



PRESS RELEASE

6th March 2019

Nearly three in ten Singaporeans say they have personally, or know someone who has been sexually harassed. However, 41% believe that false accusations of sexual harassment are a bigger problem in Singaporean society than unreported acts.

Latest Ipsos study reveals perceptions and attitudes on gender equality, sexual harassment and the #MeToo movement in Singapore

Key Points

- The top 3 most important issues cited by Singaporeans facing women and girls in Singapore are balancing work and caring responsibilities (41%), sexual harassment (31%) and physical violence (19%).
- 29% of Singaporeans say they have personally experienced, or know someone who has experienced sexual harassment. 62% have not themselves, or know of anyone who has experienced sexual harassment, and the remaining 10% prefer not to say.
- 41% believe that false accusations of sexual harassment are a bigger problem in Singaporean society than unreported acts of sexual harassment.
- 48% of Singaporeans believe that there is gender equality in Singapore.
- 32% of Singaporeans believe that there is a gender pay gap in Singapore.
- Most Singaporeans (84%) believe that there should be equal opportunities available to men and women. However, more than half of Singaporeans (54%) believe that men and women have innate skills that mean they are better at certain tasks.

Sexual Harassment

The top three most important issues facing women and girls in Singapore are considered to be: balancing work and caring responsibilities (41%); sexual harassment (31%); and physical violence (19%).

When asked if they have personally experienced, or know someone who has experienced sexual harassment, only 29% are willing to say they have. 62% say that they have not themselves or know of anyone who has experienced sexual harassment, while 10% prefer not to say.



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Singaporeans estimate that 22% of men and 53% of women have experienced sexual harassment. Perceptions of prevalence differ significantly according to gender: females' estimates of the prevalence of sexual harassment against women (57%) are significantly higher than mens' (49%). Further, those who themselves have been a victim of sexual harassment also provide significantly higher estimates of the prevalence of harassment against women (60%).

40% agree that false accusations of sexual harassment are becoming more common in Singapore nowadays. This is more strongly felt by men, with 48% of all males agreeing or strongly agreeing with this sentiment. Fewer women (33%) believe this to be so.

Additionally, 41% of all Singaporeans agree or strongly agree that false accusations of sexual harassment are a bigger problem in our society than unreported acts of sexual harassment. This perspective is more prevalent among younger and middle-aged Singaporeans, aged 18-49 (45%).

45% of Singaporeans agree that women who wear revealing clothes should not complain if men make comments about their appearance. This is not a perspective solely held by men, however: 44% of Singaporean women agree or strongly agree, as compared to 46% of males. Further, this sentiment is more commonly held by Singaporeans above the age of 50 years (52%), reinforcing generational differences.

"Ipsos' survey findings are certainly worrisome for anyone invested in gender equality in Singapore," said **AWARE (Association of Women for Action and Research) Executive Director Corinna Lim**. "Among a number of concerning points, one we are particularly keen to discuss is the apparent rise of the 'false reporting' myth - the belief that unfounded accusations of harassment are more prevalent than the underreporting of harassment. Our work at AWARE indicates to us how misguided and harmful that belief is. False reporting of sexual harassment is, by all accounts, extremely rare. Globally, as few as 2 percent of reports are estimated to be false; in Singapore, providing false information to the police is itself a crime. Concurrently, a substantial number of victims - 7 in 10 - do not report their sexual harassment, and the number one reason for this is the fear of not being believed.

"The idea of false reporting is especially a problem in the workplace. Not only does it suggest that women who speak up about real abuse will not be trusted and supported by HR, but it might also result in men - who still make up most of top management in Singaporean companies - foregoing important mentoring and other interaction with their female colleagues and employees, based on a paranoia about being falsely accused. So we want to be proactive in taking control of this dangerous, misogynist narrative, and countering its spread in our society.

"On the other hand, the survey does reveal that Singaporeans recognise that sexual harassment is a major problem - which correlates with the whopping 455 percent increase, from 2017 to 2018, in the number of '*Managing Workplace Harassment*' workshops conducted by AWARE's corporate training arm, Catalyse Consulting.

"In all, we are very excited to begin a fruitful relationship with Ipsos, whose work really complements our research at AWARE. Information like this spurs us on in our fight to change mindsets and boost understanding between all Singaporeans."



Gender Equality

48% of Singaporeans believe that there is gender equality in Singapore, defined as “*men and women are equal, and are treated equally*”. Males are significantly more likely to perceive gender equality (54% agree or strongly agree), while fewer women agree or strongly agree (43%).

Singaporeans’ perception of the extent of gender equality in Singapore is strongly associated with their perceptions of the presence of sufficient female role models in the country and the existence of a gender pay gap.

One in two Singaporeans (50%) feel that there are enough positive female role models in Singapore. 17% of Singaporeans disagree or strongly disagree that there are enough positive female role models in Singapore, while the remaining third (33%) are neutral.

A significant proportion of Singaporeans are aware of a gender pay gap in Singapore. One third (32%) believe that men and women are **not** getting paid the same for doing the same job in Singapore. This view is held by significantly more females (40%), and is even more pronounced among younger women (aged 18-24; 50%).

Most Singaporeans (84%) believe that there should be equal opportunities available to men and women. However, more than half of Singaporeans (54%) are of the opinion that men and women have innate skills that mean they are better at certain tasks.* Further, almost half (47%) of Singaporeans are of the opinion that gender quotas should be put in place in Government, while 42% feel that quotas should be used in work places.

#MeToo

The #MeToo movement encourages women to speak out about their experiences of sexual harassment and sexual assault. The movement proliferated globally in 2017 after numerous allegations of sexual abuse against women were made against high profile men.

In Singapore, 47% of Singaporeans say that they are familiar with the #MeToo movement, with slightly more men (49%) than women (45%) indicating that they are somewhat or very familiar. Familiarity is highest among those aged 25-34 (60%)

For those familiar with the movement, 37% say that it has improved gender equality in Singapore, but more of them (50%) believe the movement has a greater impact globally. On the contrary, 8% believe that the movement has worsened gender equality in Singapore and 14% believe this is the case globally.

** the example of “men are better architects and doctors, women are better caregivers and teachers” was cited when this question was asked in the survey.*



Robert McPhedran, Associate Research Director at Ipsos comments:

“This research identifies some troubling attitudes regarding gender roles, wage parity and sexual harassment in Singapore.

While Singapore has been recognised by the United Nations for its gender equality, and despite female representation at the highest levels of Government, conservative views on the skills of women are pervasive. Furthermore, many Singaporeans – particularly males - misperceive the gender wage gap as an issue of the past, irrespective of recent evidence to the contrary.

More positively, this survey highlights the widespread recognition that sexual harassment is a pernicious social issue that distresses the lives of many Singaporeans. Global movements such as #MeToo have unquestionably brought this issue to the forefront of many Singaporeans’ minds, but may have also heightened misperceptions of the prevalence of false accusations.”

Hashtags, harassment and hope

Ipsos and AWARE (the Association of Women for Action and Research) will discuss the survey findings and the state of gender relations in Singapore on 13th March 2019. Event details can be found [here](#).

For more information or to attend the event, please contact

Tammy Ho
Tammy.ho@ipsos.com
+65 9790 6340

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Technical note/About the Study:

- The survey was commissioned by Ipsos Pte Ltd and conducted in Singapore.
- A sample of n=1,019 Singapore Citizens and Permanent residents were interviewed from Jan 30th to Feb 2nd, 2019.
- Quotas and weighting were employed to ensure that the sample’s composition reflects the overall population distribution, based on Singapore Department of Statistics 2018 population estimates.
- The precision of online surveys is measured using a credible interval. In this case, the results reported are accurate to +/- 3.5 percentage points of the views and perspectives of all Singaporeans aged 18+ (at 95% confidence). Credible intervals are wider among subsets of the population.



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