

# Sexual harassment at work

Netherlands

Institute for  
Human Rights

Everyone has the right to a safe workplace. And that includes: a workplace that is free of sexual harassment. It is the employer's responsibility to ensure a safe working environment, see [www.arboportaal.nl/onderwerpen/seksuele-intimidatie/wet](http://www.arboportaal.nl/onderwerpen/seksuele-intimidatie/wet)

Sexual harassment can have a major impact, both personally and professionally. It can lead to both physical and psychological complaints. Or it can keep you from doing your job properly.



## What is sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment is defined as conduct of a sexual nature which creates an intimidating, hostile, offensive, humiliating or hurtful situation. It mainly affects women.

**It may include:**

- Verbal conduct (such as comments, emails, WhatsApp messages or the showing of images of a sexual nature)
- Non-verbal conduct (such as gestures or facial expressions)
- Physical conduct (unwanted physical contact)

**Sexual harassment may involve the conduct of:**

- Co-workers
- Managers
- Third parties (such as customers, clients, patients or visitors)

## Where can you report sexual harassment?

To ensure that sexual harassment stops, it is important to report it (tell what happened). You may choose to start by talking to the perpetrator about the conduct in question. If this has no effect, or if you are reluctant to do so after what has happened, you can report it.

**You can report the harassment to:**

- A manager
- The HR department
- A confidential adviser
- Your employer's integrity desk
- The company doctor or your GP
- A staff welfare officer
- The Works Council
- A trade union

You may also choose to submit a formal complaint, for example, if the sexual harassment continues after you have reported it. Or if the facts are very serious.

**You can submit a formal complaint to:**

- Your employer
- A complaints committee set up (or designated) by your employer to handle this type of complaint

## Where can you turn for support?

Many people find it difficult to report sexual harassment, to file a complaint about it or to bring a case to court. You may feel that you need support with this.

**For support, you can contact:**

- A confidential adviser at your employer
- The Legal Aid and Advice Centre (Juridisch Loket) [www.juridischloket.nl](http://www.juridischloket.nl)
- An anti-discrimination agency [www.discriminatie.nl](http://www.discriminatie.nl)
- A trade union
- An employment lawyer

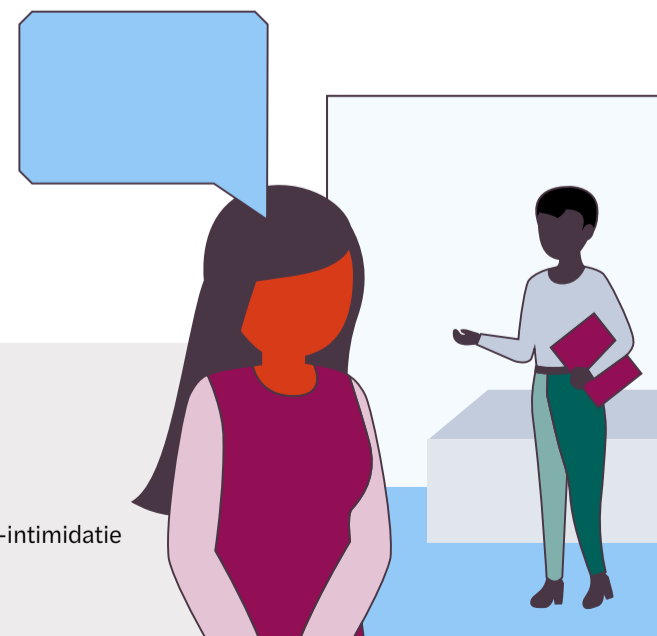
If you experience sexual harassment, you may (also) need social, medical or psychological support.

**Organisations and individuals who can advise you about this include:**

- Your GP
- A psychologist
- Victim Support (Slachtofferhulp) [www.slachtofferhulp.nl](http://www.slachtofferhulp.nl)
- Sexual Assault Center (Centrum Seksueel Geweld) [centrumseksueelgeweld.nl](http://centrumseksueelgeweld.nl)

## Other options:

- **Bringing the case to court** (in order to have measures imposed such as transferral of the perpetrator or payment of damages). An employment lawyer can explain how this is done and assist you.
- **Filing a police report** if there is a criminal offence, such as sexual assault or rape. [www.politie.nl/en/topics/report-a-crime.html](http://www.politie.nl/en/topics/report-a-crime.html)
- The **Netherlands Institute for Human Rights** can, for instance, investigate whether your employer handled your complaint about sexual harassment properly and carefully. <https://klachtenformulier.mensenrechten.nl/#/procedure?step=1>



## More information

- Unwelcome conduct guide (Wegwijzer ongewenst gedrag) [www.arboportaal.nl/documenten/publicatie/2016/06/07/wegwijzer-ongewenst-gedrag](http://www.arboportaal.nl/documenten/publicatie/2016/06/07/wegwijzer-ongewenst-gedrag)
- Netherlands Labour Authority for information on safe working conditions [www.inspectieszw.nl/onderwerpen/seksuele-intimidatie](http://www.inspectieszw.nl/onderwerpen/seksuele-intimidatie)
- Netherlands Institute for Human Rights [mensenrechten.nl](http://mensenrechten.nl)

For more information you go to: [mensenrechten.nl/seksuele-intimidatie](http://mensenrechten.nl/seksuele-intimidatie)