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**FEMALE POLICE
EMPLOYEES' PERCEPTIONS
OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

Developed by

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This study is intended for all the women in the Police who could be exposed to the risk of sexual harassment, who faced negative experiences and who have just begun their career. The study is also intended for all the men in the system, regardless of their status and position, whose decisions and actions should ensure a friendly moral and psychological climate for all the women and men working in the Police.

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK: CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

1.1. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of this study is to analyze the spectrum of factors – individual, systemic, social, cultural, etc. – that determine the female Police employees' perceptions of existence or non-existence of sexual harassment in the Police and help identify the most efficient solutions for preventing this phenomenon. The target group of the research are women employed in the Police. Analyzing their answers will help us understand the factors that have an impact on the existence/non-existence of sexual harassment in the Police. Particularly, we focused on the following objectives:

- conduct a study on the existence/non-existence of sexual harassment in the Police and identify the attitudes towards sexual harassment;
- raise the awareness of the heads of territorial, specialized and subordinated Police units about the phenomenon of sexual harassment and its consequences on the institutions and on the staff under their supervision;
- draft recommendations for preventing sexual harassment in the Police.

1.2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To reach the goal and achieve the research objectives, a complex methodological approach was chosen. The study is based on the analysis of primary data, collected via quantitative and qualitative methods (questionnaire-based survey and in-depth interview).

To establish the existence/non-existence of sexual harassment in the Police and the factors that determine it, a survey was conducted among women in Police, female officials with special status or civilian persons in different regions of the country. The questionnaire was filled in by 215 women in the Police via different methods:

- attending awareness raising workshops about the role of women in Police that were held in Balti, Cahul and Chisinau, during January - February 2020;

- sending the questionnaire to the women from different subdivisions of the Police (April-May 2020);
- placing it on the Viber group of the members of the Association of Women in Police (July-August 2020).

The data were collected during January - August 2020.

1.2.1. Study sample/profile of the respondent

The 215 women employed in the Police are included in the following age groups:

- **26%** aged 26-30 years;
- **23,3%** aged 20-25 years;
- **21,9%** aged 31-35 years;
- **18,1%** aged 36-40 years;
- **10,7%** aged over 40 years.

A share of 94% of women who participated in the survey are employed in operational positions and only 6%¹ – in management positions and about 73% – as officers.

Table 1. Study sample

		Persons	Rate %
Age	20-25 years	50	23,3
	26-30 years	56	26,0
	31-35 years	47	21,9
	36-40 years	39	18,1
	Over 40 years	23	10,7
	Total	215	100%
Title	Management	13	6,0
	Operational	202	94,0
	Total	215	100%
Status	Officer	158	73,5
	Sub-officer	51	23,7
	Civilian	6	2,8
	Total	215	100%
Length of service	1-5 years	118	54,9
	6-10 years	36	16,7
	11-15 years	22	10,2
	Over 16 years	36	16,7
	No answer	3	1,4
	Total	215	100%
Area of work	Chisinau	62	28,8
	Other localities	153	71,2
Totals:		215	100%

¹ Those 6% reflect the presence of at least 10% of women in management positions.



1.2.2. Structure of the questionnaire for the quantitative study

The questionnaire contained 17 questions, structured into 4 categories:

- profile of the respondent;
- presence/absence of sexual harassment during their work;
- response to the situation of sexual harassment;
- personal views on sexual harassment and ways to prevent it.

1.2.3. Structure of the interview for the qualitative study

The qualitative study was based on the in-depth interview, aimed to identify the situation of policewomen who experienced harassment during their career. Five online interviews were conducted with policewomen who were willing to speak about the sensitive situations they experienced. Ten open questions were formulated, based on which responses were collected, which were included in the report as sensitive testimonies.

PHENOMENON OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE POLICE

2.1. SEXUAL HARASSMENT: GENERAL TERMS

About half (49%) of the women from the Republic of Moldova aged 18-74 years, were subject to sexual harassment starting with the age of 15. Moldovan women encountered the following forms of sexual harassment most frequently: stares or longing leering (25% of women); undesired touching, hugs and kisses (19%); indiscreet comments about their physical aspect that offended them (19%)².

The concept of 'sexual harassment' is relatively new and started to be used in 1960s, although, unfortunately, this phenomenon has always existed: one accidental touch, one stare or gaze on certain parts of the body, an 'innocent' flirt or several anecdotes with sexual connotation and ambiguous message. The problem turns serious when such behavior comes from colleagues or from the boss and the salary raise or promotion to a higher position become conditional upon it. It is difficult to make a decision: the risk to be fired because you didn't 'crack' is very high. According to a study, the worst forms of sexual harassment at the place of work and study are committed by people in management positions, work colleagues and teachers. Work colleagues, most frequently, display abusive behaviors, with sexual allusions – starting with simple ones (hugs, language/jokes with sexual connotation) ending with more serious forms that imply inappropriate kisses and touching or even threats in order to have sexual intercourse³.

Sexual harassment means any undesired behavior related to the fact that an individual is subject to sexual pressure with the aim to harm the dignity of the individual and create an intimidating, hostile, humiliating and offending environment. This is about asking sexual favors, making indecent remarks or embarrassing gestures and actions that intimidate the person involved. Such behaviors – verbal and non-verbal, most frequently take place when there is an unequal balance of power and unequal position. The difference between sexual harassment

² Wellbeing and Safety of Women. Report on the results in Moldova, OSCE, 2019.

³ How to prevent sexual harassment at the place of work and study, Policy recommendations, Center Partnership for Development, Women's Law Center, Chisinau, 2018.

and other types of behaviors that express sexual attraction is the fact that sexual pressure is not desired by those who are subject to it, on the contrary, it humiliates, offends and makes people avoid those who initiate such actions, etc. Thus, in order to regard a certain behavior as sexual harassment, it is important to meet various characteristics, namely:

- be a behavior of sexual nature (verbal and/or non-verbal);
- be undesired and unpleasant to the individual concerned;
- represent the grounds for a decision that affects the harassed individual;
- be aimed at harming the dignity of the individual and creating a tensed, humiliating and intimidating environment.

Sexual harassment is the cause and the consequence of unequal relations, historically established between women and men, and gender stereotypes related particularly to gender roles of men and women are deeply rooted in the contemporary society. Research on sexual harassment demonstrates that it is linked to a lack of clarity about gender roles and work roles. At its worst, sexual harassment arises from a need for power or dominance, and a desire to assert control over others. It is related to the sex stereotypes that men want to dominate women sexually and women want to be sexually possessed. It is reported that women in traditionally female or male occupations are more exposed to sexual harassment than women in gender-neutral occupations⁴.

There are many reasons for which an employee might endure sexual harassment without reporting it. First, making the harassment public may impact future employment prospects, bearing in mind the entrenched stereotype that women are likely to fabricate allegations of sexual assault. The employee may be afraid of repercussions and recriminations, such as being labelled a “trouble-maker”. Thus, there is a heavy professional and personal cost in making the allegations public, which in some cases may involve a public scandal. This fear is exacerbated by the power dynamics between the employer and employee. The employee may have no choice but to endure the harassment due to her financial dependence on the job, and she may not have many alternative employment opportunities open to her. Indeed, such circumstances may even encourage an employer to persist with the harassment, and to do so with impunity⁵.

⁴ Training manual for judges and prosecutors on ensuring women’s access to justice, European Union, Council of Europe, September 2017, page 71. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/training-manual-women-access-to-justice/16808d78c5>.

⁵ Training manual for judges and prosecutors on ensuring women’s access to justice, European Union, Council of Europe, September 2017, page 69. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/training-manual-women-access-to-justice/16808d78c5>.

As a result, sexual harassment/gender-based harassment has a negative impact on the quality of the provided work and diminishes productivity. In harassment-tolerant environments there are significant changes in performance. First, the individual performance decreases, which naturally, affects the attitude towards work. Usually, this also results in lower performance of the team. Demotivation and frustrations are most of the times, contagious, and they can become real epidemics within those organizations that are not aware of the relationship between the satisfaction and the sense of security at the workplace and the performance.

In the Republic of Moldova, statistical data show that currently one in five employees is subject to some forms of sexual harassment at the workplace (inappropriate leering, hugs without any consent, jokes/language with a sexual connotation) and 4 out of 100 women are affected by severe forms of harassment (request to have sexual intercourse for a reward, use of force or threats to have sexual intercourses etc.). At the same time, about 20% of women were threatened or requested to have sexual intercourses at the place of study. Despite the high incidence of sexual harassment cases, only 15% of women reported such cases. The low level of reporting is determined by the self-blaming, low confidence in control bodies and the attitude of the population – 60.5% believe that harassed people are to blame for those experiences⁶.

2.2. SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE POLICE: INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Although it is a negative and illicit phenomenon, with serious consequences, unfortunately, sexual harassment continues to take place in environments that are in charge of preventing and combating crimes, such as law enforcement bodies. Unfortunately, sexual harassment is a widespread phenomenon in most of the law enforcement departments worldwide. This decreases the organizational productivity and has a significant impact on the professional environment. In law enforcement, where officers must work long hours and conduct dangerous job tasks, sexual harassment lowers job satisfaction and negatively impacts mission, safety, and results. In spite of these negative consequences, a variety of surveys and studies have demonstrated high levels of sexual harassment in police departments around the world:

- a survey study among serving policewomen from 35 countries revealed that 77% experienced sexual harassment from colleagues;
- in a study involving a large midwestern police department, every woman interviewed was subjected to verbal harassment;

⁶ How to prevent sexual harassment at the place of work and study. Policy recommendations, developed by East-European Foundation, Center Partnership for Development, Women's Law Center, page 3. Available at: http://cdf.md/files/resources/131/9468_cpdcdf_analiza_hartuirea_sexuala_final.pdf.

- in a 2008 survey, more than half of female officers had experienced sexual harassment in police departments in Australia, Great Britain, and the US⁷.

Over the years, various studies were conducted to determine the extent to which policewomen are subject to sexual/gender-based harassment and it was found that 60-70% of them experienced sexual/gender-based harassment. A 1985 study conducted by the Police Foundation found that 67% of female officers were victims of sexual harassment and another similar survey showed that 68% reported having been sexually harassed by a colleague. Interestingly, only about 4-6% ever reported the harassment. This lack of reporting is directly attributable to the code of silence in law enforcement agencies and the severe retaliation that occurs when women do report misconduct⁸.

Existing research suggests that where there are more men in the workforce, an environment of sexualized joking and boasting can be created. There has been some suggestion in the literature that much of this ‘banter’ type of behavior is perceived as ‘harmless fun’, thus relieving some of the workplace stress. However, it is evident from Professor Brown’s research that the presence of ‘banter’ makes serious forms of sexual harassment more likely⁹. According to a study carried out in the Police of Japan, 34.8% of 106 policewomen said they were harassed at the workplace¹⁰.

A special study that would analyze the perceptions and the experiences of policewomen from the Republic of Moldova regarding the phenomenon of sexual harassment in the Police has not been yet conducted. Given this reality, it was considered appropriate to initiate a first tentative to discuss about preventing this phenomenon in the Police of the Republic of Moldova.

Foreign researchers Seklecki and Paynich (2007) discovered that most frequently, policewomen face harassment behaviors such as: jokes/offensive stories and pursuing sexual relationships despite objections. Somvadee and Morash (2008) found that 87% of female officers reported hearing suggestive jokes or offensive stories, and 21 percent reported co-workers had attempted to establish a sexual relationship. In this study, the most common type of harassment faced by policewomen were sexual jokes.

⁷ <https://lawenforcementlearning.com/course/sexual-harassment-in-the-workplace/>.

⁸ NATIONAL CENTER FOR WOMEN & POLICING Recruiting & Retaining Women: A Self-Assessment Guide for Law Enforcement was funded by a grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Grant #99-LD-VX-0003. A Division of the Feminist Majority Foundation, page 133. Available at: <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/bja/185235.pdf>.

⁹ In 2016, 1,776 UNISON Police staff members from Police departments from England, Scotland and Wales volunteered to participate in an online survey. They represented 5.3% of UNISON Police staff members and 2.1% of the total Police staff in the Great Britain. The survey did not cover the Police officers// Time to Stamp Out Sexual Harassment in the Police, An executive summary of an LSE/UNISON research study, Available on: <https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2018/08/UNISON-LSE-report-Time-to-stamp-out-sexual-harassment-in-the-police-1.pdf>.

¹⁰ Exploring Sexual Harassment in the Police Force in Japan: A Comparative Study between Japan and the United States, page 260, Available at: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/159504225.pdf>.

A share of 95% of women recalled that at one point, during their career, they had to deal with this type of sexual harassment¹¹.

Captain George V. Robinson of the Ocala, Florida, Police Department conducted a more recent study of over 1,200 women in law enforcement in Florida and found that 61% said they had been sexually harassed in the workplace. In fact, 40% of them indicated that sexually oriented materials or sexually oriented jokes are a daily occurrence. Unfortunately, many of those responding said they believed it was their plight to endure otherwise unacceptable working conditions if they wanted to maintain a career in law enforcement. A similar study conducted in a large municipal police department in a southeastern state revealed that 68% of the respondents reported being sexually harassed on the job. Sexual and gender harassment are two of the top reasons women most often state for leaving their law enforcement careers. Not only does this illegal behavior result in low retention rates for women employees, but it is frequently the cause of severe, debilitating stress. Law enforcement agencies are frequently sued for sexual harassment. For example, in 1991 a California city had to pay \$3.1 million to two women officers who were sexually harassed by co-workers. In 1996, a woman police sergeant was awarded \$1.2 million in a case against male officers who first harassed her and then caused her to be terminated¹².

Only 3.2% of the policewomen who were subject to sexual harassment, made official complaints. This result was consistent with the situation in the Police of the United States, although the ratio in Japan is lower than in the United States (15-20%). Note that only 3.2% of women victims said they protested directly against harassers (verbally, by email, etc.). On the other hand, 34.7% of women victims said they chose 'to do nothing'. Also, 43.2% of women victims said they tried to protest only implicitly. The main reasons for 'doing nothing' were generally, the same as in the United States. The concern that 'nothing would be done despite my action' was the most common (42.4%), followed by 'the fear of retaliation by the harasser or fear that my action may make the situation worse (36.4%)' and 'the concern that I would suffer some disadvantage because of my action (27.3%)'. These characteristics were mostly the same between victims of gender harassment and unwanted sexual attention¹³.

¹¹ Brodeur, Vanessa. Female law enforcement officer's experiences of workplace harassment, 2018 . Disponibil: <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1698&context=etd>.

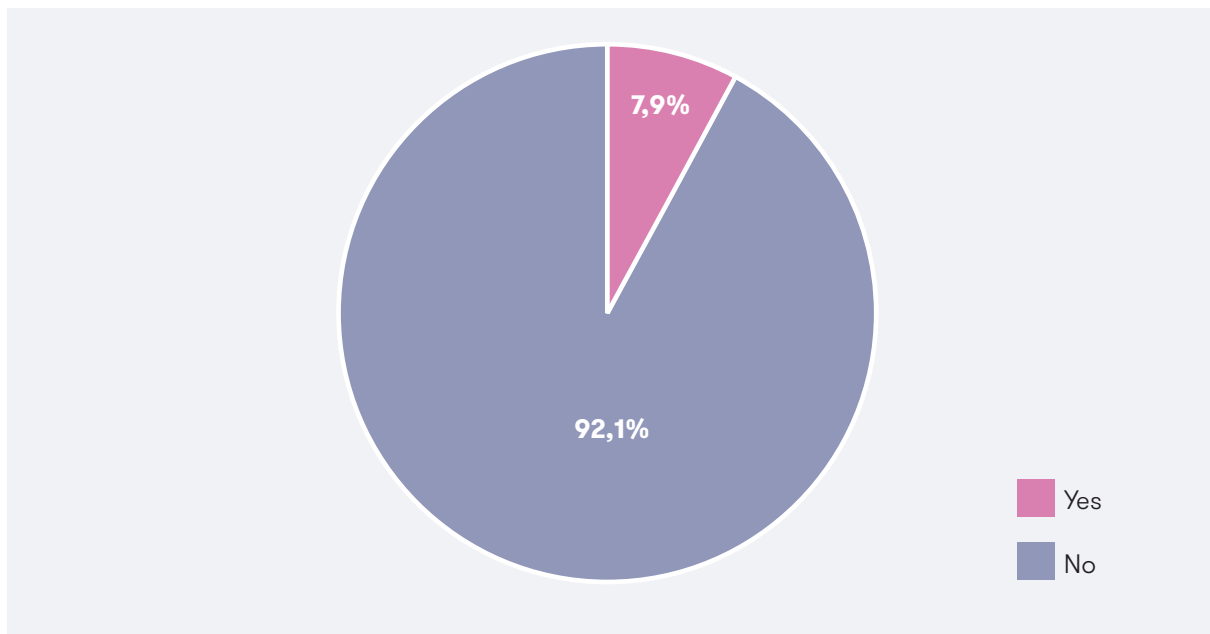
¹² NATIONAL CENTER FOR WOMEN & POLICING Recruiting & Retaining Women: A Self-Assessment Guide for Law Enforcement was funded by a grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Grant #99-LD-VX-0003. A Division of the Feminist Majority Foundation, pag.133. Disponibil: <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/bja/185235.pdf>.

¹³ Exploring Sexual Harassment in the Police Force in Japan: A Comparative Study between Japan and the United States, Disponibil: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/159504225.pdf>.

2.3. RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF AND EXPERIENCES WITH SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE POLICE

The respondents' perception of sexual harassment was evaluated from their response to the question whether they have been victims of sexual harassment. Only 7.9% (n = 17) of the respondents admitted to be victims of sexual harassment and/or of a situation that might actually lead to sexual harassment (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Share of women in the Police who stated being victims of sexual harassment at work



Despite the fact that only 7.9% of women admitted to being victims of sexual harassment, the responses to the next questions show that female police employees often face inappropriate behaviors.

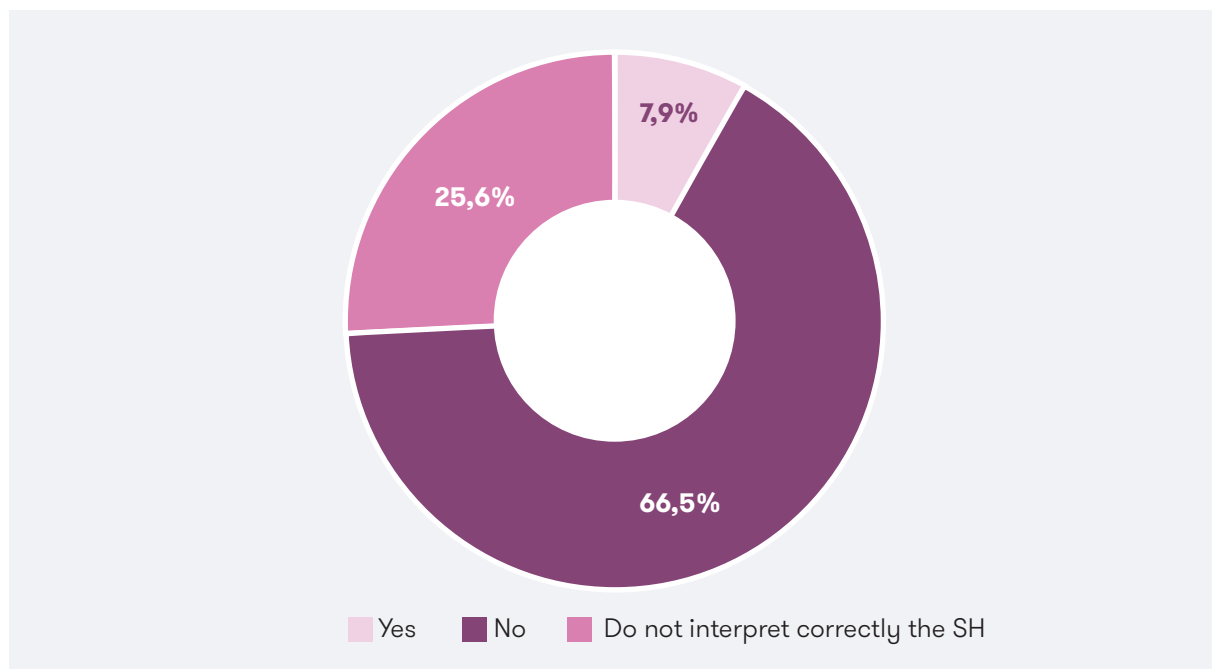
The five interviews with police women who experienced sexual harassment described the situations as follows:

1. *'A much older co-worker hit me on my backside during a discussion in his office and in the presence of his colleague, during working hours... It was disgusting, and the most embarrassing fact was that I had to reprimand a much older colleague. He often had symptoms of problems typical for elderly men';*
2. *'It was an unpleasant situation that could affect my further career.. I felt frustrated and angry';*

3. 'The embarrassing harassment situation was created by the head of General Division in the waiting room... Disappointment and no comments, just asking myself why they did not like the way I dressed that day';
4. 'I was shocked, very afraid...';
5. 'The director of the unit where I was working started with harmless compliments, then began to touch different parts of my body when he called me in his office... I was shocked, why me??? How could he do that? He was like a father to me'.

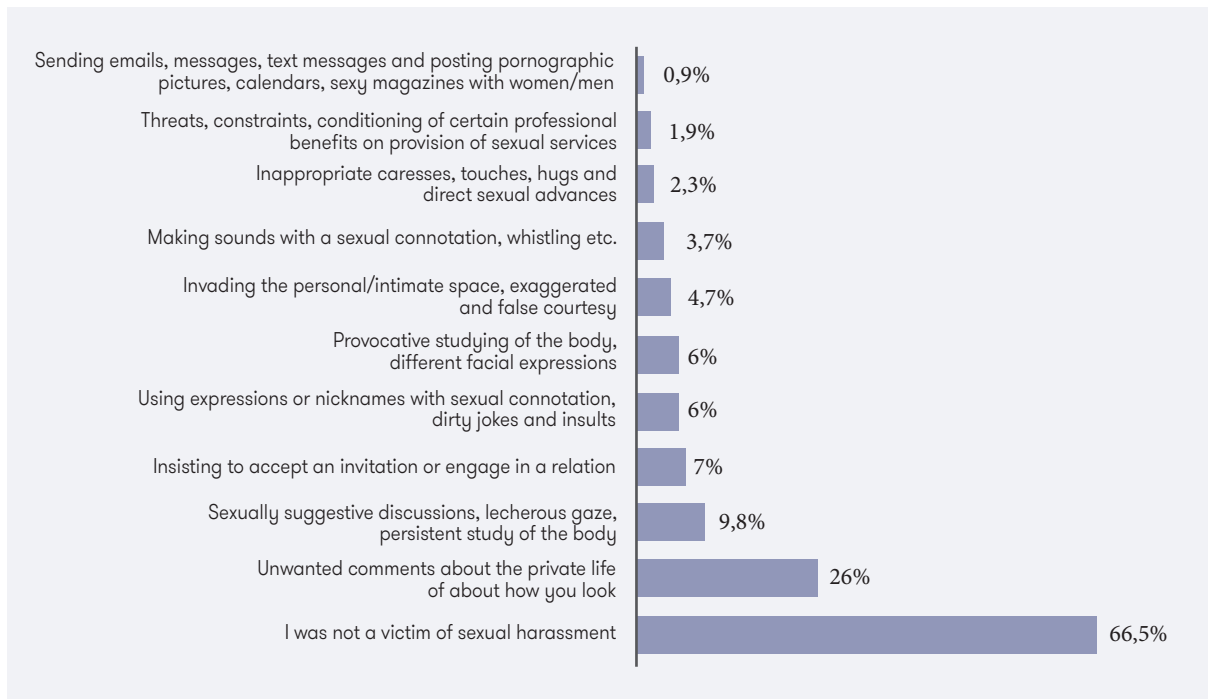
This situation is possibly due to the fact that not all the respondents understood this behavior correctly, which is proved by their responses to the question whether they experienced or not sexual harassment situations/behaviors. Thus, of 92.1% respondents who answered that they were not victims of sexual harassment, 25.6% selected the option sexual harassment situations/behaviors. These 25.6% represent the women who could have wrongly not perceived the situation as a sexual harassment (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Share of women in the Police who stated experiencing sexual harassment situations/behaviors



According to the registered responses, one in four police woman mentioned that she received unwanted comments about her private life or about the way she looked, and one in ten women faced sexual harassment situations like persistent study of her body, lecherous gazes, or sexually suggestive discussions. 7% (n = 15) answered they experienced situations when one insisted that they accept an invitation or engage in a relationship, and other 6% (n = 13) mentioned cases of dirty jokes, expressions and/or words with sexual connotations (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Share of women in the Police who experienced certain forms of sexual harassment



This conclusion was also highlighted during the Research Summit for Women in Policing in Washington, D.C, on 3-4 December 2018, hosted by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ)¹⁴. Certain participants agreed that harassment and sexism are often regarded as a normality and only the most flagrant cases are reported. ‘I do not think I was ever harassed, but some of my experiences can be regarded as harassment’, said a participant. The few researches reflect this fact: many police women reported not experiencing any sexual harassment, but facing a specific behavior that may be seen as harassment. ‘This has become a normality, so that they do not even realize that it could actually be harassment’, said a participant in the summit.

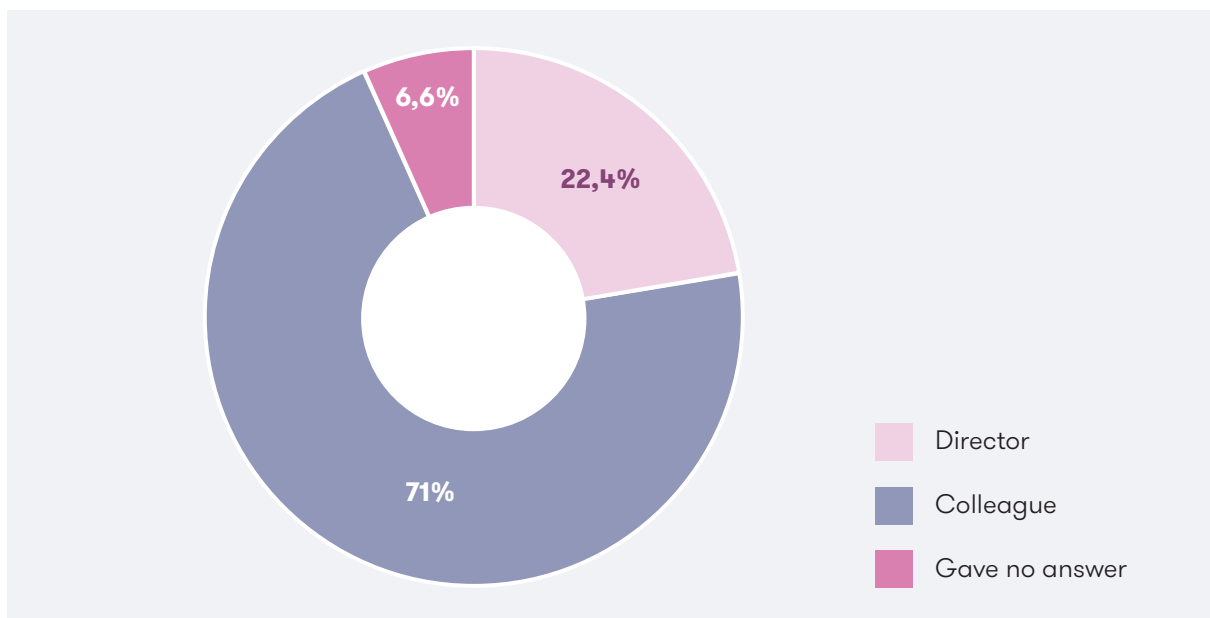
Interviewed women from the Police of the Republic of Moldova mentioned that situations they went through had certain consequences at professional and psychological levels, and their transfer to another unit was a solution for them:

1. *‘I tried to avoid as much as possible any communication with the harasser’;*
2. *‘For a year I was directly and indirectly tormented by my boss, and at the first opportunity when the unit was reorganized, I was the first to be announced that I was not on the list, though later there were vacant positions’;*

¹⁴ The purpose of the Summit was to understand the current stage of researches relevant for the American police women and to create a research agenda including questions that female leaders in this field established as priorities, moving towards parity in their activity, [ps://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/252963.pdf](https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/252963.pdf).

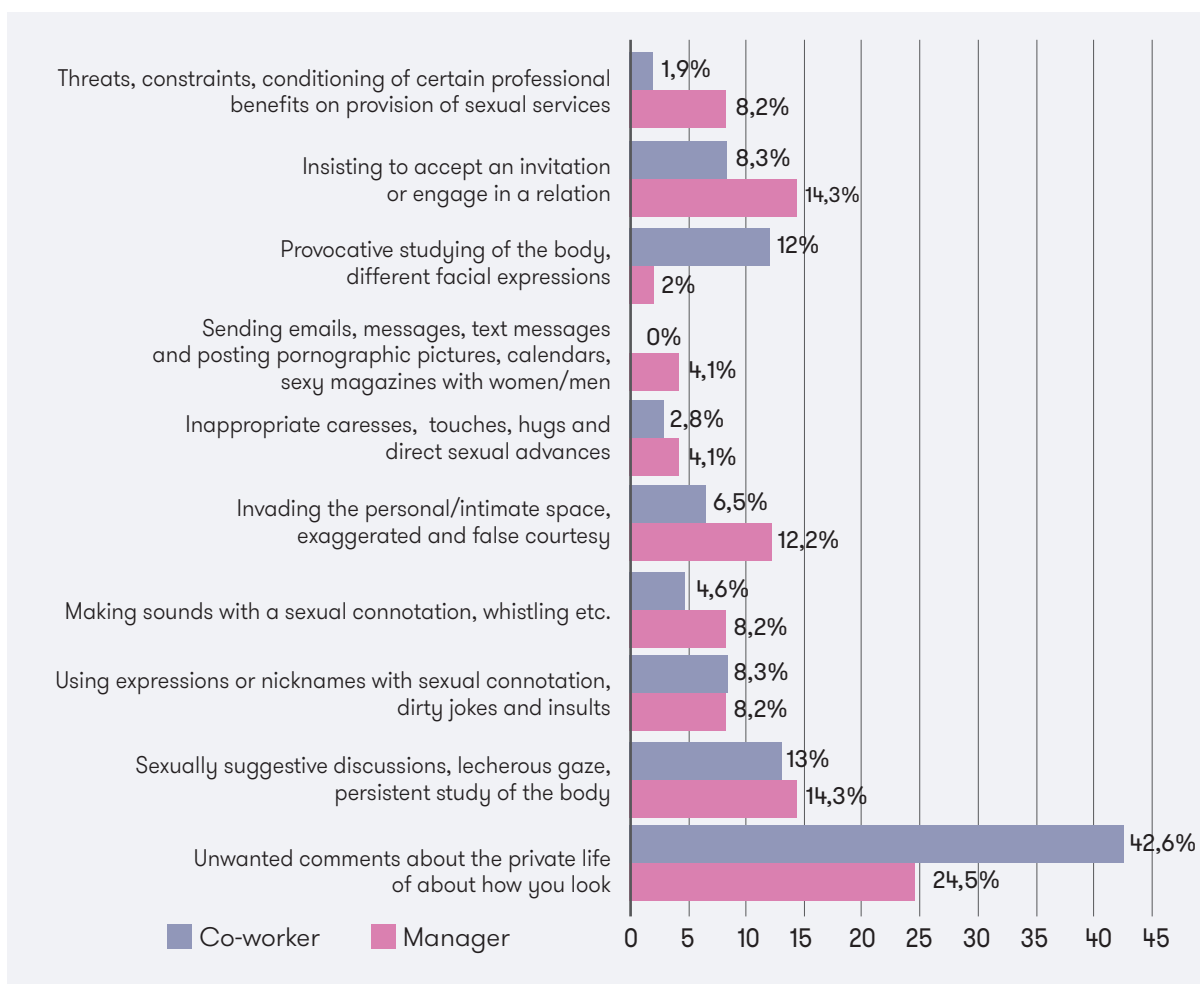
3. 'I was transferred to another unit; before that I discussed many situations with the deputy head of general unit, who recommended not to get transferred, but I understood that no measure was or will be taken';
4. 'Transferred to another unit';
5. 'After a certain period of time, I moved to another unit... When we saw each other periodically at certain meetings, we just greeted each other, but this situation affected me and made me feel frustrated when somebody touched me'.

Figure 4. Authors of indecent behaviors



The authors of indecent behaviors are most frequently co-workers – 71% (n = 54) who display different forms of harassment actions, from simple (hugs, sexual language) to severe forms that include caresses, inappropriate hugs and direct sexual advances. There are also worrying trends in a subordinate – manager relationship, where 22.4% of women mentioned that the authors of indecent behaviors were their managers (Figure 4). Unfortunately, managers were the ones who used threats and constraints, put conditions for receiving professional benefits (8.2%); insisted on accepting an invitation or engaging in a relationship (14.3%); invaded personal space (12.2%) and others. Co-workers used most often undesired comments about private life (42.5%); sexually-suggestive discussions, lascivious glances (13%); provocative study of the body (12%); (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Share of women in the Police who experienced certain forms of sexual harassment, by status of the harasser



The police women who went through a sexual harassment experience had different reactions, from fighting back to denial and shock:

1. *'I told my colleague that he crossed the line';*
2. *'I fought back, then I started to cry';*
3. *'As I was not ready for what I heard, I said nothing and just went to my office, thinking about what to do';*
4. *'Negative';*
5. *'First, I had a shock because I did not expect such behavior from my boss, I just did not understand what was happening'.*

According to the Report on mentoring visits for ensuring gender equality in police inspectorates¹⁵, one of the questions addressed was the presence or absence of sexual harassment cases in territorial police inspectorates.

¹⁵ The visits included mentoring and coaching activities for promoting gender equality in MIA/GPI. They were conducted in October 2018 - June 2019 under the Project-Based Cooperation Agreement between Gender-Centre Civil Association and UN Women (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women) and were funded by the Government of Sweden and UN Women..

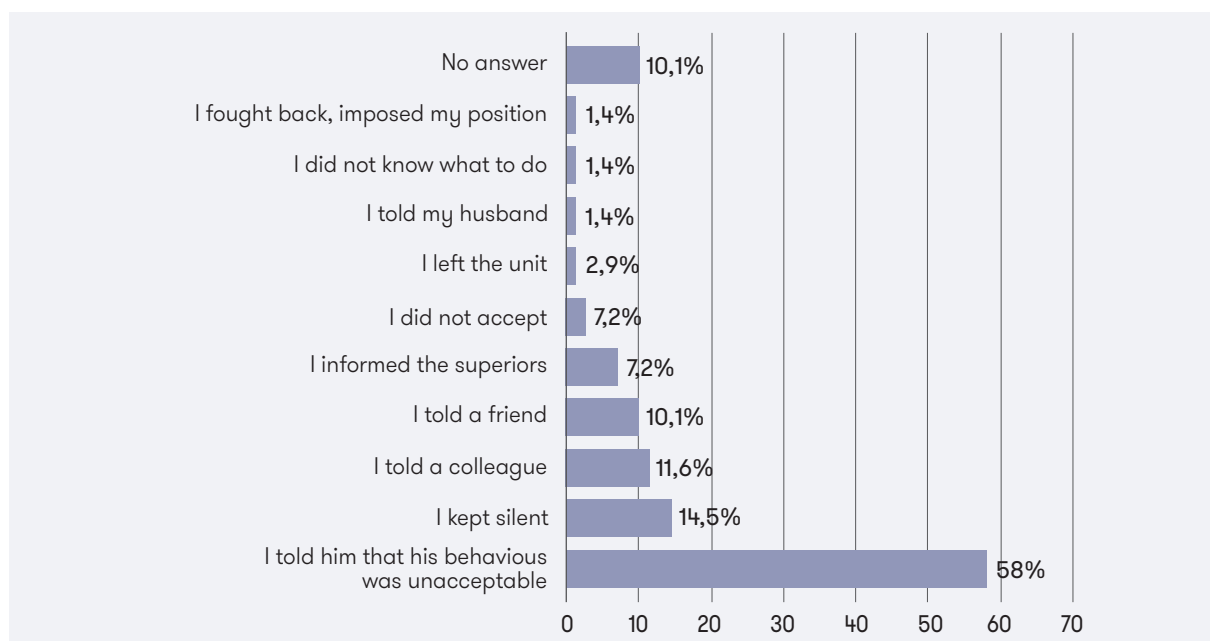
Though nobody admitted such situations, during the discussion (mentoring session), a male employer massaged a female employer who was obviously intimidated by his actions. Some managers mentioned that if women reported such situations, the men who committed those violations were directly confronted.

The reactions of harassers revealed based on the interviews of the 5 respondents are also interesting:

1. *'He said that I was like a daughter to him and he treats her the same. I replied that I was not his daughter and his actions may be regarded as sexual harassment, mentioning also the presence of the witness, but the latter declared promptly that he did not want to get involved, stating that nothing really happened';*
2. *'As if nothing happened and it was something normal';*
3. *'He did not feel guilty, he kept smiling and the deputy chief supported him on the same tone';*
4. *'Happy and eager to achieve his purpose';*
5. *'He was not going to ruin my family relationship, on the contrary, he thought that it would improve it... he later said that I would not escape him anyway'.*

Regarding the reactions of Police women to the harassment, according to their responses, approximately one in eight respondents – 14.5% (n = 10) – stated that she had kept silent when experiencing a sexual harassment action, 58% (n = 40) said to the author of sexual harassment that such behavior was unacceptable, and 11.6% (n = 8) talked about what happened to a colleague (Figure 6).

Figure 6. What did you do in this situation? (Total No. = 83)



58% of the respondents told the harasser that his behavior was unacceptable. This is one of the first actions that the victim of the sexual harassment should take, regardless of her field of activity.

In case of sexual harassment, some victims share their experience with someone they trust to ask for advice, others try to solve their problem by themselves:

1. *'After an objective examination of the situation with my close colleagues, we concluded that it was impossible for me to prove that this situation existed';*
2. *'The next day, the lady from chancellery office, who did not witness the event but was told by somebody, tried to defend him saying that he was drunk, but his parents and other relatives did not know';*
3. *'I talked to nobody about that, but I reached certain conclusions about those people;*
4. *'I talked to the psychologist and my parents';*
5. *'At that moment I told nobody, I was ashamed that I let this happen, I did not believe this was happening to me'.*

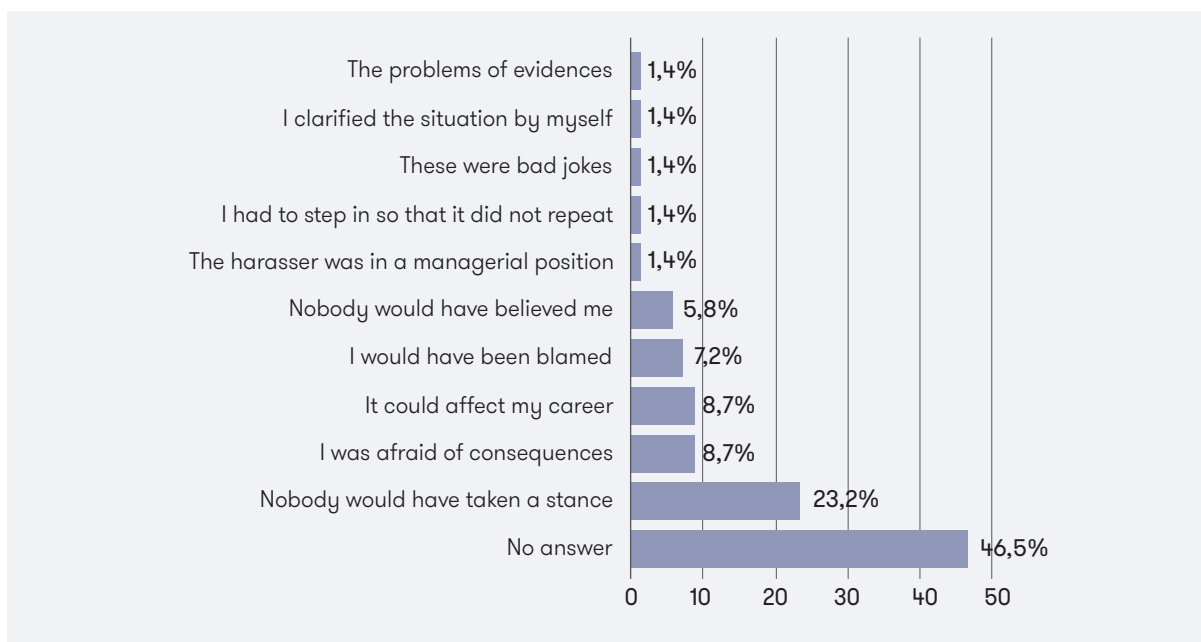
2.4. INCIDENCE OF REPORTING SEXUAL HARASSMENT ACTS

Women in policing often choose to ignore the inappropriate behaviors because they do not trust that reporting will have effective result or they pay little attention to such gestures. Thus, almost every fourth woman – 23.2% (n = 16) did not report the case when somebody made gestures of sexual nature, because she believed that nobody would take any action to solve the incident.

8.7% (n = 16) of respondents who were victims of sexual harassment were afraid to create troubles for themselves or that their career could be affected if they took any actions, and 7.2% (n = 5) thought they might be blamed (Figure 7).

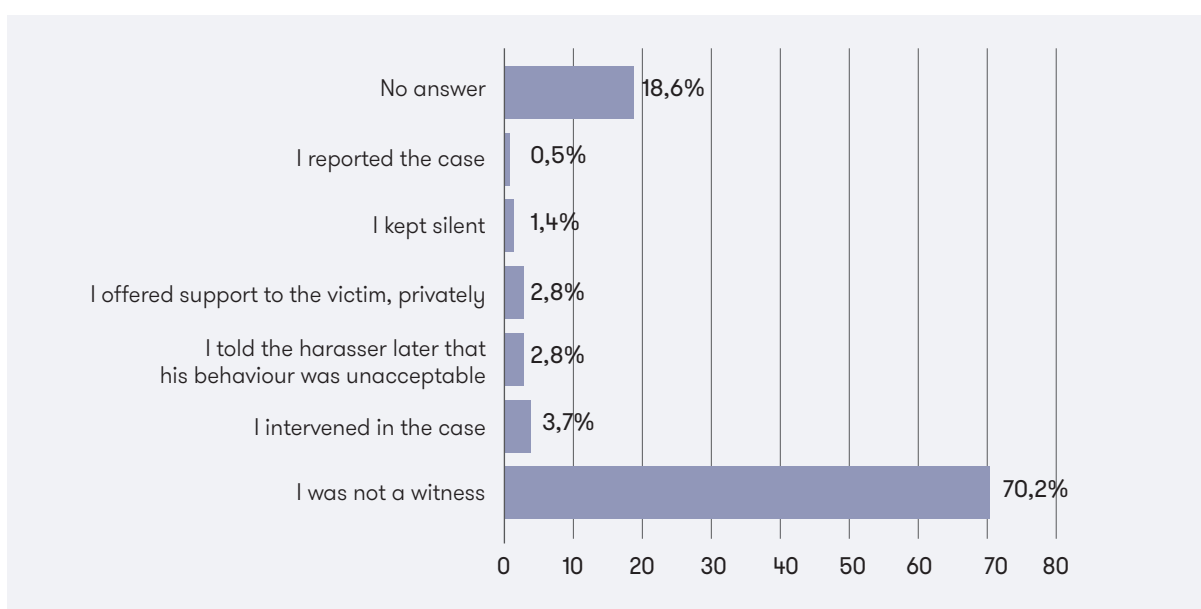


Figure 7. Causes for non-reporting the cases of sexual harassment



11.2% of the respondents admitted to witnessing situations that could be qualified as sexual harassment acts, but only 0.5% of them reported the case; 1.4% kept quiet; 2.8% privately supported the victim; 2.8% told later to the harasser that such behavior was unacceptable, and 3.7% intervened in the case (Figure 8).

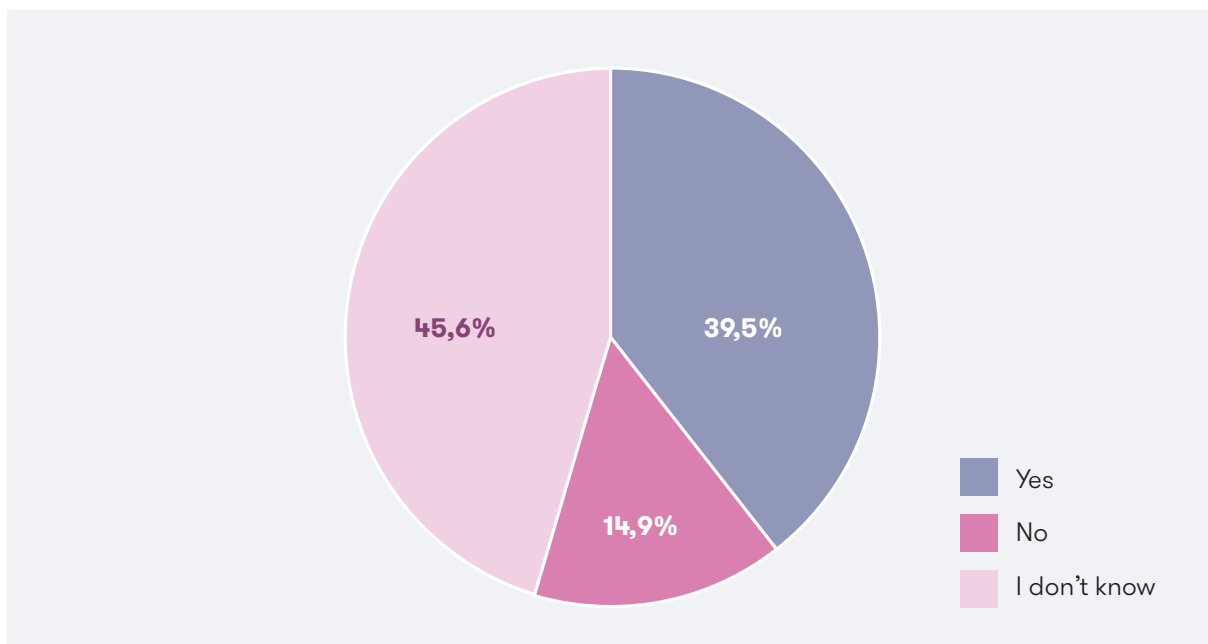
Figure 8. Share of women who witnessed situations that can be regarded as sexual harassment acts



For example, in case of sexual harassment offences, according to V. E. Georgescu, the most difficult, from the point of view of the criminal proceeding, is to prove the sexual harassment offence, considering that such behavior is rarely manifested in the presence of a third person. Sometimes, sexual harassment is committed in public, like at the workplace, but potential witnesses keep quiet as they are afraid not to be subject to disciplinary sanctions or fired. Thus, everything is resumed to presumptions¹⁶.

Regarding the security of women victims of sexual harassment – related to the reporting of sexual harassment cases – the analysis of the respondents' answers shows that almost every second respondent working in the Police does not know/is not sure if she could be safe if reporting a sexual harassment act, and 14.9% (about one in seven people) answered that they do not feel safe to report a sexual harassment act (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Share of women who would feel safe to report a case of sexual harassment



The sociologist Helen Watson, interviewed women who were sexually harassed and concluded: 'Filing an official complaint is an act of desperation, which ignores the consequences, it is the act of a person who has no power against a powerful enemy. The person in question is labelled as being the cause of problems and risks hostility from colleagues, isolation from them, given that the other ones are forced to take a side and all these have the potential to worsen even more the situation...'

¹⁶ Brânză S., *Infracțiunea de hărțuire sexuală (art.173 CP RM): Aspecte juridico-penale, partea I.* [Sexual harassment offence (Article 173 CC of the RM): Legal and criminal aspects], part I. In: *National Law Magazine*, No.2, 2012, page 7.



Another woman added: Admitting in public the things that happened to you can be worse than to suffer silently. I think it is worse than the harassment act itself. Even the women who filed a complaint, as a result of which the harasser was sanctioned, claim that they would never do the same in a similar situation. We totally agree that making accusations in such a case may be more difficult than tolerating harassment personally and professionally.¹⁷

Among the reasons for not reporting cases of sexual harassment, the most common answer was ‘the situation is not serious enough to justify a complaint’; this option being selected by 49.2%. Other common answers included ‘concern about the impact of my complaint on my career’, I am worried that ‘nothing will be done even if I file a complaint’, ‘fear of retaliation by superiors and/or co-workers’, ‘concern about the reaction of superiors and/or co-workers’ and ‘similar situations were reported and no measures were taken’¹⁸.

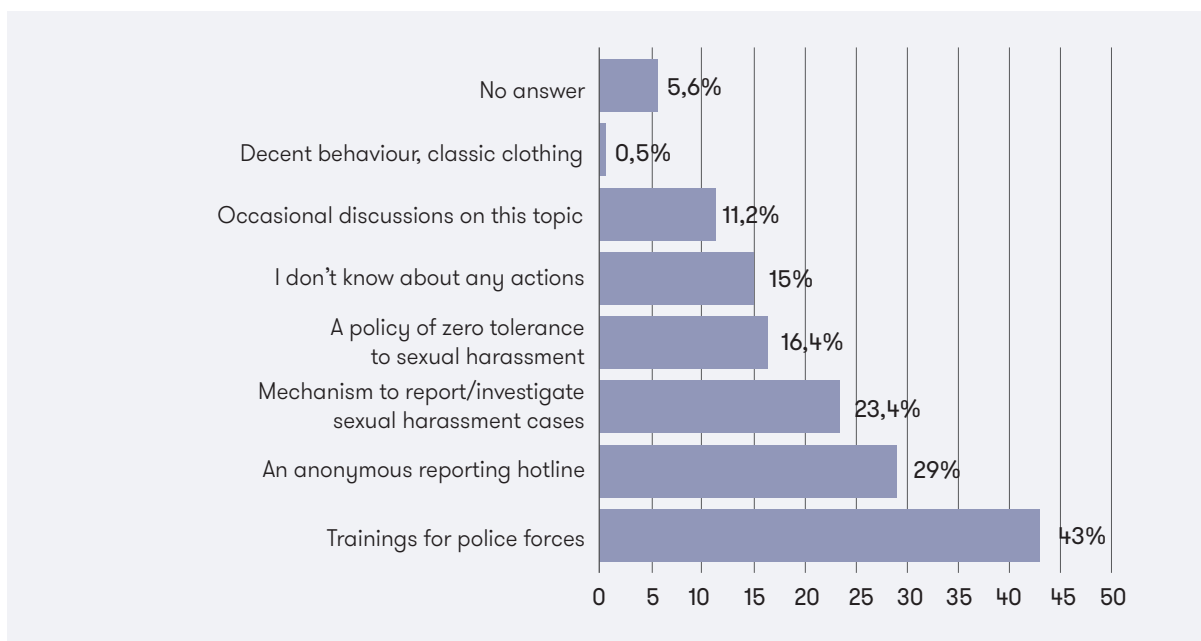
2.5. VIEWS ON THE MEASURES TO BE TAKEN TO PREVENT SEXUAL HARASSMENT

In respondents’ opinion, the following are the most efficient ways to prevent sexual harassment in the Police: for 43% (n = 92), ‘organisation of trainings for Police staff in order to raise the awareness of sexual harassment’, and 29% (n = 62) of respondents believe that the most efficient method is to create an anonymous hotline for reporting sexual harassment cases. Also, 16.4% (n = 35) believe it would be welcome to develop a clear policy of zero tolerance for cases of sexual harassment for women in the Police (Figure 10).

¹⁷ Aninosanu Livia, Martis Daniela, Sorescu Irina, How to manage situations of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is punished by law/A practical guide for HR managers and trade union representatives / Equality Partnership Centre, 2007, page 44. Available at: <https://www.cpe.ro/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Cum-gestionam-situatiile-de-hartuire-sexuala.pdf>.

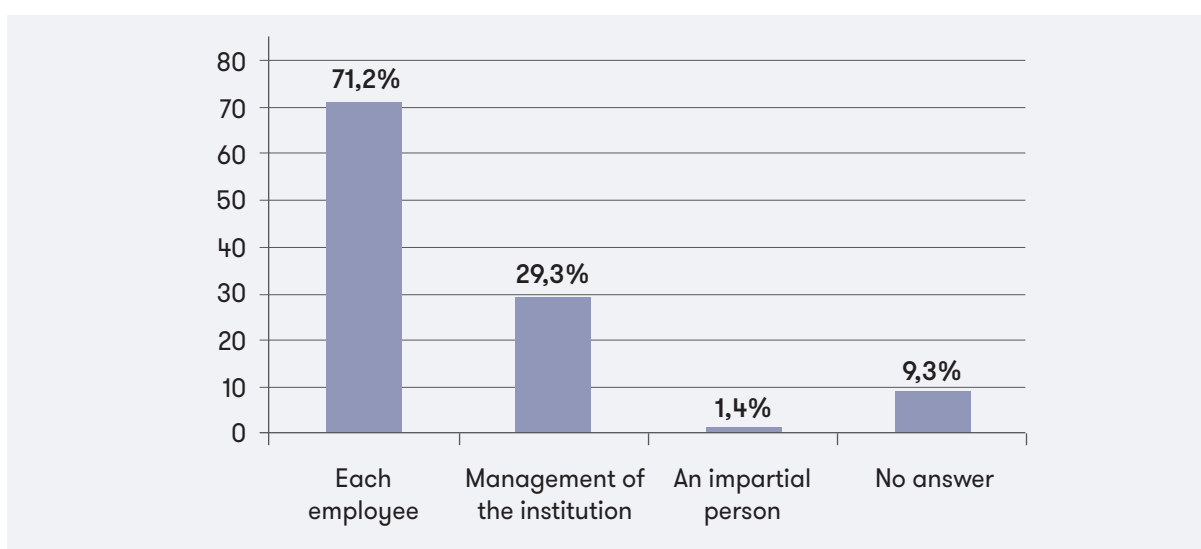
¹⁸ **Sexual harassment in law enforcement:** Incidence, Impact, and Perception. Kimberly A. Lonsway, Rebecca Paynich, and Jennifer N. Hall, pag.188. Available at: [file:///D:/Users/IGP/Downloads/kimandbeckifinal%20\(2\).pdf](file:///D:/Users/IGP/Downloads/kimandbeckifinal%20(2).pdf).

Figure 10. The most efficient methods for preventing sexual harassment



Statistical data reveal that the responsibility to prevent and combat sexual harassment in policing belongs to each employee and his/her cultural norms. Thus, 71.2% (n = 153) believe that each employee is responsible for preventing sexual harassment, 29.3% (n = 63) believe that the management of the institution should get involved more in order to fight this phenomenon, and 1.4% (n = 3) believe that engaging a psychologist would be welcome to solve the problem of harassment in the Police. Other 9.3% (n = 20) did not provide an answer (Figure 11).

Figure 11. Who is responsible for preventing and combating cases of sexual harassment?





Women in the Police who experienced sexual harassment described how should these situations be solved:

1. *'It is difficult to answer this question, it is possible to prove sexual harassment when it repeats in order to be possible to collect evidence. At the same time, no one wants to be involved as a witness. The victim is alone in this situation';*
2. *'Such situations should not be admitted from the start; I believe that each institution should make the employees to sign a form obliging them to observe the provisions about liability for cases of harassment, including sexual, and explain to them the consequences, just like in the USA, such as being fired for example';*
3. *'I would be more categorical in such situations, but I don't know if there are precedents when officers and managers who allow themselves such behavior were sanctioned. However, I found that such cases of sexual harassment are tolerated by managers. Due to the fact that the management was part of the same department, the answer was ...I don't want to argue with him, although such situations are regulated';*
4. *'By ignoring the person that tends to harass. By taking stringent measures in relation to that staff, dismiss and sanction that person';*
5. *'I wish I had the courage to report this case, but I continued to live with the conviction that the situation would not change... Back then, such cases were a normality, I never heard someone to report, it is difficult when the harasser is head of the institution who should ensure a moral-psychological climate friendly for women and men...'*

2.6. DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND FLIRTING OR EXISTENCE/NON-EXISTENCE OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT, ACCORDING TO RESPONDENTS, AND ITS CAUSES

As regards the difference between flirting¹⁹ and sexual harassment, from the point of view of respondents, 54% (n = 115) believe that Police staff knows the differences between these two actions, that is, they know that the limit between flirting and sexual harassment is set by the existence of consent, that is, by giving consent to receive sexually-suggestive comments, proposals, requests.

Although the difference between flirting and sexual harassment is very clear, 33% (n=70) believe that sexual harassment acts are present among women in Police environment (Figure 12/ Figure 13).

Figure 12. Do you think that Police employees know the difference between flirting and sexual harassment?

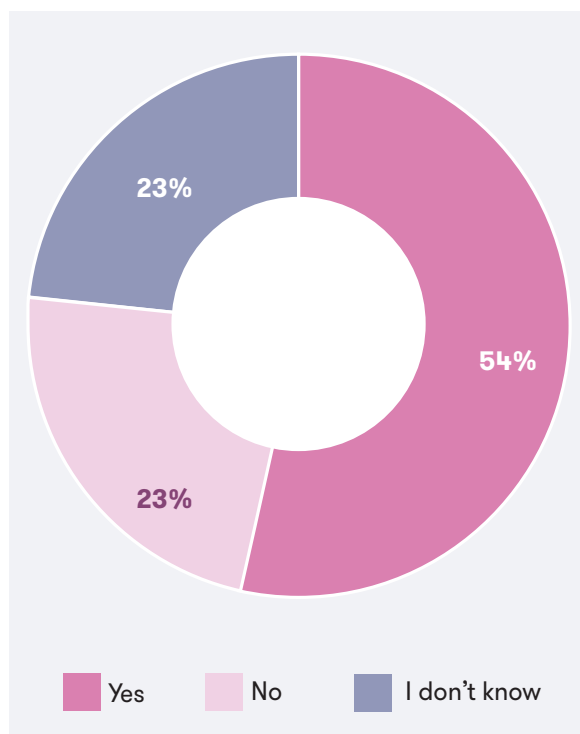
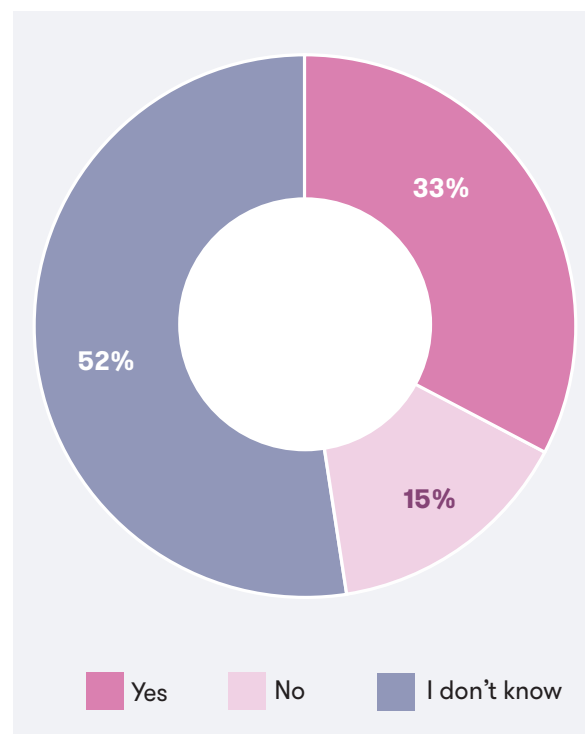


Figure 13. Do you believe that sexual harassment is present in the Police?



The degree of tolerance and the existence of stereotypes regarding the place and the role of woman in the Police, as well as their perpetuation, was mentioned by 25.6% of interviewed women. Though there are regulatory acts that oblige certain institutions to protect victims of sexual harassment, the institutional and administrative measures do not provide for a range of actions and a clear mechanism that would ensure efficient prevention/investigation and

¹⁹ Flirting is an action accepted by both parties and does not create discomfort to the person in question.

assistance measures, according to the answers provided by 19.5% of women. The fact that sexual harassment is accepted in labor relations in the Police is proven by the low level of information – 14%, as well as by the existing system of values, which encourages such behavior – 10.7%. It is alarming that 0.9% mentioned that sexual harassment acts can be caused by the provocative behavior of the victim, which reveals a lack of knowledge and existence of stereotypes (Table 2).

Table 2. Causes of sexual harassment in the Police

	Persons	Rate %
Existence of stereotypes about the place and role of women in Police, as well as about how a woman can get a promotion	55	25,6
Lack of a prevention/investigation/sanctioning mechanism	42	19,5
Balance of power between managers and subordinates	34	15,8
Low level of information about sexual harassment	30	14,0
Existent system of values, which encourages such a behavior	23	10,7
Patriarchal culture in the society	20	9,3
I do not know	5	2,3
Provocative behavior of the victim	2	0,9
No answer	87	40,5

Note that although at the moment when the research was conducted, there was no mechanism for preventing sexual harassment at system level and only certain awareness raising actions were conducted, during 2018-2019, the Council for Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality received two notifications from two Police employees concerning cases of sexual harassment at the workplace:

- 1) On 11 February 2019, the Council for Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality found discriminating the behavior of a head of inspectorate, who had harassed a subordinate based on the criterion of marital status and sex, on the labor market. The court fined him with MDL 10,000 and deprived him of the right to hold any positions during 6 months in the General Police Inspectorate of the Republic of Moldova or in its subdivisions (Decision on the case No 221/18 of 11 February 2019). The decision to sanction him was upheld by the Court of Appeal;
- 2) On 27 July 2020, the Council for Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality found that the elimination of the position of press officer of a policewoman employed in a territorial PI was a direct discrimination on the basis of sex and recommended the defendant to make sure that the petitioner is reemployed in a position that is similar to the previous one (Judgement on the Case No 108/20 of 27 July 2020).

FINAL FINDINGS/CONCLUSIONS

Sexual harassment is an extremely traumatic experience, regardless of the place in which it happens. It affects the physical, mental and emotional health, as well as the professional life of the victim. The Police employees who experienced situations/behaviors of sexual harassment described their feelings at the time as disgust, frustration, anger, disappointment, fear, embarrassment, these being signs of a state of imbalance for both female employees and the institution. For these reasons, it is important that the leadership invests in preventing such situations and maintaining a state of balance between employees.

Conducting the study was a real challenge, because some respondents felt insecure to answer questions, the subject of sexual harassment being another 'taboo' for the Moldovan Police. Although initially it was decided to interview the respondents online, which would have possibly ensured a higher participation, later it was opted for face-to-face interviews, in order to assess the respondents' reaction when answering questions.

Among the main findings of the study, which should be used as guideposts by the Police decision makers, we note:

1. Although a very small number, only 7.9%, responded that they were victims of sexual harassment, one in four respondents mentioned that they had unwanted comments about their private life and/or about the way they looked, and one in ten women faced situations of sexual harassment, such as insistent staring at the body, lascivious glances, or sexually-suggestive talk.
2. The authors of indecent behaviors are usually co-workers – 71%, but there are also worrying trends as regards the employee-manager relationship, where 22.4% of women mentioned that the authors of indecent behaviors were their managers.
3. One in eight respondents – 14.5%, said that she kept silence when she experienced an act of sexual harassment.
4. Almost one in four women – 23.2%, never reported the situation when someone used gestures of sexual nature because she believed that nobody would take action to solve this incident.

5. Every second woman employed in Police does not know/is not sure if she would feel safe to report an act of sexual harassment.
6. The most efficient ways to prevent the incidence of cases of sexual harassment in the Police are, for 43%, 'organisation of trainings for Police staff in order to raise the awareness of sexual harassment'.
7. 71.2% believe that each employee is responsible for preventing sexual harassment cases, 29.3% believe that the management of the institution should get more involved in order to fight this phenomenon.
8. One in three interviewed women believes that sexual harassment is present among women in Police.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For the decision-makers:

1. Conduct regular studies on a larger sample of people from the Police, with the involvement of men. In order to ensure confidentiality and encourage people to participate, online questionnaires need to be developed. Questionnaires could also be introduced for people who quit their jobs, to identify whether sexual harassment was not a possible cause for leaving the system.
2. Recognize the existence of cases of sexual harassment in the Police and the possible consequences of the phenomenon for the health and efficiency of the police force.
3. Organize training for the police force – not only for employees in executive positions, but also for those in management positions.
4. Encourage police women to report any case of sexual harassment.
5. Ensure the functioning of a safe mechanism for reporting and investigating cases of sexual harassment in the workplace.
6. Convey clear messages of zero tolerance to sexual harassment in the Police.
7. Include the topic ‘Preventing and combating sexual harassment in the Police’ in the Study Plan for basic and advanced managerial training courses. It is also appropriate to introduce/integrate the subject in the program of the Integrated Centre for Law Enforcement Training and of the ‘Stefan cel Mare’ Academy, into the disciplines regarding gender equality, respect for human rights, prevention and combating gender-based violence.
8. Ensure confidentiality, especially if the victim decides not to go any further, not to file a complaint, but to adopt strategies to avoid that situation and, as a last resort, to look for a new job.
9. Disclose and provide the necessary information to the authorities that will examine a case of sexual harassment, if the victim decides to turn to the competent authorities.
10. Ensure that there will be no negative consequences and retaliation against the Police employee filing the complaint.

11. Conduct internal awareness-raising campaigns on the non-admission of sexual harassment, which could have as possible slogans: 'Sexual harassment is not part of your job description', 'We say No to sexual harassment in the Police', 'I have the right not to be harassed'; 'I have the right not to be touched', 'I don't deserve to be harassed!', 'Sexual harassment is illegal behavior!', 'Believe women', 'Sexual harassment is not a joke!', 'We do not accept sexual harassment in the Police!', 'You have the courage to say NO!', 'You have the courage to speak up!', 'I deserve to be treated with respect!', 'NO means NO!', 'There is no place for sexual harassment in the Police', 'Be brave and report harassment!', 'A policewoman is Not a victim!', 'We are by your side – speak up!'

For women in Police who are at risk of harassment or who are already facing a situation of harassment:

1. Firmly demand that the harassing behavior stops, because it bothers and is illegal.
2. In relation to the harasser, the woman/victim should not pretend that nothing is happening, but declare directly what bothers her; avoid threatening and swearing or using obscenities; state clearly that she has the right to be protected from sexual harassment; combine verbal communication with the non-verbal one; should not respond to the harasser's excuses or tactics; if the harassment continues, say repeatedly that it bothers her²⁰.
3. File a complaint/notification, if such behavior continues even after the warning.
4. Tell a friend/colleague about what happened. They could testify if it comes to court.
5. Gather evidence that would support her claims.
6. If possible, identify other people who are in the same situation.
7. Talk to a specialist (psychologist/doctor/counselor) if there are symptoms of stress, depression or other health problems.
8. If the person harassing is a colleague, inform the immediate superior about this situation. If the harasser is the immediate superior, bring it to the attention of the senior manager, possibly in writing.
9. Send a written notification to the Council for Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality, accompanied by any evidence that may prove the case of sexual harassment.

²⁰ Aninosanu Livia, Martis Daniela, Sorescu Irina, How to manage situations of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is punished by law/A practical guide for HR managers and union representatives/Equality Partnership Center, 2007, p. 36. Available at: <https://www.cpe.ro/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Cum-gestionam-situatiile-de-hartuire-sexua-la.pdf>.

Recommendations from women in the police who experienced sexual harassment:

1. *'When talking with a potential harasser (similar situations in the past, perhaps with other people) record your discussion with him or make sure that it takes place in the presence of witnesses who are knowledgeable and objective; avoid talking with the potential harasser face-to-face';*
2. *'Know the difference between flirting and harassment, report such situations and ask for help. If the immediate superiors take the side of the harasser, gather as much evidence as possible';*
3. *'Each subdivision's gender unit is to report such cases and inform the territorial subdivisions through circulars, in order to encourage the victims to report such cases. Discuss such cases with the management, refuse to tolerate this kind of behavior in places where women work, by sanctioning harassers';*
4. *'Be aware, correct, at ready, handle your emotions with skill and discuss similar cases with trusted people, don't give a reason';*
5. *'Speak up and say no to such situations. Discuss it with a trusted person and come up with solutions together. I would like the system to provide a functional and safe reporting mechanism that women can trust. It is difficult to gather evidence and prove cases of sexual harassment. There is no chance really; the higher the harasser's occupied position, the lower the chances of winning the case. Nevertheless, I would like to encourage colleagues to report such cases, to have courage and not to lose hope, because such situations must not be tolerated.'*