



Voice of Women 2017

A Survey on
Women at Workplace

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1.

Note from a Woman's Diary

Dear Readers,

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to each one of you who have contributed by sharing their part and made the Women at Workplace initiative into a movement which will bring about a change in the way women are treated at their workplaces.

The real authors of this report are the 3232 participants, who have put in so much faith in HRhelpdesk.in to be their chosen one to present their voice to each and every woman who would read this report and make a resolve to change their and the lives of fellow women.



We will make every necessary attempt to work closer on issues raised through the Voice of Women – A Survey on Women at Workplace survey to bring about a positive change, however, this would be requiring your constant support to be able to make our Workplaces, better Workplaces in the coming years

The journey wasn't less than a grim one, it wasn't easy to ask women to share what they have been struggling all this while and still chose to remain silent. But, many women have stood up, and with great honesty and sincerity responded to all those questions, in some cases probably opening-up for the first time in front of someone. Today, like everyone else, they believe, that Silence won't help create a movement.

A lot has been said and written many times before on women related issues, but now it is time for call to action. While making this report the constant effort was made to keep it simple, and close to what has been written and mentioned by the participants rather than making interpretations, which could have different meaning to what has been expressed.

This report is not a mere data, but a strong way of putting across the challenges, fears, apprehensions, hopes, ambitions and dreams women have with respect to their careers. To some it is financial independence, to some it is passion, and to some it is a way of earning their livelihood, or to extend the support towards their respective families by partnering the financial burden. Women, while constantly getting grinded and managing their responsibilities at personal level, still choose to work to be able to prove that they are equally effective in bringing value to the table when it comes to contributing towards organization objectives and willingly stand up to all the hurdles. All they need in return is an environment which allows them to be able to perform, to be respected and to be treated above all prejudices.

The key message to all the women would be to speak up for your rights. raise your voice and let others be alarmed that you won't give up because somebody other than you feel that you are not good.

You don't have to push yourselves to prove to others who you are, but you definitely need to restrict others who take you for granted. Lead as an example in whichever space you are, stand up for yourself and for others who require that strength to raise their voice against all odds.

Key Findings



22% women received justice when they filed a complaint about hostile behaviors in their workplace

5% women have not experienced any of the hostile behaviors in the workplace

85% women recommend that the best way to deal with hostile behaviors is by confronting them



86% women have experienced bullying and harassment at their workplace

58% women have been subjected to gender based discrimination

56% women have been a target of sexual harassment

35% women have experienced all the above 3 hostile behaviors in their professional life

1% women chose to file a complaint with the police, courts or government agencies

67% women get subjected to these behaviors in the first 5 years of the career

It's disheartening but the numbers are painful and we feel a lot has to be done before we can say that we are part of an organization which allows safety, respect and dignity. The behaviors of bullying & harassment, discrimination and sexual harassment are not new to women, infact, they are so deeply embedded into the workplace culture that it not only requires courage, but determination, dedication and above all the heart of a lion to continue in the corporate world and yet become successful women.

*Let us build a womanhood which speaks for itself and which can defend itself
After all We are the Voice of Women*

With warm regards,

Amarpreet Kaur

Partner – Performance & Culture, Diversity & Inclusion

2.

About Women At Workplace

From the early 1900 the movement for women's rights and fair treatment at the workplace began. Over the years, it took various forms and shapes, and finally it was adopted by the United Nations and is now observed as an International women's day across the globe. While the women's day on March 8th is not only limited to workplace, the issues it is focusing are similar, only the environment changes.

We at HRhelpdesk.in, feel that the workplace is the second most important aspect in a women's life to bring about empowerment and pave the way for being treated with equality, respect and dignity.

The Women at Workplace initiative by HRhelpdesk.in is aimed at enabling this, not only by providing various opportunities to women by way of assisting them when they are in need, but also by collectively presenting a platform, where all organizations, big or small, which are working for women empowerment can assist those in need. This initiative also works on various interventions to assist companies and organizations develop systems, processes and employees in a way that not only fosters equality for women, but also embeds it as a culture and a way of living.

We are hoping that over the years, the number of women benefiting from this change will only increase and someday ensure that programmes like this are no longer required.

Women should be strong & bold enough to not tolerate any kind of ill-treatment. Women should speak out & should not be afraid.

"Only if you allow to someone to ill-treat you, you can be ill-treated repeatedly."



3.

Survey Methodology

The survey, which was based on 14 questions was administered to women across the globe through online medium. For special cases, where online systems were slowing down the process or becoming a hindrance, the survey was also administered as paper pencil or telephonic. At the completion of the process, less than 1% survey were collected using the non-online mediums, thus not only protecting confidentiality of the participants, but having accuracy of the data higher.

The Survey ran from 24th December 2016 to 5th February 2017 and had a total of 3232 women responding to it. Given the nature of questions, not all participants filled all the responses, however 95% respondents gave a response clear and detailed enough for us to make a substantial, accurate and authentic report of the same.

The survey tried and attempted to get into the personal space of a woman, by asking questions which are not only very personal to a woman, but which are also considered dangerous, shameful and very undignified for a woman to talk about.

The intent of the survey was to capture behaviors that women experience and how they react to them, it also was aiming to highlight, how effective are the various systems organizations have put in place. Therefore, every participant was required to tick mark all the behaviors they have experienced across their corporate life. Which may have happened one, or more than once, by the same offending person, or by more than one offenders in different or same organizations.

**Give women
respect,
and that is all**



Given the huge response, and the honesty with which women have responded, this is definitely a strong message that Women at Workplace have given to the world at large. The point is, are the corporations listening.

3200 women have spoken and presented a strong Voice of Women.



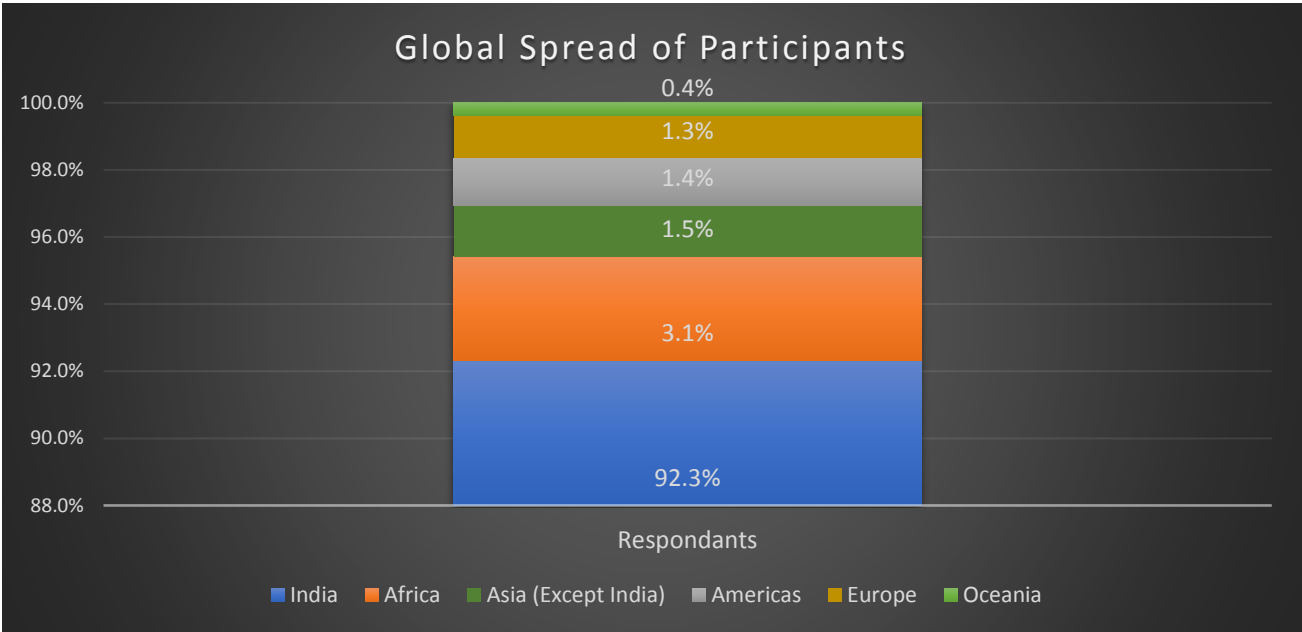
Be vigilant, since the biggest detrimental factor to the growth, respect, right and honor of a woman is another woman.

Educate all women to unite for their rights, nothing on earth can shake their determination and will power if they stand for each other.

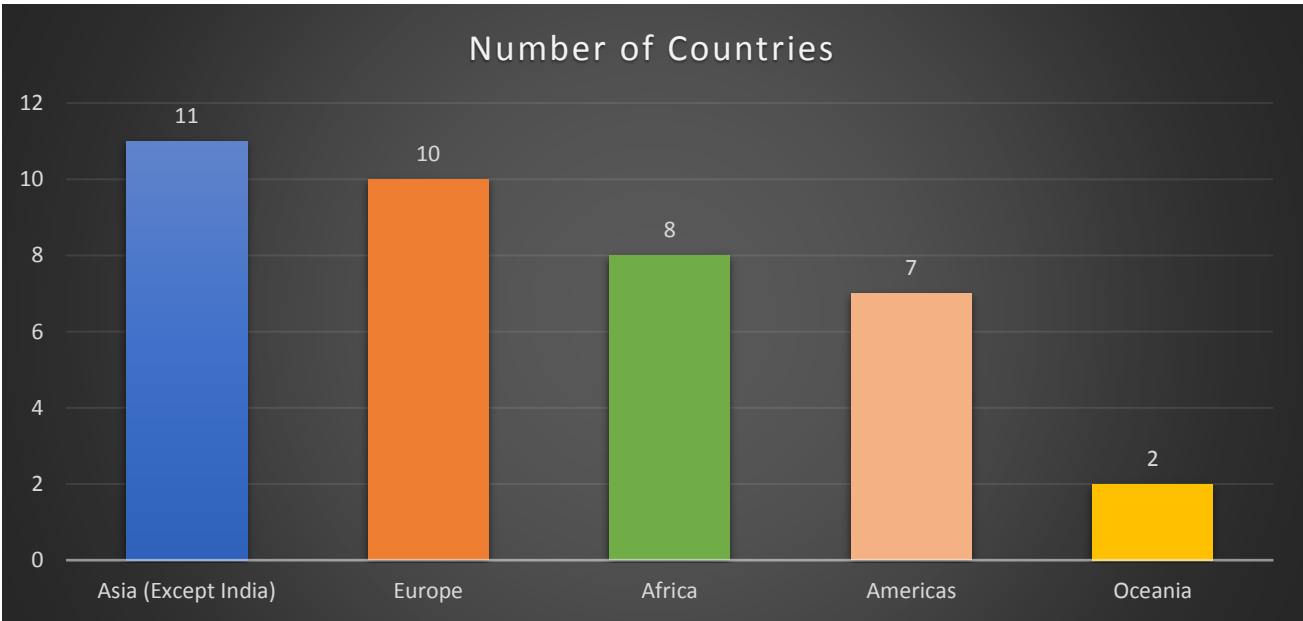
4.

Demography of Participants

Given the nature of questions and the topic, women from as many as 39 countries chose to respond. For some countries, they being the single flag bearer. While majority of the responses were from India, countries from Africa contributed the second highest.



The participant spread spans across continents and is clearly giving an indication that hostile behaviors for, Women at Workplace is not a phenomenon restricted to a particular country or region, but is a global phenomenon. The enthusiasm which women across the globe presented in responding to the survey is an encouraging step towards change.

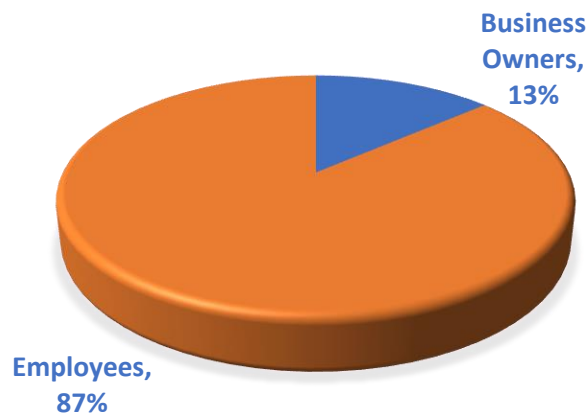


Interestingly the responses came from both developed and developing countries, from an openness perspective, Asian countries had a greater breadth of participation, whereas African

countries had a greater depth of participation. South Africa and Kenya provided the second highest respondents.

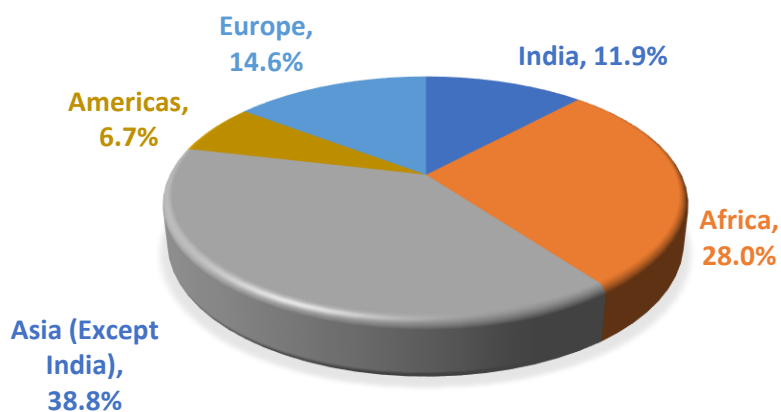
In order to understand if there is any difference in how women are treated in terms of hostile behaviors when they are an employee, or when they are business owners and have employees working under them, we requested information on this also. Even though both situations have a different approach towards delivering tasks and performance, we wanted to understand if this has any difference towards being treated.

Background of Participants



Therefore, we had divided the participants in two categories, that is employees and business owners. While employees formed the major chunk, a good proportion of participants came in as business owners also.

Business Owners as a Percent of Employees



Business owners formed a greater percentage of the total participants from Africa and Asia (Except India).

This report is presented as a combined global report and not separately for specific countries. Rationale for the same being, none of the countries apart from India, presented a large enough sample size to have specific data for that country which can stand the test of validation. Also, when this data was tested against the combined data, not much variation was seen amongst how women are being treated across the globe. Therefore, we can with confidence say, that this report talks about how women are treated at the workplace, irrespective of their present geographical location.

5.

Hostile Behaviors

For any organization to be able to achieve its goals and objectives, they need to build something called an organizational culture, this culture helps the people, which can also be addressed as people resources to adapt, perform, deliver and work towards achieving the organizations goals and objectives in a certain prescribed manner which is best suited to represent the organization image and stakeholder perception.

The same applies to individuals and groups. In our case, we will talk about what kind of culture are women getting at their workplace. And as a result of that are they contributing positively or negatively to the organization they are part of. We will examine this by way of a 3-layered approach. In order to be successful, women would need a culture, which not only ensures positivity, but also enhances productivity by way of people collaboration, team responsiveness, and high levels of trust amongst the people resources. Then there is the 2nd layer, where women to be successful in helping the company achieve its goals, need a culture which is conducive in nature. This is the layer, where women aren't really getting any positive impetus, but are getting a decent work environment to work with, where politics is less, where backbiting is little, and where individuals are allowed to deliver what they ought to.

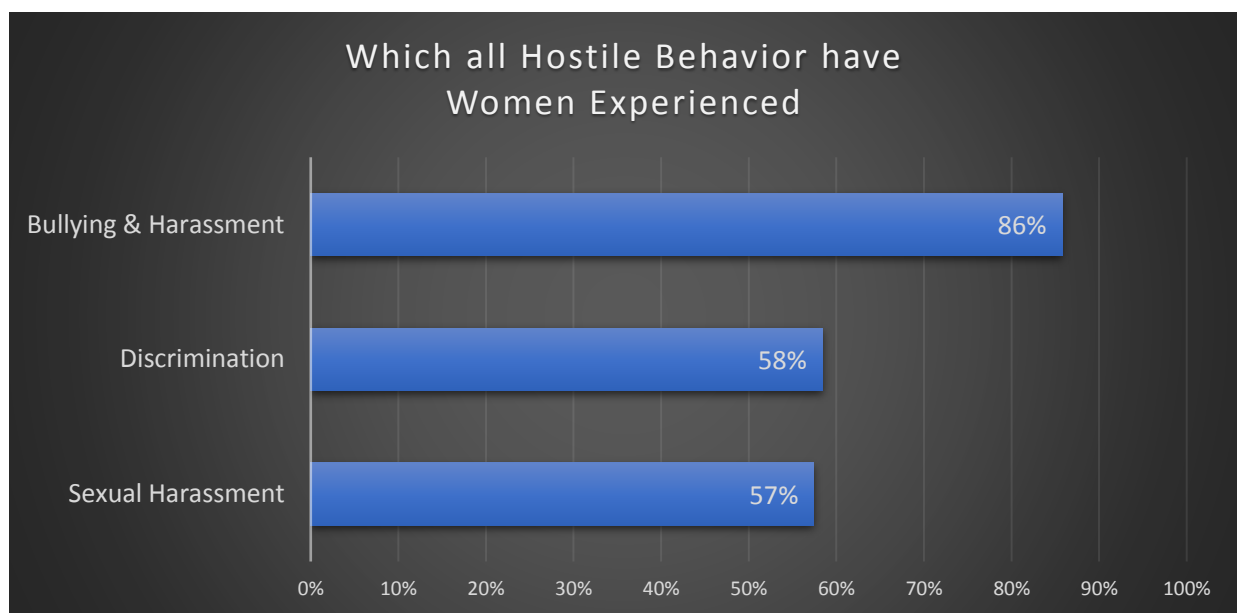
What we are going to be talking about is the 3rd layer, which is right at the bottom, this layer, not only doesn't allow women to deliver companies objectives and goals, but it inhibits them being in the workplace itself. It acts as a deterrent not only to be a productive employee, but an employee itself. The behaviors which make up this layer is what, we as HRhelpdesk.in coined as, "Hostile Behaviors"

I was usually referred to as Baby, and even though I was the senior most in meetings, the job of ordering coffee was always assigned to me.



“Hostile Behaviors” are a set of behaviors which are aimed at degrading, and demeaning the self-worth, dignity and respect of an individual. These behaviors bring in the feudal system of treatment, where the have-nots and the haves are treated not only with different laws, but have a different set of human rights for their existence at the Workplace. The behaviors that are called “Hostile Behaviors” are Bullying & Harassment, Discrimination and Sexual harassment.

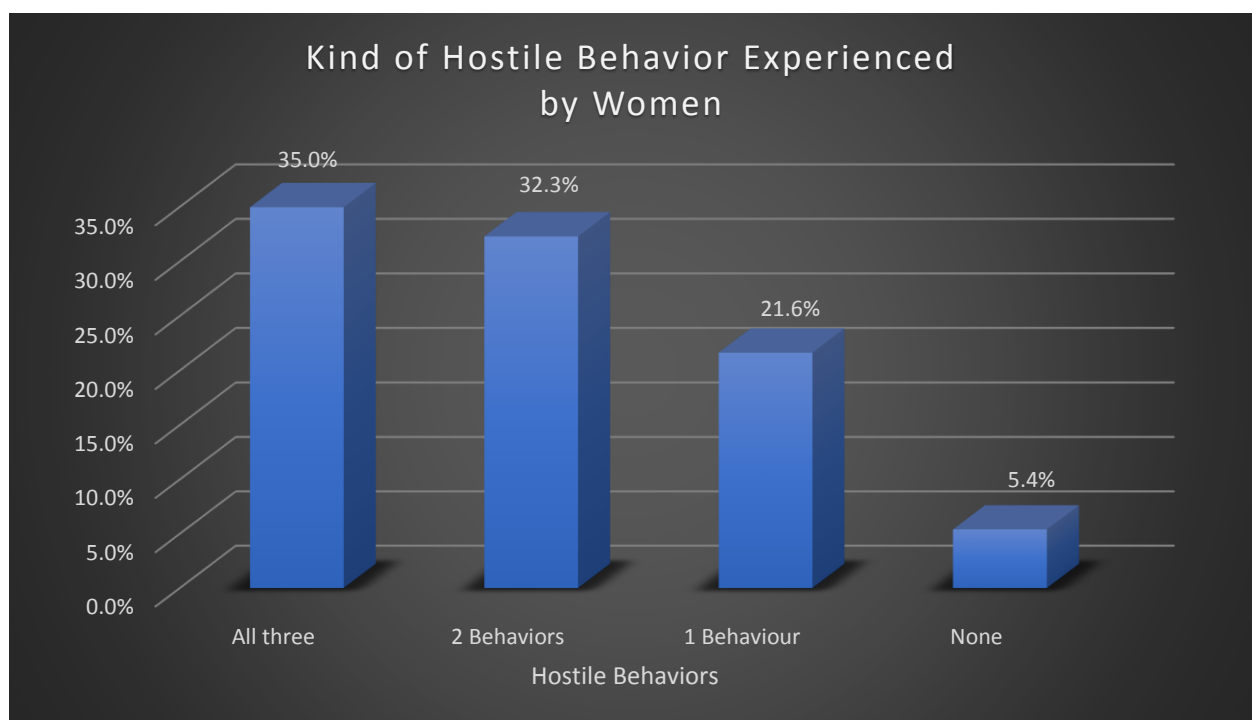
Each of these are explained in the specific sections. To be able to gauge how the women of today are being treated at their workplace, we presented a set of actions without mentioning under which category they fall and asked women to select which all actions or behaviors of the mentioned ones they have been a recipient of.



Over the year's women have experienced each of the mentioned hostile behaviors multiple times and some even have been subjected to a lot of these issues in different companies over and over again. The graph explains how women have experienced the said behaviors in the professional life. It is quite an eye-opener to know that about 86% women have experience bullying & harassment in the professional life, and yet, the countries or organizations that have specific laws or policies against these are so few, that they can be counted on fingers. It is data like these which throw a light on how we are moving in a world which is so different in perception and reality.

I retired early.

When we went a little deeper into the issue, and worked on finding on what all behaviors have women faced and what are the behaviors which are really causing all the trouble, also, it was essential to understand if the hostile behaviors had any pattern of each of the behaviors being targeted at specific set or segment of women. The data shows that a whopping 35% have been subjected to all the 3 hostile behaviors and another 32% have been subjected to atleast 2 such behaviors. Which means either they have been subjected to bullying & harassment and discrimination or sexual harassment, but the earlier 35% have been the unfortunate ones to be subjected to all the three hostile behaviors. This gives an indication that the hostile behaviors are not so much aimed at specific women, who are senior or who are from specific backgrounds, but hostile behaviors are purely something that every woman is subjected to irrespective of their seniority, background or employment type. It is a pure culture that is getting reflected.



There is however hope and a silver lining, 5.4% women reported that they have not been subjected to any of the hostile behaviors even once. This not only talks about a positive indication, but also raises a question on whether these women are awaiting their turn or is it really a positive figure.

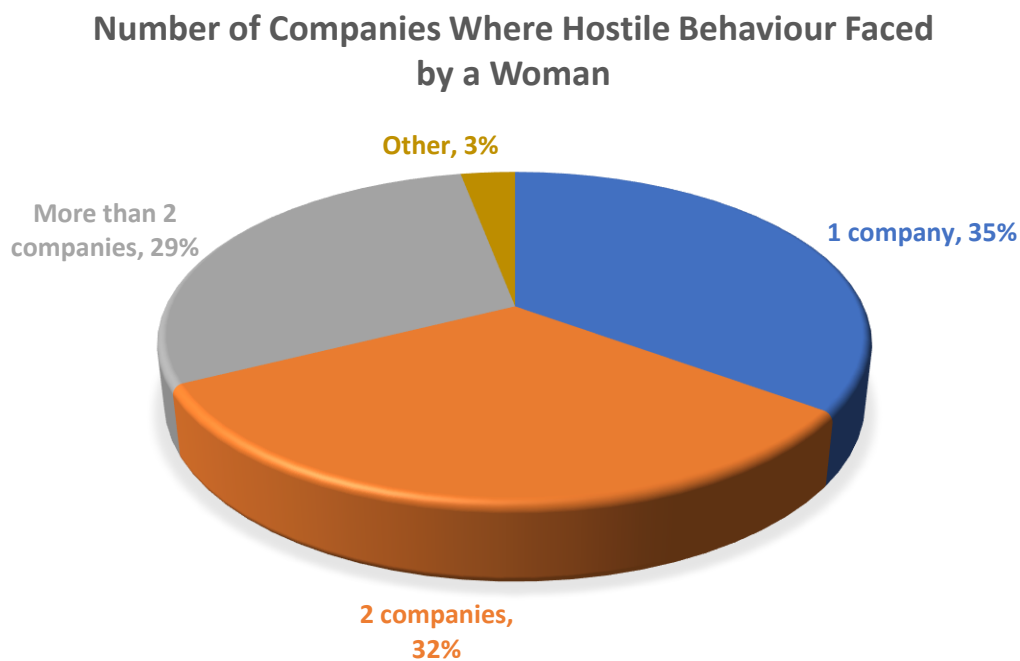
Nevertheless, we move on and explore further.

**We eventually learn how to handle or retaliate,
what doesn't kill you makes you stronger!!!**

6.

Types of Organization Nurturing Hostile Behaviors

The place where one works is an important decision taken by every person, whether it be as an employee, or whether it be as an entrepreneur when choosing clients. Therefore, we ventured into the question to understand if it is multinational companies, which are so called governed by professionalism, or whether it is local companies which are still growing up. We even broke this into large and small companies, even asked for opinions about NGO (organizations which themselves are working for a social causes). The responses are standard, which is an alarming thing, what we are dealing with is not an organizational issue, not a sectoral issue, but an issue with the mindset of the workforce, which is still not ready and not willing to give women their due respect and dignity in the workplace.



The graph explains the number of companies where women faced hostile behaviors. As you can see, hostile behaviors are not any company specific issue, but a women specific issue, which follows women no matter where they go and which organization they choose to be part of, it follows them even if they choose to give up employment and turn entrepreneurs.

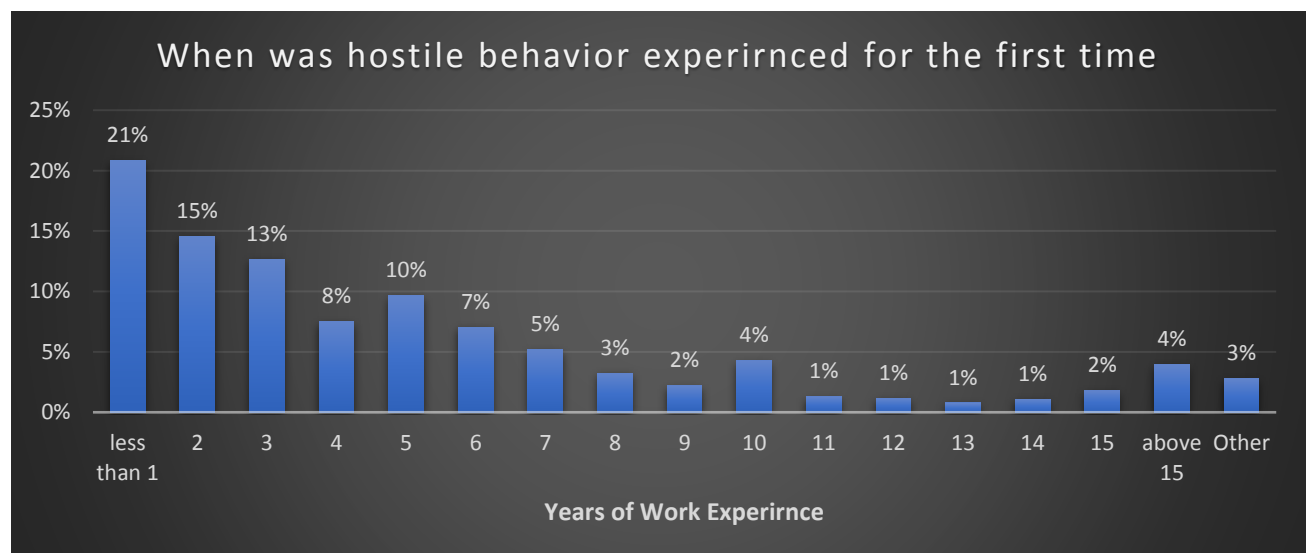
Dealing with such issues requires, a cultural interface and not merely a lip service of women friendly policies, which almost every organization has these days. It is high time organization start treating women as women and not a propaganda item of promoting Diversity.

7.

Vulnerabilities

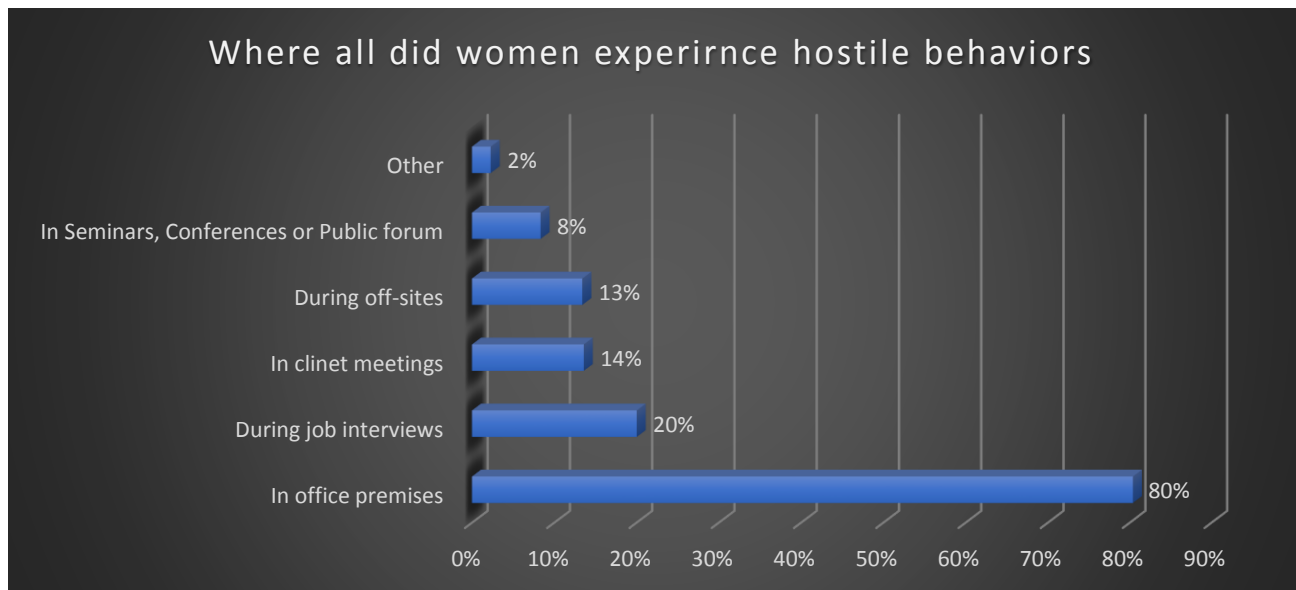
It is important to understand why and how hostile behaviors strike us, and as per pattern when are women the most vulnerable. It is heartbreaking to see that as many as 67% of women are subjected to one or the other hostile behaviors in the first 5 years of their professional life. It is not a surprise that the percentage of women dropping off from corporate life and choosing to be at home is very prevalent practice. It requires courage, and motivation to live your dreams by wading through the corporate jungle despite what is constantly hurled upon women. It is not a one-off incident that women can forget, not only the memories of the previous experience haunt them, but what continues to scare them is the future.

Organizations and women groups should really focus on the initial years of women in corporate life, as not only are they most vulnerable, but their interest and ambitions of corporate life are really molded quite a lot in the initial years of this.



Individuals make their choices basis what they experience, this also holds true for women who make the bold decision to get into the corporate world as it presents a highly civil way of reaching out to equality and living one's dreams. Given the experience women face in the initial years of the professional life, it is important that not only there is a constant focus on guiding these women, but there is a constant check on the environment to see that the world is not pushing women out of the workforce by the way they are being treated.

The physical location also plays an important role, as there are places which one does feel are target location and hence never making women ready with her defense mechanisms.



Not all hostile behaviors are demonstrated in the office premises, while the office does come out to be the largest culprit, it is also the job interviews which are a hunting ground. The job interviews, seminars, client meetings and conferences are mainly places where you have still not got associated with the company, and confronting has a direct impact on the chances of your

getting that job or the assignment. Women who have chosen to be entrepreneurs, or women who have chosen role that require them to meet clients are the third highest venue.

Irrespective of that fact, it is important that ways of complaining or confronting be designed keeping in mind not only the employees but also women who come in touch with the organization.

As an entrepreneur, I stopped doing business with such clients and forego the payment that was due from them.

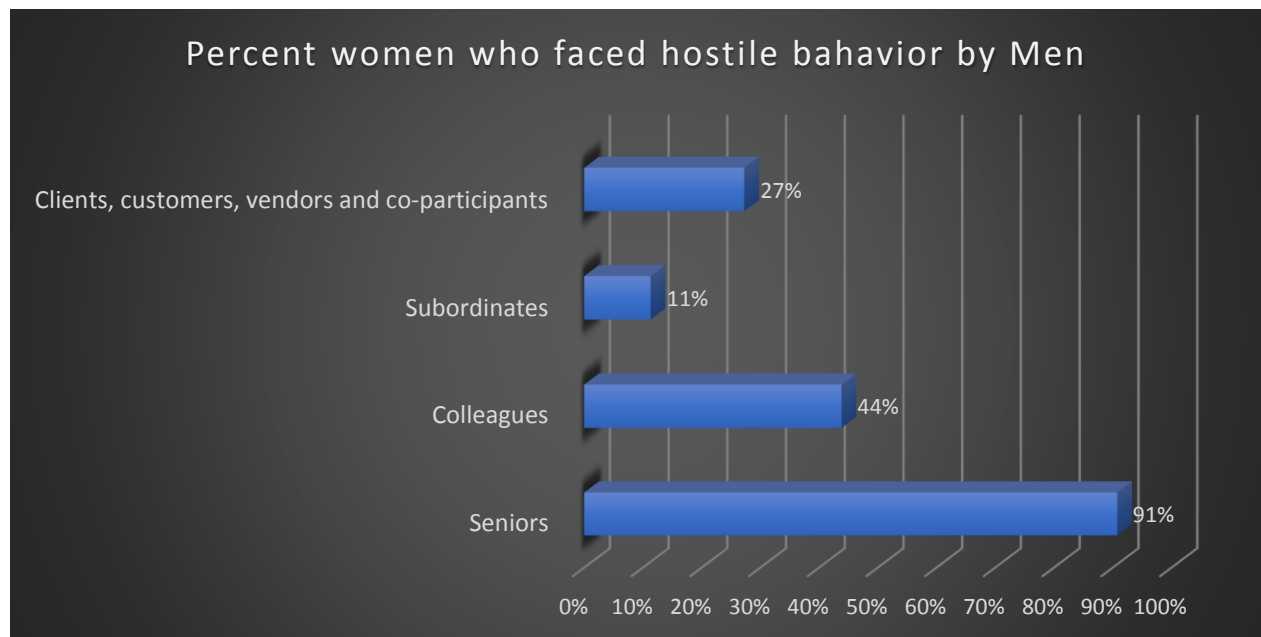


8.

Who are the Offenders?

While it is a cultural issue in terms of facing hostile behaviors, 91% women have faced hostile behaviors at the hands of their seniors, who are men. This obviously gives a clear insight into why the trust into systems and processes is low for the organizations. Hostile behaviors and the misuse of power that women experience is quite related.

Why women are choosing more and more to opt out of the corporate life and take un-explained career breaks.



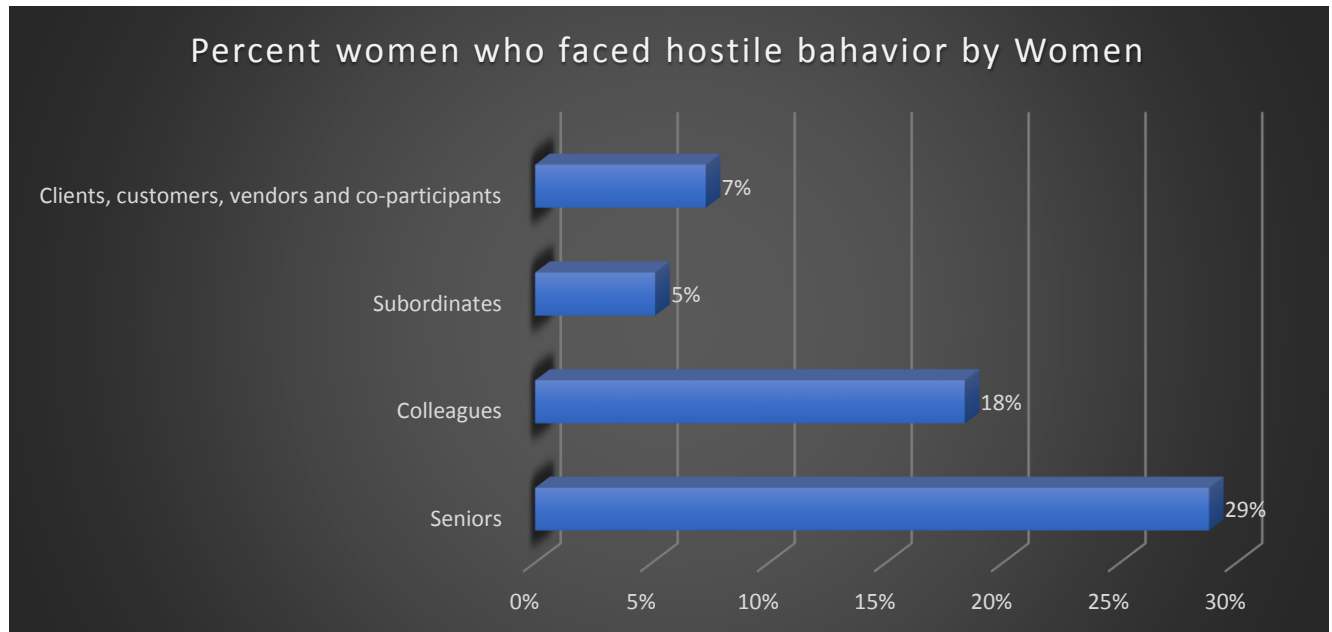
The point is, women are always being torn between the professional aspirations they have and the supervisor's personal behaviors, which become hurdles in letting them achieve those ambitions due to hostile behaviors.

Surprisingly, women have even reached a stage where they have been made a target of hostile behaviors by their subordinates, this definitely calls for introspection in women itself and demonstrates the total failure of basic hygiene practices in the respective companies.

A factor which hasn't really been considered, but presents a case for discussion is when women have to face hostile behaviors by vendors, clients and customers. There is ambiguity in how to deal with these situations process wise, and organizations should find and make a system for dealing with such situations. This not only is a grey area but is also a prevalent one when issues do not fall under the category of employees, protection must be provided to women from these environments also.

The important thing to remember here is that we are highlighting hostile behaviors and not men with hostile behaviors. Given the rate at which world has changed, even women have

subjected fellow women to hostile behaviors, which are not only limited to bullying & harassment, but also to sexual harassment.



A good 29% women have subjected their junior women to hostile behaviors, this again re-affirms the point that hostile behaviors have become a culture in organizations and are not a one-off incident, or a one-off issue.

The offenders of hostile behavior are both men and women, one group may be larger than the other, but the point is the system of addressing hostile behaviors and making a culture in the organizations which is not only welcoming women into the workforce has to be designed keeping in mind a culture and not merely an approach which is designed to protect women from men.

**Absolute equality. Not just saying it but doing it.
Equal pay, work, responsibility, duties, leave.**

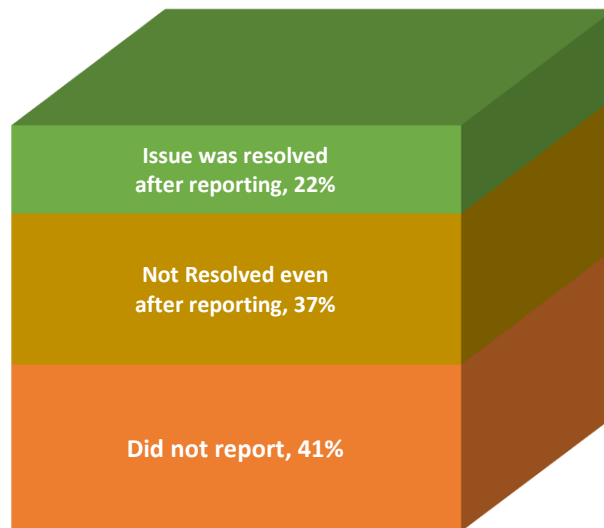
**As an employer, there is no difference
in my treatment of male and female staff.**

9.

Is the Justice System Working?

It takes a lot of courage and dedication to put forward a complaint on any of the hostile behaviors faced by women, after all, none of these come with hard evidence and every time the culprit will not only defend himself or herself, but put counter allegations which are even more harmful and demeaning.

How is The Justice System Working



About 22% women chose to put a complaint atleast once and found that their complaints were resolved appropriately by the companies. It would be worthwhile to understand how many women put a complaint when the event happened to them for the first time. From the subsequent questions, it doesn't look like that women normally complain in the first go. They by nature, seemed more adaptive and forgiving.

However, what is more alarming and unfortunate is that as many as 37% women did not find an appropriate resolve and closure to the complaint raised by them. This figure is quite high. Not only does this demotivate the women from being in the corporate world, but discourages other women who are aware of this incident from raising a complaint or offering confrontation to the offender if they are ever made a target.

This becomes apparent by the fact that 41% women have chosen not to put up any complaint with the system on the hostile behaviors faced by them. The impact this high degree of non-complaints can be tremendous not only on the morale of the workforce, but on the profits of the organization itself.

In totality, close to 78% women are not having any trust in the justice system that organization have tried to put together for women employees, even though in some cases like sexual harassment, it is mandated by law.

With 78% women not having a justice system, it is no wonder that not only the incidents of hostile behavior keep increasing, but the attrition rate of the women workforce is always a challenge for most of the organizations.

It won't be unfair to say that women who are titled as average performers are being made to perform at that level on account of the culture of hostile behaviors, if the culture is conducive, all these women will start showing their true performance, which could be far higher than the levels at which they perform today. With this culture, the percentage of women wanting to fulfill their career ambitions would keep dropping significantly over a period of time.

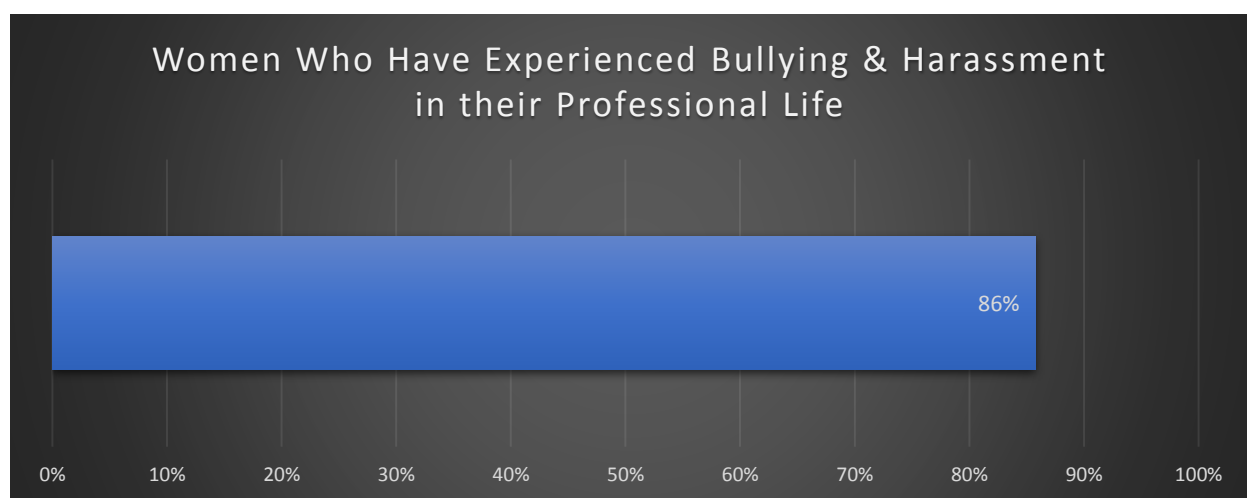
**Because there was no point
as the culprit was the part of the
anti-harassment committee itself.**

10.

Bullying and Harassment

It is important for one to understand what is bullying & harassment before being able to understand this and then developing a system of dealing with it. There is a thin line between having a demanding supervisor, customer or a client and bullying & harassment. Even though the line is thin, there are clear distinctions which tell you that you are a target of someone.

Bullying & Harassment are a certain set of unwelcome conduct that humiliate, demean, offend and intimidate people. These are aimed at influencing or forcing someone to do something that the bully or harasser wants them to do (doesn't matter whether what the bully wants is right or wrong, whether the expectation is professional or non-professional). These kind of behaviors, are neither relevant nor appropriate at the workplace and will not normally be classified as civil behaviors.



Bullying & harassment is prevalent in the workplace almost like an epidemic, the reason for that is simple, the supervisors are given almost absolute power to control the career of their subordinate, therefore bullying & harassment have become an outcome of a misused power tool provided to the people placed in positions of power. Women seem to be getting the rough side of it, with as many as 86% women being bullied and harassed, the workplace definitely isn't presenting itself as a conducive one to a sizeable chunk of the global workforce. The choices women continually have to keep making are whether all these pains are worth it, and for how long can they keep sacrificing for the betterment of their long-term goals and ambitions. These choices won't be limited to only women, anyone who is a constant subject to such levels of bullying & harassment, will someday be forced to make the call.

What is important for women to be aware of is whether they are being bullied or not, and whether they are being harassed or not. This harassment is definitely something apart from sexual harassment, which is covered in the next section, though legally women are not protected against being bullied or harassed at the workplace in majority of the countries, if one is aware of being a target, the individual can plan a good course of action to protect themselves from the upcoming harm.

Before we get into the symptoms, it is important to get one thing understood and in clear perspective, both you and the other individual are in the company to work and be treated with respect, both of you are using the company to attain certain goals in life, because the company is supporting that, you both continue working in the company.

In the workplace, bullying and harassment happens primarily by people around you, that is, those who are above you, those who are your colleagues or those below you. In either of these, some of the following signs appear and give you a distinct indication that you are being targeted for bullying and harassment.

1. The bully or harasser will lose their temper on you more than once, it doesn't matter whether that is done in private or public, what matters is that in their mind they have positioned you as someone who is lower in the food chain of respect.
2. The bully will tell you to do your work better a little too frequently. They may demonstrate that they are genuinely and from their heart wanting to help you, but in reality, they are putting constraints in your thinking and making you believe that the way of working as mentioned by the bully is the best and yours isn't. They are pushing you to believe that intellectually the bully is better than you.
3. The bully will normally interfere in every possible decision you take and expect that you seek approval or guidance from them, thus limiting the scope of your free thinking and creativity.
4. The bully will humiliate you more than once and in a planned manner with the intent of hurting your feelings and showing you down. Again, it doesn't matter whether it is in public or private. The intent is, you have featured as an individual who can be played around with and tossed around without any significant resistance.
5. The bully will normally try and limit your exposure to key and senior stakeholders, and will keep you away from high impact projects.
6. You will experience a use and throw behavior, or an in-consistent behavior, when they need you for a task or a project, you will be their best pals and their best team members, however once the task is done, you will be tossed around, humiliated and treated almost as if you are worthless. You will very often get a feeling of being used and thrown.
7. Even if the bully does reward you, it will be with a sense of sarcasm and will be mostly to continue using you for some more time for a project they feel only you can do best.
8. One of the most important and tactical thing the bully will do is to take control of your credibility within the organization, you will soon realize that they will play an active role in running your credibility in the company or building it basis how you react to their bullying and harassment. If you play along, things are wonderful, if you resist, then you get the heat of it. They do this by sabotaging, telling lies and creating an environment which ensures failure for the target, therefore not only in your own eyes, but in the eyes of the company you will start seeing yourself as a failure. This by far is the most difficult part and this impacts performance, it doesn't matter whether it is perceived or real, the point is, the world works on perceptions

and not on reality, companies which can distinguish reality and facts from perception are very few.

9. You will normally find yourself labeled as an under-performer, even though you are well aware that you are not and the data doesn't say so. This is because, skilled bullies will turn the entire episode of bullying & harassment into a performance management issue. This way the entire organization stands together against the individual and the bully protect themselves.

While these are some of the common behaviors that bullies demonstrate, it is essential for you to gauge the relationship and consult a third party, which should not be your HR team and then classify whether you are being harassed or bullied. The HR team no matter how mature or strong, will always look at a situation from a different view, especially when it is linked to performance.

Women are constantly being subjected to various forms of behaviors in the workplace which is quite a stressful situation to be, the work stress is not so much about delivering to organizations targets, but is more towards managing the hostile behaviors that are targeted at women at the workplace.

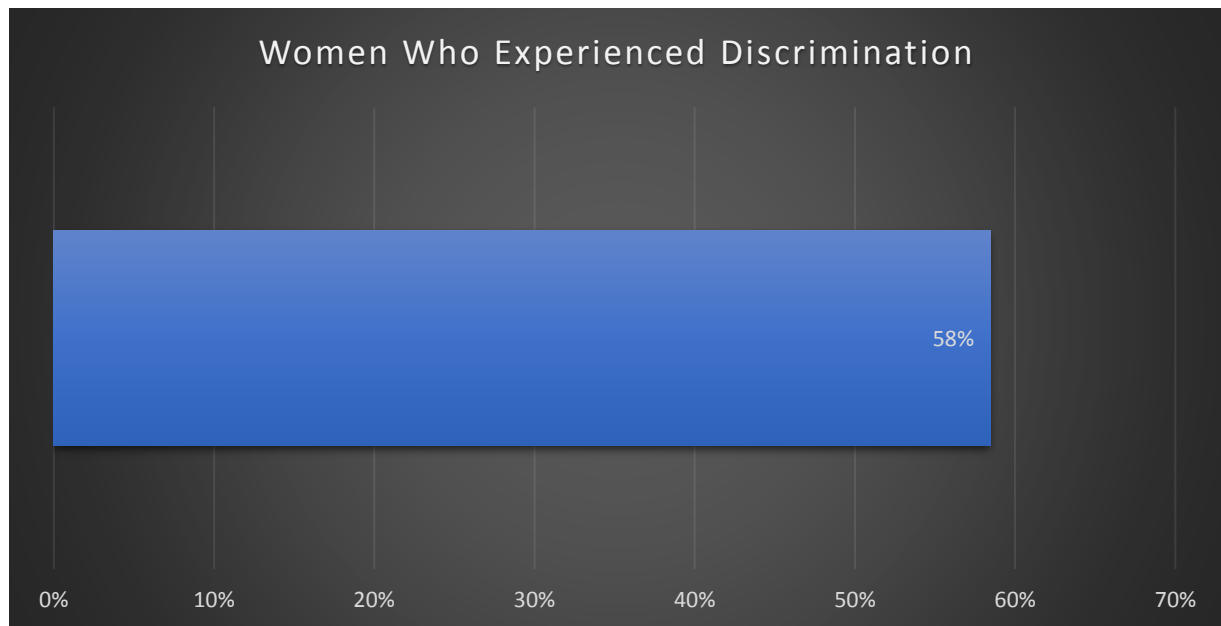
As many as 60% women have face one or the other form of humiliation, and as many as 50% women have faced verbal invasion of their privacy. Not an ideal place for women to be.

Bullying & Harassment Behaviors	Women who have faced these behaviors
Shouted, screamed at or been spoken to rudely or have faced humiliation in public or private	60%
Been asked Privacy invading personal questions (marriage plans, about pregnancy plans, love life or any other matters which are personal to a woman)	50%
Being put in a non-favorite bracket	36%
Being questioned on your intellectual capabilities	35%
Excessive fault finding of your work done	30%
Unjustifiable denial of promotion, appropriate pay raise or useful training	28%
Falsely categorized as under performer	26%
Sidelined or removed from core work and important projects	25%

11.

Discrimination

What is discrimination? There were days when discrimination was done in apparent manners and fairly as a industrial practice, like being paid different wages, having different benefits or even not providing basic infrastructure which is essential like specific restrooms. Those days are over and in most of the workplaces atleast the apparent ones no longer exist. What exists are more subtle ways, which can be called white collared discrimination. Again, like any hostile behavior, to be able to handle this, women have to first understand that they are being discriminated against on the basis of gender.



It is important to understand that there is discrimination prevalent in the workplace, irrespective of the number of laws that are prevalent in almost all countries which forbid discrimination. Gender based discrimination has been talked about from early industrial revolution and a much has been done about it, but, has it ended, the survey participants don't feel so.

As many as 58% women feel that they have been subjected to gender based discrimination. So, what is discrimination and how does one know that they are being discriminated against on the basis of gender.

Discrimination is nothing but a set of unjust or prejudicial behaviors for different set of people, in our case, different for men and different for women. Normally one would experience one of the following,

1. Creating specific roles and jobs which are meant specifically for women or specifically looking for a particular gender while hiring or promoting for a particular role.
2. Discussing disadvantages about women on account of their recent marriage and the likelihood of becoming mothers soon or during the course of a project.

3. Making statements about jobs at which women are really good at.
4. Making fun of women about their intellectual capabilities
5. Taking advantage of life situations that women go through, which could result either in career breaks or reduced focus on workplace.

There are numerous others examples which one can list here, the primary message being, decision of the outcome is not based on performance, potential or competencies that a women presents, but on the fact that she is a women and hence the assumptions are made by the other side. These assumptions are not made on data, but on perceptions about being a woman. Rarely will the other side be able to give explanations for such decisions which can stand the test of data or logic.

As part of the survey, women have mentioned that a majority of them are subjected to discrimination, specially those who have chosen to be entrepreneurs.

Gender Discrimination Behaviors	Women who have faced these behaviors
Being a business women, made fun of or humiliated on your business managing competencies	95%
Subjected to career disadvantage as a result of maternity or marital status	48%
Denied opportunity on the basis of gender	45%
Discounted unreasonably when returning from Career Break on Role, Designation, Salary or Grade	28%

What is alarming being, that even now close to 45% women have been denied opportunities at the workplace purely on ground of being women, and even though there is so much talk about something as important and as basic as maternity for the propagation of human race, women are experiencing discrimination on account of that. Not something that the corporate world seems to have understood.

When women choose to be entrepreneurs, the world doesn't change either, it is not only surprising but quite a stressful situation that 95% women who have chosen to be entrepreneurs get questioned on their intellectual capability, not because they are entrepreneur, but because they are a women entrepreneur.

So much for level playing field. Are the organizations really wanting Diversity and wanting to promote gender?

One of the trends which is being seen as a very prevalent practice in today's environment being seeing that specific roles are classified as suitable for only women, even if you are given a role which the organization says is suitable for women and you are the lucky one to have assigned them, remember, there are numerous other roles and opportunities that have been classified as unfit for women, this happiness therefore is short-lived. Organizations which say specifically looking for certain roles to be filled by women or men, are not really promoting gender diversity. They are more focused at meeting the perception of being a gender friendly organization.

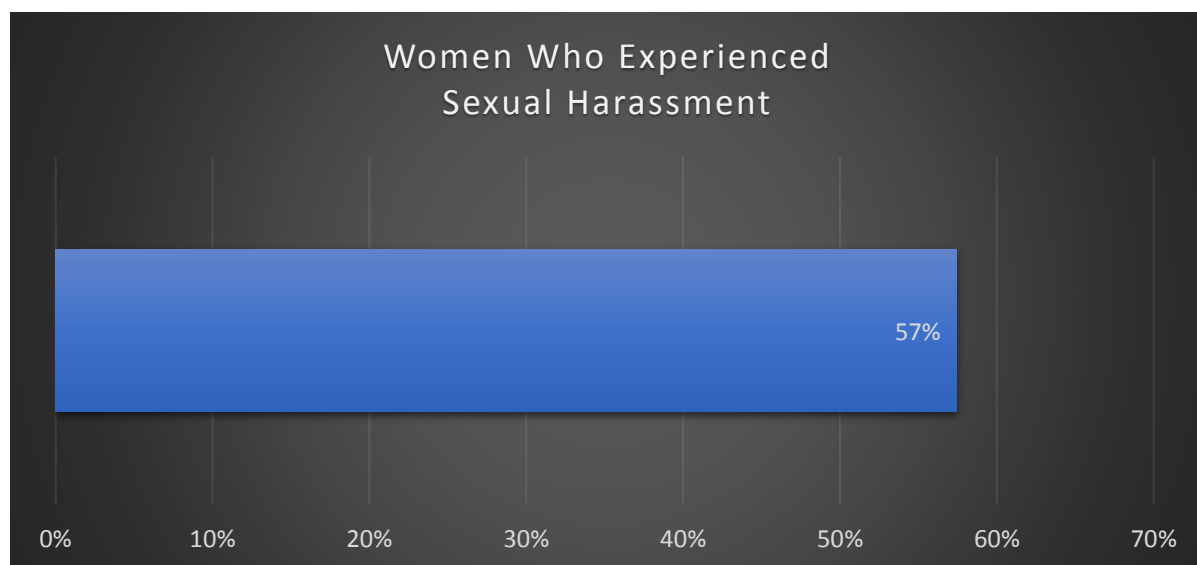
How do you tackle the situation if you are forced into this? Discrimination is protected by law, over and above organization policies. If you do have a feeling that you are being discriminated on the basis of gender, remember the first thing is to inform a fellow group of women who are responsible for promoting women causes in the organization or the society. Once you have done that, inform your manager and the complaints committee that you feel you are being discriminated on the basis of gender and how it can be set right. Do remember to do this in writing, with copies to the same internal or external group which is guiding you. Ideally the company should sort this out, if not, you do have a system to support you.

**Where issues were,
individual support was good.
However, where I was in a male dominated culture
where this was endemic,
I was told I needed "to man up" and fit in.**

12.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is something that is one of the most demeaning aspects associated with the workplace. A modern-day workplace is something which is supposed to present the epitome of human advancement, atleast on the thought process side of it and thus should be presenting a highly-advanced culture for the workforce. However, even though majority of the people involved in the corporate world today have a decent amount of education, especially those at senior levels, the issue of sexual harassment being prevalent in organizations is a really thought provoking question putting a doubt on the very fact if human race has advanced at all from their primitive mid set. The ways of sexually harassing may have differed, but the thought process remains the same. This is quite a strange thing, that irrespective of the fact that there are laws, yet the workplace hasn't yet been made stress free and safe for women.



Quite amusingly, as many as 57% women reported to have been subjected to sexual harassment at the workplace during their professional life.

It is important for women to first understand that they are being targeted for sexual harassment, and then devise a plan to tackle it. The plan has to be designed properly and should have someone else also standing by you to protect you, and that someone isn't the organization, it is a small group of friends and colleagues. Once you have that, the best way to deal with sexual harassment is to confront and inform the individual that they need to stop. Besides, it is important that you share all this in writing as a complaint to the company so they have to necessarily take care of something, the supervisors normally would have shown you as an underperformer already by now, and their response to management would be that since they labeled you as an underperformer, you are retaliating by putting false allegations. Whether you like it or not, a host of companies will fall for this version of the supervisor and agree to them.

Which is why it being essential for you to have some sort of support group which can help present your case and stand by your side as the pressure needs to be mounted on the organizations. It doesn't matter whether you are an employee, a vendor, a client or an

entrepreneur, if you experience this, make sure you report it directly to the relevant people at the top.

Experience for women starts by being a target of flirting, this has various shapes and forms, from coffees to verbal discussions to outings. A staggering 54% women have been target of flirting, there has to be some way in which the organizations give clear message to its workforce that women are not here for extra marital affairs or for getting married. The much more hideous ones like commenting on one's physical appearance and asking for sexual favors are also pretty much prevalent in the organizations and need to be tackled with strength and determination by women.

Sexual Harassment Behaviors	Women who have faced these behaviors
Experienced Flirtish behaviors	54%
Commented upon your physical appearance	31%
Been exposed to sexually explicit material (jokes, pornography, comments)	21%
Inappropriate touching	17%
Subjected to foul or obscene language (can be direct and indirect)	14%
Requests for sexual favors (direct or indirect)	14%

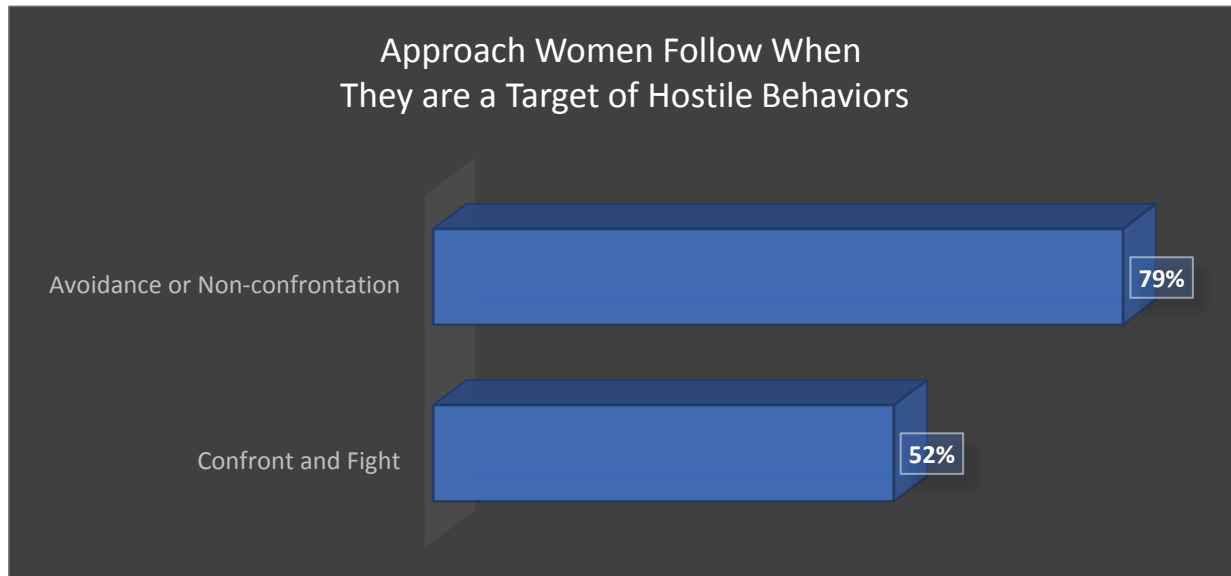
Dealing with sexual harassment is a straight forward way of Stopping the individual when they are harassing you and that too by making sure that it is known and heard by many more individuals. Ensure you first file a complaint in the system and then confront, and ensure that you have a group backing you up for your actions. It is not difficult for one to understand that they are being targeted for sexual harassment, if you feel it, just say it and that may get a reputation to you of being very stubborn or very non-cooperative, but will save you the trouble of facing in-dignity and disrespect at the hands of someone who has little or no value for human dignity.

Do all this while you are still in the company and when the harassment has happened, don't let too much time elapse.

13.

How Women Reacted to Hostile Behaviors on them?

This section not only gives very clear information on how women have reacted when not only the hostile behaviors happened to them for the first time, but for subsequent times. Which means, this explains the probable ways in which women choose to respond to hostile behaviors.

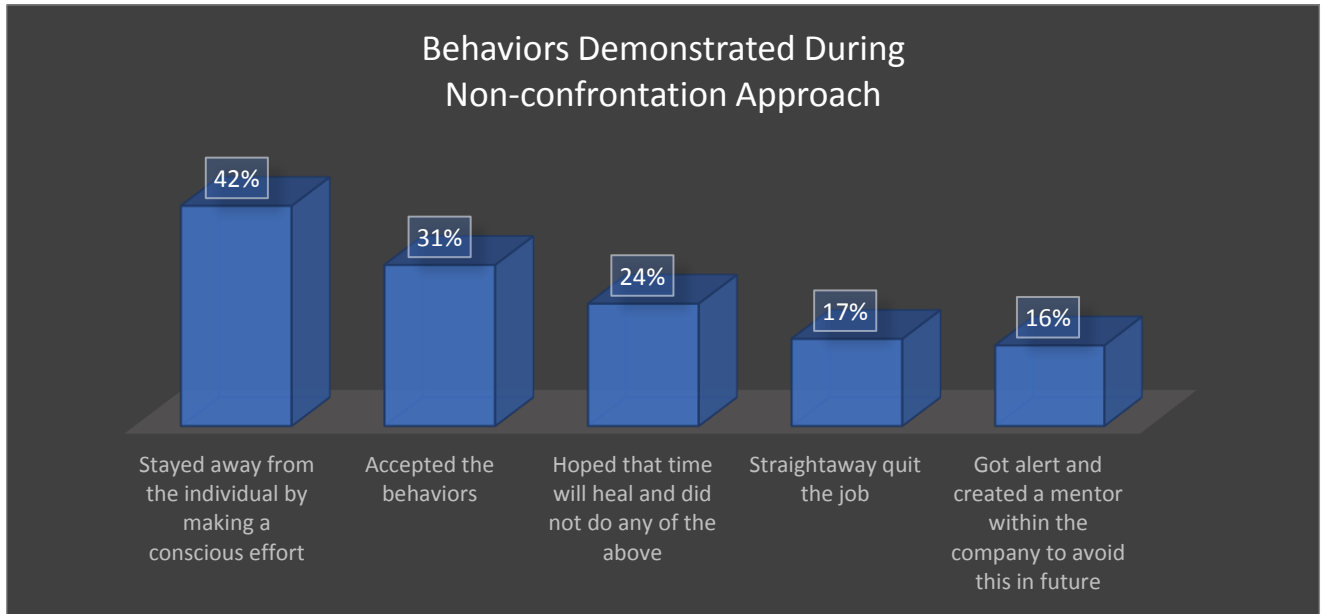


All the behaviors were broken into 2 headings, namely avoidance and confrontation. When hostile behaviors were targeted at women, majority of the times, majority of them choose to follow some or the other avoidance approaches, believing that things will improve and it will be better for life as time passes.

There are numerous reasons why women choose not to fight as a main response, whether they be related to embarrassment, or be related to fear of retaliation, or whether it be related to the simple fact that they are alone in this fight against a hostile culture.

The point is, none of these three aspects represent a picture when women can perform and deliver to the tasks assigned as a dedicated high potential professional from here-on.

**There are no rules in companies
to protect vendors from this.**

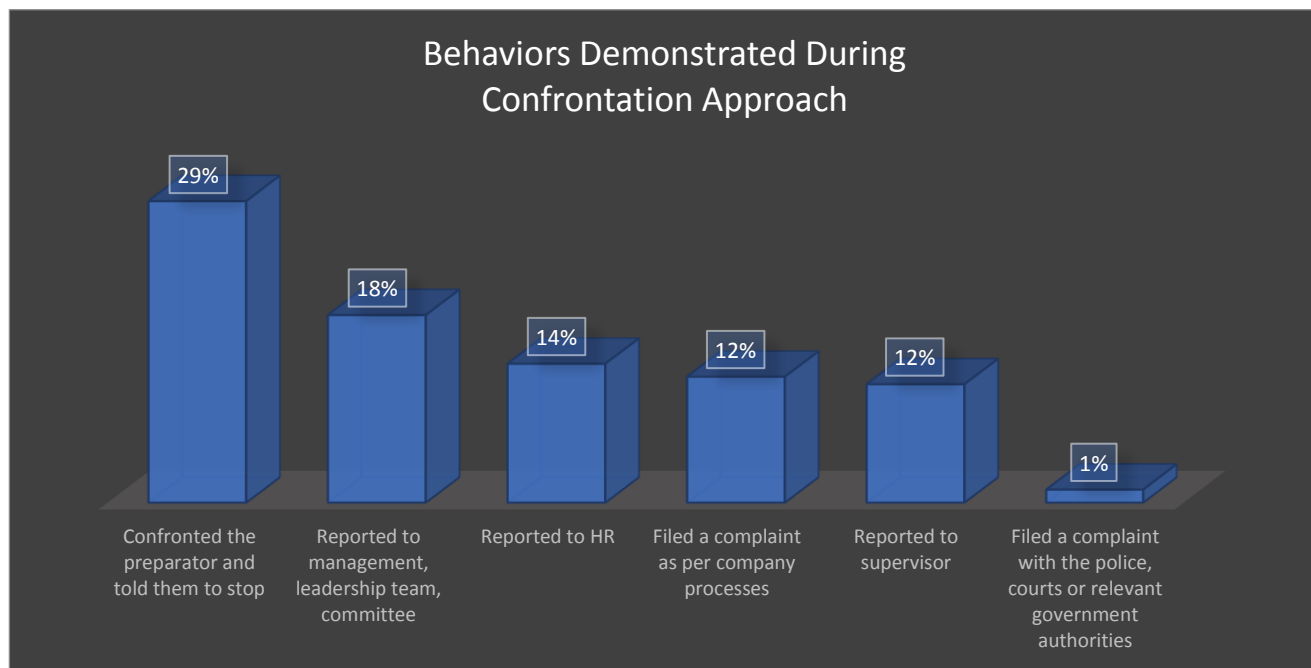


When we went a little deeper into the issues to understand how women react or behave when following the specific approach of avoidance, it gives an heart breaking information that as many as 31% women gave in to the requests and accepted the way they are being treated, as there was nothing that they believed they could do, it was either this or losing the job and their professional dream.

Another 24% women believed in fate and thought things will improve with time, so much for working in a corporate world and believing in modern way of thinking. Obviously, the highest option chosen by women was to stay away from the perpetrator, which is more like a prey running away from a hunter. Not a very good situation to be in, knowing that you are being hunted. This only gives the offender more encouragement to try their luck.

Stop evaluating people on perceptions and feedbacks, generally when they do not get favors they start speaking about your performance.





It is not that women don't have the spirit to confront and fight, we think it is more of an environmental support or the degree to which they are pressed or the mere fact that they believe they have had enough that they choose to confront.

Fortunately, there were as many as 29% women who confronted the person offending them, this may have been a learnt behavior, or maybe a way of living, but the good part is that this was demonstrated.

The concerning part is that whatever systems and processes the organizations normally have to provide support to women by way of a complaints mechanism, i.e.: reporting to HR, reporting to company complaint processor for that matter reporting to the supervisor is almost a non-impact activity. This is a very clear message being given by women to the organizations, that complaints mechanisms are a complete failure and need some kind of overhauling. Some trust was still put by women in the leadership teams or committees, rather than the set processes of the organizations.

Whether it be external agencies which are brought in to receive such complaints or whether the committee are involved at a higher level with women to build trust, some action needs to be initiated by organizations to make complaining and reporting effective. With an ineffective system like this, we definitely are not only making women susceptible to harm, but encouraging even fence sitters to try their luck and have some fun.

Respect that lady employees have been also selected based on their merit.

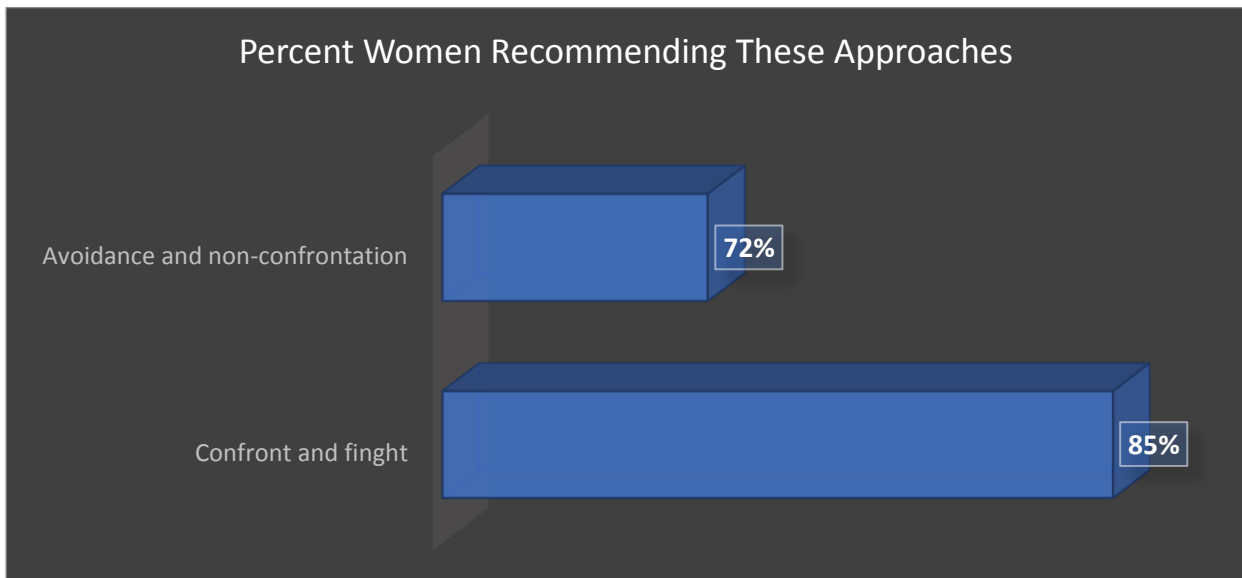
Sensitize male and lady colleagues and awareness towards this topic, whereby making the workplace ambience / experience professional and pleasant.



14.

What are Women Recommending as Ways to Deal with Hostile Behaviors?

Once women have already experience hostile behaviors, they represent a completely different outlook for other women. This is more like advising others on what we did wrong should not be repeated by others. Which is why we asked the women who have had to unfortunately be a target of hostile behaviors to mention 3 most effective ways of dealing with hostile behaviors.



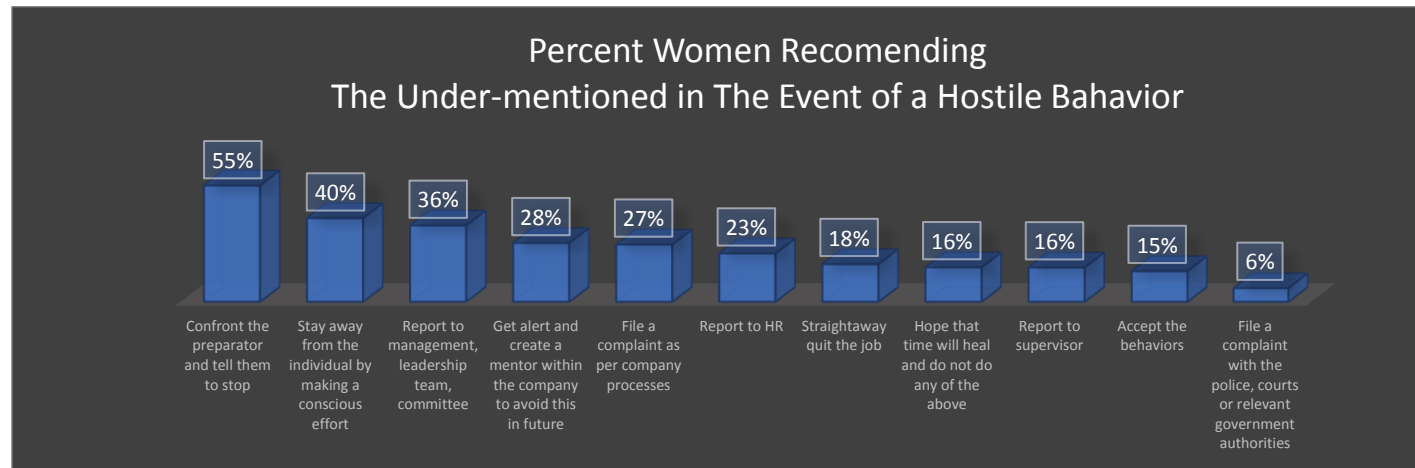
Not surprising that as many as 85% recommend other women to follow the approach of confronting rather than avoiding.

Situations like these are always a combination of a few responses, however unlike when they were targets, women are now recommending that atleast one of the responses that women should respond with should be a confrontation based response.

I had reported to the Managing Director and no action was taken in spite of my long email detailing the entire process.

If you go a little deeper into this, confronting the perpetrator and reporting to management seemed as the most viable options that women propose to be used.

This is a sea change from when it happened to them when only 52% chose to confront, to now advising others, as many as 85% wanting to confront, as one of the 3 things that should be done.



Women are wanting other women to be brave, to be courageous, and to take matter in their own hands. Organizations, women's groups and leaders have to provide an environment which is strong enough and free enough for women to fight and speak up for their self-respect and yet not face retaliation.

It looks like women are now ready, the point is, are the organizations?

**I gave in to request for sexual favors, as
I had no other choice,
am a single mother and need a job.**

Suggested Ways to Dealing with Hostile Behaviors

15.

Hostile behaviors are a part and parcel of everyday workplace for women, irrespective of whether it has happened to you or not, the point isn't whether it will happen to you or not, the point is, when it will happen will you be prepared. Therefore, you must think through and handle the symptoms in a much better way to avoid succumbing to hostile behaviors.



Preparation for hostile behavior

- Be part of a women's group, whether it be in the workplace, residential neighborhood or an NGO
- Discuss hostile behaviors as an agenda item in the groups meetings and ways in which individuals can understand and handle those. Stress on the group to declare what group will do to support members
- Ensure that your surroundings are aware of your intent of standing up against Hostile Behaviors
- Print the I support page and put it on your desk, this is a good deterrent



During hostile behavior

- Protecting your personal safety is of paramount importance
- Resist, share your piece of mind, but in a very appropriate manner which keeps your safety in mind
- If you know there is a CCTV, or people around who can hear you, shout and create a drama, even at the cost of exaggeration if required
- Ensure you remember whatever is happening in detail so you can record it for having strong evidence



Post hostile behavior

- Speak, this is the most important thing, speak about it with your colleagues, your friends, your family and definitely the Women's group you are part of
- Report it the same day, in writing and with multiple places and multiple people. Ensure you report not only as per process, but share in writing with your friends, colleagues, skip levels and others in the workplace.
- Be prepared to take a backlash, don't assume everyone out there is honest, but, remember, do not resign, let the company terminate you if required. If resignation is the only option, write in detail why you are resigning in the letter

16.

Conclusion and Disclaimer

To conclude, we would like to recommend that a focused approach is required by women to be part of groups, organizations and support systems that can help them tide over the hostile behaviors they face at the workplace. The organizations are losing a huge chunk of talented manpower and their performance only to their inability in managing certain basic expectations that women have, the expectation of being treated as an equal.

The mere concept of being an entrepreneur or an employee, or being a diversity number is not that women look up to, what they look up to is fairness. HRhelpdesk.in is committed to ensuring that this change is brought about in the corporate world, as time progresses, we shall continue to not only publish more research findings which can enable both women and organizations to make actionable change, but also to change the culture at large.

After all, the louder we speak, the more people will hear the Voice of Women.

Disclaimer: this report is a result of the survey conducted by HRhelpdesk.in, analysis done and assumptions made out of it are as result of the responses filled by the participants. While this report does present a strong opinion, it is completely left at the discretion of the individual person or an organization to make their own assumptions and decisions they feel appropriate. HRhelpdesk.in cannot be held liable for any benefit or loss that organizations or individuals face, as we are merely presenting a collective view of the 3200 survey participants.

**Hoping to have a world where women can feel
empowered at the Workplace.**



How we can help?

As an Individual:

Discuss your issues with us or take support of others
by sharing your story and questions
on HRhelpdesk.in

As an Organization:

Reach out to us and we shall support you
in building a workplace culture
which is conducive and catalytic