CCISUA-wide Staff Survey on Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Harassment and Abuse of Authority

Coordinating Committee for International Staff Unions and Associations
Survey Results

Discrimination
Sexual Harassment
Harassment
Abuse of Authority
CCISUA is pleased to present an overview of the results of the survey it recently ran on workplace discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment and abuse of authority. The purpose of the survey is to better understand your experiences, particularly at a time when policies on these issues are under scrutiny, some under revision.

We strongly believe that we must all make use of the opportunities to improve these systems, and ensure that policies are grounded in the real-life experiences of staff, and in their expectations. The need for improvement is even more evident when reviewing the results of the survey:

- 40% of respondents state that they have been victims of discrimination
- 37% were victims of harassment
- 15% were victims of sexual harassment
- 44% were victims of abuse of authority

While these numbers are frightening, also very troublesome is the lack of confidence staff have in the reporting mechanisms. In all cases, fewer than 20% of staff reported the prohibited conduct; in the case of sexual harassment, only 10% did.

Why? Because of a serious lack of confidence in the system, and the fear of reprisal. Of those who do file a complaint, very few see an investigation take place. And the results of the investigations are viewed with dissatisfaction.

While reviewing the results, keep in mind that they reflect global trends. There are significant differences between the responding entities, some faring better than others.

For reference purposes, the survey relies on the definitions of discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment and abuse of authority found in the UN Secretariat’s document, St/STB/2008/5.
Non CCISUA members, e.g.:
UNESCO, IOM, UNDP, UN Women, UNDSS, ICSC
More than 6,600 respondents

- 58% women
- 37% men
- 4% prefer not to say
Overview

All respondents:

- Discrimination: 40%
- Sexual harassment: 16%
- Harassment: 37%
- Abuse of authority: 44%

Prohibited conduct
Overview

Prohibited conduct

Female respondents

- Discrimination: 44%
- Sexual harassment: 23%
- Harassment: 40%
- Abuse of authority: 46%

Male respondents

- Discrimination: 34%
- Sexual harassment: 5%
- Harassment: 32%
- Abuse of authority: 39%
Discrimination
Victims of discrimination 40%

Women 64%

Men 31%

Prefer not to say 5%

Victims
Discrimination

Organizations

- UNICEF (15%)
- UNHCR (15%)
- UN HQ New York (14%)
- ILO (6%)
- Other (please specify) (12%)

Other organizations (15%)

Peacekeeping mission

NDP

UNOPS

UNJSPF

ECE

UNCTAD

OHCHR

UN Habitat

ECA

UNEP

IRMCT

OCHA

ESCWA

ESCAP

UNOV

UN Nairobi

UNODC

UNOG
Discrimination

By whom

- Supervisor 73%
- Peers 25%
- Colleagues 28%
- Other 20%

Human Resources
- managers
- partners
- recruitment
- member
On what basis

- Age: 22%
- Colour or race: 21%
- Disability: 1%
- Ethnic origin: 15%
- Language: 12%
- Nationality: 34%
- Gender: 42%
- Religion: 7%
- Sexual orientation: 3%
- Social origin: 7%
- Other: 24%

Discrimination
Victims of discrimination 40%
Did not file complaint: 87%

Why?

- Lacked confidence in the system: 56%
- Feared reprisal: 52%
- Confidentiality issues: 38%
- Insufficient evidence: 32%
- Unsure of type of abuse: 29%
- Lacked knowledge about the system: 23%
- Preferred informal means: 22%
Was an investigation held?

- Yes: 39%
- No: 61%
Discrimination

Outcome of investigation

- Extremely unsatisfactory: 48%
- Not satisfactory: 14%
- Somewhat satisfactory: 31%
- Fully satisfactory: 6%

Complaint

- Discrimination

"The perpetrator was recruited again in another agency"
"The outcome was fully satisfactory but it was not applied"
Sexual harassment
Victims of sexual harassment 16%

Women 83%
Men 13%
Prefer not to say 4%

Victims of sexual harassment

P 54%
G 29%
D or higher 3%
FS 0.3%
NPO 4%
Consultant 5%
Intern 1%
Former employee 1%
Other 4%
Sexual harassment

Organizations

- UNHCR (18%)
- UN HQ New York (18%)
- UNICEF (11%)
- Other (please specify) (11%)
Complaint

Sexual harassment

Did not file complaint 90%

Filed complaint 10%
Sexual harassment

Did not file complaint 90%

Why?

- Lacked confidence in the system: 45%
- Feared reprisal: 44%
- Confidentiality issues: 35%
- Preferred informal means: 29%
- Insufficient evidence: 27%
- Unsure of type of abuse: 23%
- Lacked knowledge about the system: 22%
- Other reasons: 22%
I was on a short term contract and my supervisor threatened to give me a low rating. I was a consultant. I was not confident that anything would change. As a man, I was ashamed to complain. I feared that complaining would damage my career. Lack of confidentiality in HR. I was discouraged. A man is never taken seriously when sexually harassed by women. No mechanism to report an external partner. There were no direct words or acts; it was subtle, mainly with comments and invitations.
Sexual harassment

Was an investigation held?

- Yes: 39%
- No: 61%

File complaint: 10%
Sexual harassment

Yes 39%

Outcome of investigation

Extremely unsatisfactory 37%
Not satisfactory 18%
Somewhat satisfactory 34%
Fully satisfactory 11%

“No result”
“Poor communication”
“Traumatic experience”
“No protection for victims”
“Had to interact professionally with the abuser”
“Perpetrator moved to another department but not fired”
Harassment
Victims of harassment 37%

Prefer not to say 5%

Women 63%

Men 32%

Victims
Harassment

Organizations

- UNICEF (15%)
- UNHCR (15%)
- UN HQ New York (15%)
- Other (please specify) (12%)
- ILO (6%)
- UNODC
- UNOV
- ESCAP
- ESCWA
- OCHA
- IRMCT
- UNEP
- Peacekeeping mission
- UN Habitat
- ECA
- OHCHR
- UNCTAD
- ECE
- UNJSPF
- UNOPS
- WFP
- UNDP
- UNOPS
Harassment

By whom

- Supervisor: 76%
- Supervisee: 6%
- Colleagues: 17%
- Peer: 27%
- Other: 13%
Victims of harassment
37%
Harassment

File complaint: 18%
Did not file complaint: 82%

Why?

- Lacked confidence in the system: 54%
- Feared reprisal: 54%
- Confidentiality issues: 40%
- Preferred informal means: 27%
- Insufficient evidence: 23%
- Unsure of type of abuse: 21%
- Lacked knowledge about the system: 19%
- Other: 17%
“I feel threatened by my supervisor. He already dismissed staff and local staff arbitrarily and there is no surveillance in the system on his actions.” “I am still collecting evidence.” “I’m afraid to lose my job. Being a consultant my position is not steady and the continuation of my contract depends on my supervisor.” “I applied for another position in a different organization.”

“I was advised not to report the harassment by the offender’s supervisor, as doing so would have been detrimental to my career.” “There is still no formal mechanism in place to deal with discrimination / harassment by independent experts.” “I was advised by HR to find another position/duty station rather than fighting back.” “Filing a complaint labels you as a "trouble maker".”

“I was told by the Supervisor that he knows who goes to the Ombudsman, HR etc.”
Harassment

Was an investigation held?

- Did not file complaint: 82%
- Filed complaint: 18%

- No: 66%
- Yes: 34%
Harassment

Investigation

Yes  34%

Outcome of investigation

- Extremely unsatisfactory: 40%
- Not satisfactory: 20%
- Somewhat satisfactory: 31%
- Fully satisfactory: 9%

"The harasser remains in the system and was promoted."
"I was pressured to drop the charges."
"Despite the case being referred for disciplinary action, nothing was done."
"It took too long to get help. I felt abandoned."
Abuse of authority
Abuse of authority

Vicfims of abuse of authority 44%

Women 61%
Men 34%

Prefer not to say 5%

Victims
Abuse of authority

Organizations:
- UNICEF (18%)
- UN HQ New York (16%)
- UNHCR (15%)
- ILO (6%)
- Other (please specify) (11%)
Abuse of authority

- Supervisor: 87%
- Supervisee: 2%
- Colleagues: 8%
- Peer: 9%
- Other: 13%
Abuse of authority

Victims of abuse of authority
44%

Filed complaint
15%

Did not file complaint
85%
Abuse of authority

Did not file complaint 85%

- Filed complaint 15%
- Feared reprisal 57%
- Lacked confidence in the system 54%
- Confidentiality issues 40%
- Preferred informal means 22%
- Insufficient evidence 21%
- Unsure of type of abuse 19%
- Lacked knowledge about the system 17%
- Other 15%

Why?
“I am afraid of the abuser. I hoped that by being nice to that person I could avoid trouble – turns out I couldn't.” “I am scared of the non-renewal of my contract.” “I lacked confidence in the senior leadership that they would take action.” “I don't know how to file.” “As a JPO, it is hard to justify abuse of power because you are by definition in a lower position.” “Situation of vulnerability - short term contract, extensions depending on supervisor.” “It was in verbal manner and also without the witness/presence of a third party.” “People in charge of complaints are colluding with management and harassers.” “I was advised not to by my supervisor.” “I was warned by my supervisor that my EPAS will not look nice and no one will hire me.”
Abuse of authority

Was an investigation held?

- Yes: 36%
- No: 64%

Did not file complaint: 85%
Filed complaint: 15%
Abuse of authority

Outcome of investigation

- Extremely unsatisfactory: 33%
- Not satisfactory: 19%
- Somewhat satisfactory: 38%
- Fully satisfactory: 10%

"Nothing changed and the perpetrator didn't have to explain anything."
"Despite the case being referred for disciplinary action against the offender, nothing was done."
"The only penalty was to move the supervisor to another duty station."
We are grateful to the over 6,600 respondents from across the UN System for their time and efforts to help us better understand the experiences and concerns of UN employees.

CCISUA will share the results as widely as possible within the Organization to help us all prepare the way forward for a United Nations that is open, welcoming and above all, free of abuse.