

Sexual Harassment at Work

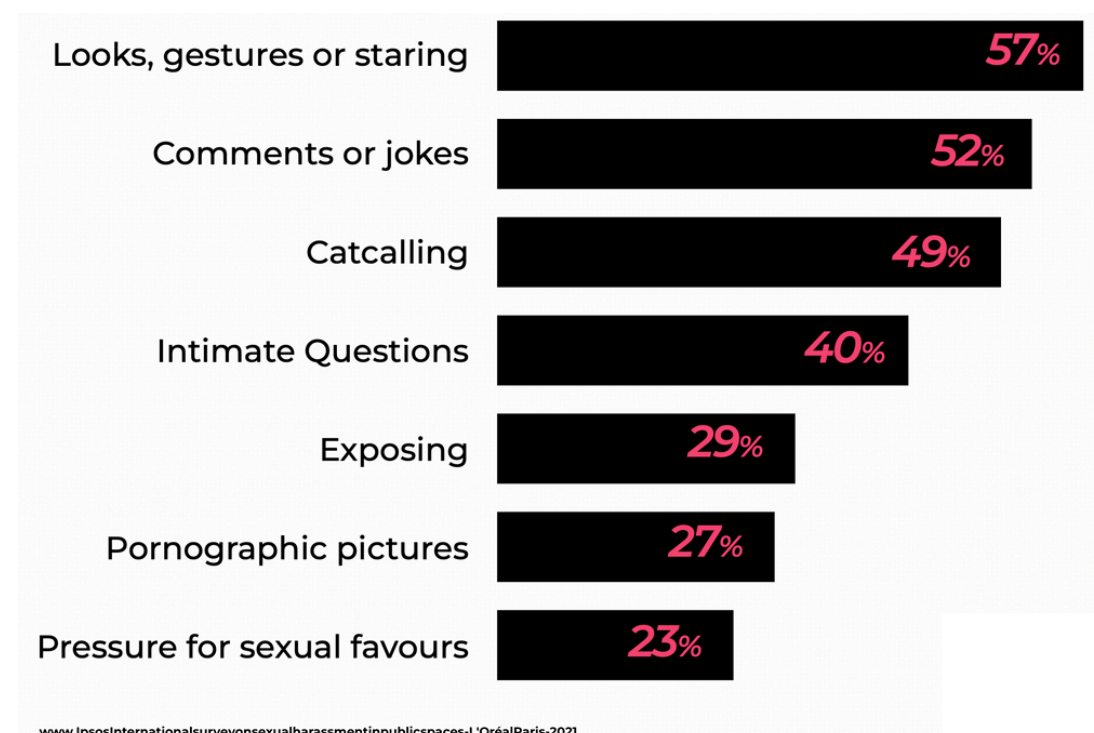
What you need to know. What you can do. Where to get help.

You are not alone

Sexism isn't a thing of the past – it's a structural power imbalance. It shows up in language, images, jokes, comments, looks, gestures, and actions. And that's exactly why it concerns all of us.

Reality in facts

More than 50% of all employees in Germany experience sexual harassment during their working life. Often, it doesn't happen just once. And yes: Even so-called "harmless" jokes or "funny" comments are not okay at work and cross boundaries. Sexual harassment doesn't start with physical assault. It starts where people are reduced to their gender — where power is used, disrespect becomes normal, and limits are ignored.



What you can do

Sexual harassment is not your personal problem – it's a structural injustice.

You have the right to defend yourself. You can:

- Tell the person directly: "Stop. That's inappropriate." or "Don't do that. It makes me uncomfortable."
- Talk to others and share your experience
- Set boundaries – and announce consequences
- Inform the workplace complaint office, equality officer, supervisor or staff council
- Reach out to an external, independent support service
- Get legal advice
- Be an ally if you witness something happening

You are not alone – and you don't have to stay silent.

Help in Germany

You are affected? You have questions? Or do you fear crossing boundaries yourself? There are places to help you. Free. Anonymous. Professional.

Antidiscrimination Office of the Federal Government

0800 546 5465

www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de

**Sexual harassment is
not a joke,
not an accident,
not a compliment,
and not a misunderstanding.**

But Violence.

The AGG and your rights in Germany

Sexual harassment at work is a form of discrimination — and it's forbidden. The General Equal Treatment Act (AGG) makes this clear:

Sexual harassment means any unwanted sexual behavior that hurts the dignity of the person affected.

What matters is not "how it was meant" — but how it is experienced. Forbidden behaviors include:

- Staring in a creepy way, inappropriate closeness, unwanted naked pictures or exposure
- Touching, hugging, or "accidental" closeness without consent
- Sexual comments, double-meaning remarks, insulting jokes
- Sexist memes, pornographic material in office chats, unwanted messages
- Threats, emotional blackmail, abuse of power
- Unequal treatment in opportunities, pay, evaluation of performance, body, or clothing

What your employer must do

Your employer's responsibility has a name: duty of protection.

Companies, organizations, and leaders must protect employees from (sexual) harassment and discrimination. This is not optional — it's the law.

Protection includes:

- Active prevention through training, guidelines, and protection concepts
- A complaint office as required by §13 AGG
- Serious investigation of incidents
- Sanctions against offenders

Looking away only protects the perpetrators. Silence preserves the power of those who cross boundaries.

If you are not taken seriously or nothing happens: stand up for yourself. You are not alone.