



Global Workshop on Sexual Harassment in Academia

Summary and Shared Commitments

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On 27-28 October 2025, the *InterAcademy Partnership* (IAP), in collaboration with the *U.S. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine* (NASEM), convened a workshop on examining sexual harassment in academia across international contexts. The workshop was hosted by *L'Académie des sciences* in Paris, France and was sponsored by the *Henry Luce Foundation*. It brought together 21 scholars, practitioners, and experts representing 16 countries.

Over the course of two days, participants discussed the shared and distinct challenges faced regarding sexual harassment and gender-based violence in their contexts, the costs for individuals and the scientific community, and the need for improved data collection to study both the problem and the impact of potential solutions. The workshop also highlighted case studies of innovative and effective approaches to preventing and addressing sexual harassment around the globe.

This document outlines the key takeaways from the two days of the workshop. It also asserts the shared values and commitments of the attendees to work towards producing an academic environment free of harassment.



Day 1: Definitions and Experiences Across Contexts

Panel One: Defining Sexual Harassment

The first day of the workshop was centered around three panel discussions, each tackling key issues that impact the ability to understand and address sexual harassment in a global academic context. The day began with a panel aimed at defining sexual harassment, moderated by Dr. Geneviève Almouzni, Director of Research at *Centre national de la recherche scientifique* (CNRS) and Member of the *Académie des sciences* and chair of gender and diversity working group at the European Research Council. Despite the initial aspiration, when this panel was first conceived by the workshop planning committee to develop a shared global definition of sexual harassment that could support collaboration on addressing the issue, the panel ultimately problematized this notion and offered a rich and thought-provoking discussion for participants.

Alima Sagito, Executive Director of Savannah Woman Integrated Development Agency in Ghana, highlighted the key challenge of shared definitions, noting that while it would be good to have a general framework that people understand across contexts, there is a need to allow variability to appropriately reflect context-specific understandings and experiences. A single definition risks elevating certain experiences over others, rather than fully capturing the lived realities of all who face sexual harassment across the global research enterprise.

This point was underscored by Virginia Braun, Professor of Psychology at the University of Auckland in New Zealand who expressed the need to recognize both the universality and particularity of sexual harassment. She noted that many institutions often model their policies on those of other universities, aiming to meet or exceed established standards. However, such policies may still fail to address the particular needs and realities of their own community.

Marcela Linková, researcher at the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, further noted that variations exist not only in definitions but also in the terminology used across contexts. Within the European Union, for example, there is a focus on the term *gender-based violence* rather than *sexual harassment*, in part to move away from the sexualized framing of the issue and to capture a broader spectrum of harmful behaviors.

Panelists ultimately argued for a unifying framework for sexual harassment that would allow for adaptation across contexts.

Panel Two: The Costs of Sexual Harassment

The second panel examined the costs of sexual harassment and was moderated by Meredith Nash, Independent Scholar from Australia. This panel focused, not only on the costs individuals face from experiencing or witnessing harassment, but also on the costs to institutions, to society, and to the scientific research enterprise. Members of this panel argued that these costs were similar across most contexts, highlighting that even with unique circumstances the experience of sexual harassment is similarly damaging.

Melina Dederichs, Founder and Managing Director of The Yellow Project in Germany, noted that impacts on individual health are comparable around the world. Prolonged gender harassment can cause PTSD symptoms and can manifest physically in a variety of ways.

Gina El-Feky, Acting President of the Academy of Scientific Research and Technology of Egypt, highlighted the immense loss to the academic and scientific enterprise as marginalized groups, particularly women, who face higher rates of harassment are pushed out. This loss not only harms their careers but removes the many contributions they could otherwise make. It also results in more homogenous teams despite the evidence that more diverse teams are more creative and produce better outcomes.

The panel closed with a “magic wand” question, asking panelists to reflect on the single factor they would most want to change tomorrow if they could. Ana Vidu, Ramon y Cajal Fellow at the University of Ramon Llull in Spain, noted the need to cultivate strong and effective academic leadership capable of meaningfully addressing sexual harassment rather than prioritizing protecting the institution’s reputation. Even with promising policies in place, progress is stifled by weak leadership; conversely, strong leaders can sometimes overcome less than adequate policies to drive positive change.

Panel Three: Data Collection Across Countries and Contexts

The final panel examined data collection across countries and contexts. This panel was moderated by Gabriela Torres, Professor at Rhode Island College in the United States. Panelists spoke of ways to improve data collection within local contexts, consider cross-context comparisons, and increase the sharing of key information and promising practices.

At present, there is no single mechanism collecting data on sexual harassment in academic settings with a global perspective, but there have been some efforts at regional data collection. Anna Bull, Co-Founder and Director of The 1752 Group from the United Kingdom, discussed the need for intersectional data collection and problematized the use of the term ‘unwanted’ in measuring sexual harassment, as power-based sexual conduct does not have to be unwanted to

be harmful or create a hostile environment. She highlighted data collection through a UK national study, Power in the Academy, on staff-student sexual misconduct, as well as the UniSAFE project, a European Union funded effort to examine sexual harassment in research performing organizations. She noted that while these efforts are important, people also need to believe the problem exists where they are, emphasizing the need for local data.

The panel closed with attention to ways to improve the sharing of promising practices. Nasima Carim, Professor at the University of Pretoria in South Africa, and Giorgia Magni, Lecturer at the University of Geneva in Switzerland, both underscored the need to look at contexts where policies and resources show promise and share key information and reports from different countries in one common space.

Day 2: Case Studies Across the Globe

The second day of the workshop turned to a series of country-specific case studies to further examine the unique contexts of the experts joining the workshop. Case studies were shared from Australia, Colombia, Nigeria, France, India, and Jordan.

The case study presentations were book-ended by presentations from organizations supporting work in this space: the Henry Luce Foundation from the United States and the Fondation l'Oréal from France. Aida Gureghian, Program Director at the Henry Luce Foundation, opened the session, sharing ongoing efforts of the Foundation to support women in academic STEM. She drew particular attention to the critical role of storytelling to humanize individual experiences and build momentum to create change and garner support. The case studies that followed built on this call for storytelling.

Juliette Rochet, Director of Committees and Reports Department at the *Académie des sciences* in France laid groundwork on the status of women in science in France and shared the output of the report released in 2024 titled *Science: Where are the Women?* She discussed a self-perpetuating cycle in which stereotypes of women impact performance in science, resulting in less guidance as well as self-censorship, that leads to a lower proportion of women and less visibility, ultimately reinforcing stereotypes. Though the report was not explicitly on sexual harassment, she highlighted how this cycle is also a breeding ground for harassment.

Several presenters detailed the legal and structural landscape surrounding sexual harassment and gender-based violence within their countries and the ways in which the contours of legal action have and have not responded to struggles on the ground. Across different contexts, public attention and scrutiny following a scandal often spurred action. Presenters highlighted the lived

realities that drove the action and pointed out the many ways in which progress remains incomplete.

Sharanjet Dhawan, Assistant Professor at *Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University* (CCSHAU) in India, outlined the case of Bhanwari Devi, a Dalit woman who was gang raped after intervening to prevent the marriage of a young girl in her village. In response to this horrific event, women's groups and NGOs under the collective name Vishakha filed a Public Interest Litigation in the Supreme Court of India that led to new guidelines for all workplaces in India including academic institutions and were codified into law in 2013 under the POSH Act.

Rana Husseini, Senior Reporter from the Jordan Times in Jordan, told the story of decades of struggle to drive change in gender-based violence. In the face of broad societal denial and resistance from policy makers, a grassroots student-led campaign emerged in 2012 specifically calling for the repeal of Article 308, an act that allowed rapists to evade legal action if they married their victims. Progress took time but was catalyzed further with the international MeToo campaign in 2017. In 2023, Jordanian labor law was amended to define sexual harassment for the first time and introduce criminal penalties.

While these wins represent important progress within the broader societal landscape, and have meaningful implications for scientific and academic environments, presenters also recognized that more work was still needed and even improved legal landscapes continue to have significant gaps.

Meredith Nash, independent scholar from Australia, highlighted that Australia benefits from an integrated approach to managing workplace harassment, where sexual harassment is viewed and legally treated as a work safety issue. She noted, however, that integration on paper does not always translate to transformation in practice. Even with strong structures in place, culture often lags, requiring not a single intervention but a strategic, tailored, and integrated systems approach.

Evelyn Umemezia, Professor at the University of Benin in Nigeria, echoed this message. In Nigeria, the first comprehensive definition of sexual harassment was codified in 2015 under the VAPP Act, but interpretations and applications remain inconsistent across the country. Even with progress, she noted that many people continue to view sexual harassment as a private matter rather than a serious violation requiring intervention and some remain unaware that sexual harassment is illegal. She argued for cultural transformation through accountability and legal integration, training and capacity building, and inclusive policies.

Liliana Lopez-Forero, Professor at the Universidad Simón Bolívar in Colombia focused her remarks on the challenges of seeing legal change truly turn into culture change. She began her talk centering the impact of gender-based violence in Colombia, where 18 women were murdered in 2025 for speaking out about human rights. Laws may seek to create change, but she pointed out

that in many instances legal compliance was procedural rather than transformative. To create transformative change, she called for broader conversations and new epistemologies that respect local and marginalized communities and the unique perspectives they bring rather than only accepting prevailing methods and ways of learning.

The session closed with a presentation from Caroline Negre, Director of Science Programs, at the Fondation l'Oréal in France. She highlighted ongoing efforts by the Fondation l'Oréal to advance women and address sexual harassment. In particular, she detailed a 2022 L'Oréal-Ipsos survey of 5200 scientists from 117 countries which found that 1 in 2 women reported being the victim of sexual harassment at work¹. In response, the Fondation l'Oréal is working on tools like a Violentimeter, a visual tool designed in collaboration with the University of Geneva to help individuals identify escalating patterns of violence and to help better understand the problem.

Shared Values, Shared Commitments

Inspired by the expertise and perspectives shared at the October 2025 workshop convened by the InterAcademy Partnership, the presenters and attendees asserted their shared values and shared commitment to advancing this work in their own domains and to fostering academic environments free of harassment.

Shared Values

Central to the vision for positive change towards addressing sexual or gender-based harassment are a set of shared values that guide how the presenters and attendees approach and understand the issue. These values shape both the analysis of the problem and a commitment to meaningful solutions.

Human Dignity

Sexual harassment violates the fundamental principle of human dignity by diminishing and mistreating individuals². Upholding dignity within academic environments is not only an essential value in its own right, but also critical to advancing the global academic enterprise by ensuring fair and equal access for everyone.

¹ Tétaz, A. and Vacas, F. 2023. Une femme scientifique sur deux révèle avoir été victime de harcèlement sexuel au travail. <https://www.ipsos.com/fr-fr/une-femme-scientifique-sur-deux-revele-avoir-ete-victime-de-harcelement-sexuel-au-travail>

² UNESCO. 2019. Anti-Harassment Policy. <https://shknowledgehub.unwomen.org/en/resources/unesco-anti-harassment-policy>

Global Interconnectedness

The academic enterprise is inherently global, connecting people across borders in the shared pursuit of knowledge and its benefits. With this interconnectedness comes a collective responsibility to safeguard scientific environments from sexual harassment. Yet, sexual harassment within academia remains a global challenge. When harassment occurs anywhere in the global academic community, it undermines scholars everywhere and disrupts the shared pursuit of knowledge and discovery. To advance a fair and thriving academic enterprise, everyone needs to work together to ensure all academic spaces are free from any harassment.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is grounded in the principles of objectivity, honesty, openness, accountability, fairness, and stewardship³. Sexual harassment violates these principles, particularly accountability, fairness, and stewardship by failing to take responsibility for harm, fostering judgement based on unfair criteria, and creating an exclusionary environment⁴. Sexual harassment drives those harassed out of academia, denying them the opportunity to contribute their perspectives. This exclusion is not only harmful to individuals but also undermines the process of discovery, compromising its quality, completeness, and credibility.

Shared Commitments

Participants of the October 2025 workshop affirmed the urgent need for action and committed to advancing efforts to prevent and address sexual harassment within their own countries and contexts. They identified several key steps necessary to strengthen the integrity, fairness, and excellence of the academic environment and prevent sexual harassment.

Collective Framework with Respect for Context-Specific Understandings

A regionally led, globally connected initiative is needed to strengthen the capacity of academic institutions and academies around the world to address sexual harassment. While unifying frameworks can aid communication across contexts, presenters and attendees acknowledged that no single definition adequately encompasses the unique needs of all contexts. Instead, they call for a collective framework that highlights the clear harms of sexual harassment and gender-based violence and makes clear the boundaries that need to be respected while allowing the

³ NASEM. 2017. *Fostering integrity in research*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/21896>.

⁴ NASEM. 2018. *Sexual Harassment of Women: Climate, Culture, and Consequences in Academic Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/24994>

flexibility for local context to shape the specific needs, approaches, and experiences of individuals and communities impacted by sexual harassment.

Data Collection and Analysis

Participants and attendees call for expanded access to data on sexual harassment in academic institutions globally and for the development of clear and consistent metrics that can be applied across contexts. It is the responsibility of academic institutions to collect key data to better understand the needs and experiences of their communities and to ensure the environments they work in are conducive to their full and unincumbered participation. Greater collaboration is also needed to develop metrics that can be applied across country contexts without flattening the specificity and uniqueness of each domain or region.

Sharing of Promising Practices and Improved Knowledge Transfer

Participants and attendees call for greater collaboration and sharing of effective practices of addressing sexual harassment in academia across institutions, cultures, and countries. Continued engagement via conferences, workshops, and research will allow innovative and effective practices to spread and create systemic change. Many useful tools, resources, and policies already exist and there is a strong need for knowledge translation to avoid reinventing what already exists. This sharing requires the same kinds of flexibility and acknowledgement of context-specific needs outlined previously that will allow policies developed in one setting to be appropriately and authentically brought into others.

Application of an Intersectional Approach

While sexual harassment can affect anyone, those with multiple marginalized identities are disproportionately impacted. Their experiences highlight how harassment intersects with other forms of discrimination and bullying^{5 6 7}. Addressing sexual harassment needs to center these voices to ensure solutions that reflect the full scope of lived experiences.

⁵ Calafell, B.M. 2014. Did it Happen Because of Your Race or Sex? University Sexual Harassment Policies and the Move Against Intersectionality. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5250/fronjwomestud.35.3.0075?seq=1>

⁶ Rostamian, A., Firouzjah, A.R., and Asfaji, A.A. 2022. Sociological Study of Sexual Harassment of Disabled Women in Mazandaran Province. https://ssoss.ui.ac.ir/article_26331.html?lang=en

⁷ Humbert, A.L. and Strid, S. 2024. Intersectionality and Gender-Based Violence: An Empirical Multi-Level Examination of Prevalence and Frequency in Universities and Research Organizations. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/10778012241265363>

Engagement of Allies Across the Academic Enterprise

Sexual harassment affects not only those directly targeted but also colleagues and witnesses, who can experience similar adverse effects^{8 9}. Thus, it is important for all members of the academic enterprise to act as allies and active bystanders in addressing this problem and ensure an academic environment where everyone can thrive. It is especially important for those in leadership positions to take on personal accountability to act and create a space where all individuals can work freely and without violence.

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⁸ Miner-Rubino, K., and Cortina, L. M. 2004. Working in a context of hostility toward women: Implications for employees' well-being. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1076-8998.9.2.107>

⁹ Miner-Rubino, K., and Cortina, L. M. 2007. Beyond targets: Consequences of vicarious exposure to misogyny at work. *Journal of Applied Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.92.5.1254>



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