

To see what you have learned through this course, there will be a small five-question quiz in the end.

## Why look at the economic consequences of sexual harassment?

- Physiological consequences (anxiety, PTSD, depression, lack of concentration, memory problems)
- → Leads to: Severe economic consequences – for the individual, the company, and society.
- No one can put **exact** number to what sexual harassments costs
- Economic incitement = a good motivator for change



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Most people probably do not think of sexual harassment as a primarily economic issue. Sexual harassment is perhaps often more thought of as an ethical, legal or psychological issue – and that is all true. However, sexual harassment is *also* an economic issue.

Deciding to focus on the economic consequences or costs of sexual harassment does not mean that the psychological, ethical or any other aspect of sexual harassment aren't important – not at all.

First of all, most of the economic costs of sexual harassment are direct or indirect consequences of the psychological costs. Anxiety, PTSD, depression, lack of concentration, and memory problems are just some of the common psychological consequences of sexual harassment, and they all influence people's work ability, efficiency and so on. Therefore, the economic and the psychological consequences of sexual harassment cannot be separated entirely. But today we will focus more on the economic or financial consequences.

The economic costs of sexual harassment can be separated into three different categories: Sexual harassment comes with economic consequences for the individual,

for the company and for society. Looking at the economic consequences of sexual harassment through these three categories, you can get an in-depth insight into both how many and how serious costs sexual harassment actually has.

And even though it is not possible to put exact numbers on the economic consequences of sexual harassment – both because it is not just simple mathematics that is required to know the exact costs and because the consequences are so vast and multiple – it still makes sense to look at what we do know.

Thinking about and understanding sexual harassment as an economic issue too, may make it a bit easier to start the preventative work, because losing money is something that most people relate to very easily – especially leaders, managers and CEO's who are often the ones in charge of what kind of focus a workplace has on actively creating a good, sexual harassment-free work environment.

Therefore, focusing on the economic costs of sexual harassment (and on the flipside: the economic gains of having a great, harassment-free work environment) can be a great thing if you want to motivate yourself or someone else in your workplace to start actively preventing and dealing with sexual harassment.

This insight will hopefully be a great motivator for you or your workplace to start – or get even more serious – with actively preventing and dealing with sexual harassment.

## What is sexual harassment?

- Experience versus intention
- Physical, verbal, non-verbal
- Who is at risk?  
age <-> gender <-> power



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But first of all, it is important to have the same understanding of “sexual harassment” – what it is, who is at risk and so on. Without a shared definition about what sexual harassment is – what kinds of behaviour and language counts as sexual harassment – everybody will most likely have their own thoughts about what it is and isn’t. And it is difficult to try to prevent and handle something we don’t even agree on what is. So that is why defining sexual harassment today – and in general – is crucial.

### Experience

The first and most important thing to tell about sexual harassment is that what counts as sexual harassment is the behaviour or language that is *experienced* as sexual harassment. This means that the experience – and not the *intention* of the person who is harassing – is the defining factor.

This does not mean that the intention of the harasser isn’t important at all. The intention is very important once a case of sexual harassment has to be dealt with. Because someone who didn’t intend to harass will most likely be more willing to change their behaviour and to be sympathetic about the harm they have (unintentionally) done. However, the intention of the harasser is not relevant when answering “What counts as sexual harassment?” – only when the workplace wants to

find a solution to the harassment.

### **Physical, verbal, non-verbal**

Secondly, sexual harassment can be physical (touch in any kind of way), it can be verbal (sexist language, “jokes”, conversations and so on) and at last, it can be non-verbal (stares, being shown sexually explicit pictures and so on).

### **Who is at risk?**

The third thing that is good to know about sexual harassment is who is at risk. Of course, everybody can be subjected to sexual harassment. However, some people have a much higher risk of being subjected to sexual harassment than others. A person’s risk of being subjected to sexual harassment can be determined by looking at the person’s age, gender, and power in the company – and the combination of the three.

And because sexual harassment is a highly gendered issue, this means that women are much more at risk than men. And the group who is the most at risk are young women without power in a company or in a certain work situation. This can be the young, new female employees, or it can be the woman with low job security or without union representation. So power is both formal and informal power. The less power someone has in all regards, the more likely the person is to be subjected to sexual harassment.

Just like women are more at risk than men, LGBTQI+ people – people who break with the societal cisgendered and heterosexual norm – are also more at risk than men.

Knowing who is more at risk can make the preventative work a little easier, because then you know who you may have to pay extra attention to.

## The facts: Economic consequences for the individual

- Sick leave
- Loss of job – sometimes complete loss of work ability
- Lack of referral – harder to get new job
- Loss of career opportunities, experience, co-worker relations, interesting work tasks
- Need for therapeutic support
- Higher risk of divorce

FACT – a study by the Danish Trade Union Confederation (FH) shows that every tenth person who has been subjected to sexual harassment quits their job.



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There are several economic consequences for the individual who has been subjected to sexual harassment.

Being subjected to sexual harassment can often lead to sick leave or even loss of job – oftentimes the problem is not that the person subjected to sexual harassment is fired, but the person ends up leaving themselves because of the psychological strain they experience. A Danish study shows that 1 out of 10 people who have been subjected to sexual harassment quit their job which is of course very unfortunate and a sign that they probably did not receive the help they needed or should have had.

Some people who have been subjected to sexual harassment lose their work ability partly or entirely. People who for example end up with PTSD, anxiety or depression because of their experiences with being sexually harassed, can have an extremely hard time finding their way into the workforce again which is of course a very serious consequence for the individual.

But even the people subjected to sexual harassment who "only" ends up quitting their job (not that this isn't a big and serious consequence) they often experience a setback in their work life/career. Quitting because of sexual harassment can mean

that the person does not get a referral (either because the one making the referral is the harasser or because the person subjected to the harassment just don't want anything to do with the workplace after quitting) which can make it harder for them to get a new job.

Other consequences can be career-setbacks due to the loss of career opportunities that the person has had to leave, loss of work experience, loss of network, loss of interesting work tasks and so on – things that make up a person's skill sets and work experience which is what a person builds their career around.

People subjected to sexual harassment also often need therapeutic or psychological support afterwards which also often is expensive.

Furthermore, people who have been subjected to sexual harassment also have a higher risk of getting a divorce. It is not possible to pinpoint the exact reason for this – but the stress and strain a person subjected to sexual harassment experiences, can of course affect the person's relationship to their spouse. And getting a divorce can also be both a financial and personal setback.

[The study referred to: Fagbevægelsens Hovedorganisation (2019): "Balance og ligestilling"/(Balance and equity)]



## The facts: Economic consequences of the workplace

### Direct costs:

- Sick leave
- Contract termination
- Employment and training of new employees
- Compensation payment
- Time spent administering and processing cases

### Indirect costs:

- Lower job satisfaction (gossip, lack of safety and trust)
- Decreased productivity (the harassed person *and* the co-workers)
- Bad reputation (attracting new employees and costumers)

**FACT** – A Danish study shows that someone who is exposed to sexual harassment has 60% higher instances of sick leave compared with someone who has not been exposed to sexual harassment.



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Sexual harassment has some very serious economic consequences for each workplace that struggles with sexual harassment cases – whether the company knows or does not know about this problem.

### Direct costs

There are some very direct costs such as the costs related to a person who is on sick leave, due to experiences with being sexually harassed, and who therefore does not participate actively in the workplace. A Danish study shows that someone who has been subjected to sexual harassment has 60 % higher instances of sick leave compared to someone who has not been subjected to sexual harassment. So if your company struggles with people going on sick leave, looking into sexual harassment may be a good idea.

If the person subjected to sexual harassment quits their job (or other people who are negatively affected by the effects it has on the quality of the work environment), then the company loses all of the knowledge and skills this person has – and the company has to spend money and resources first hiring and then training a new employee. Getting new employees because people quit is a costly and time-consuming affair.

Another direct cost of sexual harassment is when a company has to pay compensation to the employee who has experienced sexual harassment. Oftentimes sexual harassment cases are not dealt with and the person just quits and leaves the workplace of the harasser – however, the cases that do get discovered can also be very costly for the company. Both the compensation but also all the time spent administering and processing cases will cost the company money and resources. The harasser can of course also be fired as a consequence of the harassment, which is another additional cost that would not have existed had the harasser not harassed in the first place due to active, preventative work.

### **Indirect costs**

The more indirect costs of sexual harassment – but at least as important – are related to the work environment. A workplace with sexual harassment is not a good and safe workplace for the employees. Even for the employees who are not directly subjected to sexual harassment themselves can experience lower job satisfaction and this often results in a decreased productivity and efficiency at work which is not good business.

Another indirect cost is the company's reputation. Every company wants to attract the best employees – and to do that you have to have a good reputation that underlines how much your employees enjoy their work and work environment. A company with issues of sexual harassment will not attract the best people. And even if people outside the workplace may not know about a company's issues with sexual harassment, the company will most likely not have the reputation of being a great workplace in general.

The company's reputation is also very relevant when it comes to attracting new customers/clients. A company known for having a bad work environment – for not having strong, ethical values or for having issues with sexual harassment – is not something that will help attract more business, to say the least.

[The Danish study referred to is: Anette Borchorst og Lise Rolandsen Agustin (2017): "Seksuel chikane på arbejdspladsen – faglige, politiske og retslige spor" (/Sexual harassment in the workplace – professional, political and legal)]

## The facts: Economic consequences for society

- Permanent loss of *or* decreased work ability
- Time on unemployment benefit after leaving job
- Expenses in relation to divorce (case processing)

FACT – A Danish study shows that sexual harassment from citizens against employees within the social and health sector cost society around 13.5 million euro in 2014 – solely in terms of production losses due to employees' sick leave



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If someone – due to being subjected to sexual harassment – loses their work ability, or part of it, instead of contributing to society's economy, they become an expense to society because the person will need unemployment benefits and perhaps some kind of health care support to help them with their psychological or other challenges.

A Danish study shows that citizens subjecting social and health workers to sexual harassment cost the Danish society around 13,5 million euro in 2014 – and that is only if you look at the employees sick leave. Then think about all of the other direct and indirect consequences sexual harassment has and what amount of money that may amount to in total.

[The National Research Centre for the Working Environment (NFA) (2018): "Seksuel chikane i omsorgsarbejde"(/Sexual harassment in care-taking work)]

## The economic incitement for prevention

Preventing and dealing with sexual harassment is of course something everybody should do because it is the right thing.

However, many things (being busy, not believing your workplace has sexual harassment, lack of knowledge and tools...) can be barriers for starting this work.

In that case, the economic losses of sexual harassment (AND the economic **gains** of creating a good work environment), can be a great motivator to start preventing and dealing with sexual harassment.

If you don't have the power to start preventing and dealing with sexual harassment yourself, present these economic aspects of sexual harassment to your leader/manager as a way of convincing the person of the importance this work



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In an ideal world everybody would actively prevent and deal with sexual harassment because it is simply the right thing to do. But there are many different barriers to why people don't do this very important work. Some may feel like they are too busy to start an initiative to prevent/deal with sexual harassment. Some may think that sexual harassment is not an issue in their workplace – actually many people (oftentimes, men) tend to think that there isn't a problem. But there is. Sexual harassment is a very big hidden issue that often does not come out into the open – but not seeing sexual harassment does not mean that it does not exist. It is a taboo topic, and many people subjected to sexual harassment feel fearful, guilt or shame or are not sure they will be met with understanding if they speak up or seek help. And this is part of the reason why people who have been subjected to sexual harassment do not just speak up about their experiences.

Waiting for a sexual harassment case to come forward to start acting is the wrong way to go about this. First of all, if your workplace does not actively work with preventing and with dealing with sexual harassment – and if the employees do not know that you take this topic seriously – you will most likely not hear of any sexual harassment, because people will be too afraid or feel too unsafe to seek help.

The only right way to go about this is to be actively working with this topic: Bringing awareness to it, being very clear about the fact that sexual harassment is not okay, talking about where people can get help and so on – if you do that and do it continuously (this is very important), then you will hear about cases and then you can deal with it.

Knowing about these psychological and economic consequences of sexual harassment will hopefully motivate you to start this preventative work. And even if you do not have the power to start this work, the hope is that you can bring this knowledge to your manager and convince them that this is a great thing – ethically *and* financially – to start focusing on.

## How to deal with and prevent sexual harassment: The conversations and meetings

How to:

1. **PREVENT:** Talk about boundaries (*course available*)
2. **PREVENT:** Remind people before office parties, in news letters, on posters, and so on, about being mindful and respectful of other people's boundaries and that "a no is a no".
3. **PREVENT+DEAL WITH:** Co-worker responsibility (*course available*)
4. **DEAL WITH:** What to say/not to say to a (suspected) victim/survivor of sexual harassment (*course available*)

Always:

- "Attack" sexual harassment from multiple angles
- Have a **continuous** conversation and focus



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In this course we will not go in depth about how to prevent and deal with sexual harassment. The aim of this course is to motivate you to realise that you need to take this issue seriously and to educate you on the consequences of sexual harassment.

However, to get an idea about how to deal with and prevent sexual harassment we will go through the different actions you can take. Some of the things you can start doing today, and others you can learn more about in additional courses. But just knowing how to go about dealing with and preventing sexual harassment, and what it takes to do so, may be a great start.

The first thing you need to do to both deal with and prevent sexual harassment in the workplace is to start conversations and to set up meetings in your workplace where you can talk about this topic.

A good idea is to set up a meeting where you and your co-workers can talk about boundaries and have a conversation about what is all right to say and do in your workplace and what is not. The aim here is not that everybody has to have the exact same boundaries but more that you all learn how to talk about and express your boundaries with each other. The aim is also that each employee realises that

everybody has different boundaries, and that you need to be mindful of them. And you don't even need to talk explicitly about "sexual harassment". Just talking about boundaries will have a preventive effect. And then, when you have become more used to these kinds of conversations, then you may start talking more explicitly about sexual harassment.

There are some very useful tips and "how-to's" when it comes to facilitating this kind of conversation about boundaries and possibly sexual harassment. It can be a difficult topic to talk about and that is why it is a good idea to know exactly what to do and why so that everybody feels safe in the situation.

The second, and very easy thing, you can do is to start talking about boundaries and sexual harassment in your everyday work life. Before an office party, the boss could for example in her/his/their welcome-speech remind everybody to be mindful of other people's boundaries and remind everybody that sexual harassment is not okay. Or you could remind people of your values – for example about how everybody needs to respect each other and each others different boundaries and so on – in your news letter, on posters on the wall and so on.

The third thing you can do, which both deals with and prevents sexual harassment, is to start thinking about and talking about sexual harassment as something that involves everyone in the workplace – not just a person who has been subjected to sexual harassment and the harasser. Talk about the fact that a safe and good work environment should be everybody's responsibility and that if someone sees or hears something they think could be sexual harassment, they should speak up and take responsibility for the situation. A conversation about co-worker responsibility and how to speak up as a witness is very effective. However, creating a norm of co-worker responsibility when it comes to creating a harassment-free work environment is not an easy job – intervening in a situation and saying "hey, this is not okay!" can be very difficult and uncomfortable.

Therefore, there is a course available about how to go about this.

The fourth thing relates to how to deal with a sexual harassment case properly, meaning say or maybe not say to a person whom you suspect has been subjected to sexual harassment – or of you *know* that someone has been subjected to it. Talking to and supporting a victim/survivor of sexual harassment comes with quite a lot of responsibility, because it is important to show that you want to help, that the person can trust you, that you do not blame them or multiple other things. It is in general a very hard conversation to have, and therefore it is important to have some knowledge about what to remember to say and what not to say in a situation like this.

There is also an entire course available about how to have this difficult conversation.

To sum up, the very best way to both deal with and prevent sexual harassment is to “attack” the problem from multiple angles. Doing all of the thing above is by far the best and most effective way to do this work.

And another very important thing: To prevent and deal with sexual harassment, you have to have a continuous conversation and awareness about it. Even the most amazing workplace with a top notch work environment has to have a continuous conversation and awareness to make sure that they maintain a sexual harassment-free work environment. The single most effective thing is to talk about it and to keep talking about it.



## How to deal with and prevent sexual harassment: The policy

There are **eight** topics that should be included in a sexual harassment policy

1. Definition (Experience, not intention)
2. Zero-tolerance
3. Examples
4. Second-hand sexual harassment
5. Who to contact
6. Disciplinary action
7. Anonymity



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Conversations and meeting are very important if you want to both deal with and prevent sexual harassment.

But it is also very important to have a policy about sexual harassment – and not just any policy. It is very important that the policy is detailed and contains all the useful information.

The topics that should be covered in a policy about sexual harassment is:

1. A definition about what sexual harassment is: for example that it can be verbal, physical, and non-verbal and that *experience*, not *intention*, is what defines what counts as sexual harassment
2. That you have a zero tolerance when it comes to sexual harassment. This does not mean that everyone who has sexually harassed someone else (intentionally or unintentionally) will automatically get fired. It just means that sexual harassment will be taken very seriously, which is an important message to state clearly.

make the quite abstract term “sexual harassment” a lot more concrete and tangible which is very important. Because a big barrier when wanting to start dealing with sexual harassment cases and support victims/survivors can be that people who indeed *have* experienced sexual harassment often do not think of themselves as “victims of sexual harassment”. Many people do not seem to connect the term “sexual harassment” to themselves or their own uncomfortable experience. Therefore it is very helpful and important to make this term as concrete as possible so that people may realise that what they have experienced actually *is* sexual harassment.

4. State that this policy also covers people who have been subjected to second-hand sexual harassment. Second-hand sexual harassment relates to people who in some way help or support people who have been subjected to sexual harassment and who – because of their supporting role – become subjected to sexual harassment or bullying themselves. This can be a way in which harassers try to maintain a culture of silence. Therefore, people who have been subjected to second-hand sexual harassment should also be mentioned.
5. Who to contact if someone wants to seek help. The best thing is to have multiple people to contact in the case that one of the contact people is the harasser or to make sure that the person subjected to sexual harassment can choose someone they trust.
6. Either state that there will be disciplinary action to anyone who subjects someone to sexual harassment – or state *what kind* of disciplinary action harassers will get.
7. State that it is possible to tell about experiences with sexual harassment and still stay anonymous.

## Final quiz

1. Write down three ways in which sexual harassment is an economic burden to an individual
2. Write down three ways in which sexual harassment is an economic burden to a company
3. Write down as many of the seven important topics that should be included in a policy on sexual harassment
4. Write down as many of the three previously mentioned *preventative* measures one can make use of
5. Write down as many of the two previously mentioned measures one can make use of to *deal with* sexual harassment



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To see what has stuck with you today, we will have a short final quiz with five questions/tasks.

Find a piece of paper and write down:

- **Three ways in which sexual harassment is an economic burden to an individual**

Answer:

Sick leave

Loss of job – sometimes loss of work ability

Lack of referral – harder to get new job

Loss of career opportunities, experience, co-worker relations, interesting work tasks

Need for therapeutic support

Higher risk of divorce

- **Write down three ways in which sexual harassment is an economic burden to the company**

Answer:

Sick leave

Contract termination

Employment and training of new employees

Compensation payment

Time spent administering and processing cases

Lower job satisfaction (gossip, lack of safety and trust)

Decreased productivity (the harassed person *and* the co-workers)

Bad reputation (attracting new employees and costumers)

- **Write down as many of the seven important topics that should be included in a sexual harassment policy**

Answer:

1. Definition (Experience, not intention)

2. Zero-tolerance

3. Examples

4. Second-hand sexual harassment

5. Who to contact

6. Disciplinary action

7. Anonymity

- **Write down as many of the three previously *preventative* measures one can make use of**

Answer:

Talk about boundaries (*course available*)

Remind people before office parties, in news letters, on posters, and so on, about being mindful and respectful of other's boundaries and that "a no is a no".

Co-worker responsibility (*course available*)

- **Write down as many of the two previously mentioned measures one can make use of to *deal with* sexual harassment**

Co-worker responsibility (*course available*)

What to say/not to say to a (suspected) victim/survivor of sexual harassment (*course available*)

[Go through each participant's answer with them and talk about what they have written down.]