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

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

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Executive summary

This report presents the findings of a survey conducted to understand the types, effects and outcomes of workplace humour experienced by women in the New South Wales (NSW) construction industry. The survey is part of a project 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, some humour can have negative consequences, for example when it is targeted, belittling and/or aggressive in nature. The literature also describes how some workplace behaviour performed under the guise of humour, should actually be considered to be a form of sexual harassment.

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.

Overall respondents had positive attitudes towards workplace humour indicating they believe 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.

Respondents indicated 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, either within or before the 12 months preceding completion of the survey. 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 reported significantly greater experience of other forms of sexual harassment behaviour compared to those in office-based roles.

When asked what type of humour is 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 is also considered to be unacceptable by many respondents. Similarly, respondents identified humour that is targeted, personal, intended to make someone feel bad and/or that makes the target of humour feel uncomfortable as also 'crossing the line' with respect to what is acceptable/unacceptable in a workplace.

Unacceptable workplace humour was most frequently identified as being perpetrated by male coworkers (reported by 39.5% of 337 respondents). If they had experienced unacceptable workplace humour, respondents were asked to indicate whether they reported this behaviour to their employer. 39.7% of 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 respondents who indicated they did not report their experience of unacceptable workplace humour to their employer (46.7%) indicated that they did not report this experience because they feared reporting unacceptable workplace humour 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.

When asked about the impacts of experiencing unacceptable humour in the workplace, 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%).

One quarter (25.2%) of 321 respondents who indicated whether or not their employing organisation has a banter policy indicated that their employing organisation has a policy dealing with workplace banter, while nearly half of respondents (47.7%) indicated their employing organisation has no such policy.

The results suggest the presence of an organisational policy dealing with workplace banter positively impacts reporting behaviour and treatment following the reporting of unacceptable workplace humour. Proportionally more respondents whose organisation has a formal banter policy indicated they reported the experience of unacceptable workplace humour (68.12%) than those whose organisation has no policy (47.8%). Proportionally more respondents whose

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 do not have a formal banter policy (17.9%).

The results of the survey indicate that much of the workplace humour experienced by women in the NSW construction industry is positive. However, some humour is also negative and potentially harmful. In some instances this humour constitutes sexual harassment. When workplace humour ‘crosses the line’ in relation to what is considered to be acceptable/unacceptable, the survey results suggest women’s health can be adversely affected. Women exposed to unacceptable workplace humour also indicated they avoid work situations (such as courses, meetings and work shifts) in order to avoid coming into contact with the perpetrator. This avoidance behaviour has the potential to adversely impact women’s career opportunity and progression.

Construction organisations can influence the responses to unacceptable workplace humour through managerial action, for example implementing a banter policy. Taken together, the survey results suggest that ensuring workplace humour does not ‘cross the line’ is important in creating construction workplaces in which women are safe and able to experience positive career outcomes.

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).

1.2 Purpose

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 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.

This survey is part of a project 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 purpose of this survey was to understand the types and effects of workplace humour experienced by women in the NSW construction industry.

The survey will be followed by in-depth interviews in the second stage of the project. The survey and interview data will be combined to form the evidence-base for the development of training

resources that can help to create workplace cultures that are inclusive, respectful and supportive of women in all roles. It is anticipated that adopting these resources will help the NSW construction industry create work cultures that are more attractive to women, encouraging entry, increasing retention and reducing harm.

The target cohort for the survey was women working in the NSW construction industry. Women were invited to participate in the survey data collection stage of the project and, it is expected, will also be the principal beneficiaries of the project output (training resources). The survey (and subsequent interviews) will produce critical new evidence that will form the basis for developing the training resources, including facilitators' guidance material, case studies and role-play scenarios based on lived experiences and real-life situations.

The training resources will help NSW-based construction organisations to develop 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 presents the results of the first stage of the project, i.e., an industry-wide survey of women working in the NSW construction industry. The 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: Results – presents the survey results.
- Part 5: Discussion – discusses the implications of the results.
- Part 6: References – lists references cited throughout the report.
- Part 7: 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

3.1.1 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 1.

3.1.2 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).

3.1.3 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, 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 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 B 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.

Part 4: 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.

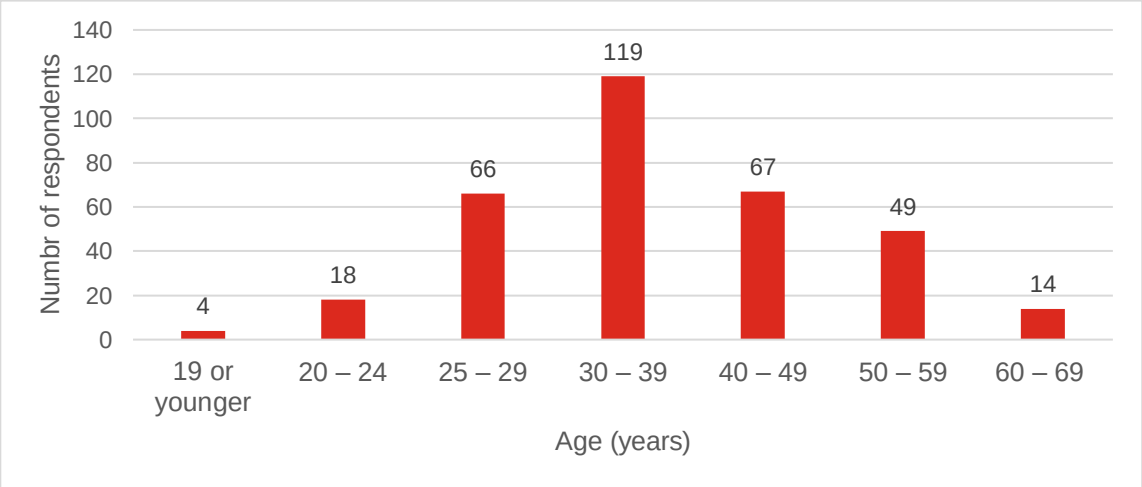

Figure 4.1: Distribution of respondents by age

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.

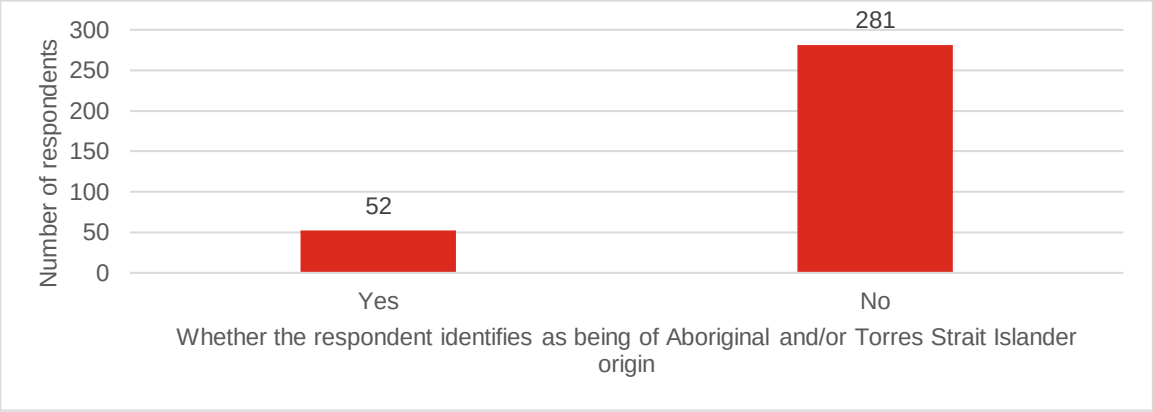

Figure 4.2: Distribution of respondents by identification as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin or not

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%).

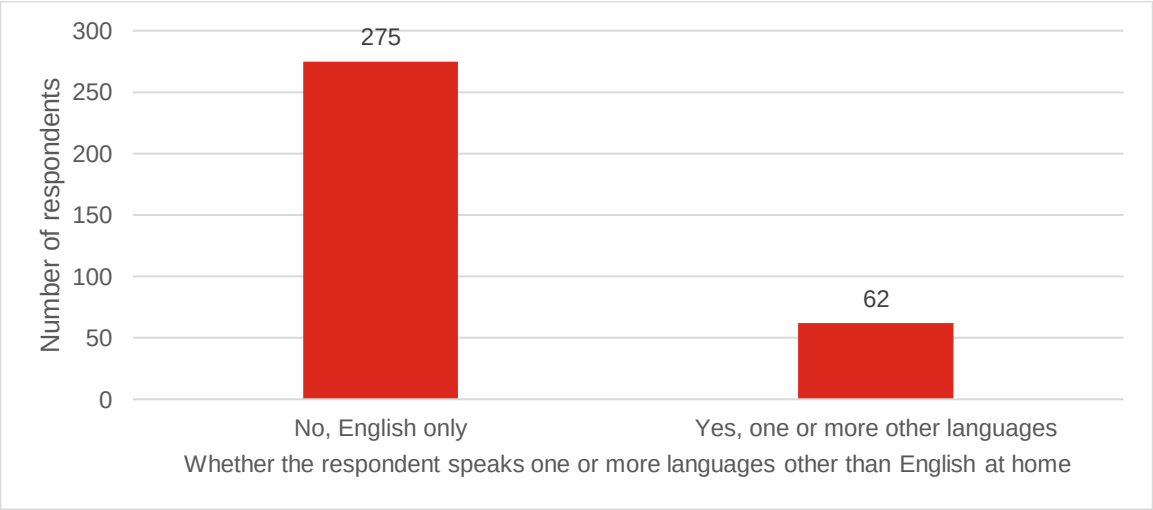

Figure 4.3: Distribution of respondents by the use of English at home

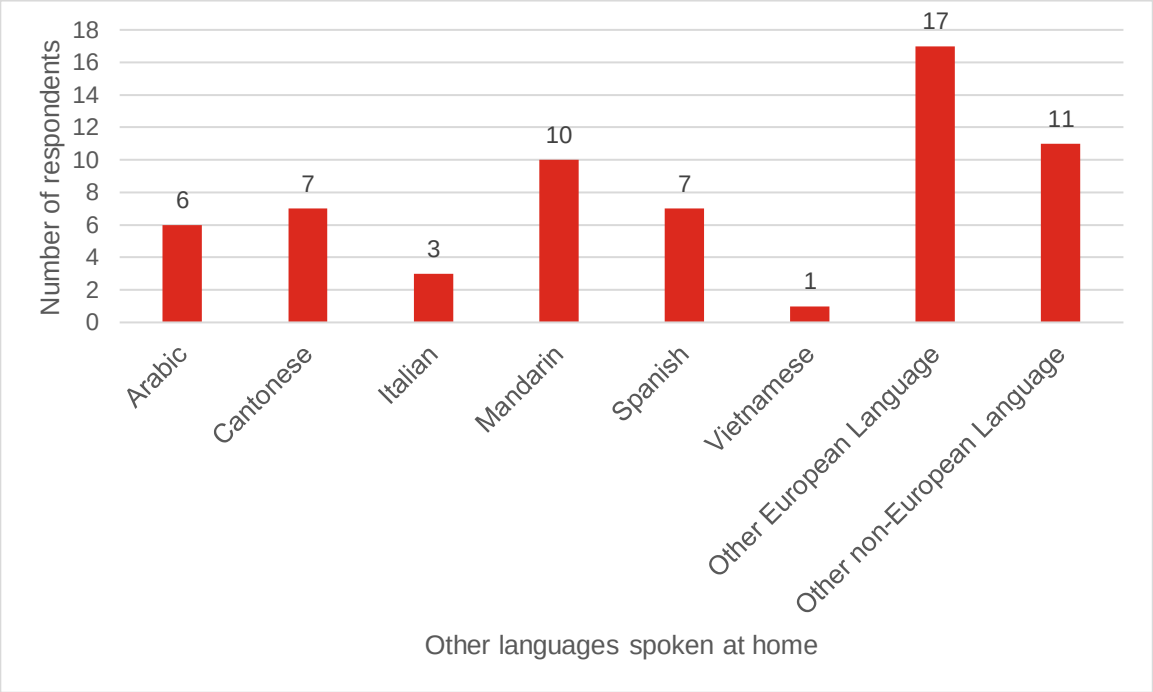

Figure 4.4: Distribution of respondents by the main language spoken at home (if other than English)

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.

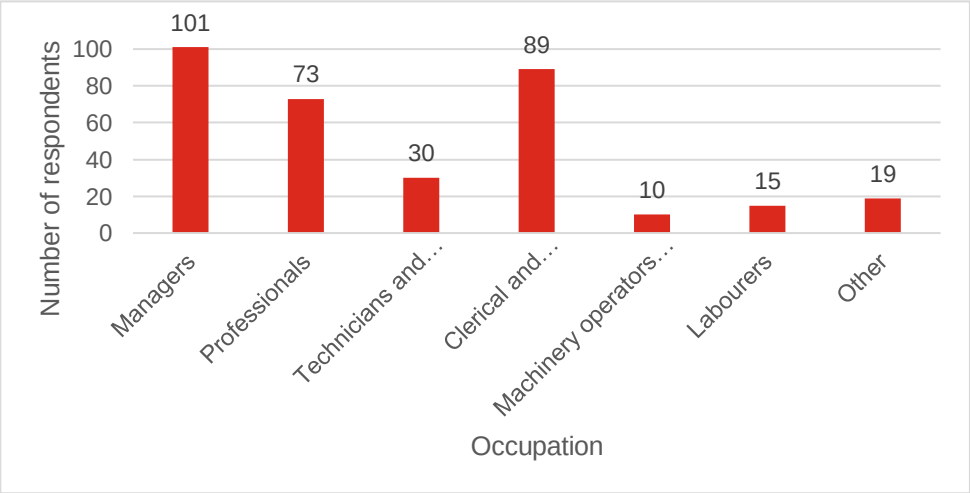

Figure 4.5: Distribution of respondents by occupation

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.

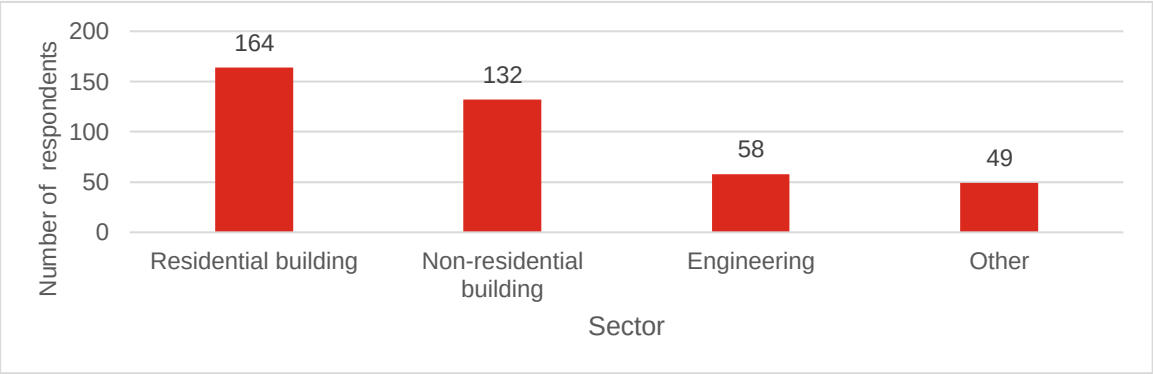

Figure 4.6: Distribution of respondents by sector

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.

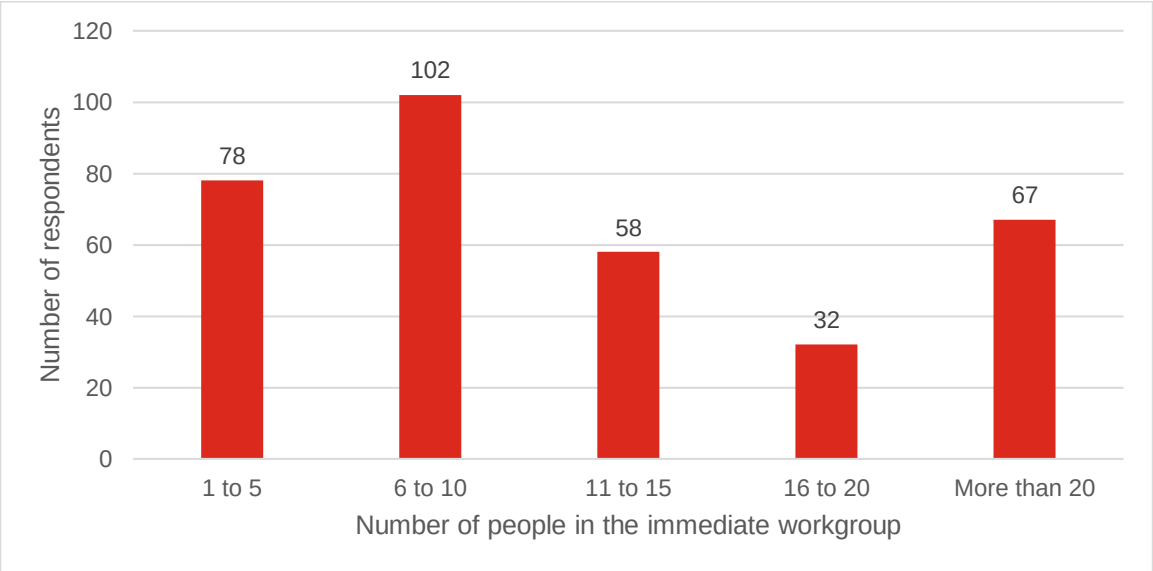

Figure 4.7: Distribution of respondents by size of immediate workgroup

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.

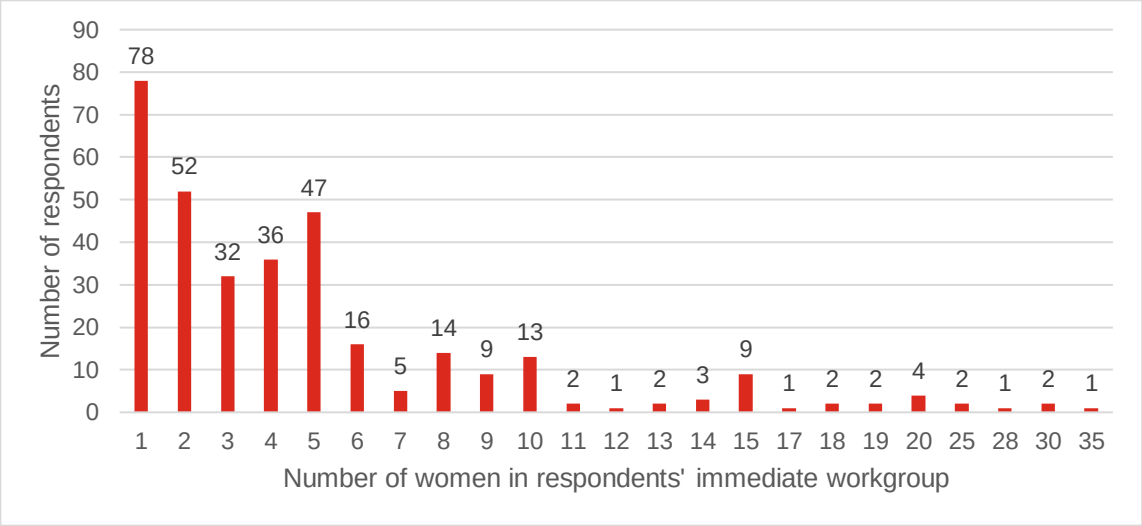

Figure 4.8: Distribution of respondents by the number of women in their immediate workgroup

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.

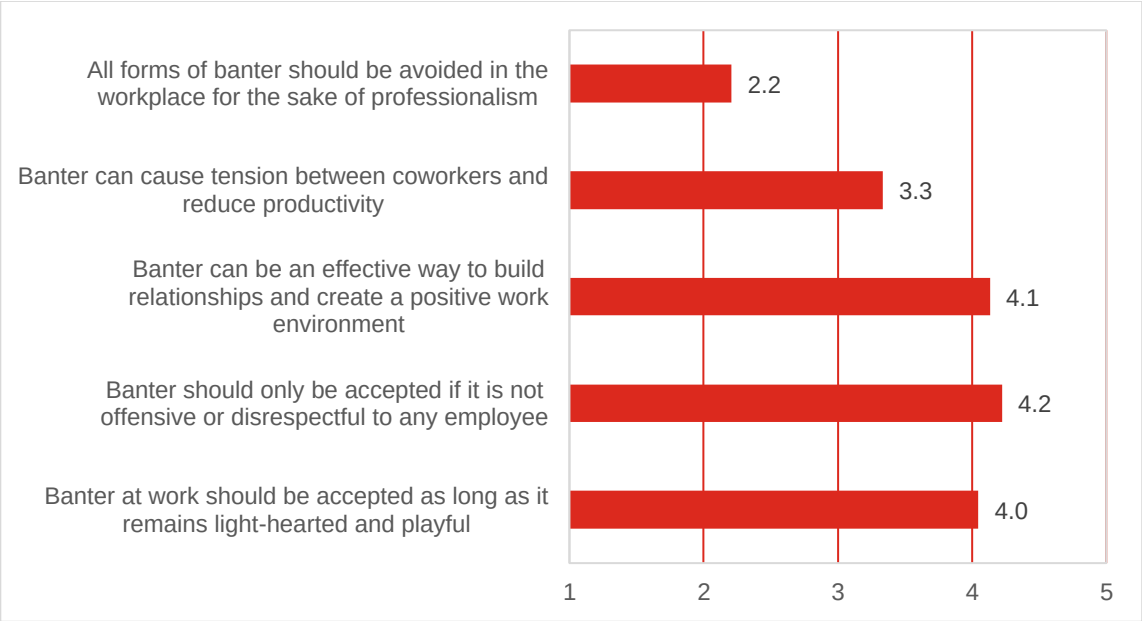

Figure 4.9: Mean scores for humour attitude items

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.

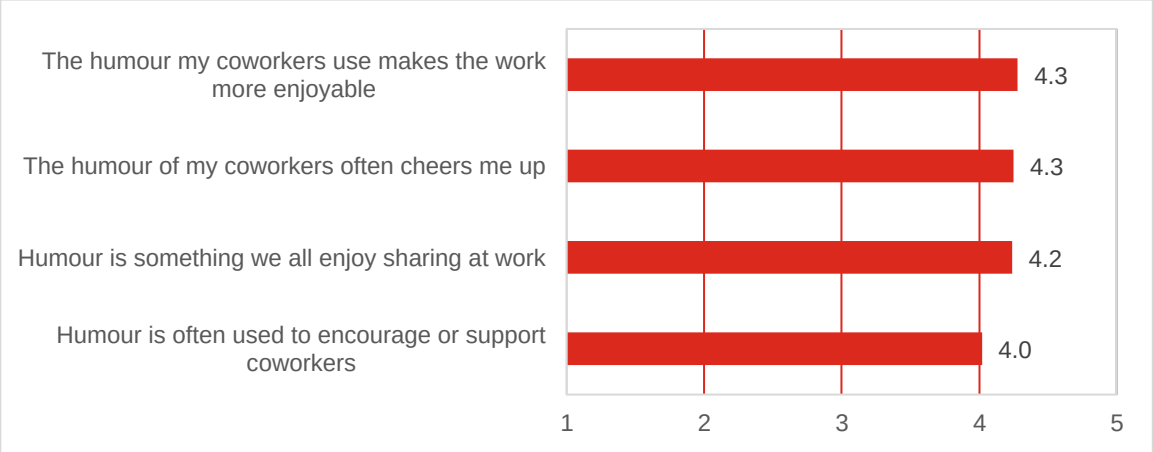

Figure 4.10: Mean scores for positive humour items

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.

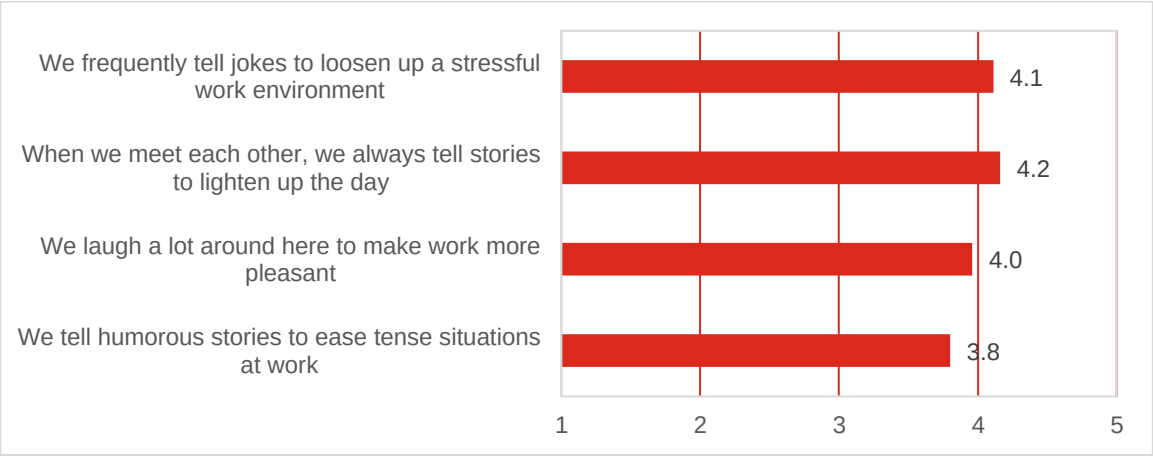

Figure 4.11: Mean scores for stress-relieving humour items

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 7, Section 7.2.2. The results of the analysis are presented in Part 7, Table 7.1. 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 7.1).

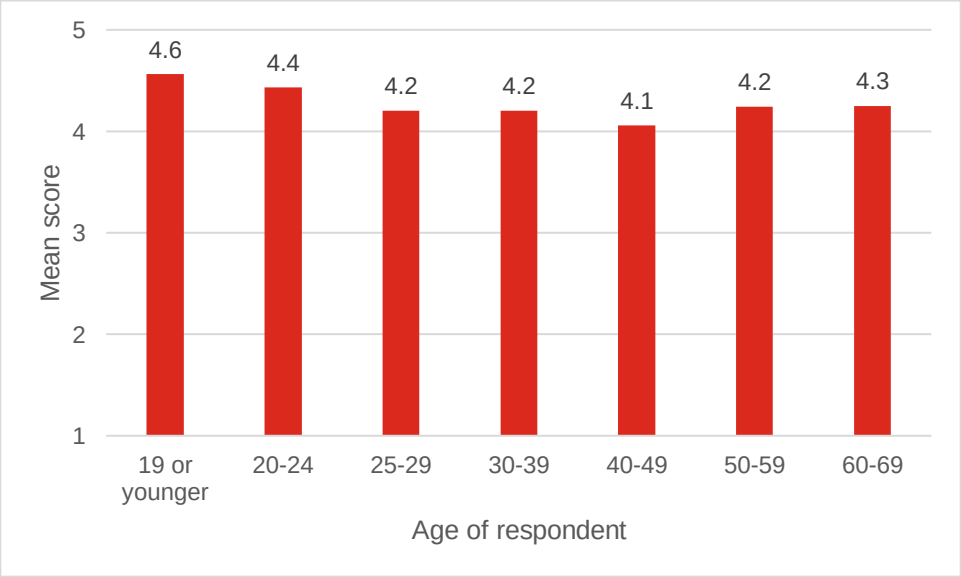

Figure 4.14: Mean positive humour scores by respondents' age

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 7.1).

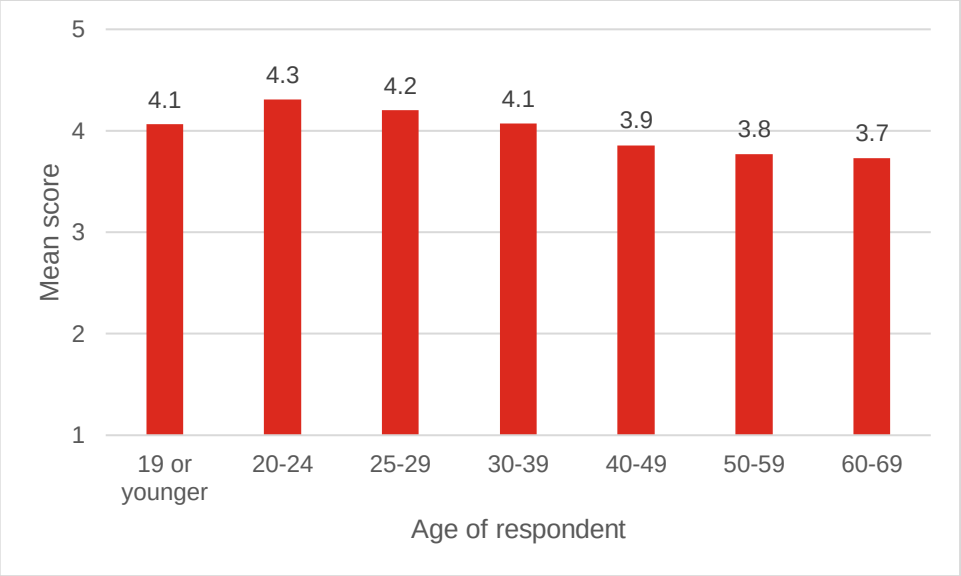

Figure 4.15: Mean stress-relieving humour scores by respondents' age

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 7.1).

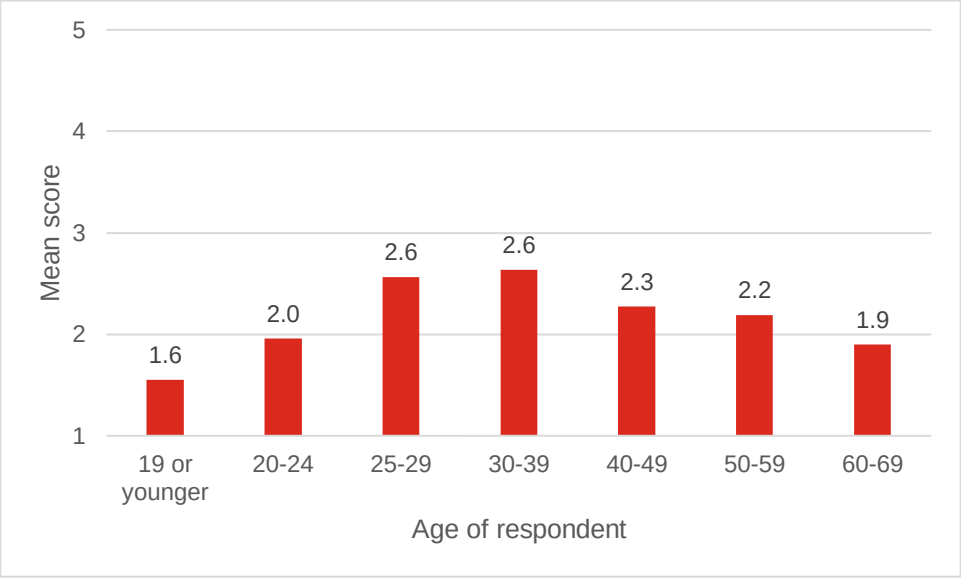

Figure 4.16: Mean negative humour scores by respondents' age

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 7.1).

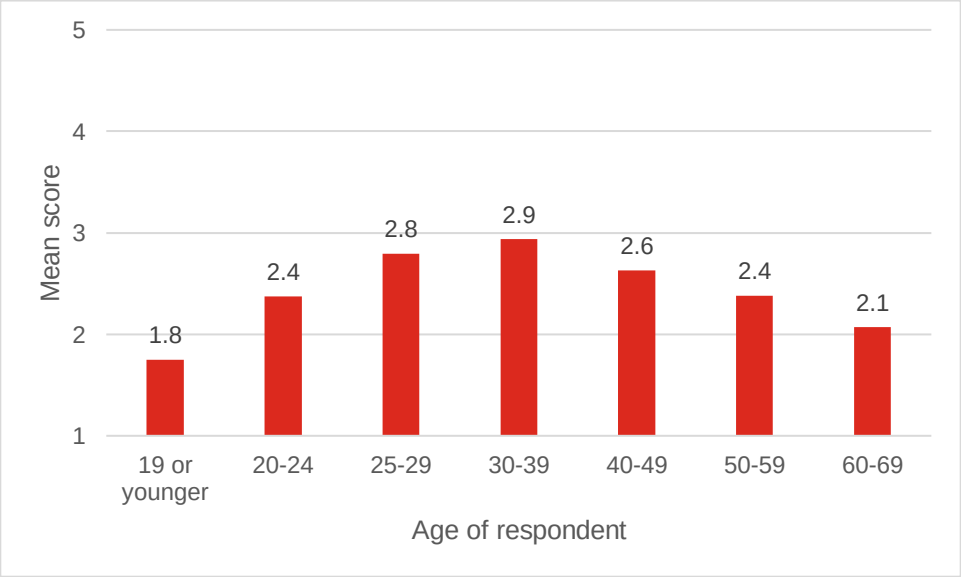

Figure 4.17: Mean self-defeating humour scores by respondents' age

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 7, Table 7.2. 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 7.2). Differences in mean scores for positive and stress-relieving humour did not differ significantly between respondents in site- and office-based roles.

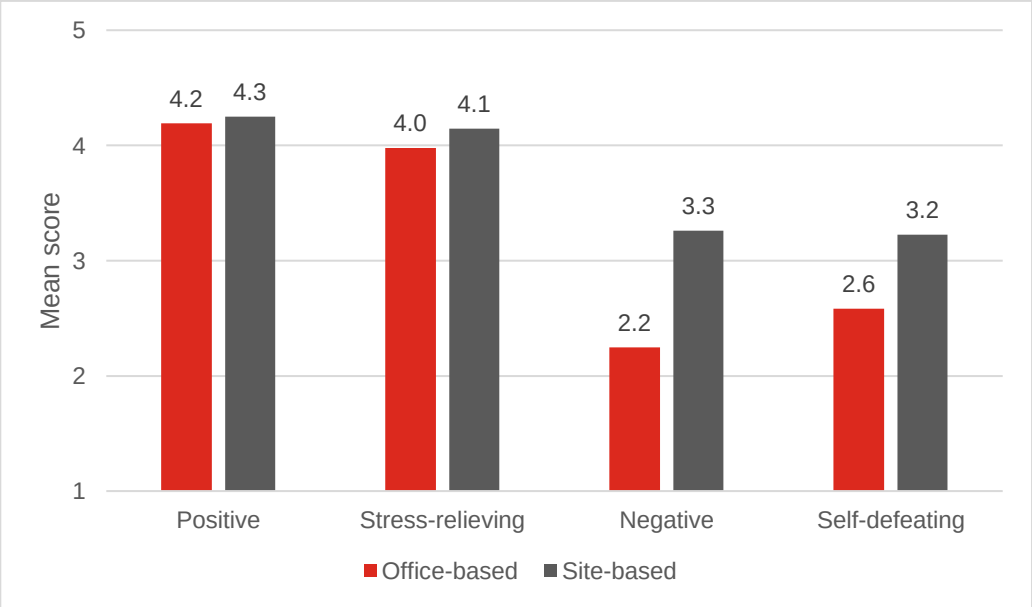

Fig. 4.18: Mean humour type scores reported by office-based and site-based workers

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 7, Table 7.3.

Significant differences were found between these two groups of respondents for negative and self-defeating humour (Table 7.3). 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.

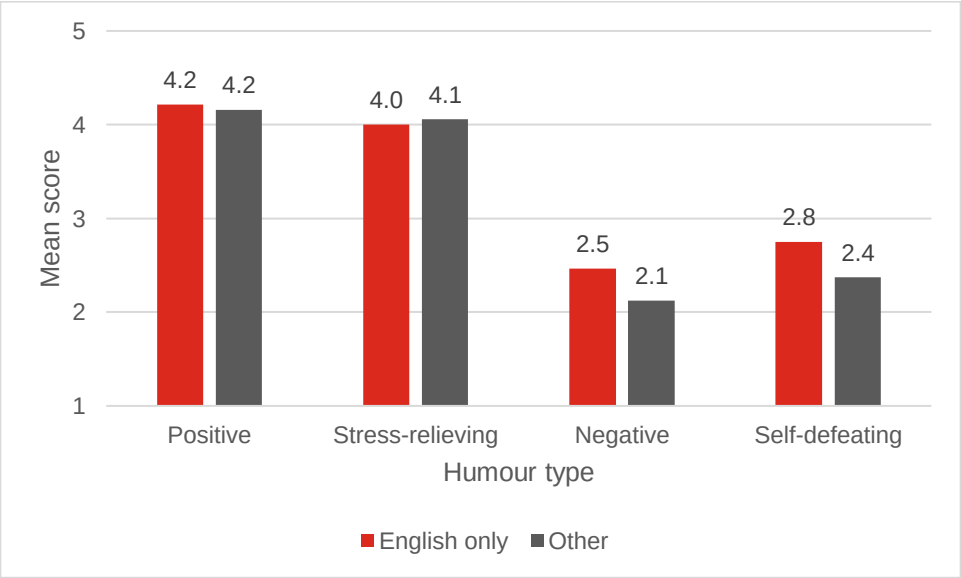

Fig. 4.19: Mean humour type scores reported by respondents who speak only English or who speak other languages at home

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.

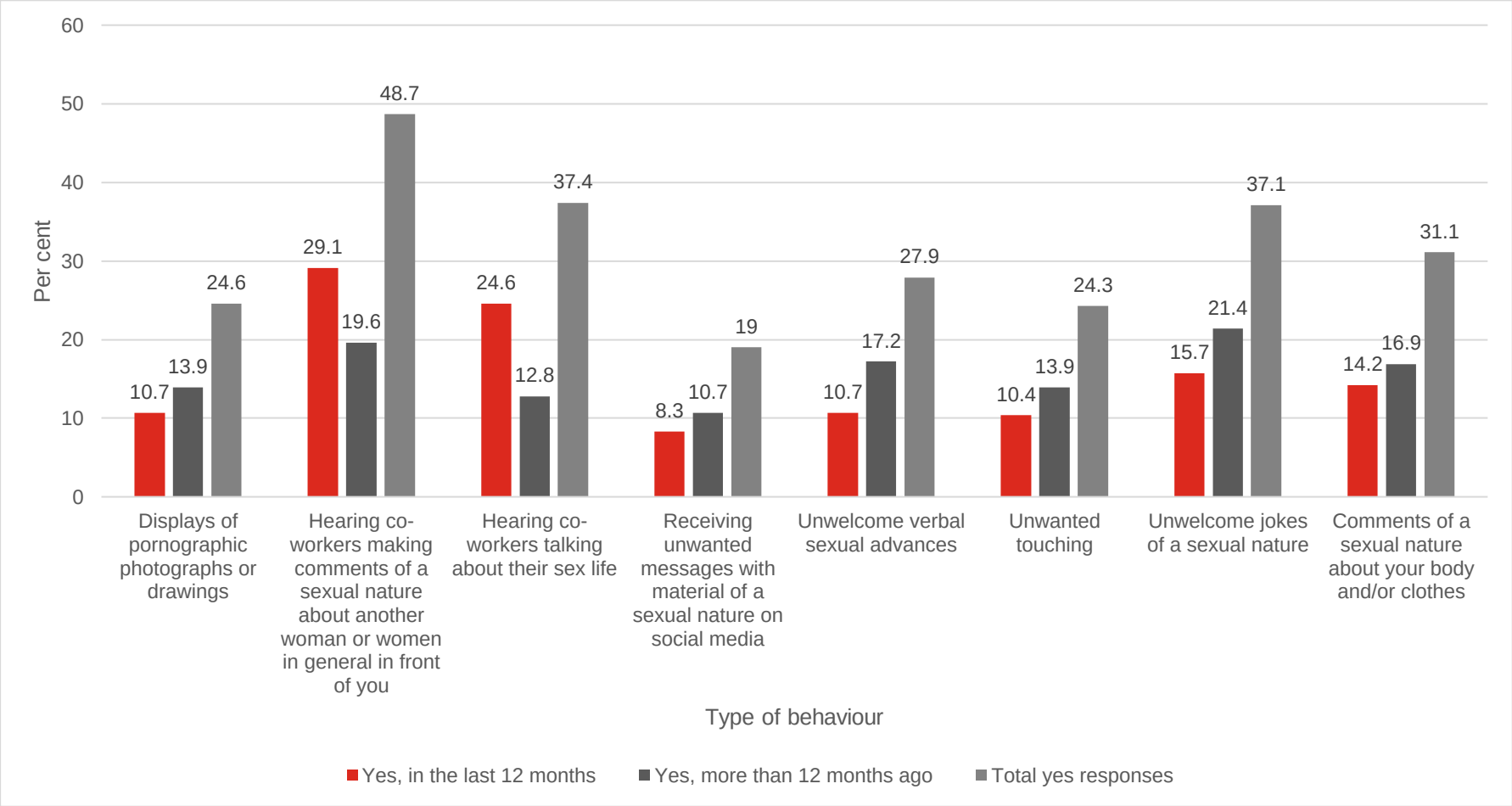

Figure 4.20: Sexual harassment behaviour experiences (as % of total respondents in the sample)

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 7.4). 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.

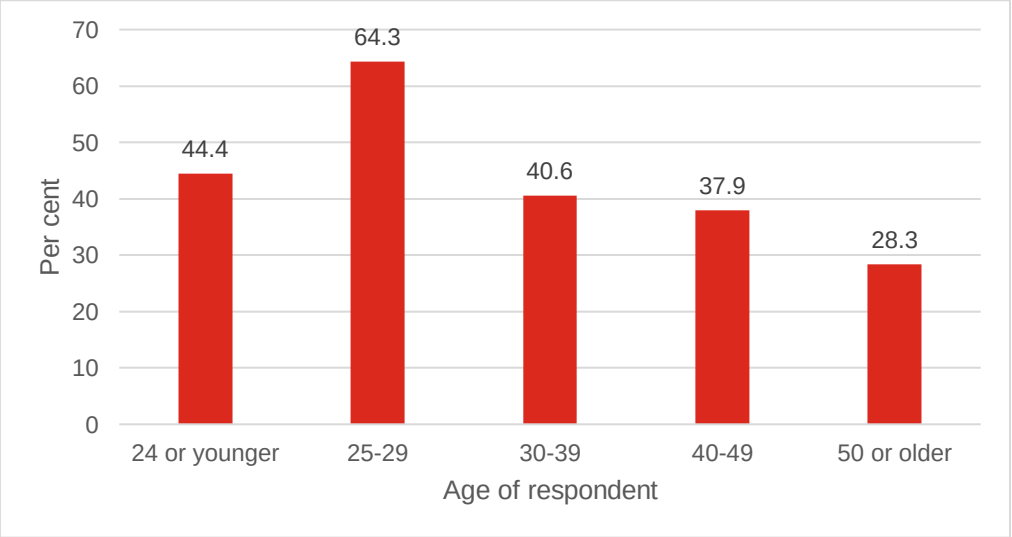

Figure 4.21: Respondents experiencing hearing coworkers talking about their sex life by age (n=298)

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 7.4). 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.

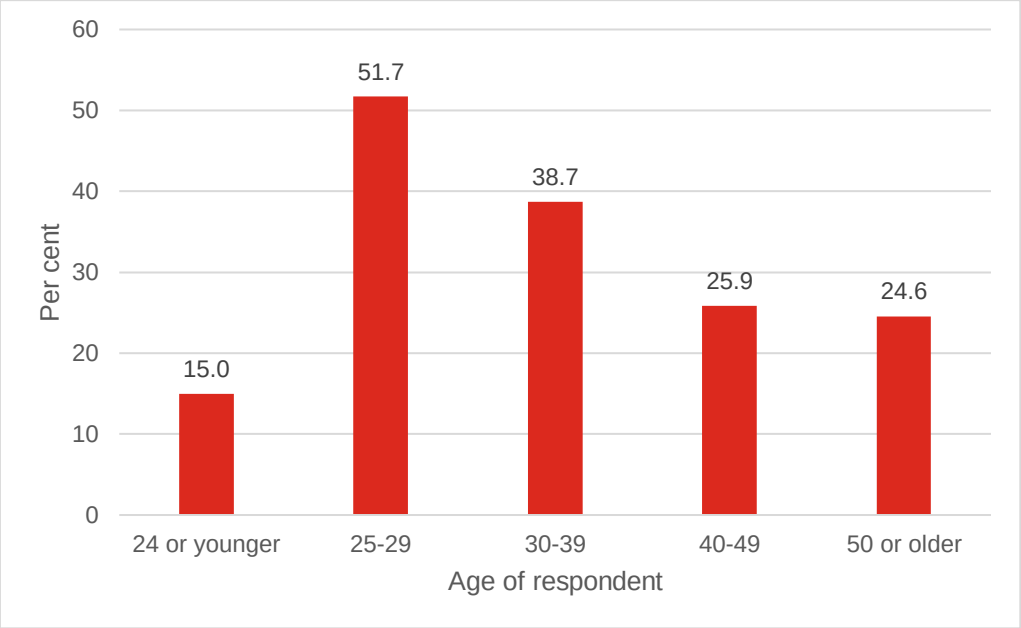

Figure 4.22: Respondents experiencing comments of a sexual nature about their body or clothes by age (n = 304)

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 7.5.

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 7, Table 7.5. Differences between office- and site-based respondents' experiences of all sexual harassment behaviours were statistically significant.

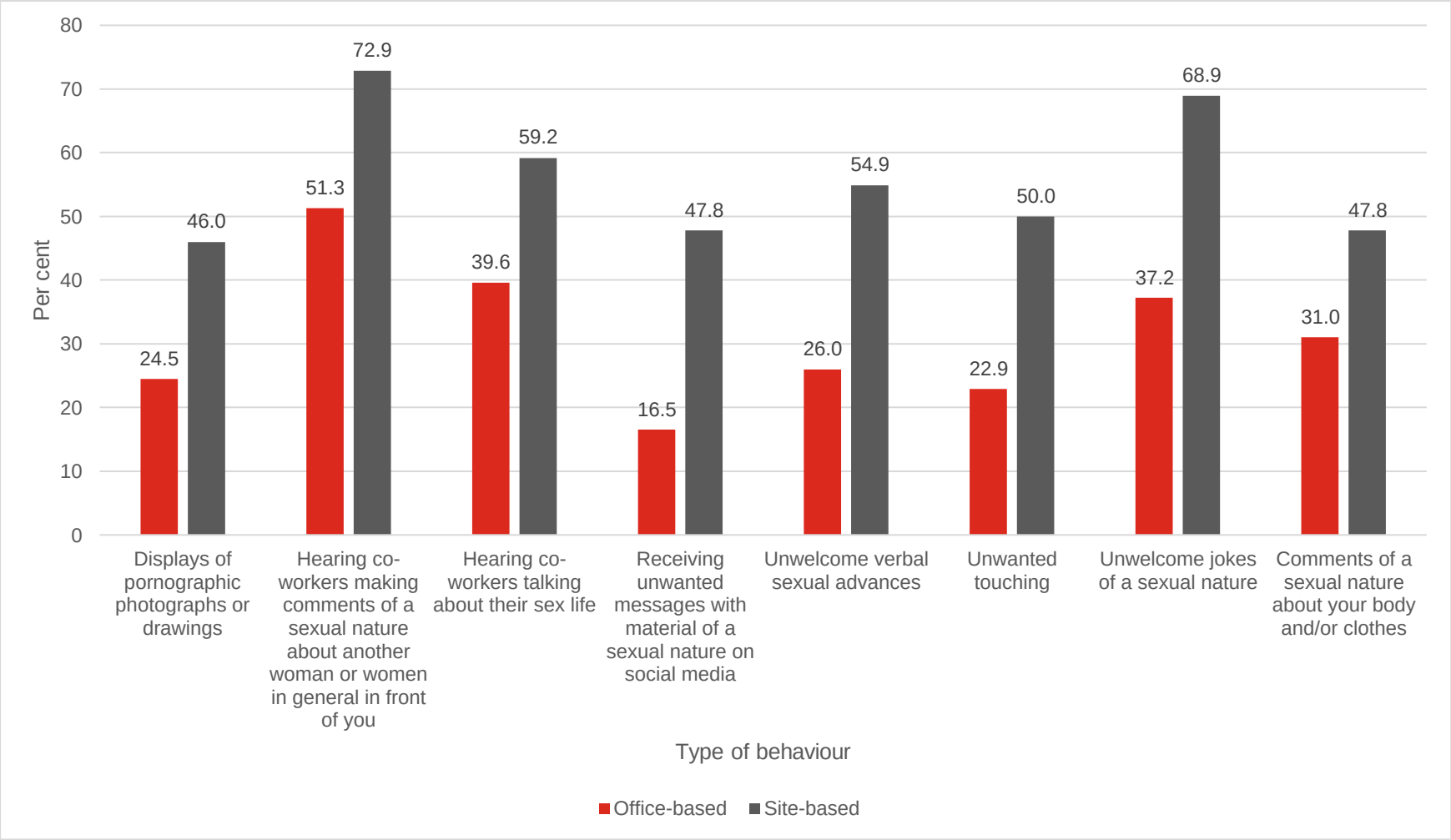

Figure 4.23: Experience of sexual harassment behaviour by office- and site-based respondents by type of behaviour

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 7.6.

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 7, Table 7.6. 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.

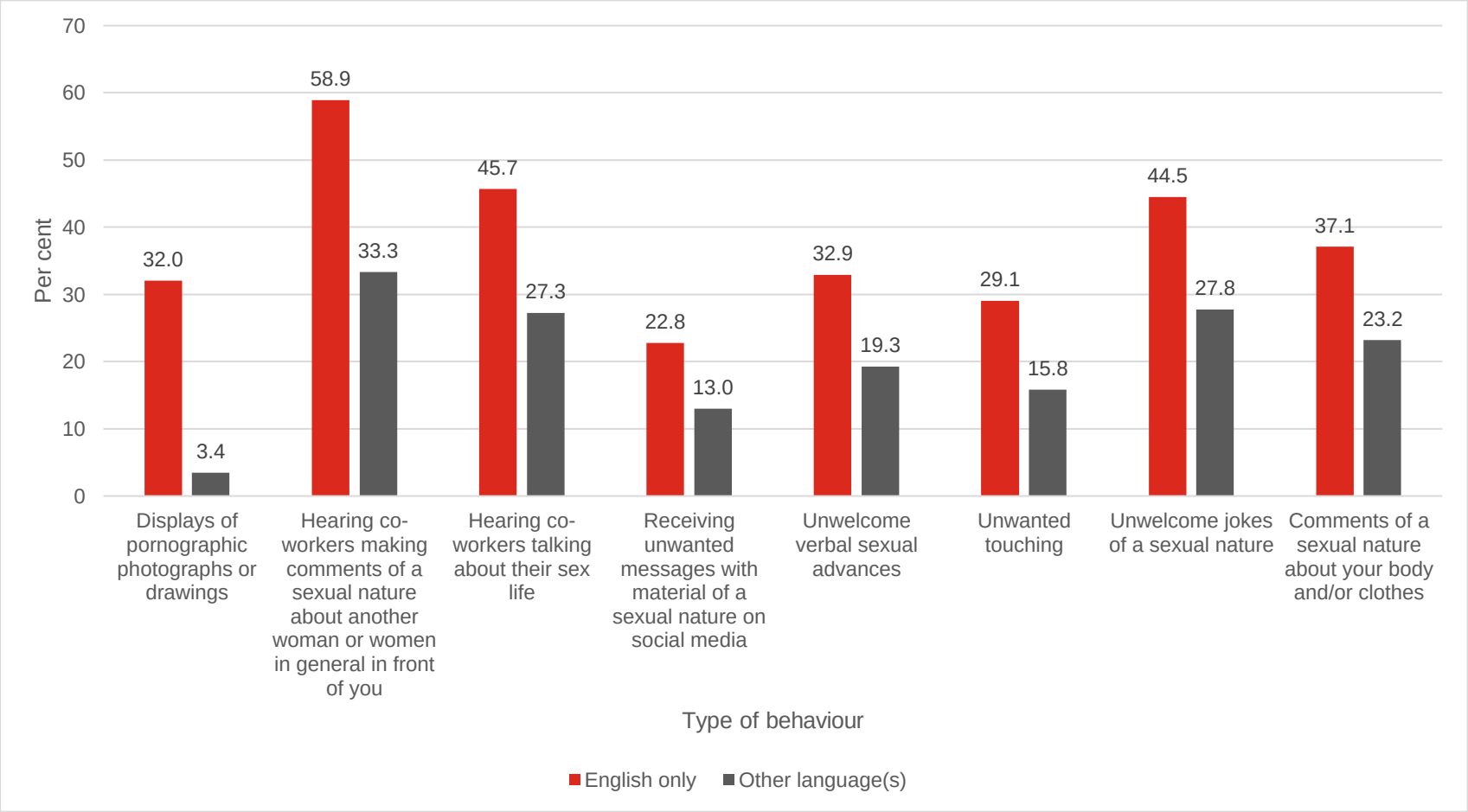

Figure 4.24: Experience of sexual harassment behaviour experienced by respondents who speak only English or another language(s) at home by type of behaviour

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, ha… ha… ha…"

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.

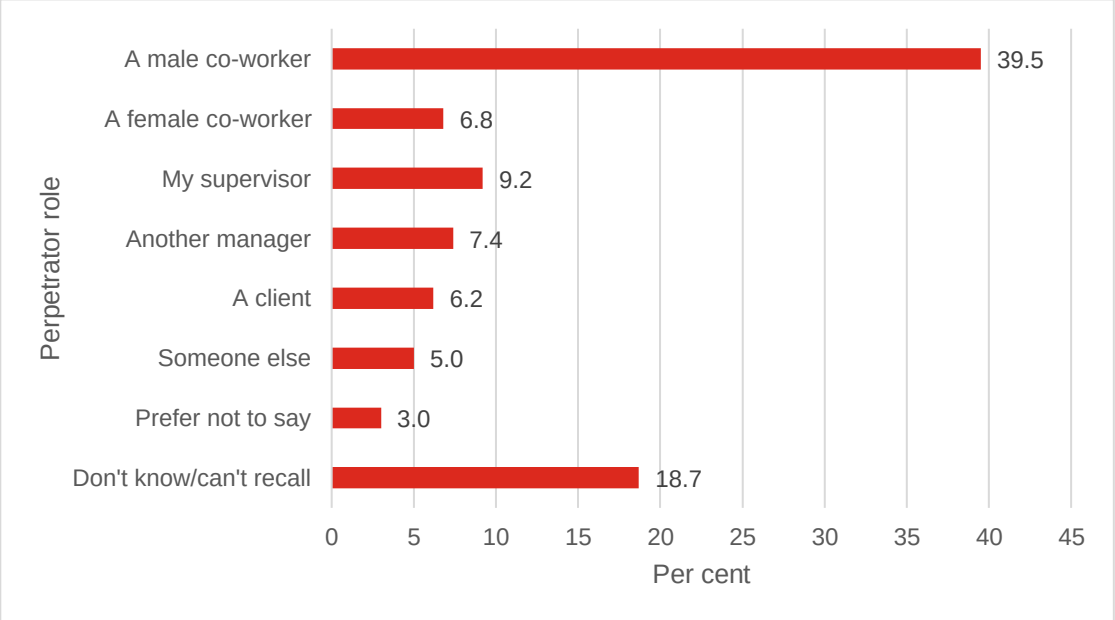

Figure 4.25: The job role of people reported to perpetrate unacceptable workplace humour (n=337)

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.

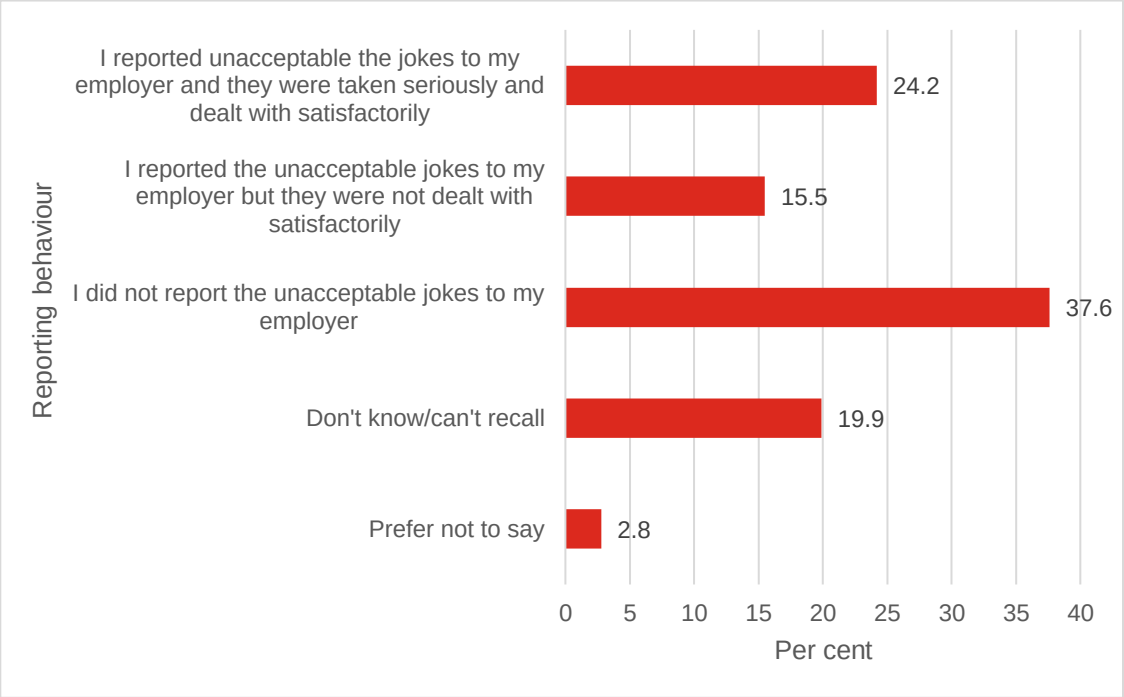

Figure 4.26: Reporting behaviour in relation to unacceptable workplace humour (n=322)

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.

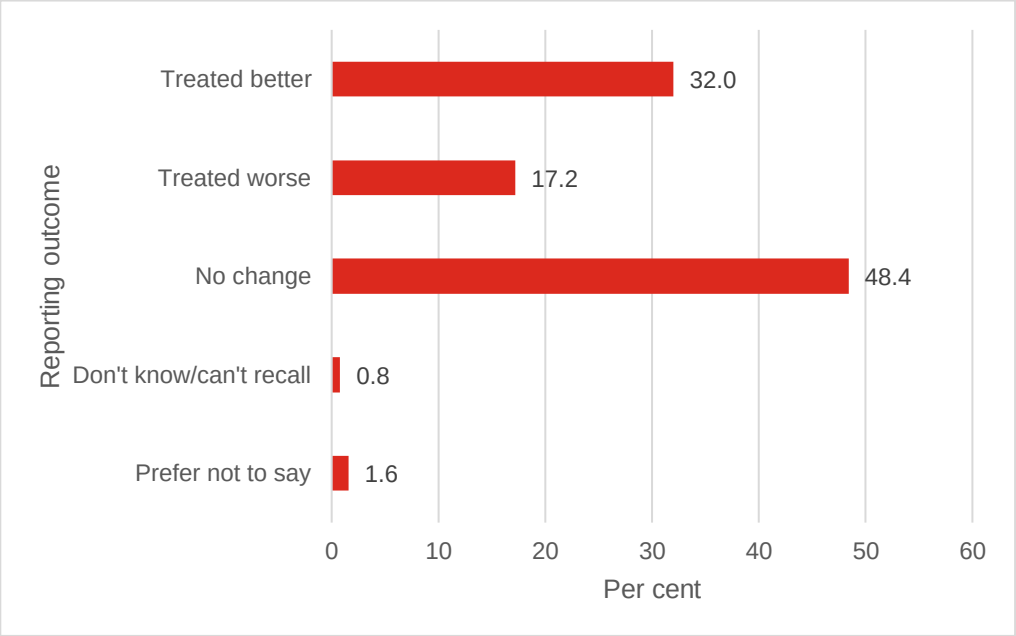

Figure 4.27: Respondents' treatment following reporting of unacceptable humour in the workplace

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”).

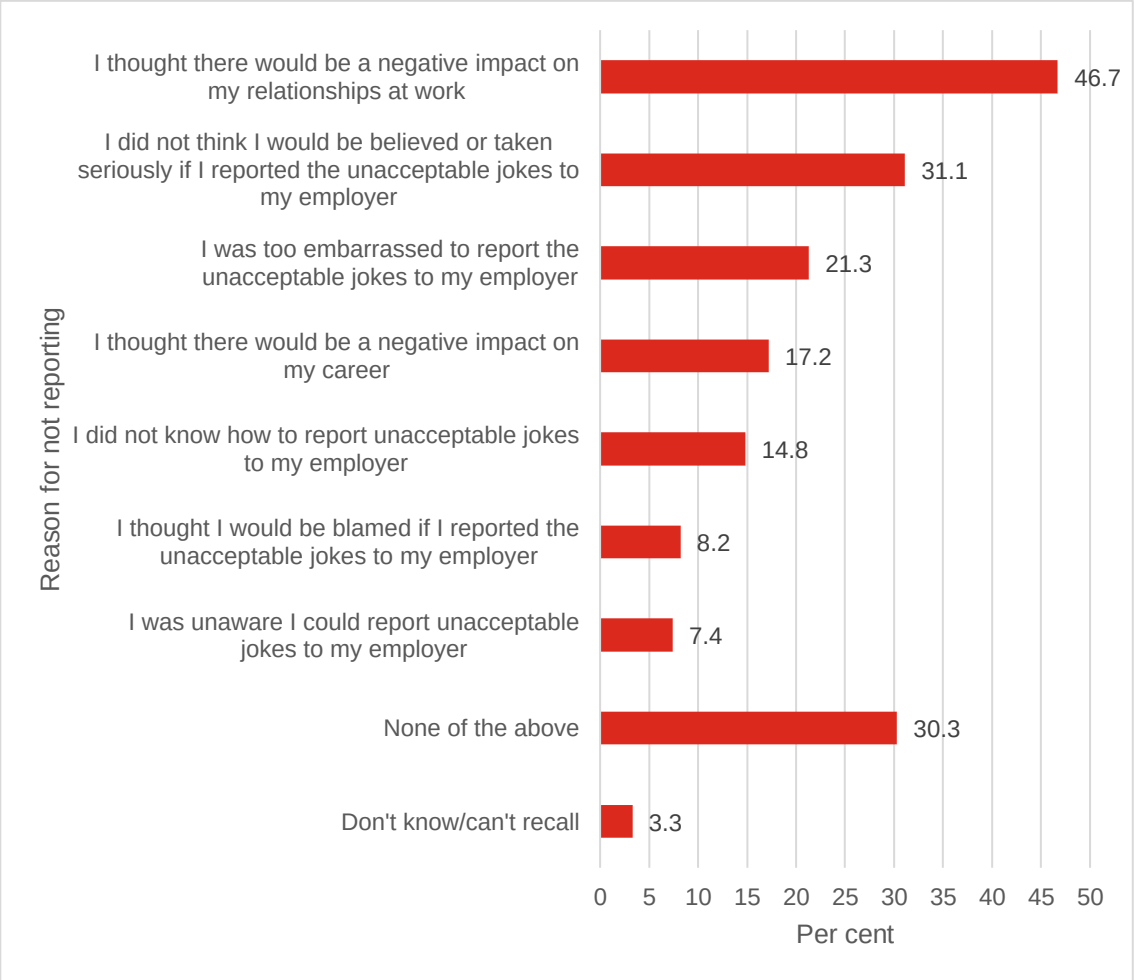

Figure 4.28: Identified reasons for respondents not reporting unacceptable jokes to their employer

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 7, Table 7.7).

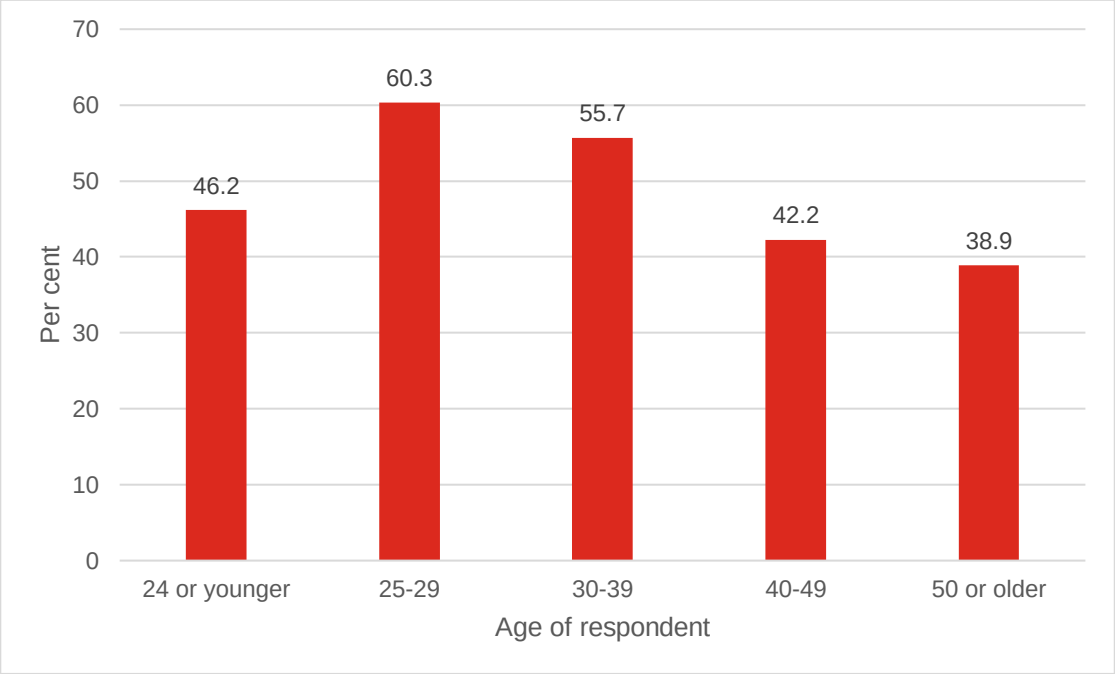

Figure 4.29: Reporting of unacceptable workplace humour by respondents' age

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 7, Table 7.8).

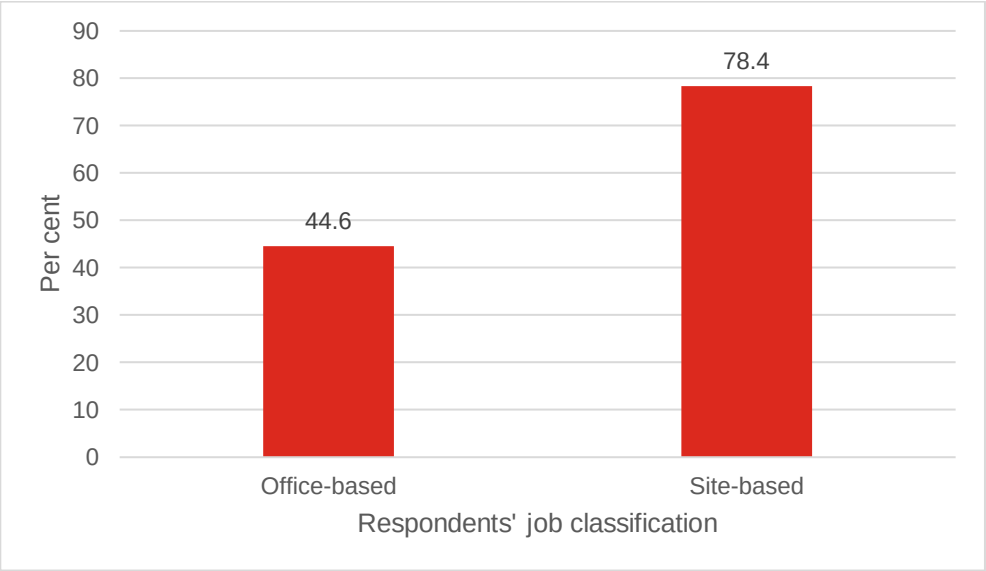

Figure 4.30: Reporting of unacceptable workplace humour by respondents' job classification

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 7, Table 7.9).

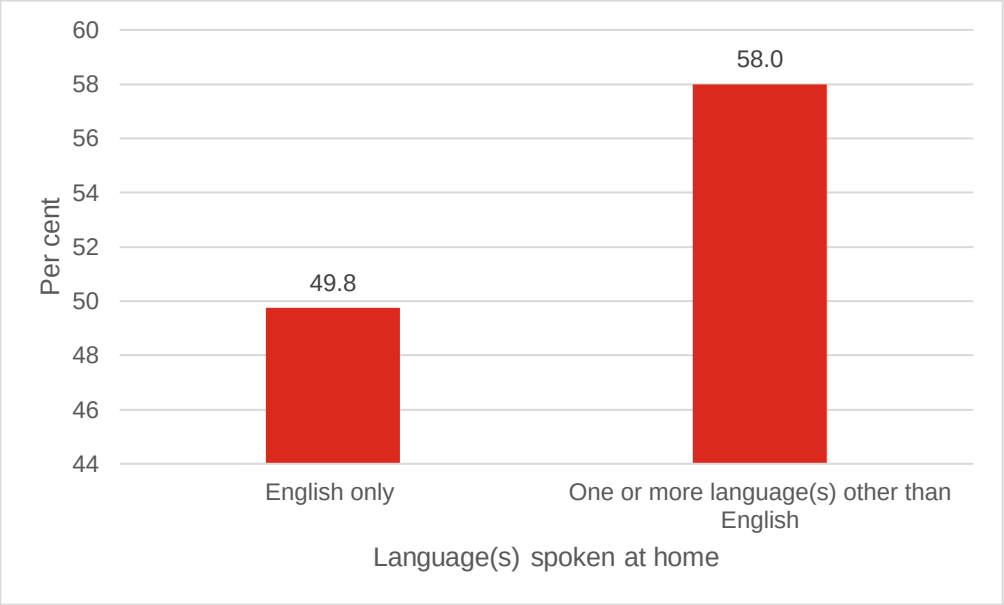

Figure 4.31: Reporting of unacceptable workplace humour by language spoken at home

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.

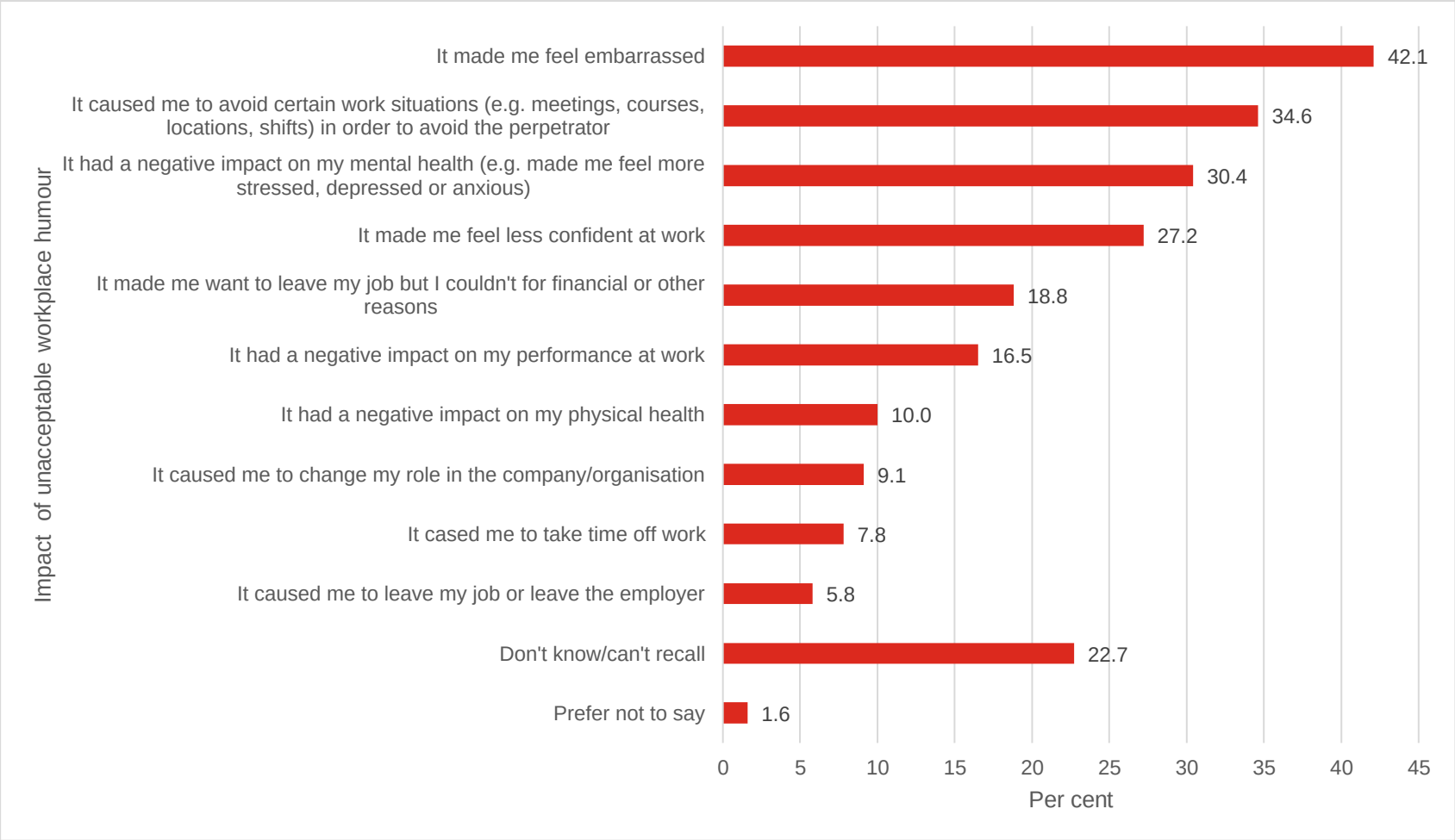

Figure 4.32: Impacts on recipients of unacceptable workplace humour

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.

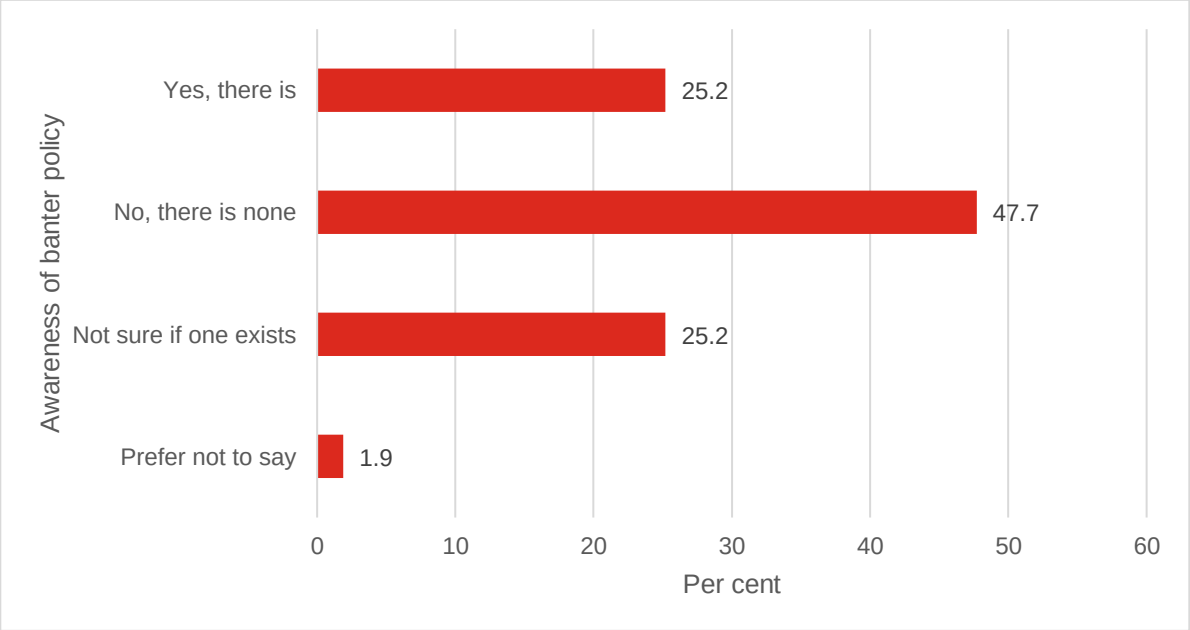

Figure 4.33: Respondents' awareness of organisational banter policy in their employing organisations

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 7, Table 7.10).

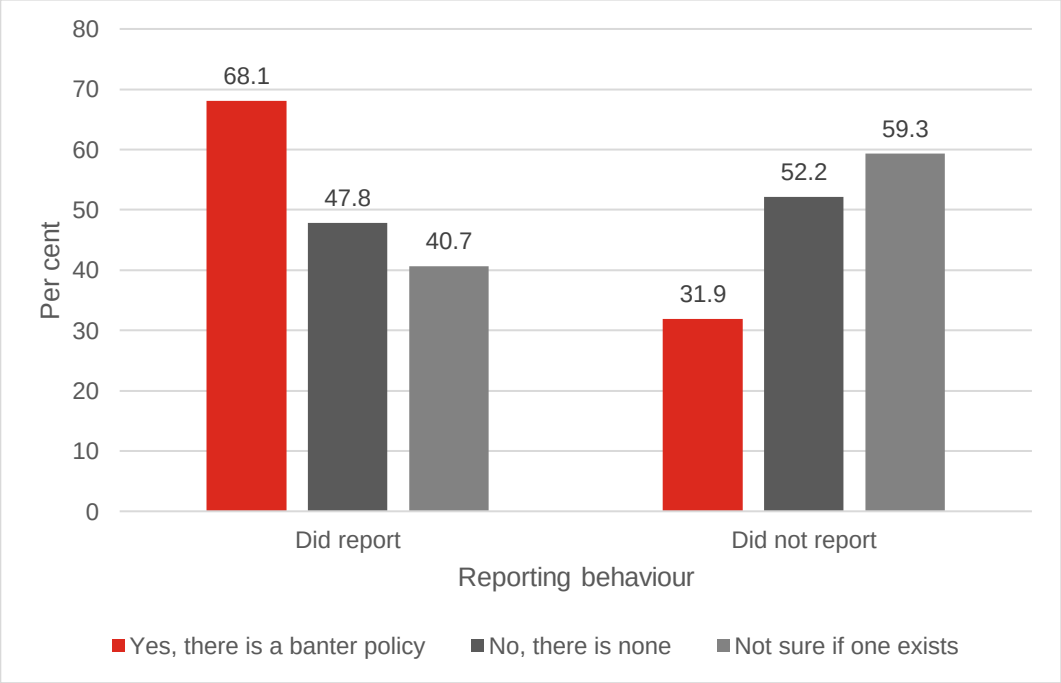

Figure 4.34: Respondents' reporting behaviour according to whether there is an organisational policy concerning workplace banter

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 7, Table 7.11).

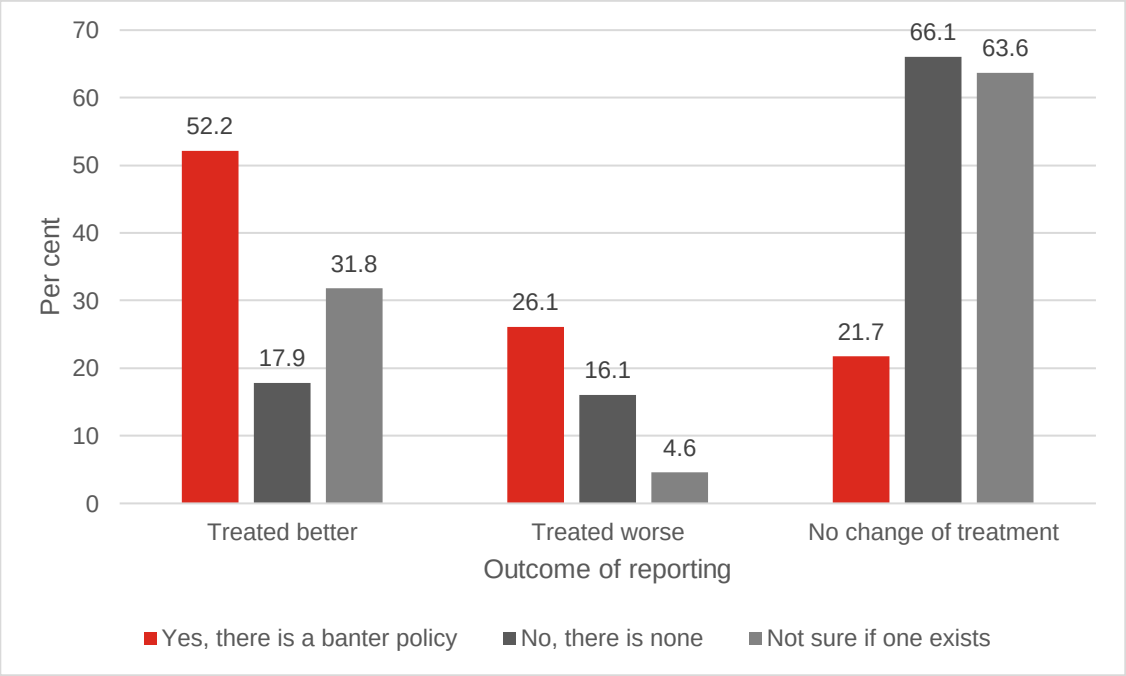

Figure 4.35: Treatment after reporting an incidence of unacceptable workplace humour by whether a respondent's employing organisation has a formal banter policy

Part 5: Discussion and next steps

5.1 Discussion

The findings reveal that humour is a prevalent characteristic of construction workplaces in which the women in our sample work. Mean scores for positive and stress-relieving humour were higher than scores for negative and self-defeating humour, indicating that respondents experience positive forms of humour more frequently than they experience negative forms of humour in the workplace. This is important because, when positive, workplace humour can build good relations with coworkers and is an effective way of 'doing collegiality' at work (Holmes, 2006, p. 27). Plester (2009a) describes how workplace humour relieves frustration and helps people to deal with difficult or unpleasant situations. Appropriate workplace banter can also provide relief from boring work and build social cohesion and camaraderie in the workplace (Plester & Sayers, 2007). Mesmer-Magnus et al. (2012) report that workplace humour is linked to enhanced work performance, satisfaction, workgroup cohesion, health, and coping effectiveness, and decreased burnout, stress, and withdrawal from work.

However, some women in our sample indicated that they experience negative and/or self-defeating humour in their workgroups. These humour types are reported to have negative consequences for health and wellbeing (Hogh et al., 2005) and lead to avoidance behaviour (Wilcock et al., 2019).

Our results indicate that negative and self-defeating humour were more frequently reported by respondents in their 20s and 30s, by people in site- compared to office-based roles and by people who indicated they speak only English at home.

The difference between site- and office-based humour in construction has previously been observed by Watts (2007) who identified site-based humour to be characterised by crude language, mimicry and innuendo, which is also consistent with our finding that women in site-based roles reported significantly more exposure to jokes of a sexual nature vin their workplace compared to respondents in office-based roles.

Respondents were asked if they have ever experienced a variety of sexual harassment behaviours in their workplaces. 64.7% of all survey respondents indicated they had experienced at least one of the forms of sexual harassment listed. The most frequently identified experiences 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%).

Some significant differences were observed in respondents' experiences of different types of sexual harassment behaviour by the age of respondents, their job classification and language spoken at home.

A significantly higher proportion of respondents aged between 25 and 29 years reported experiencing hearing coworkers discussing their sex lives at work (64.3%) and experiencing comments of a sexual nature about their bodies/clothes (51.7%) compared to workers in other age groups.

A significantly higher proportion of respondents in site-based roles reported experiencing sexual harassment than respondents in office-based roles for all types of sexual harassment behaviour. 72.9% of site-based respondents indicated they had experienced hearing coworkers making comments of a sexual nature about another woman or women in general, 68.9% indicated they had experienced unwelcome jokes of a sexual nature and 54.9% indicated they had received unwelcome verbal sexual advances.

A significantly higher proportion of respondents who indicated they speak only English at home reported experiencing sexual harassment than respondents who indicated they speak a language other than English at home for all sexual harassment behaviours except receiving unwanted messages of a sexual nature on social media.

Reasons for these differences are unclear and this will be explored in the next steps of the project (see 5.2).

Previous research shows that aggression and sexism in the workplace are sometimes expressed through humour, enabling perpetrators of sexual harassment behaviour to express otherwise unacceptable opinions under the guise of it being 'a joke' (Plester, 2015). The labelling of potentially harmful workplace humour as 'just a joke' can perpetuate some forms of sexual harassment as perpetrators and bystanders are able morally disengage from this behaviour (Page et al., 2015). For example, when asked about the point at which workplace humour 'crosses the line' and becomes unacceptable, one 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 most frequently identified subject of humour that respondents considered to be unacceptable in the workplace is humour that is of a sexual nature. Previous research shows that humour of a sexual nature is harmful to those it targets and can result in "linguistic injury" (Butler, 1997), i.e. emotional or physical harm caused by language. Previous research also found that the severity of linguistic injury caused by sexually-based humour depends on the function, initiator, target and response of the humour. Specifically, harm is likely to be most severe in cases where humour of a sexual nature is:

- used to demean an individual

- initiated by a person in a position of higher-status or majority
- targeted at those who are in lower-status or minority; and
- where others also join in (Humonen & Whittle, 2023).

Respondents also considered workplace humour to be unacceptable when it involves 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). Respondents observed that humour that is targeted, intentionally hurtful and that results in the recipient feeling bad or uncomfortable is not acceptable in the workplace. This is consistent with the definition of humour adopted in this study (as articulated in Part 2.1) that recognises humour as an intentional act but does not assume the effect of humour is always positive (i.e. the receiver finds the interaction amusing).

Respondents were asked about the perpetrators of unacceptable workplace humour. The most frequently identified perpetrators of unacceptable workplace humour were male coworkers (39.5%).

When asked whether they reported experiences of unacceptable workplace humour to their employers, 37.6% indicated they did not report this behaviour. However, 24.2% of respondents indicated they did report the unacceptable humour and the issue was dealt with satisfactorily.

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%).

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 inappropriate 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).

When asked about the impacts of exposure to unacceptable workplace humour, respondents identified a variety of adverse impacts, including:

- feeling embarrassed (42.1%)
- causing them to avoid certain work situations (e.g. courses, meetings, shifts, locations) (34.6%)

- negative impacts on mental health (30.4%), and
- feeling less confident at work (27.2%).

10% of the respondents also indicated that their physical health was affected by experiencing unacceptable workplace humour. These findings reflect the harm that can occur as a result of exposure to unacceptable workplace humour. This harm includes impacts on health and wellbeing, as well as withdrawal and avoidance behaviours that can adversely affect women's careers. 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). Our survey results similarly 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.

Previous research also calls for interventions to provide greater clarity to managers and employers to identify when workplace humour has crossed a line to the extent that it may be considered bullying or harassment (Middlemiss et al., 2017). 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 has a formal banter policy reported incidences of unacceptable humour (68.1%) than those whose organisation has no policy (47.8%). A greater proportion of respondents whose employing organisation has 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 has no banter policy (17.9%).

The findings of the survey provide new insights into the workplace humour experiences of women in the NSW construction industry. While much of the humour experienced is positive and stress-relieving, in some instances the workplace humour experienced by respondents is also negative.

A key challenge for individuals who engage in workplace humour is knowing when and what type of humour is acceptable, enjoyable and inclusive, and when humour crosses a line to be unwanted, 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). The next steps of the research will provide additional evidence to help the construction industry to develop interventions that are likely to assist in this. It is hoped that this

will contribute to construction workplaces that are safe and healthy and support the attraction, retention and career progression of women.

5.2 Next steps

In-depth interviews will be conducted to more fully understand women's experiences in different job roles (office/site), sectors (residential/commercial/engineering) and organisational environments (small/large companies). Subject matter experts in workplace gender issues will also be interviewed.

The interviews will explore questions arising from the survey findings. For example:

- why are there differences in experiences between different groups of women in terms of exposure to humour and sexual harassment?
- how are different groups of women affected by exposure to humour in the workplace (e.g. health/wellbeing, careers, retention etc)?
- what can be done by organisations to prevent unacceptable, aggressive and exclusionary humour in construction workplaces?
- how can reporting of incidences of unacceptable workplace humour be encouraged?
- what is an appropriate response to incidences of unacceptable workplace humour? and
- what training do workers, supervisors and managers need to address this issue?

Drawing on the interview results, evidence-informed training resources will be developed to help construction organisations create workplace cultures that are inclusive, respectful and supportive of women in all roles. It is envisaged these training resources will be implemented in Master Builders NSW member organisations and shared with organisations outside of Master Builders NSW membership.

It is hoped that adopting these resources will help employers in the NSW construction industry to protect the safety and health of the women they employ and also create work cultures that are more attractive to women, encouraging entry and increasing retention.

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Part 7: Appendices

7.1 Survey questions

Demographic questions

Aspect	Question	Options	
Age	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 and over
Gender	How do you identify yourself?	• Man • Woman • Non-binary	• Prefer not to say
Ethnicity	Are you of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin?	• Yes • No	• Prefer not to say
	Do you speak a language other than English at home?	• Yes, English only	• No, one or more language(s)
	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
Occupation	What best describes your occupation?	• Managers • Professionals • Technicians and trade workers • Clerical and administrative workers	• Machinery operators and drivers • Labourers • Other, please specify:_____
Industry sector	In which sector do you currently work? (**You can choose more than one**)	• Residential building sector • Non-residential building sector • Engineering sector • Others	
Immediate group	In your current workplace, how many people are in	• 1 - 5 • 6 - 10	• 16 - 20 • More than 20

	your immediate workgroup?	• 11 - 15
	Please specify the number of women in your immediate work group___	

Attitude toward humour

Attitude toward banter Source: Aussie Attitude Toward Humour Survey (Preply, 2023)	**Items**	**Responses**
	To which extent do you agree with the following statements?	
	1. Banter at work should be accepted as long as it remains light-hearted and playful 2. It should only be accepted if it is not offensive or disrespectful to any employee 3. It can be an effective way to build relationships and create a positive work environment 4. It can cause tension between colleagues and reduce productivity 5. All forms of banter should be avoided in the workplace for the sake of professionalism	1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neutral 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree

Humour types

Humour type	**Items**	**Responses**
Positive humour Source: Humour Climate Scale (Cann, 2014)	**Thinking about your experience of humour at your <u>current workplace</u>, to which extent do you agree with the following statements?**	
	1. Humour is often used to encourage or support coworkers 2. Humour is something we all enjoy sharing at work 3. The humour of my coworkers often cheers me up 4. The humour my coworkers use makes the work more enjoyable	1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neutral 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree
Stress relieving humour	**Thinking about your experience of humour at your <u>current workplace</u>, to which extent do you agree with the following statements?**	

Source: Lang and Lee (2010)	1. We tell humorous stories to ease tense situations at work 2. We laugh a lot around here to make work more pleasant 3. When we meet each other, we always tell stories to lighten up the day 4. We frequently tell jokes to loosen up a stressful work environment	1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neutral 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree
Negative Humour Source: Humour Climate Scale (Cann, 2014; Wijewardena et al., 2016)	**Thinking about your experience of humour at your <u>current workplace</u>, to which extent do you agree with the following statements?**	
	1. The humour used by my coworkers can often make someone in the group feel bad 2. If someone makes a mistake, they often will be ridiculed by others in the group 3. Humour is sometimes used to intimidate others in the group 4. My coworkers sometimes use humour to belittle each other 5. My coworkers some use physical humour with the potential to cause physical harm	1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neutral 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree
Self-defeating Humour Source: Humour Style Questionnaire (Martin et. al., 2003)	**Thinking about your experience of humour at your <u>current workplace</u>, to which extent do you agree with the following statements?**	
	1. I let people laugh at me or make fun at my expense more than I should. 2. I often try to make people like or accept me more by saying something funny about my own weaknesses, blunders, or faults. 3. I often go overboard in putting myself down when I am making jokes or trying to be funny. 4. 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.	1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neutral 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree
Sexual harassment behaviour (TUC, 2016)	**Have you ever experienced any of the following types of unwanted sexual behaviour in your workplace?**	
	• Displays of pornographic photographs or drawings in the workplace	

	• Hearing colleagues making comments of a sexual nature about another woman or women in general in front of you • Hearing colleagues 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	• Yes, in the last 12 months • Yes, more than 12 months ago • No, I haven't • Don't know/can't recall • Prefer not to say.

Perception of unacceptable jokes

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

_____

Perpetrator of unacceptable jokes

Perpetuator (TUC, 2016)	**Question:**	**Responses**
	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 • Not sure/ Can't recall • Prefer not to say

Reporting of unacceptable jokes

Reporting (TUC, 2016)	**Question**	**Response**
	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 • Don’t know / Can’t recall • Prefer not to say
Treatment after reporting	**For those who answered “reported”:** Do you think you were treated better or worse by your employer after reporting the unacceptable jokes?	• Treated better • Treated worse • No change • Don't know / Can't recall • Prefer not to say
Reasons for not reporting	**For those who answered “did not report”:** What were the reasons that you did not report?	• I thought there would be a negative impact on my relationships at work 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 thought there would be a negative impact on my career if I reported the unacceptable jokes to my employer • I did not know how to report the unacceptable joke to my employer • I was unaware that I could report the unacceptable jokes to my employer • I thought I would be blamed if I reported the unacceptable jokes to my employer • None of the above • Don’t know / Can’t recall • Prefer not to say

Impact of unacceptable jokes

Impact of unacceptable jokes	Question	Responses
	Which, if any, of the following describe the effects that the experience of unacceptable jokes had on you? (you can select more than one)	• It made me feel embarrassed • It caused me to avoid certain work situations (meetings, courses, locations, particular shifts) in order to avoid the perpetrator • It made me feel less confident at work • It had a negative impact on my mental health (e.g. made you feel more stressed, anxious, depressed) • It made me want to leave my job (but I couldn't because of financial or other factors) • It caused me to leave my job or leave the employer • It had a negative impact on my performance at work • It had a negative impact on my physical health • It caused me to have to take time off work • Don't know • It caused me to change my role in the company/organisation • Prefer not to say

Knowledge about banter policy

Knowledge about banter policy (Wilcock et al., 2017)	Items	Responses
	Does your workplace have a policy on banter?	1 = yes 2 = no 3 = not sure 4 = prefer not to say

7.2 Statistical procedures used

7.2.1 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.

7.2.2 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.

7.2.3 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.

7.2.4 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.

7.3 Statistical test results

Table 7.1: 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 7.2: 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 7.3: 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 7.4: 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 7.5: 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 7.6: 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 7.7: 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 7.8: 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 7.9: 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 7.10: 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 7.11: 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		