

8

Problems at work

A Discrimination

If people are treated differently from each other in an unfair way, they are **discriminated against**.

If a woman is unfairly treated just because she is a woman, she is a victim of **sex discrimination**. In many organizations, women complain about the **glass ceiling** that prevents them from getting further than a particular level.

If someone is treated unfairly because of their race, they are a victim of **racial discrimination** or **racism**. Offensive remarks about someone's race are **racist** and the person making them is a **racist**.

Equal opportunities, positive discrimination or **affirmative action** is when help is given in education and employment to groups who were previously discriminated against.

Some companies have a **dignity at work policy** covering all the issues described in A and B.

Note

BrE: **equal opportunities**

BrE/AmE: **positive discrimination**

AmE: **affirmative action**

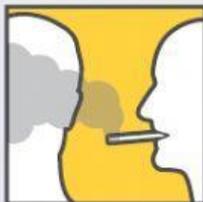
B Bullying and harassment

If someone such as a manager **bullies** an employee, they use their position of power to hurt or threaten the employee. Someone who does this is a **bully**. The **bullying** can often be verbal.

Sexual harassment is when an employee behaves sexually towards another in a way that they find unwelcome and unacceptable. The related verb is **harass**.

C Health and safety

Health and safety issues for people at work contribute to a **bad working environment**. The government sends officials called **health and safety inspectors** to make sure that factories and offices are safe places to work. They check what companies are doing in areas like:



a passive smoking



b repetitive strain injury or RSI



c dangerous machinery



d hazardous substances



e fire hazards



f heating and air-conditioning



g first aid

Of course, dangerous machinery and hazardous substances can cause **industrial accidents**.

Note

Compensation (see Unit 5) can also be used to mean money or other benefits that someone receives after an injury caused by a work accident.

Exercises

- 8.1** Complete these headlines and articles with expressions from A and B opposite. Use one expression twice.

1  OFFICE MANAGER ACCUSED OF
A court heard today how an office worker was almost driven to suicide by a bullying office manager. James Blenkinsop, 27, told how boss Nigel Kemp victimized him by shouting at him, criticizing his work in front of others, tearing up his work and telling him to do it again.

2  NATIONAL RESTAURANT CHAIN FACES CLAIMS
Four waitresses claim they were repeatedly by male bosses in a branch of a well-known national restaurant chain. All four waitresses said they were subjected to sexist remarks at the restaurant.

3  JAPANESE WOMEN BREAK THROUGH
Naomi Tanaka, 23, last year started working on the Tokyo Stock Exchange as a trader. She complained about traditional and said she did not want to be a 'counter lady' answering phones and serving tea at a Japanese bank. Instead she got a job as a trader at Paribas, a French firm.

4  SHOP MANAGERESS IN CASE
A clothing shop's half-Burmese manageress, 24-year-old Marion Brown, claims her boss continually made remarks, and sacked her from her £110-a-week job when she objected. She claims that the company that owns the shop has racially against her.

5  ABOLISHED AT TEXAS LAW SCHOOL
Last year federal law court made affirmative action at the University of Texas law school illegal, and supporters of have said that it was a 'disaster'. The University of Texas law school last year admitted a class that was 5.9 per cent black and 6.3 per cent Hispanic. This year the black percentage stands at just over 0.7 and the Hispanic at 2.3.

- 8.2** Match the employees' complaints (1–7) with health and safety issues (a–g) in C opposite.

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1 I do a lot of data entry, and recently I've started getting really bad pains in my wrists. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 My doctor says there's something wrong with my lungs, but I've never smoked. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 It's either too cold and we freeze, or too hot and we all fall asleep. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 There's all this waste paper, but there no fire extinguishers in the building. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 The containers are leaking – one day someone is going to get acid burns. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6 There are no safety guards on the machines – you could easily get your hand caught. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7 There are all these problems, but no-one is trained to give medical assistance. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Over to you

Think about the industry you work in or would like to work in. Look at a health and safety website, for example the UK government site at www.hse.gov.uk, and identify key hazards in the industry.