

STUDY REPORT

# WORKPLACE SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE CIVIL SERVICE IN GEORGIA



This publication was prepared by CRRG-Georgia in cooperation with Civil Service Bureau of Georgia within the framework of the UN Women implemented project “Good Governance for Gender Equality in Georgia” supported by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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CIVIL SERVICE IN GEORGIA



**UN WOMEN**

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Norwegian Ministry  
of Foreign Affairs





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# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
<b>CRRC</b>	Caucasus Research Resource Centers
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>Istanbul Convention</b>	Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
<b>LEPL</b>	Legal Entity of Public Law
<b>MoD</b>	Ministry of Defence of Georgia
<b>SHAS</b>	Sexual Harassment Attitudes Scale
<b>SHDQ</b>	Sexual Harassment Definitions Questionnaire
<b>SHRAS</b>	Sexual Harassment Reporting Attitudes Scale
<b>UN Women</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

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- FIGURE 1:** Now read some situations that happened to some [man/woman] at work with a senior of their opposite sex. Would you consider the following as sexual harassment or not? (percentage of “yes” responses)
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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Study on Workplace Sexual Harassment in the Civil Service<sup>1</sup> in Georgia is a joint initiative of UN Women and the Civil Service Bureau of Georgia. The study was prepared by CRRC-Georgia for UN Women within the framework of the “Good Governance for Gender Equality in Georgia” project generously supported by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The study aimed at generating evidence to inform policies on preventing and responding to workplace sexual harassment in Georgia’s civil service and had the following objectives:

- ▶ To obtain estimates of the prevalence and forms of sexual harassment in the civil service
- ▶ To examine civil servants’ awareness of and attitudes towards sexual harassment in the workplace, including its causes, places of occurrence, consequences, risks and protective factors, legislation/policy in place and reporting mechanisms, as well as their views on preventing sexual harassment
- ▶ To understand the characteristics of perpetrators of workplace sexual harassment in the civil service and the impacts of workplace sexual harassment on those who experience it

The study used a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative research. An online survey was carried out between mid-December 2020 and early February 2021 and involved 461 civil servants. In addition, 35 semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with civil servants who were recruited from the online survey, as well as

with selected representatives of government and civil society organizations. The study was implemented in line with established methodological and ethical standards and guidelines<sup>2</sup> and was informed by methodologies such as the Australian National Survey on Workplace Sexual Harassment<sup>3</sup> and the Violence against Women Survey conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights,<sup>4</sup> as well as international and regional frameworks such as the Council of Europe Istanbul Convention, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (DEVAW) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) general recommendations No. 19 and No. 35.

## KEY FINDINGS

### Awareness of and attitudes towards sexual harassment

- ▶ While civil servants may be aware of the phenomenon of sexual harassment in theory, they are less likely to identify it in practice. For instance, inappropriate comments or jokes with sexual pretexts are accepted and regarded as normal as employees do not perceive it as an unwelcome behaviour. Stemming largely from established societal norms, many civil servants perceive sexual harassment as a part of typical working culture.

1 Civil service refers to employment within state and local self-government public (budgetary) institutions. For more detailed information about the definition of civil service, see the Law of Georgia on Public Service. Available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/3031098?publication=26>.

2 United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Guidelines for Producing Statistics on Violence against Women: Statistical Surveys (New York, United Nations, 2014). ST/ESA/STAT/SER.F/110. Available at [http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/docs/Guidelines\\_Statistics\\_VAW.pdf](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/docs/Guidelines_Statistics_VAW.pdf).

3 Kate Jenkins, Everyone’s Business: Fourth National Survey on Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces (Sydney, Australian Human Rights Commission, 2018). Available at <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/sex-discrimination/publications/everyones-business-fourth-national-survey-sexual>.

4 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Violence against Women: An EU-Wide Survey – Survey Methodology, Sample and Fieldwork (Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2014). Available at <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2014/violence-against-women-eu-wide-survey-main-results-report>.



- ▶ Women and men have different perceptions of what can be considered sexual harassment. Men were less likely than women to consider staring and unwanted glancing as harassment.
- ▶ Gender differences in perceptions are considerable, as the majority of women (93 per cent) believe that sexual harassment is a serious social problem, while only 44 per cent of men think the same.
- ▶ The majority of surveyed civil servants agreed that workplace sexual harassment needs to be taken seriously (98 per cent) and that perpetrators should be strictly prosecuted (95 per cent).

### Prevalence and forms of sexual harassment

- ▶ Workplace sexual harassment is a widespread phenomenon in the civil service in Georgia. One third of the survey respondents reported having experienced sexual harassment in the civil service. Every two in five among the female respondents and workers in central government institutions said they experienced workplace sexual harassment. Half of the respondents who have spent 20 or more years in the civil service reported having experienced sexual harassment during their civil service tenure.
- ▶ Women and civil servants under the age of 35 were more likely to have been victims of sexual harassment. Women are also more likely to experience more than one form of sexual harassment than men. About 31 per cent of women reported experiencing more than one form of harassment, while only 15 per cent of men reported the same.
- ▶ Survey results attest that the majority of sexual harassment cases go unnoticed by outsiders. Only one fifth of respondents who have experienced sexual harassment said that someone else was present during the incident.
- ▶ Verbal and non-verbal cues rather than physical violations of privacy are more prevalent forms of sexual harassment in the civil service. In addition, non-physical and verbal harassment such as explicit comments, questions about one's

private life, staring, jokes, gestures and unwanted invitations to go out on a date are more likely to happen repeatedly.

- ▶ The likelihood of being sexually harassed increases in less formal situations such as during business trips, team-building exercises and corporate parties.
- ▶ Experts and informants from the civil service noted that male-dominated workplaces such as law enforcement agencies bear higher risks of sexual harassment. Threats of sexual harassment are lower in institutions where women hold leadership positions.

### Perpetrators and bystanders

- ▶ Ninety-one per cent of women who had experienced sexual harassment named a male colleague as the perpetrator. Most perpetrators are reported to be older than their victims.
- ▶ One fourth of respondents who reported experiencing harassment refused to describe their relationship with the perpetrator. A plurality of others (about 40 per cent) named a manager or work supervisor as the perpetrator of their latest sexual harassment experience.
- ▶ Forty-seven per cent of survey respondents report that they have learned about or witnessed sexual harassment in one form or another during their time in Georgia's civil service, mostly through word of mouth.
- ▶ Reporting is the least preferred action by bystanders when it comes to reacting to sexual harassment cases. Only 3 per cent of the bystanders reported the incident to national authorities, while 6 per cent said that they did nothing. The majority (62 per cent) said that they provided emotional support to the victim.
- ▶ The qualitative interviews revealed that bystanders' inaction could be explained by them not being sure whether what they witnessed is harassment. General societal attitudes towards reporting, including victims considering it an intrusion by others into their own life, further prevent bystanders from intervening.

- ▶ Bystanders are more likely to intervene when the perpetrator is someone of the same rank. If a supervisor is involved, they usually do not intervene.
- ▶ Workplace sexual harassment training attendance is associated positively with the awareness of reporting mechanisms and less sexist attitudes towards sexual harassment.

## Reporting workplace sexual harassment

- ▶ In general, civil servants hold favourable attitudes towards reporting sexual harassment. The majority of respondents agreed that civil servants have the right to report workplace sexual harassment (94 per cent), and about 80 per cent agreed that reporting workplace sexual harassment is an effective way of stopping the abuse. Data show, however, that these attitudes are not translated into practice and that the majority of sexual harassment cases in the civil service go unreported.
- ▶ At the same time, reporting workplace sexual harassment in the civil service is perceived to have negative consequences for one's career. Thirty-four per cent of survey respondents agree that those who report sexual harassment risk being looked upon badly, and 24 per cent share the opinion that reporting sexual harassment leads to animosity in the workplace.
- ▶ The qualitative interview respondents named the lack of information regarding what can qualify as sexual harassment, the lack of reporting mechanisms, concerns about confidentiality (i.e. a lack of trust towards colleagues or leadership) and the lack of trust towards institutions as key obstacles to reporting. Other concerns include personal factors such as the fear of retaliation from the perpetrator, shame or guilt, career considerations, family problems and the lack of support from colleagues and the general public.
- ▶ An immediate supervisor, the Public Defender's Office and a dedicated reporting mechanism for reporting sexual harassment are perceived to be the most comfortable ways to report sexual harassment in the civil service.
- ▶ Protecting confidentiality and sensitizing top management on sexual harassment issues have been identified as priorities for effective anti-sexual harassment mechanisms.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ It is recommended that internal mechanisms on the prevention of and response to sexual harassment in the civil service be introduced.
- ▶ Civil service organizations should consider regular and, if possible, mandatory sexual harassment training for civil servants, ensuring that they are informed about the phenomenon, legislation, available response mechanisms and consequences of workplace sexual harassment.
- ▶ Civil service organizations should ensure that high-ranking officials are sensitive towards sexual harassment issues and, as role models, consistently demonstrate their commitments towards preventing sexual harassment in the workplace. Zero tolerance policy towards sexual harassment should be encouraged at the workplaces.
- ▶ To encourage actual reporting behaviour, civil service organizations should regularly conduct awareness-raising campaigns to promote anti-sexual harassment legislation and policies and encourage reporting by both victims and bystanders.
- ▶ To further encourage reporting, civil service organizations should better protect the confidentiality of not only the victims of sexual harassment but also those who are bystanders.
- ▶ Among other actions, civil service organizations should consider promoting women to high-ranking positions as a preventive measure towards sexual harassment.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Global context

Everyone has the right to live a life free from violence, including sexual harassment, be it in the workplace or in public spaces. In spite of this, sexual harassment in the world of work is present in all jobs, occupations and sectors of the economy in all countries across the world. Moreover, even though sexual harassment can be theoretically experienced by both – men and women, in practice, traditionally and globally, women are more likely to become victims of sexual harassment in general and at the workplace. The latter can be explained by existing gender norms and power imbalance between women and men. Sexual harassment against women in the world of work is a serious violation of women’s human rights and a major barrier to achieving equality of opportunity and access to decent and dignified work.<sup>5</sup> It has a devastating impact on women’s health, well-being and economic status. It is also deeply connected to social norms, values and stereotypes that foster gender inequalities, discrimination against women and unequal power relations between men and women, including intersecting forms of discrimination, for example, based on gender, race, age, disability and other characteristics.

Taking into account that definitions of workplace sexual harassment vary in national legislations of different countries, estimates from available country surveys show that as many as 75 per cent of the

world’s women aged 18 and over, or at least 2 billion women, have experienced sexual harassment.<sup>6</sup> A study of 42,000 people in the European Union found that every other woman (55 per cent) has experienced sexual harassment at least once since the age of 15.<sup>7</sup> Among women who have experienced sexual harassment, 32 per cent indicated that the perpetrator was somebody from the employment context – such as a colleague, a boss or a customer – and 75 per cent of women in top management jobs reported having experienced sexual harassment in their lifetime.<sup>8</sup>

Despite its high prevalence, sexual harassment in the workplace remains largely unreported, with many victims, bystanders and witnesses afraid or reluctant to come forward or unsure about how to do so. When victims do complain, many face ineffective complaints systems or procedures, experience retaliatory action or further violence and harassment, or lose their jobs. Social norms blaming the victim or stigmatizing women speaking out about gender inequalities also perpetuate the silence around sexual harassment. Studies have documented the devastating effects of sexual harassment on women’s psychological and physical health. Victims of workplace sexual harassment often suffer from depression and post-traumatic stress disorder.<sup>9</sup> Other research has shown that the experience of workplace sexual harassment negatively affects

5 Jane Pillinger, *Handbook: Addressing Violence and Harassment against Women in the World of Work* (Geneva, UN Women, ILO, 2019). Available at [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---europe/---ro-geneva/---ilo-ankara/documents/publication/wcms\\_731370.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---europe/---ro-geneva/---ilo-ankara/documents/publication/wcms_731370.pdf).

6 Joseph Chamie, “Sexual Harassment: At Least 2 Billion Women”, Inter Press Service News Agency, 1 February 2018. Available at <http://www.ipsnews.net/2018/02/sexual-harassment-least2-billion-women/>.

7 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Violence against Women: An EU-Wide Survey*.

8 Darius K-S Chan et al., “Examining the Job-Related, Psychological, and Physical Outcomes of Workplace Sexual Harassment: A Meta-Analytic Review”, *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (December 2008): 362–76, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.2008.00451.x>.

9 Dan Cassino and Yasemin Besen-Cassino, “Race, Threat and Workplace Sexual Harassment: The Dynamics of Harassment in the United States, 1997–2016”, *Gender, Work & Organization*, vol. 26, No. 9 (September 2019), pp. 1221–40. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12394>.

women's job satisfaction and performance,<sup>10</sup> leads to occupational segregation and hinders women's economic empowerment.<sup>11</sup>

Various international and regional women's rights instruments, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the ILO Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (No. 111) and the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (hereinafter the Istanbul Convention), call on governments, employers, workers and their organizations to take appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment and to develop programmes and procedures to eliminate sexual harassment and other forms of violence against women in the workplace and elsewhere. The women of the global #MeToo movement have further unearthed a long-running injustice and invited the public into a discussion on sexual harassment that has not previously garnered widespread attention or support. The movement has created a pivotal moment in time, showing that sexual harassment is neither trivial nor uncommon, thereby magnifying the need for governments and employers to strengthen prevention and response mechanisms on sexual harassment.

Studies attest that women are more vulnerable to sexual harassment in the workplace than men. Perpetrators are overwhelmingly male, and the prevalence of harassment varies across occupational groups, sectors, ages and educational attainments.<sup>12</sup>

The International Labour Organization (ILO) identifies situations where women are more exposed to sexual harassment. These include working in jobs requiring interaction with the public, including care

work with those who are in distress, for example. The ILO further lists occupations where women are more vulnerable to sexual harassment. These include working with objects of value, in situations not covered by labour laws and social protections, in resource-constrained settings, under unsocial working hours, in relative isolation and/or remote locations, in intimate spaces and private homes, in conflict disaster zones, and in places where there are high unemployment rates.<sup>13</sup> While women of all ages and levels of education experience harassment, younger women and women with higher education are more likely to be harassed.<sup>14</sup>

Studies consistently find that women workers in health-related occupations are more likely to be sexually harassed in the workplace. In contrast, sexual harassment in the civil service, which is the subject of the presented study, is generally less investigated.

Data on workplace sexual harassment are scarce. Reasons for the lack of evidence are manifold and range from conceptualization to underreporting sexual violence. While international and regional agreements offer specific definitions of violence and harassment against women in the workplace, disagreements between national legislations exist, complicating identifying the victims of such abuses. Underreporting represents yet another hindrance to the estimation of the scale of workplace sexual harassment against women. In contexts with high unemployment, the underreporting of workplace sexual harassment cases is associated with the reluctance of losing a job.<sup>15</sup> Shame, stigma and fear are common reasons why cases of sexual harassment often go unreported. Additionally, existing legislation, the police and justice system, the procedural burden of filing complaints and the lack of awareness among relevant authorities prevent women from reporting instances of sexual harassment.<sup>16</sup>

10 Darius K-S Chan and others, "Examining the Job-Related, Psychological, and Physical Outcomes of Workplace Sexual Harassment: A Meta-Analytic Review", *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, vol. 32, No. 4 (December 2008), pp. 362-76. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.2008.00451.x>.

11 Cassino and Besen-Cassino, "Race, Threat and Workplace Sexual Harassment".

12 Darcy Hang and Melissa Moyser, "Harassment in Canadian Workplaces", *Insights on Canadian Society* (2018). Available at <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2018001/article/54982-eng.pdf>.

13 Pillinger, Handbook.

14 Jenkins, *Everyone's Business: Fourth National Survey on Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces*.

15 Cassino and Besen-Cassino, "Race, Threat and Workplace Sexual Harassment".

16 Pillinger, Handbook.

## 1.2. National Context

During the past two decades and in the aftermath of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Georgia has seen considerable progress in advancing the policy and legislative framework around gender equality and violence against women. In 1994, Georgia acceded to CEDAW, an international instrument for the protection of women's rights, with no reservations; and at the 1995 Beijing Conference, Georgia joined the countries that agreed to develop action plans for improving the conditions of women. In 2017, Georgia ratified the Istanbul Convention and adopted a milestone legal framework aimed at harmonizing the domestic legislation with the Istanbul Convention. In addition, Georgia endorsed the Sustainable Development Goals by nationalizing all 17 goals, including Goal 5 – to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, including via the elimination of all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres.

Important legislative proposals have been introduced with the aim of aligning Georgia's legislative framework with the principles of gender equality and ending violence against women. The aim of these amendments was to bring domestic legislation in compliance with international requirements set by pertinent conventions to which Georgia is a party. These include the adoption of the 2006 Law of Georgia on the Elimination of Violence against Women and/or Domestic Violence, and the Protection and Support of Victims of Such Violence; the 2006 Law of Georgia on Combating Human Trafficking; the 2010 Law of Georgia on Gender Equality; and the 2014 Law of Georgia on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination. The latter includes the prohibition of discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation and gender identity, as do the amendments made to the Criminal Code in 2012, criminalizing domestic violence.

In Georgia, the National Study on Violence against Women conducted in 2017 revealed that 20 per cent of women in Georgia have experienced sexual harassment, of whom 10 per cent have reported experiencing sexual harassment in the workplace.<sup>17</sup> The findings of this study have greatly informed the agenda of the Government, development partners and civil society organizations on tackling sexual harassment. As a result, in 2017, the Government of Georgia amended the Code of Conduct for Civil Servants to include the responsibilities of civil servants on preventing and responding to workplace sexual harassment. In 2019, the Parliament of Georgia adopted landmark legislation establishing regulations for the prevention of and response to sexual harassment in public spaces and in the workplace.

While Georgia has made progress in addressing sexual harassment, significant gaps remain. Legal change has not yet translated into outcomes for victims as the reporting on sexual harassment remains extremely low. An overwhelming majority of employers do not have internal reporting mechanisms or mandatory trainings on sexual harassment, contributing to low reporting. At the time of the study's fieldwork, only 1 out of 10 ministries – the Ministry of Defence (MoD) – had adopted an internal sexual harassment complaints mechanism.<sup>18</sup> In 2020, an increasing number of civil service organizations started to adopt internal sexual harassment complaints mechanism – an effort led by the Inter-Agency Commission on Gender Equality, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence with UN Women support. Nevertheless, these efforts are still in the embryonic stage, and the prevalence of, as well as the awareness of and attitudes towards, workplace sexual harassment remains grossly underresearched, with data remaining scarce.

17 UN Women and GEOSTAT, National Study on Violence against Women in Georgia 2017: Summary Report (Tbilisi, UN Women, 2018). Available at <https://georgia.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/03/national-study-on-violence-against-women-in-georgia-2017>.

18 Georgia, The 2018 Report on the Implementation of the UN Security Council's Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security in Georgia (ქალეზბე, მშვიდობასა და უსაფრთხოებაზე გაეროს უშიშროების საბჭოს რეზოლუციების განხორციელების 2018-2020 წლების საქართველოს ეროვნული სამოქმედო გეგმის 2018 წლის ანგარიში) (Tbilisi, 2018). Available at <http://myrights.gov.ge/uploads/files/docs/72951325ანგარიში-2018-.pdf>.

### 1.3. Study goals and objectives

The Study on Workplace Sexual Harassment in the Civil Service in Georgia is a joint initiative of UN Women and the Civil Service Bureau of Georgia. The study was prepared by CRRC-Georgia for UN Women within the framework of the UN Women-implemented project “Good Governance for Gender Equality in Georgia” supported by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The initiative aimed at generating evidence to inform policies on preventing workplace sexual harassment in Georgia’s civil service and had the following objectives:

- ▶ To obtain estimates of the prevalence and forms of sexual harassment in the civil service during workers’ lifetime as well as in the preceding 12 months
- ▶ To examine civil servants’ awareness of and attitudes towards sexual harassment in the workplace, including its causes, places of occurrence, consequences, risks and protective factors, legislation/policy in place and reporting mechanisms, as well as their views on how it can be prevented
- ▶ To understand the characteristics of perpetrators of workplace sexual harassment in the civil service and the impacts of workplace sexual harassment on those who experience it

The study used a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative research. An online survey was carried out between mid-December 2020 and early February 2021 and involved 461 civil servants. In addition, 35 semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with civil servants who were recruited from the online survey, as well as with selected representatives of government and civil society organizations. The study was implemented in line with established methodological and ethical standards and guidelines<sup>19</sup> and was informed by methodologies such as the Australian National Survey on Workplace Sexual Harassment<sup>20</sup> and the Violence against Women Survey conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights,<sup>21</sup> as well as international and regional frameworks such as the Council of Europe Istanbul Convention, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (DEVAW) and the CEDAW general recommendations No. 19 and No. 35.

This report proceeds as follows. First, a comprehensive review of global and national contexts is presented, followed by the results of the qualitative and quantitative studies administered by CRRC-Georgia among civil servants and corroborated with expert interviews. The report concludes with a summary of the findings and evidence-based policy recommendations.

19 United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Guidelines for Producing Statistics on Violence against Women.

20 Jenkins, Everyone’s Business: Fourth National Survey on Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces.

21 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Violence against Women: An EU-Wide Survey.



## 2. METHODOLOGY

The aim of the study is to obtain estimates of the prevalence and forms of sexual harassment in the civil service. This study examines civil servants' awareness of and attitudes towards issues of sexual harassment in the workplace and establishes the characteristics of perpetrators of workplace sexual harassment in the civil service. Finally, this research unveils the effects of workplace sexual harassment on those who experience it.

This study uses a mixed-methods approach and combines evidence from quantitative and qualitative components. The study's quantitative component is based on a self-selected, self-administered online survey of Georgian civil servants. In contrast, the findings of the qualitative component stem from in-depth interviews with civil servants and experts.

The self-administered and confidential online survey asked respondents about their attitudes towards and experiences of workplace sexual harassment in Georgia's civil service. The United Nations Guidelines for Producing Statistics on Violence against Women informed the design of the instrument.<sup>22</sup> At the end of the survey, respondents were redirected to the online resources provided by the Public Defender's Office on the prevention of workplace sexual harassment. The Civil Service Bureau assisted in distributing the questionnaire among the civil service workers.

To gain an in-depth understanding of respondents' attitudes and experiences, the questionnaire included several standardized inventories, including a modified version of the Sexual Harassment Definitions Questionnaire (SHDQ),<sup>23</sup> an inventory of

attitudes towards sexual harassment by Collins and Blodgett,<sup>24</sup> and the Sexual Harassment Reporting Attitudes Scale (SHRAS).<sup>25</sup> Personal and bystander experiences of sexual harassment were measured using adapted questions from the Australian National Survey on Workplace Sexual Harassment<sup>26</sup> and the Violence against Women Survey by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights.<sup>27</sup> The final instrument was developed by UN Women and CRRC-Georgia in close cooperation with the Civil Service Bureau and the Inter-Agency Commission on Gender Equality, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and focuses on capacity development.

Before the main fieldwork, the questionnaire was thoroughly piloted and tested. Pilot interviews were administered with selected civil servants. They provided feedback about the concerns and possible issues regarding the questionnaire. In total, nine women and one man representing public institutions located in and outside the capital completed the online survey. The pilot respondents ranged in age from 26 to 45. Four respondents worked in a central public institution, four were employees of a Legal Entity of Public Law (LEPL), and two worked in a subdepartmental agency. Based on the recommendations from the pilot interviews, the survey instrument was slightly changed (mainly in terms of wording).

The questionnaire measures the prevalence of sexual harassment by providing respondents with a list of behaviours likely to constitute sexual harassment and asking them whether they had experienced these behaviours (i.e. the behavioural definition of

22 United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Guidelines for Producing Statistics on Violence against Women.

23 Danielle Foulis and Marita P. McCabe, "Sexual Harassment: Factors Affecting Attitudes and Perceptions", *Sex Roles*, vol. 37, No. 9 (November 1997), pp. 773–98. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02936339>.

24 Eliza G.C. Collins and Timothy B. Blodgett, "Sexual Harassment...Some See It...Some Won't", *Harvard Business Review* (March 1981). Available at <https://hbr.org/1981/03/sexual-harassmentsome-see-itsome-wont>.

25 Brian Cesario, Elizabeth Parks-Stamm, and Mujgan Turgut, "Initial Assessment of the Psychometric Properties of the Sexual Harassment Reporting Attitudes Scale", ed. Traci Craig, *Cogent Psychology*, vol. 5, No. 1 (January 2018). Available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311908.2018.1517629>.

26 Jenkins, *Everyone's Business: Fourth National Survey on Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces*.

27 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Violence against Women: An EU-Wide Survey*.

sexual harassment). Such an approach is thought to measure the prevalence of sexual harassment more accurately than using the legal definition of sexual harassment.<sup>28</sup>

The majority of the results quoted in this report are based on the behavioural definition, an approach thought to measure the prevalence of sexual harassment more accurately than the legal definition.

Overall, 461 interviews were collected between mid-December 2020 and early February 2021. Two thirds (313 cases) of interviewees were women, 181 interviews were given by civil servants under the age of 34, and 161 interviews were conducted with respondents aged 35–44. At the same time, 119 surveys were administered to individuals who were

aged 45 and older. More than half (54 per cent, specifically 248 respondents) worked at institutions located in Tbilisi, while 46 per cent (213 respondents) were employees outside Tbilisi.

The majority of interviewees (262) worked in central government institutions, 78 were employed in local governments, 35 worked in court administrations, and 33 worked at a subdepartmental agency. Twenty-nine were workers at LEPLs. Twenty-four respondents worked at other institutions.

The study's qualitative component is based on 35 semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted with civil servants (recruited from the online survey) and experts. The majority of interviewees were female (Table 1).

**TABLE 1.**  
Gender distribution of semi-structured interview respondents

	Women	Men
Civil servants	20	7
Experts	7	1
Total	27	8

The presented study had limitations. Due to the online survey's self-selected nature, estimates derived from the survey need to be taken with care when generalizing to the Georgian civil servants' total population. While invitation emails were sent to most civil servants, those who have experienced harassment or are aware of such cases might have responded to the survey disproportionately. Nonetheless, as the survey findings are mainly

consistent with the study's qualitative component, we carefully argue that the survey generally reflects the situation in Georgia's civil service. As for the findings on prevalence, figures too should be interpreted carefully, considering the fact that many civil servants nationwide mostly worked remotely during the preceding 12 months before the survey due to the COVID-19-related restrictions.

28 Jenkins, Everyone's Business: Fourth National Survey on Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces.



# 3. STUDY FINDINGS

## 3.1. Awareness of and attitudes towards sexual harassment

- ▶ The majority of civil servants are aware of the phenomenon of sexual harassment. The vast majority of survey respondents were able to identify sexually suggestive comments (86 per cent), a joke about a sexually explicit topic (90 per cent) and unnecessary physical familiarity (98 per cent) as examples of sexual harassment. Asking a woman for a date in exchange for career advancement was identified as sexual harassment by 91 per cent of respondents.
- ▶ While civil servants may be aware of the phenomenon of sexual harassment in theory, they are less likely to identify it in practice. For instance, inappropriate comments or jokes with sexual pretexts are accepted and regarded as normal as employees do not perceive it as an unwelcome behaviour. Stemming largely from established societal norms, many civil servants perceive sexual harassment as a part of typical working culture.
- ▶ Women and men have different perceptions of what can be considered sexual harassment. For example, men were less likely to consider staring and unwanted glancing as harassment than women.
- ▶ Gender differences in perceptions are considerable, as the majority of women (93 per cent) believe that sexual harassment is a serious social problem, while only 44 per cent of men think the same.
- ▶ The majority of surveyed civil servants agreed that workplace sexual harassment needs to be taken seriously (98 per cent) and that perpetrators should be strictly prosecuted (95 per cent).
- ▶ Georgian civil servants score relatively low on the sexism scale. Nevertheless, sexist attitudes that condone workplace sexual harassment are prevalent among civil servants: almost one third (31 per cent) of respondents agreed to the statement that attractive women should expect sexual advances in the workplace. Every fifth respondent agreed that women often encourage supervisors' sexual interests to improve their work situation.
- ▶ Women, younger respondents and those who have spent less than 20 years in the civil service are less likely to hold sexist attitudes and/or condone sexual harassment.

To understand the extent of civil servants' awareness of sexual harassment, several standardized tests were administered under the quantitative research that measured their attitudes towards and awareness of sexual harassment. First, respondents were presented with a modified version of the SHDQ developed by Foulis and McCabe.<sup>29</sup> The SHDQ scale consists of four items describing hypothetical situations and asking interviewees to evaluate whether

they would consider these as instances of sexual harassment.

The overwhelming majority of respondents considered items describing sexually suggestive comments (86 per cent), a joke about a sexually explicit topic (90 per cent) and unnecessary physical familiarity (98 per cent) as examples of sexual harassment. Representatives of key demographic groups held broadly similar opinions.

29 Foulis and McCabe, "Sexual Harassment".

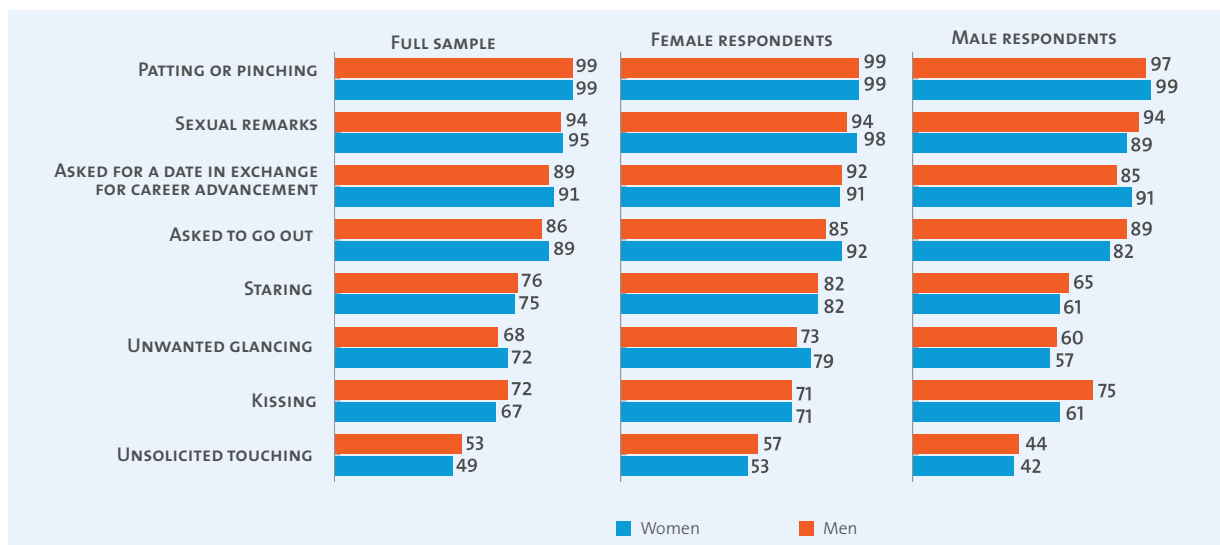
While these data suggest that civil servants are mostly aware of the definition and forms of sexual harassment, the qualitative research revealed that in practice, civil servants are often unable to properly identify sexual harassment in real life. For instance, while male respondents in the qualitative interviews shared general concerns regarding the issue, many argued there is confusion around the term, as sometimes even a simple compliment might be regarded as harassment.

*“For instance, a girl walks in front of me, and my reaction is, ‘Wow, what a cool woman she is.’ [...] I may have said nothing bad but praised [the way she looked]. Nonetheless, [such a compliment]*

*might have caused an awkward [situation]. Words that are received as uncomfortable for a person is also harassment.” (Civil Servant 20, male, 56 years old, Tbilisi)*

To further investigate subjects’ attitudes towards workplace sexual harassment, respondents took another standardized test designed by Collins and Blodgett.<sup>30</sup> Similar to the SHDQ inventory, this inventory also asked about a hypothetical situation. In contrast with the original instrument, half of the sample was presented with a vignette describing such cases that might happen to women. Another half was asked about men.

**FIGURE 1**  
**Now read some situations that happened to some [man/woman] at work with a senior of their opposite sex. Would you consider the following as sexual harassment or not? (percentage of “yes” responses)**



There were no statistically significant differences in the assessment of hypothetical situations whether the subject was a woman or a man (Figure 1).<sup>31</sup> **Nonetheless, women and men hold different perceptions of what can be considered sexual harassment. Men were less likely to consider staring and unwanted glancing as harassment**

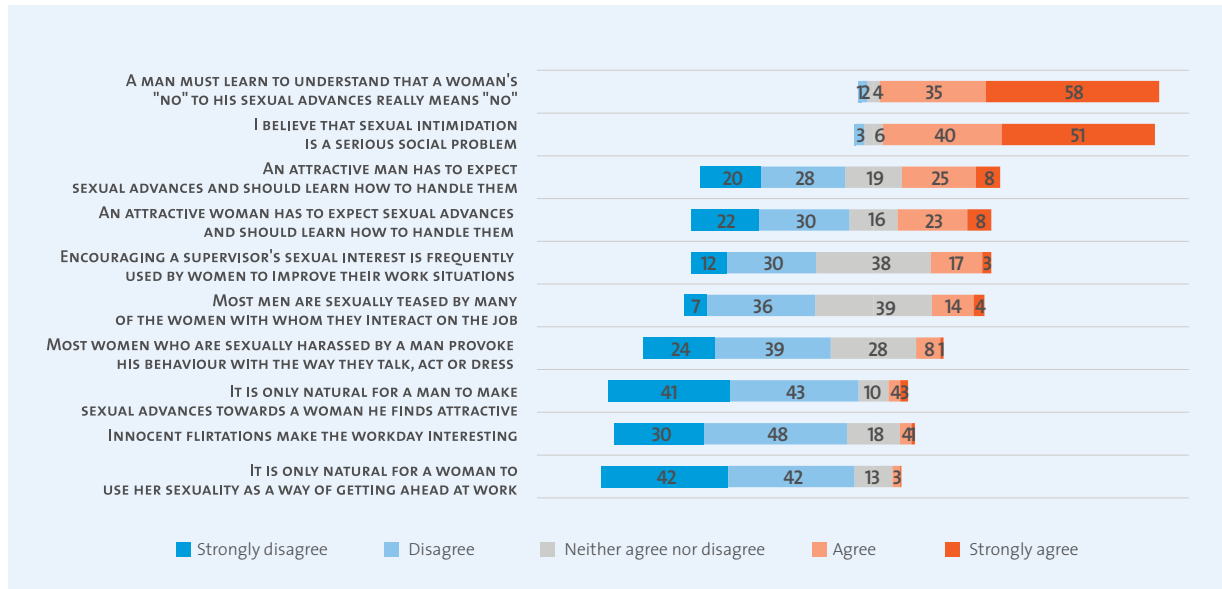
than women. Sixty-five per cent of men who were asked about a male subject and 61 per cent of men asked about a female subject said that a situation involving unwanted staring was sexual harassment. Eighty-two per cent of women responded that this should be considered sexual harassment, irrespective of the gender of the hypothetical subject.

30 Collins and Blodgett, “Sexual Harassment...Some See It...Some Won’t”.

31 Here and below, proportions in the charts might not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding error.

**FIGURE 2**

Below, we give opinions that some people hold. Others disagree. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of these statements? (percentage)



The study also explored the prevalence of sexist attitudes among civil servants. For these purposes, the Sexual Harassment Attitudes Scale (SHAS), a special inventory designed by Mazer and Percival, was used.<sup>32</sup> Respondents were asked to evaluate their attitudes towards 10 different statements that described various popular opinions towards sexual harassment (Figure 2) on a five-point scale.

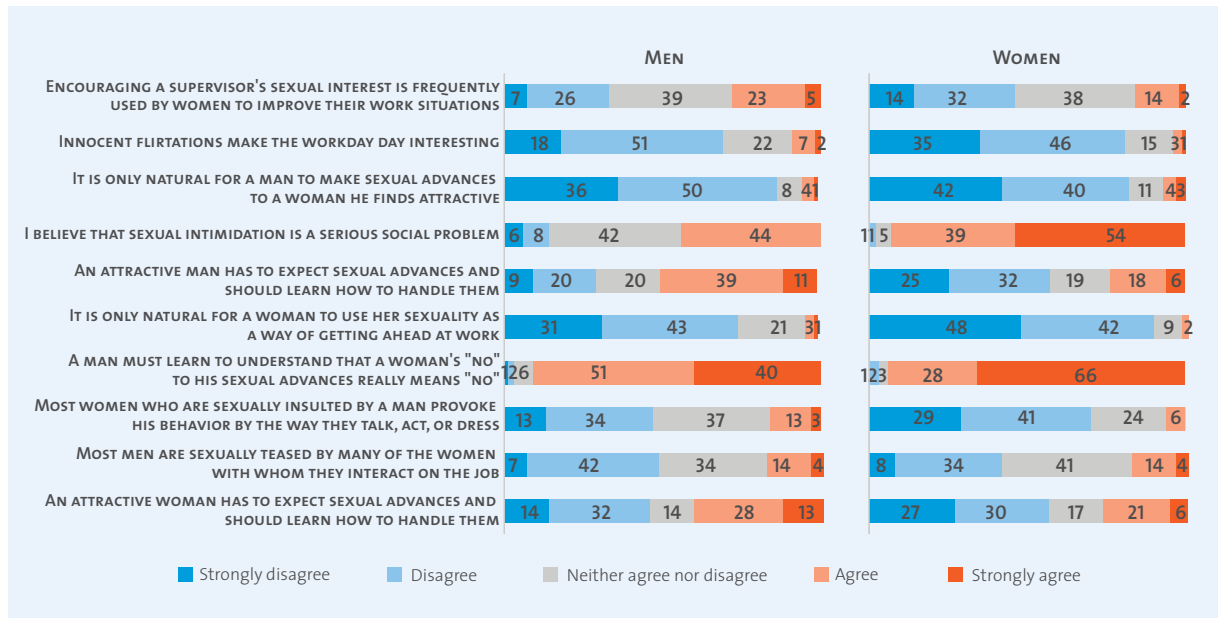
The majority of interviewed civil servants disagreed with the items that measured sexist attitudes towards sexual harassment issues. Ninety-three per cent agreed that a woman's "no" on sexual advancement is a "no", and 91 per cent believed that sexual

harassment is a serious problem. Eighty-four per cent disagreed with statements describing making sexual advances by men or using sexuality to get ahead at work as natural. Nevertheless, the study further revealed that gender stereotypes and sexist attitudes remain widespread among civil servants: 16 per cent of male civil servants strongly agreed or agreed to the statement that women who are sexually harassed provoke perpetrators with their behaviour. Only half of interviewees (53 per cent) disagreed that attractive women should expect sexual advances, while almost the same share (48 per cent) opposed a similar statement about men.

32 Donald B. Mazer and Elizabeth F. Percival, "Ideology or Experience? The Relationships among Perceptions, Attitudes, and Experiences of Sexual Harassment in University Students", *Sex Roles*, vol. 20, No. 3 (February 1989), pp. 135-47. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00287987>.

**FIGURE 3**

**Below, we give opinions that some people hold. Others disagree. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of these statements? (percentage; disaggregated by gender)**



There are considerable differences between women's and men's answers. The vast majority of women (93 per cent) believe that sexual harassment is a serious social problem, while only 44 per cent of men think the same (Figure 3). Twenty-six percentage points more men (50 per cent) than women (24 per cent) agree with the opinion that an attractive man should expect sexual advances. Forty-one per cent of men and 27 per cent of women agree with a similar statement about a woman. About 12 percentage points more men (28 per cent) than women (16 per cent) believe that women often encourage supervisors' sexual interests to improve their work situation.

To understand which groups of civil servants might hold sexist attitudes, an additive index was constructed.<sup>33</sup> The index is a sum of answers to the SHAS inventory where high values (close to 45) can be interpreted as holding sexist attitudes. In contrast, lower values (near 10) correspond to not having sexist attitudes. Georgian civil servants score

low (22 points on average, with a standard deviation of 5.5) on the sexism scale. That is, the interviewed respondents are less likely to hold sexist attitudes. While there are differences across various groups, variations are small. Women, younger respondents and those who have spent less than 20 years in the civil service are less likely to hold sexist attitudes. On average, women score 21 points on the scale, while men score 23 points.

Interviews conducted under the qualitative research component characterized Georgian civil servants' attitudes towards sexual harassment as flippant, stemming largely from deeply rooted stereotypes, **a lack of knowledge and societal attitudes**. Experts listed cultural and normative factors that complicate addressing workplace sexual harassment issues among Georgian civil servants. Civil servants sometimes perceive sexual harassment as a **part of typical working culture**. Usually, they find it difficult to differentiate between what flirtation is and where individuals cross the line in

33 Differences between the groups were identified using linear regression models predicting SHAS index values using gender, age, region, experience of working in the civil service, and the type of institution.

acceptable romantic pursuit. Moreover, informants argued that as workers spend most of their time at their jobs, these are the places where employees can socialize and potentially find romantic partners. Experts observed that such attitudes are prevalent among those in managerial positions. The latter often believe that such issues were brought upon by the western culture and that it is not a problem in Georgia.

Others link the prevalence of sexual harassment to Georgians' **views on romantic relationships**, where men are supposed to be initiators of the relationship and should exert an effort to the object of their romantic interests. Not surprisingly, such advances often translate into unpleasant behaviour, especially when it happens at work. In short, **prevalent patriarchal cultural norms make perpetrators sometimes not realize that sexual advances are undesirable and can be perceived as sexual harassment.**

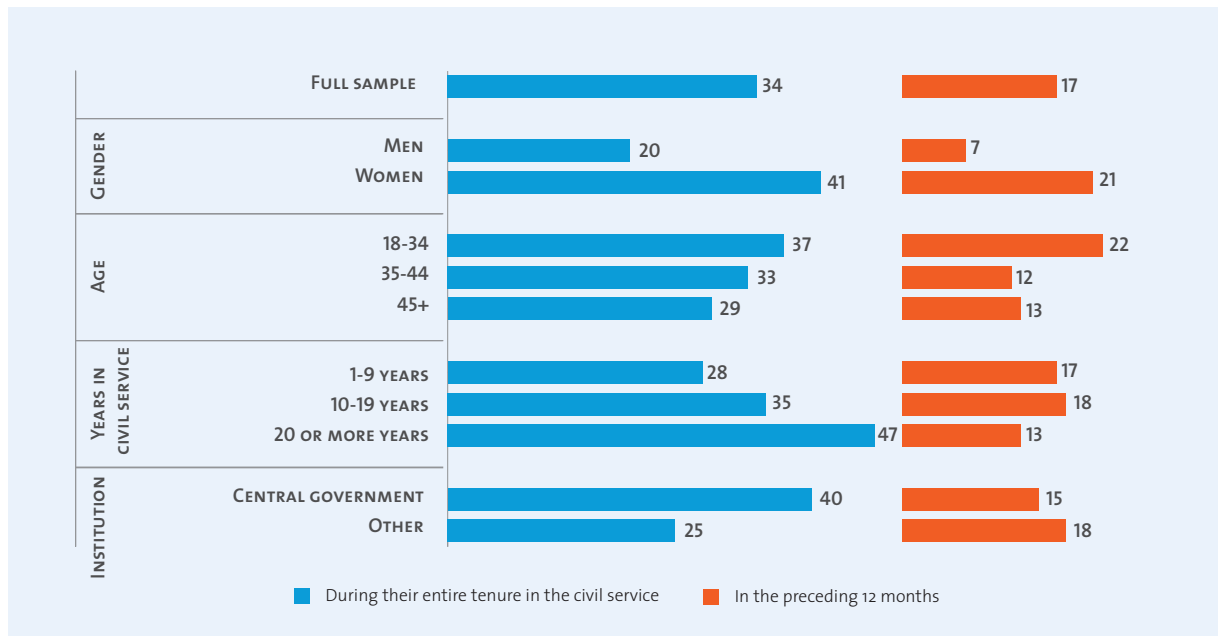
### 3.2. Prevalence of sexual harassment

- ▶ Workplace sexual harassment is a widespread phenomenon in the civil service in Georgia.
- ▶ One third of the survey respondents reported having experienced sexual harassment in the civil service. Every two in five among the female respondents and workers in central government institutions said they experienced workplace sexual harassment. Half of the respondents who have spent 20 or more years in the civil service reported having experienced sexual harassment during their civil service tenure.
- ▶ Women and civil servants under the age of 35 were more likely to have been victims of sexual harassment. Women are also more likely to experience more than one form of sexual harassment than men. About 31 per cent of women reported experiencing more than one form of harassment, while only 15 per cent of men reported the same.
- ▶ More than one fifth of female respondents experienced more than one form of sexual harassment during the preceding 12 months, compared to 6 per cent of men.
- ▶ Respondents from central government institutions are more likely to report having experienced sexual harassment than those working outside Tbilisi.
- ▶ Survey results attest that the majority of sexual harassment cases go unnoticed by outsiders. Only one fifth of respondents who have experienced sexual harassment said that someone else was present during the incident.
- ▶ Forty-seven per cent of survey respondents report that they have learned about or witnessed sexual harassment in one form or another during their time in Georgia's civil service, mostly through word of mouth.

Study findings reveal that sexual harassment is common in Georgian workplaces and that many employees are not aware of what sexual harassment means. For instance, inappropriate comments or jokes with sexual pretexts are accepted and regarded as normal as employees do not perceive these as unwelcome behaviours. Interviewed civil servants

also shared this opinion, noting that victims (and harassers) often do not label such cases as harassment. Some respondents linked the prevalence of sexual harassment to the accepted norms in society and assumed that sexual harassment is common everywhere, including the civil service.

**FIGURE 4**  
Experience of sexual harassment (percentage)



The third (34 per cent) of the interviewed respondents reported having experienced sexual harassment in one way or another during their entire tenure in the civil service. Every two in five among the female respondents and workers in central government institutions said they experienced workplace sexual harassment (Figure 4). Half of the respondents who have spent 20 or more years in the civil service reported having experienced sexual harassment during their civil service tenure. About 15 per cent of the interviewees reported that they had experienced at least one form of sexual harassment during the preceding 12 months. Women and younger civil servants were more likely to have been victims of sexual harassment (Figure 4). About 21 per cent of female civil service workers reported experiencing sexual harassment during the previous year, while only 7 per cent of men said the same. One fifth of respondents under the age of 35 said that they were sexually harassed during the previous 12 months. Notably, the period under discussion coincided with a nationwide lockdown during which most public servants were asked to work remotely from their homes.

Women are more likely to experience more than one form of sexual harassment than men. About 31 per cent of women reported experiencing more than one form of harassment, while only 15 per cent of men reported the same. More than one fifth (22 per cent) of female respondents experienced more than one form of sexual harassment during the preceding 12 months, compared to 6 per cent of men.

The situation in Georgia's civil service is not unique. The extent of workplace sexual harassment is somewhat similar to what was found by a comparable EU-wide study.<sup>34</sup> According to that study, about 40 per cent of women in the workplace were survivors of workplace sexual harassment, with those in higher positions being disproportionately affected. Although the results vary depending on definition and methodology, sexual harassment appears to occur in virtually all workplaces across the world to a varying degree. The existing studies show that approximately 30 per cent to 50 per cent of women, as well as 10 per cent of men, have experienced some form of sexual harassment in their workplaces in the EU.<sup>35</sup>

34 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Violence against Women: An EU-Wide Survey*.

35 G. Timmerman and C. Bajema, *Sexual Harassment in the Workplace in the European Union* (European Commission, 1998).

### 3.3. Forms of sexual harassment

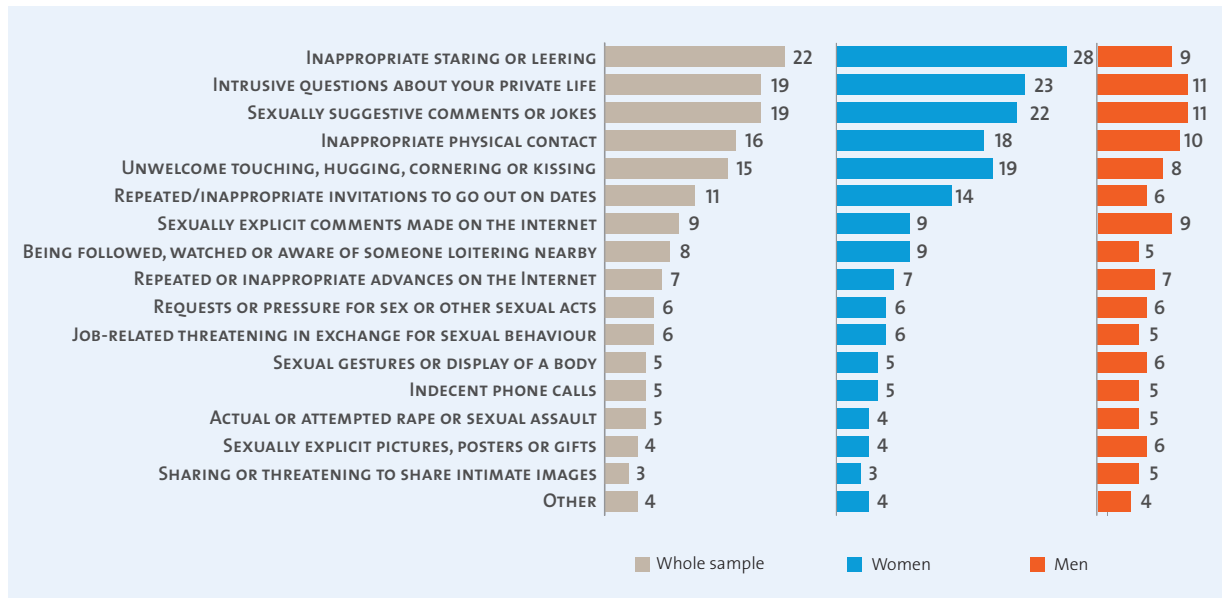
- ▶ Both the qualitative and quantitative components of the study show that verbal and non-verbal cues rather than physical violations of privacy are more prevalent forms of sexual harassment in the civil service.
- ▶ Respondents in the qualitative component pointed out that lewd comments, jokes, compliments and questions of a sexual nature, text messages, staring, inappropriate or sexually suggestive physical touching, repeated requests for dates and unwanted flirting are the forms of sexual harassment that are often experienced by civil servants.
- ▶ The likelihood of being sexually harassed increases in less formal situations such as during business trips, team-building exercises and corporate parties.
- ▶ Experts and informants from the civil service noted that male-dominated workplaces such as law enforcement agencies bear higher risks of sexual harassment. Threats of sexual harassment are lower in institutions where women hold leadership positions.
- ▶ According to qualitative interview respondents, cases of quid-pro-quo sexual harassment are less prevalent and mostly occur when the perpetrator is in a higher power position in the workplace and can offer benefits like promotions and bonus payments to victims.
- ▶ Non-physical and verbal harassment such as explicit comments, questions about one's private life, staring, jokes, gestures and unwanted invitations to go out on a date are more likely to happen repeatedly.

The results of both the quantitative and qualitative studies confirm that verbal and non-verbal cues rather than physical violations of privacy are more prevalent forms of sexual harassment in the civil service. About 22 per cent of interviewees said they have experienced inappropriate staring or leering during their tenure in the civil service (Figure 5). Ten per cent reported such things to be happening

during the preceding 12 months (Figure 6). About one fifth of the interviewees indicated that they had experienced verbal forms of harassment such as intrusive questions about their private life and sexually suggestive comments (19 per cent). About 9 per cent had such an experience during the previous year.

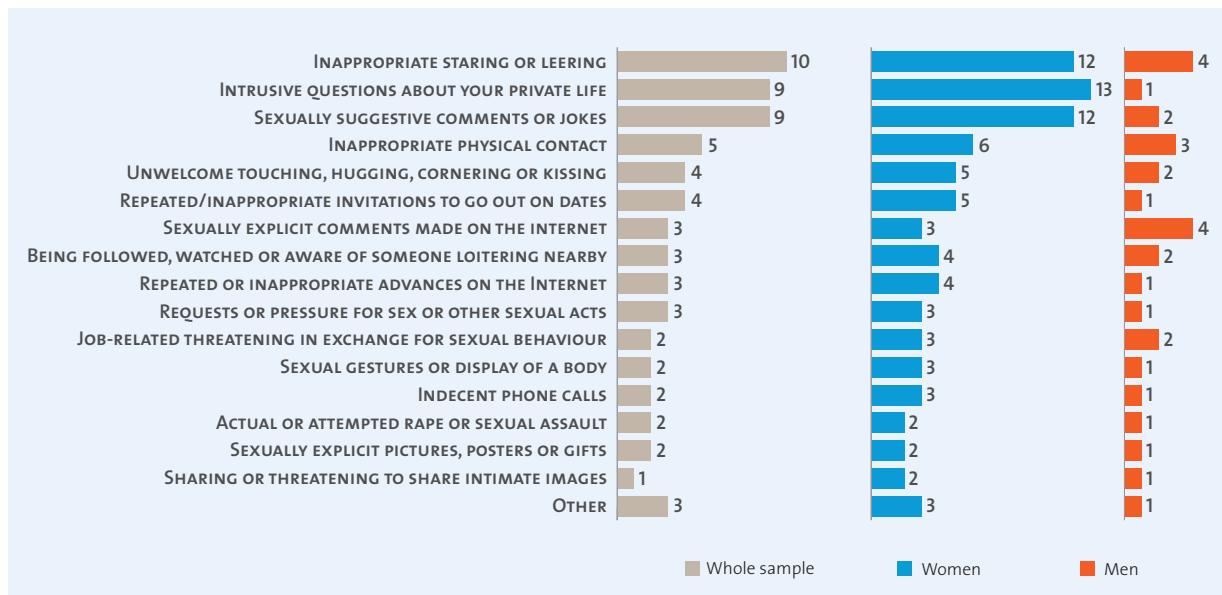
**FIGURE 5**

Listed below are some different forms of sexual harassment that some people have experienced. At any time during your tenure in the civil service, have you experienced any of the following behaviours in a way that was unwelcome/annoying? (percentage of “yes” responses)



**FIGURE 6**

Listed below are some different forms of sexual harassment that some people have experienced. At your current workplace, have you experienced any of the following behaviours during the preceding 12 months in a way that was unwelcome/annoying? (percentage of “yes” responses)





Respondents in the qualitative interviews pointed out that verbal forms of sexual harassment are more prevalent than physical harassment, with interviewees listing such examples as lewd comments and jokes, compliments and questions of a sexual nature. Such comments sometimes refer to one's sex life but also could be very general. Interviewees considered such abuses "mild" forms of harassment. Nonetheless, some stressed that even compliments could create a toxic environment and embarrass victims, especially when other colleagues are present. Respondents also listed text messages, staring, inappropriate or sexually suggestive physical touching, repeated requests for dates and unwanted flirting as forms of sexual harassment that they experienced or heard from others in the civil service.

Verbal harassment often entails discussing one's married life or sexual preferences. Perpetrators frame such conversations as something that helps their target (usually a younger colleague) with their sexual life.

*"I had to attend the meeting, and I went to the office of my supervisor. Two of my male colleagues were there too. When they saw me, they started making some jokes about me, that I should get married soon and that they had a potential husband for me. This colleague said that [the guy he would arrange as my partner] was physically very strong, with good muscles, who would give any woman pleasure. [...] I was shocked, and the only thing I could say was that women need something else to get pleasure, not muscles, and left the office." (Civil Servant 10, female, 29 years old, outside Tbilisi)*

*"I was going out to smoke. [My supervisor made a joke] that women older than me would meet me there and that 'you would cuddle them'. When I went back inside, [my female supervisor] came up to me at the water dispenser, and suddenly she said*

*something like 'What can I do? I also want to be wooed' and so forth. She would also say and send me text messages like 'My aunt said that if I don't get married, I should find a good young boy and have a child'." (Civil Servant 3, male, 27 years old, Tbilisi)*

Women disproportionately experience sexual harassment. During their time in the civil service, 28 per cent of women had experienced inappropriate staring, while 23 per cent mentioned intrusive questions about their private life. Moreover, 22 per cent reported sexually suggestive and improper jokes, compared to less than 12 per cent of men (Figure 5). About one fifth of women have experienced inappropriate physical contact (18 per cent) or unwelcome touching (19 per cent), while 14 per cent received repeated improper invitations to go out on a date. Such intrusions were reported by less than 10 per cent of men.

Qualitative research revealed that the likelihood of respondents being sexually harassed increased in less formal situations such as during business trips, team-building exercises and corporate parties. Experts highlighted that as workplaces do not end at someone's desk, any interaction with colleagues – even outside the physical workplace, virtually or at informal meetings/parties – also represents a continuation of the workplace and can include risks of sexual harassment.

Respondents believed that so-called quid-pro-quo sexual harassment, when employees were promoted or offered promotions, bonuses and benefits in exchange for sexual relationships, were less prevalent. As experts noted, quid-pro-quo sexual harassment mostly occurs when the perpetrator is in a higher position of power in the workplace and can offer benefits like promotions and bonus payments to victims.

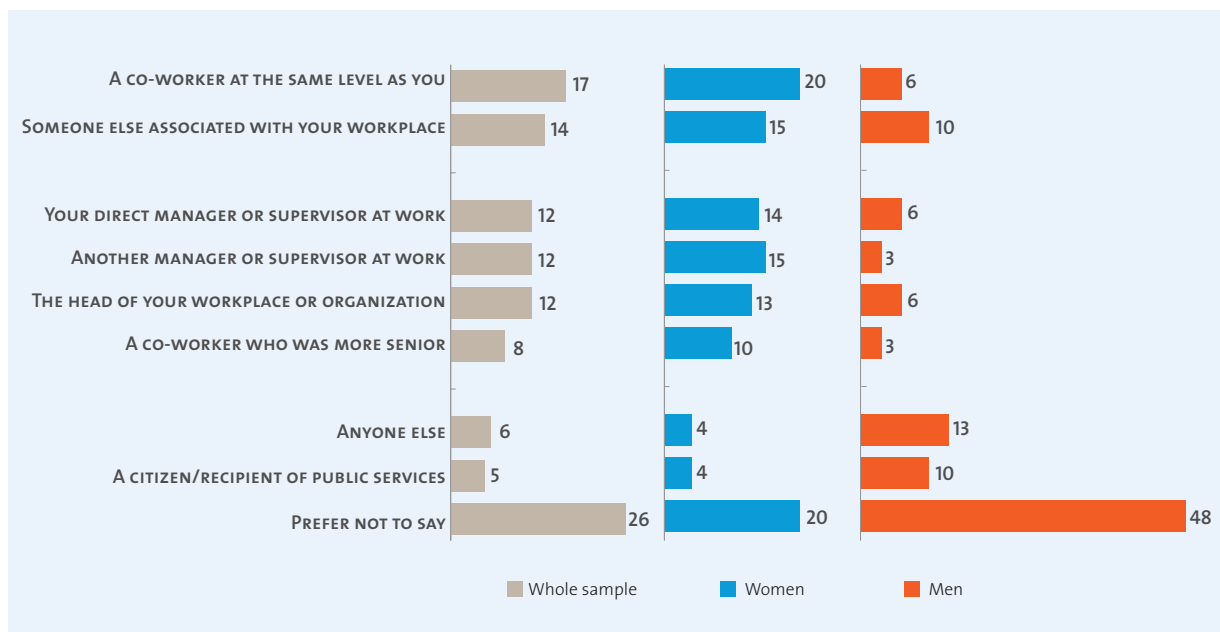
### 3.4. Perpetrators

- ▶ Respondents in the qualitative component of the study agreed that in most cases, the harasser is a supervisor, who generally happens to be male, while targets of sexual harassment are typically good-looking, well-dressed younger women or divorced women who hold a lower status in the civil service, such as specialists, secretaries and interns.
- ▶ Seventy-four per cent of survey respondents who had experienced sexual harassment named a male colleague as the perpetrator. For most female victims (91 per cent), the perpetrator was male.
- ▶ The majority of those who reported being sexually harassed during the preceding 12 months said that the perpetrator of the latest incident was someone who was older (56 per cent) than them.
- ▶ One fourth of respondents who reported experiencing harassment refused to describe their relationship with the perpetrator. A plurality of others (about 40 per cent) named a manager or work supervisor as the perpetrator of their latest sexual harassment experience.

Nearly three quarters of cases (74 per cent), respondents who had experienced sexual harassment named a male colleague as the perpetrator. About one quarter (27 per cent) of respondents said that

the harasser was a woman. For most female victims (91 per cent), the perpetrator was male, while 97 per cent of male respondents indicated that it was someone of the opposite sex.

**FIGURE 7**  
Listed below are some different forms of sexual harassment that some people have experienced. At any time during your tenure in the civil service, have you experienced any of the following behaviours in a way that was unwelcome/annoying? (percentage of “yes” responses)



For most respondents who reported sexual harassment, the perpetrator in the latest incident was older (56 per cent). About 30 per cent said that the perpetrator was of the same age or younger, while 14 per cent could not tell. Two thirds (64 per cent) of female victims said that the perpetrator was someone older. A plurality of respondents (26 per cent, Figure 7) who reported experiencing harassment was reluctant to describe their relationship with the perpetrator. About 40 per cent of respondents named a manager or work supervisor: 12 per cent named a direct manager, a different 12 per cent named another manager, and yet another 12 per cent named the head of the organization, while 8 per cent named a senior worker.

The survey findings are in line with the results of the qualitative research. Under the qualitative research, respondents overwhelmingly agreed that in most cases, the perpetrator of sexual harassment is a supervisor, who generally happens to be male. According to expert opinion, connections between the perpetrator's gender and position are no surprise considering that men dominate high- and medium-ranking leadership positions in most civil service agencies.

When discussing specific characteristics of both perpetrators and victims, interviewees were most wary of the middle-aged men who occupy a middle- or higher-ranking position as potential harassers. At the same time, targets of sexual harassment are typically good-looking, well-dressed younger women who hold a lower status, such as specialists, secretaries and interns. Respondents also argued that supervisors sometimes weaponize victims' economic vulnerability and the need for victims to keep their jobs in order to obtain sexual favours.

*"People with power in agencies feel more confident and entitled to [sexually harass others]... As men are more likely to hold higher positions in public service than women, and statistics bear this out, that [power] 'helps' even more, right?" (Expert 7)*

Another vulnerable group that perpetrators often target is divorced women. As one respondent noted, if someone is not married, perpetrators might only limit themselves to flirting, while they approach divorced women directly for sexual favours.

*"In Georgia, a divorced woman is perceived as an easy target, whom you can ask anything. [...] People know that with girls who are not married, it's only flirting, but [divorced women] are directly asked [for sex]." (Civil Servant 9, female, 31 years old, outside Tbilisi)*

While perpetrators are usually male, women might also harass others. The physical appearance of younger men might make them a target for a female colleague's sexual interests.

*"This harassment also comes from women: [a man] may be younger than her, but she will still flirt with handsome boys and men." (Civil Servant 19, male, 59 years old, outside Tbilisi)*

Experts and informants from the civil service noted that male-dominated workplaces such as law enforcement agencies bear higher risks of sexual harassment. Threats of sexual harassment are lower in institutions where women hold leadership positions.

*"In my opinion, [places with higher risks of harassment include] the police, the military, law enforcement in short. In my opinion, men are in the majority; [they] create the environment and might be less considerate of certain things." (Civil Servant 8, female, 45 years old, Tbilisi)*

While respondents mainly discussed sexual harassment cases where perpetrators and victims are of the opposite sex, experts also noted that incidents also occur involving people of the same sex. However, considering the homophobic attitudes that are prevalent in Georgian society, there is little to no evidence of such incidents.

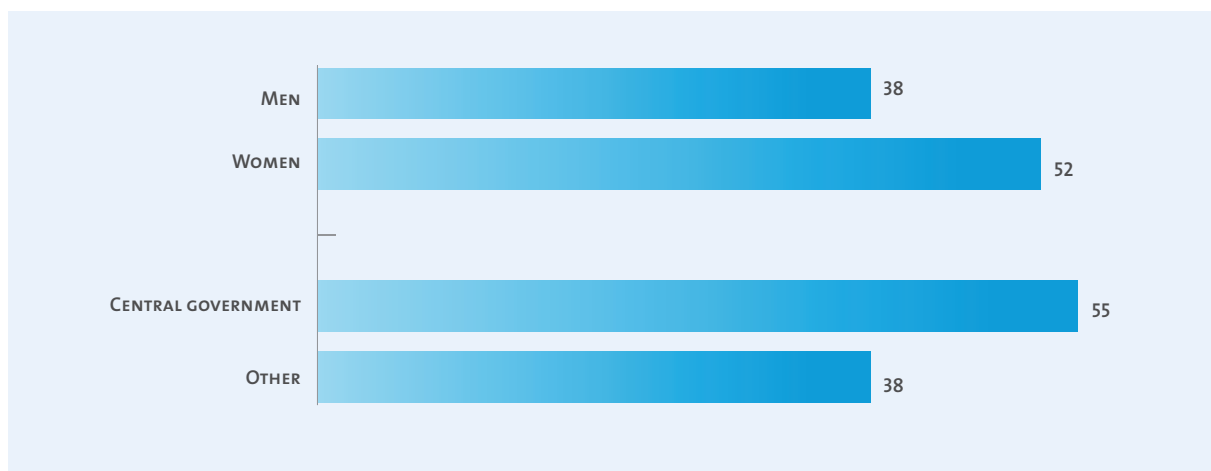
### 3.5. Bystanders' experience of workplace sexual harassment

- ▶ Reporting is the least preferred action by bystanders when it comes to reacting to sexual harassment cases. Only 3 per cent of the bystanders reported the incident to national authorities, while 6 per cent said that they did nothing. The majority (62 per cent) said that they provided emotional support to the victim.
- ▶ The qualitative interviews revealed that bystanders' inaction could be explained by them not being sure whether what they witnessed is harassment. General societal attitudes towards reporting, including victims considering it an intrusion by others into their own life, further prevent bystanders from intervening.
- ▶ Bystanders are more likely to intervene when the perpetrator is someone of the same rank. If a supervisor is involved, they usually do not intervene.
- ▶ Forty-seven per cent of survey respondents report that they have learned about or witnessed sexual harassment in one form or another during their time in Georgia's civil service, mostly through word of mouth.
- ▶ Women and respondents from central government institutions were more likely to be bystanders.

Almost half of the respondents (47 per cent) reported having intruded or witnessed sexual harassment in one form or another during their time in Georgia's civil service. Thirty-nine per cent learned about it through word of mouth, 31 per cent heard directly from the assaulted person, and 14 per cent personally witnessed such incidents. Women and respondents from central government

institutions were more likely to be bystanders. Fifty-two per cent of women have observed or witnessed sexual harassment, compared to 38 per cent of men (Figure 8). Fifty-five per cent of respondents working for the central government reported being a bystander, while 38 per cent of civil servants in regional institutions witnessed sexual harassment.

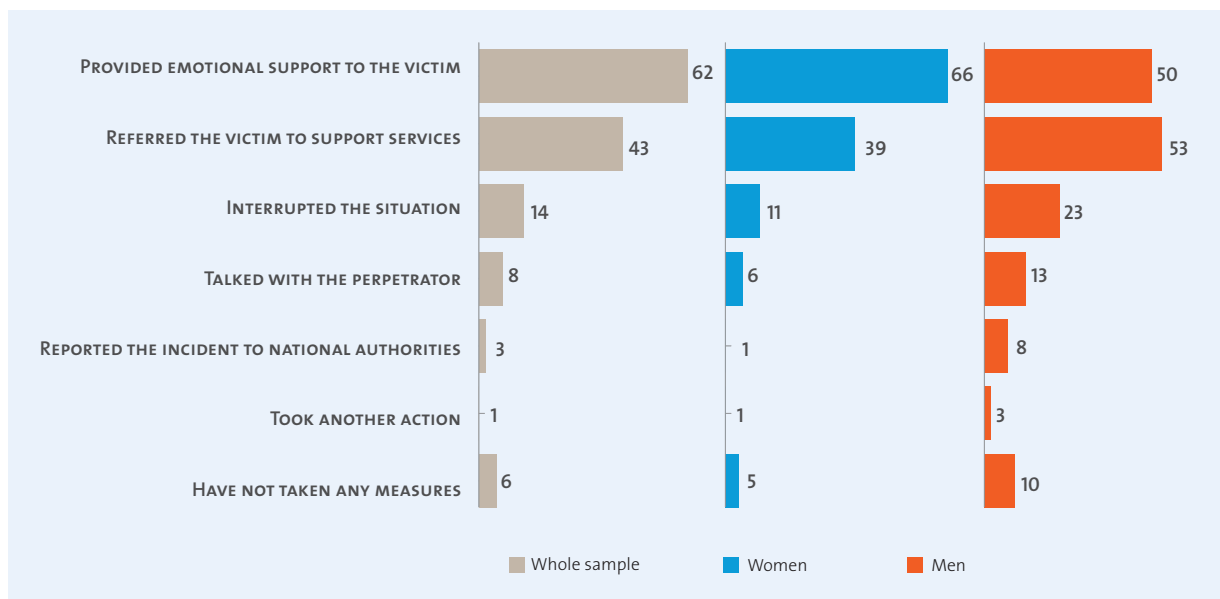
**FIGURE 8**  
Share of respondents who have been bystanders of a sexual harassment case during their tenure in the civil service (percentage)



Reporting is the least preferred action by bystanders when it comes to reacting to sexual harassment cases. Only 3 per cent of the bystanders reported the incident to national authorities, while 6 per cent said that they did nothing (Figure 9). The majority

(62 per cent) said that they provided emotional support to the victim. Forty-three per cent referred the victim to support services. Fourteen per cent interrupted the situation, and 8 per cent talked with the perpetrator.

**FIGURE 9**  
**How did you react to this situation? (percentage; 160 respondents who reported witnessing sexual harassment)**



Those who have not taken any measures (10 respondents) were asked the reasons for inaction. While some said they did not consider the situation as serious (three respondents), four were convinced that the victims were already getting help. And in four other cases, respondents did not know how to behave in comparable situations.<sup>36</sup>

Under the qualitative research, one respondent who agreed to share her own experience of being a bystander in a sexual harassment case believed that a female victim was sexually harassed by her supervisor. While the respondent offered to report the case to the department head, the victim could not be convinced. The respondent was confident that the victim was trying to cover up her own experience to ease tensions at the office. Another informant also reported the fact that victims often hide their experience of being harassed.

*“Something was wrong with one of our employees; I still think something happened because the supervisor often called this girl [to his office]. After one of the meetings, [I saw that this] girl was crying in her office. This is how I accidentally witnessed the proof [of harassment].” (Civil Servant 11, female, 42 years old, Tbilisi)*

Respondents noted that one of the reasons for bystanders’ inaction is that bystanders cannot often make up their mind whether what they witnessed is harassment. Informants said that while they might perceive a particular incident as harassment, the victim might not and vice versa. One respondent described a situation at a corporate party where she believes a new employee was harassed by her supervisor. He would not let her interact with other colleagues during the whole evening. But the fact

36 Considering the small sample size, these results are presented for illustrative purposes only.

that the woman was smiling made others think that nothing was suspicious.

*“At a corporate evening event, there was a new employee. The other employee was constantly with her, not leaving her alone, literally not allowing anyone else to either dance with her or sit down with her, [...] [and] I thought I would help a little bit [by intervening]. But as this girl was looking happy, I could not dare to tell the guy to let her go.” (Civil Servant 21, female, 42 years old, Tbilisi)*

General attitudes towards reporting prevent bystanders from intervening. Sometimes even victims

treat reporting by others as an intrusion into their own life.

Survey results attest that the majority of sexual harassment cases go unnoticed by outsiders. Only one fifth of respondents who have experienced sexual harassment said that someone else was present during the incident. Notably, in only 7 out of 21 cases where bystanders were present, the bystanders tried to intervene. On three occasions, they talked with the perpetrators, while they took another action in the rest of the cases.<sup>37</sup>

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37 As the number of responses is extremely low, results are presented for illustrative purposes only.

### 3.6. Reporting workplace sexual harassment

- ▶ In general, civil servants hold favourable attitudes towards reporting sexual harassment. The majority of respondents agreed that civil servants have the right to report workplace sexual harassment to their supervisor (94 per cent), and about 80 per cent agreed that reporting workplace sexual harassment is an effective way of stopping the abuse. Data show, however, that these attitudes are not translated into practice and that the majority of sexual harassment cases in the civil service go unreported.
- ▶ At the same time, reporting workplace sexual harassment in the civil service is perceived to have negative consequences for one's career. Thirty-four per cent of survey respondents agree that those who report sexual harassment risk being looked upon badly, and 24 per cent share the opinion that reporting sexual harassment leads to animosity in the workplace.
- ▶ The qualitative interviews showed that the lack of information regarding what can qualify as sexual harassment, the lack of reporting mechanisms, concerns about confidentiality (i.e. a lack of trust towards colleagues or leadership) and the lack of trust towards institutions were named as key obstacles to reporting. Other concerns include personal factors such as the fear of retaliation from the perpetrator, shame or guilt, career considerations, family problems and the lack of support from colleagues and the general public.
- ▶ How supervisors approach the problem of sexual harassment was identified as a key factor for reporting sexual harassment cases. Qualitative interview respondents believe that expressing support for the victims of sexual harassment even in declarative terms can make a difference and empower the victims.
- ▶ Only one third of victims of sexual harassment talked to someone regarding the most severe incident, while only 10 per cent sought help from formal channels. Those who sought help contacted their immediate supervisor, the head of the agency, the police, a hotline and/or the human resources department.
- ▶ Overall, Georgian civil servants express that they are not reluctant to report workplace sexual harassment cases. Respondents scored 37 points on average on the SHRAS index (which varies between 25 and 45, where scores close to 25 mean that a respondent feels reluctant to report workplace sexual harassment cases and values close to 45 mean that he/she is open to reporting).
- ▶ An immediate supervisor, the Public Defender's Office and a dedicated reporting mechanism for reporting sexual harassment are perceived to be the most comfortable ways to report sexual harassment in the civil service.

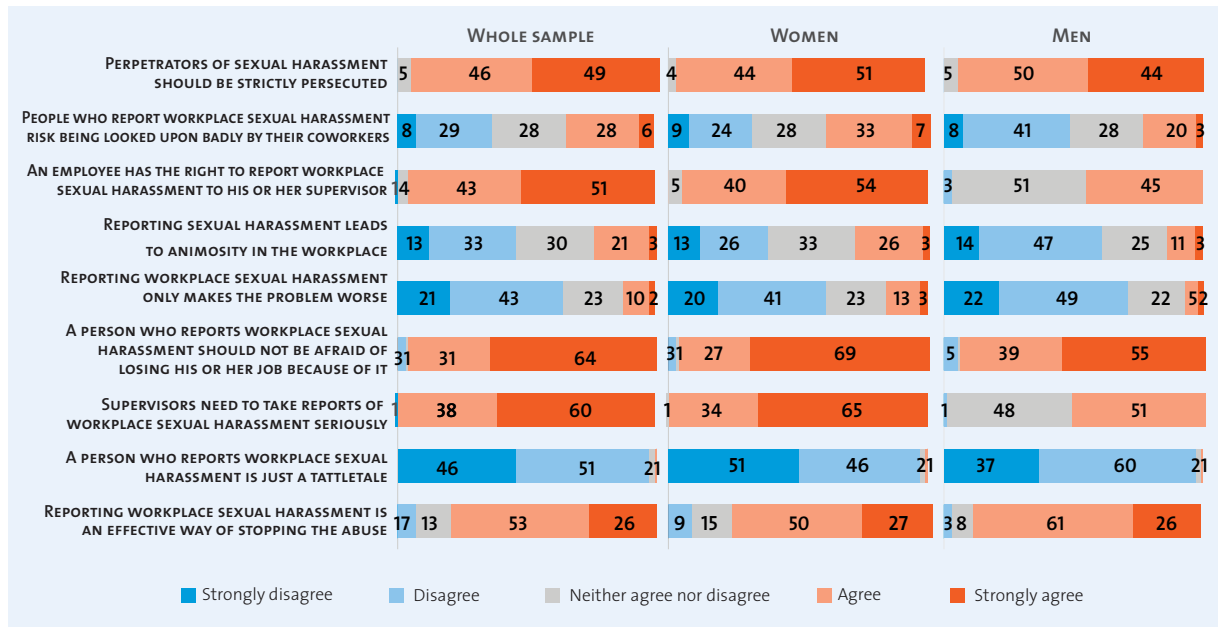
To understand civil servants' attitudes towards reporting sexual harassment, survey respondents were presented questions from the Sexual Harassment Reporting Attitudes Scale (SHRAS)

developed by Cesario and colleagues.<sup>38</sup> The inventory asks one to evaluate his/her opinion on various aspects of reporting behaviour.

38 Cesario, Parks-Stamm and Turgut, "Initial Assessment of the Psychometric Properties of the Sexual Harassment Reporting Attitudes Scale".

**FIGURE 10**

**Please indicate to what extent would you agree or disagree with the statements below. (percentage)**



Interviewees seemed to be favourable towards reporting workplace sexual harassment cases (Figure 10). The majority agreed that workplace sexual harassment needs to be taken seriously (98 per cent), perpetrators should be strictly prosecuted (95 per cent), those who report such cases should not be afraid of losing their job (95 per cent), and that employees have the right to report workplace sexual harassment (94 per cent). About 80 per cent agreed that reporting workplace sexual harassment is an effective way of stopping the abuse. The majority (97 per cent) disagreed that a person who reports workplace sexual harassment is a tattletale. About two thirds (64 per cent) disagreed that reporting sexual harassment cases makes the problem worse. Opinions, however, diverged when respondents were asked whether reporting sexual harassment creates an unwanted atmosphere in the workplace. While 38 per cent of the interviewees disagreed that those who report sexual harassment risk being looked upon badly, 34 per cent agreed. About one quarter (24 per cent) agreed that reporting sexual harassment leads to animosity in the workplace.

A cumulative index was set up to understand which groups were more open to the behaviour of reporting sexual harassment cases. The SHRAS index

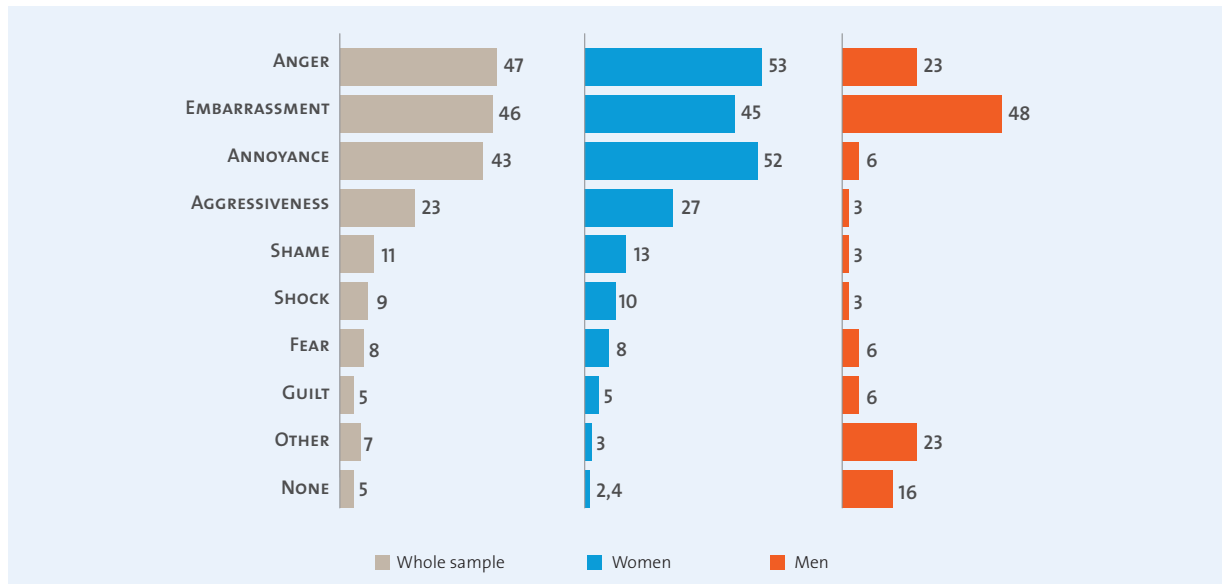
varies between 25 and 45, where scores close to 25 mean that a respondent feels reluctant to report workplace sexual harassment cases, while values close to 45 mean that he/she is open to reporting. Overall, Georgian civil servants express that they are not reluctant to report workplace sexual harassment cases. Respondents scored 37 points on average on the SHRAS index (with a standard deviation of 4). Notably, there was a small yet significant difference in terms of gender and geography. Women scored relatively low (36) on the scale, while men scored higher (37 points). Respondents from Tbilisi had higher index values (37) than those from other areas of Georgia (36). While these findings might indicate genuinely existing attitudes, it is still challenging to understand whether such attitudes are properly translated into behaviour.

Majority of respondents, who have ever experienced sexual harassment at the workplace, feel anger, embarrassment and annoyance as a result of this experience. Female victims feel mostly anger, annoyance and embarrassment, while male victims report feeling embarrassment and anger. Moreover, men are more likely to answer other or no feelings to this question



**FIGURE 11**

Please name the feelings that resulted from the most serious incident of sexual harassment at this workplace that ever happened to you? (% asked to those 155 respondents, who said that they had experienced sexual harassment)

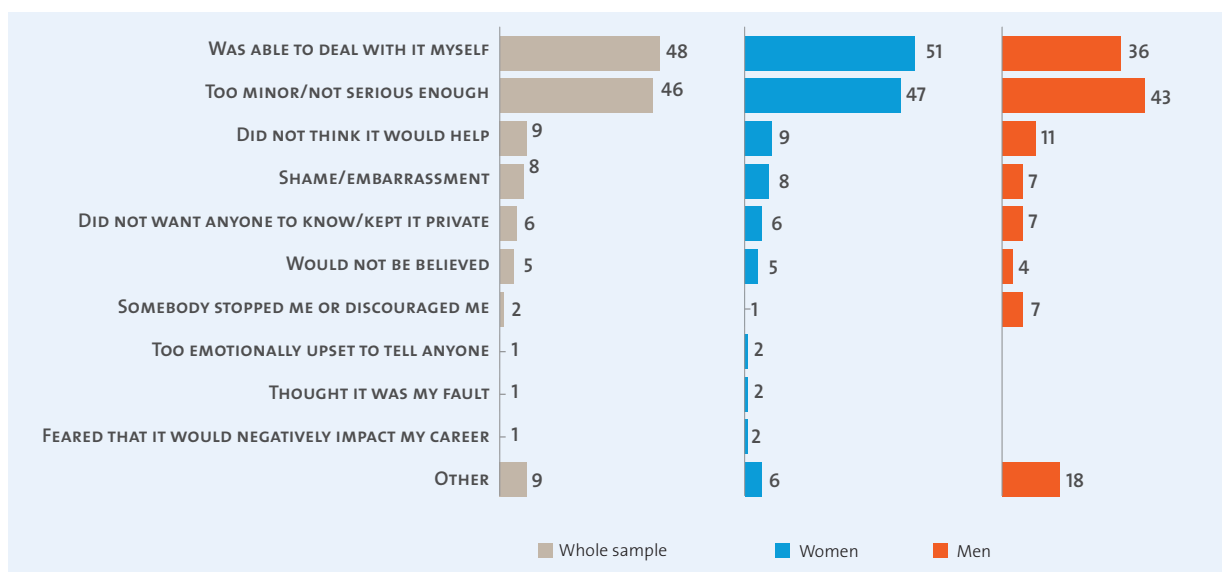


Consistent with the information unveiled in the qualitative component, the survey results tell a similar story of reluctance from victims and bystanders to report sexual harassment cases or seek help.

Only one third of victims talked to someone regarding the most severe incident, while only 10 per cent (15 respondents) sought help.

**FIGURE 12**

Please indicate to what extent would you agree or disagree with the statements below. (percentage)

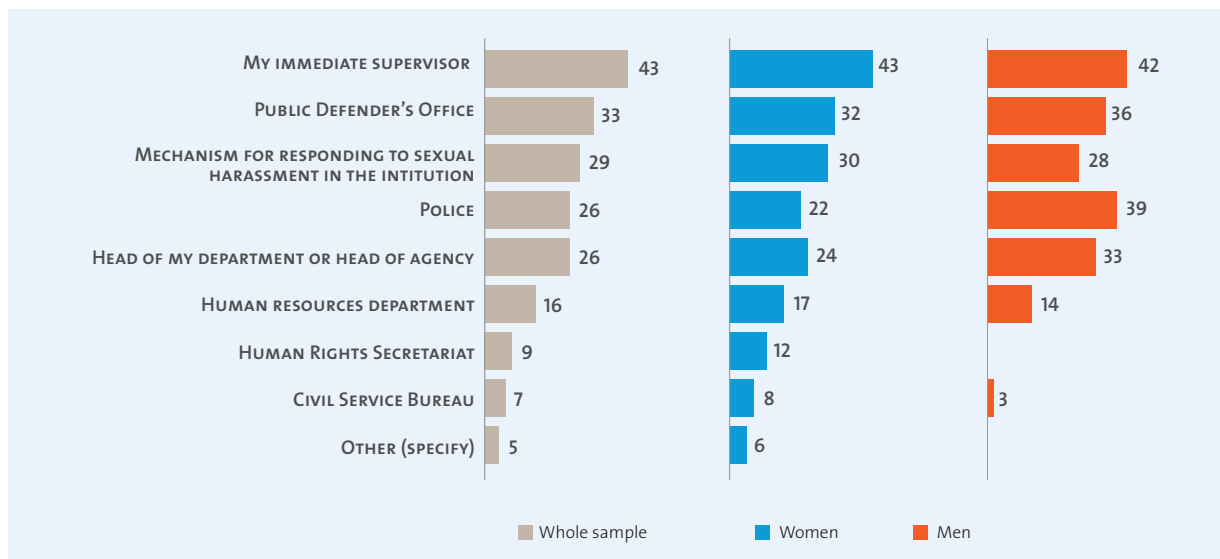


The majority of those who have talked to someone about their experience did so with friends (63 per cent) or coworkers (61 per cent). Fewer discussed it with a partner, counsellor (7 per cent) or another family member (9 per cent). Those who sought help contacted their immediate supervisor, the head of the agency, the police, a hotline and/or the human resources department.

Why do the victims of sexual harassment not seek help? A plurality (48 per cent) of those who have

not done so explained that they could cope independently, while 46 per cent downplayed such an incident's seriousness (Figure 11). Fewer (9 per cent) thought that it would not help, 8 per cent felt shame, 6 per cent kept it secret, and 5 per cent thought others would not believe them. While there are fewer differences between women and men, male respondents are relatively more likely to name other reasons (18 per cent) than female respondents (6 per cent).

**FIGURE 13**  
**If you had to report a case of sexual harassment, to whom would you feel most comfortable to report? (percentage; multiple choice; 150 respondents)**



The qualitative research revealed that the most significant barriers that prevent civil servants from reporting workplace sexual harassment incidents include the lack of knowledge and the presence of organizational barriers, such as the lack of information regarding what can qualify as sexual harassment, the unavailability of reporting mechanisms or concerns about confidentiality (i.e. a lack of trust towards colleagues or leadership). Other concerns reflect personal factors such as the fear of retaliation, shame or guilt, career considerations, family problems and the lack of support from colleagues. Social factors also often prevent victims from reporting sexual harassment. They are aware of the fact that someone among their friends or

family will learn about the incident. Others who self-censor are afraid of losing their job, do not want to be targets of shaming, or are not convinced that they have enough evidence against the perpetrator.

Experts indicated that the existing culture in the country's civil service that discourages employees from speaking up is another factor preventing victims from reporting sexual harassment incidents. As one respondent put it, in a small country like Georgia where tightly knit "clans" hold power, raising a voice – especially against those in power – might destroy one's career.

Interviewed experts agreed that it is a huge burden for a victim if their story becomes public. They are

unable to find support as society mostly blames victims. Thus, whoever decides to go public acknowledges the difficulty and stigma attached to such actions.

*“From what we have seen in public cases, the fate of these girls is so difficult... Society has condemned them; they lost their jobs, became depressed, faced unemployment... It takes a lot of courage to report such a case [to the authorities].” (Expert 6)*

Female victims address the authorities or speak out publicly only in situations when they leave their jobs. Experts agree that this comes from employers' negligence when victims cannot find solutions internally within their organizations. Another reason is that victims worry about their safety, as they do not trust institutions responsible for their protection.

Even if victims go to court, legal battles might be lengthy and overwhelming. Experts noted that victims should have the feeling that court sanctions against perpetrators are fair. Otherwise, they might find year-long court battles exhausting and disappointing.

*“For victims of sexual harassment, the damage done to them is not compensated – neither monetarily nor morally. Speaking up against the harasser essentially means that society will shun the victim.” (Expert 8)*

Respondents who said they had interrupted a sexual harassment incident were asked about the most convenient mechanism through which to report such cases. Forty-three per cent mentioned their immediate supervisor, 33 per cent named the Public Defender's Office, and 29 per cent indicated a dedicated reporting mechanism for reporting sexual harassment within the institution. Fewer would approach the police or the head of the department or agency (26 per cent), the human

resources department (16 per cent), the Human Rights Secretariat under the Administration of the Government (9 per cent) or the Civil Service Bureau (7 per cent).

Female bystanders named more institutions that they would feel comfortable approaching than men. More men (39 per cent) than women (22 per cent) named the police, the Public Defender's Office (36 per cent among men and 32 per cent among women) and the head of the department (33 per cent among men and 24 per cent among women). An equal number of women and men would feel comfortable reporting to their immediate supervisor (43 per cent and 42 per cent, respectively) and using a dedicated reporting mechanism (30 per cent of women and 28 per cent of men).

To eradicate sexual harassment, it is crucial to have a constructive and inclusive working environment. Experts noted that creating such conditions in Georgia's civil service largely depends on how supervisors approach the problem. While some in leadership positions are aware of the importance of sexual harassment issues and help victims, others downplay and even create a hostile environment. Experts highlighted that even expressing support for the victims of sexual harassment in declarative terms might also make a difference and empower victims.

*“Leadership's attitudes are important. When a supervisor avoids making jokes about sexual harassment and does not try to present the issue as ridiculous, it creates an environment free of sexual harassment. In opposite situations, even awareness-raising campaigns and events are not successful if the leadership is not serious about the problem.” (Expert 4)*

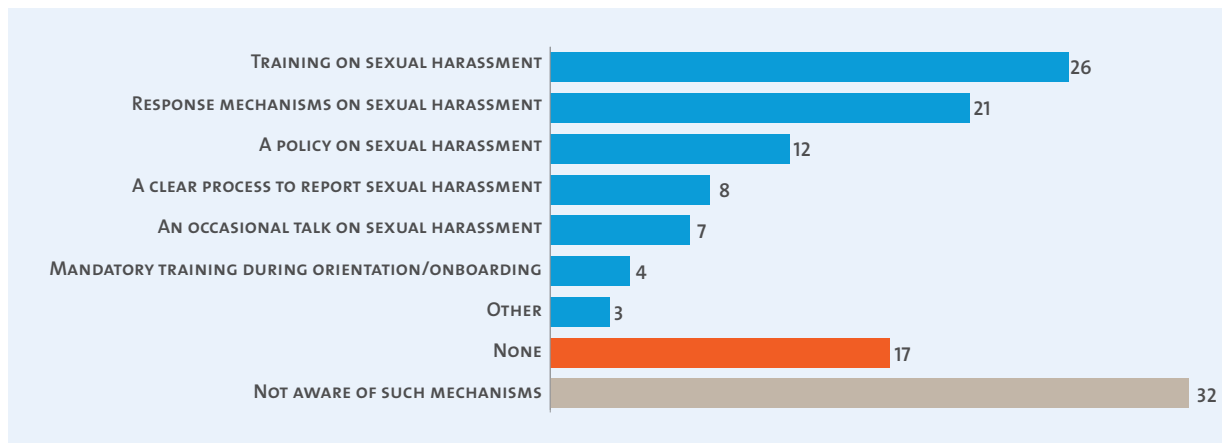
### 3.7. Awareness of laws and response mechanisms on workplace sexual harassment

- ▶ Ninety per cent of the survey respondents are aware that sexual harassment is prohibited under Georgian legislation.
- ▶ Slightly more than one third of interviewees (32 per cent) under the qualitative research said they are not aware of internal anti-sexual harassment mechanisms existing within their organization.
- ▶ One fifth (21 per cent) reported on the existence of response mechanisms on sexual harassment. Twelve per cent mentioned having a policy, while 8 per cent named having a straightforward process to report sexual harassment.
- ▶ One third of the interviewed civil servants said that they had attended training on workplace sexual harassment. Respondents from the regions were more likely to have attended such training (43 per cent) than those in Tbilisi (31 per cent).
- ▶ Training attendance is associated positively with the awareness of reporting mechanisms and less sexist attitudes towards sexual harassment.
- ▶ Protecting confidentiality and sensitizing top management on sexual harassment issues have been identified as priorities for effective anti-sexual harassment mechanisms.

The majority (90 per cent) of interviewed public servants are aware that sexual harassment is prohibited under the Georgian legislation. About

7 per cent are unaware of it, while about 2 per cent believe that it is not forbidden.

**FIGURE 14**  
**What does your organization have in place to address sexual harassment at work?**  
 (percentage; multiple choice)



Survey respondents were asked whether they were aware of specific regulations on sexual harassment that are in place within their institutions. Almost one third of interviewees (32 per cent) said they are not

aware of such tools, while 17 per cent said there were none (Figure 13). Notably, respondents from the central government and those under the age of 45 were less aware of such policies or mechanisms.

A quarter of civil servants said that their organizations conduct training to address sexual harassment issues. One fifth (21 per cent) reported on the existence of response mechanisms on sexual harassment. Twelve per cent mentioned having a policy, while 8 per cent named having a straightforward process to report sexual harassment. Fewer picked occasional talks (7 per cent), mandatory training during orientation (4 per cent) or other mechanisms (3 per cent).

One third of the interviewed civil servants said that they had attended training on workplace sexual harassment. Respondents from the regions were more likely to have attended such training (43 per cent) than those in Tbilisi (31 per cent). More civil servants from the central government participated in training on workplace sexual harassment (43 per cent) than other institutions' representatives (29 per cent). Notably, training attendance is associated positively with the awareness of reporting mechanisms and less sexist attitudes towards sexual harassment.

Under the qualitative research, the majority of interviewed civil servants were not aware of the laws and policies addressing workplace sexual harassment, as the majority could not think of any. Only a few informants named the Civil Servants' Code of Ethics, the Law of Georgia on Public Service and their organizations' internal rules. One respondent recalled his/her organization's interior audit office, human resources department, occupational safety management and the website <http://mkhileba.gov.ge>, where victims can leave anonymous messages. Another respondent mentioned gender advisers. Nonetheless, respondents are aware that in cases of sexual harassment, they can address the Public Defender's Office or request help from law enforcement agencies.

The qualitative study respondents came up with certain recommendations for preventing workplace sexual harassment in Georgia's civil service. Informants named awareness-raising campaigns

to educate their colleagues and the general public. They contend that unless there is relevant knowledge of how severe the issue is, no reporting mechanism will be successful.

*"[One should] raise the awareness [of civil servants]. If many people will stand on the harassers' side and justify their actions, [then] no mechanism, no box, no virtual room and no hotline will help eliminate such incidents." (Civil Servant 7, female, 35 years old, Tbilisi)*

Experts also endorsed mandatory training for civil servants that would cover the forms of discrimination, harassment and security issues. They also suggested including clauses prohibiting sexual harassment in labour contracts as this would serve as an effective preventive measure.

When discussing reporting mechanisms, respondents suggested that confidentiality is the key issue to be considered and that the civil service network should offer access to both internal and external agencies so that individuals have a choice of where to go for support. Improved access to such tools for reporting will ensure that civil servants perceive the issue of harassment as important.

*"Before you approach external institutions, the issue should be dealt with locally and confidentially, with minimal risks to others. A victim can bypass [internal reporting mechanisms and] appeal to the Public Defender even today, but to make the system more efficient and aware of victims, I recommend having trustworthy internal mechanisms." (Expert 7)*

Interviewees agreed that to eliminate sexual harassment from the civil service effectively, officials in leadership positions need to become more sensitive. Such a top-down approach would ensure that employees take the issue more seriously. Moreover, some respondents even suggested that the Government declare fighting against workplace sexual harassment as its priority, as it did with domestic violence.

# 4. KEY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 4.1. Conclusions

- ▶ While the quantitative data suggest that civil servants are mostly aware of the definition of sexual harassment, data triangulation under the qualitative research suggests that the awareness of what sexual harassment means is quite low. Moreover, stemming from established societal norms and a lack of knowledge, some civil servants perceive sexual harassment as a part of typical working culture. Often, neither the harasser nor the victim realizes that the action can be considered sexual harassment or lead to consequences.
- ▶ There are considerable gendered differences in the perceptions of what can be considered sexual harassment or how serious the problem is. Men were less likely than women to identify certain forms of harassment as sexual harassment. Women (93 per cent) were also significantly more likely to report that sexual harassment is a serious issue in the workplace, compared to men (41 per cent).
- ▶ Civil servants generally scored relatively low on the sexism scale, as the majority of interviewed civil servants disagreed with the items that measured sexist attitudes towards sexual harassment issues. Nevertheless, gender stereotypes and sexist attitudes that condone workplace sexual harassment remain widespread among civil servants. For example, every fifth respondent agreed to the statement that women who are sexually harassed provoke perpetrators with their behaviour. Women, younger respondents and those who have spent less than 20 years in the civil service are less likely to hold sexist attitudes.
- ▶ Workplace sexual harassment is a widespread phenomenon in the civil service. One third of the interviewed respondents said that they had experienced sexual harassment in one way or another. Every two in five among the female respondents and workers in central government institutions said they experienced workplace sexual harassment. Almost half of the respondents (47 per cent) mentioned that they have observed or witnessed sexual harassment in one form or another during their time in Georgia's civil service. While these rates are quite high, they are lower than the average rates of workplace sexual harassment across Europe, which can be attributed to underreporting on the prevalence of such incidents.
- ▶ Women, especially young women, are disproportionately at risk of experiencing workplace sexual harassment in the civil service, compared to men.
- ▶ The chances of being a victim of sexual harassment increase in less formal situations such as during business trips, team-building exercises and corporate parties. Experts and informants from the civil service noted that male-dominated workplaces such as law enforcement agencies bear higher risks of sexual harassment. Threats of sexual harassment are lower in institutions where women hold leadership positions.
- ▶ It is believed that so-called quid-pro-quo sexual harassment, when employees were promoted or offered promotions, bonuses and benefits in exchange for sexual relationships, were less prevalent in the civil service, compared to other forms of sexual harassment. The results also affirm that verbal and non-verbal cues rather than physical harassment are more prevalent.
- ▶ Respondents in the qualitative component of the study agreed that in most cases, the harasser is a supervisor, and the latter generally happens

to be male. According to expert opinion, connections between the perpetrator's gender and position are no surprise considering that men dominate high- and medium-ranking leadership positions in most civil service agencies. Targets of sexual harassment are good-looking, well-dressed younger women who hold a lower status, such as specialists, secretaries and interns.

- ▶ The survey results attest that the majority of sexual harassment cases go unnoticed by outsiders.
- ▶ In general, civil servants hold favourable attitudes towards reporting sexual harassment. They feel that sexual harassment should be prosecuted and that it is unacceptable. Yet, these attitudes are not translating into action: reporting is the least preferred action by bystanders when it comes to reacting to sexual harassment cases. Only 3 per cent of the bystanders reported the incident to national authorities. Only one third of victims talked to someone regarding the most severe incident, while only 10 per cent (15 respondents) sought help.
- ▶ The lack of information regarding what can qualify as sexual harassment, the lack of reporting mechanisms, concerns about confidentiality (i.e. a lack of trust towards colleagues or leadership) and the lack of trust towards institutions were named as key obstacles to reporting. Other concerns include personal factors such as the fear of retaliation from the perpetrator, shame or guilt, career considerations, family problems and the lack of support from colleagues and general public.
- ▶ The majority of the online survey respondents (90 per cent) are aware that Georgia's laws prohibit sexual harassment. About 7 per cent are

unaware of it, while about 2 per cent believe that it is not forbidden. There is overall good awareness of the laws, considering that the legislation was only recently enacted.

- ▶ Civil servants who were interviewed for the study's qualitative component were less aware of policies and procedures addressing workplace sexual harassment, as the majority could not think of any. This was not surprising, considering that at the time of the interview, only one ministry and one LEPL had such a mechanism in place.
- ▶ One third of the interviewed civil servants said that they had attended training on workplace sexual harassment. Respondents from the regions were more likely to have attended such training (43 per cent) than those in Tbilisi (31 per cent). More civil servants from the central government participated in training on workplace sexual harassment (43 per cent) than other institutions' representatives (29 per cent). Notably, training attendance is associated positively with the awareness of reporting mechanisms and less sexist attitudes towards sexual harassment.
- ▶ Respondents pointed out several barriers that prevent victims from filing a formal report. The main impediments included the difficulty of clearly identifying sexual harassment, shame, confidentiality concerns, the fear of losing their job and the lack of evidence or witnesses.
- ▶ Interviewees believe that training and awareness-raising campaigns are the most effective means of changing military personnel's mindset. Such obligatory training modules should include illustrative examples that closely reflect the working environment of military service personnel.

## 4.2. Recommendations

The analysis above leads to a number of recommendations:

- ▶ When asked about to whom they feel most comfortable reporting on sexual harassment, an overwhelming majority of civil servants said that they would feel more comfortable reporting internally (within the organization) than externally. It is recommended that internal mechanisms on the prevention of and response to sexual harassment in the civil service be introduced.
- ▶ Both qualitative and quantitative evidence shows that trainings are associated with increased sensitivity towards sexual harassment cases. Civil service organizations should strongly consider regular and, if possible, mandatory sexual harassment training for civil servants, ensuring that they are informed about the phenomenon, legislation, available response mechanisms and consequences of workplace sexual harassment.
- ▶ Civil service organizations should ensure that high-ranking officials are sensitive towards sexual harassment issues and, as role models, consistently demonstrate their commitments towards preventing sexual harassment in the workplace. In-depth interviews attested that civil servants are more conscious of sexual harassment when their immediate supervisors take the issue seriously.
- ▶ Civil servants in Georgia express positive attitudes towards reporting sexual harassment incidents. On the other hand, there are few if any such cases. To encourage actual reporting behaviour, civil service organizations should regularly conduct awareness-raising campaigns to promote anti-sexual harassment legislation and policies and encourage reporting by both victims and bystanders.
- ▶ To further encourage reporting, civil service organizations should better protect the confidentiality of not only the victims of sexual harassment but also those who are bystanders, as concerns over confidentiality have been identified as key barriers to reporting among study respondents.
- ▶ Interviews with civil servants and experts attest that in organizations where women are in high-ranking positions, sexual harassment is less prevalent. Thus, among other actions civil service organizations should consider promoting women to high-ranking positions, which, among other things, would serve as a preventive measure towards sexual harassment.



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