



Is a #MeToo Moment Long Overdue in the Geosciences? A discussion on harassment, sexual harassment and sexual violence within Alberta's Resource Sector, and what we can all do about it.

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Summary

The history of harassment, sexual harassment and sexual violence within the Alberta resource sector is long and persistent. Many geoscientists have experienced and/or have knowledge of other's experiences during their careers. And though individual companies may have internal harassment policies, rarely do the execution of these policies become public within the company or beyond. It is "understood" that secrecy is the overarching strategy of most companies when bullying, harassment, and abuse occur. Often victims of harassment, sexual harassment and sexual violence find themselves alone in their journey to overcome their experiences, and others become new victims when these topics are not thoroughly examined, and actions taken.

In 2018 the GeoWomen group used a short anonymous survey to ascertain how their community's experiences correspond with the rest of Canada. In May 2018, GeoWomen hosted a panel of experts to discuss this topic and the results of their survey. The discussion included examples of female geoscientist's experiences within their working environments, psychological responses to abuse, and legal implications. The panel's objective was to support victims of abuse by presenting steps to mitigate damages to careers, safety, mental and physical well-being.

Theory / Method / Workflow

The GeoWomen presented an anonymous online survey.

Results, Observations, Conclusions

Findings from the GeoWomen survey as of November 2018:

50.8% of respondents have experienced sexually harassed at work.

37% of respondents have reported their sexual harassment to a superior or HR.

20.3% of respondents have been sexually assaulted in the workplace.

24.1% of respondents have reported their sexual assaults to a superior or HR.

These numbers are aligned with results from the author's own research of geoscience women within the Alberta resource sector (Bjarnason, 2018), and supports other research findings on women in the sciences (Clancy et al., 2014; Ilies et al., 2003). The statistic also aligns with women's experiences from across the Canadian working environment.

From Angus Reid (2018):

52% of Canadian women say they have been subject to sexual harassment in the workplace.

28% of Canadian women have been subject to non-consensual sexual touching/sexual assault in the workplace.

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I would like to acknowledge my fellow panelists from May 2018:

Susan R. Eaton PGeol., PGeoph., MSc.

Catherine McAteer LLB, BSc.

Dr. Dianna Campbell-Smith PsyD, RPsych

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