Data Collection Guide

Purpose

The purpose of this guide is to assist you to collect data on sexual harassment and sexual assault (SHSA) in your organisation, and use it to design effective strategies for its prevention and response, specific to your workplace.

Why collect data?

Data provides evidence on which prevention and response strategies to SHSA can be measured against. It empowers you to make informed decisions to ensure your workplace strategies remain effective and useful.

Additionally, the production of data on industry-specific risks or trends and shared learnings may benefit workplaces of a similar nature. It also enables your organisation to be transparent and accountable to your workers and the broader community.

Data collection should be ongoing to ensure continuous improvement of policies and practice which respond to current issues. See Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 – Data collection cycle

Defining what to measure and how to measure it
Understand what you are measuring and how you'll measure it.

Analyse data
Understand what the data means to gain greater insights.

Communicate insights and results
Tell people what you have found to be transparent.

Operationalisation of data
Turn your insights into valuable actions.

Refresh data
Frequently refresh your data to ensure it remains relevant.

The type of data collected by the methods set out in this guide is known as organisational data. This is data which reflects how the organisation is functioning. Organisational data may be examined or analysed to determine trends and the presence of SHSA in the workplace.

This guide sets out how to obtain organisational data from internal sources. You should remain aware of indirect data which may come from external sources, such as through social media, or from customers, suppliers or other external stakeholders.

1. What and How to Measure?

Less than 20 per cent of SHSA experiences are reported. Therefore, data collection systems should avoid narrowly focussing on reported incidents of SHSA. An effective approach will collect and analyse a broad range of indicators of SHSA to allow you to understand, identify, measure, and monitor:

- the prevalence of SHSA in your workplace i.e. amount or frequency (including where not formally reported);
- the nature of SHSA in your workplace i.e. when, where and how it occurs, who is involved and what form it takes;
- any cultural drivers and enablers of SHSA in your workplace;
- the risks and trends specific to your organisation and industry;
- the impact of SHSA on your workers, your business, the community, and society;
- the progress and effectiveness of your prevention and response framework;
- how your organisation has responded to incidents and supported impacted people in the past;
- transparency about the prevalence and nature of SHSA in your workplace, and your response; and
- your compliance with relevant regulatory reporting requirements.

Looking to workplaces and industries with similar working conditions and cultures, common workforce demographics and work environments can also provide valuable insight.

Data collection process

The section above sets out what should be identified through data collection in your workplace.

This section will assist you to develop targeted questions to produce that information and ensure you are measuring more than the issues you are already alert to.

Keep in mind that different data sources measure different things. Some will assess how your organisation responds to incidents, whereas others provide insight into preventative strategies. In defining what you seek to measure, ask yourself:

- What is the purpose of measuring SHSA in our workplace? Is it largely to help develop preventative strategies or to better respond to incidents? Or a combination of both?
- What do we already know about SHSA in our workplace? How do we know this?
- What can we discover from other workplaces and industries that might help us define what we need to know?
- Will the timing of data collection have an impact on what we are able to measure?

These questions will help to determine the most relevant data sources for your organisation before developing your structured data collection process.

Data collection at the workforce level

Organisations collect data about the prevalence of SHSA in their specific workplace using a variety of sources. Figure 2 shows the key ways in which organisations can collect evidence of workplace SHSA (adapted from WorkSafe New Zealand Advice for Small Business).

Management culture and behaviour reviews

Feedback from health and safety representatives

Worker surveys

Resignations turnover rate

Worker interviews

Sources of information about the prevalences of sexual harassment

Absenteeism and sick leave levels

Worker focus groups

Reports of sexual harassment

Exit interviews

Employee Assistance Program (EAP) reports

Legal actions

Appraisals

Figure 2 – Sources of information about the prevalence of SHSA.

It is important to plan your data collection and ensure you are only collecting what is needed. The following are useful and practical methods of data collection:

- **Professional feedback** – health and safety representatives and officials can provide advice on culture and SHSA concerns.
- **Review rates** – resignation and staff turnover rates in particular work areas can indicate problems, including with SHSA.
- **Check absenteeism and sick leave records** - clusters around a particular work area or workers can indicate issues.
- **Formal mechanisms** – complaints, legal actions, and reports can provide relevant data.
- **Employee Assistance Program** – the program can provide general data on worker concerns and issues.
- **Manager or supervisor performance reviews** – reviews can produce anonymous appraisals from co-workers and peers.

- **Exit interviews** – can produce first-hand information on workplace culture.
- **Surveys** – worker surveys can provide insight on SHSA issues specific to your workplace, however, individual confidentiality must be carefully protected.
- **Focus groups** – worker focus group discussions can provide insight on SHSA issues specific to your workplace, however, confidentiality must be carefully protected.
- **Interviews** – confidential worker interviews can provide valuable insight into particular issues or work areas.
- **Reviews** – regular management reviews can provide insight into culture and behaviour.

These methods are explained in more detail in the next section.

Methods of data collection

Anyone participating in data collection – survey participants, interview participants and participants in focus group discussions – should be provided with relevant helplines and support services. This can include your workplace support services as well as services such as:

- 1800RESPECT: 1800 737 732
- Beyond Blue: 1300 224 636
- 13 Yarn: 13 92 76
- Lifeline: 13 11 14

1. Surveys

Surveys can ask workers to answer from a pre-determined set of responses (e.g. yes or no) or the questions can be open-ended and require a written answer. Surveys that use a set of pre-determined answers are easier to analyse, interpret and look at over time, compared to open-ended data. However, open-ended data usually gives more detailed answers.

Developing appropriate measurement tools (metrics)

It is important to ensure that methods of collecting data through worker surveys is safe, confidential, and does not put workers at risk of harm. For example, evidence must not be collected in a way that identifies impacted people or perpetrators, or that risks re-traumatisation of impacted people. When conducting staff surveys, it is important to think about the questions you ask your workforce. UN Women, the United Nations entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women have noted:

Asking what participants have observed is a safer strategy than asking them to discuss what they have experienced.

It is more useful and appropriate for you to ask general questions, designed to provide insight into how comfortable and likely workers are to raise concerns directly with their manager or the company. For example, you may ask 'how frequently does your manager meet with you to ask you about any concerns you have about work?' and 'how often does your manager talk to you about our workplace behaviour policy?'

By asking such questions, organisations can understand more about workers' experiences as well as factors that could contribute to a greater risk of SHSA occurring or going unreported. You could then use such data to modify the practical approaches you take in the workplace and increase the likelihood of workers promptly raising any workplace concerns, including concerns about SHSA.

It is important for organisations to collect data regularly to allow them to monitor trends over time, identify emerging risks and measure the effectiveness of any actions they take to address SHSA (for example the implementation of a SHSA policy or training at a workplace) and adjust or introduce new measures accordingly.

Any survey responses collected should be de-identified and respondent confidentiality maintained. Workers may be more willing to share information through an anonymous survey rather than an interview, however, the size of the organisation may affect how identifiable the respondents to the survey really are.

Surveys collecting data from impacted people and witnesses or bystanders to SHSA on what they have observed and experienced are useful, whilst avoiding repeatedly asking those impacted to recount their experience, which can cause re-traumatisation.

The Respect in Mining Program provides the following templates:

- [Worker SHSA Experience Survey](#) – This survey is used to understand workers' experiences with SHSA.
- [Workplace Audit Tool](#) – This survey is to assess the company's current position in relation to its approach to SHSA.
- [SHSA Risk Assessment Audit](#) – This tool provides a series of questions regarding specific hazards that will assist with identifying workplace SHSA risks. Conducting regular audits is a useful way to evaluate your workplace SHSA program. It will highlight areas that require improvement and allow for the refinement of initiatives by creating a cycle of continuous improvement.

2. Interviews

Interviews involve creating a set of questions to ask individuals. It is usual that one or two interviewers and one interviewee are involved. Interviews have a conversational nature which can be helpful for probing topics in detail to add depth to existing numerical data.

You can use interviews to:

- Explore what type of emotions, assumptions or attitudes may be influencing behaviour.
- Explore perceptions of the interviewee which can't be obtained in surveys.
- Follow-up on unexpected results (e.g. poor participation rates in a training program, or poor feedback ratings) to investigate the cause.
- Confirm your interpretations of data collected via other methods (e.g. surveys).

Interviewer training

All interviewers should be provided with specific training on recognising if a respondent is becoming distressed or appears to be uncomfortable about continuing with the interview. When undertaking the interview, the interviewers should alert participants to the nature of the questioning, the possibility of distress and advise participants of available support services.

3. Focus group discussions

Worker focus group discussions (FGDs) can help to explore issues and concerns. Focus groups bring together a small group of workers (usually around 6–12 people) to discuss a topic of interest. They typically operate as a group conversation, with a facilitator guiding the group. Similar to interviews, FGDs can be used to explore topics in a more in-depth manner, thereby adding understanding to existing numerical data.

Safety

There are risks in using FGDs, such as the possibility of re-traumatising impacted persons, experiencing backlash and collusion. FGDs that discuss personal experiences of SHSA must be carefully planned and facilitated.

FGDs can be more safely conducted to discuss general workplace culture, power imbalances or gender equality in the workplace. FGDs are also a useful method to explore enablers and challenges to implementing SHSA prevention and management strategies.

As for interviews, FGDs should be conducted by a trained facilitator.

The Respect in Mining Program provides the following guide:

- [Focus Group Discussion Guide](#) – This guide provides information on conducting an effective focus group to help further understand any issues that emerged following the baseline data collection.

2. Analysing the Data

Once a data collection process has been conducted, the next step is to conduct the analysis.

The analysis should interrogate and triangulate data from different sources to get a true reflection of the trends and areas of concern in your organisation indicative of SHSA risks and the effectiveness of your SHSA strategy.

Your analysis should:

- understand and identify the data;
- interrogate – question the data and discover the meaning;
- synthesise – bring together the data and identify the data relationships;
- triangulate – overlaying different but related data sets using tools like hypothesis testing, correlation testing and 'cause and effect' to corroborate results;
- connect disparate data to gain insights;
- understand complex relationships and large data sets;
- identify trends and patterns in the data; and
- conclude what data provides the most value.

It is important to note that when an organisation becomes more open about discussing SHSA and the relevant policy is implemented, workers are likely to feel more comfortable reporting SHSA incidents. Therefore, in the short-term, it is likely that prevalence rates will increase. This is to be expected and is not concerning. The data that is important is the data collected in the longer term after the policies and procedures have been implemented. It is also important to recognise that change may not happen immediately, especially for issues like SHSA where significant cultural change may be required.

3. Communicating Insights and Results

Once data has been collected and analysed, the next step is to report and communicate the results. This step is about transparency with your workforce, external stakeholders and the community.

It is linked with every other domain in the framework for preventing, managing, and responding to workplace SHSA – for example, it lays the foundation for building a culture of trust, respect, and safety, it demonstrates leadership commitment, it develops knowledge, it normalises discussions about SHSA, and it brings awareness to and trust in support and reporting mechanisms.

4. Operationalising Data

Operationalising insights involves transforming your evaluation and analysis into tangible actions to support and enhance your SHSA response and prevention strategy.

5. Refreshing Data

SHSA data collection and analysis should not be a one-off activity. It should be continual and ongoing. The frequency of data refresh would depend on the size, and governance and reporting systems in place within your organisation, including the frequency with which information is disclosed to the various stakeholders.

Be aware of over-analysing. Some data collection may be continuous, for example, metrics that are collected on an ongoing basis, such as incidents, absenteeism etc. Other data, such as workplace surveys, interview and FGDs may be collected at specified time points. This will depend on your organisational policy for data collection. For example, some organisations conduct annual surveys, others may collect data every two or three years.

Data and indicators should be refined over time to measure the effectiveness of prevention and response mechanisms and respond to changes in data quality, collection processes, strategies and external developments in SHSA best practice over time.

6. Challenges of Data Collection and Analysis

Collecting accurate and insightful data can present challenges. Being aware of these challenges will provide opportunity to actively implement strategies to overcome and avoid the pitfalls.

Challenge	How to address
Narrow data set For example, data focused largely on reported or substantiated SHSA cases, or a focus on measures that are aligned with existing cultural objectives	Expand the data you collect to include a variety of sources and indicators in recognition of systematic drivers of SHSA and risk factors. Ensure there is a reliable basis for selecting metrics and measures used.
Inconsistent or incomplete data collection For example, if there are multiple channels available for reporting of incidents (e.g. leader, Human Resources, EAP, whistleblowing program etc) each with differing data formats, and there is no centralised data repository.	Implement a standard data collection template and process that covers all reporting channels. It can be as simple as a spreadsheet with data validation controls in place, or a sophisticated case management system.
Inconsistent data collecting cadence within your organisation, which can impact effective evaluation and analysis. For example, one division might be collecting quarterly aggregated data while another may be monitoring monthly.	Develop clear and consistent procedure for collecting data across the organisation.
Knowledge gap for those responsible for collecting and inputting data regarding sexual harassment, which can impact data integrity and comprehensiveness. For example, important information may be unknowingly missed or lack necessary details in case management systems; or interviews and focus groups may miss key data due to lack of confidence or inexperience probing into delicate topics. See our **Focus Group Discussion Guide** for more information about conducting focus groups.	Invest in training and capability uplift for those responsible for collecting and inputting data to ensure they understand workplace sexual harassment and the drivers and risk factors.

Challenge	How to address
Data collection methods which focus narrowly on obtaining information, without consideration for the wellbeing and confidentiality of the people sharing their experiences through the process. This risks re-traumatisation of people impacted and undermines your organisational commitment to embedding a culture of safety, respect, and trust. For example, conducting interviews or discussion groups with people about their experiences of sexual harassment where the facilitator is not trauma informed, gives no consideration to creating a safe space for sharing and offers no psychological or other wellbeing support to the participants after the interview.	Ensure data collection methods involving surveys or discussion groups are psychologically and physically safe for people who participate. Ensuring those conducting interviews or discussion groups are trauma informed and do not put workers at risk of harm. Ensure the information does not identify individuals. Ensure the person impacted consents to data collection and the method and scope of the inquiry. Ensure support is available to impacted people throughout and after the process of data collection, e.g. following up with an interviewee, or offering EAP.
Responsibility and accountability for data collection is not clearly allocated and/or data is mostly collected reactively in response to specific requests or questions. This will result in an incomplete data set and impediments to accurate and fulsome analysis.	Clearly and proactively allocate responsibility and accountability for data collection in relation to SHSA. This can include building data collection into staff roles and organisational policy so data collection becomes common practice and business as usual.