

Harassment at Sea

SIU Canada
Membership Survey

February 2024

**Seafarers' International
Union of Canada**





Harassment at Sea: Survey Report

Between July 2023 and September, 2023, the Seafarers' International Union of Canada (SIU) surveyed its membership to gauge the issue of harassment, sexual harassment and bullying on board SIU Canada crewed vessels. The SIU Canada has been representing the majority of unlicensed seafarers working aboard vessels on the Great Lakes, St. Lawrence River, East Coast, West Coast and Arctic since 1954. SIU members have acquired the reputation of being amongst the best-trained and most qualified sailors in the world.

This report analyses the results of the Union's survey on harassment, in hopes that the results will help better educate and raise awareness among the Canadian marine sector as to the severity and scope of harassment in Canada's seagoing workplaces.

As a product of the results of this survey, the SIU Canada will be working to address issues of harassment among its membership and will be holding the employers accountable to ensure they are doing their part when instances of harassment occur.

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A Message from our President

“The Seafarers’ International Union of Canada is committed to helping end harassment on board Canadian vessels in order to make seafaring a safe career for all.”



Michael Given
President, SIU Canada

The Seafarers’ International Union of Canada decided that surveying our membership regarding the issue of harassment was a necessary step in addressing these problems that unfortunately exist on board seagoing vessels across the country, impacting tens of thousands of hardworking seafarers. Harassment has been a known issue in the industry for quite some time and the SIU Canada made the decision to take the first step in trying to grasp the severity and scope of the issue among our membership, after similar action was taken by our friends with the Norwegian Seafarers’ Union. We thank the Norwegian Seafarers’ Union for leading the charge globally on confronting these problems.

Harassment is not something the SIU Canada has ever taken lightly, and we have zero tolerance for this type of behaviour within our membership. All parties who commit these acts need to be held accountable in order to ensure a safe working environment for all

those on board. The SIU Canada is no place for those who commit acts of harassment. Not in our union. Not now, not ever. The SIU Canada is committed to doing everything in our power to ensure the companies that employ our members are doing their part in putting an end to harassment on board their vessels.

Not only is it important to tackle issues of harassment to ensure that our members are safe and comfortable while on the job, but it is important to address issues of harassment for the long-term stability of the Canadian seafaring industry. Why would anybody want to continue being a seafarer if they are the target of harassment at work? Ending harassment at work will take an industry-wide effort, and the Seafarers’ International Union of Canada is happy to release the statistics from this survey to start the conversation as to what more can be done to protect hardworking Canadian seafarers.

A Message from our Women's Representative

“Female seafarers are disproportionately impacted by harassment at work. This is a fact that we should not and cannot accept. We must fight to make work comfortable for everyone.”



Nadia Pecoraro

Women's Representative, SIU Canada

It should come as no surprise to anyone that harassment disproportionately impacts female workers. This is true no matter what industry you examine, with the marine sector being no different. The statistics gathered from our survey show that female seafarers are far more likely to experience harassment, bullying or sexual harassment on board than their male counterparts, surely due in part to seafaring being a male-dominated industry. Regardless of the demographic make-up of the industry, harassment of any kind on board cannot be tolerated.

As the SIU Canada Women's Representative, it is important that female voices are present in our Union and that the SIU Canada continues to consider the differing challenges faced by female seafarers to help increase female representation on board Canadian vessels. We must all do our part

to make our industry safe and appealing for women, and we hope that this survey can help raise awareness around issues of harassment at sea.

The SIU Canada urges all our members to ensure that if you are the subject of harassment on board your vessel, make sure your Union is made aware, and ensure you file a report with your employer about your experiences. If you are unsure of what the reporting procedures are with your employer, contact your Union and we will make sure that the company is made aware of your experiences, and that they are held accountable in addressing the problem. We are all in this together, and we must all do our part to put an end to harassment at sea.

About **The Survey**

”
33%

have been subjected to
harassment in the last four
years.



The SIU Canada Harassment Survey was conducted between July and August 2023. The survey was sent to all members of the Seafarers' International Union of Canada who had an email on file with the Union at the time the survey was electronically distributed.

The survey was inspired by a similar survey conducted by the Norwegian Seafarers' Union (NSU), who graciously shared the data gathered and the questions used in their survey with the SIU Canada. The SIU Canada used many of the questions found in the NSU's survey, with some additions and changes.

The survey was developed using SurveyMonkey and consisted of 45 questions. A majority of the questions on the survey will be discussed throughout this report. The only question that the Union is keeping private is the final question where members were asked to bring any questions or concerns to the Union's attention. The number of respondents is being kept private, however, the number of respondents and the demographic make-up of the respondents is an accurate reflection of the entire SIU Canada membership.

Harassment can be defined broadly as any act in which a person is abused, threatened, intimidated, or assaulted in their employment. While exact definitions vary in legislation, The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety states that workplace violence or harassment includes; threatening behaviour, verbal or written threats, verbal abuse, or physical attacks.

”
46%

have been subjected to harassment at some point in their career as a seafarer.



The questions in the survey sought to gather information on a variety of topics related to harassment, along with harassment itself. These include:

- The impacts of age, race, and gender on harassment in the workplace
- The varying forms of harassment
- Workplace hierarchy, power dynamics and its impact on harassment
- Mental health impacts of harassment
- And the employer’s role in protecting employees from harassment at work

This wide range of questions gave the SIU Canada a good idea of the scope and scale of harassment at sea. Harassment is a topic that is difficult to fully investigate through an optional survey, and the SIU Canada acknowledges that these results may be skewed as a member that has experienced harassment at sea is more likely to complete the survey than those who have not, however the results still lend valuable information to anti-harassment efforts. Any amount of harassment in the workplace should not be tolerated, and the Union is happy to get the conversation started within the Maritime industry to help address and come up with solutions to this important issue.

Key Findings

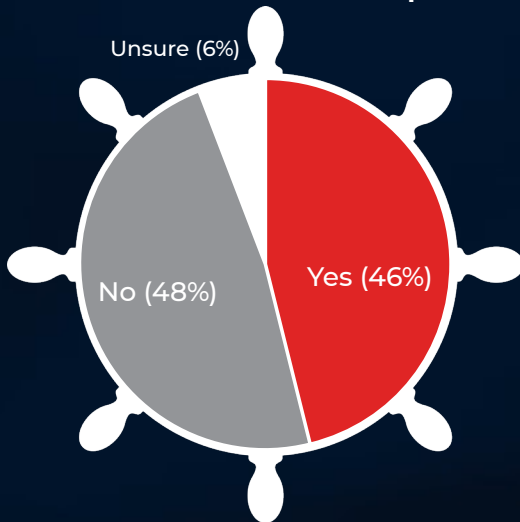


Of total respondents

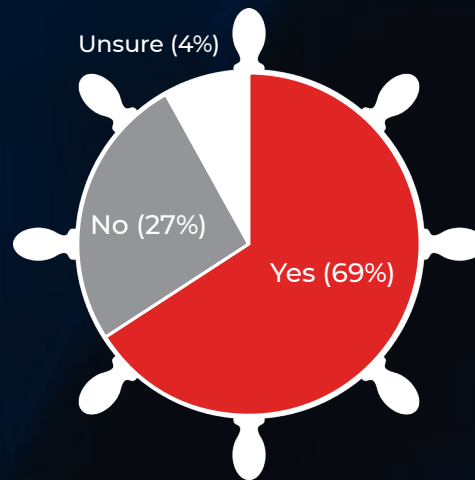
- 33% of respondents have experienced harassment over the last four years.
- 46% of respondents have experienced harassment at some point in their career as a seafarer.
 - 58% of women respondents have been harassed in the last 4 years, 69% have been harassed at some point in their career.
 - When asked about specific incidents that would be considered harassment, the number of respondents who have experienced harassment increases to 53% from 46%.
- 52% of respondents have observed or know about others in the workplace who have been subjected to harassment.
- 6% of respondents have been subjected to sexual harassment at work during the last 4 years, 9% at some point in their career.
 - 21% of women have been subjected to sexual harassment at work during the last 4 years, 35% at some point in their career.
- 42% of respondents either responded 'no' or 'not sure' when asked if there were procedures in place to report bullying, harassment, or sexual harassment in their workplace.
- 48% of respondents answered 'yes' when asked if there were anti-harassment training programs provided by their employer.
- 60% of respondents answered 'no' or 'not sure' when asked if they felt their employer is doing enough to protect them and their colleagues from harassment at work.

Career-spanning Harassment Statistics

All Membership



Female Members



Of those who have been harassed

- 67% of those who indicated that they have been harassed at work were harassed by a superior. 16% from a colleague of equal rank.
- 83% of those who have been harassed were harassed by a male, 10% by a female.
- 42% of those who have been harassed indicated that their harassment had a 'large impact' on their motivation and wish to continue the job.
- 30% of those who have been harassed have had to take time off from work as a result.
- 63% of those who have been harassed indicated that their harassment led to increased depression, anxiety or other mental health strain.
- 48% of those who have been harassed did not report inappropriate behaviour to their employer.
- 20% of those who have reported inappropriate behaviour felt their employer took their concerns seriously.
- 49% of those who have reported inappropriate behaviour felt their reporting had negative consequences for them.

Gender & Age

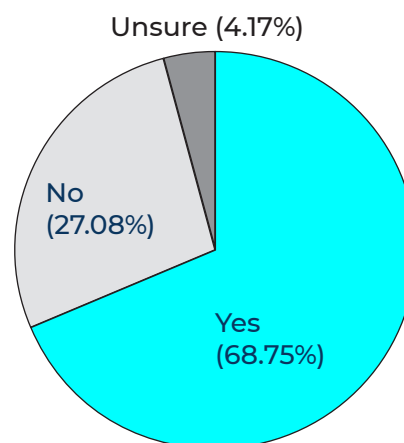
When considering issues of harassment in the workplace, it is important to acknowledge the varying experiences of different sexes, ages, ethnicities etc. The results of the survey showed the differing experiences of those in certain groups – something the SIU Canada views as extremely valuable information.

Gender

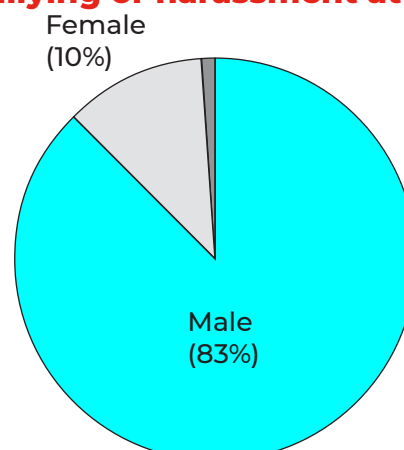
The survey results showed that 28% of male-identifying respondents experienced harassment at work in the last four years. 42% of male respondents answered that they had experienced harassment at some point throughout their career as a seafarer. This differs from the female-identifying respondents greatly, with 58% of female respondents stating that they had experienced harassment in the last four years, and 69% at some point throughout their career as a seafarer. According to the statistics gathered from this survey, female seafarers are 27% more likely to be harassed at sea.

When looking at all of those who have experienced harassment at sea, 83% of respondents stated that the sex of the person who had harassed them at work was a male. It should be noted that while this looks like a staggering statistic, the marine sector in Canada is a heavily male-dominated industry. A 2021 study from Transport Canada showed that 25% of overall marine transportation workers were female. This is further showcased by this survey, as 85% of respondents identified as male, with 13% identifying as female.

Have you ever been bullied or harassed at work at any point in your career as a seafarer? (Female Respondents)



What sex was the person or persons who subjected you to bullying or harassment at work?

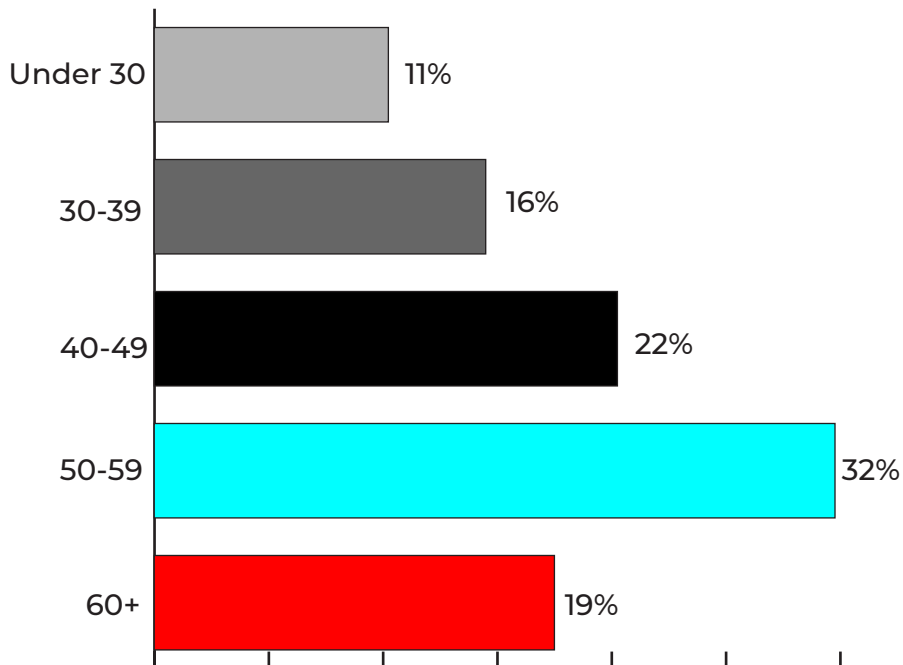




Age

When considering the experiences of different generational groups with harassment in the workplace, the survey showed that 32% of those under the age of 40 indicated they experienced harassment at work in the last four years, and 45% had experienced harassment at some point in their career as a seafarer.

Age of Respondents

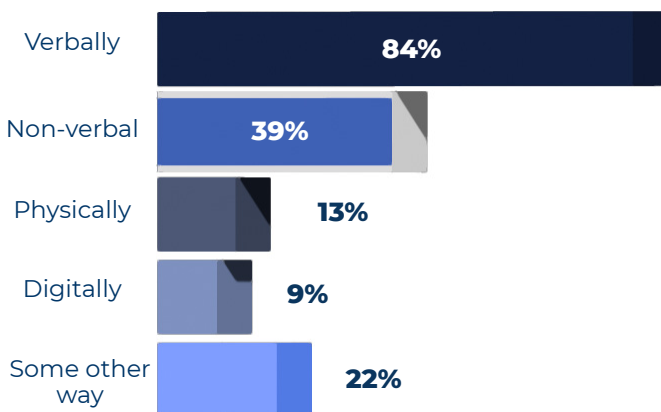


For the respondents that indicated they were 40 years old and above, 33% had experienced some form of harassment in the last four years, and 46% had experienced harassment at some point in their career. This shows that harassment can be experienced by anyone on board, regardless of age.

Forms of Harassment

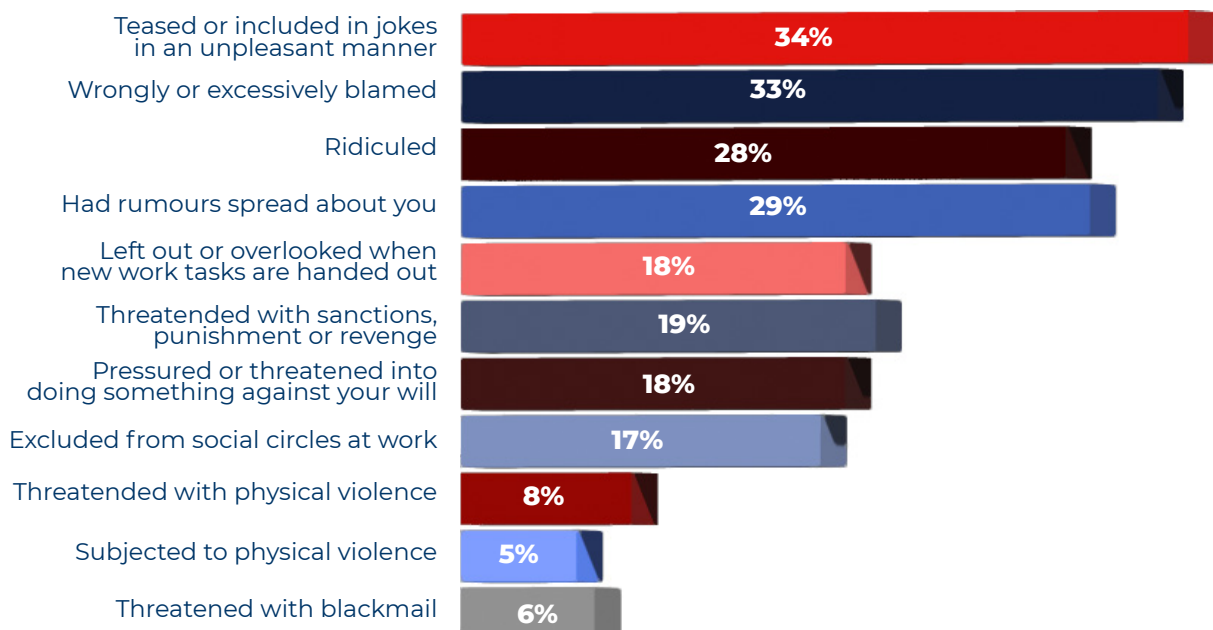
Harassment in the workplace comes in a variety of forms. While hard to fully encapsulate, the SIU Canada attempted to gain further insights into these varying forms of harassment and gathered the below data from the survey.

In what way or ways have you been subjected to bullying or harassment?



Those respondents who indicated that they had experienced some form of harassment while at work were asked in what forms they had been subjected to their harassment. Respondents were asked to select all forms that apply, including verbally (oral and written), non-verbal (looks, gestures, etc.), physically, digitally (social media, SMS, email), or some other way.

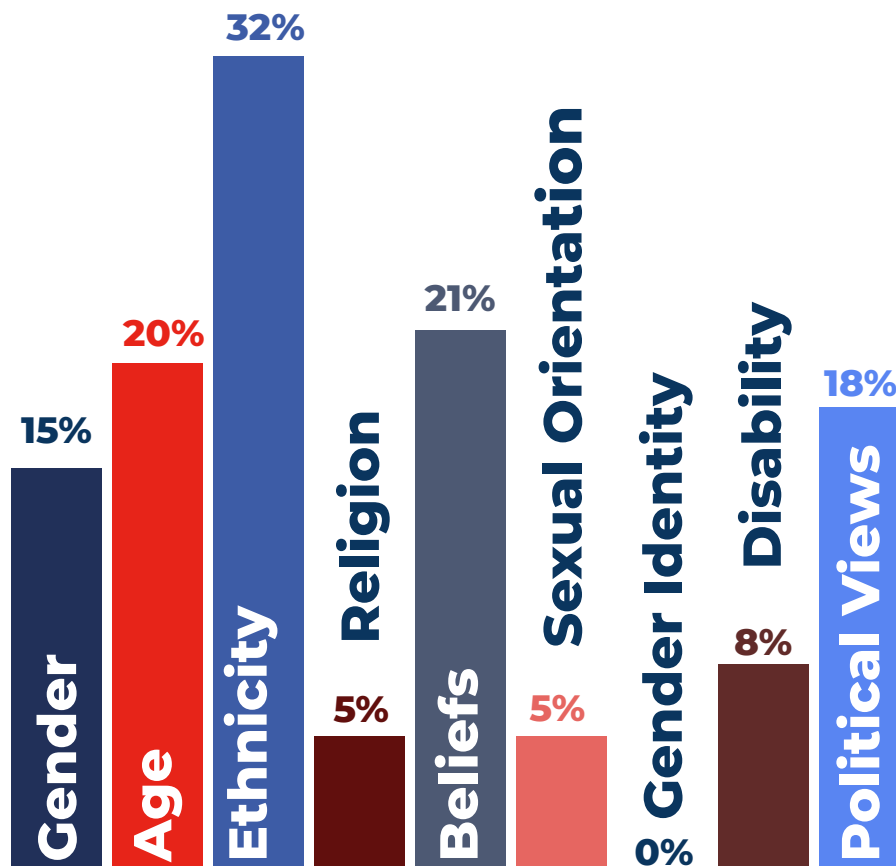
Have you ever experienced or been subjected to any of the following in your workplace? (all respondents)





Targets of Harassment

Those who commit acts of harassment against fellow colleagues often target certain individuals or certain traits of an individual and use that as the reason or justification for their harassment or discrimination. These targets of harassment include those of a different race or ethnic minority, gender, age, their religion or beliefs, their sexual orientation or gender identity, a disability, or their political views. The results of these questions from those who have experienced some form of harassment can be found below. Of the varying qualities that are targeted in instances of harassment, ethnicity was the leading cause among SIU Canada members, followed by beliefs and age.

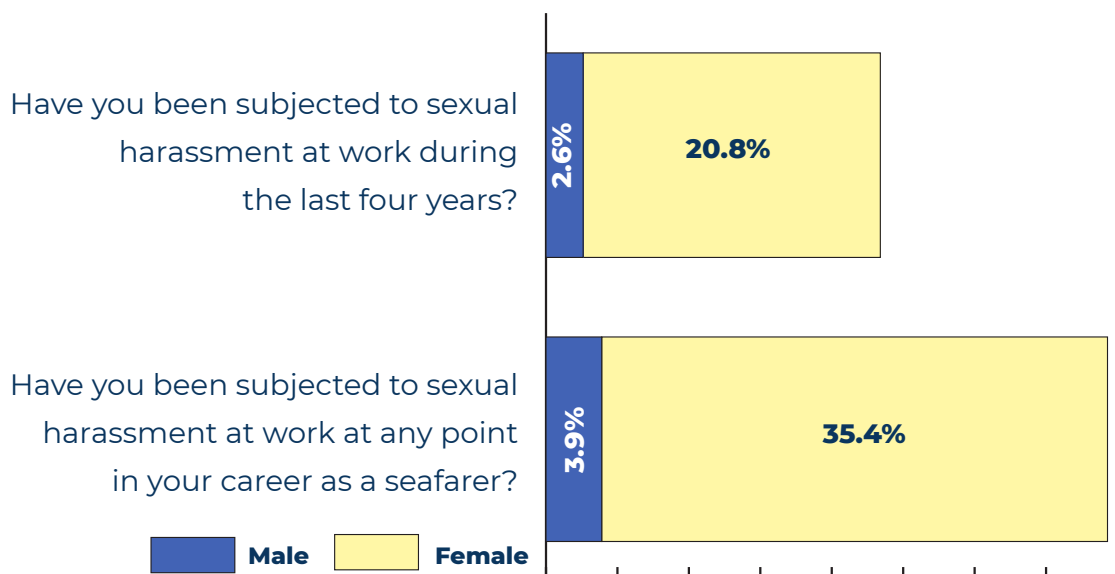


Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment can be a traumatizing and life-altering form of harassment, and we encourage all SIU Canada members that experience sexual harassment, or any form of harassment, on board your vessel to immediately contact your Union. The survey included a few questions regarding specifically sexual harassment on board SIU crewed vessels and these were the findings.

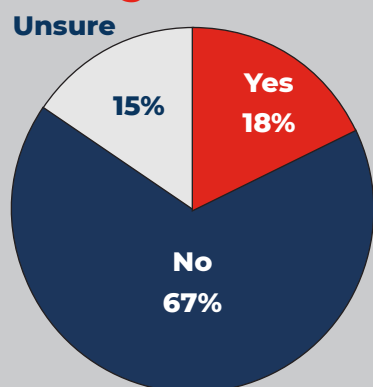
6% of all respondents had experienced sexual harassment on board their vessel in the last four years, 9% at some point in their career as a seafarer.

Once again, the experiences of female respondents differed greatly from male respondents, with 21% of female respondents indicating that they had been subjected to sexual harassment in the last four years, and 35% had been subjected to sexual harassment at some point in their career.

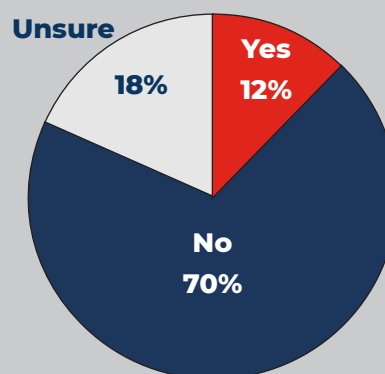


Have you personally observed or know about other in your workplace who have been subjected to sexual harassment?

Throughout Career



Past four years



Observing Bullying and Harassment

The SIU Canada survey included questions to gauge those who have observed or heard about others in their workplace experiencing some form of harassment at work. It is often found that those who observe others experiencing harassment in the workplace often stay silent, as they view it as someone else's problem, or they fear that coming forward may result in retaliation against them. Some of the data gathered around those who observed harassment can be found in the bullet points below.

- 43% of respondents have personally observed or know about others in their workplace who have been subjected to harassment in the last four years. This is an increase from those who have experienced harassment firsthand in the last four years by 8%.
- 52% of respondents have personally observed or know about others in their workplace who have been subjected to harassment at some point in their career. This is an increase from those who experienced harassment firsthand throughout their career by 6%.
- 12% have observed or know about others in their workplace who have been subjected to sexual harassment in the last four years – an increase from those who indicated they had experienced it firsthand by 6%, or double.
- 18% have observed or know about others in their workplace who have been subjected to sexual harassment throughout their career – an increase from those who indicated they had experienced it firsthand by 9%, or double.

Power Dynamics of Harassment



The power dynamics and hierarchy of the workplace often play a major factor in issues of workplace harassment. This survey identified that this was indeed the case among SIU Canada members who completed the survey. Of those who had experienced some form of harassment on board, 67% indicated that they were harassed by a superior. 16% indicated that they had been harassed by a colleague of equal rank.

This statistic is not meant to create division between unlicensed seafarers and their

superiors on board, but the goal is to point to a clear issue relating to power dynamics in the workplace, and how that impacts harassment. The experiences of those working on seagoing vessels is very similar to those in workplaces elsewhere, with regard to the power dynamics of harassment. This figure is one of the most staggering and troubling that was found throughout the survey and it is certainly a topic that needs further study, thought and action to address.



Harassed by a Superior



67%

Of those who have experienced harassment on board have been harassed by a superior

Of those who experienced harassment, 37% indicated that their harasser was between the ages of 36-50 years old and 33% indicated that their harasser was between the ages of 51-60 years old. Of those who experienced harassment, 9% were harassed by an individual below the age of 35. This suggests that there potentially exists certain power dynamics based on age, with those below the age of 35 much less likely to commit acts of harassment against their colleagues. This also coincides with the survey results that showed those under the age of 35 are also more likely to be a target of harassment themselves.

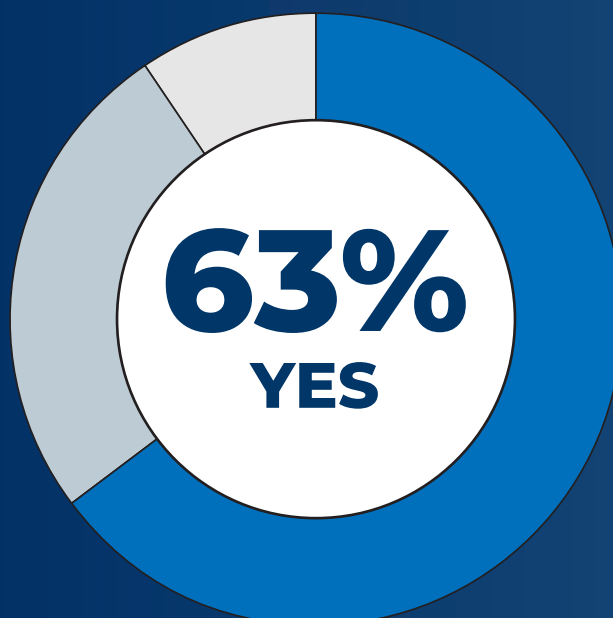
It should also be noted that the average age of seafarers in Canada is quite high, so this may have skewed the results. For reference, of those who completed the survey, 27% were below the age of 40, while 73% were 40 years old and above.

Impacts of Harassment

It comes as no surprise that those who have experienced harassment at work, in any industry, have felt significant impacts to their mental health as a result. Our survey found that seafarers who have been harassed are no different.

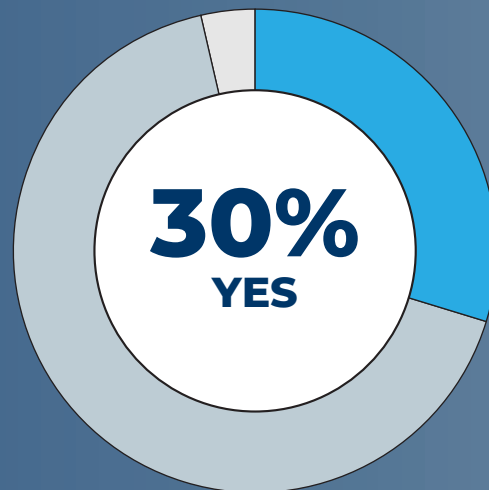
The toll that harassment takes on the mental health of those who have been the victim of such an act is significant and measurable. The statistics gathered from our survey regarding the number of those who did not seek help from a mental health professional afterwards is also troubling and will need to be addressed moving forward. The stigma behind issues of mental health is still prevalent in our society. Addressing the stigma behind seeking help and addressing issues of workplace harassment go hand-in-hand.

If you have been subjected to harassment or bullying at work, did this lead to increased depression, anxiety or other mental health strain?

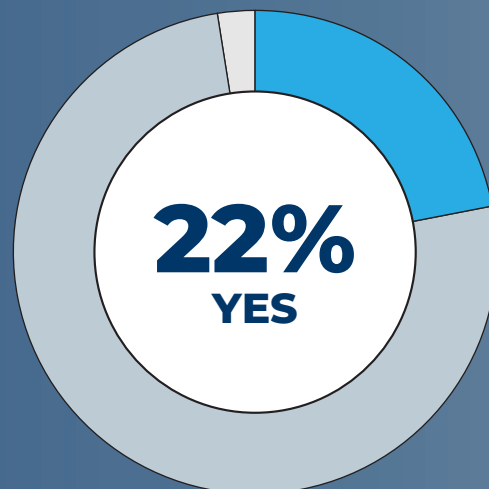


- 42% of those who have experienced harassment indicated that the harassment had a large impact' on their well-being, motivation and wish to continue the job.
- 30% of those who have experienced harassment had to take time off from work due to their harassment.
- 63% of those who have been harassed indicated that the harassment led to increased depression, anxiety or other mental health strain.
- Just 22% of those who have been harassed sought help from a medical or mental health professional.

Have you ever had to take time off work as a result of being harassed?



Have you ever sought help from a medical or mental health professional as a result of being harassed?



Employers' Role in Addressing Harassment

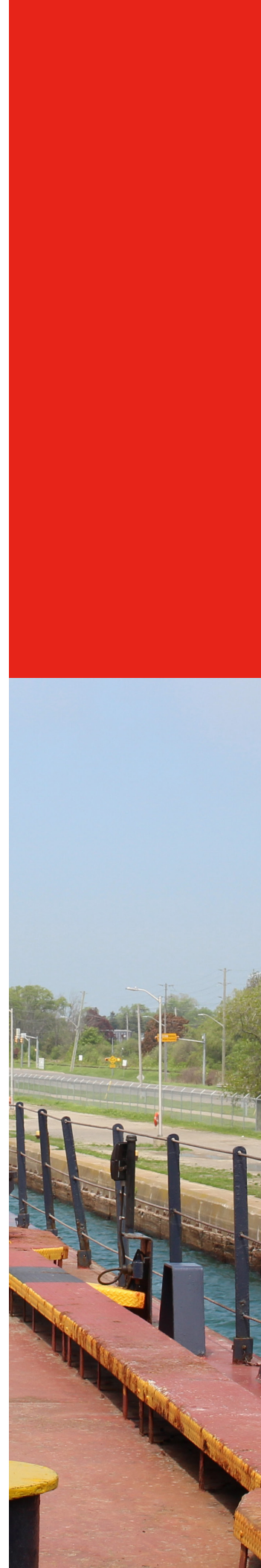
The SIU Canada's harassment survey was able to gain extremely interesting and important data pertaining to the reporting of harassment to employers and how the various employers of SIU Canada members are dealing with issues of harassment. More education, training and attention must be paid by the employers of SIU members in order to move forward in properly addressing harassment at sea.

The survey results pointed to a major problem with SIU members reporting incidents of harassment. **48% of those who have been harassed did not report their harassment to their employer.** It is clear that more action is needed from the side of the employer to ensure Canadian seafarers feel safe, comfortable and feel that their reports are being taken seriously. Of those who have experienced harassment on board that did report it to their employer, only 20% felt that their employer took their concerns seriously.

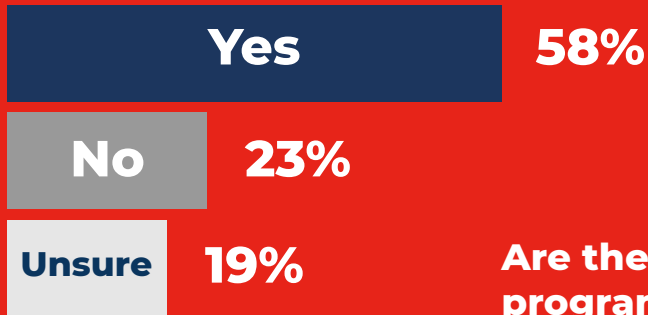
On the topic of workplace procedures in place by the employers of SIU Canada members, there exists a great deal of concern as well. The information gathered through this survey on this topic shows that Companies that employ SIU Canada Members must do a better job in educating members on what anti-harassment procedures are in place, and further anti-harassment training for employees is needed.

42% of total respondents either answered 'no' or 'not sure' when asked if there were workplace procedures in place to report bullying, harassment, or sexual harassment. 52% of total respondents answered 'no' or 'not sure' when asked if there were anti-harassment training programs provided by their employer.

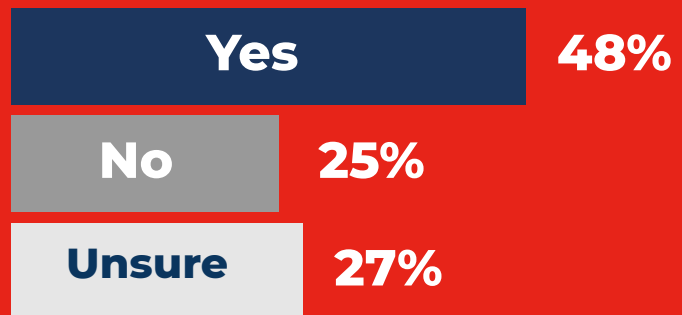
60% of total respondents answered 'no' or 'not sure' when asked if they felt their employer was doing enough to protect them and their colleagues from harassment at work.



Are there procedures in place to report bullying, harassment, or sexual harassment in your workplace?



Are there anti-harassment training programs provided by your employer?



Do you feel your employer is doing enough to protect you and your colleagues from harassment at work?



These statistics are unacceptable, and employers must do more to ensure workers are properly educated and trained on the topic of harassment. Even if some of these employers provide training, it is clear that more work needs to be done to communicate this more effectively to employees.



Conclusion

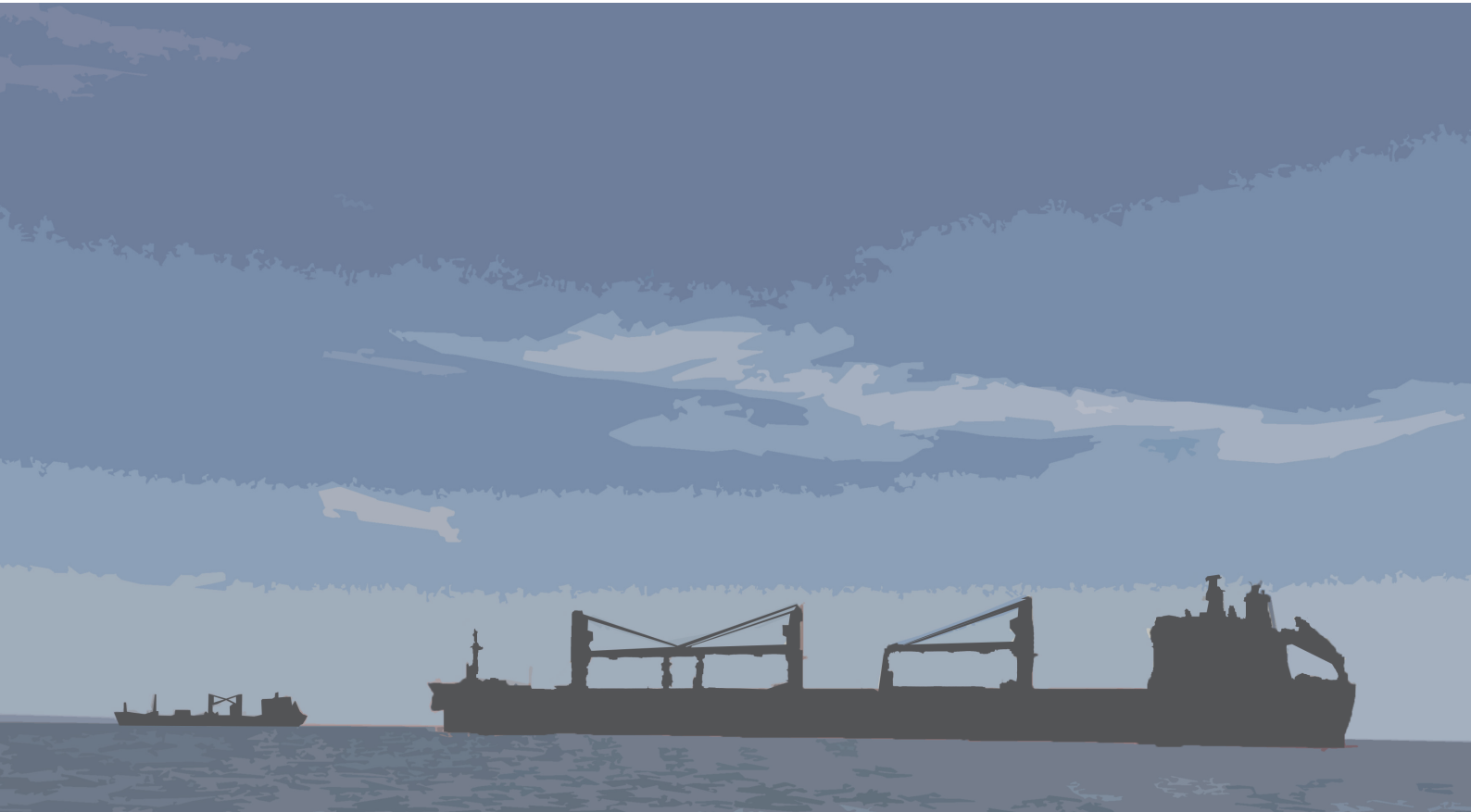


The Seafarers' International Union of Canada's harassment survey results are troubling yet should not be surprising to anyone in the Canadian maritime industry. Harassment on board Canadian vessels and in the marine sector more broadly is a topic that has been largely avoided by many, until now. The time for addressing these issues is long overdue.

The publishing of the results of the SIU Canada harassment survey is just the beginning of the Union's plan to help tackle these issues. The Union wanted to gain as much information as possible with this initial survey to help the Union, as well as those in the maritime industry, gain knowledge of just how widespread harassment on board Canadian vessels is. This survey also allowed the Union to gain valuable information regarding how workers are dealing with harassment on board and how well educated they are on the topic. Furthermore, the survey pointed to potential issues in how the companies that employ SIU Canada members are educating and training their employees. The Union plans on working with the companies, shipowners, and all levels of government to address the issues brought up in this survey.

The Seafarers' International Union of Canada is committed to finding solutions to address these problems and will be working diligently for all Canadian seafarers to help bring an end to harassment and bullying at sea. All industry stakeholders must do better to ensure that workers in the Canadian marine sector can earn a living in a safe work environment. Addressing issues of harassment is also key to improving upon recruitment and retention issues within the industry as well. The SIU Canada hopes that releasing these survey results can help promote awareness and facilitate conversations about how the industry can move forward and encourage more young people and women to join the industry knowing that the Union is willing to do whatever it takes to make jobs at sea safe for all. It is the Union's hope that the insights gained from this harassment survey will help shape the conversation around harassment in the marine sector going forward.

The Union wishes to thank all SIU Canada members for participating in this important survey, the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) and its affiliates for their work on workplace harassment, and specifically the Norwegian Seafarers' Union for helping to get this important conversation started.



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