Sexual harassment of women in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Analysis Based on Data from the OSCE-led Survey on Violence against Women

Violence against women (Article 3a)

Violence against women is understood as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and shall mean all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

Sexual violence (Article 36)

Engaging in non-consensual vaginal, anal or oral penetration of a sexual nature of the body of another person with any bodily part or object; engaging in other non-consensual acts of a sexual nature with a person; causing another person to engage in non-consensual acts of a sexual nature with a third person. Consent must be given voluntarily as the result of the person’s free will assessed in the context of the surrounding circumstances.

Sexual harassment (Article 40)

Any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment, is subject to criminal or other legal sanction.

THE STUDY INVOLVED A SURVEY OF A REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE OF

2,321 WOMEN AGED 18 - 74 LIVING IN BiH

THIS FIGURE INCLUDES

1,163 women in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH),
1,018 in the Republika Srpska (RS),
139 in the Brčko District (BD)

SEXUAL HARASSMENT IS “ANY FORM OF UNWANTED VERBAL, NON-VERBAL OR PHYSICAL CONDUCT OF A SEXUAL NATURE WITH THE PURPOSE OR EFFECT OF VIOLATING THE DIGNITY OF A PERSON, IN PARTICULAR WHEN CREATING AN INTIMIDATING, HOSTILE, DEGRADING, HUMILIATING OR OFFENSIVE ENVIRONMENT”.

Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) (Article 40)
PERPETRATORS

- **unknown perpetrators** (62%)
- **friends, acquaintances, or neighbours** (29%)
- **a colleague or boss** (17%)
- **someone who not specified in the available categories** (23%)

Almost three in ten women in BiH report having experienced at least one form of sexual harassment since the age of 15, and 15 per cent of women reported being victims of severe forms of sexual harassment.

Prevalence of sexual harassment in BiH, 2018:

- **Since age of 15**
  - 28%
  - 26%
  - 31%

- **In the 12 months prior to the survey**
  - 10%
  - 9%
  - 14%

Prevalence of the most severe forms of sexual harassment in BiH, 2018:

- **Since age of 15**
  - 15%
  - 14%
  - 16%

- **In the 12 months prior to the survey**
  - 4%
  - 4%
  - 5%

The prevalence of sexual harassment in BiH is lower than in the EU and in other countries in the region, but this could be due to lower awareness or reduced readiness to disclose it in the survey.

Prevalence of sexual harassment by country, 2018, %

- **Albania**
  - 17%
  - 54%

- **Bosnia and Herzegovina**
  - 10%
  - 26%

- **Montenegro**
  - 18%
  - 31%

- **North Macedonia**
  - 10%
  - 30%

- **Serbia**
  - 18%
  - 42%

- **Moldova**
  - 18%
  - 42%

- **Ukraine**
  - 17%
  - 42%

Base: All participants in the OSCE-wide survey (women aged 18-74 (15,779)).
Source: OSCE-led Survey on Violence against Women, 2019
Women who experienced at least one form of sexual harassment by co-workers (boss or colleague) in BiH (67).

Source: OSCE-led Survey on Violence against Women, 2019

Sexual harassment in the workplace, by type, per cent:

- Inappropriate staring or leering: 23.8%
- Sexually suggestive comments or jokes: 14.6%
- Inappropriate invitations to go on date: 12.7%
- Intrusive questions about private life: 11.2%
- Intrusive comments about physical appearance: 8.2%
- Other: 4.2%

Women at higher risk of sexual harassment are usually younger and economically active, often in precarious employment, as well as students, women in urban areas, and those in a vulnerable situation.

Prevalence of sexual harassment since the age of 15, by age and Entity, per cent:

- BiH: 18-29: 22.2%, 30-59: 25.4%, 60+: 17.6%
- FBiH: 18-29: 28.3%, 30-59: 25.5%, 60+: 17.6%
- RS: 18-29: 22.2%, 30-59: 25.5%, 60+: 17.6%

Prevalence of sexual harassment by activity status, per cent:

- Self-employed: 43.2%
- Student: 40.3%
- In paid work: 38.3%
- Unemployed: 25.5%
- Fulfilling domestic tasks and care responsibilities: 24.1%
- Helping in the family business: 22.6%
- In retirement: 17.6%

Prevalence of sexual harassment by the level of education, per cent:

- Master or equivalent: 20.0%
- Bachelor or equivalent: 44.5%
- Upper secondary education: 32.7%
- Lower secondary education: 17.5%
- Primary education: 15.5%
- Never been in formal education, not completed primary education: 7.5%

Percentage of women who disagree and strongly disagree with attitudes among women who disclosed and women who did not disclose the experience of sexual harassment:

- Women without experience of sexual harassment: 23.4%
- Women with experience of sexual harassment: 24.3%

Prevalence of sexual harassment by minority and forced migration status, per cent:

- BiH: 28.1%
- RS: 33.0%
- FBiH: 33.0%
- Returnee: 33.9%
- Refugee, displaced: 30.4%
- Religious minority: 33.1%
- Ethnic minority: 33.1%

Sexual harassment triggers psychological consequences.

Women’s emotional responses to the most serious incident of sexual harassment, by entity, per cent:

- BiH: Embarassment: 45.4%, Annoyance: 44.8%, Anger, rage: 46.4%
- RS: Embarassment: 39.7%, Annoyance: 41.7%, Anger, rage: 40.9%
- FBiH: Embarassment: 40.0%, Annoyance: 40.0%, Anger, rage: 38.4%
Psychological consequences of the most serious incident of sexual harassment, by entity, per cent:

- Feeling vulnerable: BiH 15.6%, FBiH 11.9%, RS 19.2%
- Anxiety: BiH 6.4%, FBiH 13.4%, RS 19.5%
- Loss of self-confidence: BiH 8.6%, FBiH 13.3%, RS 16.1%
- Difficulty in sleeping: BiH 4.8%, FBiH 10.6%, RS 17.3%
- Depression: BiH 5.9%, FBiH 10.6%, RS 14.4%
- Panic attacks: BiH 5%, FBiH 9.6%, RS 17.7%
- Difficulty in relationships with other people: BiH 5.3%, FBiH 9.4%, RS 13.1%
- Difficulty concentrating: BiH 4.2%, FBiH 7.9%, RS 15.3%

Percentage of women who pointed to different forms of sexual harassment as the most serious incident they experienced and sharing/reporting that incident to others, per cent:

- Inappropriate advances on social networks: BiH 46.2%, FBiH 53.8%
- Intrusive comments about physical appearance: BiH 44.9%, FBiH 51.1%
- Intrusive questions about private life: BiH 54.5%, FBiH 45.5%
- Inappropriate invitations to go out on dates: BiH 35.3%, FBiH 64.7%
- Sexually suggestive comments or jokes: BiH 57.4%, FBiH 42.6%
- Inappropriate staring or leering: BiH 42.4%, FBiH 57.6%
- Unwelcome touching, hugging or kissing: BiH 58.3%, FBiH 41.7%

Percentage of women who experienced the most serious incident of sexual harassment by listed perpetrators who shared/report that incident, per cent:

- Someone they did not know: BiH 55.7%, FBiH 44.3%
- Somebody else they know: BiH 56.2%, FBiH 51.1%
- Friend, acquaintance, neighbour: BiH 50%, FBiH 50%
- A date, someone they just met: BiH 46.8, FBiH 64.7%
- Relative/family member: BiH 54.5, FBiH 45.5%
- Co-worker: BiH 73.3, FBiH 22.7%
- Previous boyfriend: BiH 75.1, FBiH 26.9%
- Previous partner: BiH 75.1, FBiH 26.9%

RECOMMENDATION

1. Continuous work on increasing awareness of sexual harassment as a form of gender-based violence among both women and men.
2. Improving protection mechanisms at all levels of governance and in all relevant settings.

Gender equality mechanisms at State and Entity levels should take the lead in the establishment and promotion of such protection mechanisms.