

2026

# State of Workplace Harassment Report





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# Executive summary

The modern workplace is significantly different from what it was a decade ago. Hybrid work setups, fully remote teams, quick job changes, and a new generation of workers have transformed the ways people communicate, collaborate, and define boundaries at work. These changes have also altered how workplace harassment is experienced, reported, and handled.

Harassment is both a cultural and ethical concern with tangible business impacts. Unchecked misconduct leads to increased turnover, eroded trust, lower productivity, and substantial costs from attrition and rehiring, reputational damage and even legal liability.

To better understand how harassment is experienced, perceived, and addressed in today's organizations, Traliant partnered with the independent market research firm Researchscape to survey 2,193 U.S.-based employed adults working in organizations with 100+ employees across healthcare, retail, hospitality, manufacturing, and office/professional settings.



*While 77% of respondents report that their organization places a “very high” or “extremely high” priority on preventing workplace harassment, nearly a third (28%) do not feel fully protected.*

The survey findings present a critical call to action for employers committed to building compliant, high-performing workplaces. While 77% of respondents report that their organization places a “very high” or “extremely high” priority on preventing workplace harassment, nearly a third (28%) do not feel fully protected.

The survey sheds light on the realities that employees face today and identifies areas where employers must strengthen their policies and training programs to foster a truly safe workplace culture. Overall, the 2026 findings suggest modest but meaningful progress in prevention and awareness, alongside continued exposure to harassment that emphasizes the need for sustained effort.

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# Key findings



**Harassment remains visible in the workplace.** Nearly four in ten employees (38%) report witnessing workplace harassment in the past five years, and 21% have been directly targeted. The situation is more pronounced among Gen Z employees, with nearly half (46%) witnessing harassment and one-third (33%) experiencing it firsthand.



**Harassment exposure is highest in customer-facing industries:** Customer-facing industries report the highest exposure to workplace harassment. Half of hotel, restaurant, and bar employees (50%) have witnessed harassment, and nearly one-third (29%) have personally experienced it. This is higher than office workers (32% witnessed; 17% experienced) and most other industries surveyed.



**Witnesses report rifts in satisfaction with organizational handling:** 22% of those who witnessed harassment did not report it. Of those who did, more than one-third (38%) reported dissatisfaction with their employers' handling of the report.



**Fear of retaliation also persists as a significant barrier.** Among employees who feel unprotected, 71% cite concerns about retaliation as the primary reason they do not feel safe.



**The availability of reporting channels impacts reporting behavior.**

While most employees say they would report harassment, 33% would do so only if they could remain anonymous.



**Training plays a crucial role.** Employees who undergo regular training report higher feelings of safety and confidence in their employer's commitment to preventing harassment. Nonetheless, 14% of employees report not receiving any training in the past year.

These findings highlight that although most employees feel protected and trust their employer's efforts to prevent harassment, notable gaps remain in reporting behavior, fear of retaliation, and satisfaction with how employers respond.

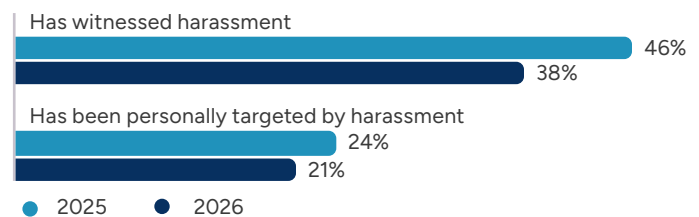
Employers must understand how employees perceive and experience these issues to fulfill their legal duty to provide a workplace free from harassment and to foster a safe, respectful, and sustainable work environment.

# The state of harassment in the workplace

Workplace harassment is defined as discriminatory, offensive, or unwelcome conduct tied to protected characteristics (e.g., race, gender, religion, disability) as well as other inappropriate behaviors that undermine professionalism and respect.

Over the past five years, 38% of employees surveyed have witnessed harassment of a colleague, and 21% report being personally targeted. These figures represent a slight improvement from Traliant's 2025 report, which found that 46% had witnessed harassment and 24% had experienced it firsthand. However, modest declines should not overshadow the fact that a significant percentage of employees continue to work in workplaces where harmful behavior goes unchecked.

## Exposure to Workplace Harassment (Past Five Years)



## Defining the terms

Workplace harassment is defined as discriminatory, offensive, or unwelcome conduct tied to protected characteristics (e.g., race, gender, religion, disability) as well as other inappropriate behaviors that undermine professionalism and respect.





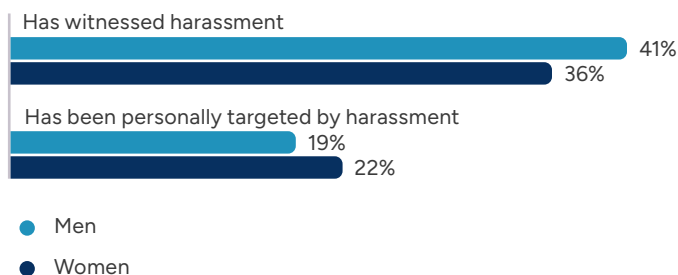
There are also notable gender and generational differences in reported experiences. For example, men reported higher rates of witnessing harassment (41% vs. 36%) than women. At the same time, women are more likely to agree that workplace harassment is a growing issue and needs more employer attention.

Younger generations reported significantly higher rates of being targets of harassment. One third of Gen Z respondents (33%) and nearly a quarter (24%) of Millennials answered “Yes” to having personally experienced workplace harassment, compared with 16% of Gen X and just 12% of Baby Boomers.

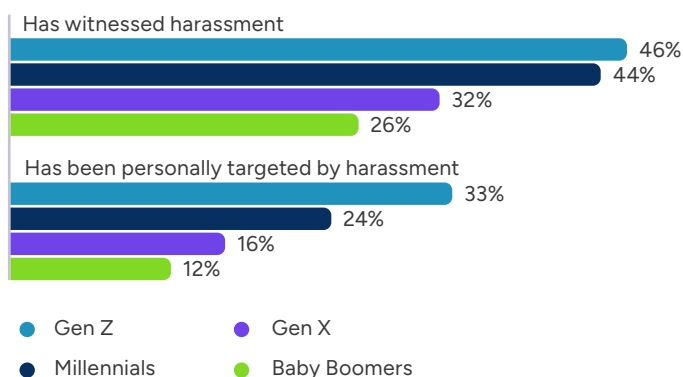
These findings highlight a growing generational gap between evolving employee expectations and existing workplace practices. This can be attributed to multiple factors, including the fact that early-career roles often place younger employees in customer-facing positions with limited authority and decision-making power. The risk of harassment can be tied to career stage and power imbalance, and being newer in the workforce means having fewer informal support networks.

This gap also reflects increased recognition, as Gen Z tends to have higher awareness and a greater willingness to name and report misconduct that may have been normalized to prior generations.

## Exposure to Workplace Harassment by Gender (Past Five Years)



## Exposure to Workplace Harassment by Generation (Past Five Years)



## Defining the generations

Gen Z: 1997 and later

Millennial: 1981 - 1996

Gen X: 1965 - 1980

Baby Boomer: 1946 - 1964

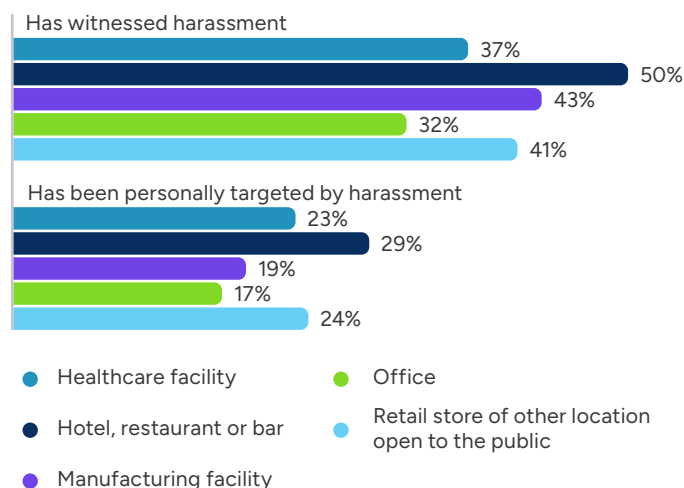


An employee's industry also plays a major role in exposure to harassment. Exposure is highest in customer-facing industries, which report the most workplace harassment. Half of hotel, restaurant, and bar employees (50%) have witnessed harassment, and nearly one-third (29%) have personally experienced it. This is higher than among office workers (32% witnessed; 17% experienced) and most other industries surveyed.

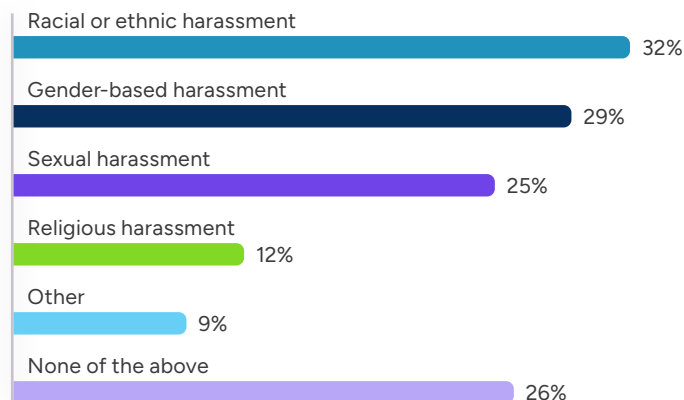
However, digital harassment is more prevalent in office and professional environments. While overall exposure is lower in these settings, office-based and professional services employees are more likely to report harassment occurring through digital channels, including social media (20%), text messages (13%), and workplace chat platforms such as Slack or Teams (11%), reflecting the heavier reliance on digital communication in these roles.

Workplace harassment also extends well beyond sexual misconduct. When asked to select all forms they had witnessed or experienced in the past 12 months, employees most frequently cited identity-based harassment — such as racial or ethnic (32%) and gender-based harassment (29%) — more often than sexual harassment (25%). This finding displays the need for prevention efforts that address a broader range of behaviors and identities.

## Exposure to Workplace Harassment by Industry (Past Five Years)



## Which types of harassment have you personally witnessed or experienced in the last 12 months? (Select all that apply)

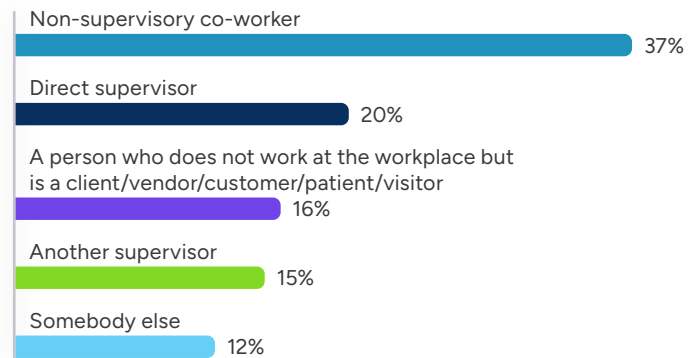


Employees most frequently cited identity-based harassment — such as racial or ethnic and gender-based harassment — more often than sexual harassment. This finding displays the need for prevention efforts that address a broader range of behaviors and identities.



Who are the perpetrators of witnessed harassment? While the data shows that harassment is most often committed by non-supervisory coworkers (37%), both indirect and direct supervisors are responsible for 35%, according to survey responses. Harassment is not a role-specific infraction, and these results mark the importance of harassment prevention training for all levels.

## How would you classify the person who committed the harassment?



Employees look to managers and executives for guidance on modeling appropriate behavior and consistently enforcing standards. When leaders visibly prioritize respect, safety, and compliance, those values cascade throughout the organization.



This dynamic also highlights the importance of transparent, anonymous reporting pathways and effective leadership accountability. Employees look to managers and executives for guidance on modeling appropriate behavior and consistently enforcing standards. When leaders visibly prioritize respect, safety, and compliance, those values cascade throughout the organization.

Leaders play a critical role not only in responding to harassment but in preventing it through equitable decision-making, clear communication, and a willingness to address issues promptly. By demonstrating a zero-tolerance stance, leadership establishes the foundation necessary for a workplace where people feel protected, empowered, and confident that concerns will be taken seriously.

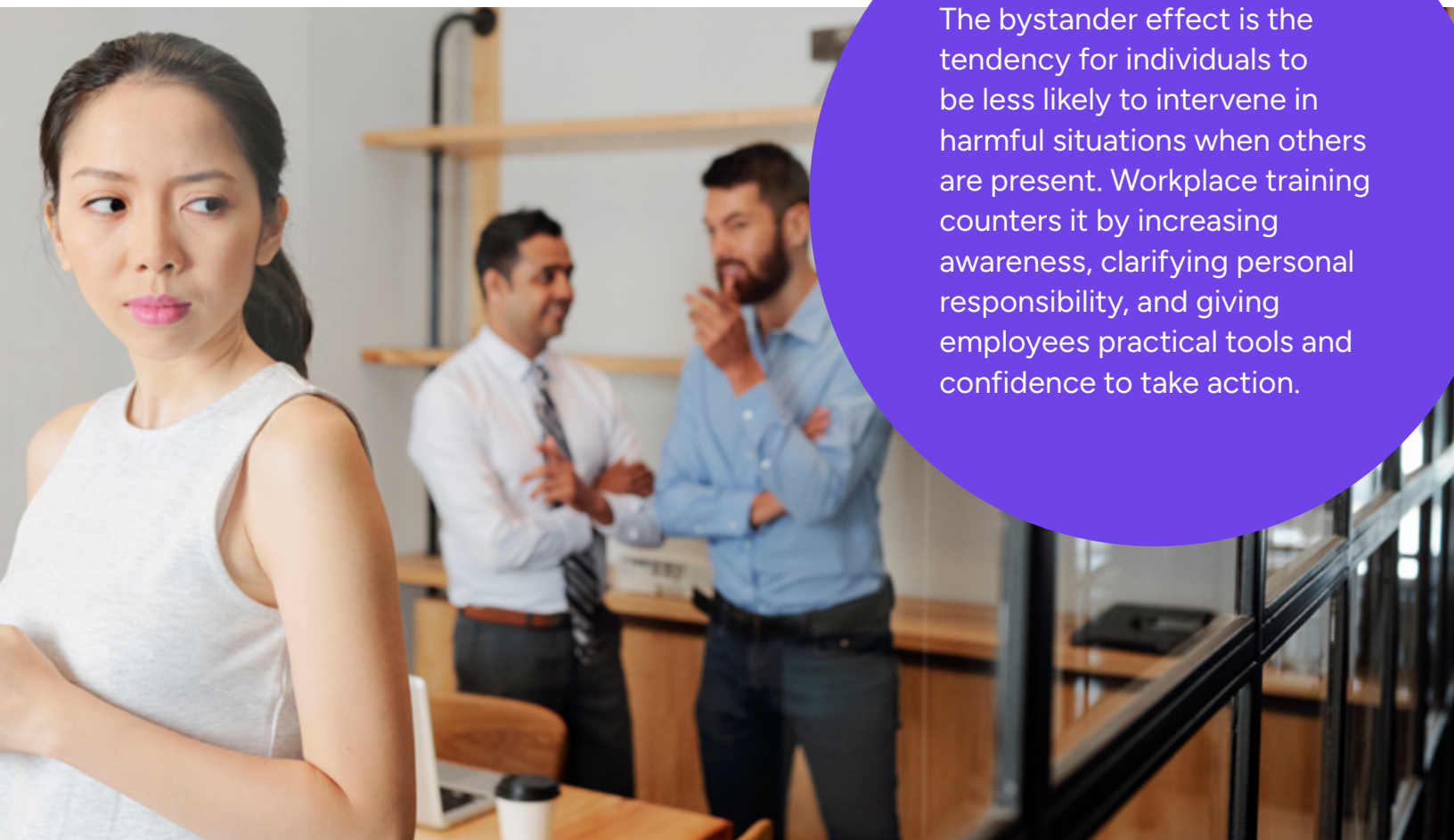
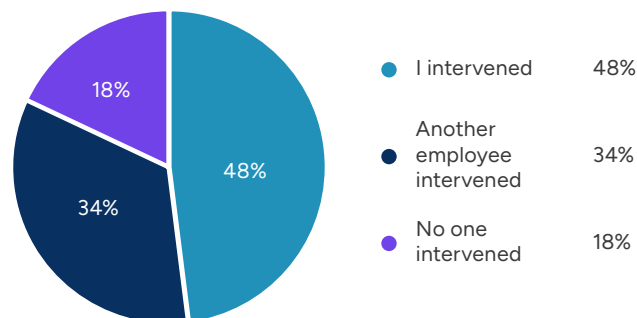


# Intervention and reporting workplace harassment

When employees witness workplace harassment, intervention is important because it helps stop harmful behavior early, discourages repeat behavior, and prevents silence from being mistaken for approval.

When employees witness harassment, the data shows that intervention is common, but not universal. Nearly half (48%) of witnesses reported stepping in themselves, and another third (34%) say someone else intervened. However, 18% report that no one intervened at all — underscoring the continued relevance of bystander intervention training.

**Did you or someone else intervene in the situation to de-escalate or resolve harassment?**



The bystander effect is the tendency for individuals to be less likely to intervene in harmful situations when others are present. Workplace training counters it by increasing awareness, clarifying personal responsibility, and giving employees practical tools and confidence to take action.

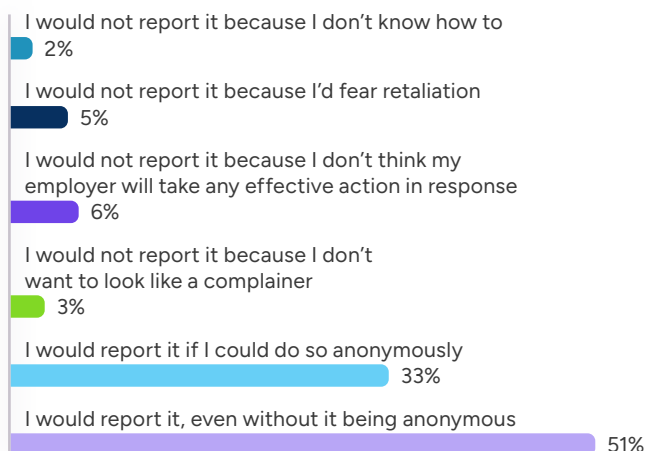
After an incident occurs, employee reporting plays a central role in an employer's ability to investigate, remediate, and prevent future workplace harassment. An effective response depends on the employer receiving swift notice and employees coming forward with their experiences.

Half (51%) of employees would report harassment in all situations, regardless of whether anonymity is provided. However, one-third of employees (33%) would only report harassment if they could do so anonymously.

What causes this gap in reporting? When reporting pathways are limited or employees are unsure whether their identity will be protected, incidents are far more likely to go unreported. This causes organizations to lose visibility into emerging issues, allowing problematic behavior to continue unchecked and potentially escalate. This not only puts employees at risk but also significantly increases the organization's exposure to legal, financial, and reputational risks.

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### If there were a scenario at work where you were a victim of harassment or witnessed a coworker experience an instance of harassment, how likely is it that you would report the issue to a manager or HR?



An employee's industry may also bring in different circumstances for their level of comfort with reporting incidents. For example, customer-facing industries (like hotels and restaurants), which we discussed in the previous section, report the highest exposure to workplace harassment, but do not report incidents at significantly higher rates. This suggests that while incidents are common, frontline workers may face additional barriers to reporting, such as less formalized HR structures, limited access to managers during shifts, fear of customer retaliation, or concerns about job security in roles with higher turnover.

As a result, higher exposure does not necessarily translate into greater confidence or follow-through in reporting. The influence of organizational infrastructure and work environment is paramount to employee trust in reporting systems.

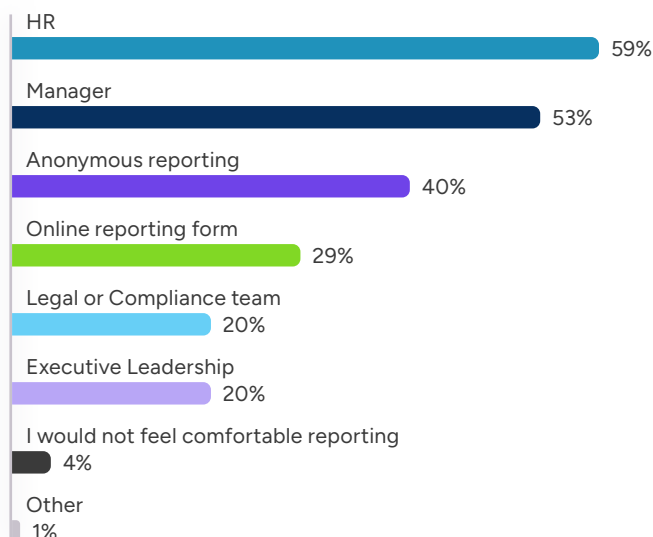
Survey results found that among respondents, the top three preferred channels for reporting were HR (59%), Managers (53%), and Anonymous reporting (40%). This demonstrates that no single channel works for everyone. Offering multiple reporting options helps meet employees where they are and empowers them to speak up in a way that makes them feel safest.

Better awareness and more varied reporting channels enable employees to know exactly where to report harassment and what to expect if they do so. For the employees who reported feeling unprotected, the top factor was fear of retaliation.

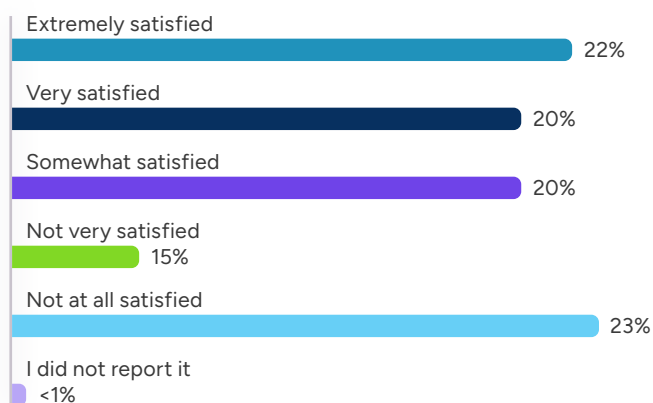
Once an incident is reported, the next critical phase is how an employer handles an investigation. More than one-third (38%) of those who did report harassment expressed dissatisfaction with how their employer handled the report. Notably, this dissatisfaction is more pronounced among women.

Even well-designed policies fail if they are not perceived as equitable by the people they intend to protect, and the cost extends beyond individual cases to workforce stability and culture. Perceived mishandling of harassment reports could lead to higher turnover among women and a reduced willingness to speak up about other issues.

## Which reporting channels would you feel most comfortable using? (Select all that apply)



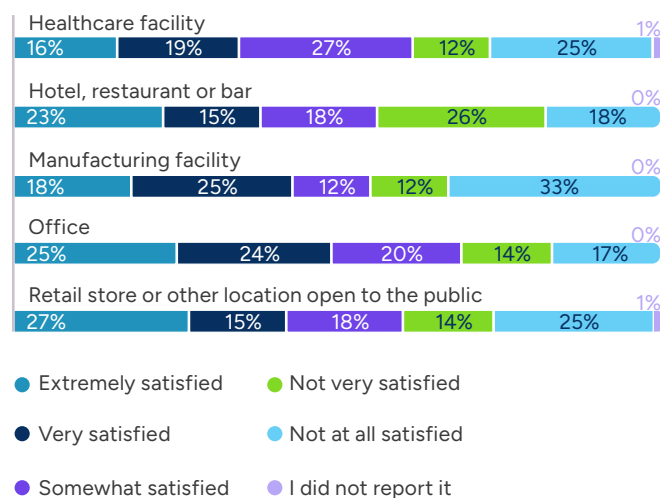
## If you've reported an incident of harassment, how satisfied were you with your employer's handling of the report?



Additionally, reporting confidence varies by environment. Employees in larger organizations and office-based settings are more likely to report greater confidence in their employer's handling of reports due to the more formalized processes and infrastructure in place. Larger organizations have access to dedicated HR teams and standardized investigation protocols, resulting in predictable and repeatable processes that employees can depend on. Office-based environments often provide easier access to HR and managers, as well as more frequent communication about policies.

The increased confidence of employees in larger, office-based workplaces suggests that clear communicative systems and strong visibility play a significant role in shaping trust in employer handling.

## If you've reported an incident of harassment, how satisfied were you with your employer's handling of the report?



Even well-designed policies fail if they are not perceived as equitable by the people they intend to protect, and the cost extends beyond individual cases to workforce stability and culture.





# Training and prevention policies

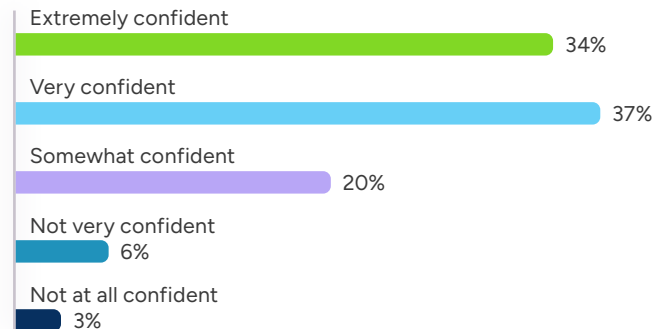
Workplace harassment training and policies aim to educate employees and managers on how to recognize, address, and prevent harassment. This training is crucial because it helps create a safe and respectful work environment, reduces legal risks, and protects a company's reputation.

Overall confidence in employer harassment-prevention efforts remains high: 71% of respondents are very or extremely confident that their employer's practices create a safe and supportive environment. Training plays a central role in building this confidence, which has remained consistent over the past year.

Practical training can significantly influence an organization's culture by equipping employees with the skills to recognize and respond to harassment, fostering a supportive and respectful environment. In the past year, most respondents reported receiving training on:

- Codes of conduct (63%)
- Harassment prevention (58%)
- Workplace violence prevention (50%)
- Inclusion (48%) and unconscious bias (23%)

**How confident are you that your employer's harassment prevention practices create the environment you need to feel safe and supported?**



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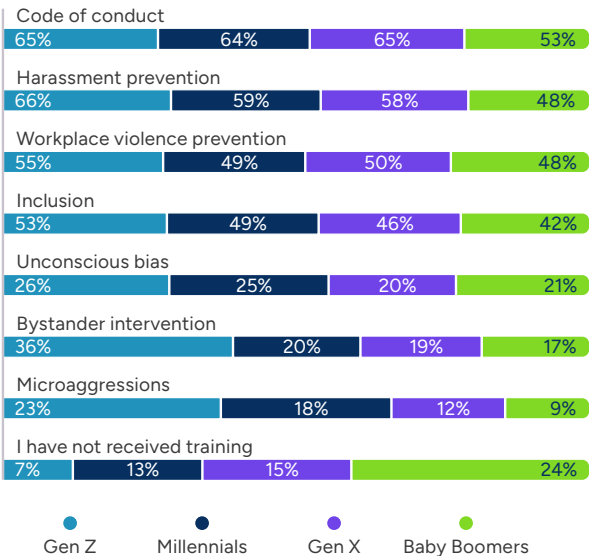
However, 14% of employees reported not receiving any training in the past year. This leaves a significant group vulnerable and opens the door to perpetuating cultures that tolerate harassment. Additionally, employees who have not received training report significantly lower feelings of protection.

The 2026 report identified that generational differences also manifested in the receipt of workplace training. Almost a quarter (24%) of Baby Boomers reported they did not receive any training, compared with only 7% of Gen Z. Given this, Gen Z often expects clear accountability in cases of harassment. As new generations are entering the workforce, it has become a more common expectation.

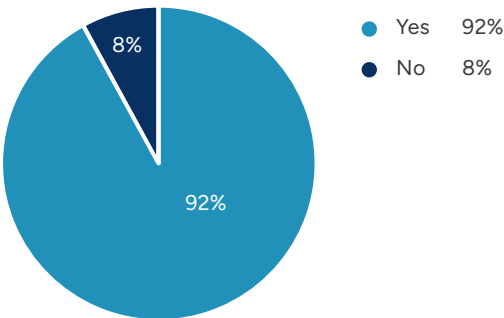
Encouragingly, among those who have received training, more than nine in ten (92%) say it was relevant to their industry, suggesting that organizations are increasingly tailoring content to real-world contexts.

One-size-fits-all harassment training fails to resonate equally across all roles, limiting its effectiveness. Today’s multi-generational workforce expects practical, scenario-based training that is relevant to the employees’ day-to-day interactions. This shift toward more tailored, role-specific learning that draws on real-world contexts and reinforces accountability reflects the modern workforce’s desire for interactive, grounded training models.

Within the past year, what training have you received from your employer?



Did you find the training relevant for your industry?

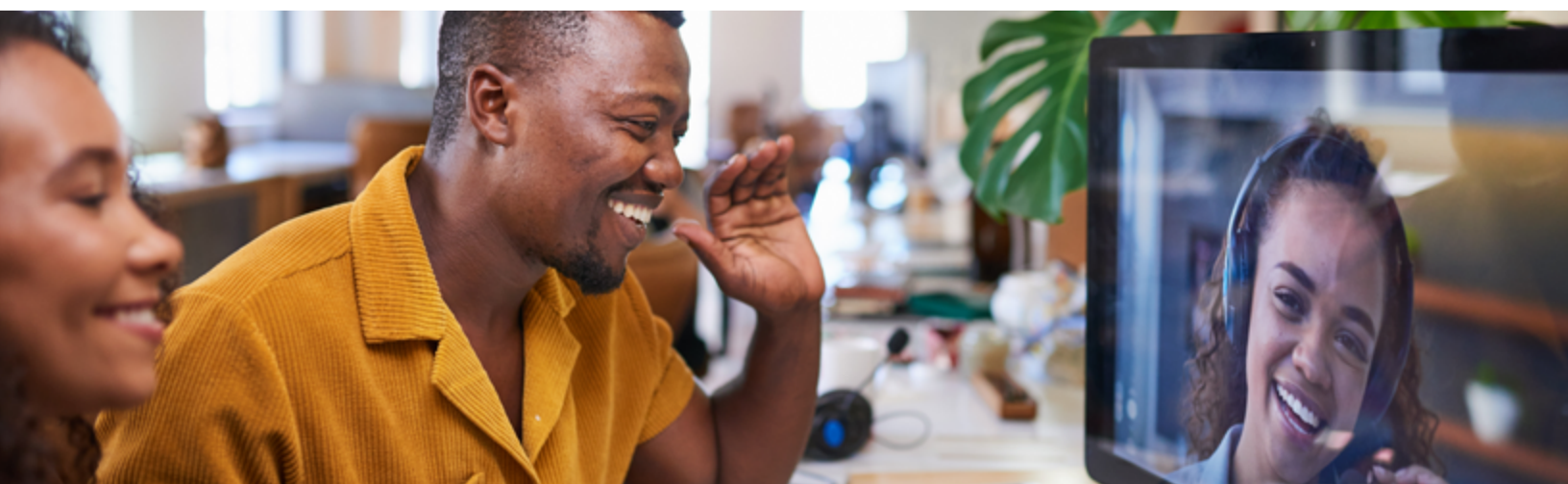


# Conclusion

The 2026 State of Workplace Harassment Report shows steady progress amid persistent challenges. Most employees feel protected and recognize their employer's commitment to prevention; yet harassment persists — and the fear of retaliation remains a powerful deterrent to reporting.

## Key findings:

- **Harassment remains in plain sight.**  
Nearly four in ten employees (38%) say they've witnessed workplace harassment in the past five years, and one in five (21%) report being targeted — clear proof that misconduct persists across industries. The impact is even more pronounced among Gen Z, with nearly half (46%) witnessing harassment and one-third (33%) experiencing it firsthand.
- **Retaliation fears remain a significant barrier.**  
Among employees who feel unprotected, 71% cite fear of retaliation as the primary reason they don't feel safe.
- **How employees report matters.**  
While most say they would speak up, one in three (33%) would do so only if they could report anonymously. This emphasizes the importance of offering multiple, varied reporting channels that facilitate honest and confidential reporting at an employee's comfort level.
- **Training works — but gaps remain.**  
Regular training is strongly linked to greater feelings of safety and confidence in employer response, yet 14% of employees report receiving no workplace-related training in the past year.
- **Harassment exposure varies by industry.**  
Customer-facing employees experience disproportionately higher levels of workplace harassment, yet they report incidents at similar rates to other industries. This gap suggests significant barriers prevent frontline workers from reporting harassment despite experiencing it more frequently.
- **Witnesses report mixed confidence in organizational handling.**  
Twenty-two percent of witnesses did not report harassment, and among those who did, more than one-third (38%) were dissatisfied with their employer's response.



# The path forward

By addressing these areas, organizations can reduce risk, strengthen trust, and foster workplaces where employees feel safe, respected, and empowered to do their best work. For employers, effective harassment prevention involves understanding the subtle differences within their workforce, how employees perceive harassment, who is most likely to experience or report it, and how these reports ultimately unfold. With this understanding, employers can make more strategic, informed decisions about allocating resources to foster safer workplaces and maintain a zero-tolerance policy on harassment.

## **Expand and modernize training to reflect evolving workplace realities**

Generic harassment training does not effectively connect with all roles, restricting its impact. Today's multi-generational workforce anticipates practical, scenario-based training that applies to their daily work. This move toward customized learning, which uses real-world workplace situations and emphasizes accountability, aligns with the modern workforce's preference for interactive, realistic training approaches.

## **Ensure reporting systems are accessible, confidential, and trusted**

When employees can report concerns without unnecessary obstacles and without fear of retaliation, organizations gain the visibility needed to act quickly and effectively. Trust in this process ensures that these concerns are raised, handled fairly, and resolved in ways that facilitate responsibility and employee security.

## **Reinforce zero-tolerance expectations**

When leadership clearly communicates and consistently upholds a strict stance against harassment, it creates a ripple effect among employees. Staff members look to leadership for modeling accountability and appropriate behavior. This visible dedication builds trust in the workplace and ingrains compliant conduct as a fundamental organizational value.

## **Act decisively and transparently when issues arise**

This is essential to maintaining trust in reporting systems, and it starts with an organization's leadership. When leadership responds promptly and clearly, they are better positioned to prevent escalation and uphold a culture of safety and respect.



# Methodology

The independent market research firm Researchscape surveyed over 2,000 US-based employed adults (18 years and older) at companies with 100 to 1,000+ employees. Conducted in December 2025, the survey encompassed the hospitality, healthcare, retail, and industrial/manufacturing industries, as well as office settings.



## About Traliant

Traliant is a leader in compliance solutions, dedicated to making workplaces better for everyone. With unparalleled in-house legal expertise, Traliant delivers engaging training, a flexible platform and practical tools that not only help organizations build a stronger culture but also support their everyday compliance needs.

Trusted by more than 14,000 organizations worldwide, Traliant delivers a continuously compliant library of 50+ essential courses, such as [sexual harassment training](#), [workplace violence prevention](#), [employment law fundamentals](#) and [code of conduct](#), kept current by its team of in-house legal experts to reflect the latest laws and regulations. Known for bringing innovation to workplace learning, Traliant delivers innovative solutions, including Netflix-style training series, TikTok-style microlearnings, and podcast discussions, as well as bespoke course creation, policy and handbook reviews and phishing simulations in one scalable platform.

Recognized on Inc.'s 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies list for five consecutive years and backed by PSG, a leading growth equity firm, Traliant is consistently honored for its award-winning products and workplace culture. Learn more at [www.traliant.com](http://www.traliant.com) and follow us on [LinkedIn](#).