

## GENDER EQUALITY

# The Price of Speaking Up

Women still face retaliation for reporting workplace sexual harassment

Despite the gains of the #MeToo movement, women still hesitate to file work-related sexual harassment complaints for fear of repercussions. Now a study suggests people may indeed penalize female employees for self-reporting such experiences.

Chloe Grace Hart, a doctoral candidate in sociology at Stanford University, ran an experiment five times between late 2017 and early 2018, each time involving about 200 people who identified as male, female or another gender. Hart asked participants to imagine they were the manager of a company considering a fictional female sales associate, named Sarah, for promotion. Each participant was assigned to one of five groups. Four groups received an employee file that contained information about harassment—either sexual or nonsexual—that Sarah had experienced from

a male co-worker. Each incident was either self-reported or reported by a colleague. A fifth group received the same file without any record of harassment.

Hart then asked the participants to rate how inclined they were to recommend Sarah for promotion on a scale from 1 (“extremely unlikely”) to 7 (“extremely likely”). Hart found that on average participants were 0.37 points less likely to recommend Sarah for promotion if she self-reported her sexual harassment than if her colleague reported it. They were also 0.16 points less likely to recommend her than if she self-reported nonsexual harassment. Finally, the participants were 0.11 points less likely to recommend her than if her employment file made no mention of any harassment. The study was published online in May in *Gender & Society*.



It serves as a reminder that barriers to reporting sexual harassment “have not gone away,” says Nancy Hauserman, professor emeritus of management and entrepreneurship at the University of Iowa, who was not involved in the study. “I think it is important to keep sexual harassment in the scholarly gaze.”

The findings are bolstered by a 2018 report that analyzed 46,210 Title VII sexual harassment discrimination charges filed with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and state Fair Employment Practices Agencies. The report found that 65 percent of women who filed such charges between 2012 and 2016 said they lost their jobs after making their complaints.

But Hart’s research did find a silver lining. The participants in her most recent study group were significantly more likely to promote Sarah when she self-reported sexual harassment as compared with those in the earliest group—which may be linked to the momentum of the #MeToo movement, Hart says. “I don’t think that the study indicates that the problem is solved,” she says. “But if nothing else, it indicates that we are able to shift our social perceptions of people in a position of experiencing sexual harassment.” —Agata Boxe

## ECOLOGY TECH

# Flight Lights

Ultraviolet illumination helps birds avoid power lines

Human activities are killing wildlife at unprecedented rates, with causes ranging from environmental pollution to the built environment. For some bird species, nighttime collisions with power lines are driving substantial population declines. But now scientists have come up with a clever way to make the cables easier for birds to spot, without being unsightly to humans.

Industry and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service guidelines recommend that utility companies mark their power lines with plastic attachments to increase visibility, but birds are still dying. Biologists reported that 300 Sandhill cranes perished in one month in 2009 from collisions with marked lines at the Rowe Sanctuary in Nebraska, where the cranes stop over during their annual

spring migration. “We need forward-thinking methods to protect not only large birds that are inherently at greater risk from power lines but also millions of smaller migratory birds,” says Anne Lacy of the International Crane Foundation.

Half of all avian species can see ultraviolet light. So James Dwyer, a wildlife biologist at utility consulting firm EDM International in Fort Collins, Colo., had the idea of using near-visible UV light to illuminate power lines. EDM’s engineering team and the Dawson Public Power District developed such light systems and installed them on a tower supporting a power line at Rowe Sanctuary. Over a 38-night period, crane collisions decreased by 98 percent when the lights were on, the researchers reported in a study published online in May in *Ornithological Applications*.

Richard Loughery, director of environmental activities at the Edison Electric Institute, who was not involved in the project, says the new UV system adds an important



tool for use in hotspots where endangered bird species nest and feed.

The researchers did not observe any negative impacts on other species: insects did not swarm toward the lights, nor did bats or nighthawks do so in pursuit of a meal. And Dwyer says birds are unlikely to confuse such near-ground UV illumination with natural cues such as starlight.

“I don’t want utilities to build lines wherever they want because there’s a new tool,” says biologist Robert Harms of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, who was not involved in the work. But for existing lines, he says, the UV system could be “absolutely amazing.” —Rachel Berkowitz