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

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This initiative was a funding recipient in the NSW Government Women in Construction Industry Innovation Program.

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

Purpose of the survey

The purpose of this survey was to understand the types and effects of workplace humour experienced by women in the New South Wales (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 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.

Who completed the survey?

337 women

completed the survey in total

78%

office-based workers

16%

site-based workers

(6% unspecified)

49%

residential

39%

non-residential

17%

civil engineering

(some respondents worked in multiple sectors)

Types of humour experienced by women

Survey respondents were asked about four types of humour:

1. **Positive** (makes work more enjoyable)
2. **Stress-relieving** (eases tense situations)
3. **Negative** (causes harm to others)
4. **Self-defeating** (putting oneself down to hide feelings)

Positive and stress-relieving were the most commonly reported humour types. Site-based respondents reported significantly higher mean scores than office-based workers for negative and self-defeating humour (see Fig. 1).

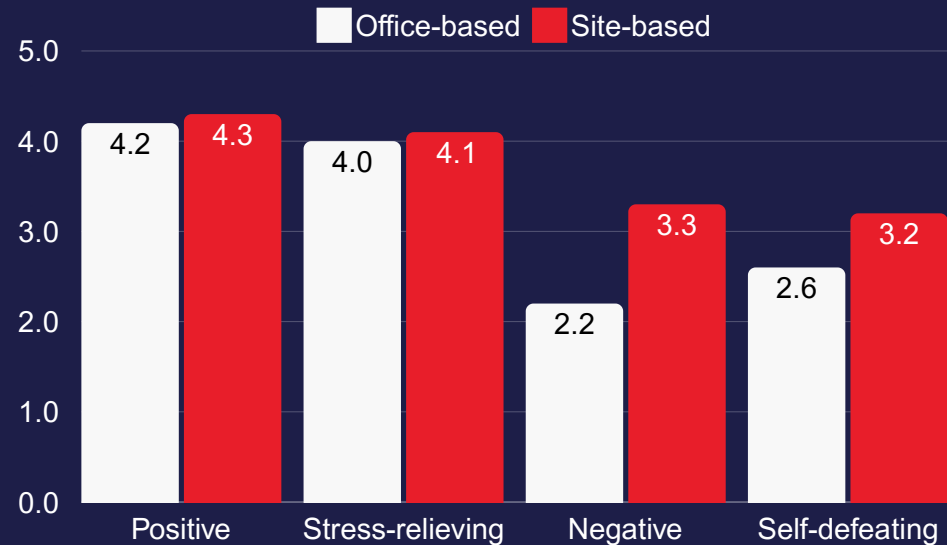


Fig. 1: Humour type mean scores reported by occupation type

Unacceptable humour

65% of respondents indicated that they had experienced some form of sexual harassment at the workplace. Unwelcome jokes of a sexual nature were identified as one of the most common forms of sexual harassment experienced by respondents, especially for on-site workers (as shown in Fig. 3).

Respondents were also asked to describe what makes a joke unacceptable to them. 50 of the most common words in the responses to this open-ended question are represented in Fig. 2.



Fig. 2: Common words used in respondents' definition of unacceptable humour

65%

of respondents had experienced some form of sexual harassment at the workplace.

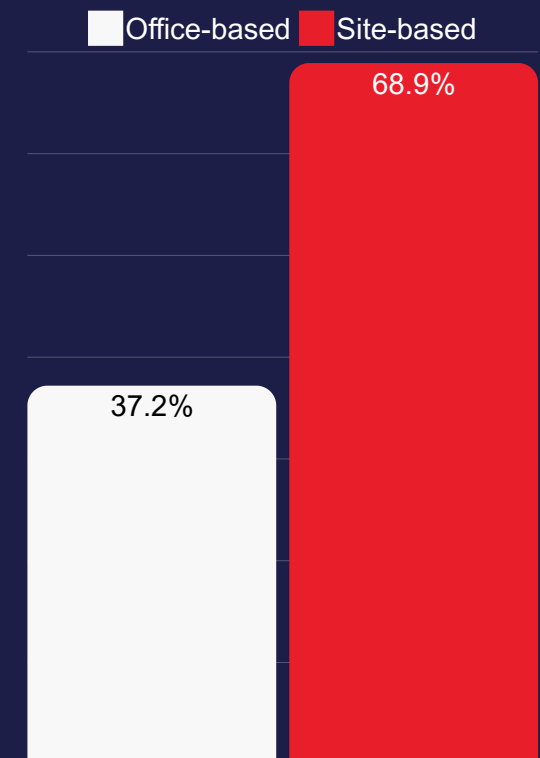


Fig. 3: Experience of unwelcome jokes of a sexual nature by office- and site-based workers

Impacts of unacceptable humour at work

In the survey, respondents most frequently identified the perpetrator of unacceptable humour in the workplace as their male co-workers (39.5%). Additionally, 16.6% of respondents identified their supervisor or another manager as the perpetrator of unacceptable humour in the workplace.

Respondents were asked to indicate the impacts that experiencing unacceptable humour in the workplace had on them. The most frequently identified impact was feeling embarrassed (42.1%). Over a third of respondents (34.6%) indicated that exposure to unacceptable workplace humour made them avoid certain situations in order to avoid the perpetrator. One in three respondents (30.4%) indicated that unacceptable workplace humour had negatively impacted their mental health. 33.7% of participants indicated that unacceptable humour caused them to change their role, leave their job, or want to leave their job but they were unable to do so.

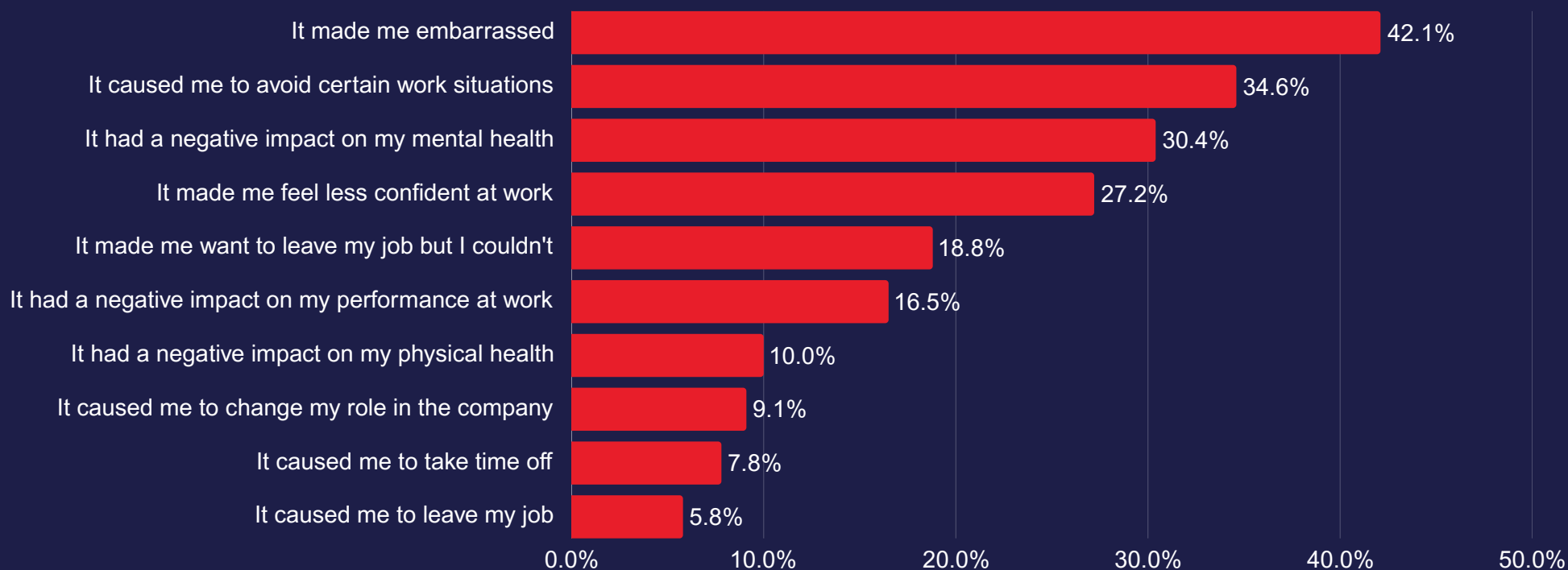


Fig. 4: Impacts on recipients of unacceptable workplace humour

Reporting unacceptable workplace humour

Respondents who had experienced unacceptable workplace humour were asked if they reported it to their employer. More than a third (37.6%) indicated that they did not report their experience of unacceptable workplace humour. 24.2% of respondents indicated that they had reported and the issue was dealt with satisfactorily. However, 15.5% of respondents indicated that they had reported and the issue was not dealt with satisfactorily.

Respondents who did not report instances of unacceptable workplace humour 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 humour. Almost half of respondents indicated that they feared reporting the incident would negatively impact their working relationships (46.7%). A third (31.3%) indicated that they did not think they would be believed or taken seriously, and 21.3% indicated that they were too embarrassed.

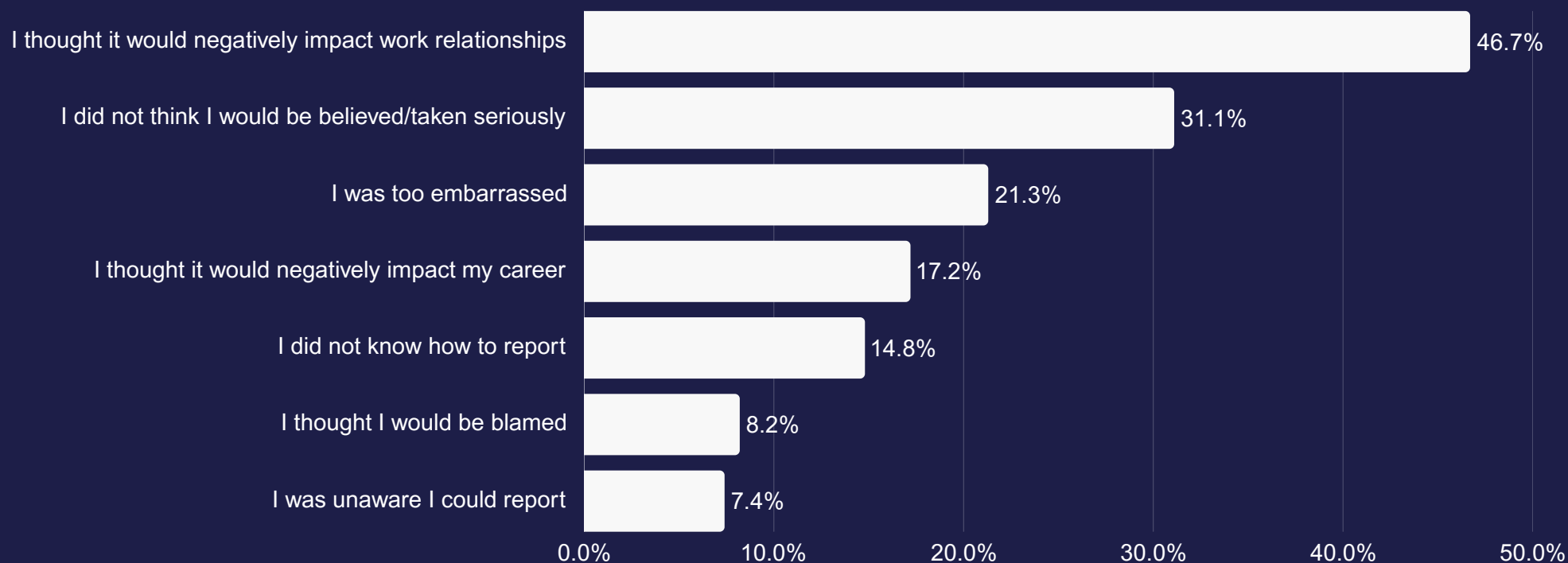


Fig. 5: Identified reasons for respondents not reporting unacceptable workplace humour to their employer

The effectiveness of banter policies

Respondents were asked whether their employing organisation had a formal policy dealing with banter at work. One quarter of respondents (25.2%) indicated that their employer did have a banter policy. Another quarter (25.2%) of respondents were unsure if a formal banter policy existed. Nearly half of respondents (47.7%) indicated that their employing organisation had no policy on the subject of banter.

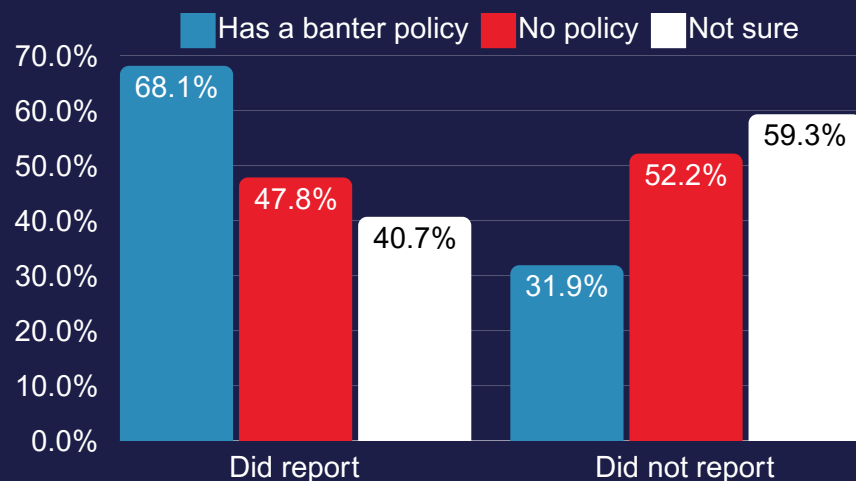


Fig. 6: Respondents' reporting behaviour according to whether there was a formal banter policy

Fig. 6 shows that significantly more respondents reported instances of unacceptable workplace humour when they knew that their employer had a formal banter policy.

Fig. 7 shows that significantly more respondents were treated better after reporting an incident when they knew that their employer had a formal banter policy.

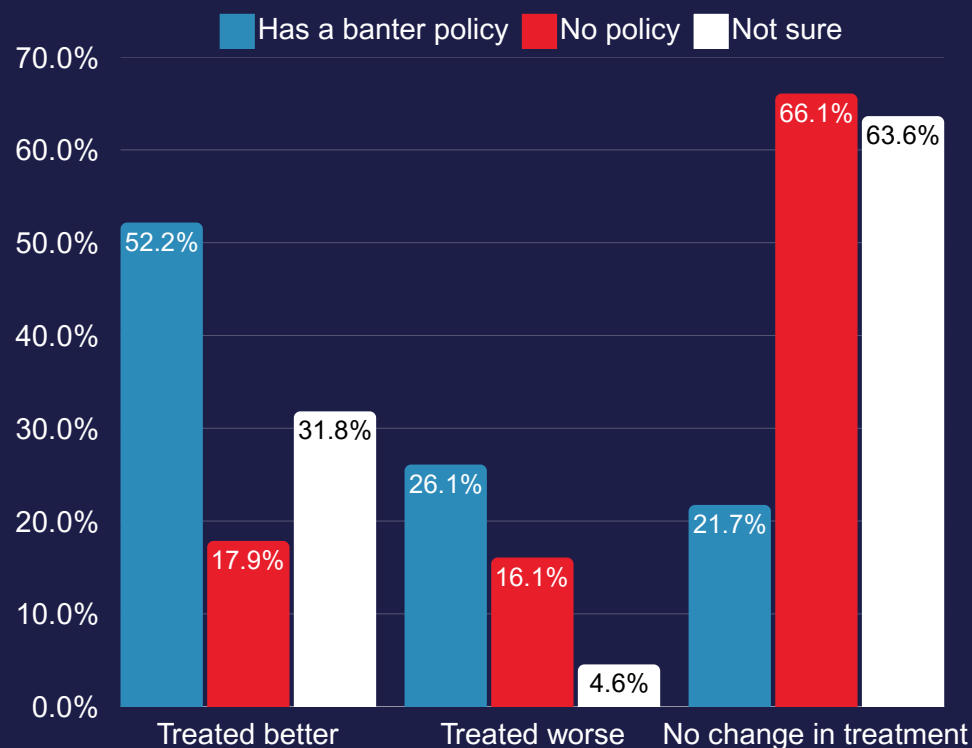


Fig 7: Treatment after reporting unacceptable humour by whether employer had a formal banter policy

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