



Gender Stat: Sexual Violence, Work and Financial Precarity

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Introduction

This Gender Stat, another in our Gender and Precarity series, underlines the connection between a high incidence of sexual violence and financial precarity. It is an overview of the incidence of sexual violence in industries such as restaurants/hospitality, trades, corporations and business, sex work, farmwork and the military. The data reflects the various types of sexual violence perpetrated at work—rape, sexual assault, verbal and physical sexual harassment, sexually (suggestive remarks, unwanted touching, pressure to date or engage in a sexual relationship), intimate partner violence, and even homicide. The statistics come from government sources (the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, etc.) as well as reports and studies from a variety of academic and nonprofit institutions.

Findings across data sources show that sexual harassment is common across industries and fields. It is experienced by men at higher rates than is commonly understood, and in some industries at comparable rates to women. For example, approximately one-half of all women and men working in the restaurant industry are sexually harassed. Whereas nine out of ten women in the construction industry report being the targets of sexual harassment, men - who make up 97 percent of the construction workforce - filed one-quarter of sexual harassment complaints. And 90 percent of women and 70 percent of men who are scientist trainees report being sexually harassed during their fieldwork training.

The Costs

According to sociologist Rebecca M. Loya in her paper "Rape as an Economic Crime: The Impact of Sexual Violence on Survivors' Employment and Economic Well-Being," "Researchers have found that sexual assault creates high financial costs for survivors and society at large." Researchers from the University of Miami and the University of Colorado–Denver, in their paper "The Cost of Crime to Society: New Crime-Specific Estimates for Policy and Program Evaluation," subdivide those costs into two categories: tangible and intangible. The following chart, adapted from their research, shows the types of costs in each category and their associated costs. The study finds that the intangible costs associated with each incident of sexual assault (\$199,642) is twice the rate of the next highest crime (aggravated assault at a cost of \$95,000) and second only to homicide (\$8.4 million). The study ultimately finds that the total tangible and intangible costs of each incident of sexual violence have the potential to reach \$240,776.

The National Sexual Violence Resource Center puts the annual cost of rape in the U.S. at \$127 billion.

A Legal Momentum fact sheet regarding female survivors of domestic violence shows that:

- Collectively, they miss approximately 8 million days of work annually.
- Because of lingering effects, half (50 percent) of sexual assault survivors quit or lose their jobs within a year of being assaulted.

According to a 2000 study by the University of Minnesota's Ross Macmillan, being the victim of sexual violence during adolescence has the potential to disrupt two key determinants of income in later life: educational achievement and employment success. For example:

- Up to 70 percent of the negative effects of the victimization come from lower achievements in education and employment, especially among young adults, including less educational aspiration, time and energy devoted to schoolwork and fewer goals for future success in education.
- Based on how much earning potential diminished across a lifetime for those who were sexually assaulted in adolescence, including the effect on educational attainment, Macmillan calculated the cost of violent criminal victimization at an average of \$242,000.
- Average hourly wages in early adulthood are more than \$1 lower for those victimized in adolescence.

Health-related costs

- Recently abused women have health care costs that are more than twice those of never abused women and about \$4,500 higher than women who have not been abused in the past year.
- A 2012 study published in the Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease found that Latina and African
 American women were more likely to experience depression if they had been victims of severe sexual abuse
 as girls.
- The National Sexual Violence Resource Center reported that more than three-quarters (81 percent) of women and one-third (35 percent) of men said they lived with short- and long-term effects from the sexual violence that they suffered.
- The center also found that the costs for health care among women who were sexually abused as children were 16 percent higher than those for women who were not abused.
- Women who are being physically or psychologically abused take part in more mental health services than women who are not, according to a 2009 study of 3,000 women (ages 18–64) in the Pacific Northwest. Those who were currently abused had a 2.5 times higher chance of having met with a mental health provider in the previous year. Even if the abuse was up to 5 years in the past, the health care costs for formerly abused women were about one-fifth (19 percent) higher than for women who had not been abused.
- According to a Service Women's Action Network fact sheet, health care costs for each military sexual
 assault amount to almost \$11,000. All told, in 2010 the Veterans Benefits Administration spent well over
 three-quarters of a billion dollars (\$872 million) on health care expenses related to sexual assault.

Snapshot of sexual violence at work

Sexual violence data from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission: According to its website, the EEOC is "responsible for enforcing federal laws that make it illegal to discriminate against a job applicant or an employee (including a veteran) because of the person's race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), or genetic information."

- The EEOC began issuing guidelines on sexual harassment in the workplace in 1980, the first year that a sexual harassment charge was filed.
- Before 1991 (the year that Anita Hill testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee and the nation that she
 had been sexually harassed by then—Supreme Court Justice nominee Clarence Thomas), 6,870 claims had
 been filed with the EEOC. In 1992, the number jumped to 10,532.

- In 1998, the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in the case *Oncale v. Sundowner Offshore Services, Inc.* elevated same-sex sexual harassment to the same status as harassment between different sexes, and opened the door for such complaints to be filed with the EEOC.
- In 2013, close to 1 in 10 (8 percent) complaints filed with the EEOC were for sexual harassment charges. From 1997 to 2011, 206,000 sexual harassment complaints were filed with the EEOC and its counterparts at the state and local level, with 29,773 originating from men (an average of 14 percent). Men's filings increased from just over 1 in 10 (12 percent) in 1997 to close to 1 in 5 (16 percent) in 2011.

Sexual violence data from other sources:

- In 2011, ABC News / Washington Post conducted a poll with just over 1,000 adults, more than two-thirds of whom considered sexual harassment a serious problem in the U.S. Moreover, 1 in 5 women and 1 in 10 men said they have been targets of sexual harassment at work.
- In 2013, *Huffington Post* and YouGov conducted a poll on the topic, also with about 1,000 adults. One in 5 respondents (19 percent) said they had been sexually harassed by a co-worker, though not a supervisor or boss. Of those, one guarter (27 percent) did not report the incident(s).
- A study by the Transgender Law Center called "The State of Transgender California Report: Results from
 the 2008 California Transgender Economic Health Survey" found that 15 percent of respondents had been
 sexually harassed at work. Respondents whose boss or supervisor knew that they were transgender were
 targeted with verbal and sexual harassment and disciplined at higher rates.
- In 2014, the American Bar Association noted that "Over 70% of workplaces in the U.S. have no formal workplace violence program or policy, and only 4% of employers actually train their workforce on domestic violence."
- The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) conducted a study of human resources
 professionals about domestic violence and stalking at their workplaces. About half of those responding
 represented private businesses (49 percent).
 - Almost half of the publicly owned companies were more likely to have formal policies regarding domestic violence (45 percent) and stalking (43 percent). In contrast, just over a quarter of privately owned for-profits were likely to have either (28 percent and 26 percent, respectively).
 - Over half of the organizations with 2,500 to 24,999 employees were likely to offer formal training to employees on sexual violence, domestic violence and stalking through an employee assistance program (59 percent). Less than a quarter (22 percent) of those with 1 to 99 employees were likely to do the same.
 - More than a third (36 percent) of the human resources professionals surveyed did not know if their companies offered such training.
 - The survey also revealed that addressing domestic violence (DV), sexual violence (SV) and stalking (ST) at work varied by organization type and size. For example:
 - Approximately half of the organizations reported at least one workplace issue related to sexual violence (53 percent), domestic violence (43 percent) and stalking (47 percent) over the previous five years. And yet only one-third or less conducted formal workplace trainings on SV (36 percent), and only one-fifth conducted training on DV (20 percent) or ST (20 percent).
 - Organizations with at least 25,000 employees had policies in place to address DV (58 percent), SV (77 percent) and ST (56 percent)
 - However, small organizations with less than 100 employees were least likely to have a policy for DV (19 percent), SV (44 percent) and ST (19 percent).
 - The way private companies address domestic violence is slowly being influenced by state laws, according to another SHRM report. For example, there is no federal law clearly describing an employer's obligation to an employee who is a domestic violence victim. However, in recent years, 16 states have passed mandates that require employers to provide unpaid leave for these employees: Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Kansas, Maine, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New Mexico, North

Carolina, Oregon, Virginia and Washington. Some, like Massachusetts, offer up to 15 days in a 12-month period.

Overview of sexual violence in specific industries/fields

Farmworkers

The seminal 2005 article "The Green Motel," published in *Ms. Magazine*, described an industry with a significant sexual harassment problem. As the EEOC regional attorney for the San Francisco, California, office said, female farmworkers are 10 times more vulnerable to sexual violence because "in the agricultural industry, the imbalance of power between perpetrator, company and the worker is probably at its greatest." A worker quoted in the article put it this way: "We thought it was normal in the United States that in order to keep your job, you had to have sex." (Also see "Lessons from the Fields: Female Farmworkers and the Law," a 2002 paper documenting levels of sexual harassment of farm workers.)

- As documented in the PBS Frontline documentary Rape in the Fields, the 2004 case EEOC v. Harris Farms
 Inc. was the first ever sexual harassment case by a worker against a grower to go before a jury in court,
 even though agriculture is considered the oldest industry in the U.S. Although that case resulted in an
 \$800,000 award for the worker, the second such case didn't make it to a jury until 2013.
- Since 1998, the EEOC has received just over 1,100 complaints of sexual harassment against agricultural industries.
- A 2012 report by Human Rights Watch found that women make up about one-quarter of the U.S. agricultural workforce and that at least half of the workforce is undocumented.
- In a 2010 study by University of California–Santa Cruz professor of psychology Irma Morales Waugh, 4 out of 5 (80 percent) of female farmworkers of Mexican descent said they had been the target of sexual harassment, which is at least 30 percent higher than the national workforce average of 35 to 50 percent.
- A study by the Southern Poverty Law Center found that female crop workers earn \$11,250 per year, which is below the poverty level for a household of one. In comparison, male crop workers earn \$16,250.
- The women in Morales's study reported that the sexual harassment they were subjected to left them with headaches (49 percent), trouble sleeping (52 percent), shaking hands (51 percent), perspiring or sweaty hands (49 percent), heart palpitations (48 percent), and chronic tiredness (48 percent). More than two-thirds (62 percent) reported feeling nervous or on edge.

Construction

- The National Women's Law Center estimates in a 2014 report that women comprise less than 1 in 20 (3 percent) workers in the construction and extraction industries, a proportion that has not increased significantly over the past two decades. That translates to 7.6 million men and 206,000 women. Three-quarters of female construction workers are white, 15 percent are Latina, 7 percent are African American and 3 percent are Asian American.
- Almost 9 out of 10 (88 percent) women in construction say they have been the target of sexual harassment.
- One woman quoted in the report said, "On the construction site, men don't see you as a plumber or as an
 electrician—they only see you as a woman who shouldn't be there. They give you a hard time to press you
 to quit. Women are groped, grabbed, and relentlessly harassed. A lot of women leave the job before a year
 is out. It's just too stressful. It'll never change without having more women on the work site and training
 women to compete in Ironwork."
- Men filed up to a quarter (20 to 25 percent) of the sexual harassment complaints brought against construction-related industries from 2002 to 2012.

Sex workers

- In 2011, the American Journal of Public Health published a study of 573 transgender sex workers in San Francisco and Oakland, California. More than half of adult respondents (52 percent) said they had been sexually assaulted by a customer. The highest rates were among whites (59 percent) and the lowest were among Latina/os (36 percent).
- The World Health Organization found HIV infections among sex workers are reduced by approximately a quarter (25 percent) when they are physically or sexually assaulted less.
- A study of 130 sex workers living in San Francisco found that:
 - o 75 percent reported a history of childhood sexual abuse, by an average of 3 perpetrators
 - o 68 percent had reported being raped since becoming sex workers
 - o 48 percent had been raped more than five times
 - 46 percent of those who reported rapes stated that they had been raped by customers
 - 68 percent of respondents from the study met criteria for a PTSD diagnosis
- Among homeless sex workers, 1 in 5 (21 percent) women and 1 in 20 (6 percent) men reported being sexually assaulted
- Almost one-third (30 percent) of shelter youth and close to three-quarters (70 percent) of street youth are
 victims of commercial sexual exploitation. The average age-of-entry into prostitution for girls is 12–14 years
 old. The average age for boys is 11–13 years old.
- More than a quarter (28 percent) of street youth and 10 percent of shelter youth use survival sex (selling of sex for shelter, food, drugs or money), which makes them more likely to have been victims of sexual assault.

Scientists

- A 2014 survey by anthropologist Kathryn B. H. Clancy showed that one in five (20 percent) of scientists had been sexually assaulted at work through unwanted or nonconsensual sexual contact or physical sexual harassment. More than half had been the target of sexual harassment in the form of sexual comments, jokes about sex, comments on physical appearance, etc.
- The group most targeted were trainees, i.e., students or recent graduates new to fieldwork: 90 percent of women and 70 percent of men were sexually harassed/assaulted during their training.
- Female scientists were four times more likely to be sexually assaulted than men (26 percent versus 6 percent).
- Not even a quarter of respondents (22 percent) could say they had worked on a field site with an established harassment policy.

Experienced	Gender	All % (N)	Respondent's Status at Time of Experience*		
			Trainee % (N)	Employee % (N)	Faculty % (N)
Men	41% (56/138)	68% (38)	20% (11)	13% (7)	
Assault	Women	26% (131/504)	86% (113)	11% (14)	2% (3)
	Men	6% (8/133)	75% (6)	0% (0)	25% (2)

*Not all respondents provided an answer to these questions. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0102172.t002

- There were 5,061 sexual assault reports across four branches of the armed services according to the survey results of the 2013 "Department of Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military." This is a 50 percent increase over the 2012 report, which recorded 3,374 sexual assaults. The most recent "Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Active Duty Members," from 2012, a secondary report about sexual violence in the military, reported that 6 percent of active military women and 1 percent of men had been the targets of unwanted sexual contact.
- For almost half (41 percent) of the victims, the assaults took place during the workday.
- During the assaults, 1 in 2 (50 percent) perpetrators used physical force, 17 percent used the threat of such
 force or 12 percent threatened to ruin the victim's reputation. Perpetrators were typically co-workers (almost
 two-thirds / 57 percent), other military personnel (40 percent) or a higher ranking person who was not in the
 victim's chain of command.
- Only 10 percent of women and 19 percent of men believe that sexual assault is less of a problem than it was four years ago. According to the Service Women's Action Network (SWAN), more than half of all sexual violence incidents in the military happen to men.
- Sexual violence—also called Military Sexual Trauma (MST)—is the leading cause of post-traumatic stress disorder among women in the armed services.

Restaurant industry

As mentioned earlier, Restaurant Opportunities Centers United conducted a survey of restaurant workers to understand how deeply embedded sexual harassment is in the industry. The types of sexual harassment include: sexual teasing, jokes, remarks, being cornered, deliberately touched, groped or pinched, inappropriately kissed or fondled, receiving sexually suggestive text messages from co-workers, pressure for dates, indecent exposure and rape.

Some highlights of the report:

- "The Glass Floor: Sexual Harassment in the Restaurant Industry" reveals that the rate of sexual harassment experienced by workers in the restaurant industry is almost comparable by gender: about half of men (47 percent) and women (50 percent).
- Transgender workers experience sexual harassment at a high rate, too, at 60 percent.
- More than half of those targeted are sexually harassed on a monthly basis.
- One percent of women and 2 percent of men surveyed had been the victim of rape or attempted rape by coworkers, while rape by a supervisor was experienced by one percent of each women and men.

Conclusion

Sexual violence is omnipresent in our society, including in the world of work. We all pay a price, but those who are direct victims are put on precarious financial footing. If a victim of sexual violence is targeted outside of work, the lingering impact of the violence limits one's ability to be healthy and engaged, to get an education and to earn a decent living. When the sexual violence takes place at work, it directly shapes a victim's economic reality that pits the need to earn a living to support self and family against the right to safety, security and the freedom from sexual violence. Working should not force workers into making an either/or choice

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