

# Foreword

**Bullying, sexual harassment, and racial harassment in the workplace are wrong and unlawful in Aotearoa New Zealand. These represent barriers to equal opportunities and are unacceptable and incompatible with the right to decent work and working conditions.**

Fairness, the right to work, and the right to equal employment opportunities are non-controversial foundations of positive employment relations. However, we are not all equal, and to act as if we are, despite significant hardship and wealth gaps between diverse communities (let alone between the sexes), neglects our responsibilities as a nation.

In 2022, Te Kāhui Tika Tāngata Human Rights Commission (Commission) published the report, *Experiences of Workplace Bullying and Harassment in Aotearoa New Zealand*, based on research conducted into the prevalence of sexual harassment, bullying, and racial harassment in the workplace. The report demonstrated a concerning prevalence of these behaviours and differences in experiences between people of different age groups, genders, across industries, and different personal characteristics.

For example, the report highlighted a disproportionate prevalence for Tangata Whenua, Pacific Peoples, Asian workers, new migrants, disabled workers, and bisexual workers. The report made headlines because the prevalence statistics and the accompanying narratives were so ugly. What the report did not tell us was the cost to individuals directly concerned or to employers, and this was a gap in our advocacy toolbox.

In 2023, the Commission was approached by KPMG (New Zealand), who generously offered their services on a pro-bono basis. Our two agencies had a pre-existing relationship, as both were affiliated with the Women’s Empowerment Principles work in Aotearoa to promote workplace gender equality. Through this relationship, the Commission respected KPMG because of its enduring commitment to gender equity for its workforce and the ripple effect it had on other businesses. The Commission, therefore, accepted the offer by KPMG, which led to this important, milestone-setting report on the costs of bullying and harassment to employers in Aotearoa. In understanding the economic impact, we must not forget the effect it has on those experiencing bullying and harassment, including on their finances, health, and wellbeing. There is also an impact on the wider work environment, the strain it puts on loved ones and relationships, and the wider costs to society.

There is a growing movement in Aotearoa and internationally to address and eliminate violence in all its forms in the workplace as a human rights issue. In 2019, the International Labour Organisation - Violence and Harassment Convention (ILO 190) came into force. It has been ratified by many of our trading partners but is yet to be ratified by New Zealand. This needs to happen urgently.

With perseverance, courage, leadership, rights-respecting laws, and good evidence and knowledge such as that contained in this report, we can eliminate violence in the workplace. Equality, equity, and fairness belong to all.



**Saunoamaali'i Karanina Sumeo**

Kaihautū Ōritenga Mahi |  
Equal Employment Opportunities Commissioner  
Te Kāhui Tika Tangata |  
New Zealand Human Rights Commission





Te Kāhui Tika Tangata New Zealand Human Rights Commission (the Commission) is established and operates under the Crown Entities Act 2004 and the Human Rights Act 1993. Independent of government, the Commission is accredited as an 'A status' national human rights institution under the United Nations Paris Principles. Information about the Commission's activities can be found on our website: [www.tikatangata.org.nz](http://www.tikatangata.org.nz).

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Lastly, KPMG and the Commission acknowledge and thank all those who took the time to respond to the original survey about their experiences of workplace bullying and harassment. Many respondents who experienced these behaviours shared their personal stories with us, and we are grateful for their trust in us to do so. We hope that by continuing to shed light on the impacts of workplace bullying and harassment we may honour their experiences and progress initiatives to promote safe working conditions for all.

## Disclaimer

This research has been carried out by an independent party under contract to the Commission. The views, observations, and analysis in this report are those of the authors and are not to be attributed to the Commission.