

Achieving Workplace Gender Equity and Inclusion and Working Towards Eliminating Sexual Harassment

Michelle Kelly, Co-Chair of the Gender Equity Committee

Agenda

1. What is the Gender Equity Committee
2. What did we learn from the 2019 Survey
3. How do we work together address these issues
4. Next Steps

Gender Equity Committee

- The Gender Equity Committee advises, monitors and supports Council in the work and governance of the Society on Gender Equity Issues
- Gender Equity Issues are those related to the protection, advancement and promotion of those who are equity-seeking on the basis of gender, gender identity and sexuality.

Responsibilities of the GEC

- Develop policy and program options for the promotion and advancement of equity and diversity in the legal profession in Nova Scotia.
- Develop policy and program options to increase access to the legal profession by members of equity seeking groups.
- Raise awareness of historic and current Gender Equity Issues as they relate to the legal profession and the administration of justice.

- Identify issues, provide advice to Council and carry out assigned work regarding:
 - Barriers and impediments to entry into the Nova Scotia legal profession and involvement in the Society by women;
 - Barriers and impediments in the access of justice;
 - Experiences of women, as members of the Nova Scotia legal profession and with regard to the administration of justice; and
 - The intersection of Gender Equity Issues with those issues affecting additional equity seeking groups.

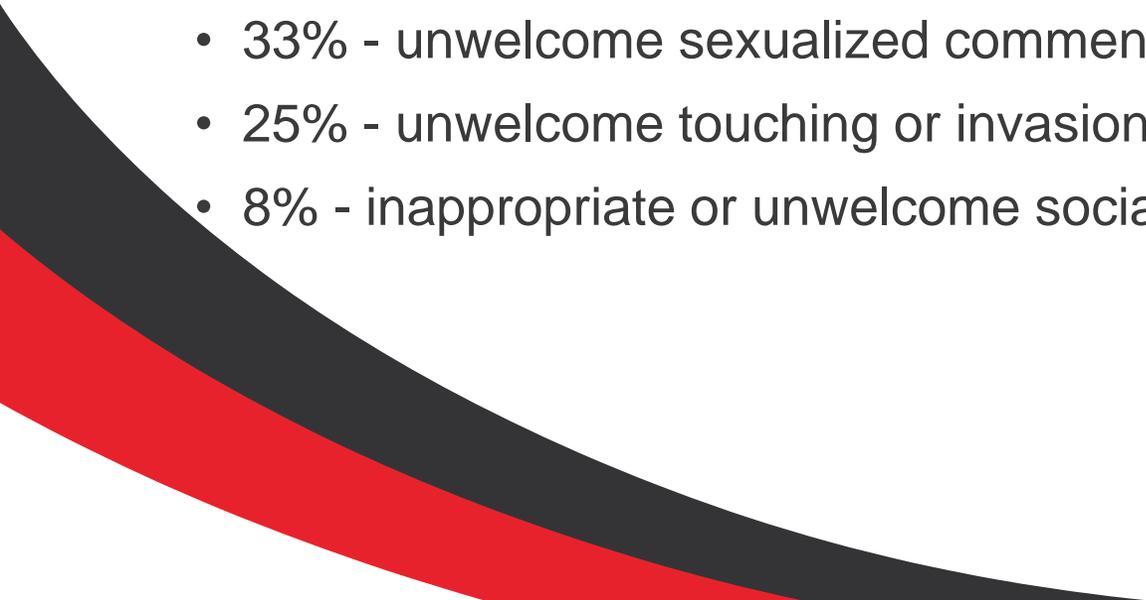
2019 Survey

- In response to the overwhelming information collected in the 2008 postcard campaign, GEC issued an online questionnaire to all members asking targeted questions on gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment experienced by our members.
 - GEC thanks respondents to this survey for their candor, bravery, and trust in sharing their stories with us. You inspire us to work to make our profession better.
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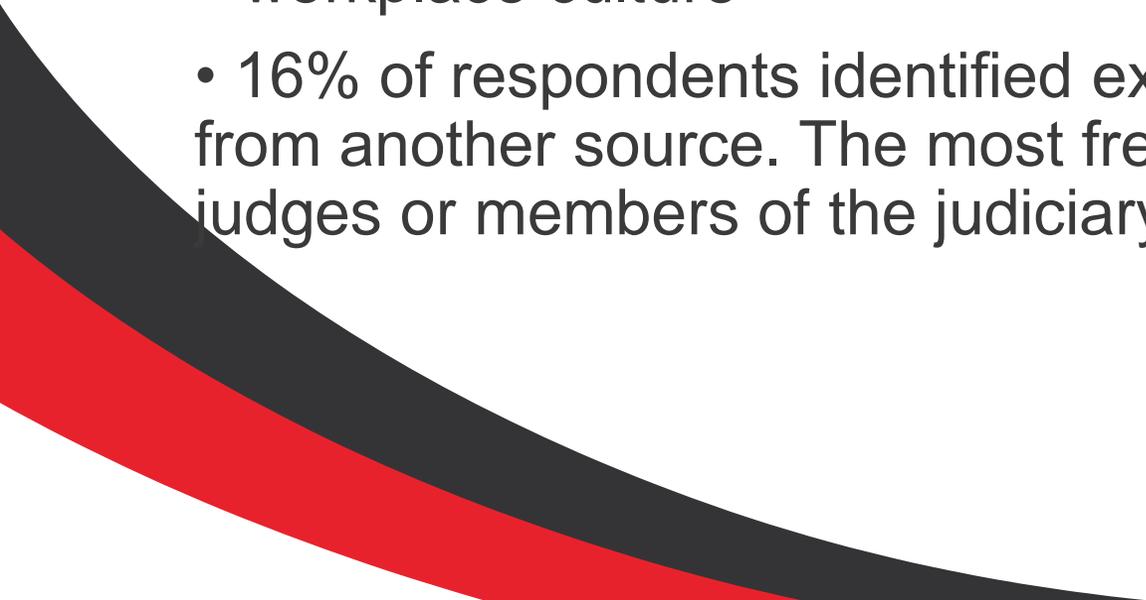
2022 Report

- https://nsbs.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/GEC-Report.FINAL_.pdf
- In their totality, the responses paint a clear picture that despite the progress made in improving the cultures, policies and diversity of legal workplaces, **gender-based harassment and discrimination still impacts the careers of too many lawyers in Nova Scotia**. Also, the perception of how prevalent gender-based harassment or discrimination is in the legal profession does vary by gender.

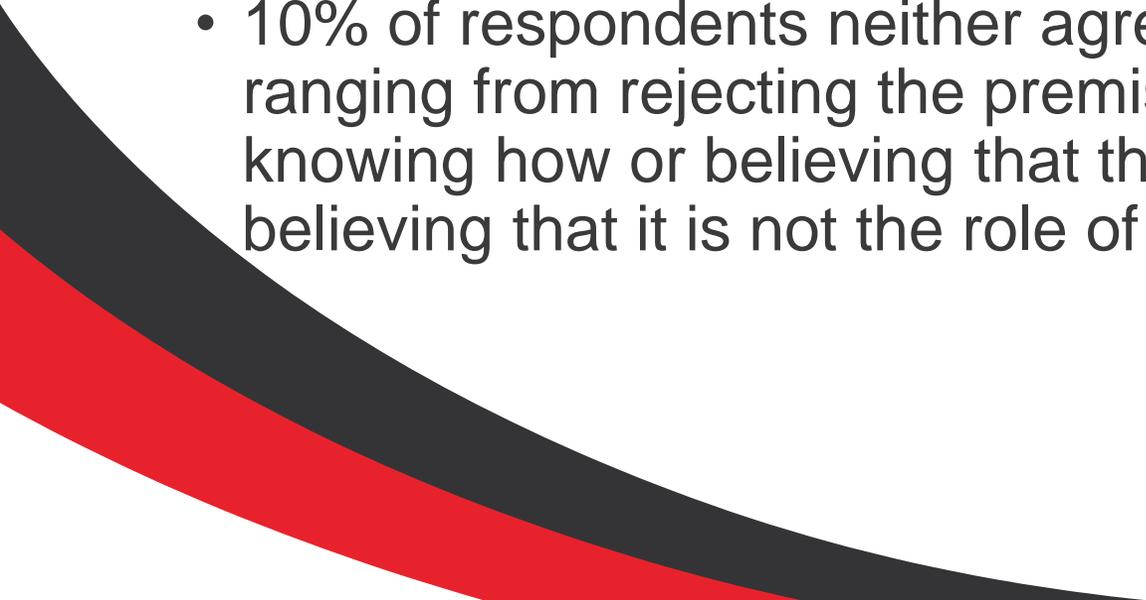
What does gender based discrimination and sexual harassment look like:

- 51% - use of inappropriate sexualized comments or language
 - 50% - unwelcome or inappropriate questions about my personal life
 - 48% - unequal opportunities for work experience
 - 43% - social exclusion
 - 41% - barriers to advancement
 - 33% - unwelcome sexualized comments or advances directed at me
 - 25% - unwelcome touching or invasion of my personal space
 - 8% - inappropriate or unwelcome social media or electronic communication
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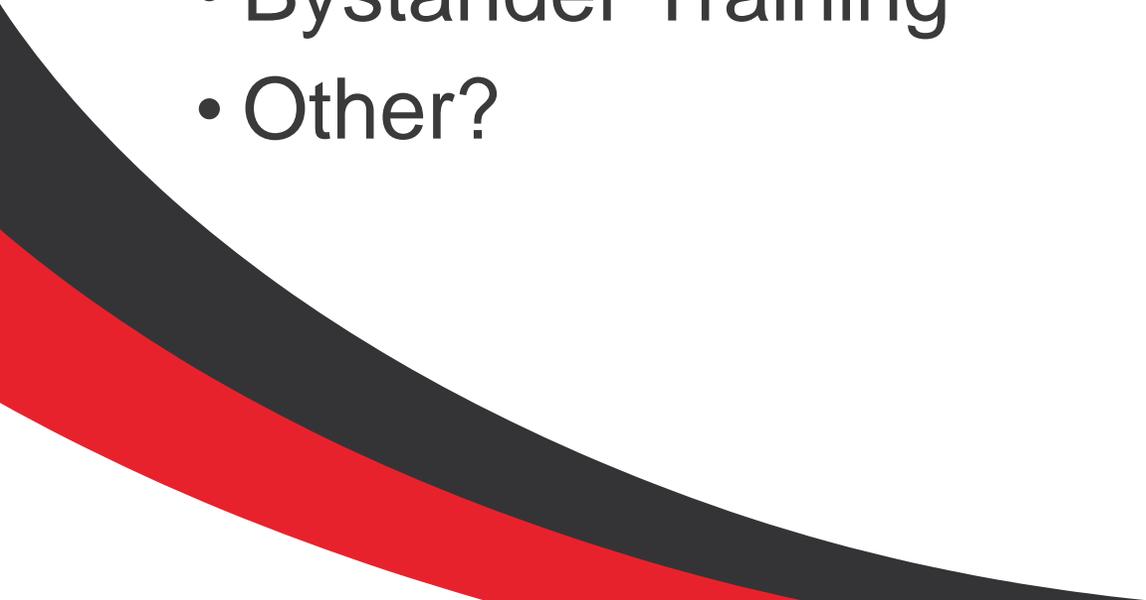
Who are the “offenders?”

- 61% reported experiencing such behavior from a senior lawyer in their own workplace
 - 54% of respondents reported experiencing such behavior from a client
 - 54% of respondents identified experiencing discrimination and harassment from opposing counsel
 - 42% of respondents identified the behavior as “systemic” because of workplace culture
 - 16% of respondents identified experiencing discrimination and harassment from another source. The most frequent “other “source specified were judges or members of the judiciary.
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What is the Society's Role

- 80% of respondents believed that the Society should be taking steps to address systemic issues of gender-based harassment and discrimination in the legal profession
 - 10% of respondents believed that the Society should not be taking such steps
 - 10% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed and provided reasoning ranging from rejecting the premise that such discrimination exists, not knowing how or believing that the Society could impact this issue or believing that it is not the role of the Society to intervene in the issue.
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How do we work together to address gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment?

- Training
 - Code Provisions/Discipline
 - Targeting Firms and Workplaces
 - Bystander Training
 - Other?
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Next Steps

- GEC is doing an international scan on how the legal profession worldwide is tackling these issues to develop best practices and provide recommendations to the Society
- We want to hear from you if you have further thoughts or recommendations
- Email mkelly@coxandpalmer.com or mchai@stewartmckelvey.com



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