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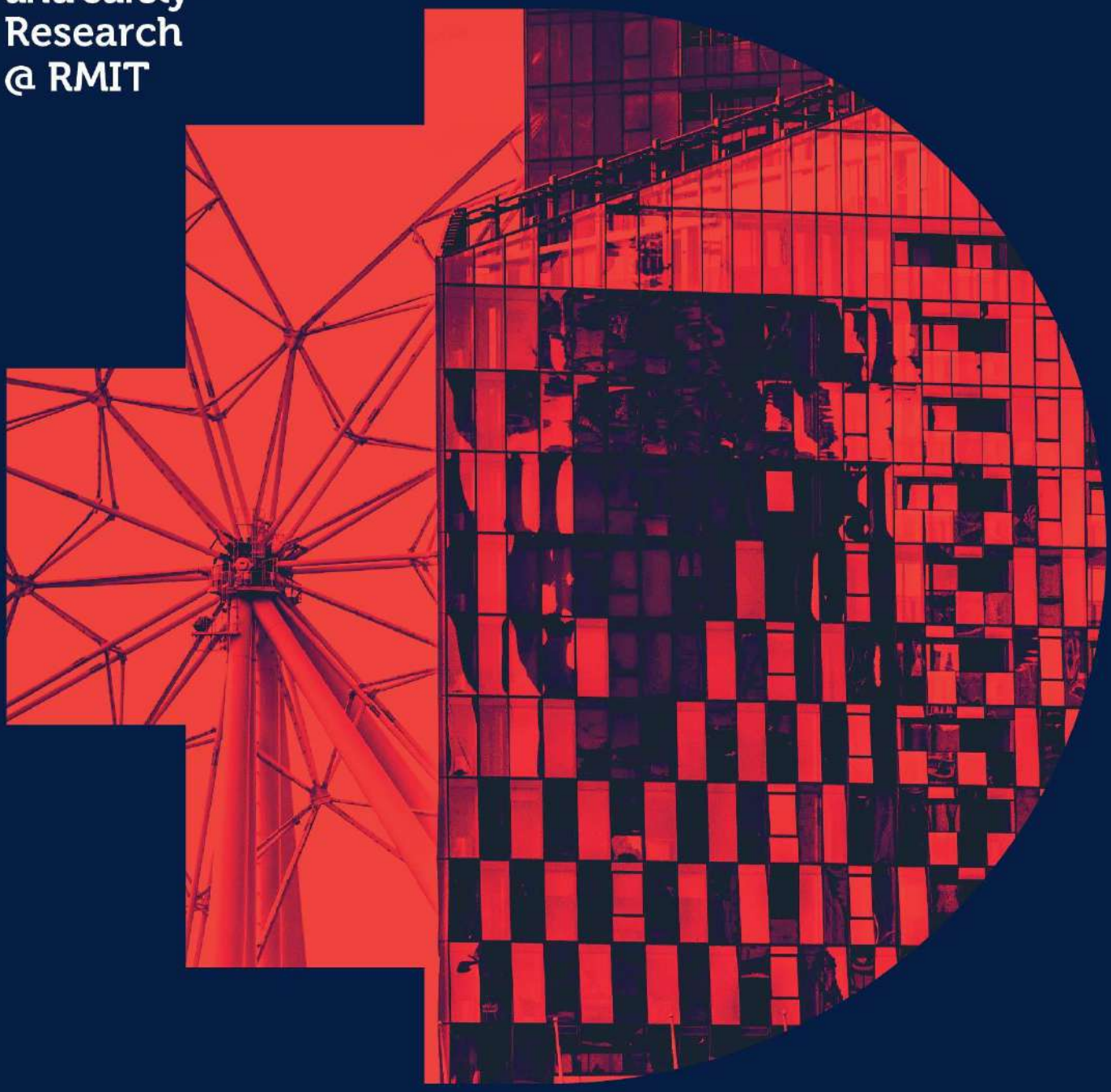

The experience of workplace humour among women in the NSW construction industry: Final report

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The experience of workplace humour among women in the NSW construction industry: Final report

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Contents

Executive summary

This report presents the findings of a project undertaken to understand women's experiences with humour in the New South Wales (NSW) construction industry. The project was funded by the NSW Government Women in Construction Industry Innovation Program (IIP), which supports initiatives to make construction a more diverse, inclusive and safe industry for women.

A review of the literature indicates humour is a prevalent feature of many workplaces. Depending on its nature, workplace humour can have different impacts. Some workplace humour helps to build social cohesion, relieve stress and improve the experience of work. However, when humour is used in a negative way — for example, when it is targeted, belittling and/or aggressive in nature — it can have damaging impacts. The literature also describes how some workplace behaviour performed under the guise of humour, should be identified as sexual harassment.

A two-stage sequential mixed methods research design was adopted. Specifically, an industry-based survey was conducted first to understand the types and effects of workplace humour experienced by women in the NSW construction industry. The survey collected data about respondents':

- demographic characteristics
- attitudes towards workplace humour
- experience of workplace humour
- experience of sexual harassment behaviour
- opinions about what constitutes unacceptable workplace humour
- experience of unacceptable workplace humour, and
- reporting of unacceptable workplace humour, as well as
- whether respondents' employing organisation has a policy dealing with the subject of workplace banter.

The survey was followed by in-depth interviews to more fully understand women's experiences in different job roles, industry sectors, and organisational environments. Subject matter experts in workplace gender issues were also interviewed. In addition to their personal experiences of workplace humour, interview participants were asked about their views on strategies and measures to prevent negative workplace humour and create more respectful and inclusive work environments in the NSW construction industry.

Overall, survey respondents expressed positive attitudes towards workplace humour, predominantly believing that banter in the workplace can be an effective way to build relationships and create an enjoyable work environment. However, they also agreed that banter is only acceptable if it is not offensive or disrespectful and remains light-hearted and playful. Interview

participants also observed humour as a fundamental component of construction site environments, and they acknowledged that jokes and banter can serve to relieve stress in construction workplaces.

Survey respondents indicated that they experience positive and stress-relieving humour in their immediate workgroups to a greater extent than they experience negative or self-defeating humour. However, some significant differences were observed. For example, respondents in site-based roles reported significantly higher mean scores for negative and self-defeating humour than their office-based counterparts.

218 (64.7%) of the 337 survey respondents indicated that they had experienced some form of sexual harassment at work. Respondents in site-based roles reported significantly more experience of coworkers making unwelcome jokes of a sexual nature (68.9%) than their office-based counterparts (37.2%). Site-based respondents also experienced other forms of sexual harassment significantly more than those in office-based roles. The interview results similarly revealed that many women, irrespective of their job role, had experienced teasing, put-down humour, sexual or discriminatory humour in their work environments.

When survey respondents were asked what types of humour are unacceptable in a workplace, the most frequent response was humour of a sexual nature. Humour that is sexist or about someone's race, cultural or linguistic background, religion, sexual orientation, physical ability, personal circumstances, family, or individual traits was also considered to be unacceptable by many respondents. Similarly, survey respondents identified humour that is targeted, personal, intended to make someone feel bad and/or makes the target of humour feel uncomfortable as also 'crossing the line' with respect to what is acceptable/unacceptable in a workplace. These results were consistently echoed by interview participants, who also noted that humour is often used to mask underlying hostility under the guise of being 'just a joke'.

Unacceptable workplace humour was most frequently identified as being perpetrated by male coworkers (reported by 39.5% of 337 survey respondents). If they had experienced unacceptable workplace humour, respondents were asked to indicate whether they reported this behaviour to their employer. 39.7% of survey respondents indicated they reported their experience to their employer. However, another 37.6% indicated they did not report experiences of unacceptable workplace humour to their employer.

Nearly half of 122 survey respondents who did not report their experience of unacceptable workplace humour to their employer (46.7%) attributed their decision to a fear that reporting would negatively impact their working relationships. A further 31.1% indicated that they did not think they would be believed or taken seriously, and 21.3% indicated they were too embarrassed to report their experience of unacceptable workplace humour. The interviews further uncovered other barriers to reporting, including the fear of being labelled overly sensitive and/or difficult to work with, concerns about being perceived as unsuitable for the construction industry, negative career consequences, and workplace power dynamics.

Interview participants shared that when they did report unacceptable workplace humour, the reporting outcomes were varying. While some participants received supportive responses from their organisations, others stated that their reporting was not taken seriously or dismissed. In some

cases, organisations only acted when participants indicated an intention to resign, and some participants even experienced punitive actions as a result of making formal complaints about unacceptable humour in the workplace.

Interview participants also described other coping approaches to unacceptable workplace humour. Some avoided work occasions or disengaged from conversations at work to protect themselves from unacceptable jokes, while others tried to fit in with the workplace joking culture. A few women also chose to directly speak with the perpetrators of unacceptable humour. However, they also acknowledged that the outcomes of direct confrontation often depended on their relationships with the perpetrators and the level of support of other coworkers.

When asked about the impacts of experiencing unacceptable humour in the workplace, survey respondents (n=309) most frequently identified the following:

- feeling embarrassed (42.1%)
- causing them to avoid certain work situations (e.g. courses, meetings, shifts, locations) to avoid the perpetrator (34.6%)
- negative impacts on mental health (30.4%), and
- feeling less confident at work (27.2%).

Similarly, the major impacts of unacceptable workplace humour revealed by interview participants included negative emotional impacts, such as discomfort, stress, anger and embarrassment, and career impacts, such as negative effects on professional and career development.

One quarter (25.2%) of 321 survey respondents indicated that their employing organisation has a policy dealing with workplace banter, while nearly half of survey respondents (47.7%) indicated their employing organisation has no such policy.

The results suggest that the presence of an organisational policy dealing with workplace banter can have a positive impact on reporting behaviour and treatment following the reporting of unacceptable humour. Proportionally more survey respondents reported unacceptable humour when they knew their organisation had a formal banter policy (68.12%) compared to those whose organisation had no policy (47.8%). Also, proportionally more survey respondents indicated they were treated better after they reported an incident of unacceptable workplace humour when they knew their organisation had a formal banter policy (52.2%) compared to those whose organisations had no policy (17.9%).

Interview participants suggested a range of strategies and measures on how the construction industry can change its humour culture to be more inclusive, supportive and safe, including:

- encouraging individuals in the industry to be active (rather than passive) bystanders in response to unacceptable humour
- ensuring leaders at all organisational levels demonstrate a clear commitment to driving workplace cultural change and making sure unacceptable humour is not seen as normal and permissible

- raising awareness of potential harm caused by unacceptable workplace humour and providing education on respect at work across organisational levels
- promoting industry-wide collaboration and initiatives to support cultural change in the construction industry, and
- building a more diverse and inclusive workforce to bring about fundamental shifts in construction industry culture.

Guided by key learning objectives derived from the survey and interview findings, a training video resource titled *Not "Just a Joke"* was developed to help foster a culture of positive humour in Australian construction workplaces. The resource consisted of 10 short sections. Each section can be viewed independently or screened to a group of people in a facilitated session. Without pausing for group discussions, the entire video resource runs for approximately 12 minutes.

To evaluate the video resource, three focus group sessions were conducted between 4th and 6th June 2025. These sessions engaged a mix of women and men in a variety of roles across different sectors and stakeholder groups in the NSW construction industry.

In general, focus group participants agreed with the content of the video resource and found its key messages clear and strong. They recognised its relevance to the Australian construction industry and its wide applicability beyond, to other male-dominated industries. It is expected that the resource will help construction organisations to create workplace cultures that are inclusive, respectful and supportive of women in all roles.

Part 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

Workplace humour that is affiliative enhances group cohesiveness, communication and creativity and reduces stress (Plester, 2009). However, aggressive or sexist humour that exceeds typical levels of acceptability is harmful to workers' mental health (Hogh et al., 2005), especially when targeted towards workers who are low in power or social status or in a minority (Mortensen & Baarts, 2018).

Women in construction have reported frequent exposure to gender-based joking that is excessive, inappropriate and harmful (Watts, 2007). The social context of the workplace is important for workers' health, wellbeing, retention, and performance. Construction workplaces are characterised by banter, which can sometimes be inappropriate, offensive, undermining, or exclusionary. Women are particularly impacted by workplace banter that includes sexual comments or innuendo, which is linked to reduced mental health and wellbeing.

Humour is a deeply entrenched characteristic of construction workplaces within which women are reported to experience inappropriate or abusive language and behaviour (Watts, 2007). Previous research in the New South Wales (NSW) construction industry shows that this humour is often tolerated and even normalised. For example, an 18-year-old woman described her experience: "*…if you don't have a sense of humour with the boys in this industry, you generally will not get along with them. Because I'm a female, they're going to call me different things. But, like, saying like 'you stupid bitch' or the 'C' word… nothing too bad, not to the point where it's racist or discriminative or anything*" (Lingard et al., 2021).

Anecdotal evidence suggests that this type of humour is widespread; moreover, the situation can be made worse by low levels of workplace support and a lack of transparent reporting processes (Jenkins, 2018). Yet, despite evidence showing the harmful effects of aggressive/sexist workplace humour, this aspect of workplace culture has not been addressed by previous research or culture-change interventions in the Australian construction industry.

1.2 Purpose

This project was funded by the NSW Government Women in Construction Industry Innovation Program (IIP), which supports initiatives to make construction industry workplaces more diverse, inclusive and safe for women.

The first stage of the project involved a survey to understand the types and effects of workplace humour experienced by women in the NSW construction industry.

The survey was followed by in-depth interviews to more deeply understand women's experiences with workplace humour across different job roles, industry sectors and organisational environments.

The combined body of evidence from the survey and interview data were used to inform the development of a video-based training resource that would help to create workplace cultures that are more inclusive, respectful and supportive of women in all roles (See Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1: Research and development stages

It is anticipated that adopting the resource will help the NSW construction industry create work cultures that are more attractive to women, encouraging entry, increasing retention and reducing harm. The training resource includes facilitators' guidance material, as well as case studies and scenarios based on lived experiences and real-life situations.

The training resource is designed to help NSW-based construction organisations to develop and maintain inclusive workplace cultures in which women are supported and are not exposed to sexist, sexualised or aggressive gender-based joking. The project directly addresses all three of the IIP objectives:

- helping construction organisations to create inclusive workplace cultures and, in doing so, improving the wellbeing of women in the workforce
- creating work environments that will be more attractive to women, thereby increasing the numbers of women likely to enter construction jobs as well as remain in these jobs over the long term, and

- creating an environment wherein women feel supported and able to pursue long-term careers in all job roles.

1.3 Report structure

This report comprises of the following sections:

- Executive summary – provides a summary of the report.
- Part 1: Introduction – provides an overview of the background and aims of the project.
- Part 2: Literature review – provides a brief review of the literature relating to workplace humour and its impacts.
- Part 3: Methods – provides an overview of the research process, followed by the data collection and analysis methods.
- Part 4: Survey results – presents the survey results.
- Part 5: Interview findings – presents the findings from interviews.
- Part 6: Discussion – discusses the implications of the research results.
- Part 7: Development and evaluation of a training resource – presents the structure of the training resource and stakeholders' feedback on the initial draft of the training resource.
- Part 8: References – lists references cited throughout the report.
- Part 9: Appendices – provides supplementary information about the study.

Part 2: Literature review

2.1 Defining workplace humour

Humour is a common part of workplace social interaction (Collinson, 2002). Humour has been defined and understood in different ways (Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2012). Some definitions see humour as communication that is mutually amusing, i.e., communication that a speaker intends to be amusing is perceived to be amusing by the receiver (Holmes & Marra, 2002). This situation is also regarded as successful humour. However, attempts at humour can also be unsuccessful, for example when the speaker intends a joke to be amusing but the joke is not perceived to be funny by the receiver. In recognition that not all humour is successful, Cooper (2005) defined humour as "any event shared by an agent (e.g. an employee) with another individual (i.e. a target) that is intended to be amusing to the target and that the target perceives as an intentional act" (p. 767). This definition recognises humour as an intentional act but does not assume the effect of humour is positive (i.e. that the receiver finds the interaction amusing). This definition also goes beyond verbal interactions and includes the sharing of artefacts that are not produced by the instigator of humour, e.g. cartoons, and also practical jokes. This broader definition of workplace humour was adopted in the present study.

Cooper (2008) further identifies three theories explaining why people engage in humour. These are:

- relief theory - which suggests that humour is used as a defence mechanism to reduce anxiety, fear or suffering and protect individuals against adverse conditions or experiences they might face
- incongruity theory - which is focused on the object of humour itself and is based on the belief that, in an orderly world, people find unexpected events funny, and
- superiority theory - which suggests that joking is used by instigators to position themselves in a position of power over others (e.g. the targets of humour).

These motivations for engaging in humour are likely to produce humour of different types and with different consequences for recipients or targets.

2.2 Types of humour

Martin et al. (2003) also describe different humour styles which are likely to produce positive and negative outcomes when used in a work context. They suggest that humour can be either inwardly- or outwardly-focused. Inwardly-focused humour focuses on the speaker making jokes about themselves and can be self-enhancing (positive) or self-deprecating (negative). Outwardly-focused humour targets others and can be affiliative (positive) or aggressive (negative). Martin et al. (2003) suggest that affiliative humour is non-threatening, non-hostile humour that improves

social relationships, while aggressive humour seeks to victimise, ridicule or belittle others. The latter type of humour can be harmful to those who are targeted by it (Hogh et al., 2005).

Much of the humour experienced in work environments is described as 'banter' which refers to "the playful and friendly exchange of teasing remarks" (Plester & Inkson, 2019, p. 53). Workplace banter often includes back and forth humorous teasing that focuses on traits, habits, or characteristics of the recipient, who is then expected to respond with banter of their own (Plester & Sayers, 2007, p. 159).

Some workplace banter is experienced as friendly and fun (Buglass et al., 2021). However, when participants do not know one another well or when banter is one-sided it can be hurtful and damaging (Dynel, 2008). Lawless and McGrath (2021) also differentiate between inclusive and exclusionary banter. The former helps to develop friendships and build a sense of solidarity in a workplace, while the latter includes the telling of jokes that exceed acceptable boundaries. Exclusionary banter can also be underpinned by a perpetrator's genuine dislike of the target. If targets of banter are low in status or not considered to be core members of a social group, banter is more likely to be experienced as exclusionary and hostile (Plester & Sayers, 2017). UK research shows that young workers and women are often subjected to exclusionary banter in the workplace and are unlikely to report this behaviour due to fear of repercussions (Wilcock et al., 2019). In such instances, banter can result in workers avoiding interactions with their colleagues, experiencing mental health impacts and/or leaving their employment (Wilcock et al., 2019).

2.3 Outcomes of humour

Research shows that, depending on its nature, workplace humour can serve a variety of functions and have different outcomes (Plester & Orams, 2008). For example, humour can help to build collegial relationships with coworkers (Holmes, 2006), can provide relief from boring work and build social cohesion and camaraderie in the workplace (Plester & Sayers, 2007). Plester (2009a) also describes how workplace humour relieves frustration and helps people to deal with difficult or unpleasant situations. New workers are often socialised into a workgroup through the joking culture as people learn what it is acceptable to joke about within the group and what is not to be mentioned or discussed (Mak et al., 2012). Fine and de Soucey (2005) also argue that conflict between members of a workgroup can be more easily diffused through humour, as group members who violate group norms can be admonished or criticised in a humorous way, thereby correcting undesired behaviours while also protecting interpersonal relationships (Holmes & Marra, 2002).

Workplace humour has been linked to enhanced work performance, satisfaction, workgroup cohesion, health, and coping effectiveness, and decreased burnout, stress, and withdrawal from work (Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2012). Some writers even suggest that humour should be deliberately used by managers as a tool to motivate employees to achieve high levels of performance (Romero & Cruthirds, 2008). However, others have observed that managerial joking cannot be separated from the hierarchical relationships and gendered power dynamics that exist in many workplaces, creating the risk that manager-manipulated humour can be experienced as oppressive, embarrassing or othering (Collinson, 2002).

2.4 Humour in male-dominated industries

Humour in many male-dominated workplaces has been identified as contestive and aggressive (Holmes & Schnurr, 2005), often taking the form of 'put down' humour (Hickey & Roderick, 2022). Put down humour is joking behaviour that seeks "to derive amusement at the expense of something or someone; for example, though an insult, demeaning joke, teasing, sarcasm, or self-deprecating remark" (Terrion & Ashforth 2002, p59). This type of humour often targets workers who are low in power or social status and can be harmful (Mortensen & Baarts, 2018; Middlemiss, 2017). For example, in the Australian construction and building industry, Riggall et al. (2017) report that banter and practical jokes are sometimes used to mask bullying and directed at apprentices with the intention of harm.

Importantly, in some male-dominated workplaces a joking culture develops in which profane, sexualised and aggressive humour becomes the norm (Plester, 2015). In these environments banter discriminates against and devalues the contribution of women (Topić, 2021). It can be difficult for women in such workplaces to make a complaint about inappropriate workplace humour because they fear that speaking up will have negative career/employment consequences. These concerns appear to be justified as Australian research shows that women who voice concerns about offensive humour in male-dominated workplaces are seen, by their coworkers, as contributing to their own exclusion and victimisation (Saunders & Easteal, 2012).

In the male-dominated construction industry, Watts (2007) also observed that workplace humour differs between office- and site- environments. In the former, humour is characterised by sarcasm, banter, mocking and irony, while site-based workers frequently engage in joke-telling (often using crude language), mimicry and innuendo (Watts, 2007). A recent study by TDC Global and the National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC) found that 88% of women in construction report experiencing microaggressions in the workplace (TDC Global/NAWIC, 2024). The TDC Global/NAWIC report defines microaggressions as small acts that make people feel less welcome, less valued or less safe. Women in all roles (including office- and site-based roles) reported experiencing microaggressions which were most frequently in the form of verbal interactions (80%) and which were reported to negatively affect women's professional confidence and wellbeing. While it is not clear to what extent the verbal microaggressions reported by the respondents in the TDC Global/NAWIC survey reflect exposure to aggressive humour, research in the UK suggests that women are frequently exposed to sexual harassment in the workplace that is passed off as 'just a bit of banter' (TUC, 2016). This is important because euphemistic labelling of inappropriate behaviour as humour can be a significant barrier to the recognition and prevention of harassment and/or bullying in the work environment (Middlemiss, 2021). Watts (2007) further observes that women in construction sometimes join in with sexist humour in order to be accepted in the workplace.

Part 3: Methods

3.1 Research process overview

A mixed methods approach was adopted for undertaking this project. Johnson et al. (2007) defined mixed methods research as: "…*the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration*" (p.123).

A two-stage sequential mixed methods research design was developed for this project. Specifically, an industry survey was conducted first to understand the types and effects of workplace humour experienced by women in the NSW construction industry. Then in-depth interviews were conducted to:

(i) more fully understand women's experiences in different job roles (office/site), sectors (residential/commercial/engineering) and organisational environments (small/large companies)

(ii) explore the cultural determinants of workplace humour, and

(iii) explore women's ideas for ways to promote positive humour and prevent negative humour in construction workplaces. Subject matter experts in workplace gender issues were also interviewed. Participants were also asked about their views on how the existing humour culture in construction workplaces could be changed.

3.2 Industry survey

3.2.1 Survey instrument

The survey instrument consisted of 46 questions in five sections.

Section one asked questions about respondents' demographic and employment backgrounds, including:

- age
- gender identity
- ethnic background
- occupation
- sector within the construction industry, and

- workgroup size and number of women in the workgroup.

Section two assessed respondents' attitudes toward humour (Preply, 2023).

Section three examined respondents' experiences of different humour types, including:

- positive humour (Cann et al., 2014)
- stress-relieving humour (Lang & Lee, 2010)
- negative humour (Cann et al., 2014; Wijewardena et al., 2016), and
- self-defeating humour (Martin et al., 2003).

Section four explored respondents' experiences with sexual harassment behaviours and unacceptable jokes, using questions adapted from the report "Still Just a bit of Banter? Sexual harassment in the workplace in 2016" (Trades Union Congress, 2016), including:

- experiences of sexual harassment behaviours
- perceptions of unacceptable jokes
- perpetrators of unacceptable jokes
- reporting of unacceptable jokes, and
- impacts of unacceptable jokes.

Section five asked one question about respondents' knowledge of workplace banter policy (Wilcock et al., 2017).

Survey scales and items are outlined in Appendix 8.1.

3.2.2 Survey sampling

In 2022/2023, the NSW construction industry employed 401,564 people, with women making up 16.3% of the workforce (Master Builders Australia, 2023). It is estimated that there are 65,455 women in the NSW construction industry. With this size of population, a confidence level of 95%, a margin of error of 7%, and a population proportion of 50%, the minimum required sample size is 196 (Cochran, 1977).

3.2.3 Survey administration and participant recruitment

The survey was administered using the RMIT Qualtrics online survey platform. Participants could access the survey using any electronic devices (e.g. a computer or a smartphone) via an anonymous hyperlink or a QR code generated by the platform.

The survey was administered between Monday, 28 October 2024 and Tuesday, 3 December 2024. Master Builders NSW played an instrumental role in participant recruitment by distributing a survey invitation to approximately 8, 000 member organisations, who were requested to share

the survey invitation to their women employees and invite them to participate in the survey. Master Builders NSW also promoted the survey to the following organisations/groups/committees/social media platforms:

- Chinese Building Association of NSW
- Master Builders NSW employees
- Master Builders NSW Group Training Organisation
- Master Builders NSW E-Circular
- Master Builders NSW LinkedIn Profile
- Master Builders NSW Members Newsletter
- Newcastle Master Builders Group Training
- Newcastle Women Building NSW Luncheon
- NSW Women in Construction LinkedIn Profile
- Women Building NSW Ambassadors
- Women Building NSW LinkedIn Profile, and
- Women in Building and Associated Services.

In total, 454 survey responses were received, with 363 (80%) of them from women. This exceeded the target sample size of 196. Among the 363 responses received from women, 26 (7%) were largely incomplete and excluded, resulting in 337 (93%) valid responses retained for the subsequent analysis.

3.2.4 Survey data analysis techniques

Descriptive analysis was performed to provide an overall understanding of respondents' self-reported attitudes towards humour, humour types, their experiences of sexual harassment behaviours and their experience, perpetrators and consequences of unacceptable humour in the workplace.

Mean scores were calculated for each humour type and the results were compared between different demographics groups. To test the statistical significance of the mean differences between groups, t-tests, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Chi-square tests were used (see Appendix 8.2 for descriptions of these statistical procedures). ANOVA is a statistical procedure that determines whether there are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of three or more groups of respondents for variables of interest. A t-test is used to assess whether there are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of two groups of respondents for variables of interest. While a chi-square test assesses if the distribution of a categorical variable (e.g. yes or no) differs in two or more independent groups.

3.3 In-depth interviews

3.3.1 Interview questions

Interview questions were developed to explore participants':

- demographic background
- experiences with humour and banter in the workplace
- insights into how humour is experienced differently by individuals from diverse backgrounds,
- the characteristics of the construction industry that shape the workplace humour, and
- opinions about strategies and measures to prevent negative humour in the workplace and create respectful and inclusive work environments.

The list of interview questions is provided in Appendix 8.4

3.3.2 Interview participants and process

Interview participants were recruited from Women Ambassadors of Master Builders NSW, and the industry connections of the RMIT research team. An invitation email with an explanation of the project purpose, along with a detailed Project Information Sheet and Consent Form (PISCF) was sent to recruit participants. A 'snowball' recruiting approach was also used to request interview participants to introduce potential participants from their networks.

Online interviews were conducted between 12 February and 3 March 2025. A total of 19 women participated, including subject-matter experts, managers, and office-based and site-based workers from the commercial, residential, and industrial sectors of the construction industry. The interviews ranged in duration from 24 to 96 minutes.

At the start of each interview participants were briefed on the project, as outlined in the PISCF. The interviewer then sought permission to audio-record the interviews for transcription purposes. Participants were informed that their involvement was entirely voluntary, and that all data would be kept confidential.

3.3.3 Interview data analysis

The interview transcripts were thematically analysed by a researcher. Thematic analysis is a qualitative method for identifying and analysing patterns in textual data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis began with multiple readings of the transcripts to develop a deep understanding of the content. Following this familiarisation phase, the data were coded inductively by assigning short descriptive labels (i.e. codes) that reflected patterns or meanings within the responses. Similar codes were then grouped together and organised into broader themes. To ensure the reliability of the coding process, the analysis was cross-checked with the interviewers.

The themes were presented with illustrative quotes. In some cases, we provided contextual information about the participants and details of their experiences with humour and humour management. However, we have opted to omit certain information (e.g. demographic details) to avoid the potential identification of individuals.

Part 4: Survey results

4.1 Characteristics of respondents

4.1.2 Demographic characteristics

Age: Figure 4.1 shows the age distribution of respondents. The largest group of women respondents (n=119, 35.3%) was between 30 and 39 years old. Four respondents (1.2%) were under 20 years old.

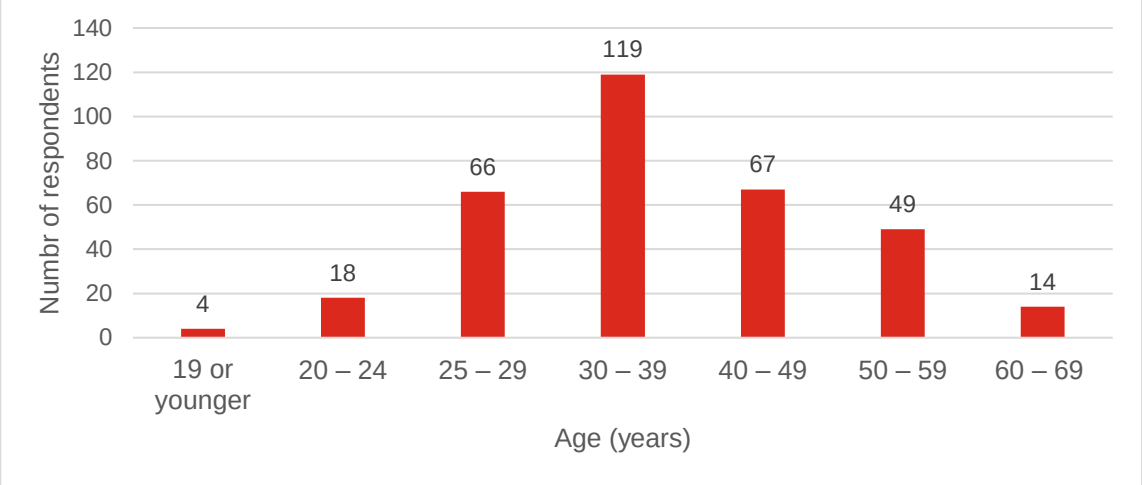

Figure 4.1: Distribution of respondents by age

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin: Figure 4.2 illustrates the number of respondents identifying as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin and those that did not. 52 (15.4%) respondents identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin. The majority (n=281, 83.4%) did not identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. Four respondents (1.2%) preferred not to indicate whether they identify as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin.

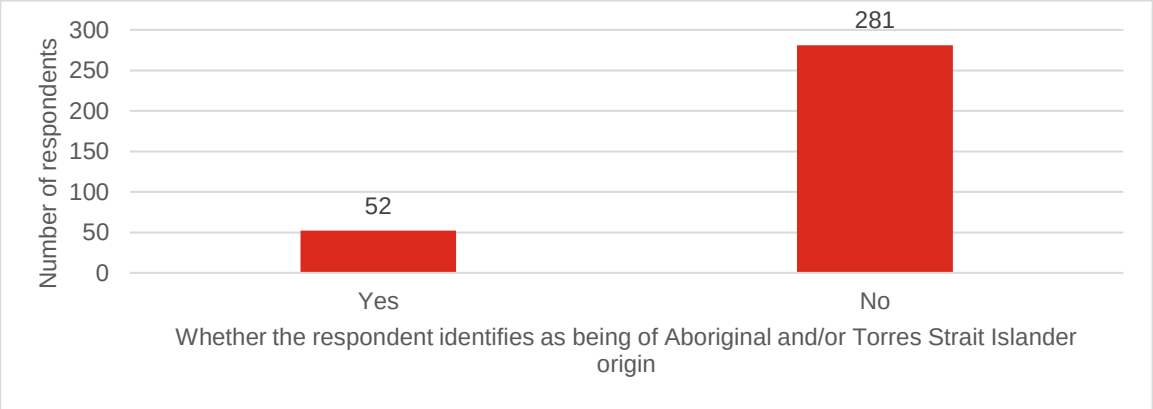

Figure 4.2: Distribution of respondents by identification as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin or not

Language spoken at home: Figure 4.3 shows the distribution of respondents who indicated they only use English and who do not. Most respondents indicated they speak only English at home (n=275, 81.6%). Figure 4.4 shows the distribution of respondents by other languages spoken at home. Among the 62 (18.4%) respondents who indicated they use another language at home, other European languages are most frequently spoken (n=17, 5.0%), followed by Mandarin (n=10, 3.0%), Cantonese (n=7, 2.1%), and Spanish (n=7, 2.1%).

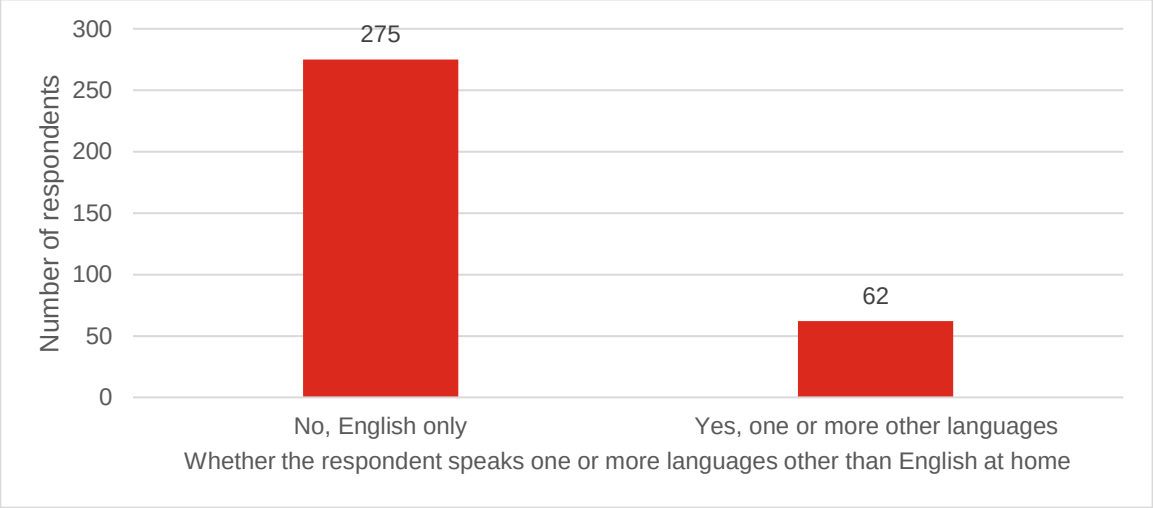

Figure 4.3: Distribution of respondents by the use of English at home

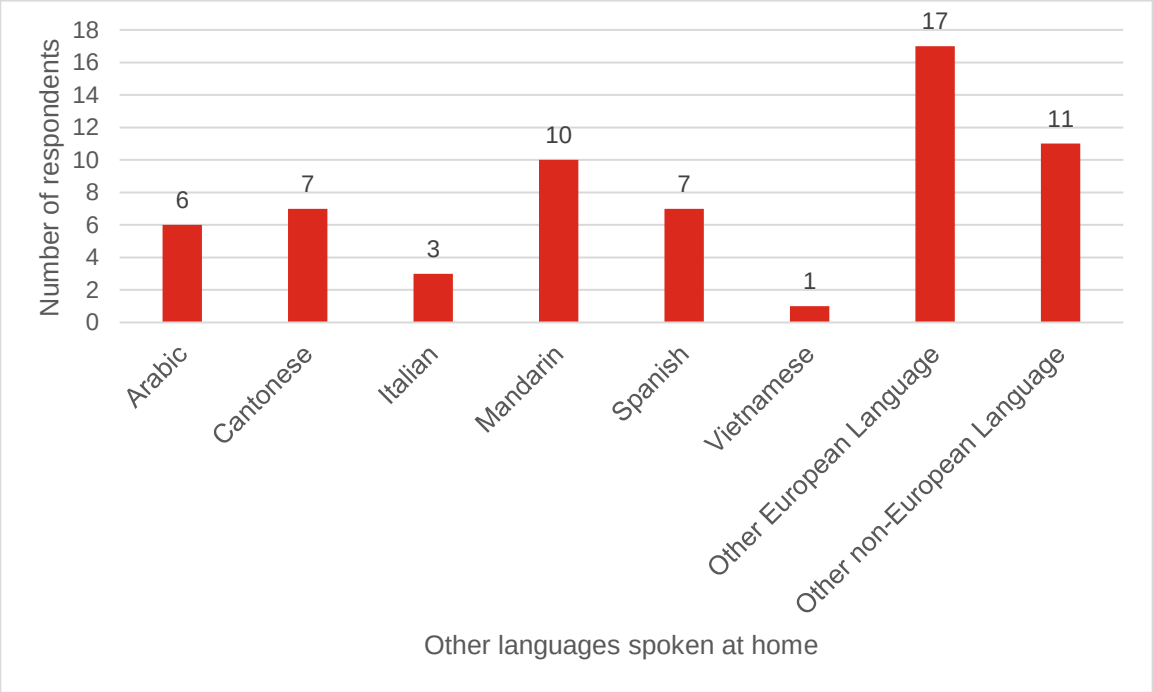

Figure 4.4: Distribution of respondents by the main language spoken at home (if other than English)

Occupation: Figure 4.5 shows the distribution of the respondents by occupation. The majority of respondents indicated they are office-based workers, including managers (n=101, 30.0%), clerical and administrative staff (n=89, 26.4%), and professionals (n=73, 21.7%). There were 30 (8.9%) technicians and trade workers, 10 (3.0%) machinery operators and drivers, and 15 (4.5%) labourers among the respondents. 19 respondents (5.6%) indicated their occupation as one 'other' than those listed in the survey.

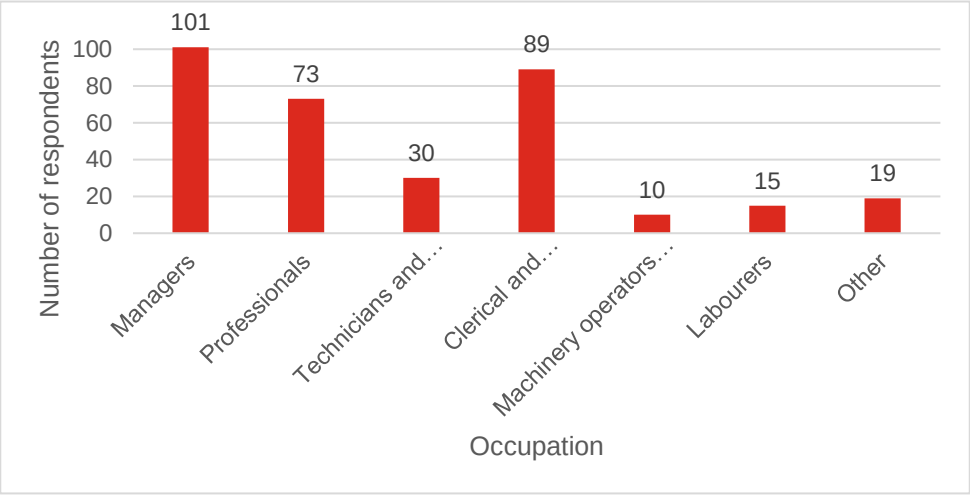

Figure 4.5: Distribution of respondents by occupation

Sector: Figure 4.6 shows the distribution of the responses by industry sector. Respondents were asked what sector of the construction industry they work in. **They were able to indicate more than one sector**. 277 (82.2%) respondents indicated they work in one sector, and 60 (17.8%) indicated they work across different sectors. A total of 403 responses were recorded across 337 participants. Most respondents work in the residential building sector (n=164, 48.7%). 132 (39.2%) and 58 (17.2%) respondents work in the non-residential building sector and civil engineering sector respectively. 49 (14.5%) work in other sectors, such as education and training and industry associations.

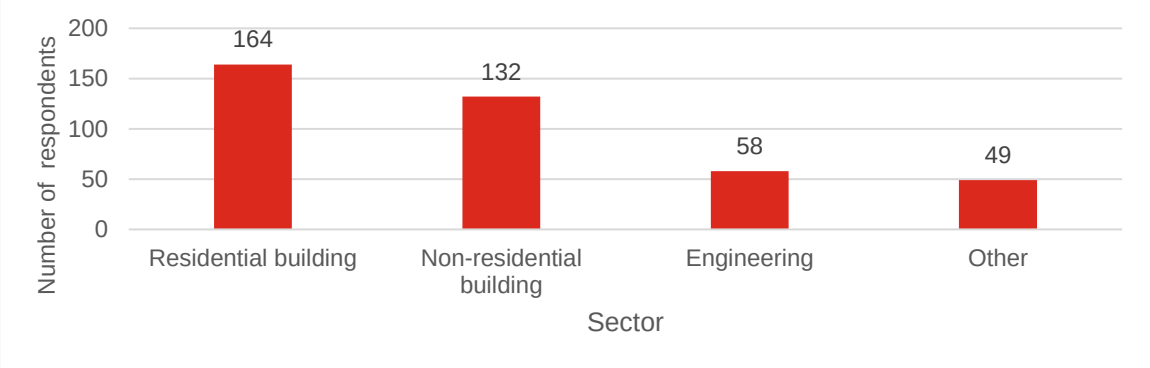

Figure 4.6: Distribution of respondents by sector

Immediate workgroup size: Figure 4.7 shows the distribution of the respondents by size of their immediate workgroup. Most respondents reported they work in an immediate work group of six to ten people (n=102, 30.3%). their immediate workgroup.

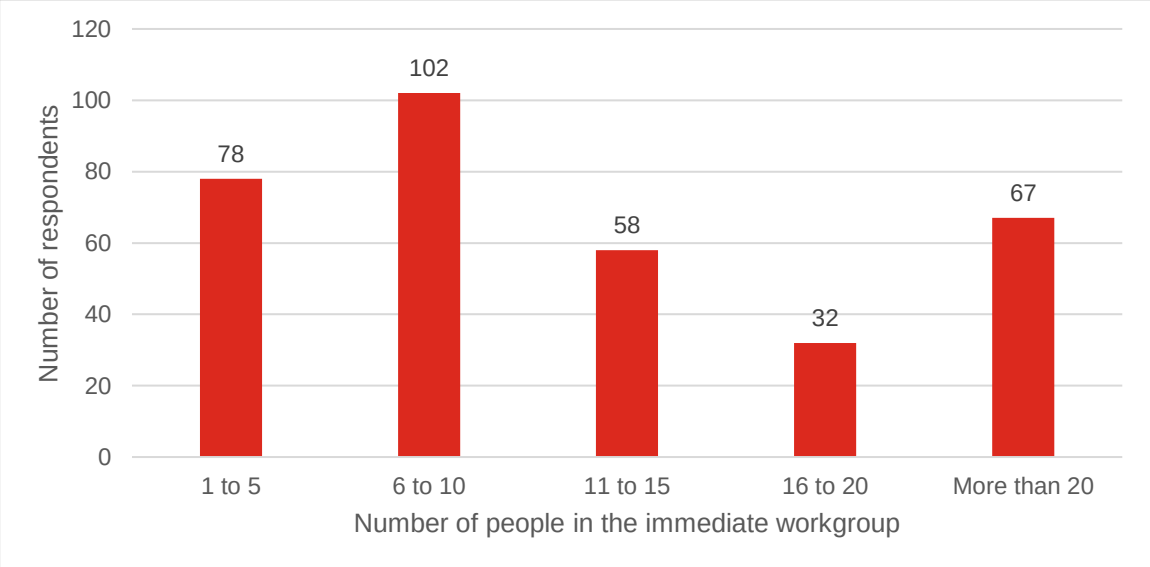

Figure 4.7: Distribution of respondents by size of immediate workgroup

Number of women in the immediate workgroup: Figure 4.8 shows the number of women in respondents' immediate workgroup. The median of the number of women in respondents' immediate workgroup was four. 78 (23.1%) respondents indicated they are the only woman in their immediate workgroup. Most (n=245, 72.7%) respondents indicated they have five or fewer women in their immediate workgroup. Three respondents (0.9%) did not indicate the number of women in their immediate workgroup.

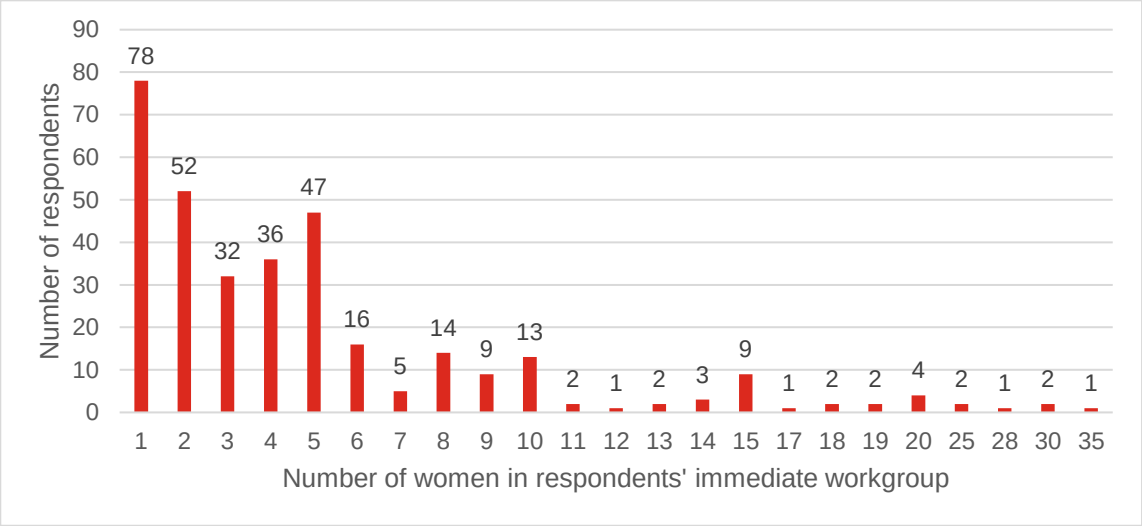

Figure 4.8: Distribution of respondents by the number of women in their immediate workgroup

4.1.2 Attitudes to workplace humour

To measure respondents' attitudes to workplace humour, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following statements:

- all forms of banter should be avoided in the workplace for the sake of professionalism
- banter can cause tension between coworkers and reduce productivity
- banter can be an effective way to build relationships and create a positive work environment
- banter should only be accepted if it is not offensive or disrespectful to any employee, and
- banter at work should be accepted as long as it remains light-hearted and playful.

Responses were captured on a 5-point Likert response format ranging from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5). Prior to analysis, scores for each item were reversed so that **a higher score reflects a higher level of agreement with each statement.**

For each statement a mean score was calculated based on respondents' ratings. Figure 4.9 shows these mean scores. Overall, respondents agreed that banter can be an effective way to build relationships and create a positive work environment. Conversely, respondents largely disagreed with the statement that banter should be avoided in the workplace for the sake of professionalism. However, participants also largely agreed that banter should only be accepted if it is not offensive or disrespectful to any employee and as long as it remains light-hearted and playful. Respondents were close to neutral in their agreement/disagreement about the potential for workplace banter to cause tension between coworkers and reduce productivity, possibly because this would likely depend on the nature of the banter experienced.

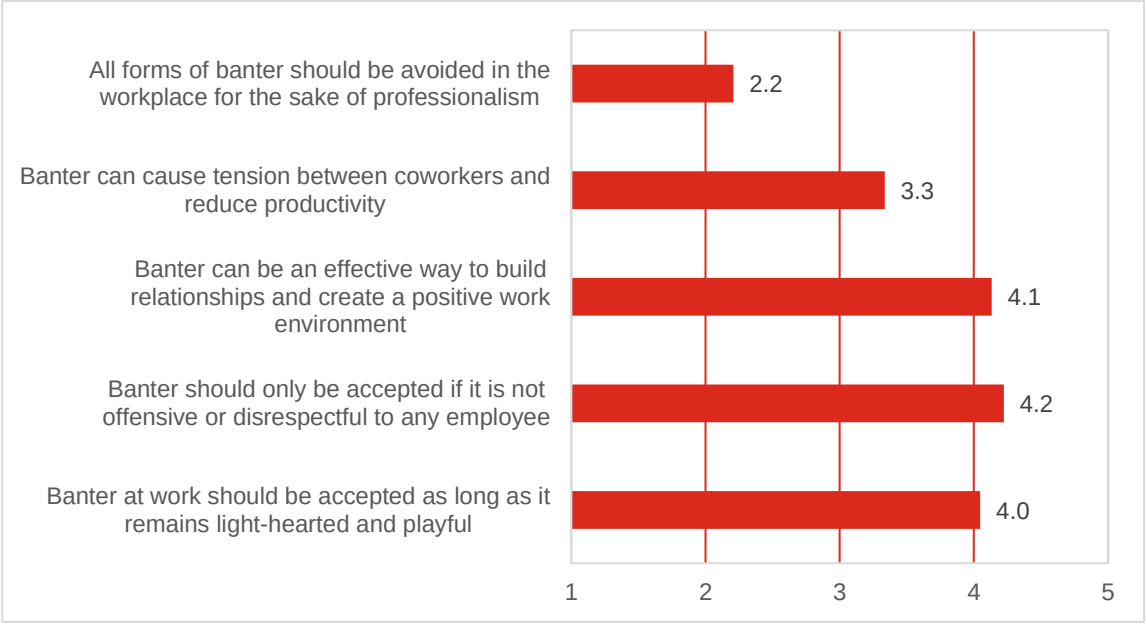

Figure 4.9: Mean scores for humour attitude items

4.2 Experience of workplace humour

Survey participants were asked about the humour used in their immediate workgroup. In particular, they were asked to report on the frequency with which positive humour, stress-relieving humour and negative humour are used in their workgroups. Respondents were also asked to indicate to what extent they use self-defeating humour in the workplace. Responses were captured on a 5-point Likert response format ranging from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5).

Prior to analysis scores for each item were reversed so that **a higher score reflects a higher frequency of occurrence of this type of humour**. The results are presented in this section of the report.

4.2.1 Positive humour

Figure 4.10 shows the mean scores for the individual statements included in the positive humour scale. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following statements:

- the humour my coworkers use makes the work more enjoyable
- the humour of my coworkers often cheers me up
- humour is something we all enjoy sharing at work, and
- humour is often used to encourage or support coworkers.

For each statement a mean score was calculated based on respondents' ratings. The mean scores for all the statements were greater than 4.0 (out of 5), with the overall mean score being 4.2.

The Cronbach alpha coefficient of positive humour items is 0.8, indicating good internal consistency reliability for the positive humour scale.

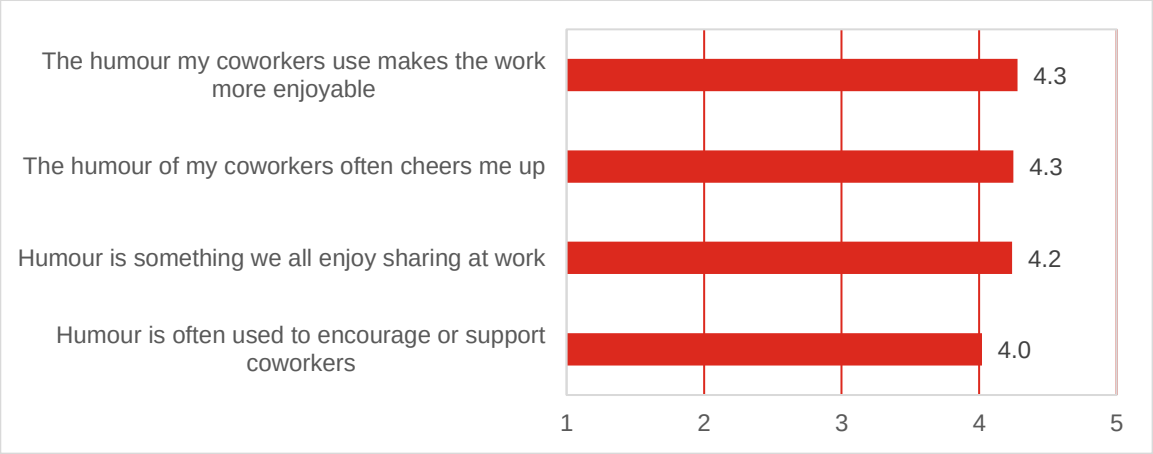

Figure 4.10: Mean scores for positive humour items

4.2.1 Stress-relieving humour

Figure 4.11 shows the mean scores for the individual statements included in the stress-relieving humour scale. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following statements:

- we frequently tell jokes to loosen up a stressful work environment
- when we meet each other, we always tell stories to lighten up the day
- we laugh a lot around here to make work more pleasant, and
- we tell humorous stories to ease tense situations at work.

For each statement a mean score was calculated based on respondents' ratings. The overall mean score for all the statements was 4.0 (out of 5).

The Cronbach alpha coefficient for stress-relieving humour items is 0.8 indicating good internal consistency reliability for the stress-relieving humour scale.

Figure 4.11: Mean scores for stress-relieving humour items

4.2.3 Negative humour

Figure 4.12 shows the mean scores for the individual statements included in the negative humour scale. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following statements:

- my coworkers sometimes use humour with the potential to cause physical harm
- my coworkers sometimes use humour to belittle each other
- humour is sometimes used to intimidate others in the group
- if someone makes a mistake, they often will be ridiculed by others in the group, and
- the humour used by my coworkers can often make someone in the group feel bad.

For each statement a mean score was calculated based on respondents' ratings. The overall mean score for all the statements was 2.4 (out of 5).

The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the negative humour items is 0.9, indicating good internal consistency reliability for the negative humour scale.

Figure 4.12: Mean scores for negative humour items

4.2.4 Self-defeating humour

Figure 4.13 shows the mean scores for the individual statements included in the self-defeating humour scale. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following statements:

- if I am having problems or feeling unhappy, I often cover it up by joking around, so coworkers don't know how I really feel
- I often go overboard in putting myself down when I am making jokes or trying to be funny
- I often try to make people like or accept me more by saying something funny about my own weaknesses, blunders, or faults, and
- I let people laugh at me or make fun at my expense more than I should.

For each statement a mean score was calculated based on respondents' ratings. The mean scores for all statements were below 3.0 (out of 5), with the overall mean score being 2.7.

The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the self-defeating humour items is 0.8, indicating good internal consistency reliability for the self-defeating humour scale.

Figure 4.13: Mean scores for self-defeating humour items

4.2.5 Humour type by age groups

A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistical test was conducted to determine if respondents' reported humour types differed depending upon their age. For a description of this statistical procedure see Part 9, Section 9.2.2. The results of the analysis are presented in Part 9, Table 9.1. The number of valid cases for the analysis was 336, i.e. those responses that answered all survey questions relating to humour type and age.

Figure 4.14 shows the mean positive humour scores for respondents by age. Respondents aged between 40 and 49 years reported the lowest experience of positive humour (mean score of 4.1), while those aged 19 years or younger reported the highest experience of positive humour in the workplace (mean score of 4.6). Overall, the differences in positive humour scores between respondents in different age groups were not statistically significant (Table 9.1).

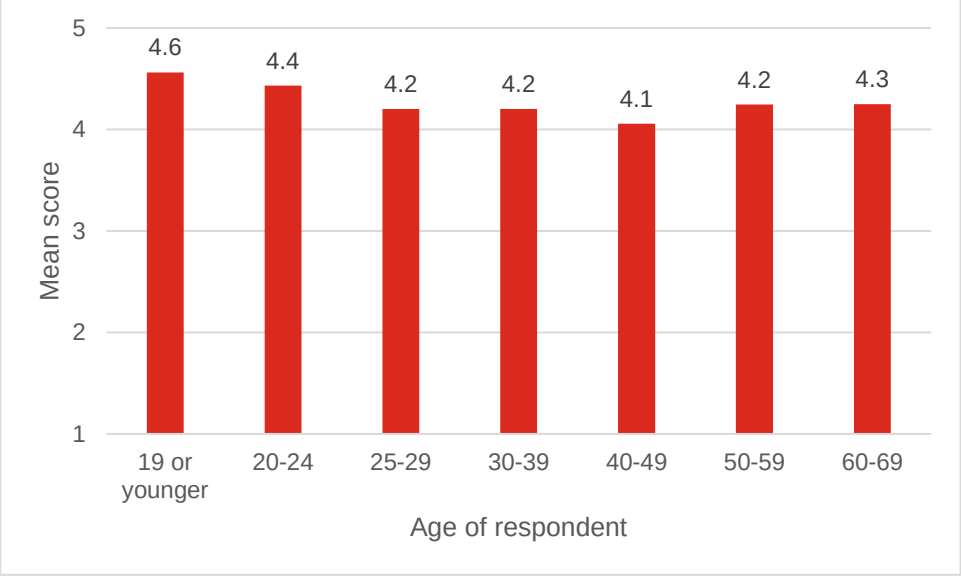

Figure 4.14: Mean positive humour scores by respondents' age

Figure 4.15 shows the mean stress-relieving humour scores for respondents by age. The reported experience of stress-relieving humour decreased steadily with respondents' age. It was the highest among workers between the ages of 20 and 24 (mean score of 4.3) and lowest among respondents in their 60s (mean score of 3.7). Overall, these differences in stress-relieving humour scores between respondents in different age groups were statistically significant (Table 9.1).

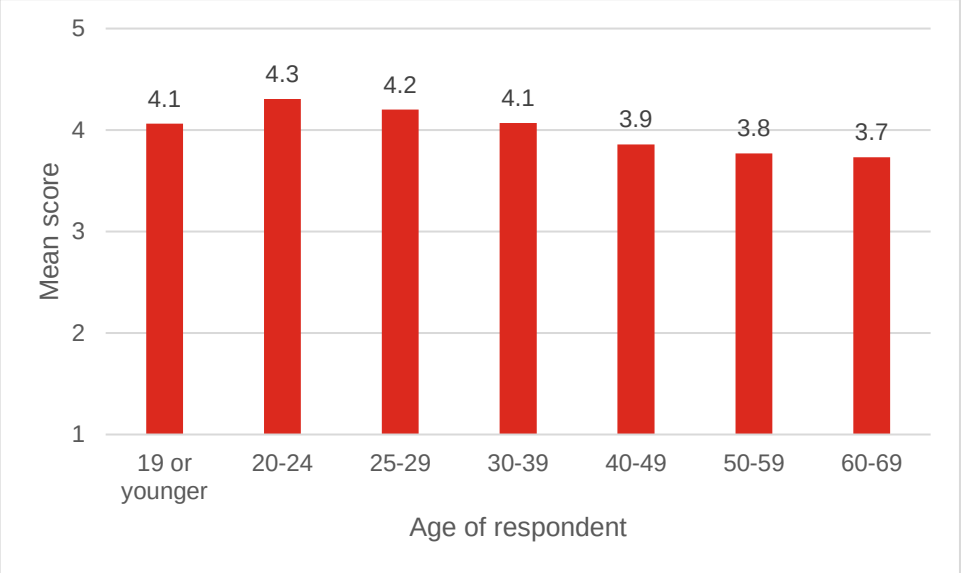

Figure 4.15: Mean stress-relieving humour scores by respondents' age

Figure 4.16 shows the mean negative humour scores for respondents by age. Respondents in younger age groups (<19 to 24 years) reported lower frequency of experience of negative humour in the workplace. Respondents aged 25 to 39 years reported experiencing the highest levels of negative humour in the workplace (mean score of 2.6). The frequency of negative humour reported to occur steadily decreased with respondents' age from ages 30 to 39 years. Overall, these differences in negative humour scores between respondents in different age groups were statistically significant (Table 9.1).

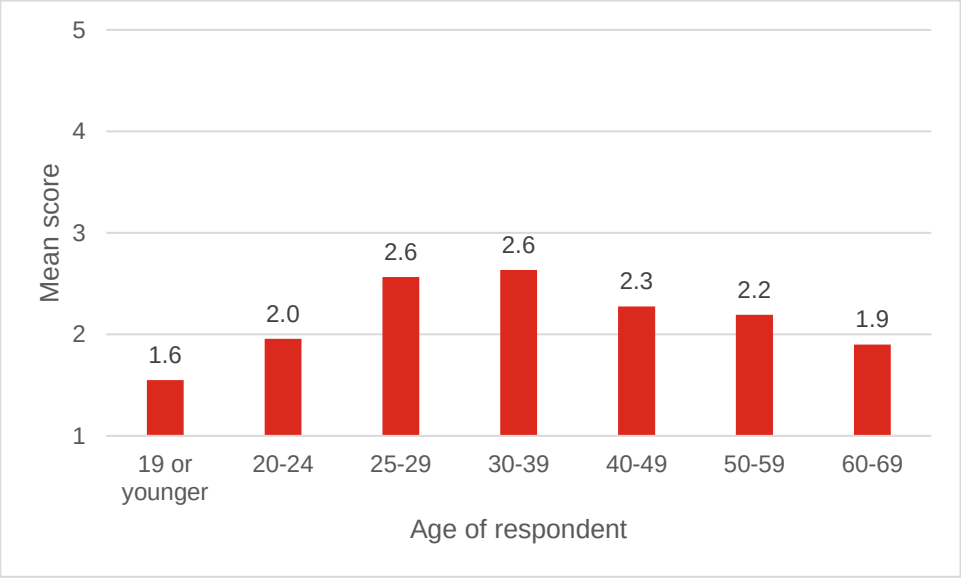

Figure 4.16: Mean negative humour scores by respondents' age

Figure 4.17 shows the mean self-defeating humour scores for respondents by age. Respondents' experience of self-defeating humour was the lowest among the youngest (<19) and oldest (60-69) year age groups (with mean scores of 1.8 and 2.1 respectively). The highest self-defeating humour score was reported by respondents between the ages of 30 and 39 years (mean score of 2.9). Overall, the differences in self-defeating humour scores reported by respondents in different age groups were statistically significant (Table 9.1).

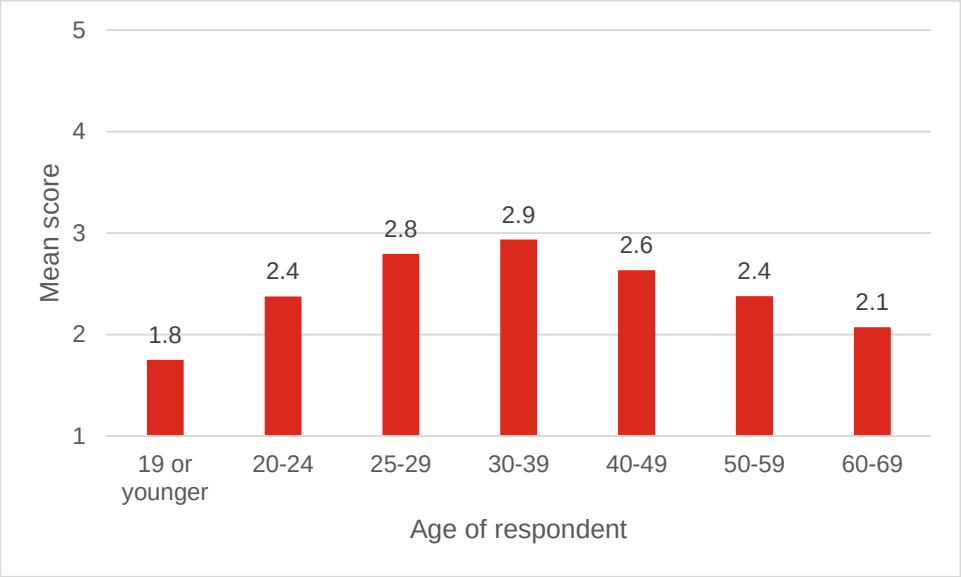

Figure 4.17: Mean self-defeating humour scores by respondents' age

4.2.6 Humour type by job classification (office- or site-based)

For the purposes of this analysis, respondents were categorised into two groups based on their occupation. Respondents who indicated they are technicians, tradespeople, machinery operators, drivers, or labourers were classified as site-based, while people who indicated they are managers, professionals, clerical or administrative workers were classified as office-based. Respondents who gave their occupation as 'other' (n=19) were not included in this analysis as it was unclear whether these respondents work predominantly in a site or office environment.

Figure 4.18 shows the mean scores for these two groups of respondents for the different humour types experienced in the workplace. Independent samples t-tests were undertaken to determine whether the differences in mean scores for humour types between office- and site-based respondents were statistically significant. The results are presented in Part 9, Table 9.2. The number of valid cases for analysis is 308, i.e. those responses that answered all questions relating to humour types and occupation.

Respondents in site-based roles reported significantly higher mean scores for both negative humour and self-defeating humour than their counterparts in office-based roles (Table 9.2). Differences in mean scores for positive and stress-relieving humour did not differ significantly between respondents in site- and office-based roles.

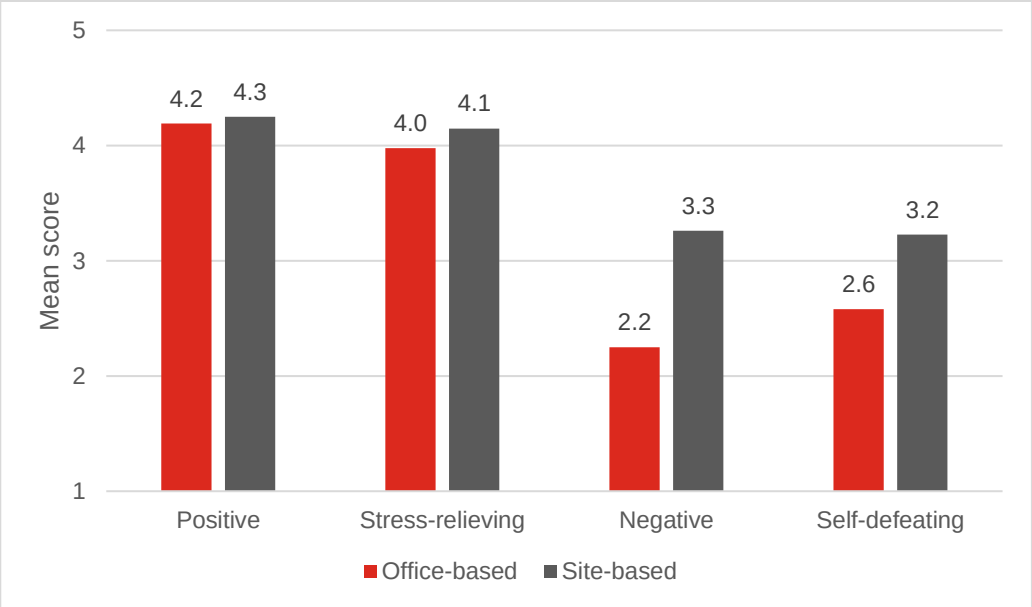

Fig. 4.18: Mean humour type scores reported by office-based and site-based workers

4.2.7 Humour type by language spoken at home

Figure 4.19 shows the mean scores for the different humour types experienced in the workplace by respondents who indicated they speak only English and those who indicated they speak another language at home. Independent samples t-tests were undertaken to determine whether the differences in mean scores for humour types between respondents who indicated they speak only English and those who speak another language at home were statistically significant. The

number of valid cases included in this analysis was 325, i.e., those respondents that answered all questions relating to humour type and language spoken at home. The results are presented in Part 9, Table 9.3.

Significant differences were found between these two groups of respondents for negative and self-defeating humour (Table 9.3). For both of these two humour types – that are associated with unfavourable outcomes – respondents who indicated they speak only English at home reported significantly higher mean scores than respondents who indicated they speak another language at home. Differences in mean scores for positive and stress-relieving humour were not statistically significant.

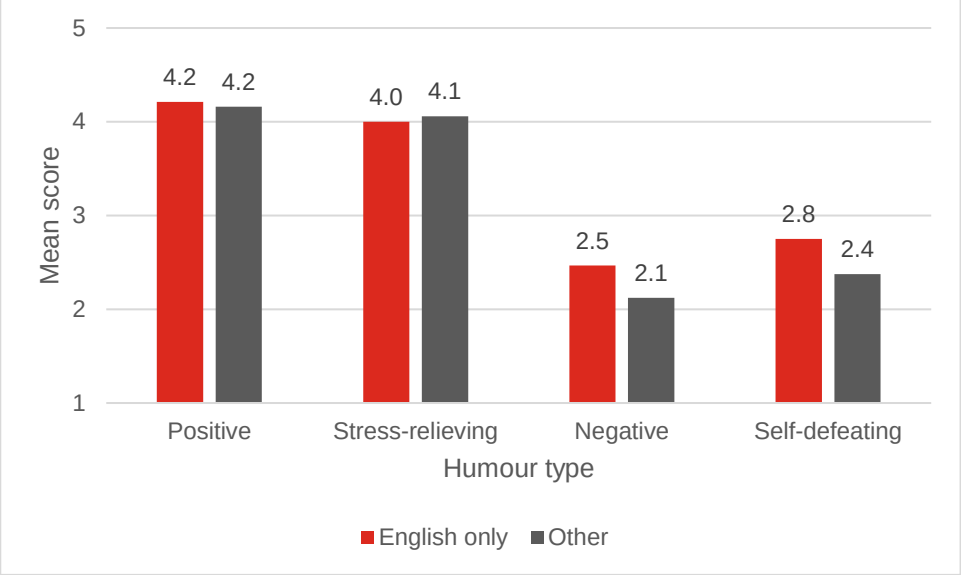

Fig. 4.19: Mean humour type scores reported by respondents who speak only English or who speak other languages at home

4.3 Experience of sexual harassment behaviour

4.3.1 Types of sexual harassment behaviour experienced

Respondents were asked to respond to a question about the extent to which they had experienced different types of behaviour sexual harassment behaviour in the workplace. **Respondents were able to indicate more than one type of sexual harassment behaviour.**

218 (64.7%) of the 337 survey respondents indicated that they had experienced some form of sexual harassment at work, either within or before the 12 months preceding completion of the survey.

Figure 4.20 shows the percentage of all respondents who reported experiencing each type of sexual harassment behaviour. Nearly half (48.7%) of all of the 337 survey respondents indicated they had heard coworkers make comments of a sexual nature about another woman or women in general in front of them. More than one third of 337 respondents indicated they had heard coworkers talking about their sex lives (37.4%) or making unwelcome jokes of a sexual nature (37.1%). While 31.1% of the respondents indicated they had experienced comments of a sexual nature about their body and/or clothes and 27.9% had experienced unwelcome verbal sexual advances.

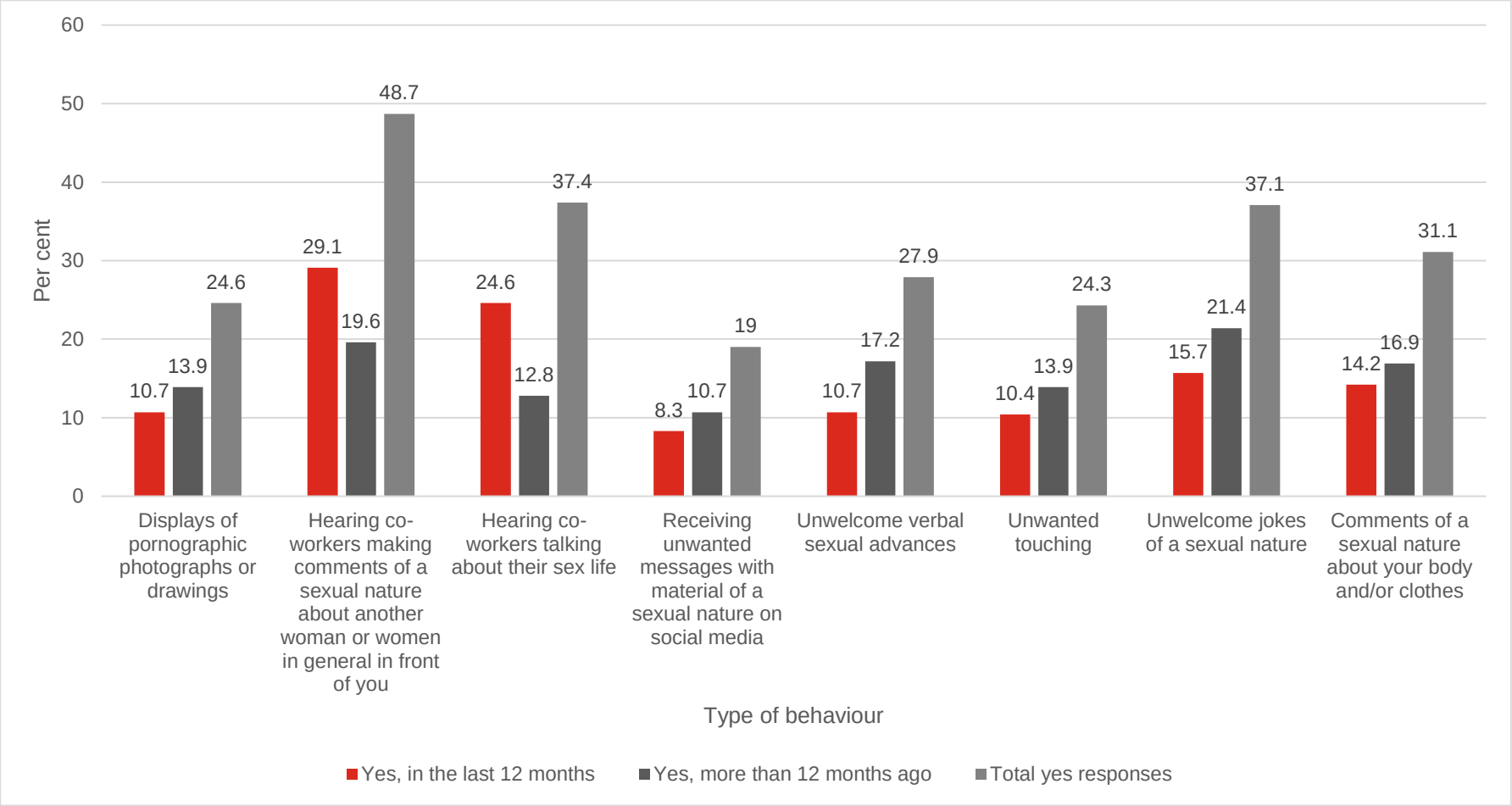

Figure 4.20: Sexual harassment behaviour experiences (as % of total respondents in the sample)

Chi-square tests were performed to determine whether there were any significant differences between the sexual harassment behaviours experienced by respondents in different age groups, by job classification, and by the use of language at home. Only respondents indicating the experience of these behaviours either within or before the 12 months preceding completion of the survey and those indicating no experience, are included in the tests.

4.3.2 Sexual harassment behaviour experience by age group

Significant differences by age of respondent were found for the experience of hearing coworkers discussing their sex lives while at work (Table 9.4). The percentage of respondents reporting this experience in each age group is shown in Figure 4.21. Proportionally more respondents aged between 25 and 29 years reported experiencing hearing coworkers talking about their sex life at work compared to respondents in other age groups. Older respondents reported this behaviour less frequently, but still more than one in four respondents aged 50 years or older reported having experienced this behaviour.

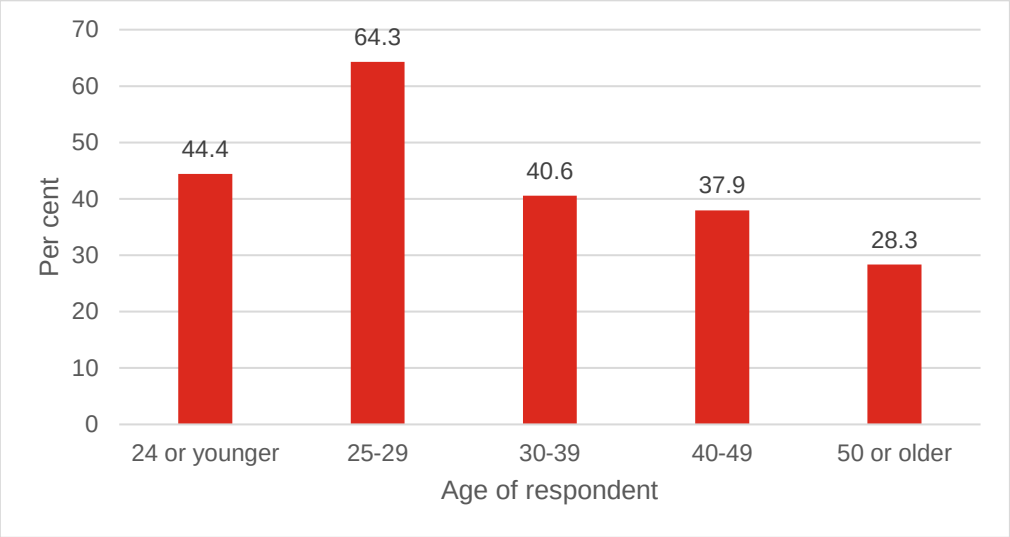

Figure 4.21: Respondents experiencing hearing coworkers talking about their sex life by age (n=298)

Significant differences by age of respondent were also found for the experience of receiving comments of a sexual nature about their body or clothes (Table 9.4). The percentage of respondents reporting this experience in each age group is shown in Figure 4.22. More than half of the respondents aged between 25 and 29 years reported having experienced this behaviour. However, approximately a quarter of respondents aged 40 years or older also reported having this experience in the workplace.

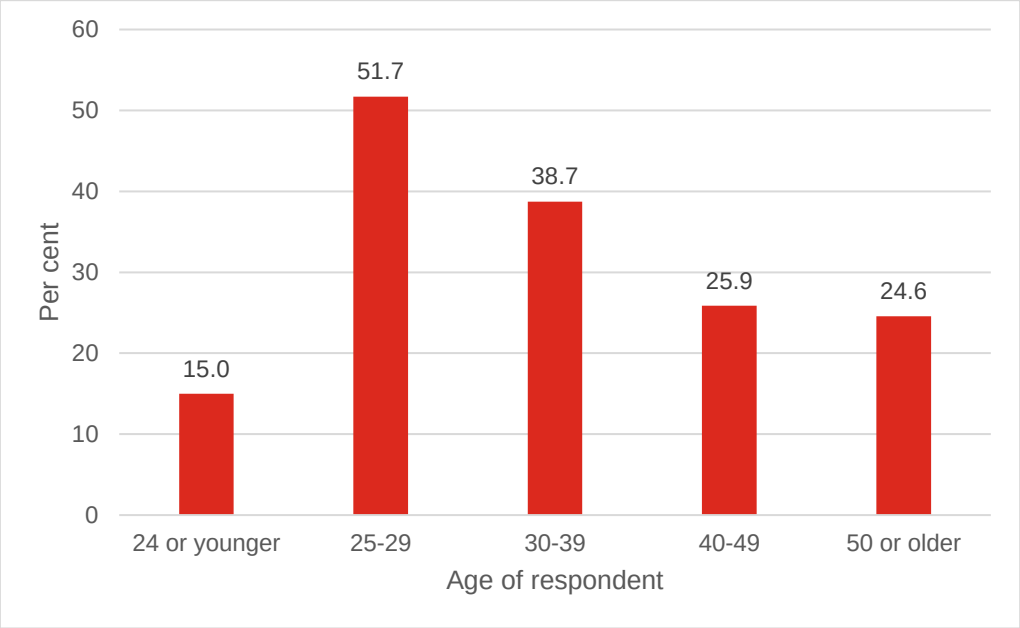

Figure 4.22: Respondents experiencing comments of a sexual nature about their body or clothes by age (n = 304)

4.3.3 Sexual harassment behaviour experience by job classification

The experience of sexual harassment behaviours also varied significantly depending on respondents' job classification (i.e., whether they indicated they are in a site- or office-based role). Figure 4.23 compares the percentage of site- and office-based respondents who reported having experienced the different types of sexual harassment behaviours in the workplace. The numbers of respondents who answered questions relating to each sexual harassment behaviour and occupation are listed in Table 9.5.

Proportionally more respondents in site-based roles reported experiencing the following behaviours than those in office-based roles:

- displays of pornographic photographers or drawings in the workplace (46.0%)
- hearing coworkers making comments of a sexual nature about another woman or women in general in front of them (72.9%)
- hearing coworkers talking about sex life (59.2%)
- receiving unwanted messages with material of a sexual nature on social media (47.8%)
- unwelcome verbal sexual advances (54.9%)
- unwanted touching (50.0%)
- unwelcome jokes of a sexual nature (68.9%), and

- comments of a sexual nature about their body/clothes (47.8%).

A Chi-square test was performed to determine whether these differences were statistically significant. The results are presented in Part 9, Table 9.5. Differences between office- and site-based respondents' experiences of all sexual harassment behaviours were statistically significant.

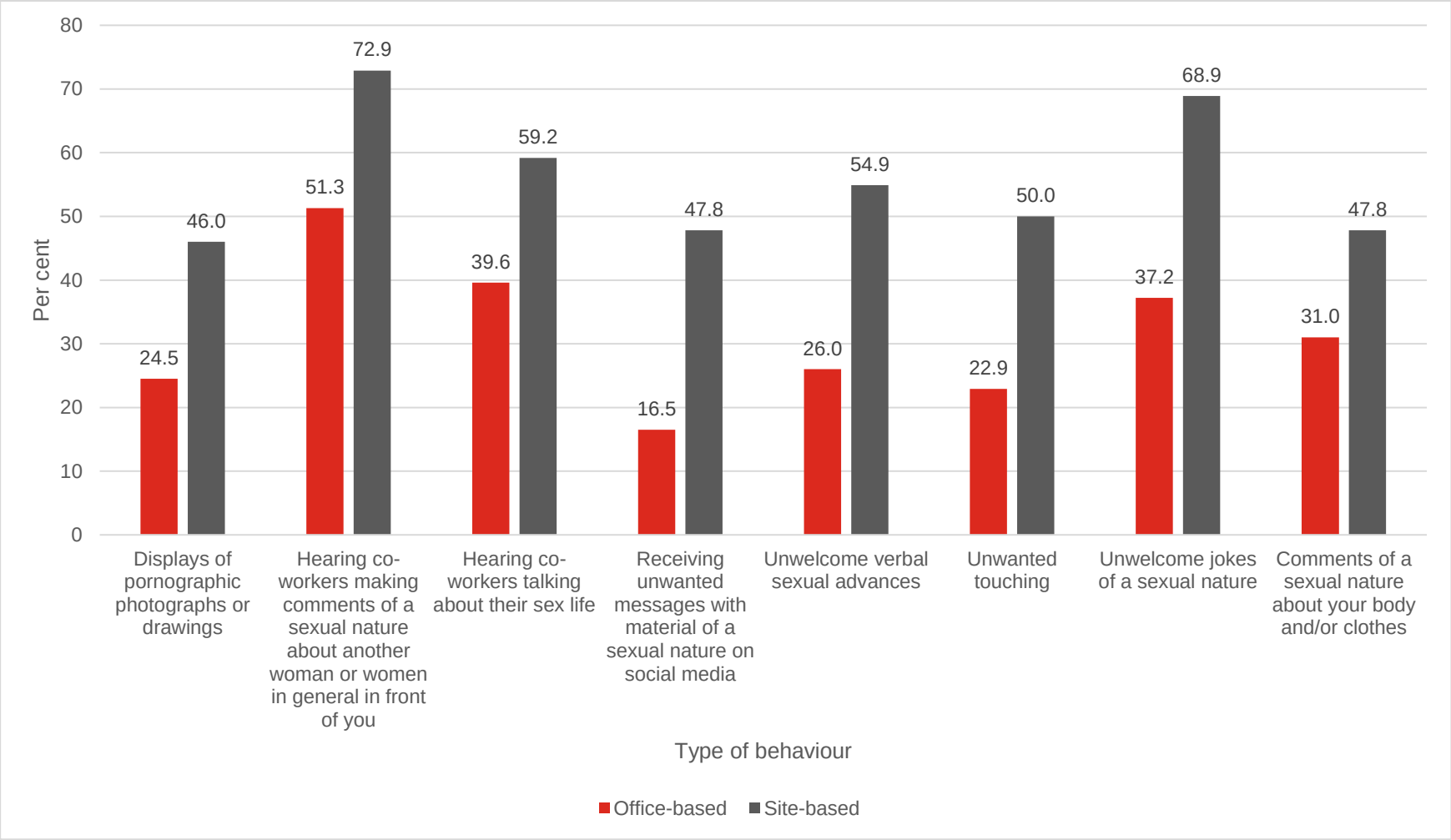

Figure 4.23: Experience of sexual harassment behaviour by office- and site-based respondents by type of behaviour

4.3.4 Sexual harassment behaviours experienced by respondents who differed in language spoken at home

Figure 4.24 shows the percentage of respondents who indicated they experienced different types of sexual harassment behaviour by the language they indicated they speak at home. Respondents who indicated they speak only English at home were proportionally more likely to indicate that they had experienced all types of sexual harassment behaviour compared to respondents who speak a language other than English at home. The numbers of respondents who answered questions relating to each sexual harassment behaviour and language spoken at home are listed in Table 9.6.

Notwithstanding this, more than one in five respondents who speak a language other than English at home reported experiencing:

- hearing coworkers making comments of a sexual nature about another woman or women in general in front of them (33.3%)
- hearing coworkers talking about their sex life (27.3%)
- unwelcome jokes of a sexual nature (27.8%), and
- comments of a sexual nature about their body and/or clothes (23.2%).

A Chi-square test was performed to determine whether these differences were statistically significant. The results are presented in Part 9, Table 9.6. Differences between the experiences of respondents who only speak English and those who speak another language at home were statistically significant for all of the sexual harassment behaviours, except for the behaviour of receiving unwanted messages of a sexual nature on social media.

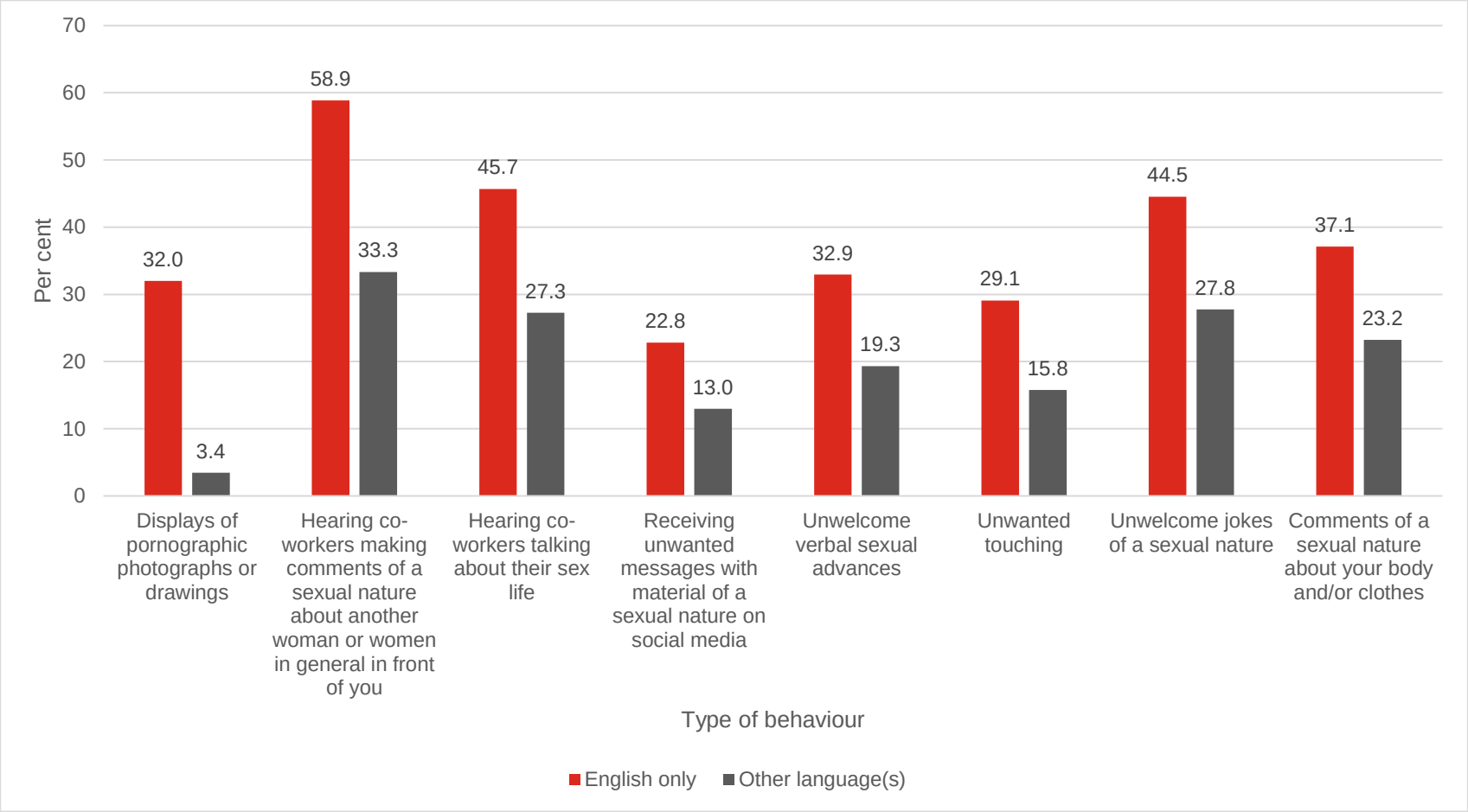

Figure 4.24: Experience of sexual harassment behaviour experienced by respondents who speak only English or another language(s) at home by type of behaviour

4.4 Perceptions of humour that 'crosses the line'

Respondents were asked what makes a joke unacceptable to them and were encouraged to provide examples or describe the characteristics of such humour. A total of 240 respondents answered this question. The comments were thematically analysed and the resulting themes are presented in the following sections with illustrative quotations from respondents' comments.

4.4.1 Jokes of a sexual nature

> *"As I walked in the door to begin my day, he said to me, 'Hey! Show me your tits, hahaha…'"*

The most frequent aspect of humour that respondents believe to be offensive and unacceptable in the workplace and offensive is when jokes of a sexual nature are made:

- "*crudely referencing anything sexual, or even making a point to tell another woman you are physically attracted to her"*
- "*vulgar and pornographic jokes"*
- *"sexually disgusting or vulgar jokes"*
- *"whenever it is sexual"*
- *"when it is sexualising"*
- *"sexual banter of any nature to me is unacceptable, whether you are male or female"*
- *"if the joke or banter has a sexual connotation", and*
- *"any sort of sexual innuendo about or towards another person".*

Some respondents provided examples of their experience of sexual humour in the workplace. These typically involved unwanted sexual advances or uninvited remarks about respondents' bodies. One respondent recalled being made fun of for her "big butt." Another respondent recounted the following experience: "*A manager of mine was talking with a client about a recent sexual harassment training he had to attend. He was laughing it off to prove a point. As I walked in the door to begin my day, he said to me, 'Hey! Show me your tits, ha… ha… ha…*'"

Sexual jokes made in a group setting, even if not directed at women or referring to women's bodies, were still considered unacceptable. One respondent described this type of humour: "*When boys joke in group situations and refer to male genitals*."

Some respondents observed that the use of profane language with sexual connotations is common and offensive. One noted: "*I'm not easily offended but hate hearing the 'C' word constantly*."

4.4.2 Other unacceptable jokes

Respondents also described other characteristics of workplace humour that they consider to be unacceptable. For example, jokes that reference or reinforce gender stereotypes were considered inappropriate. For example, one respondent shared: "*A male colleague telling a female coworker to get back to the kitchen and organize lunch is not funny*." Another respondent highlighted discriminatory sexist remarks, such as "*women are short-sighted with long hair*," noting that such comments "*reinforce stereotypes, hurt individuals, and contribute to conflicts and injustices*."

> *"A male cohort telling a female coworker to get back to the kitchen and organise lunch is not funny."*

Respondents also believe that making jokes about someone's race, cultural or linguistic background, religion, sexual orientation, physical ability, personal circumstances, family, or individual traits, such as their appearance or personality is unacceptable:

- *"anything and everything homophobic, sexist, racist"*
- *"anything that touches in a derogatory manner on the following areas: religion, race, gender, physical appearance, sexuality; anything that needs to be preceded by "not being offensive" or followed up with 'just joking'"*
- *"discrimination and prejudice against specific groups based on race, gender, religion, nationality, etc."*
- *"humour targets people based on race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or other identities"*
- *"when you make a derogatory or hurtful remark about a person or their beliefs, looks, religion or disabilities if any etc. and try to play it off as a joke"*
- *"degrading another person either about their appearance or personality"*
- *"when a joke is made directly about my physical, nationality, culture"*
- *"when it is targeting someone's appearance, character and religion"*
- *"anything about my personal nature that means something to me"*
- *"jokes involving personal privacy and sexuality are not acceptable"*
- *"if its directly something that will hurt you, anything about appearance, family, living situation etc."*
- *"poking fun at someone's personal insecurities or hardships - like their appearance, finances, or job status",* and
- *"joking about family is the most unloving thing".*

Respondents also suggested that humour that ventures too far into someone's private life and/or sharing information about someone that might not be publicly known is also unacceptable:

- *"getting personal about my private issues",* and
- *"publicise the details, secrets, embarrassing experiences, etc. of my private life that I don't want to disclose as jokes, such as emotional entanglement, family conflicts, etc.".*

Respondents also pointed out that making jokes about traumatic events or experiences is unacceptable and can cause considerable harm to people who may have experienced such events in their lives. As one respondent explained: *"make light of trauma or suffering: humour around serious issues like violence, abuse, poverty, or death can be deeply distressing, especially for people who've been directly affected."*

4.4.3 Intention and impact of humour delivery

Many respondents considered the intention of the person delivering 'humour' as a factor in determining the acceptability of a workplace joke. They considered a joke to be unacceptable when it was deliberately targeted and intended to make someone else feel uncomfortable:

- *"when it gets personal and directed at someone"*
- *"when it appears to be targeted"*
- *"when it is directed to someone personally"*
- *"when the joke is from someone I know, their intent is the difference between whether it's acceptable or not"*
- *"if it is with malicious intent"*
- *"intent is part of it—if it is intended to demeaning or hurtful, not understanding that the world has moved on and what may have previously been acceptable and refusal to move with the times"*
- *"when the person making the joke/banter says something deliberately with the intent to offend or hurt someone and disguises it as a joke—'I was only joking'"*
- *"it crosses the line when the underlying intention is to put someone down or embarrass them"*
- *"when it is meant to cause harm"*
- *"when it is intentionally used to belittle someone or make them feel insecure"*
- *"any jokes designed to target someone's failures"*
- *"I would consider crossing the line when it's intended to be mean or nasty",* and

- *"if it is intended to cause a negative reaction from the target person".*

Some respondents also commented on the subjective nature of humour and observed that a person making a joke may not have intended to cause offence, but a recipient may still be offended. These respondents believe that if the recipient finds a joke to be offensive or feels uncomfortable then the humour is unacceptable. For example, one respondent explained that "*offending someone or repetitively making the same joke when someone clearly does not find it light-hearted*" is unacceptable.

The recipient's willingness to participate in workplace humour was also identified to be a factor in where the boundary of acceptability should be drawn. One respondent observed that "*jokes [made] at someone's expense when they haven't initiated the joke*" are unacceptable.

> *"This is subjective… But I would say it crosses the line when others are impacted."*

The impact of humour was also identified as a factor determining whether it is acceptable or not in a workplace context. Many respondents believe that a joke is unacceptable if it causes the recipient to feel intimidated, belittled, hurt, marginalised, or uncomfortable—regardless of intent. One respondent explained: "*This [what makes a joke unacceptable] is subjective... But I would say it crosses the line when others are impacted*." Other respondents shared a similar understanding:

- "*when it puts people down and makes them feel bad in any way it is totally unacceptable"*
- *"if it will put someone down or make others feel uncomfortable—in fact if it will do anything except cheer them up/make them laugh/lighten the mood",* or
- *"once it makes someone feel uncomfortable".*

4.5 Experience of unacceptable workplace humour

4.5.1 Perpetrator of unacceptable jokes

Having identified the characteristics of workplace humour that they consider to be unacceptable, respondents were asked to identify the job role of people who perpetrate humour they consider to be unacceptable in their workplace.

Figure 4.25 shows the roles of people identified as being the perpetrators of unacceptable workplace humour experienced by respondents. Respondents most frequently identified the perpetrator of unacceptable jokes in the workplace as their male coworkers (39.5%). Additionally, 16.6% of respondents identified their supervisor or another manager as the perpetrator of unacceptable jokes in the workplace.

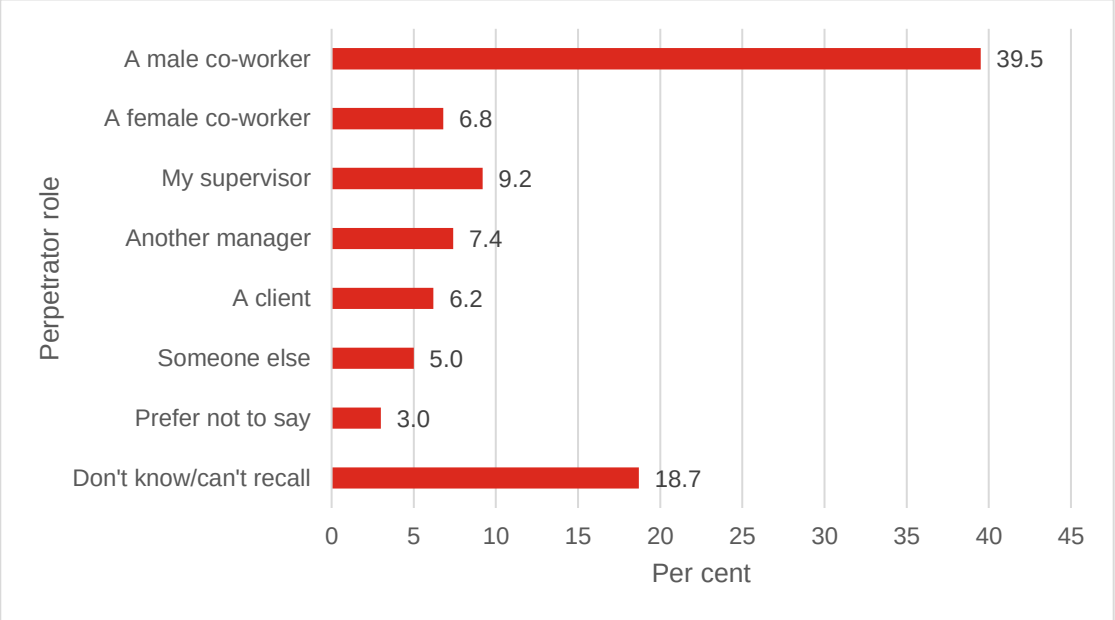

Figure 4.25: The job role of people reported to perpetrate unacceptable workplace humour (n=337)

4.5.2 Reporting of unacceptable jokes

If they had experienced workplace humour they considered to be unacceptable, respondents were asked to indicate whether they reported this behaviour to their employer. A total of 322 respondents answered this question. The results are shown in Figure 4.26.

More than one-third of respondents (37.6%) indicated they did not report their experience of unacceptable workplace humour to their employer. 24.2% of respondents indicated they had reported the unacceptable workplace humour, they were taken seriously and the issue was dealt with satisfactorily. A further 15.5% of respondents indicated they had reported the unacceptable workplace humour to their employer but the issue was not dealt with satisfactorily.

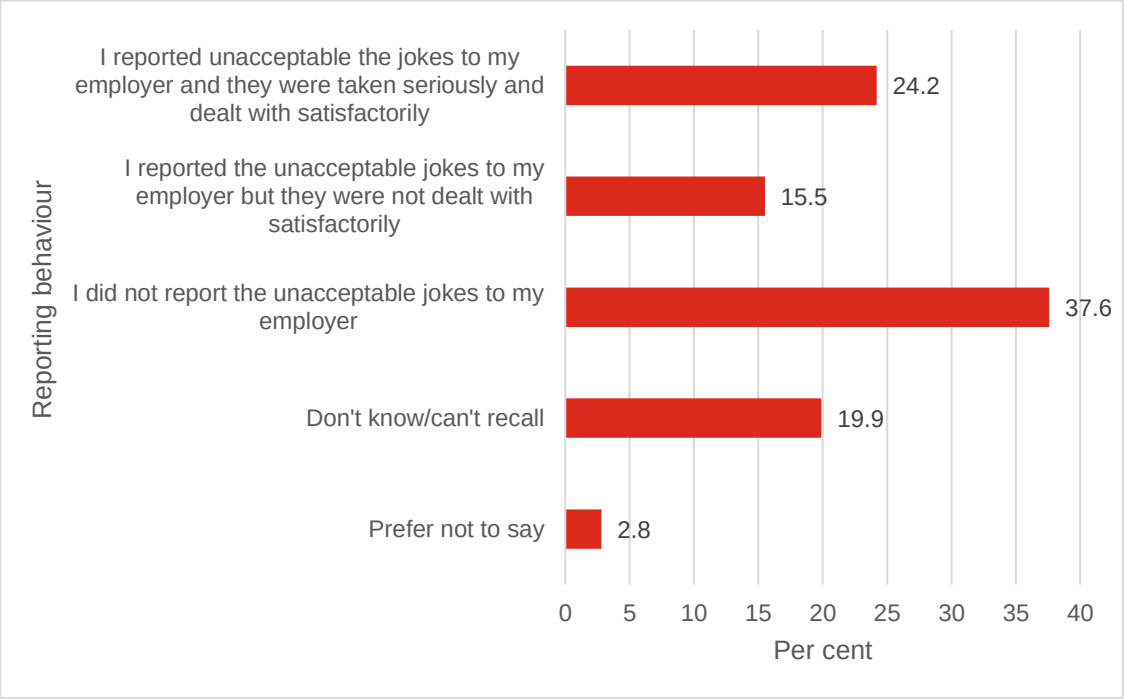

Figure 4.26: Reporting behaviour in relation to unacceptable workplace humour (n=322)

4.5.3 Outcomes of reporting of unacceptable workplace humour

Figures 4.27 shows the outcomes indicated by respondents who reported instances of unacceptable humour in the workplace (n=128).

The largest proportion of these respondents (48.4%) indicated that they experienced no change in their treatment after reporting workplace humour that they considered to be unacceptable. 17.2% of respondents who indicated they reported unacceptable workplace humour to their employer indicated they were treated worse after reporting. 32.0% of respondents indicated they were treated better after they reported the unacceptable humour to their employer.

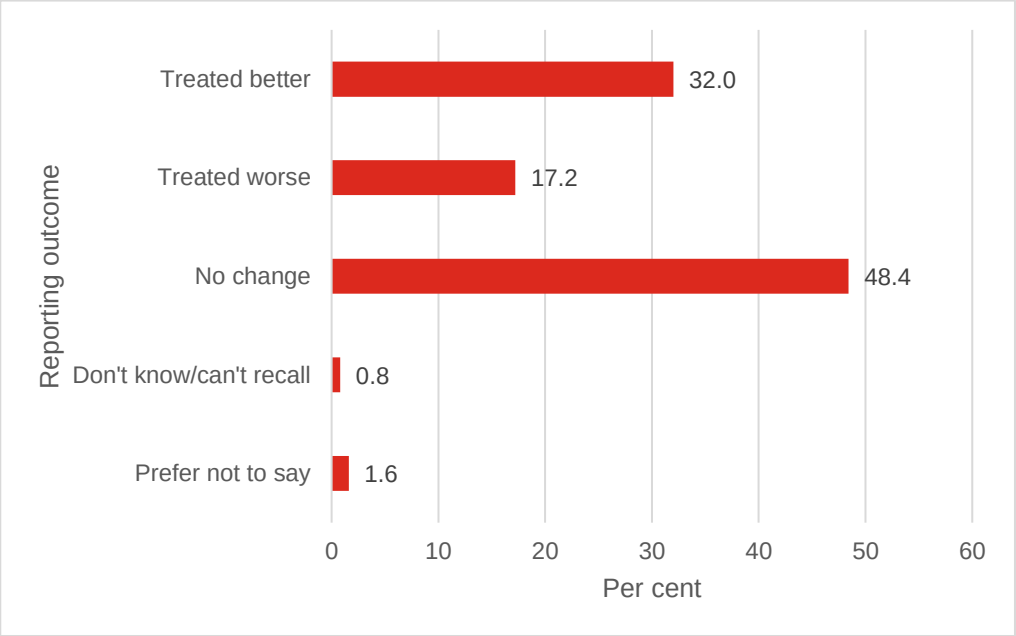

Figure 4.27: Respondents' treatment following reporting of unacceptable humour in the workplace

4.5.4 Reasons for not reporting unacceptable jokes

Respondents who did not report instances of unacceptable workplace humour to their employer were asked to provide reasons for why they did not do so. **Respondents were able to select more than one answer**, recognising that multiple factors might contribute to the decision not to report unacceptable jokes. 122 respondents answered this question, and 222 responses were collected.

Figure 4.28 shows the percentage of respondents indicating each reason for not reporting unacceptable jokes to their employer. Nearly half of 122 respondents who did not report unacceptable humour to their employer when they experienced gave the reason as being that they feared reporting the unacceptable workplace humour to their employer would negatively impact their working relationships (46.7%). A further 31.1% indicated that they did not think they would be believed or taken seriously, and 21.3% indicated they were too embarrassed to report their experience of unacceptable workplace humour.

30.3% of respondents indicated other reasons for not reporting their experience of unacceptable jokes. Some of them specified what these reasons were. Reasons given were:

- because they are self-employed
- because it felt petty to report instances of unacceptable jokes as they seemed infrequent, unimportant, or not serious enough
- because they were worried about judgement or accusation from others for being over-sensitive, or

- because they did not believe that there could be a satisfactory resolution from their employer.

Some respondents indicated that they directly confronted the perpetrator of unacceptable humour in the workplace by themselves. While other respondents indicated they made a conscious decision to ignore the behaviour (i.e. “let it go”‘ and/or not to “take it personally”).

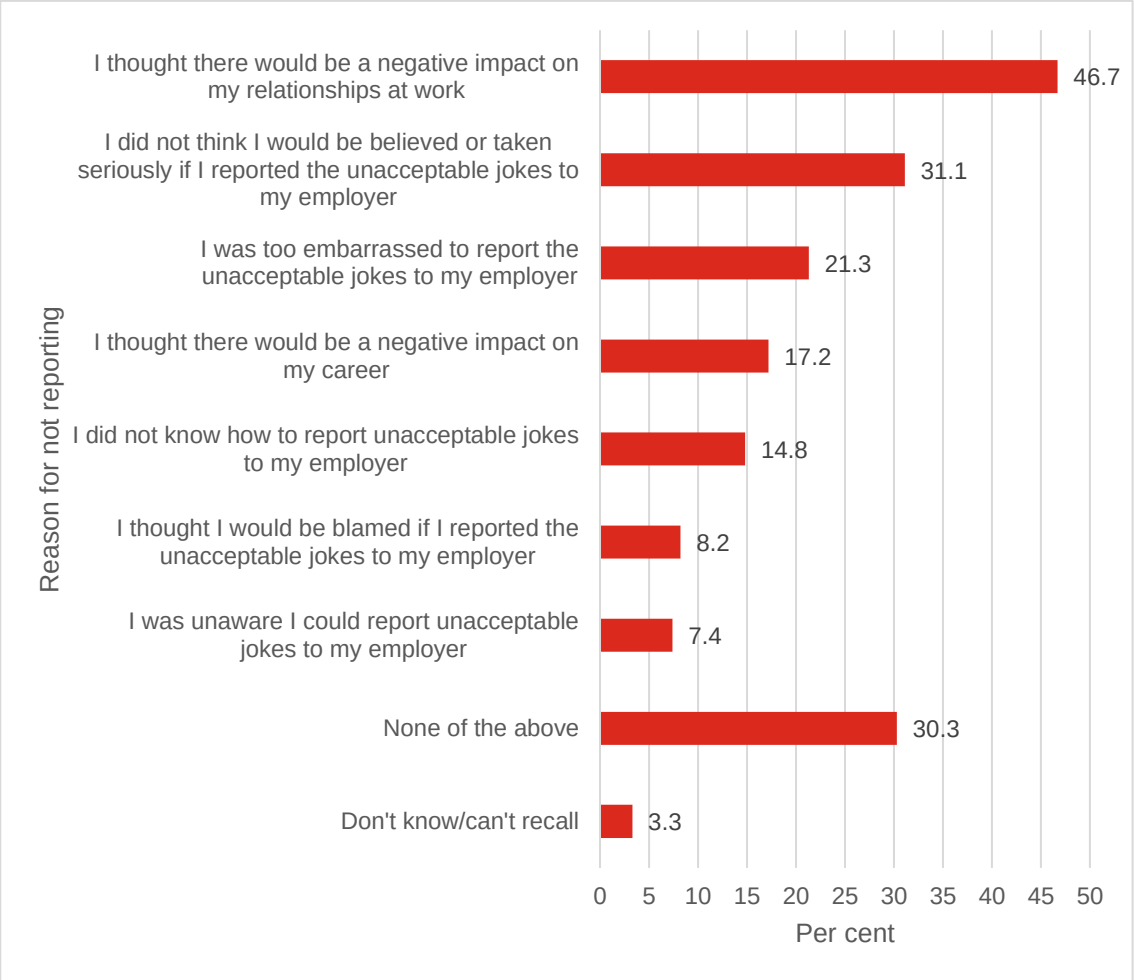

Figure 4.28: Identified reasons for respondents not reporting unacceptable jokes to their employer

Chi-square tests were performed to determine whether there were any significant differences in the reporting of unacceptable jokes between respondents in different age groups, by job classification, and by the use of language at home. The results are presented in Part 7.3. Only respondents who indicated “yes, I reported the unacceptable jokes to my employer” regardless of the outcome of this reporting and “no, I did not report the unacceptable jokes to my employer” were included in the analysis (n=249).

4.5.5 Reporting of unacceptable jokes by respondents' age

Figure 4.29 shows the proportion of respondents in different age groups who indicated they had reported instances of unacceptable humour to their employer (irrespective of the outcome of this reporting).

60.3% of respondents aged between 25 and 29 years, and 55.7% of those aged between 30 and 39 years indicated they reported their experience of unacceptable humour to their employers. This compares with 46.6% of those 24 years of age or younger and 38.9% of respondents 50 years of age or older.

A Chi-square test (n=249) indicated that the difference in reporting behaviour between respondents in different age groups is statistically insignificant (Part 9, Table 9.7).

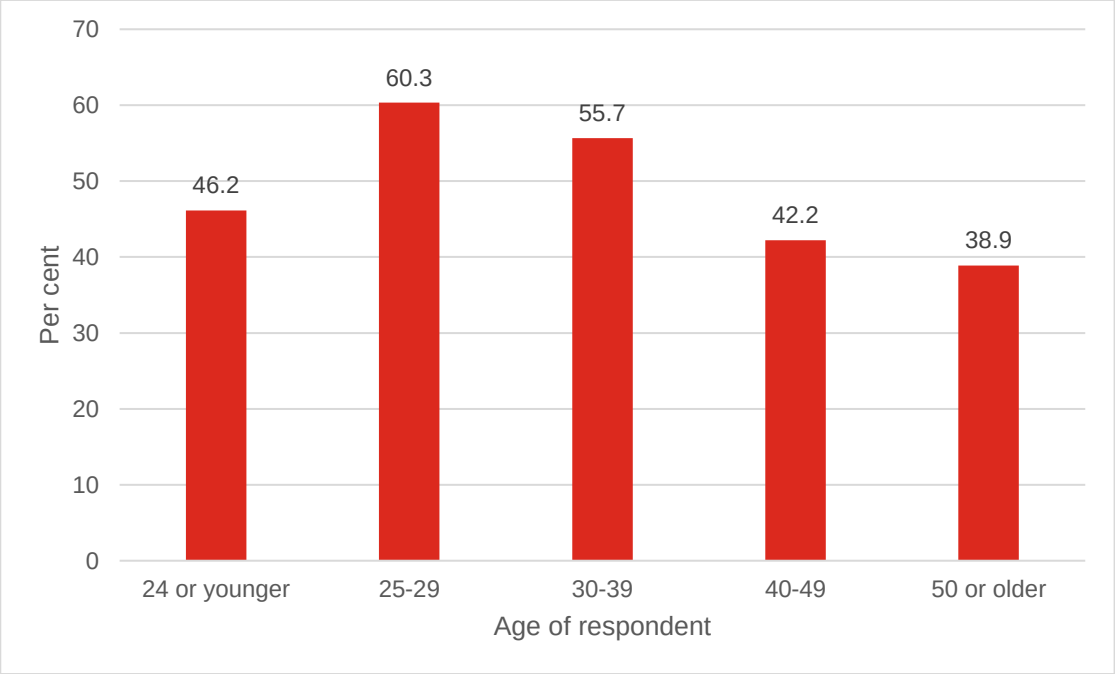

Figure 4.29: Reporting of unacceptable workplace humour by respondents' age

4.5.6 Reporting of unacceptable jokes by respondents' job classification

Figure 4.30 shows the proportion of respondents in different job classifications who indicated they had reported instances of unacceptable humour to their employer (irrespective of the outcome of this reporting).

Proportionally more respondents in site-based roles (78.4%) indicated they had reported instances of unacceptable workplace humour to their employers than respondents in office-based roles (44.6%).

A Chi-square test (n=237) indicated that the difference in reporting behaviour among respondents in office- and site-based jobs is statistically significant (Part 9, Table 9.8).

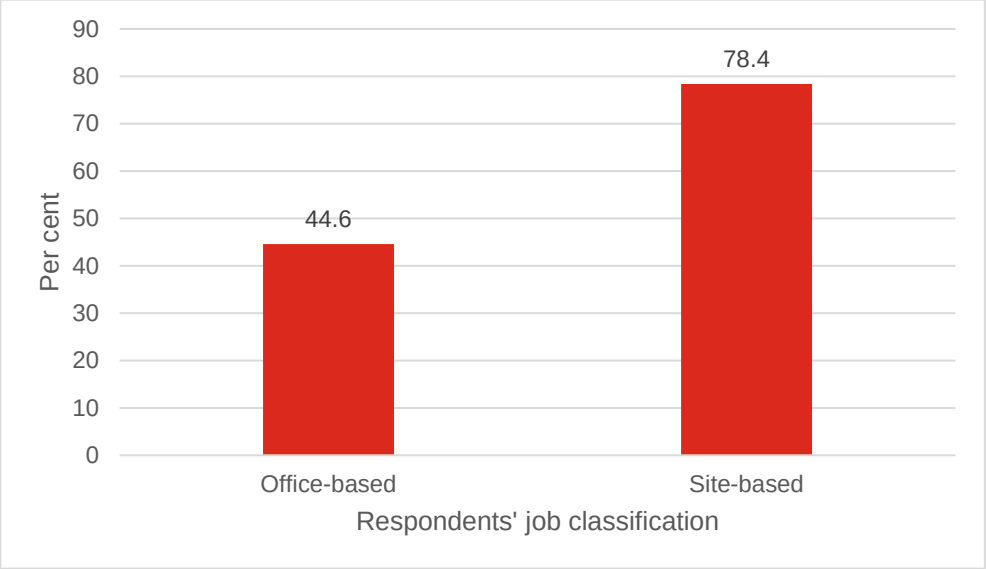

Figure 4.30: Reporting of unacceptable workplace humour by respondents' job classification

4.5.7 Reporting of unacceptable jokes by language spoken at home

Figure 4.31 shows the proportion of respondents who indicated they had reported instances of unacceptable humour to their employer (irrespective of the outcome of this reporting) by whether or not they speak a language other than English at home.

Proportionally more respondents who speak a language other than English at home (58.0%) indicated they had reported instances of unacceptable workplace humour to their employers than respondents whose only language at home is English (49.8%).

A Chi-square test (n=249) indicated that the difference in reporting behaviour among respondents who only speak English at home and those who speak a language other than English at home is not statistically significant (Part 9, Table 9.9).

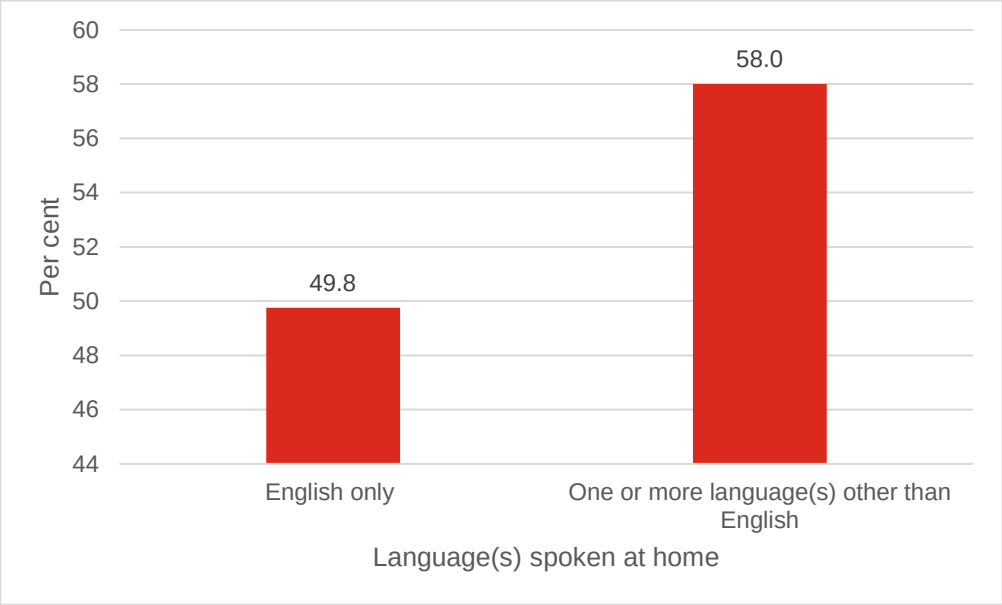

Figure 4.31: Reporting of unacceptable workplace humour by language spoken at home

4.5.8 Impacts of unacceptable jokes

Respondents were asked to indicate the impact that experiencing unacceptable humour in the workplace had on them. In recognition that this experience could have multiple impacts, **respondents were able to select more than one answer to this question**. 309 out of 337 respondents answered this question, and 700 responses were collected.

The most frequently identified impact experienced by respondents was feeling embarrassed following their exposure to unacceptable workplace humour (mentioned by 42.1% of 309 respondents). However, one in three (34.6%) respondents indicated that exposure to unacceptable workplace humour made them avoid certain work situations, e.g. meetings, courses, shifts or work locations, in order to avoid the perpetrator. More than a quarter of respondents (30.4%) also indicated exposure to unacceptable humour in the workplace negatively impacted their mental health, for example making them feel more stressed, depressed or anxious. Another 27.2 % indicated that the experience of unacceptable humour in the workplace made them feel less confident at work.

Figure 4.32 shows the percentage distribution of the different impacts identified by respondents as being associated with exposure to unacceptable humour in the workplace.

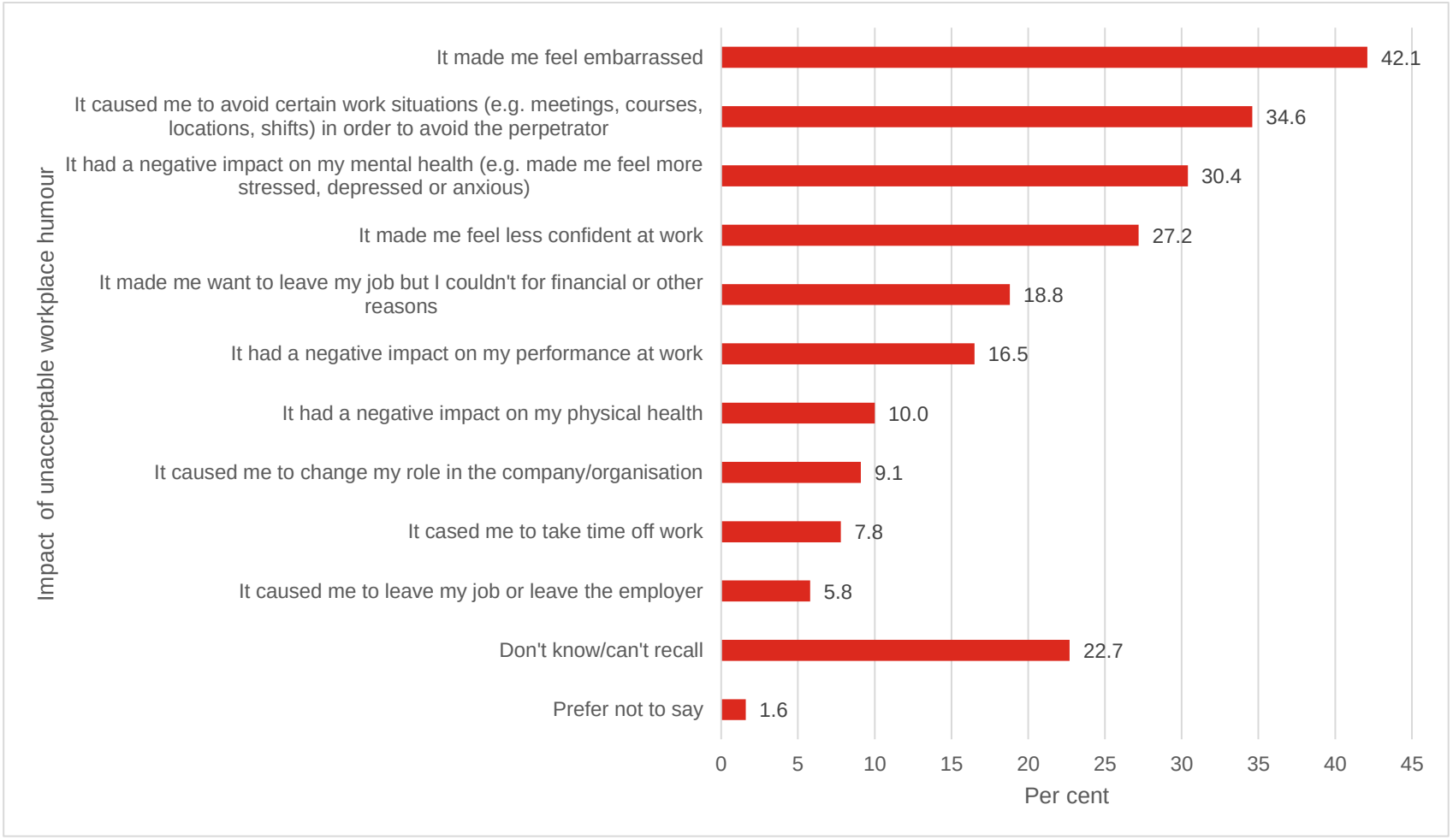

Figure 4.32: Impacts on recipients of unacceptable workplace humour

4.6 Banter policy and effectiveness

4.6.1 Existence of an organisational banter policy

Respondents were asked to identify whether their employing organisation has a formal policy dealing with workplace banter. Figure 4.33 shows the responses to this question. 321 respondents answered this question.

One quarter of 321 respondents (25.2%) indicated that their employing organisation does have an organisational policy dealing with workplace banter. Another 25.2% of respondents were unsure if a policy on banter exists in their employing organisations. Nearly half of respondents (47.7%) indicated their employing organisation has no policy on the subject of workplace banter.

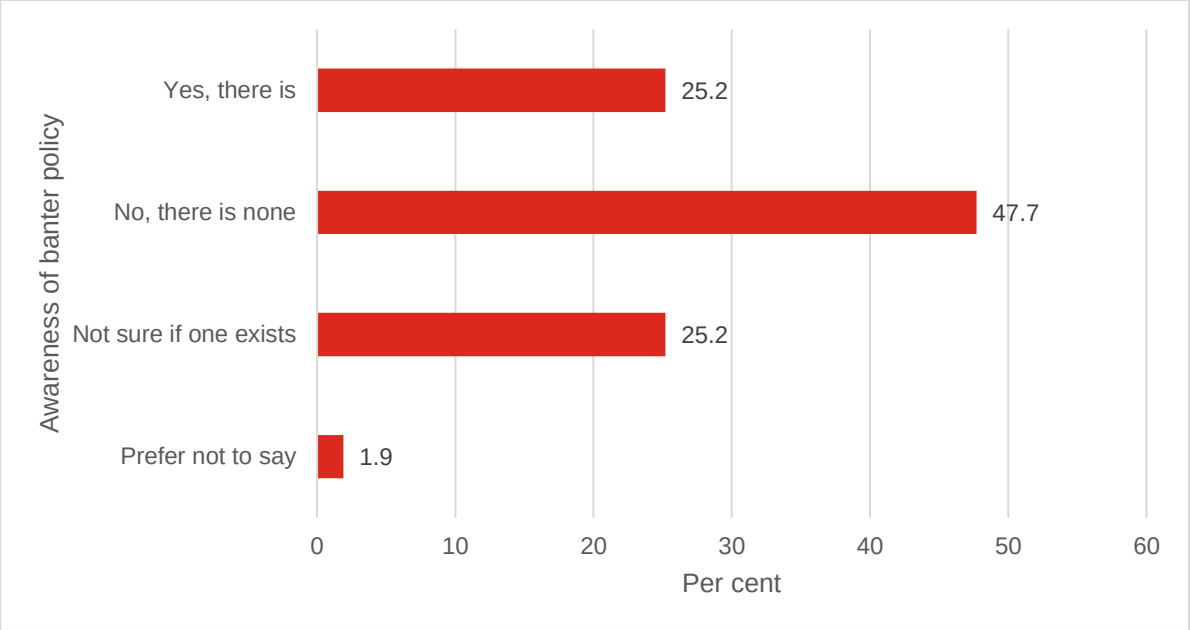

Figure 4.33: Respondents' awareness of organisational banter policy in their employing organisations

4.6.2 Banter policy and reporting

Figure 4.34 shows the reporting behaviour (expressed as a percentage) of respondents who indicated:

- their organisation has a banter policy
- their organisation has no banter policy, and
- they are not aware whether or not their organisation has a banter policy.

Proportionally more respondents who know their organisation has a formal banter policy indicated they reported the experience of unacceptable workplace humour (68.1%) than those whose organisation has no policy (47.8%) or who are unaware of the existence of a policy (40.7%).

Conversely, proportionally more respondents did not report an incidence of unacceptable workplace humour when their organisation does not have a formal banter policy (52.2%) or if they do not know if one exists (59.3%) compared to people who did not report when they were aware that their employing organisation has a formal banter policy (31.9%).

A Chi-square test (n=243) indicated that the differences in reporting behaviour between respondents who do have, don't have or don't know if their organisation has a banter policy were significantly different (Part 9, Table 9.10).

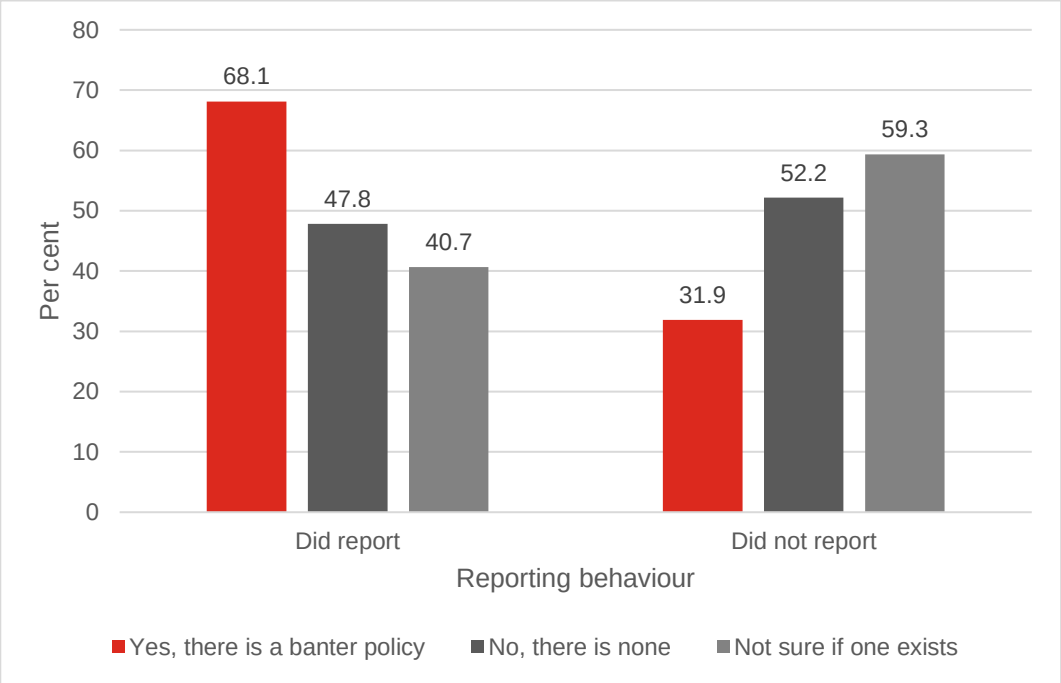

Figure 4.34: Respondents' reporting behaviour according to whether there is an organisational policy concerning workplace banter

4.6.3 Banter policy and treatment after reporting

Figure 4.35 shows the outcomes of reporting of incidents of unacceptable workplace humour according to whether respondents' employing organisation has a formal policy on workplace banter or not.

Proportionally more respondents who indicated their employing organisation has a formal banter policy also indicated they were treated better after they reported an incident of unacceptable workplace humour (52.2%) compared to those whose organisations did not have a formal banter policy (17.9%) or those who were unaware whether such a policy exists in their organisation (31.8%).

However, proportionally more respondents whose organisations have a formal banter policy also indicated that they were treated worse following the reporting of an incidence of unacceptable humour (26.1%) than those whose organisations had no such policy (16.1%) or who were unaware of whether such a policy exists (4.6%).

Proportionally more respondents who indicated no change in outcome after reporting an incident of unacceptable workplace humour work in organisations where there is no formal banter policy (66.1%) or where they are unsure if such a policy exists (63.6%).

A Chi-square test (n=124) indicated that the differences in reporting outcomes between respondents who do have, don't have or don't know if their organisation has a banter policy were significantly different (Part 9, Table 9.11).

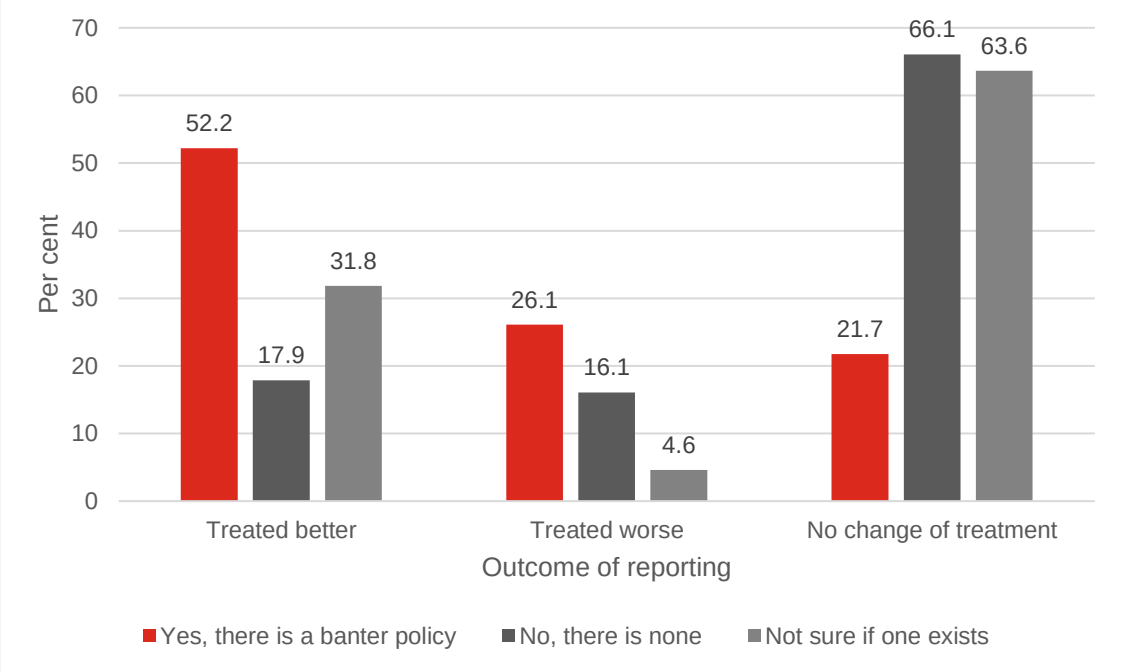

Figure 4.35: Treatment after reporting an incidence of unacceptable workplace humour by whether a respondent's employing organisation has a formal banter policy

Part 5: Interview findings

5.1 Experiences of humour

We asked women who participated in the interviews to share their experiences with humour in the workplace, both positive and negative, and to explain how they define and perceive jokes that 'cross the line'. The majority of interview participants acknowledged the value of positive humour at work, recognising that it can help reduce work-related stress and strengthen workplace relationships. However, they also observed that certain types of jokes are unacceptable in the workplace, noting that harassment and discrimination are often disguised as humour in construction workplaces. This section presents the key themes relating to participants' experiences of:

(i) humour can be a positive work experience

(ii) humour can be subjective and context-dependent

(iii) some behaviours are unacceptable in a workplace, no matter the circumstance, and

(iv) humour being used to mask underlying hostility.

These themes are described in the following section with quotations from the interviews to illustrate each theme.

5.1.1 Humour can be a positive work experience

The majority of participants recognised the essential and positive role that humour plays in the workplace. They reported that jokes and banter can serve to relieve work stress and build relationships and rapport between coworkers.

One manager who started her career in construction as a site-based worker noted that banter is a "*strong method of communication*". She described: *"It has been one of the things that has drawn me to construction."* In her observation: *"People are under a lot of pressure, but they let off that pressure by building that camaraderie and the joking around… The work is already serious and hard so then the banter keeps you going, like the banter is where you let off a bit of steam and everybody has a joke and everybody is building [with] each other."* (P01, manager)

Another participant in a trade-based role similarly explained that jokes help to relieve stress and avoid burnout: *"Getting exhausted in the field of work with this kind of job happens more frequent. So if you don't put yourself in the joking situation… you will be extremely mentally exhausted."* She added that she is both the recipient and speaker of jokes in the workplace: *"So I try to create a joke when there's an opportunity for that and then, whenever I am damned tired, stressed out, exhausted, worn out, and then someone comes around to play with me, it could be through a message, through a phone call, through a physical conversation, I just take every bit of it seriously and important… It helps to relieve the stress, even at the tiniest little level."* (P04, bricklayer)

Many of the participants highlighted the positive impact of humour in the workplace, describing how they appreciate jokes and banter when used appropriately. As one apprentice put it: *"I think humour should be encouraged and allowed. It is a way of letting off steam."* (P13, carpentry apprentice)

5.1.2 Humour can be subjective and context dependent

Although humour can help to relieve stress and build social cohesion in the workplace, participants also observed that workplace humour is not unambiguously positive. They suggested humour can be subjective and context-dependent. Specifically, what may seem harmless to one person can potentially be offensive to someone else, or when spoken in a different context.

A manager with five years of experience in construction explained: *"I think that one of the big things with humour is its interpretation. How something is said to me, and something is said to you can be interpreted differently. How do you manage someone's interpretation of humour? Something might be said to you, and you might not like that, but if it was said to me because we have a different relationship, then it might be funny."* (P06, manager)

Similarly, a professional worker who has worked in construction for 15 years shared: *"I sometimes would say that if you are part of that conversation and you understand the context to the conversation, sometimes it might be funny and you might not find it offensive, or if you know the person better, or things like that, rather than hearing things in isolation."* (P14, legal professional)

A subject matter expert provided an example: *"I'm thinking of [a Jewish friend] who has the funniest Jewish jokes you've ever heard, but they're funny because there's a group of Jews laughing at the joke, because it's using stereotypes but it's poking fun really at themselves… I certainly wouldn't repeat them."* She observed that whether humour is successful is highly dependent upon the context in which it is used: *"It's the context and it's the people."* (P08, subject matter expert)

The same subject matter expert described the need to think carefully before making a joke to imagine if anyone present could potentially be hurt or offended: "*So it is being part of being a good organisational citizen in a workplace, is being aware of the different backgrounds from which people come and using just a little bit of imagination as to what people are likely to find offensive, it does just require a little bit of imagination…we require you to put on your work persona, and part of that persona is to be respectful of people and to anticipate how people might be offended by things that you might say. So, it's not just saying 'Well, how was I to know that he would be offended by that?' Sometimes people have to use their imagination*." (P08, subject matter expert)

5.1.3 Some behaviours are unacceptable in a workplace, no matter the circumstance

Participants described behaviours they had experienced in the workplace as crossing a line of acceptability to the extent that these behaviours should not even be described as humour or jokes. For example, one manager explained that behaviour targeting other people should not be described as humour: *"I'm not going to call it [the unacceptable behaviour], a joke. I think it's a form of bullying. I don't think that there's any room for jokes onsite…like I work in an office now and there's a bit of banter, but it's never at a human being's expense. It's always about the weather, or your car, it's never really personal. I think when something is directed at somebody personally, it doesn't matter who you are, what you are, how old you are, it's not acceptable. I mean, a joke is*

when you've got, you know, that relationship with that person and it's your friend or somebody that you're acquainted with, or somebody that you have a history or relationship with, but not like a perfect stranger like coming up to you and making jokes about you." (P03, manager)

A subject matter expert similarly explained that certain behaviours that might be permissible outside of work are not acceptable in a workplace under any circumstances: "*You're not saying you simply can't tell a joke. … But just that you have to be aware…the standard that's set in the Sex Discrimination Act and also present in the positive duty under the Sex Discrimination Act and is absolutely imbued in the ILO Convention on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work, is that there just has to be safe workplaces for everyone*." (P08, subject matter expert)

She went on to explain the key point of difference is that the behaviour is taking place in a workplace: "*So that sense that there are boundaries when you're at work and that you should expect boundaries when you're at work is part of being at work, it's part of being a worker. Whether you're a contractor, manager, employee, it just it is different. So, I think the problem is when people say, 'Oh yes, but you know, all my friends think that that's hilarious' or, 'Why are you being so precious about that?' It's just like in the workplace we have different expectations of behaviour.*" (P08, subject matter expert)

Participants expressed a strong belief that making jokes about certain topics is clearly unacceptable in the workplace. These topics are described in the following sections.

Jokes of a sexual nature

For participants, unacceptable humour includes jokes that are sexual in nature or those that make derogatory comments about a person's appearance, relationship status, or private sexual life. Participants explained that such jokes cross critical boundaries between work and private life and contribute to a work environment that lacks respect or professionalism.

A director with 15 years of experience explained: *"Some subjects… certainly starting with your wives and girlfriends and their sex stuff. You just don't want to hear that. Nobody wants to hear that."* (P07, director)

A manager with over 20 years of experience in construction echoed this view: *"When it's a sexually charged joke that makes you feel like you're the example or the butt or the full stop of the joke. That's when it's uncomfortable, that's not okay."* (P01, manager)

Some participants shared specific examples of unacceptable humour that they have experienced. One participant recalled an incident: *"I think as a woman in the sector, one instance that stands out for me is my boss, who I really respected. I remember walking into his office or something like that, or being near him, and he said, 'Now, there's an arse I'll never forget', so anything that sexualises you, or puts you in a context that's sexualised by where you're seen by that person in a different light that's derogatory, that's gross."* (P10)

A manager with 40 years of experience in construction recalled how uncomfortable she felt when, as Summer approached, she wore shorts to work instead of her usual long pants. The site supervisor commented on her appearance: *"When I was on a construction site once through*

Winter, and I always wore long pants and obviously my work boots and my PPE, and then I remember as the seasons transitioned into Summer, the site foreman one day walked up to me and he said, '[name],' and I said, 'what?' And he goes, 'I didn't know you had legs.' … That wasn't actually humorous." (P03, manager)

Unacceptable humour can also manifest in everyday language on the job site. For instance, a participant specialising in health and safety shared how she was called "*safety slut*" by her male colleagues on site (P11, health and safety manager).

Participants described how jokes involving sexual connotations or innuendo, regardless of their intended target, are unacceptable. They also observed that these jokes can be made verbally and behaviourally. A business owner with 15 years of experience in the industry recalled: *"I used to have one guy on one of the projects, and this example isn't directed at me personally, but it's being in this environment where it was banter. Where he would come in on a Monday morning, and he would hang up on the superintendent's partition of his office the pair of undies from the woman who he'd slept with on the weekend… and every weekend."* (P02, business owner)

Another participant observed that exposure to unacceptable humour can occur when women inadvertently enter spaces where this humour is shared: *"There're many jokes guys won't talk about or express when there's a female around if they think she could be offended by it or, other times, some of them are quite brazen and they will anyway…Generally it's just out in the office or out if they're having a vape or a cigarette outside and you just happen to say g'day and you want to talk to them about something or just check in with them about something and they might be mid through it or they just decide to say it in front of you anyway."* (P11, health and safety manager)

Importantly, unacceptable jokes are not always created in the physical workplace. Participants observed that unacceptable humour can be brought into the workplace in the form of content that is shared from mainstream or social media: *"You get some of the guys coming in with pretty crude stuff that they might hear off the radio. Like some of those jokes that you hear on Instagram and all of that that the guys will talk… two guys will be communicating with each other on the radio so yes, mate to mate sort of thing, and then they'll just recite that joke that they heard on the radio back in the depot or in the office or they might, it might be outside."* (P11, health and safety manager)

Discriminatory gender-based jokes

Participants also identified jokes that are discriminatory based on gender as unacceptable. As a subject matter expert highlighted: *"We often forget about sex-based harassment, so that's where someone says, 'Well, you're a woman, what would you know?'. Yes, that's not sexually harassing someone, but it is absolutely disrespectful. So, I take a broad lens on what constitutes both respect and also a safe workplace, so that it might think broadly of gender-based violence against women."* (P08, subject matter expert)

A participant in a trade-based role similarly observed that sexist and discriminatory humour is unacceptable in a workplace: *"They make jokes, they laughed about it, and they said… when we are on construction site that we should be at home baking cookies…[I] found the joke a bit harmful because [it made fun of our] abilities as women. It undermined [women's] contribution to the*

construction industry. Jokes like that… [based on] gender biases are not acceptable. It's not supposed to be acceptable by anyone in a professional setting. So, it wasn't acceptable by me." (P04, bricklayer)

A participant in a managerial role also shared her experience of being routinely greeted with gender-based slurs*: "A person will come in and go, 'hello bitches.' It's just how the greeting is to everybody. I do sometimes look around the room and I go, there's different groups of people in that room from different backgrounds, from different countries who probably wouldn't necessarily appreciate that…There's often references to being female… it has become normalised."* (P06, manager)

Another participant in a managerial role described discriminatory jokes targeting women as bullying, suggesting this behaviour should be called out for what it really is, rather than passed off as workplace humour: "*One girl said to me that her favourite response is 'can you explain what that means to me?' When they tell a sexist joke. And she said, 'I'm trying to get them to actually think about what they're saying'…the little comments and the little nicknames. It's very prevalent but it's very rarely, when you call it out, does someone say, 'Oh, sorry.' Usually it's, 'Oh, I'm only joking.' And it's kind of like but if no one's laughing, no one finds it funny, that's not a joke. It's either bullying or it's stepping into another realm*." (P17, manager)

Gender-based discriminatory humour can be used to question and undermine women's capability in construction workplaces. One participant described a situation she observed: *"I think she [women coworker] tried to do something, and they just had to tell her she was wrong, and she was not doing it properly, meanwhile at the end she was actually doing the right thing. They thought she was not doing the right thing because she was a woman."* (P05, contract administrator)

Several participants also mentioned how colleagues use teasing or put-down humour when women utilise flexible work options. For example, a site coordinator transitioning from a full-time to a part-time role recalled: *"When it's four o'clock and I'm getting ready to leave… my second manager on site would say, 'Very nice for you that you can get up and go now. We have to slug it out.'"* This participant was utilising flexible work options to manage her family caring responsibilities – and had taken a pay cut in order to work reduced hours: *"I'm going to do my second job now of being a mother and I have a newly born child, so you clearly don't understand."* (P18, site coordinator)

Consistent with this participant's experience, a subject matter expert observed the challenges faced by women in construction whose caring responsibilities are regarded as problematic by organisations and coworkers: *"[Gender culture in construction is] one which absolutely privileges men but also is interesting because it values men as fathers, so if you're a father you are more likely to get flexibility in terms of your shifts which women don't get because women are seen as being problematic, and then if they go part-time for example and they still want to work certain shifts that's seen as a bridge too far."* (P08, subject matter expert)

Jokes about race, religion, and sexual orientation

Participants also identified humour targeting someone's race, sexual orientation or religion as unacceptable.

One manager explained: *"I think [it's unacceptable if] it's directed at a job role and the country, or the origin of where those people have come from. ... something like, of course it's been done like that because they're Yugoslavs or they can get into those areas because they're small. Those types of comments, not necessarily jokes but it is a bit of a joke. If you look at steel-fixers, when they get into the jump form, there was a job role once called 'monkey'."* (P06, manager)

A senior project manager emphasised that jokes are unacceptable *"when you touch on someone's cultural background or where they come from."* (P09, senior project manager)

This participant further elaborated, explaining that discussions about sexuality or cultural background are unacceptable*: "It's crossing the line when we are talking about sexuality, whether that is, you know, someone's gender or whoever they are in love with… That crosses the line. I also think when you referring to someone's cultural background in a mean way… I don't think it's appropriate."* (P09, senior project manager)

Another manager expressed a similar view: *"There's certain lines you can't cross and there's certain things you can't joke about, and it might be based on their sexuality, or it might be based on their cultural background or their religious background. There is just no go conversations and no go jokes."* (P17, manager)

A subject matter expert similarly explained that religion should not be a subject of humour in a workplace: *"There just has to be safe workplaces for everyone…You have to take people as you find them, and if people are ultra-religious for example, then it is incumbent on you not to make jokes about their religion. ...You have to assume that people are much more sensitive to certain things than you might me.*" (P08, subject matter expert)

5.1.4 Humour being used to mask underlying hostility

Many of the interview participants observed that workplace humour can be used to criticise someone's work in a light-hearted way.

For example, an interview participant in a managerial role commented on the underlying motivation of people who use 'put-down' humour: *"[The perpetrators] are trying to put someone down in a light-hearted way, so it's not sounding so formal and stereotyping. … By putting it in a funny term, it doesn't sound as bad. That was just a joke. Whereas, at the end of the day, they probably meant it and they wanted it to be said. The repercussions aren't on that person as much. … I think because they're using that to hide the truth. If there's something there they actually want to say and it's like, I was just joking."* (P06, manager)

However, in some instances put-down humour can be used to disguise an underlying hostility or aggression towards women. For example, a subject matter expert observed: *"I think in the construction sector, humour, it's not just joke-telling, it's bantering humour… it's a bullshit excuse for excluding people using humour, as far as I'm concerned. And I have to say, in construction, humour is often a mask for, as I've said before, sexism, and discrimination."* (P10, subject matter expert)

Another participant in a managerial role explained: *"The problem with banter in construction is it's too loose. … I think it's a very fine line. It can't be a joke if your comments are so derogatory and really are there to demean and belittle just women."* (P17, manager)

Another subject matter expert described the seriousness of the situation for women's work-related health and safety: "*We don't think in terms of psychological health and safety. But you only have to look at some of those awful cases that involve apprentices where there's… and the person who's in charge of the apprentices is leading the bullying or sanctioning it. And you know, bastardisation, I've read awful files where it's, you know, literally rape. … They do awful things to, yeah, horrible, horrible. But it's seen as a joke*." (P08, subject matter expert)

Participants described how it is difficult to call out sexist or discriminatory humour: *"There have definitely been times when, I don't know if it's gaslighting or what, they express it in such a way that it's, 'I'm just joking' but it's quite offensive, or, it wasn't directed at you it was just a joke—trying to frame it in such a way that, it shouldn't bother you."* (P11, health and safety manager)

Another manager similarly described the response to anyone who calls out sexist or discriminatory workplace humour as 'gaslighting', thereby silencing those who experience it: *"So that's sort of almost a constant that someone will say something, and it might be sexist or it might be racist or it might be homophobic, it will target a group of people—not necessarily young women—and when you take exception to that and you call it out… straight away it's, 'Oh, you can't take a joke. Nothing's funny anymore, you're not allowed to joke around anymore.' There's all this gaslighting behaviour where suddenly the person who called it out is portrayed as the victim, while the inappropriate comment goes unacknowledged and unaddressed… there's a lot of that."* (P17, manager)

5.2 Impacts of unacceptable humour

Unacceptable humour in the workplace can have significant emotional and career consequences for women. Some of the interview participants described how they have considered leaving their jobs due to the negative impacts of workplace interactions and culture.

This section presents the key themes relating to the impacts of unacceptable humour:

(i) emotional wellbeing, and

(ii) career impacts.

These themes are described in the following section with quotations from the interviews to illustrate each theme.

5.2.1 Emotional wellbeing

Participants reported various negative emotional impacts of unacceptable humour, including discomfort, stress, anger, and embarrassment.

For example, one participant in a trade-based role described how interactions with male coworkers adversely impacted her confidence at work: *"My colleague was a male, and then he forces himself to be part of the [pre-job planning] meeting with the ideology that, I need help because I'm a woman and then I might get exhausted because I'm a woman and then just about, he talked about it. That's a joke… It made me feel like I wasn't capable of doing my own things and then no-one, no woman, must have come this far to this stage without not being determined to continue this career."* (P04, bricklayer)

The same participant explained: *"I didn't want them to put me in a situation whereby my work, my services, will be doubted because of my gender, I didn't like that at all."* (P04, bricklayer)

Another participant in a managerial role described coping with unacceptable humour in the workplace by withdrawing from the social situation in which the humour occurred. For this participant, the impact of unacceptable humour was made worse by coworkers' laughing along with the joke, even though she believes they also considered it to be unacceptable: *"It [the inappropriate joke] made me feel super-uncomfortable and I left… I was just embarrassed. Though I felt that there were people that also thought it was inappropriate everybody laughed. So that was hurtful."* (P01, manager)

A business owner with 15 years of experience described how her male colleagues routinely came to work on Monday morning and 'showed off' the underwear of women they had slept with over the weekend: *"It made me feel quite uncomfortable just hearing. It wasn't degrading or anything like that, but there was just innuendoes and connotations all the time."* (P02, business owner)

Another participant in a managerial role described her coping strategy as suppressing her individual characteristics and emotions in an attempt to 'blend in' to the work culture: *"It made me feel yuck… I used to do it on every site, trying to blend in, you know, and even when comments were thrown at me that were humorous or sexual, I would literally walk around and act like a man… I became asexual… and I sort of masked myself that way."* This participant further explained: *"I didn't like getting singled out. I never, ever liked it."* (P03, manager)

Another manager with over 20 years' experience similarly noted that the numerically low representation of women in construction workplaces can amplify the emotional impact of humour for women who are highly aware of their minority status in construction workplaces: *"I think women are far more sensitive to some of it - which is not a criticism and I'm not saying that in a way that they shouldn't be, I'm saying that things that are said are genuinely not okay and they are more impactful for women because they already feel like a minority on a job. Even just walking onto a big construction site, even now 20 years, I know that I'm the only woman that's walking, I can feel people looking at me. It's already obvious and uncomfortable."* (P01, manager)

5.2.2 Career impacts

The interview participants also provided insights into how unacceptable jokes in the workplace can impact the professional and career development of women.

One participant, a manager with 15 years of experience in the industry, observed that jokes are commonly made about women's menstrual cycle: *"One of the worst comments I find that men, and I've seen men out on site who are tradespeople and I've seen men in project management in*

offices and other things say it, is that if a woman's like angry or upset about something and is trying to sort of explain that, the amount of men that I've heard say, 'Oh, have you got your period? Is it that time of the month?' Just straight out when she's talking about something in a professional setting and obviously is feeling quite passionate. … that's probably the most common one that I've actually heard like across the board, that it's almost like a woman's not allowed to get angry, it's like she can't feel in the same way, or she can't speak in the same tone as a man." (P17, manager)

Such comments impact women's ability to present themselves and engage with colleagues on equal terms.

Other participants observed that women sometimes leave an organisation or job directly because of exposure to unacceptable humour and discriminatory interactions. For example, a business owner with 30 years of experience working in corporate offices and at construction sites, recalled: *"I was on a site with 4,500 people, and there were 100 women in that camp environment who were dealing with these really unhealthy behaviours, and a lot of them just left."* (P02, business owner)

Another manager, with over two decades of experience in construction, similarly observed: "*I've seen people leave companies or projects because they don't like the culture or there's been toxic banter."* (P01, manager)

One of the subject matter experts also commented: *"You know, when banter is let to run rife then it's really toxic, and what do people do? They vote with their feet. They leave."* (P08, subject matter expert)

Importantly, participants also noted that men may also be adversely impacted by workplace humour that is hostile, aggressive and discriminatory: *"I think that the thing is about our research that we don't know, is we're not tracking all the men who have left construction, and anecdotally there are men that I know who have left construction careers and trades because they couldn't stand the hypermasculine culture. I think that we're not clocking the number of men who are leaving the sector because of the culture."* (P10, subject matter expert)

5.3 Responses to unacceptable humour

When experiencing unacceptable humour, participants responded differently. Most participants expressed how they had learned to accept and cope with an unhealthy joking culture in their workplaces. For these participants the barriers to reporting such behaviour were too great for it to be considered a viable option. Other participants indicated they did report instances of unacceptable workplace humour, but that the outcome of reporting was not always satisfactory. Other women described how they engaged perpetrators of unacceptable workplace humour directly. This section presents the key themes relating to responses to unacceptable humour as follows:

(i) avoidance and disengagement

(ii) fitting in

(iii) barriers to reporting

(iv) reporting outcomes, and

(v) direct engagement.

These themes are described in the following section with quotations from the interviews to illustrate each theme.

5.3.1 Avoidance and disengagement

Some women avoid work occasions or disengage from conversations at work to protect themselves from unacceptable jokes. For instance one interview participant chose to leave a work social event when she experienced targeted unacceptable humour in order to avoid further discomfort: *"I attended a Christmas party and someone in front of a group of men made a joke which was inappropriate, but I was the person he made it to, and it made me feel super-uncomfortable and I left the Christmas party."* (P01, manager)

Other participants described how they consciously disengage from humour in the workplace when they find it offensive: *"They say stuff, then I just block my ear and [think] like 'I don't know you. So I won't give you an ear.'"* (P16, professional worker)

Another participant described feeling unable to change the workplace humour so the options she sees available to her to deal with unacceptable humour are to either walk away from situations that make her uncomfortable or to develop a 'thick skin': *"Because I've gone through it, the consequence to me was either I change myself a lot and I just get the thick skin being knocked about or I change the situation, and I change where I am. In either situation the humour or banter was not stopping in both the solutions I've given."* (P18, site coordinator)

Reflecting on her 15 years in construction, a participant in a managerial role explained how she 'switches off' from conversations: *"If it's not something that I'm interested in I tend to just switch off from it."* (P19, operation manager)

Another participant described how she supressed her emotional responses when faced with unacceptable workplace humour: *"I never reacted, because I would just sit there and do my work and just brush it off and just let it go. I would never say anything at the time. Because my protection strategy when I was working on these projects is I always just pretended I was actually in a bit of a bubble. And just that if anything was happening around me, just to let it bounce off. And that was honestly my coping strategy, with the environments I worked in."* (P02, business owner)

5.3.2 Fitting in

Participants described how some women in construction roles actively try to fit in with the workplace joking culture, emulating the type of humour they see men using: *"I think they are more copying it and trying to be funny to be accepted. ...I think the girls only do it to get a bit of acceptance from the guys."* (P09, senior project manager)

A participant in a managerial role similarly commented: *"I've seen women in recent works where they are just part of the boys, and they will let it go. … They curse as much as anybody else. … I've seen a few traffic controllers and a few others that do that. It's not everyone by any stretch,*

but in some ways, you're thinking, 'well do they have to normalise to be part of the boys the group, the mateship?' Does it mean you have to compromise absolutely everything and then they become quite crude, rude and revolting as well." (P11, health and safety manager)

The following example was also given by a woman who observed 'double standards' in relation to responses to sexually-based humour from men and women. In this case, behaviour that would be unacceptable from a man was considered funny when performed by a woman: *"She'd actually undone her zip on her pants and put [something] there to make it look like it was pubic hairs coming out of her pants. … If that was a bloke, that would have been totally not okay... But everyone just kind of laughed and kept going back to work. That was it."* (P02, business owner)

5.3.3 Barriers to reporting

Most of the interview participants described it as being difficult to report instances of unacceptable humour in the workplace. Participants suggested this was because speaking up would label them as over-sensitive and/or difficult to work with, which could lead to social exclusion or marginalisation.

One participant explained: *"Look, there have been a few times when you walked in on something or went to a room where they're discussing something inappropriate, and they just apologise to me. But other times there are good examples where they expect you to have a super, super, super thick skin and they make out that it's nothing to do with you and it shouldn't impact you and, if it does, then you're a bit weird or super sensitive."* (P11, health and safety manager)

Another woman in a senior role described her coping strategy as follows: *"Just get it [the job] done. Don't fight, don't cause trouble, just move on."* (P07, director)

Women feared that reporting instances of unacceptable humour would result in them being considered unsuitable for a job in the construction industry: *"You don't want the definition of, 'you're not supposed to be here. She's too emotional, she's not supposed to be here.' You don't want people to judge you based on how you're feeling."* (P04, bricklayer)

Participants also feared negative career consequences associated with reporting unacceptable workplace humour. A woman in a managerial position explained: *"Because people are afraid of losing their jobs, their livelihood, you know, being kicked off site, being treated differently, so they're [unacceptable jokes] just tolerated."* (P03, manager)

Young workers, particularly those still undergoing training were particularly concerned about the consequences of reporting. A carpentry apprentice explained: *"I'm trying to find work at the moment to finish up my apprenticeship. …It is really tricky. ...So, trying not to make waves in that sense."* (P13, carpentry apprentice)

This carpentry apprentice explained that when perpetrators of unacceptable humour are in positions of seniority, the opportunities to call out this behaviour are substantially reduced*: "Well, no, because if there's a power imbalance, then no, because say it's your boss that's making those kinds of jokes and that they're being inappropriate. You can't just go 'shut up' to your boss, you know, can you? You've got like, you know, I think that would you feel like it would cause an argument, and you could end up not having secured work, you know."* (P13, carpentry apprentice)

A subject matter expert similarly explained: *"I mean the sexual harassment survey tells us that something like 8% of people who experience some form of sexual harassment, most of which is verbal, only 8% ever complain to anyone. … For a lot of reasons. ... Fear, they think it won't be seen as being serious enough, they're worried about their employment, it's kind of the norm in the workplace. They don't think complaining is going to change anything. … you keep your head down. Comply, or at least be seen to be complying."* (P08, subject matter expert)

5.3.4 Varying reporting outcomes

Some participants chose to report unacceptable workplace humour. However, the results of this reporting were mixed.

In one extreme example, a participant in a managerial role described how she reported experiencing unacceptable humour in the workplace but was ignored: *"I reported it… nothing happened. It was like, 'whatever, just get on with it.'"* (P03, manager). This participant then made a report through Anti-Discrimination NSW which led to an investigation and resolution process. She had hoped for an apology from the perpetrator and for the team to receive training on respectful behaviour. Instead, she was offered a small amount of compensation on the condition of signing a non-disclosure agreement. This participant also described how the organisation subsequently took punitive action against her, which she believed to be in retaliation for her complaint: *"I would have rather they keep their money, and I have free open conversations, because I knew what would happen after that, it just got worse and worse, and now I'm in a legal fight because as soon as that was over, they came after me."* (P03, manager)

Other participants similarly described how reports of unacceptable workplace humour are not taken seriously. An office-based participant witnessed a female colleague's complaint about unacceptable workplace humour being dismissed: *"When she reported, and they more like, 'This is actually not something serious. You're not supposed to report it.'"* (P05, contract administrator). The participant then explained that the organisation intervened, only after they learned the person who made the complaint intended to quit her job: *"She wanted to quit… they had to get the person to apologise to her."* (P05, contract administrator)

The lack of a satisfactory organisational response to complaints about unacceptable workplace humour was a common experience among participants: *"No one actually came back to me. I don't know if they went to tell them [the perpetrator]. So it's really not addressed there. I don't know if they are doing it specifically within themselves, the staff member [perpetrator], but I just feel like it was not to my satisfaction."* (P16, professional worker)

Notwithstanding this, some participants indicated a positive organisational response when they reported unacceptable workplace humour: *"I know that he [the perpetrator] had several conversations with our State Manager as well as with HR. He's still with us, but he was put on notice in his performance review and he was pretty keen to get a promotion… a lot more people would work under him and he has been told that that's not going to happen any time soon because if he can't be decent and treat people with respect then that's not the person they want in a senior position."* (P09, senior project manager)

5.3.5 Direct engagement

Some participants indicated that, rather than relying on organisational resolution processes, they chose to speak directly with the perpetrators of unacceptable workplace humour. For example, one participant recalled: *"I remember it being one of those times, very few times in my career that someone else's action had made me feel that uncomfortable that I had felt the need to leave something. Then I thought about it all weekend thinking what I'm going to do with this and then I decided my course of action was to go and speak to him about. … I wanted to speak to him because I wanted to speak to him prior to reporting it to management."* This conversation led to an apology which the participant accepted: *"After he apologised it was fine, water under the bridge."* (P01, manager)

In some cases, such a direct intervention might not work, as the participant explained, her existing relationship with and knowledge about the perpetrator meant that direct intervention felt like an option for her. However she also observed that, had other coworkers stepped in and corrected the perpetrator at the time that the unacceptable joke was made, the situation would not have escalated as it did: *"Mind you I have worked with this person for four years and I knew he wasn't a malicious person, so I had the respect enough to want to go and try and sort it out and just tell him how I felt. What would have made that whole situation different for me would have been the other people having stepped in."* (P01, manager)

Another participant described how she confronted a coworker and asked for an apology after he made a targeted joke about her. This participant explained that her other coworkers provided no support and dismissed the interaction that caused offence as 'just a joke': *"I demanded an apology because that was too much for me. Everybody saying 'no, you're not supposed to get angry, it was just a joke.' I was like, 'What're you talking about?' Not my life. You do not joke about my life. I'm not a comic show.'"* (P12, supply worker)

5.4 Social characteristics of construction shaping workplace humour

The interviews revealed that characteristics of construction work environments contribute to the joking culture. Construction is numerically male-dominated and work is often physically and/or psychologically demanding. Humour can be used in this context to reinforce gendered power relations and masculine culture. The following themes relating to the social characteristics impacting construction workplace joking cultures were identified in the data:

(i) high work demands and stress

(ii) predominantly male workforce, and

(iii) intersectionality and power dynamics.

These themes are described in the following section with quotations from the interviews to illustrate each theme.

5.4.1 High work demands and stress

Several participants noted that humour in construction workplaces often arises as a response to high levels of stress and pressure experienced by workers. The intense demands of the job can lead to a lack of empathy, resulting in inappropriate jokes that may hurt others.

A participant who is an apprentice described how pressure can result in put-down jokes or teasing if someone makes a mistake: *"So, it's like you're under pressure to get the job done. And, you know, you're trying not to make mistakes, and then mistakes happen. And, you know, you might make light of the situation, but sometimes it can come at a cost to someone's feelings, or you might hurt someone else with a joke you think is funny."* (P13, carpentry apprentice)

Participants also described how work stress and pressure can result in a lack of empathy or consideration of how humour could potentially impact others: *"Construction is hard. Physically, you need to put in a lot more than sitting comfortably in an office, and I don't know, the wages, there are gaps there. Every day is a challenge when you are a contractor. You have to deal with people and also manage deliveries, and every outcome is related to whether you will get paid or not, which is always questionable. There is so much stress that these guys have to go through that they don't care what other people are thinking. It's the same thing I was thinking. I didn't care about the other female team members because I was going through so much myself. They don't care about what I'm going through or what you're going through because they themselves are tired of what's going on. They have bigger challenges. They have bigger goals to deliver. It's a stressful industry to be in."* (P18, site coordinator)

High demands coupled with a shortage of skilled workers, and therefore a heavy reliance on people with technical skills and experience, can also influence construction organisations' responses to reporting of unacceptable workplace conduct. One participant described how workers who are considered 'indispensable' by employers may be protected from disciplinary action, even if a substantiated complaint is made against them: *"When someone actually reports something, but because of the person it's been reported against—well, 'we can't afford to lose that person.' So what we're going to do is, you're a subordinate, we're going to shut you up with a non-disclosure agreement, pay you out, and send you on your merry way, while keeping the person who displayed those behaviours. This is common. It happens more than people are aware."* (P02, business owner)

5.4.2 Predominantly male workforce

Several participants observed that the predominantly male workforce contributes to norms and behaviours that make up the joking cultures that prevail in construction workplaces.

One participant observed: *"I think that just simply comes down to the demographics and, yes, typical male-dominated industry. It's that blokey culture, it's the way in which they would otherwise usually communicate. … The male-dominated culture is a big reason, I think. It seems to have been typically accepted as 'this is the way that we talk, and this is the way that we communicate and it's okay' because of that demographic."* (P19, operation manager)

A woman in a professional legal role similarly observed: "*I think that it's not just construction, but also a lot of industries where there are typically more males than females… I guess jokes and*

what's funny and what's not funny, without taking into consideration what other people might find offensive. So, I think that there has been a lot of, I guess, rude and crude type jokes and behaviour." (P14, legal professional)

In this way, humour is seen as a facet of the broader hypermasculine culture that prevails in the construction industry: *"I think banter and jokes are a very minor presentation of a greater systemic problem in the workplace… and the culture of the workplace and the accepted behaviours and norms in the workplace."* (P11, health and safety manager)

5.4.3 Intersectionality and power dynamics

Women are under-represented in construction workplaces and, proportionally, also tend to be younger and occupy less senior roles than men. The interview results suggest that the factors of being a woman and being young/inexperienced intersect and increase the extent to which women are susceptible to unacceptable workplace humour, either in feeling that they must participate in such humour to 'fit in' or being exposed to unacceptable humour that they feel unable to call out.

One senior woman with over 15 years of experience in construction, explained: *"I do feel that the younger girls, especially the cadets that are still at Uni, they tend to participate in the banter because maybe it's their way of trying to get accepted amongst the boys, the boys club. … But I can imagine that some of the younger people, if they were in the office by themselves, or without some of the senior management people, they are less likely to stand up and say something."* (P09, senior project manager)

Another young woman undertaking an apprenticeship explained: *"My boss was an older gentleman, so he was in his late 60s. … So, his jokes, although funny to him, were sometimes just not on the mark. You know, they were either sexist, racist, or just inappropriate. … And as an apprentice, you kind of have to go, 'Wow.'"* (P13, carpentry apprentice)

Another participant in a senior role described how young women entering construction workplaces can feel intimidated by humour used by male coworkers: *"I have a young girl that I worked with, and I didn't realise that—so basically, it was banter about me behind my back. … But she was afraid to tell me about it because she wasn't sure how I would react, or if he would get in trouble for talking about someone else. … She was very new, very young, very unsure."* (P09, senior project manager)

A subject matter expert also observed that new entrants to industries like construction are sometimes targeted as the subjects of banter and teasing as a way of socialising them into group norms and practices, and to test their suitability for group membership: *"I think anybody who is a newcomer, or who seems to not fit beautifully into the mould… it depends on the context here. But I think they're always going to have humour thrust on them because it's a way for those they're working with to describe how we do things around here, what's expected of them, and to also test them out in terms of their responses."* (P10, subject matter expert)

Participants observed that people who do not conform to behavioural expectations – irrespective of their gender – are likely to be bullied in some workplace cultures. A woman in a managerial role observed: *"I saw apprentices drop off on that building site who were lovely boys, and they used to vanish. … I used to say to their boss, 'What happened to, you know, [name]?' 'Oh, he can't work*

here anymore. They kept picking on him.' The construction industry can be very horrible." (P03, manager)

Participants also observed that race and ethnicity also impact the way that women experience workplace humour. One participant explained: *"I think where you come from also matters. … If you come from a place where women are allowed to do what they want to do, the banter and everything is reduced a bit. Where you come from a culture where you have to fight yourself to be out… you'll have to take a strong stand… or go back into your shell."* (P05, contract administrator)

Participants also indicated that cultural background can influence the willingness of some people to 'speak up' if they experience unacceptable behaviour in the workplace: *"There's also the stuff, and this is where the cultural bit comes in as well, sometimes different cultures have to respect their elders. So, if they're copping this stuff, for them to then talk out against it… well, that's disrespecting their elders, which is not part of their culture. … I saw it with the Chinese that I worked with. There was a hierarchical thing going on there. … If you've called it out against someone who's more senior than you, they've got the power to make your life a living hell."* (P02, business owner)

5.5 Changing the humour culture

Participants were asked for their views about how the construction industry can change its humour culture to be more inclusive, supportive and safe. This section outlines the participants' ideas, which can be grouped into five key themes:

(i) becoming active bystanders

(ii) demonstrated leadership commitment

(iii) awareness raising and education

(iv) industry-level initiatives, and

(v) the call for a diverse workforce.

These themes are described in the following section with quotations from the interviews to illustrate each theme.

5.5.1 Becoming active bystanders

Participants suggested that changing the prevailing humour culture in the construction industry requires that people in the industry are willing to become active (rather than passive) bystanders. When witnessing a situation that concerns them, active bystanders take action to prevent harm or improve the situation, rather than remaining doing nothing. The interview participants described numerous occasions in which unacceptable jokes had been made in their presence while other coworkers either ignored these jokes or laughed along with them.

A participant, in a managerial role observed the importance of being able to read situations and intervene if someone is uncomfortable: *"I think that's a really important one like you can read body language, you can see when someone's uncomfortable. Had any one of those men standing with him defended me and said 'hey, that's not funny' or 'that's disgusting, don't talk to her like that' or in any way had defended me in some way I would probably not have left. I probably would have said 'that's so disgusting, you're an arsehole' and then felt better about having walked away from that situation. But no one did, they just laughed. So that in itself exacerbated that for me because they were part of the problem."* (P01, manager)

This participant continued: *"So people need to be able to have a good, hard, long look at themselves. Being part of the problem, being a bystander, not having the courage to stand up and not having I guess the ethics in some ways to stand up and provide support to people in the workplace because I don't think you're necessarily going to get rid of that behaviour. But you can definitely empower other people to stand up for it."* (P01, manager)

Similarly, a participant in a managerial role explained: *I think the conversations I have with people out on site is if we want to change culture, it's not going to be through government, it's not going to be through big business, it's going to be through people on the ground who every day turn up for each other and call out that type of behaviour every single time. That's the only way to culture changes."* (P17, manager)

5.5.2 Demonstrated leadership commitment

The role of leaders in driving culture change within organisations was identified by many participants. In particular, leaders at the frontline and in projects were singled out as playing a key role in changing workplace humour cultures to ensure unacceptable humour is not seen as normal and permissible.

One subject matter expert highlighted the importance of raising awareness among frontline leaders: *"The people who let it [unacceptable humour] through are the kind of gatekeepers. They're your frontline people, they're your operational people, but then it's also your leaders, the people next level up that have to be asking the questions, and unless you ask the questions then you don't know that that's happening."* (P08, subject matter expert)

Another participant suggested constant and repeated messaging among site-based managers and workers to communicate the importance of the issue and change the culture: "…*it might be the WHS [Work Health and Safety] Manager or the safety advisor who's always interacting on a regular basis with people across the site and builds a level of trust with people on the site. But it could be anyone from the project team… probably in the induction, making people aware of who that point of contact is should they experience something of that nature. Who they can actually come and speak to so that they know that there is someone on the site who will deal with that, continuing to remind them. An induction is one day. We obviously have toolbox talks on a regular basis so continuing to remind people."* (P19, operational manager)

Another participant identified the importance of communicating behavioural expectations to subcontracted workers and holding people accountable for their behaviour: *"If the business owners aren't on the site, then that's up to the site foreman, and it needs to be a collective management effort where management ensures with their staff… that okay, boys, this is the situation. … Quite*

frankly, there should be, I think, a three-strikes-and-you're-out policy. It should be part of their employment contract." (P15, director)

In instances where standards of behaviour are violated, it was suggested that senior leaders within an organisation should attend a worksite to reinforce the importance of the issue. *"I would have expected them to send a representative from like a more senior level, and somebody that's not onsite, so somebody from their head office to come to site and like have a chat, you know, 'Like, what's going on? What happened?'"* (P03, manager)

A subject matter expert similarly described the significant role played by senior leaders within an organisation in shaping project and workplace cultures: *"They [organisations] can behave differently. The top leaders in these organisations need to have a reckoning, because they are actually, what's going on in terms of the humour and the gendered nature of construction, is a reflection of how they behave, and the type of engagement they have with one another, the conditions of the contract for example…what you are seeing in the humour and the behaviour is a reflection of how our leaders and our companies engage with each other. ... They need to shift in their behaviours towards more feminine behaviours of collaboration, alliance-building, working together rather than constantly standing at 20 paces and having a crack at each other."* (P10, subject matter expert)

5.5.3 Awareness-raising and education

Participants identified the importance or raising awareness of the issues of respect at work and potential harm caused by unacceptable interactions or conduct.

One participant suggested leadership training is important: *"How do you train your leaders? How do you make your leaders more aware of their own behaviour? How do you treat your people? And I think that there's a lot more training now and that it done for people to be people managers. And I think that that professionalism is coming a little bit into construction. Well, I hope that it is."* (P14, legal professional)

Another participant suggested that respect at work training, addressing issues such as the 'bystander effect' should be provided to all workers: *"So starting to do more and more presentations around that awareness of behaviour and that bystander effect of not saying something and just sort of getting around, try to just let people know that they've got all that power and privilege at their fingertips that they can use to actually speak up for people when these things happen."* (P17, manager)

The same participant continued to explain how they conveyed the importance of respectful communication and behaviour to subcontractors: *"We do it so in our site inductions. Like we actually have slides around behaviour, around bullying, around harassment, around what it is and around the types of behaviours that we expect from people, which is treating other people with respect and courtesy. Like it's kind of outlaid from the beginning. And when I live and breathe it, when my team live and breathe it, it does filter down into the subcontractors. The subcontractors that we deal with, I all deal with on a personal level."* (P17, manager)

5.5.4 Industry-level initiatives

Some participants suggested that industry/employer associations could do more to support cultural change in the construction industry. For example, one participant explained: *"I think the [industry association] needs to step up to the plate a little bit more and put their foot down with policies around what will be tolerated by their members. I think fundamentally, more really needs to be done in that sector. ... To the point where, if you've got companies that have got continuing complaints about them that they've got a five-year ban on membership."* (P15, director)

A subject matter expert observed that in other sectors, including policing, organisational interventions have taken a work health and safety-based, prevention-focused approach to gender-based violence, which enabled effective action to be taken "…*at all levels of the organisation, but also across—so hierarchy—but also horizontally across the organisations*." (P08, subject matter expert)

As she explained: *"You need that industry and then you need that organisational, then you need the parts of the organisation. … Yeah, the work groups, the kind of work sites all onboard. … This job is never finished, so it's not as though you can go in once, do a bit of training and then it's fine."* (P08, subject matter expert)

5.6.5 The call for a diverse workforce

Participants acknowledged that fundamental shifts in construction industry culture are necessary to prevent the use and impacts of harmful humour in the workplace. Participants recognised that a more diverse and inclusive workforce will ultimately contribute to changing the culture.

One participant explained: *"I think what would help in my group is to bring in more women."* (P12, supply worker)

One subject matter expert also noted that change will depend on bringing a critical mass of women into the sector, retaining them and supporting their advancement to leadership roles: *"This is a cultural problem, which is a result of very gendered structures and in the theoretical gendered institutions, and it shows itself in the form of how people behave towards one another. If it was a collaborative, nurturing, and more feminine environment, then you would hope that the behaviours shown on-site would reflect that as well, rather than being adversarial. And I also think that potentially when you have a critical mass of women coming in and being part of the sector, and staying, and being in leadership positions, you may see some change."* (P10, subject matter expert)

Another subject matter expert similarly observed: *"I found it very interesting, once again about the police, that they realised it wasn't just sexist and sexualising comments and behaviour, but actually the representation of women was really important. So, they realised they had to actually do something about, a) increasing the number of women coming into the police force, and b) addressing some of the barriers they'd never really considered to women's progress."* (P08, subject matter expert)

Having women in supervisory roles was identified by one participant as something that could help to change the culture of the workplace: "*I think a woman supervisor can do, is actually big for my*

feelings… (a supervisor) should be able to read my mood… and just put in words for me… stand up for me when things like that are said about me." (P05, contract administrator)

Participants also noted that increasing the industry's diversity in relation to characteristics other than gender, would also positively impact the culture: *"Having more diversity in the building industry, I think, you know, it would be more beneficial. It's almost like an echo chamber. So, if you have all the same people doing the same things, then, you know, oftentimes they all have the same opinions because they're all watching the same shows and listening to the same music or podcasts or whatever. So, having more diversity in the construction industry will ultimately lead to more ideas and improve it, hopefully, because more people will be exposed to different sexes, different religions, different sexualities, the whole thing. So, fingers crossed, more people like me can get into the industry."* (P13, carpentry apprentice)

Part 6: Discussion of research findings

6.1 Discussion

This section of the report discusses the combined findings of the survey and the interviews and positions these findings in relation to the academic literature. Nine learning objectives were distilled from the combined findings which informed the development of a training resource.

6.1.1 The prevalence and potential impacts of workplace humour

The findings reveal that humour is a prevalent characteristic of the construction workplaces in which the women in our sample work. The survey results indicated that positive and stress-relieving humour were more frequently reported than negative forms of humour by the women who completed the survey. The women who participated in the interviews also observed humour as a fundamental component of construction site environments and they acknowledged the role that humour can play in relieving stress in construction workplaces. This observation is consistent with the literature on positive humour in the workplace, which reports that, when it is inclusive and respectful, workplace humour contributes to enhanced work performance, satisfaction, workgroup cohesion, health, and coping effectiveness, and decreased burnout, stress, and withdrawal from work (Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2012).

However, the survey results indicated that women still experience negative humour in the workplace, and women in site-based roles experience this to a greater extent than women in office-based roles. The interview results similarly revealed that many women, irrespective of their job role, have experienced teasing, put-down humour and sexual or discriminatory humour in their work environments. These findings highlight the dual nature of workplace humour and the care that needs to be taken when using it.

Australian construction workplaces are well-known as environments in which banter and practical jokes are part of daily life (Riggall et al., 2017). Banter is often characterised as a positive interaction, i.e., “the playful and friendly exchange of teasing remarks” (Plester & Inkson, 2019, p.53). When it is friendly, fun and inclusive, banter can enhance social cohesion (Buglass et al., 2021). However, if the targets of banter are low in status or not considered to be core members of a social group, banter is experienced as hostile (Plester & Sayers, 2007). Jokes that exceed acceptable boundaries act to exclude the targets of this humour (Lawless & McGrath, 2021) and can result in recipients of such humour avoiding their colleagues, experiencing adverse mental health impacts or leaving their employment (Wilcock et al., 2019). The results of the in-depth interviews conducted with women in the NSW construction industry indicate that they often experience workplace humour as hostile and exclusionary. Moreover, their reactions to this humour are consistent with those suggested by Wilcock et al., (2019), i.e. they experience psychological distress, take action to withdraw from situations to avoid being exposed to this humour and, in extreme cases, consider leaving their employment.

Learning objectives 1 & 2:

Understand the difference between positive and negative humour in the workplace.

Develop an awareness that humour can be harmful if used in ways that undermine, demean, exclude, discriminate against or harass people in the workplace.

6.1.2 What is and what isn't workplace humour

The majority of women who completed the survey (64.7%) indicated they had experienced some form of sexual harassment in the workplace. The most frequently experienced sexual harassment behaviours were:

- hearing coworkers make comments of a sexual nature about another woman or women in general in front of them (48.7%)
- coworkers talking about their sex lives at work (37.4%)
- people telling jokes of a sexual nature (37.1%)
- experiencing comments of a sexual nature about their bodies/clothes (31.1%), and
- unwelcome sexual advances (27.9%).

Many of the women who participated in the in-depth interviews shared stories in which coworkers openly bragged about their sexual activities, talked about women in a sexual way or made targeted comments about the interview participants' body or clothing, i.e. engaged in sexual harassment behaviour.

Interview participants strongly argued that some behaviour in construction workplaces should not be described as humour at all because it is sexual harassment. Some women described situations in which perpetrators of sexual harassment behaviour used humour to express unacceptable opinions under the guise of it being 'a joke' (see also, Plester, 2015).

The labelling of sexual harassment behaviour as 'just a joke' allows perpetrators and bystanders to morally disengage from this behaviour (Page et al., 2015) and acts as a barrier to the recognition and prevention of harassment and/or bullying in the work environment (Middlemiss, 2021). When asked about the point at which workplace humour 'crosses the line' and becomes unacceptable, one survey respondent described "*anything that needs to be preceded by 'not being offensive' or followed up with 'just joking'" is likely to cross the line.*"

The survey results also revealed that women in construction consider sexist or discriminatory comments or making jokes about a person's race, cultural or linguistic background, religion, sexual orientation, physical ability, personal circumstances, family, or individual traits (e.g. appearance or personality) as being inappropriate and unacceptable in the workplace. Interviewees similarly described these topics as being 'off-limits' for joking in the workplace.

Importantly, one subject matter expert suggested there are some topics that should never be joked about at work (including those identified by the research participants). In addition to avoiding these

topics, this subject matter expert recommended that people carefully consider their work context before they make jokes and try to imagine if anyone present or targeted by humour could be offended, hurt or otherwise adversely impacted. If the answer is 'yes' then, according to this subject matter expert, a joke should not be told.

Learning objectives 3 & 4:

Understand the difference between what is and what is not humour in a work context.

Be able to identify behaviour, i.e. sexual harassment, bullying or discriminatory behaviour, that should not be described as humour and therefore excused in a workplace.

6.1.3 The impacts of hostile, exclusionary humour

Humonen and Whittle (2023) describe how people subjected to 'violence' by speech are susceptible to harm in the form of linguistic injury which occurs when people feel non-belonging or loss of identity in a social environment. Moreover, the potential for injury is increased when there is an imbalance of power between the speaker and the recipient of potentially injurious words.

The survey results revealed that 30.4% of women who experienced unacceptable humour in the workplace indicated that it adversely impacted their mental health, while another 10% indicated their physical health was affected.

The interview data confirmed that women who experience unacceptable humour in the workplace experience psychological impacts and sometimes ruminate on their experiences outside work. Previous research has also found that sexualised or gender-based humour in the workplace can devalue and discriminate against women (Topic, 2020) and reinforce existing power asymmetries and inequalities (Collinson, 2002).

Interview participants further described how their 'outsider' status in a predominantly male work environment exacerbated their feelings of discomfort associated with exposure to unacceptable humour. For example, despite being in a managerial role with decades of experience in the construction industry, one interview participant described still feeling uncomfortable in a construction site environment because she 'stands out" due to her gender and knows that everyone is watching her.

The survey and interview results also indicate that women's careers are adversely impacted by the prevailing workplace humour culture in the industry. For example, 34.6% of survey respondents indicated that exposure to unacceptable workplace humour caused them to avoid attending meetings, training courses, taking particular work shifts etc. This type of avoidance behaviour has been identified as a coping mechanism in other male-dominated work environments (Manolchev et al., 2023). For women in construction, the avoidance behaviour is likely to have adverse career consequences and therefore reinforces existing gendered and unequal power structures within workplaces.

The survey results revealed that nearly a third (27.2%) of women who experienced unacceptable humour at work reported that this made them feel less confident at work, while 18.8% indicated

that the experience of unacceptable workplace humour made them want to leave their job but that they couldn't due to financial or other reasons. A further 9.1% indicated they had left a job due to exposure to unacceptable humour. The interview results also provided evidence of women either leaving or wanting to leave their jobs as a result of exposure to unacceptable humour at work.

Given the emphasis currently being placed in NSW on attracting more women into construction industry jobs (for example through the Women in Construction focused Infrastructure Skills Legacy Program and Industry Innovation Program), these findings suggest that retaining women may be challenging unless the industry addresses the issue of unacceptable workplace humour.

Learning objectives 5 & 6:

Understand the potential consequences of unacceptable workplace humour on women's health, safety and wellbeing.

Understand the potential consequences of unacceptable workplace humour on women's ability to flourish in a construction career.

6.1.4 Reporting behaviour and response

The survey results suggest that women who experience unacceptable workplace humour often do not report their experiences to their employers (37.6% did not report). Frequently mentioned reasons for not reporting incidences of unacceptable humour to their employer were:

- believing this would have a negative impact on their relationships at work (46.7%), and
- thinking they would not be believed or taken seriously (31.1%).

The interview results similarly revealed that many women choose to avoid or disengage with unacceptable workplace humour as a way of coping. Importantly, the interview participants described how many women cope in this way because they feel unable to challenge unacceptable behaviours in the workplace that are performed under the guise of humour. Women indicated that if they called out these behaviours, they would be accused of being unreasonable, difficult or lacking in humour. Several of the women who participated in the interviews described this response to women who call out unacceptable workplace behaviour as 'gaslighting'.

Ringblom (2022) describes how women in male-dominated workplaces are sometimes seen as bearing the responsibility for handling situations that "they put themselves into" by joining a male-dominated industry and, therefore, are expected to laugh along with unacceptable jokes (p. 104). Our findings are also consistent with research undertaken in the UK which found that only one in five women report sexual harassment that occurs in the form of workplace banter, because they fear they will not be taken seriously or they believe the issue will not be followed up (TUC, 2016). The TUC report found that women, particularly in male-dominated environments, fear they will be seen as humourless and unable to take a joke if they challenge sexually-based workplace banter (TUC, 2016).

In some cases, women also fear negative career consequences and even retaliatory behaviour if they make a formal complaint in relation to unacceptable workplace humour. The potential for

retaliatory behaviour was also identified by interview participants who indicated that speaking up about this issue has resulted in further discriminatory behaviour.

However, it is evident that women's experiences of reporting unacceptable workplace humour vary between construction workplaces. The survey results indicated that 24.2% of women who experienced unacceptable humour in the workplace, reported this behaviour and received a satisfactory resolution/response. A further 15.5% of respondents indicated that they had reported the unacceptable workplace humour to their employer but the issue was not dealt with satisfactorily.

Responses to women who call out unacceptable workplace humour are likely to be shaped by workplace cultures and management policies. Respondents to our survey were asked to indicate whether their employing organisation has a formal policy on workplace banter to provide guidance as to what might be considered acceptable/unacceptable in the workplace. The largest proportion of respondents (47.7%) indicated their employing organisation has no formal banter policy, while 25.2% indicated that such a policy exists in their employing organisation.

The beneficial impact of a banter policy was evidenced by the fact that proportionally more respondents whose employing organisation had a formal banter policy reported incidences of unacceptable humour (68.1%) than those whose organisation had no policy (47.8%). A greater proportion of respondents whose employing organisation had a formal banter policy also indicated they were taken seriously and treated better following reporting an incident of unacceptable humour in the workplace (52.2%) compared to those whose organisation had no banter policy (17.9%).

Women who participated in interviews also indicated that the adverse effects of exposure to unacceptable workplace humour are amplified when coworkers (bystanders) do not speak up when they witness such behaviour.

Learning objectives 7, 8 & 9:

Understand that, just because women don't 'call out' unacceptable humour in the workplace, it does not mean that they are not affected by it.

Understand that women sometimes laugh along with or choose to ignore humour that they find hurtful because they believe that 'speaking up' will lead to negative consequences.

Understand that the support of active bystanders reduces the adverse impacts on women exposed to unacceptable workplace humour.

6.2 The need for training resources

Our survey results suggest that exposure to unacceptable workplace humour is a psychosocial hazard that construction employers should be aware of and address as part of their work health and safety management programs. Similarly, if women are recruited into the construction industry

in greater numbers, failure to address the issue of unacceptable workplace humour may impede their career progression and potentially impact retention.

The subject matter expert interviews identified a need to address workplace cultures to ensure that unacceptable humour is not tolerated and humour that is used is respectful, inclusive and fun.

Interview participants described awareness-raising and education as a key component in addressing these issues. A key challenge for individuals who engage in workplace humour is knowing when and what types of humour are acceptable, enjoyable and inclusive, and when humour crosses a line to be discriminatory and potentially harmful. It is therefore important for employers to consider interventions, including the provision of guidance and training on how to ensure that humour in the workplace is appropriate and positive in its nature and consequences (Middlemiss, 2021).

A training resource was subsequently developed to address the learning objectives 1 to 9 identified in this section. The development and evaluation of the training resource are explained in Part 7. These learning objectives are based on evidence obtained from the combined survey and interview results and it is hoped that the training resource will help construction organisations to create and maintain workplace cultures that are inclusive, respectful and supportive of women in all roles.

Part 7: Development and evaluation of a training resource

7.1 Development of a training resource

Based on the survey and interview findings, a training video resource titled *Not "Just a Joke"* was developed. Key themes were identified which formed the basis of the video resource structure. The video resource design was split into ten sections:

1. Positive and negative humour
2. What does positive humour look like?
3. Taking responsibility
4. Harassment, not humour
5. Sexual harassment and sexism
6. Impacts
7. Discrimination and bullying
8. Reporting
9. Being an active bystander
10. Recap and reflection

The video resource script was written and revised several times as the research team refined the messaging to be as direct and succinct as possible, free from jargon or overly complicated vocabulary. In addition to the main content, delivered by a narrator, the research team conceived five women's stories, directly informed by the experiences of women who took part in the interviews. These women's stories were placed throughout the resource to emphasise key messages and humanise the content for the construction audience.

After the script was finalised, placeholder narration was recorded by a member of the research team. Five women were recruited to provide voices for the women's stories that appear throughout the resource. This audio was then matched to visuals which reflected the content – for example, a distressed women in hi-vis is shown putting her head in her hands whilst the narration explains what sexual harassment is. The bulk of the visual content was carefully selected from two stock videos libraries, with close attention being paid to ensuring that the video content was as relevant to an Australian construction audience as possible. This involved selecting videos of Australian construction sites, roads and cities, as well as ensuring that the depicted workers represented a range of diverse demographics and were placed in plausible industry settings.

Careful selection of the videos was especially important in bringing the women's stories to life – for example, as one woman speaker describes leaving a work function due to an offensive joke, the video cuts between a group of men laughing at a pub and an upset women driving a right-

hand drive car. Additional visuals included figures and statistics from the survey data and final edits included matching the audiovisual content to appropriate background music and adding transitions, titles and subtitles.

7.2 Evaluation of the training resource through focus groups

Three focus group sessions were conducted to evaluate the drafted training between 4th and 6th June 2025. The sessions ranged in duration from 34 to 47 minutes.

This part explains the focus group design and procedures and captures and synthesises the feedback obtained from these focus groups. The insights were used by the research team to refine the resource, culminating in a final version ready for distribution.

7.2.1 Focus group questions

In each focus group, participants were invited to share their perspectives on three key aspects of the video-based resource: (1) the content, (2) the presentation, and (3) potential use of the materials. Specifically, the following questions were posed to guide the discussion:

(1) Content

- Do you agree with the key messages?
- Are they communicated clearly?
- Are they strong enough?
- Is the content relevant to construction workplaces?
- What did you think about the women's stories? Were they impactful? Where they true to life?

(2) Presentation

- What did you think about the look and sound of the video?
- Do the "click to continue" boxes/different sections work for you?
- Did the "pause to reflect" sections work for you?

(3) Potential use

- Who do you think would benefit the most from this video?
- Would you use this training resource in your company?
- If so, when/where/who/how?

7.2.2 Recruitment and consent process

Participants were recruited through the Master Builders Association of New South Wales. Prospective participants received an invitation email outlining the project and the objectives of the focus group sessions. The email included a Project Information Sheet and Consent Form (PISCF) to ensure that participants were fully informed about the study prior to their agreement to participate.

At the commencement of each focus group session, facilitators provided participants with a briefing on the project as outlined in the PISCF, along with an overview of the session's discussion themes. They then obtained consent from participants to audio-record the conversations. Participants were advised data would be kept confidential and de-identified in any reports produced as a result of the focus groups.

7.2.3 Participants

Three focus group sessions were conducted - involving men and women in a variety of roles in the construction industry. These participants had experience in both office-based and site-based roles and worked in the residential and non-residential sectors of the industry. The group also included representatives from industry associations, training providers, and companies that support construction businesses. Table 7.1 lists the demographic information of focus group participants.

Table 7.1: Demographic information of focus group participants

Participant	Gender	Position	Sector/stakeholder group
P01	Female	Field Officer/Educator	Residential, non-residential, engineering
P02	Female	Managing Director	Residential
P03	Female	Bid Manager	Non-residential
P04	Male	Manager – Education and Skills	Training and education provider
P05	Female	Field Officer	Mental health service provider
P06	Male	Executive Officer – Safety	Industry association
P07	Female	General Manager	Industry association
P08	Female	Manager	Construction financial, insurance and legal services
P09	Female	Executive Director	Non-for-profit

7.3 Summary of feedback

7.3.1 Content

Effectiveness of messages

Participants in the three focus groups expressed broad agreement with the key messages communicated in the training resource. They described these messages as clear, strong, and effective. For example, one participant commented: *"So in construction, because we have such a vast array of employers, workers, lots of small to medium enterprises with kind of, just a few employees on site, those sorts of things, it needs to be really concise and simple and I think just having it in the sense of kind of very easy to follow kind of key messages, I think that's good."*

"The content was certainly relatable, certainly impactful."

Participants described the training resource as being relevant to construction and potentially also applicable to other industries in which men are over-represented. As one participant described: *"It's definitely not just relevant to construction and it's happening in every industry."*

> *"I would show my team here and get them to see it and just understand some of the challenges that that people face on site. … I think it has relevance in every company… in every male dominated place."*

Impact of women's stories

The inclusion of stories inspired by women who participated in interviews was considered to be impactful. Focus group participants described the women's stories as humanising and relatable. In particular, participants suggested that the tone of the video materials was appropriate: *"Unfortunately, I have to watch a lot of these things on sexual harassment and all that sort of stuff in my role, and they do come across quite preachy a lot of the time, but this was quite a good balance between those. So, I thought that that was good."*

Another participant similarly highlighted the importance of addressing silent bystanders, which was covered in one of the women's stories: *"One of the favourite things I liked about the video was the silent bystander… When I was looking at the video and I've looked at it in its entirety twice, is a really, really relevant part of what enables these bullies to do what they do. I think that was a really key message. … That was a really clever and intentional thing to do in this educational context, calling out the bystanders that stand by and laugh along … which enables that whole toxic culture and that whole bullying in itself."*

Another participant observed: *"I also think the, the active bystander part is really important because communication isn't just between the people who are doing it. Making sure that there's respectful communication is really important for anyone who's listening. … That was a really important message that I thought was well done."*

> *"I really liked the stories because I think they humanised it and put it into a bit more context for people rather than just being overly preachy."*

Narratives suggested for future training resource development

Noting the strong impacts of the women' stories depicted in the video, some participants suggested incorporating additional narratives to make the content more comprehensive in future iterations of the training materials

For instance, one participant raised concerns about workplace humour directed at women utilising flexible work initiatives. Providing flexible work options is important to support the attraction, retention and career development of women in the construction industry. Yet participants observed that jokes targeting women who use flexible work options, including those returning to work after the birth of a child - are commonplace. This participant suggested that including a story on jokes

made about working flexibly would help people to understand the harm that such jokes can do to women's confidence and careers in construction.

> *"That's one thing that we're working through really hard at the moment to the point because a lot in industry, once the female falls pregnant and then has maternity leave and comes back, they often don't come back to the project site. They will move into an office-based role, which ultimately is something that we don't want. … a lot of the banter is around, oh, you've had to drop the kid off at daycare or you've got to leave early because you've got to pick the kid up at daycare and that sort of stuff."*

Another participant suggested the inclusion of men's perspectives into the training resource. This participant believed that including men's reflections on the likely impacts of negative behaviours experienced by women would reinforce the key messages of the training materials and foster allyship.

> *"I'd really like to see some opportunities to encourage allyship and even, like, if you see something happening, if you don't call it out, how to be an ally, how to check in with that person after, if you see stuff."*

Focus group participants also observed that women can be removed from teams after reporting inappropriate behaviour in the workplace. Consequently, this participant recommended including content showing an appropriate organisational response to such situations.

> *"…So there's been a number of issues where we've had men on site sexually harass women or do whatever it is that they're doing. And instead of the male being removed, which he absolutely should be, the woman gets removed and placed onto a safer site, which I think this is a huge issue in construction."*

Participants also recommended the inclusion of content showing the long-term effects of negative workplace humour on women.

Key feedback on the content:

Participants were positive about the content, describing it as clear, impactful, and relevant. They commended that the materials strike an appropriate balance in communicating key messages without adopting a 'preaching' tone. Participants particularly liked the women' stories and commented positively on the inclusion of information about the 'bystander effect.'

Suggestions for additional stories/narratives:

- Include a story addressing negative humour directed at women utilising flexible work initiatives.
- Introduce material framed as being from a men's perspective to promote allyship and shared accountability.
- Include material communicating what is an appropriate organisational response to reports of unacceptable workplace humour. particularly instances where women are removed from work groups instead of addressing the behaviour of male perpetrators.
- Highlight the long-term impacts of negative workplace humour on women.

7.3.2 Presentation

Visual quality

Most participants provided positive feedback relating to the visual presentation of the training materials. However, some offered suggestions for improvement. The responses to the use of stock images/videos, a necessary element of the training resource development due to budgetary constraints, was mixed. Some participants felt the repeated use of some video content across the video stories added to the coherence of the videos.

> *"Having repetitiveness of the same people throughout a video makes it more relatable."*

However, other participants found the repeated use of these images could be unappealing. One participant commented on the acting in the stock video content, suggesting it could be improved. Despite these concerns, participants generally agreed that, notwithstanding limitations associated with the use of stock images/videos, the training materials were still effective in communicating the key messages.

> *"I think everybody recognises that it's stock imaging, but the stories are the thing that that's really important and the stories are good."*

Viewing experience

The original version of the training resource consisted of one 12-minute, interactive video. In this version, the video would routinely pause automatically to give the viewer time to reflect, before presenting a "click to continue" button for when the viewer wished to proceed. The majority of participants recommended removing "click to continue" buttons and "pauses to reflect" breaks contained in the first version of the training materials. These features were considered to disrupt

the ‘flow’ of the training experience. However, participants also recognised the potential usefulness of these features if the training materials were being delivered in a facilitated workshop format. Some participants suggested enabling viewers to pause and resume the video content freely as well as displaying the remaining playtime to improve the viewing experience. This feedback was incorporated into the final iteration of the resource, which now exists as a 10-part video playlist hosted on YouTube. Each of the 10 video chapters ranges from 37 seconds to one minute 40 seconds in length. Viewers are now able to view and navigate the content by selecting videos from the playlist and can choose to watch them as one whole package or break up the content over several sessions.

Key feedback on the presentation:

Participants expressed mixed opinions about the use of stock images/videos, However, participants also accepted that it was necessary to use limited stock images/videos due to the budget constraints associated with development. They commented that the use of stock images/videos did not detract from the communication of key messages in the training materials. Most participants preferred removing the “click to continue” and “pause for reflection” buttons.

Suggestions:

- Remove the “click to continue” buttons and “pause to reflect” breaks for a smoother viewing experience.
- Split the content into shorter, mini-stories and share these via YouTube.

7.3.3 Uses

Target audience

Participants discussed the best ways to utilise the video, highlighting its broad applicability to both workers currently employed in construction and individuals considering entry into the industry. They suggested the training materials could usefully be incorporated into induction training activities. Incorporating the video materials into work health and safety training and/or toolbox talks was also suggested.

Some participants recommended embedding the training materials within construction-related training programs within TAFE. They also suggested integrating the video into ‘white card’ training, a mandatory requirement for entry into site-based roles in the construction industry. Participants also indicated that the content should be made available to men and women in the industry.

"It's the people on site that are doing the jokes and are acting inappropriately. They're the ones that need that guidance… [But for] the young women that are coming into the industry, it's great for them to still see this, to give them some confidence of knowing when they are in a situation that they shouldn't potentially be in and they know that it's wrong… I think [it's for] everyone."

Delivery modes

Focus group participants discussed the most effective delivery method for the training materials, in particular whether it should be viewed and discussed in a group training experience. It was suggested that the video could be divided into short, two-minute segments that could be shared in a facilitated session and then discussed. Participants observed these facilitated sessions could either be in-person or online.

However, some focus group participants were concerned that, in certain contexts, individuals might feel reluctant to share their experiences and thoughts openly in a group setting. In such cases, these people felt that individual viewing might be more appropriate. Participants did indicate that flexibility in how the training materials were delivered is important so organisations and individuals can determine what works best for their environment/workforce.

"As a group, then I think they're great because it can open up really open discussions about each of the sections and give people the time to actually have those conversations rather than just watch it all the way through… But I also like individualised as well, because you can actually sit down and reflect and do it that way you go."

Key feedback on the uses:

The video-based training resource is well-suited for a broad audience within the construction industry.

The video can be presented in both facilitated group settings and individual sessions, each offering potential benefits (and disadvantages).

Suggestion:

- Provide flexibility as to how the video-based training materials can be shared and delivered to suit different organisational contexts, workers' needs and preferences.

7.4: Changes and improvements

Overall, participants responded positively to the video-based training materials. The key messages were considered to be relevant, important and impactful.

However, some suggestions for improvement were identified resulting in changes made to the training materials before finalisation. These included:

- breaking the content up into shorter segments
- providing these via YouTube for easy access, and
- removal of “click to continue” or “pause to reflect” buttons.

The updated format offers greater flexibility in relation to how the video-based materials are delivered in a particular organisational context.

Changes made in response to participants’ feedback:

- Developed a facilitator guide featuring discussion prompts to enhance engagement and broaden the video’s impact.
- Reformatted the video into individual clips arranged in a 10-part YouTube playlist to ensure seamless experience and allow functionalities of pause/resume/progress bar for both individual viewers and group sessions.
- Replaced the narrator’s voice with a more conversational and fluid professional voice actor with an Australian accent, adding vibrancy to the presentation.
- Minimised the repetition of frequently recurring footage to improve the overall viewing experience.

7.4: Useful links

Not "Just a Joke" is a video resource developed through this project to address the role of humour in construction workplaces.

The resource is comprised of 10 short sections. Each section can be viewed independently or screened to a group of people in a facilitated session. Without pausing for group discussions, the resource runs for approximately 12 minutes.

Scan this QR code to access the video resource, or use the link below:

youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8uYOKwoXWA9xxgnRqZQUTHiGVUiuiglL&si=MPphzdh7m38uqUmu

Visit this link to learn more about the video and download the facilitator guide:

www.rmit.edu.au/about/schools-colleges/property-construction-and-project-management/research/research-centres-and-groups/construction-work-health-safety-research/play-it-safe/not-just-a-joke

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Part 9: Appendices

9.1 Survey questions

Q1 Which age group do you belong to?

- ○ 19 years or younger
- ○ 20 - 24 years
- ○ 25 - 29 years
- ○ 30 - 39 years
- ○ 40 - 49 years
- ○ 50 - 59 years
- ○ 60 - 69 years
- ○ 70 years or above

Q2 How do you identify yourself?

- ○ Man
- ○ Woman
- ○ Non-binary
- ○ Prefer not to say

Q3 Are you of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q4 Do you speak a language other than English at home?

- ○ No, English only
- ○ Yes, one or more other languages

Q5 What is the main other language you speak at home?

- ○ Arabic
- ○ Cantonese
- ○ Greek
- ○ Hindi
- ○ Italian
- ○ Mandarin
- ○ Punjabi
- ○ Spanish
- ○ Vietnamese
- ○ Other European language
- ○ Other non-European language

Q6 What best describes your occupation?

- ○ Managers
- ○ Professionals
- ○ Technicians and trade workers
- ○ Clerical and administrative workers
- ○ Machinery operators and drivers
- ○ Labourers
- ○ Other; please specify:

Q7 In which sector do you currently work? (You can choose more than one answer.)

- ☐ Residential building sector
- ☐ Non-residential building sector
- ☐ Engineering sector
- ☐ Other: please specify:

Q8 In your current workplace, how many people are in your immediate workgroup?

- ○ 1 - 5
- ○ 6 - 10
- ○ 11 - 15
- ○ 16 - 20
- ○ More than 20

Q9 Please specify the number of women in your immediate workgroup:

Q10 The following questions are about banter in your workplace. To which extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Banter at work should be accepted as long as it remains light-hearted and playful	○	○	○	○	○
Banter should only be accepted if it is not offensive or disrespectful to any employee	○	○	○	○	○
Banter can be an effective way to build relationships and create a positive work environment	○	○	○	○	○
Banter can cause tension between coworkers and reduce productivity	○	○	○	○	○
All forms of banter should be avoided in the workplace for the sake of professionalism	○	○	○	○	○

Q11 Thinking about your experience of humour at your current workplace, to which extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Humour is often used to encourage or support coworkers	○	○	○	○	○
Humour is something we all enjoy sharing at work	○	○	○	○	○
The humour of my coworkers often cheers me up	○	○	○	○	○
The humour my coworkers use makes the work more enjoyable	○	○	○	○	○

Q12 Thinking about your experience of humour at your current workplace, to which extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
We tell humorous stories to ease tense situations at work	○	○	○	○	○
We laugh a lot around here to make work more pleasant	○	○	○	○	○
When we meet each other, we always tell stories to lighten up the day	○	○	○	○	○
We frequently tell jokes to loosen up a stressful work environment	○	○	○	○	○

Q13 Thinking about your experience of humour at your current workplace, to which extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The humour used by my coworkers can often make someone in the group feel bad	○	○	○	○	○
If someone makes a mistake, they often will be ridiculed by others in the group	○	○	○	○	○
Humour is sometimes used to intimidate others in the group	○	○	○	○	○
My coworkers sometimes use humour to belittle each other	○	○	○	○	○
My coworkers sometimes use humour with the potential to cause physical harm	○	○	○	○	○

Q14 Thinking about your experience of humour at your current workplace, to which extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I let people laugh at me or make fun at my expense more than I should	○	○	○	○	○
I often try to make people like or accept me more by saying something funny about my own weaknesses, blunders, or faults	○	○	○	○	○
I often go overboard in putting myself down when I am making jokes or trying to be funny	○	○	○	○	○
If I am having problems or feeling unhappy, I often cover it up by joking around, so coworkers don't know how I really feel	○	○	○	○	○

Q15 Have you ever experienced any of the following behaviours in your workplace?

	Yes, in the last 12 months	Yes, more than 12 months ago	No, I haven't	Do not know / cannot recall	Prefer not to say
Displays of pornographic photographs or drawings in the workplace	○	○	○	○	○
Hearing coworkers making comments of a sexual nature about another woman or women in general in front of you	○	○	○	○	○
Hearing coworkers talking about sex life	○	○	○	○	○
Receiving unwanted messages with material of a sexual nature on social media	○	○	○	○	○
Unwelcome verbal sexual advances	○	○	○	○	○
Unwanted touching	○	○	○	○	○
Unwelcome jokes of a sexual nature	○	○	○	○	○
Comments of a sexual nature about your body and/or clothes	○	○	○	○	○

Q16 In your opinion, what makes a joke or banter unacceptable or cross the line to you? Please provide examples or describe the characteristics:

_____

End of Block: Perception of Unacceptable Jokes

Start of Block: Perpetrator of Unacceptable Jokes

Q17 Thinking about your experience of jokes that crossed the line, which one of the following best describes the main perpetrator of the unacceptable jokes?

- ○ A male co-worker
- ○ A female co-worker
- ○ My supervisor
- ○ Another manager
- ○ A client
- ○ Someone else
- ○ Do not know / cannot recall
- ○ Prefer not to say

Q18 When you experienced unacceptable jokes, how did you handle them?

- ○ I reported the unacceptable jokes to my employer, and they were taken seriously and dealt with satisfactorily
- ○ I reported the unacceptable jokes to my employer, but they were not dealt with satisfactorily
- ○ I did not report the unacceptable jokes to my employer
- ○ Do not know / cannot recall
- ○ Prefer not to say

Q19 Do you think you were treated better or worse by your employer after reporting the unacceptable jokes?

- ○ Treated better
- ○ Treated worse
- ○ No change
- ○ Do not know / cannot recall
- ○ Prefer not to say

Q20 What were the reasons that you did not report? (You can select more than one answer.)

- ☐ I thought I would be blamed if I reported the unacceptable jokes to my employer
- ☐ I did not think I would be believed or taken seriously if I reported the unacceptable jokes to my employer
- ☐ I was too embarrassed to report the unacceptable jokes to my employer
- ☐ I did not know how to report the unacceptable jokes to my employer
- ☐ I was unaware that I could report the unacceptable jokes to the employer
- ☐ I thought there would be a negative impact on my relationships at work if I reported the unacceptable jokes to my employer
- ☐ I thought there would be a negative impact on my career if I reported the unacceptable jokes to my employer
- ☐ None of the above; please specify:
- ☐ Do not know / cannot recall
- ☐ Prefer not to say

End of Block: Reporting of Unacceptable Jokes

Q21 Which, if any, of the following describes the effects that the experience of unacceptable jokes had on you? (You can select more than one answer.)

- ☐ It made me feel less confident at work
- ☐ It caused me to avoid certain work situations (meetings, courses, locations, particular shifts) in order to avoid the perpetrator
- ☐ It had a negative impact on my mental health (e.g. made me feel more stressed, anxious, depressed)
- ☐ It made me feel embarrassed
- ☐ It made me want to leave my job (but I couldn't because of financial or other factors)
- ☐ It caused me to change my role in the company/organization
- ☐ It caused me to have to take time off work
- ☐ It had a negative impact on my physical health
- ☐ It had a negative impact on my performance at work
- ☐ It caused me to leave my job or leave the employer
- ☐ Do not know / cannot recall
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q22 Does your workplace have a policy on banter?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Not sure
- ○ Prefer not to say

9.2 Statistical procedures used

9.2.1 Internal consistency reliability check

When analysing data collected using psychometric scales, the first step of the analysis is to check the internal consistency reliability of those variables. Internal consistency reliability is a measure of the correlations between different items related to a particular variable. It measures whether several items (questions) that are intended to measure the same general construct produce similar scores.

The most common measure of internal consistency reliability is Cronbach's alpha coefficient. A Cronbach alpha coefficient between 0.7 and 0.8 is acceptable, between 0.8 and 0.9 is good and greater than 0.9 is excellent.

The Cronbach alpha coefficients reflect excellent internal consistency reliability for the construct of life balance (Cronbach's alpha =0.90), and acceptable internal consistency reliability for the constructs of mental wellbeing (Cronbach's alpha =0.73). The assessment of internal consistency reliability was not performed for managerial work-family support because it was measured using a single item.

9.2.2 One-way ANOVA procedure

The one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) is used to determine whether there are any statistically significant differences between the means of three or more unrelated groups. During the analysis, the variance of data between different groups is compared with the variance of data within the groups using the F test statistic. The null hypothesis is that all group means are exactly equal. A larger F ratio indicates a larger variance between the groups compared to the variance within the groups, therefore, equal group means would be less likely in case of obtaining a larger F ratio. To test the statistical significance and decide whether to reject the null hypothesis, a p-value is calculated. The p-value indicates the probability of finding a given deviation from the null hypothesis, or a more extreme one, in a sample. A small p-value means that the data we have is unlikely under the null hypothesis. The convention is that if $p < 0.05$, then there is evidence to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a statistically significant difference between the means of the groups.

9.2.3 Independent-samples t-test

A t-test is used to determine if there is a statistically significant difference between the means of two groups. The null hypothesis is that both group means are exactly equal. The magnitude of difference in the group means is expressed as a (t) score in t-test. The t-score is a ratio of the difference between the means of the two groups and the variation that exists within the groups. In addition, the statistical significance is indicated by the probability of observing such a difference in the groups' mean scores by chance (p) given the null hypothesis. A probability of equal to or less than 0.05 is often deemed to be significant leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis and concluding that the group means are not equal, i.e. there is a statistically significant difference between the means of two groups.

9.2.4 Chi-square test

A chi-square ($\chi 2$) test is used to determine if two categorical variables are independent, or if the distribution of one categorical variable differs in two or more independent groups. The basic idea of chi-square test is to compare the observed frequencies in specific categories to the expected frequencies in these categories by chance (p). The null hypothesis is there is no difference between observed frequencies and expected frequencies. Chi-square ($\chi 2$) is given by adding standardized deviations for each observation together, indicating the degree of deviation between the observed value and the expected value. The larger the $\chi 2$ value, the greater the likelihood of rejecting the null hypothesis. If the p value is less than 0.05, it indicates a significant relationship between the two categorical variables or that the distribution of one categorical variable differs across two or more independent groups.

9.3 Statistical test results

Table 9.1: ANOVA results comparing humour type mean scores among respondents in different age groups

Humour type	Age group	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error	F-ratio	P-value
Positive humour	19 years or younger	4	4.5625	.55434	.27717	1.363	.229
	20 – 24 years	18	4.4306	.57398	.13529		
	25 – 29 years	66	4.2008	.62206	.07657		
	30 – 39 years	119	4.2017	.59685	.05471		
	40 – 49 years	67	4.0560	.57706	.07050		
	50 – 59 years	48	4.2448	.64924	.09371		
	60 – 69 years	14	4.2500	.63549	.16984		
Stress-relieving humour	19 years or younger	4	4.0625	.71807	.35904	4.259	<.001*
	20 – 24 years	18	4.3056	.41618	.09809		
	25 – 29 years	66	4.2008	.59682	.07346		
	30 – 39 years	119	4.0693	.63690	.05838		
	40 – 49 years	67	3.8582	.61117	.07467		
	50 – 59 years	49	3.7704	.65319	.09331		
	60 – 69 years	14	3.7321	.70345	.18801		
Negative humour	19 years or younger	4	1.5500	.71880	.35940	3.624	.002*
	20 – 24 years	18	1.9556	.86923	.20488		
	25 – 29 years	66	2.5758	.95725	.11783		
	30 – 39 years	118	2.6339	1.12419	.10349		
	40 – 49 years	64	2.2750	.91582	.11448		
	50 – 59 years	49	2.1918	.91101	.13014		
	60 – 69 years	14	1.9000	.80670	.21560		
Self-defeating humour	19 years or younger	4	1.7500	.28868	.14434	3.798	.001*
	20 – 24 years	18	2.3750	1.05806	.24939		
	25 – 29 years	65	2.7923	1.01027	.12531		
	30 – 39 years	116	2.9353	1.09897	.10204		
	40 – 49 years	64	2.6328	.84394	.10549		
	50 – 59 years	47	2.3777	.97506	.14223		
	60 – 69 years	14	2.0714	1.02577	.27415		

Table 9.2: Independent t-test results comparing humour type mean scores by respondents' job classification

Humour type	Work role	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error	t-value	P-value
Positive humour	Office-based	254	4.19	0.62363	0.03913	-0.840	.403
	Site-based	54	4.25	0.43977	0.05984		
Stress-relieving humour	Office-based	254	3.9774	0.66366	0.04164	-1.782	.076
	Site-based	54	4.1481	0.50823	0.06916		
Negative humour	Office-based	254	2.248	0.91439	0.05737	-6.682	<.001*
	Site-based	54	3.2593	1.02911	0.14004		
Self-defeating humour	Office-based	254	2.5807	0.97188	0.06098	-3.831	<.001*
	Site-based	54	3.2269	1.15566	0.15726		

Table 9.3: Independent t-test results comparing humour type mean scores with respondents' language spoken at home

Humour type	Speaks only English at home	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error	t-value (equal variance assumed)	P-value
Positive humour	Yes	264	4.2112	.59117	.03638	.603	.547
	No	61	4.1598	.63251	.08098		
Stress-relieving humour	Yes	264	4.0000	.64562	.03974	-.627	.513
	No	61	4.0574	.63639	.08148		
Negative humour	Yes	264	2.4652	1.03901	.06395	2.757	.007*
	No	61	2.1213	.83609	.10705		
Self-defeating humour	Yes	264	2.7519	1.05301	.06481	2.889	.005*
	No	61	2.3730	.89049	.11401		

Table 9.4: Chi-square test results comparing experience of sexual harassment behaviours by respondents' age

Sexual harassment item	Age group	Experienced	Did not experienced	No. of cases	Chi-square value	Sig.
Displays of pornographic photographs or drawings in the workplace	24 years or under	2	20	22	4.267	.371
	25 – 29 years	19	43	62		
	30 – 39 years	30	78	108		
	40 – 49 years	17	42	59		
	50 years or above	15	45	60		
Hearing coworkers making comments of a sexual nature about another woman or women in general in front of you	24 years or under	9	11	20	2.342	.673
	25 – 29 years	35	24	59		
	30 – 39 years	60	45	105		
	40 – 49 years	31	28	59		
	50 years or above	29	30	59		
Hearing coworkers talking about sex life	24 years or under	8	10	18	16.506	.002*
	25 – 29 years	36	20	56		
	30 – 39 years	43	63	106		
	40 – 49 years	22	36	58		
	50 years or above	17	43	60		
Receiving unwanted messages of a sexual nature on social media	24 years or under	3	17	20	5.622	.229
	25 – 29 years	16	43	59		
	30 – 39 years	27	82	109		
	40 – 49 years	11	47	58		
	50 years or above	7	51	58		
Unwelcome verbal sexual advances	24 years or under	4	17	21	9.153	.057
	25 – 29 years	26	34	60		
	30 – 39 years	36	73	109		
	40 – 49 years	15	45	60		
	50 years or above	13	46	59		
Unwanted touching	24 years or under	3	18	21	5.931	.204
	25 – 29 years	22	38	60		
	30 – 39 years	30	77	107		
	40 – 49 years	14	46	60		
	50 years or above	13	47	60		
Unwelcome jokes of a sexual nature	24 years or under	6	15	21	5.549	.235
	25 – 29 years	31	29	60		
	30 – 39 years	47	60	107		
	40 – 49 years	20	34	54		
	50 years or above	21	38	59		
Comments of a sexual nature about your body/clothes	24 years or under	3	17	20	16.260	.003*
	25 – 29 years	30	28	58		
	30 – 39 years	43	68	111		
	40 – 49 years	15	43	58		
	50 years or above	14	43	57		

Table 9.5: Chi-square test results comparing experience of sexual harassment behaviours by respondents' job classification

Sexual harassment item	Job type	Experienced	Not experienced	No. of cases	Chi-square value	Sig.
Displays of pornographic photographs or drawings in the workplace	Office-based	60	185	245	9.502	.002*
	Site-based	23	27	50		
Hearing coworkers making comments of a sexual nature about another woman or women in general in front of you	Office-based	122	116	238	7.566	.006*
	Site-based	35	13	48		
Hearing coworkers talking about sex life	Office-based	93	142	235	6.362	.012*
	Site-based	29	20	49		
Receiving unwanted messages of a sexual nature on social media	Office-based	40	202	242	22.412	<.001*
	Site-based	22	24	46		
Unwelcome verbal sexual advances	Office-based	63	179	242	16.395	<.001*
	Site-based	28	23	51		
Unwanted touching	Office-based	56	189	245	12.799	<.001*
	Site-based	23	25	48		
Unwelcome jokes of a sexual nature	Office-based	90	152	242	15.635	<.001*
	Site-based	31	14	45		
Comments of a sexual nature about your body/clothes	Office-based	75	165	240	10.137	<.001*
	Site-based	27	22	49		

Table 9.6: Chi-square test results on sexual harassment behaviours by language spoken at home

Sexual harassment item	Use of language at home	Experienced	Not experienced	No. of cases	Chi-square value	Sig.
Displays of pornographic photographs or drawings in the workplace	English only	81	172	253	19.681	<.001*
	Other language(s)	2	56	58		
Hearing coworkers making comments of a sexual nature about another woman or women in general in front of you	English only	146	102	248	11.654	<.001*
	Other language(s)	18	36	54		
Hearing coworkers talking about sex life	English only	111	132	243	6.226	.013*
	Other language(s)	15	40	55		
Receiving unwanted messages of a sexual nature on social media	English only	57	193	250	2.586	.108
	Other language(s)	7	47	54		
Unwelcome verbal sexual advances	English only	83	169	252	4.085	.043*
	Other language(s)	11	46	57		
Unwanted touching	English only	73	178	251	4.202	.040*
	Other language(s)	9	48	57		
Unwelcome jokes of a sexual nature	English only	110	137	247	5.124	.024*
	Other language(s)	15	39	54		
Comments of a sexual nature about your body/clothes	English only	92	156	248	3.894	.048*
	Other language(s)	13	43	56		

Table 9.7: Chi-square test results on reporting of unacceptable jokes by age

Age group	Reported	Did not report	No. of cases	Chi-square value	Sig.
24 years or under	6	7	13	6.482	.166
25 – 29 years	35	23	58		
30 – 39 years	54	43	97		
40 – 49 years	19	26	45		
50 years or above	14	22	36		

Table 9.8: Chi-square test results on reporting of unacceptable jokes by job type

Job type	Reported	Did not report	No. of cases	Chi-square value	Sig.
Office-based	83	103	186	18.325	<.001*
Site-based	40	11	51		

Table 9.9: Chi-square test results on reporting of unacceptable jokes by language spoken at home

Language spoken at home	Reported	Did not report	No. of Cases	Chi-square value	Sig.
English only	99	100	199	1.089	.297
Other language(s)	29	21	50		

Table 9.10: Chi-square test results on reporting of unacceptable jokes by banter policy availability

Is there a banter policy at your workplace	Reported	Did not report	No. of cases	Chi-square value	Sig.
Yes	47	22	69	11.008	.004*
No	55	60	115		
Not sure	24	35	59		

Table 9.11: Chi-square test results on treatment after reporting by banter policy availability

Is there a banter policy at your workplace	Treated better	Treated worse	No change	No. of cases	Chi-square value	Sig.
Yes	24	12	10	46	24.284	<.001*
No	10	9	37	56		
Not sure	7	1	14	22		

9.4 Interview questions

1. Can you tell me a little more about what you do for your work:
    i. What's your job role?
    ii. Which sector are you working in? Residential, commercial or civil and engineering?
    iii. How long have you been working in construction?
    iv. How would you consider the size of your company (small, medium and large)?
    v. How many women are in your immediate workgroup?
2. What is humour like in your workplace? How does that affect your experience of work?
    i. If good, can you give some examples, why are they good?
    ii. If bad, can you give some examples, why are they bad?
3. Is there something in the construction workplace that makes humour different from other workplaces?
4. Have you experienced jokes that are unacceptable? (If no go to Q5) If yes, what happened, can you describe? Why was that unacceptable to you? How did you handle the situation? At any point, did you think about reporting it? Why and why not? Did you eventually report it?
    i. If yes, what happened after reporting? Was it dealt with satisfaction? Could that be done better, and if yes, how?
    ii. If no, why didn't you report? What can be done to change the way you feel about reporting?
5. (Optional, if answer no to Q4) Have you witnessed anyone else in your workplace experiencing an unacceptable joke? What happened? Do you think the person considered reporting it? Why and why not? Did that person eventually report?
    i. If yes, what happened after reporting? Was it dealt with satisfaction? Could that be done better, and if yes, how?
    ii. If no, why didn't they report? What can be done to change the way people feel about reporting?
6. In your view, what makes a joke unacceptable in the workplace? Why do you think people make jokes like these? Are these behaviours tolerated? Why or why not?

7. Who is more likely to be the target of jokes in your workplace, why? Is it always that person? Can that person get back with a joke? Why or why not? What can be done to make humour less targeted?

8. Do you think men and women engage with workplace humour differently in your workplace? Why? Are there any cultural differences in using and handling humour? Why? How can humour be made more equitable?

9. Should construction organisations manage workplace humour? If yes, how? If no, why not?

    i. What are the potential problems of over-regulating workplace humour? What would be the implications if a construction organisation does not manage workplace at all? How can organisations find a balance between encouraging positive humour and ensuring it does not cross boundaries?

    ii. What challenges do organisations face in managing workplace humour?

    iii. What are the key signs that indicate workplace humour has become problematic or harmful? How can managers recognise if humour is negatively affecting the individual/team?

10. Is there anything else construction organisations can do to ensure workplace humour is positive not negative?