



PRESS RELEASE
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**U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Releases Report,
*Federal #MeToo: Examining Sexual Harassment
in Government Workplaces***

WASHINGTON – Today, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights released [*Federal #MeToo: Examining Sexual Harassment in Government Workplaces*](#), a report which examines the federal government’s response to workplace sexual harassment in the federal government. Specifically, the Commission analyzed the federal government’s primary enforcement agency in this area, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). The report includes data on the frequency of claims and findings of harassment, the resources dedicated to preventing and redressing harassment, and the impact and efficacy of enforcement efforts. To consider the nature of workplace sexual harassment more broadly in federal workplaces, the Commission also evaluated sexual harassment complaint practices and responses at two large agencies: the State Department and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

“The federal government’s longstanding and persisting failure to take adequate steps necessary to address this form of serious workplace misconduct is especially concerning given its dual role as the largest employer in the United States and as the principal enforcer of federal civil rights protections. We urge all agencies and Congress to take up the Commission’s recommendations immediately to protect federal workers and serve as the model employer government should be in our nation,” said **Catherine E. Lhamon**, Chair of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

The Commission majority found:

- Widely prevalent workplace sexual harassment in the federal government. A federal survey estimated 1 in 7 federal employees experienced sexually harassing behaviors at work between 2016-18;
- Structural power imbalances and gender disparities are strongly predictive of workplace sexual harassment;
- A dearth of publicly available data on the frequency of harassment;
- A widespread fear of retaliation among victims of sexual harassment for reporting misconduct;
- Fewer workplace protections for federal employees compared to private sector workers due to antiquated laws; and
- Lower caps on monetary damages in sexual harassment lawsuits for federal employees, which can discourage victims from risking their careers and reputations to seek redress and deter attorneys from taking their cases.

The Commission majority recommends that:

- Federal agencies implement mandatory anti-harassment training programs, establish uniform penalties, ensure that victims are adequately protected against retaliation, and end the practice of transferring harassers to other departments or agencies;
- Congress revise the statutory protections and remedies available to federal workers, including increasing the time restraints and financial caps applicable to sexual harassment claims;
- Congress enact explicit statutory protections for federal government contractors and interns; and
- Congress require findings of sexual harassment to be automatically referred to the Office of Special Counsel, as an independent and unbiased authority, to ensure that sexual harassment protections are enforced, and perpetrators are adequately disciplined.

The Commission held a [public briefing](#) on this subject in May 2019, and heard testimony from current and former government officials, academic and legal experts, advocates, and individuals who have experienced harassment. We invite you to view the [morning](#), [afternoon](#) and [public comment](#) sessions, and the briefing [transcript](#).

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The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is the only independent, bipartisan agency charged with advising the President and Congress on civil rights and reporting annually on federal civil rights enforcement. Our 51 state Advisory Committees offer a broad perspective on civil rights concerns at state and local levels. The Commission: In our 7th decade, a continuing legacy of influence in civil rights. For more information about the Commission, please visit www.usccr.gov and follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).