

# Utah Researchers Release Report On Sexual Harassment In Utah Workplaces

By KATHERINE TAYLOR • MAR 12, 2018



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*Last week, researchers with the Utah Women and Leadership Project released a summary of recent research entitled “Sexual Harassment: What Utahns Need to Know.”*

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“Sexual Harassment: What Utahns Need to Know” is a summary of research published by Utah Valley University’s Utah Women and Leadership Project. Dr. Susan Madsen is one of the authors of the research.

She said one of the motivations behind this research was teaching people what actually constitutes sexual harassment. In one study, 25 percent of women said they had experienced sexual harassment in the workplace.

“But when they actually gave them the definition, it rose dramatically to 40 percent, and other studies even say higher,” Madsen said. “So in the state of Utah people are concerned about that, but a lot of people don’t know what it is.”

The research also investigates situations in which sexual harassment is more likely to occur. In data from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, there’s a common thread of sexual harassment occurring more frequently in low-paying service occupations. The four industries where sexual harassment was reported most are food service, retail trade, manufacturing, and healthcare and social assistance.

This data comes from formal, documented complaints. However, the women who choose to file formal complaints are part of a very small minority. According to the report, approximately 85 to 95 percent of women who experience sexual harassment do not file a formal complaint.

“The biggest thing that we find in the research is that it’s power,” Madsen said. “It’s power issues. So when women do not report, they feel a threat in some way.”

The report also includes recommendations on how workplaces can combat sexual harassment.

“When someone reports, you investigate,” Madsen said. “When actual harassment has been proven, no matter if they’re your best salesperson, no matter if they’re a vice president, companies just need to be committed to follow through.”

Madsen said employers will benefit from these practices too, because employees will feel more loyal and be more likely to stay at their companies.

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