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U.S. Equal Employment
Opportunity Commission

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Sexual Harassment

It is unlawful to harass a person (an applicant or employee) because of that person's sex. Harassment can include "sexual harassment" or unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature.

Harassment does not have to be of a sexual nature, however, and can include offensive remarks about a person's sex. For example, it is illegal to harass a woman by making offensive comments about women in general.

Both victim and the harasser can be either a woman or a man, and the victim and harasser can be the same sex.

Although the law doesn't prohibit simple teasing, offhand comments, or isolated incidents that are not very serious, harassment is illegal when it is so frequent or severe that it creates a hostile or offensive work environment or when it results in an adverse employment decision (such as the victim being fired or demoted).

The harasser can be the victim's supervisor, a supervisor in another area, a co-worker, or someone who is not an employee of the employer, such as a client or customer.

Employer Coverage

15 or more
employees

Time Limits

180 days to [file a charge](#)
(*may be extended by state laws*)

Federal employees
have 45 days to
[contact an EEO
Counselor](#)

For more information,
see:

[Facts About
Sexual
Harassment](#)

[Title VII of the
Civil Rights Act of
1964](#)

[Regulations: 29
C.F.R. Part
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