

# **Sexual Harassment - Questionnaire Survey for Sports Sector**

## **Summary of Survey Findings**

### **Background**

Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination. Sexual harassment refers to any person making unwanted sexual advances, or unwelcome request for sexual favours against another person which involve verbal, non-verbal or physical behaviours. Sexual harassment also refers to a conduct of a sexual nature which creates a hostile or intimidating environment for another person. Since sexual harassment is a widespread phenomenon in the community, sport organizations may have to deal with such unwanted conduct of a sexual nature. Research studies indicate that incidents of sexual harassment have a negative impact on individuals' physical and psychological health (International Olympic Committee, 2007).

2. Sexual harassment may be encountered by both male and female athletes, and any member of a sports organization. Overseas research on the prevalence rate of sexual harassment in sport in different countries estimated the range from a low of 19% to a high of 92% (Leahy & Fasting, 2015). The large range may be due to different definitions, research design and assessment tool used in different research studies. However, the research studies consistently pointed out that sexual harassment is more common among peers, and occurs across all sports and to all athletes regardless of gender or level (Alexander, Stafford, & Lewis, 2011; Fasting, Brackenridge, & Sundgot-Borgen, 2004; Kirby, Greaves and Hankivsky, 2000).

3. The issues of sexual harassment in sports have drawn attention at the international level. In 2003, the EU Parliament Resolution on Women and Sport urged its member states and sports federations to adopt measures to prevent and eliminate sexual harassment and abuse in sport (European Parliament, 2003). In 2007, the European Commission published a White Paper on Sport that urged the member states to protect all athletes by having legislation to eliminate sexual harassment and abuse in sport (European Commission, 2007). In the same year, the Executive Board of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) adopted a Consensus Statement on "Sexual Harassment and Abuse in Sport" (International Olympic Committee, 2007). The aim of the Consensus is to improve the protection of athletes from sexual harassment and abuse in sports setting by advocating effective preventive policy, providing prevention strategies, as well as promoting the awareness of sexual harassment and abuse in the realm of sports.

4. In Hong Kong, there are 75 National Sports Associations (NSAs) under the Sports Federation and Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China (SF&OC). NSAs are members of the SF&OC which is the National Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China, responsible for coordinating local sports organizations and promoting interests in sports in Hong Kong. NSAs are local governing sports organizations in the respective sports disciplines with the objectives to promote and develop local sports and participate in international sports activities. They are normally affiliated to the international or Asian federations concerned and are recognized by SF&OC as the sole official representatives for their respective sports in international events.

5. As an attempt to promote awareness of anti-sexual harassment in the sports sector, the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) conducted a survey entitled “Sexual Harassment – Questionnaire Survey for Sports Sector in Hong Kong” to enhance the awareness of NSAs in formulating policy for the prevention of sexual harassment. The EOC was in partnership with the SF&OC to carry out the questionnaire survey. Anonymous self-reporting questionnaire has been used to explore whether the NSAs in Hong Kong have adopted an anti-sexual harassment policy and their efforts on preventing sexual harassment among athletes, and between coaches (and members of the athlete’s entourage) and athletes. The Survey also asked whether there are any sexual harassment incidents reported to the NSAs during the past 12 months.

6. The questionnaires were disseminated both by post and e-mail via the SF&OC to the 75 NSAs in Hong Kong during the period between late October 2014 and mid-December 2014. The completed questionnaires were directly returned to the EOC by e-mail or fax, or by post in a reply envelope. Out of the 75 questionnaires given to the NSAs, 57 completed questionnaires were returned to the EOC. The response rate of the Survey was 76%.

7. According to the responded NSAs, they have 3,021 affiliated clubs and a total of 291,800 individual members (*Table 14 & 15*) in their membership list. These figures indicated that the NSAs are serving a large number of people who participate in sports activities in Hong Kong. These findings are consistent with the results of Consultancy Report on Sport conducted by Community Sports Committee (CSC) of the Sports Commission in 2009 that a large number of Hong Kong citizens aged 15 or above participated in sports regularly in Hong Kong.

## Key Findings

8. The majority of NSAs in Hong Kong do not have a written anti-sexual harassment policy. Among those 57 responded NSAs, only seven (12%) reported that they had formulated a written anti-sexual harassment policy, whereas 50 respondents (88%) did not have one (*Chart 1*).

9. Another important finding was that many NSAs had not provided a code of ethics and guidelines on anti-sexual harassment to coaches. Among the 55 responded NSAs, only 37% (n = 20) had provided coaches with a code of ethics or guidelines on anti-sexual harassment, while 47% (n = 26) had not done so, and 16% (n = 9) did not know whether any code or related guidelines have been provided to their coaches or not (*Chart 9*). Out of the 20 NSAs that provide coaches with a code of ethics/guidelines on anti-sexual harassment, 6 had formulated anti-sexual harassment policy. One of the NSA that formulated anti-sexual harassment policy did not know whether code of ethics/guidelines on sexual harassment had been provided to coaches or not (*Chart 9*). The majority of responded NSAs (62%, 34 out of 55) did not have a written anti-sexual harassment policy or a code of ethics/guidelines on anti-sexual harassment for their coaches.<sup>1</sup>

10. Only one NSA (2%, N=54) reported that there was complaint about sexual harassment in the past 12 months and the number of complaints received was one. The form of sexual harassment of that case was inappropriate physical touching, patting and/or kissing. While the majority of NSAs (93%) replied that they did not receive any complaints about sexual harassment in the past 12 months, 5% did not know whether there were any complaints or not (*Chart 11*).

### *NSAs with written anti-sexual harassment policy*

11. For those NSAs with anti-sexual harassment policy statement (n = 7), the most common items in their policy include (*Table 2.1*):

- (i) Definition of sexual harassment and examples of sexual harassment (6 out of 7);
- (ii) Clear statement that sexual harassment will not be tolerated (5 out of 7);

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<sup>1</sup> The number of 34 NSAs includes those do not have sexual harassment policy and code of ethics/guidelines on sexual harassment for their coaches (n = 26), and those do not know whether there are code of ethics/guidelines on sexual harassment for their coaches and currently do not have sexual harassment policy (n = 8).

- (iii) Policy statement indicated that it applies to all coaches and other employees of the sports association (5 out of 7);
- (iv) Procedure of dealing with sexual harassment complaints (5 out of 7).

12. However, very few NSAs have included a note about disciplinary action (3 out of 7), contacts details of persons designated to handle sexual harassment complaints (2 out of 7), or assurance that no one will be penalized for lodging a complaint in good faith (1 out of 7) in their anti-sexual harassment policy (*Table 2.1*).

13. Among those seven NSAs with written anti-sexual harassment policy, only one claimed that all eight of the above mentioned items were included in their policy. Less than half of the NSAs included four or more items in their written anti-sexual harassment policy (*Table 2.2*). The survey also found that most of the NSAs did not regularly review their anti-sexual harassment policy. Six out of seven NSAs have not reviewed the policy after the policy was formulated (*Table 5*). These results seem to imply that the anti-sexual harassment policy of the NSAs is not comprehensive and may not be able to meet the specific needs of relevant sports/organization in the changing environment. The implementation measures, such as contact information of designated complaint-handling personnel and a note about disciplinary action, are often omitted in their anti-sexual harassment policy.

14. When the NSAs were asked about the way they would notify their individual members or affiliated clubs about anti-sexual harassment policy, four out of seven replied that they notified members by giving them a physical copy. Three out of seven replied that the notification was via e-mail. None of the NSAs has uploaded the policy on their Internet website (*Chart 4*). When asked about whether their anti-sexual harassment policy statement is applicable to affiliated clubs, only one out of seven claimed that it is applicable. The other six NSAs replied either the policy is not applicable, or do not know whether it is applicable, or they do not have any affiliated club (*Chart 3*). These results suggested that the policy may not be easily accessible to the affiliated clubs and individual members. Given that only a few NSAs have developed their own policy on anti-sexual harassment and only one applies its policy on affiliated clubs, it is doubtful whether the individual sports clubs would have the awareness to formulate their own anti-sexual harassment policy. Even in those NSAs which have formulated a policy statement, the missing of important information about complaint handling and the difficulty in obtaining the policy information may make it difficult for staff or athletes to understand the complaint procedure when sexual harassment occurred.

### ***NSA without written anti-sexual harassment policy***

15. Among the NSAs without a written policy on anti-sexual harassment (n = 50), the reasons for not formulating a policy are mainly “staff was not trained in formulating the related policy” (50%), and “no urgency to formulate a policy statement on sexual harassment” (40%), and “no need to formulate a policy on sexual harassment as the association have a Code of Ethics for coaches” (34%). Other reasons for not formulating an anti-sexual harassment policy included: “Sexual harassment has never occurred in the association, and therefore, it is not a necessity to formulate the related policy” (32%), “Never have thought of developing a policy” (20%), and “Concerns that people may misinterpret the formulation of the related policy as frequent occurrence of sexual harassment in the association” (12%) (*Table 7*).

16. For those NSAs without a written anti-sexual harassment policy, only eight of them (16%) will consider formulating one in the next 12 months, while the majority of NSAs (60%, n = 30) said they did not know, and 24% (n = 12) indicated that they would not consider formulating any anti-sexual harassment policy in the near future (*Chart 8*).

### ***Lack of comprehensive preventive measures on anti-sexual harassment***

17. Almost half (46%, n = 26) of the NSAs indicated that they have not taken any preventive measures against sexual harassment, while 54% of NSAs (31 out of 57) said that they have (*Chart 10.1*). The most common measures are: “Requiring the prospective coaches to verify nil criminal conviction records against a specified list of sexual offences under the ‘Sexual Conviction Record Check’ Scheme” (48%); and “Requiring coaches to sign an acknowledgment and consent form after reading the policy/Code of Ethics/ Guidelines on sexual harassment” (29%). However, just a few NSAs adopt measures to enhance staff and members’ awareness on sexual harassment, for example, only 16% of NSAs reported that information related to anti-sexual harassment has been displayed in the association and only 6% (N = 31) of NSAs provided training to their athletes about anti-sexual harassment (*Table 10.1*).

### ***Demand for training on anti-sexual harassment***

18. Nearly 90% of the responded NSAs (86%, 44 out of 51 respondents) showed interest in attending training courses organized by the EOC on preventing sexual harassment

or sending their staff to training, helping them to equip with knowledge and skills for handling sexual harassment incidents (*Chart 16*).

## **Recommendations**

19. The survey findings suggest that there is a very low awareness among NSAs in developing and carrying out anti-sexual harassment policy/programmes in the sports sector in Hong Kong. Most of the surveyed NSAs have not adopted a policy statement on anti-sexual harassment (88%), while nearly 40% of NSAs do not have any preventive measures against sexual harassment. The lack of anti-sexual harassment policy among the NSAs is disappointing. It reflects that NSAs have not provided sufficient knowledge-for thousands of athletes to guard against sexual harassment. It is strongly recommended that NSAs develop a formal anti-sexual harassment policy in the very near future.

20. The present survey also shows that 63% of the responded NSAs do not have a code of ethics/guidelines on anti-sexual harassment. Such results are disturbing. Evidently, many athletes, coaches, staff and parents have not been adequately informed of what constitute unwanted sexual advances, or unwelcome request for sexual favors. Given the high prevalence rate of sexual harassment in the sports sector in foreign countries, and bearing in mind that NSAs have the legal responsibility to provide a sexual harassment free environment in all sports activities, NSAs should take action to prevent sexual harassment before incidents of sexual harassment occur in their association.

21. In Hong Kong, the prevalence rate of sexual harassment in the sports sector in the past 12 months was extremely low. The lack of awareness of sexual harassment in general, and the fear of repercussion together with the shame of having been sexual harassed on the part of the athletes in particular, may discourage affected persons from reporting against sexual harassment.

22. Although some NSAs have adopted an anti-sexual harassment policy (N=7), most policies are not comprehensive and have not been regularly reviewed or up-dated. The general lack of awareness on sexual harassment, together with a shortage of vital details in the anti-sexual harassment policy, may cause athletes, coaches and staff not to come forward to raise a complaint of sexual harassment. It is recommended that NSAs should develop a comprehensive anti-sexual harassment policy including the definition of sexual harassment, a zero-tolerance policy, a procedure of complaint-handling, contact information of designated complaint-handling personnel, and note about disciplinary action.

23. Some NSAs may have an established an anti-sexual harassment statement, but due to insufficient publicity, athletes, coaches and other staff members are often unaware of such a policy. Therefore the policy should be made public and widely known to all parties in the sports association via notices, circulars, flyers and e-mails, so that athletes, coaches, staff members, volunteers, contract workers, and even service providers, can have a clear understanding of the policy. It is also important to ensure that formal training on anti-sexual harassment be provided to all new staff members and athletes, including parents of underage student athletes, in orientation programmes.

24. Some NSAs required coaches to sign an acknowledgement and consent after reading the code of ethics/guidelines on anti-sexual harassment. This is a good practice. Those NSAs, which have not done so, should adopt this practice. Some NSAs required coaches to submit a “Sexual Conviction Record Check”. This may serve as another layer of protection against sexual harassment.

25. Another common reason for NSAs not having an anti-sexual harassment policy is that “staff are not trained in formulating the related policy statement”. Since most of the NSAs indicated that their staff did not receive any training in anti-sexual harassment, and indicated a strong demand on training, the EOC would liaise with relevant stakeholders to explore organizing anti-sexual harassment trainings for NSAs, in order to encourage sports associations to take a lead in formulating and implementing the policy. The NSAs and affiliated clubs have the responsibility for ensuring that all athletes, coaches, and staff members have to be equipped with formal training on anti-sexual harassment.

26. Since the IOC has adopted the Consensus Statement on “Sexual Harassment and Abuse in Sport” in 2007, it is recommended that the SF&OC may encourage NSAs and their affiliated clubs to adopt and publicize the Consensus Statement. These organizations should formulate their own anti-sexual harassment policy as an attempt to demonstrate their commitment to creating a safe and mutually respectful environment for athletes, coaches and staff members in sports sector.

27. Since very few NSAs provided formal anti-sexual harassment training to athletes, it is essential to raise such awareness in the sports sector. The SF&OC and NSAs may consider taking a first step in anti-sexual harassment. For instance, putting an anti-sexual harassment webpage on their Internet website that includes the IOC Consensus Statement on Sexual Harassment and Abuse in Sport, the related anti-sexual harassment policy and guidelines, and

other practical resources on preventing sexual harassment in sports. Internet webpage is a useful and easily accessible medium for all parties in sports club and for their associates, for example, parents of student athletes and volunteers. Needless to say, all athletes, coaches, staff, volunteers and parents should receive formal training in anti-sexual harassment.

28. The Hong Kong Government has a key role to play to promote the prevention of sexual harassment in the sports sector. As the major source of funding to different sports organizations and as a signatory to the related international treaties, the Hong Kong Government has the moral obligation to shoulder the responsibility for the prevention of sexual harassment in the sports sector.

29. Since the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was extended to Hong Kong in 1996, the Hong Kong Government has an obligation to undertake a series of measures to end discrimination against women in all forms, including the elimination of sexual harassment. The Convention defines discrimination against women as "...any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field." In addition, the Labour and Welfare Bureau has recently announced that starting from 1 April 2015, all government bureaux and departments must refer to the Gender Mainstreaming Checklist of the Women's Commission and apply gender mainstreaming when formulating major policies and initiatives. Promoting a sexual harassment free environment in the sports sector is one of the ways to defend women's rights and promote women's interests. Therefore, the Government should take preventive measures to eliminate all forms of harassment and abuse in sports to ensure that there is a safe and supportive environment for sports players.

30. The Hong Kong Government should encourage NSAs to take all practicable and reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment. The Consultancy Report conducted by Sports Commission recommended the Hong Kong Government that the "Sport for All" policy should be fully implemented, in which creating opportunities and favorable environment through collaboration with key stakeholders to enable everyone, regardless of gender, age, ability, socio-economic status, or ethnicity, to participate freely in physical activities and sport. Anti-sexual harassment should be considered as one of the important elements in the "Sport for All policy".

31. The Hong Kong Government may consider providing incentives to NSAs to formulate a written anti-sexual harassment policy, and requiring them to implement the related policy as part of the criteria in funding application. Under the current funding mechanism, subvented NSAs are required by the LCSD to establish a transparent system for the selection of athletes, which includes the requirement of setting out the selection criteria and appeal mechanism in writing, as well as uploading them onto the NSAs' official website to inform athletes and members of the public ahead of the selection. Similarly, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) may consider encouraging subvented NSAs<sup>2</sup> to formulate an anti-sexual harassment policy, providing more resources to NSAs helping them to establish a transparent mechanism for handling sexual harassment complaints, and upload the policy onto the NSAs' website.

32. Incidents of sexual harassment occurred in many sectors of the community, including the sports sector. Encouraging NSAs to adopt and implement anti-sexual harassment policy is just the first step to combat this problem. The Hong Kong Government may consider joining hands with key stakeholders in the sports sector, such as, the Sports Federation & Olympic Committee of Hong Kong (SF&OC), the Hong Kong Sport Institute (HKSI), the Hong Kong Elite Athletes Association (HKEAA), and all NSAs in Hong Kong to launch a public education campaign on anti-sexual harassment in the sports sector. For example, the LCSD and the SF&OC may consider promoting a sexual harassment free environment in the major games and public sports events in Hong Kong. It is necessary to enhance the public awareness of preventing sexual harassment, in order to provide a safer, healthier and more positive environment for all citizens to enjoy sports and unleash their potential in the sports field.

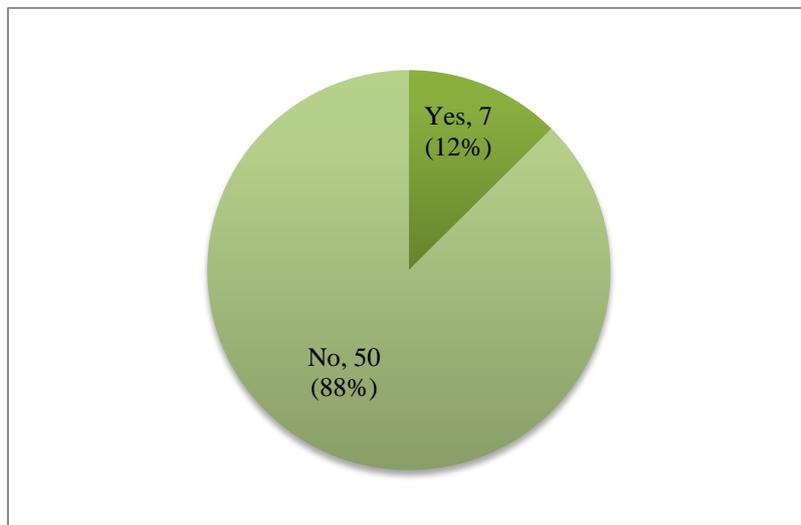
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<sup>2</sup> In 2013-2014, 58 NSAs received a total of HK\$259 million from the Sports Subvention Scheme administered by the LCSD.

## Tables and Charts

### 1. Is there a written policy on sexual harassment in your sports association?

**Chart 1** (N = 57)



### 2. If there is a written policy on sexual harassment in your sports association, the policy includes: (you may tick more than one box)

**Table 2.1** (N = 7)

	No# of Cases
Definition of sexual harassment and examples of sexual harassment	6
A clear statement that sexual harassment will not be tolerated	5
The policy applies to all coaches and other employees of the sports association	5
Procedure of dealing with sexual harassment complaints	5
The policy applies to all athletes and other members of the sports association	4
A note about disciplinary action	3
The names and contacts of persons designated to handle sexual harassment complaints	2
An assurance that no one will be penalized for coming forward with a complaint in good faith	1
Others	0

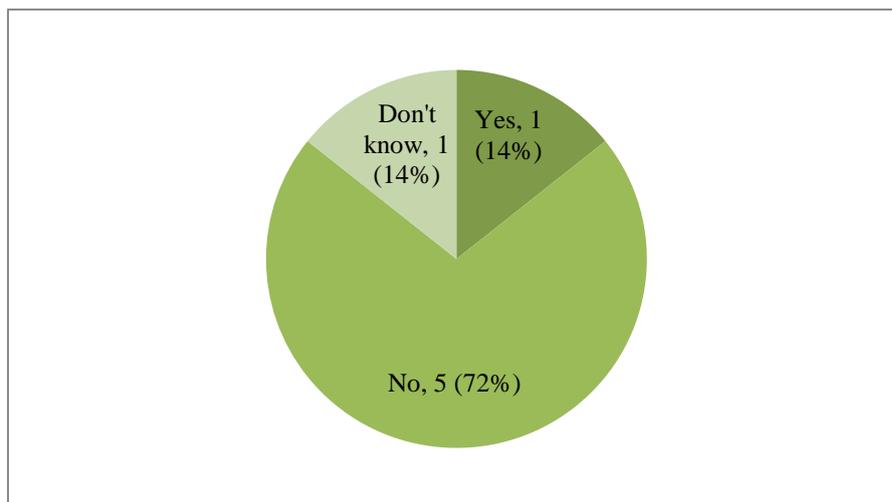
**Table 2.2**

The number of items in the sexual harassment policy of NSAs (N = 7)

	<b>No# of NSA</b>	<b>%</b>
Includes 1 item	1	14%
Includes 2-4 items	3	43%
Includes 5-7 items	2	29%
Includes 8 items or above	1	14%
Total	7	100%

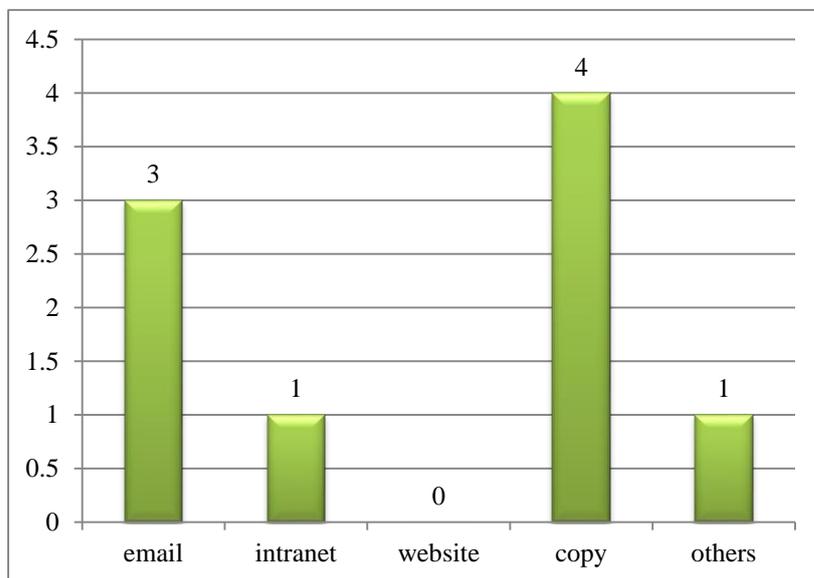
**3. Is the written policy on sexual harassment applicable to your affiliated clubs?**

**Chart 3** (N = 7)



4. How did you notify your individual members/affiliated clubs of the written policy on sexual harassment? (you may tick more than one box)

**Chart 4** (N = 7)



5. In which year did your sports association establish the first written policy on sexual harassment?

6. In which year did your sports association last review on the written policy on sexual harassment?

**Table 5** (N = 6)

Year of Establishment	Year of Review
2010	2010
2012	2012
2013	2013
2006	2006
2013	Did not provide answer
1994	2002

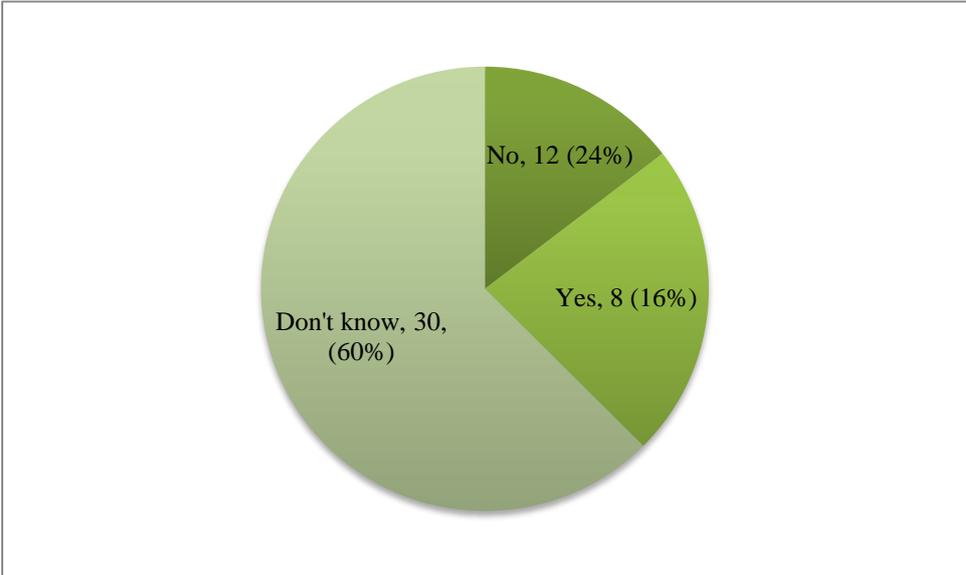
**7. If your sports association DO NOT have a written sexual harassment policy, the reasons are: (you may tick more than one box)**

**Table 7** (N = 50)

	Case	%
Staff are not trained in formulating the related policy;	25	50%
There is no urgency to formulate a policy on sexual harassment;	20	40%
There is no need to formulate a policy on sexual harassment as the association have a Code of Ethics (which includes the issue of sexual harassment) for coaches;	17	34%
Sexual harassment has never occurred in the association, and therefore, it is not a necessity to formulate the related policy;	16	32%
Never have thought of developing a policy;	10	20%
There are concerns that people may misinterpret the formulation of the related policy as frequent occurrence of sexual harassment in the association.	6	12%
<u>Others:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our employment for coaches needs them to provide related proof from HK police to confirm that they have not committed sexual crime;</li> <li>• Our association does not directly employ any coach. The affiliated club members should have their own policy for their own coaches, etc.</li> </ul>	4	8%

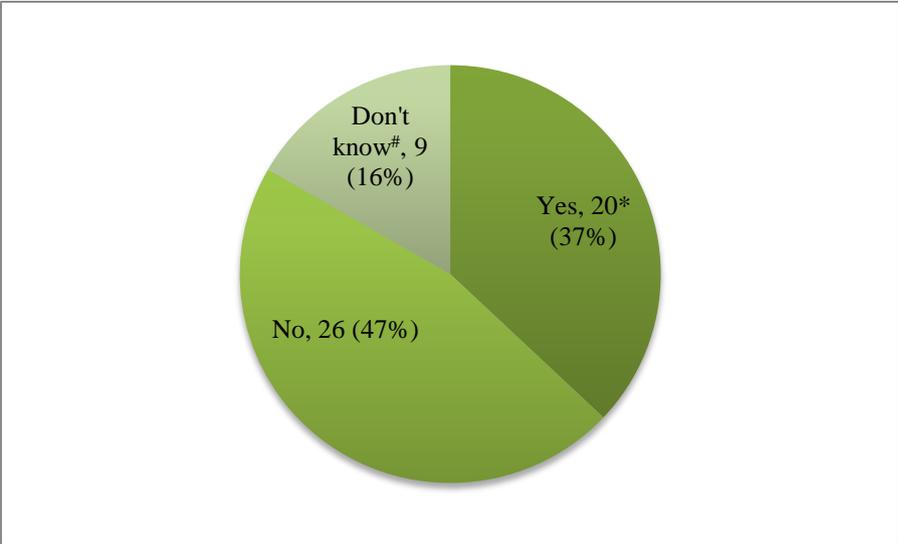
**8. Will your sports association formulate a written policy on sexual harassment in the next 12 months if your association DO NOT have one at the moment?**

**Chart 8** (N = 50)



**9. Do your sports association provide coaches with Code of Ethics/Guidelines on sexual harassment?**

**Chart 9** (N = 55)

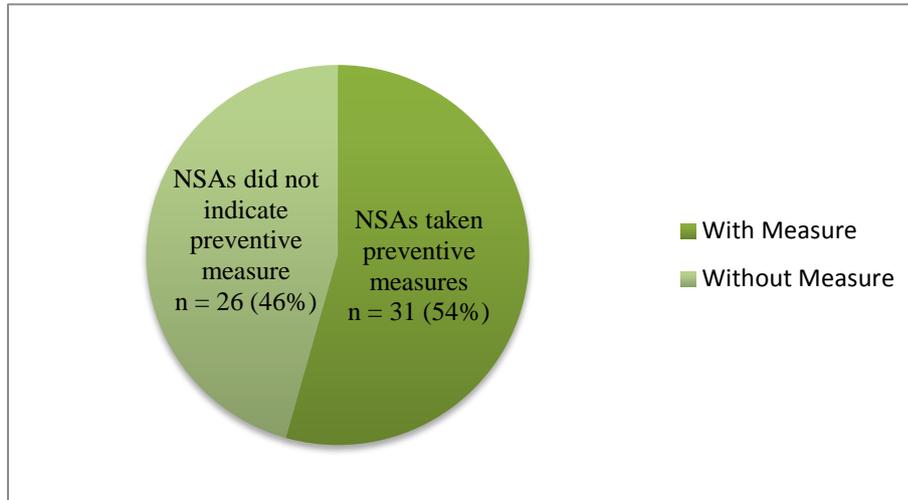


\* Out of the 20 NSAs who provide coaches with Code of Ethics/Guidelines on sexual harassment, 6 also have a written policy on sexual harassment.

# One of the NSA that formulated sexual harassment policy did not know whether code of ethics/guideline on sexual harassment was provided to coaches or not.

**10. Have your sports association taken any of the following preventive measures on sexual harassment?**

**Chart 10** Percentage of NSAs with preventive measures (N = 57)



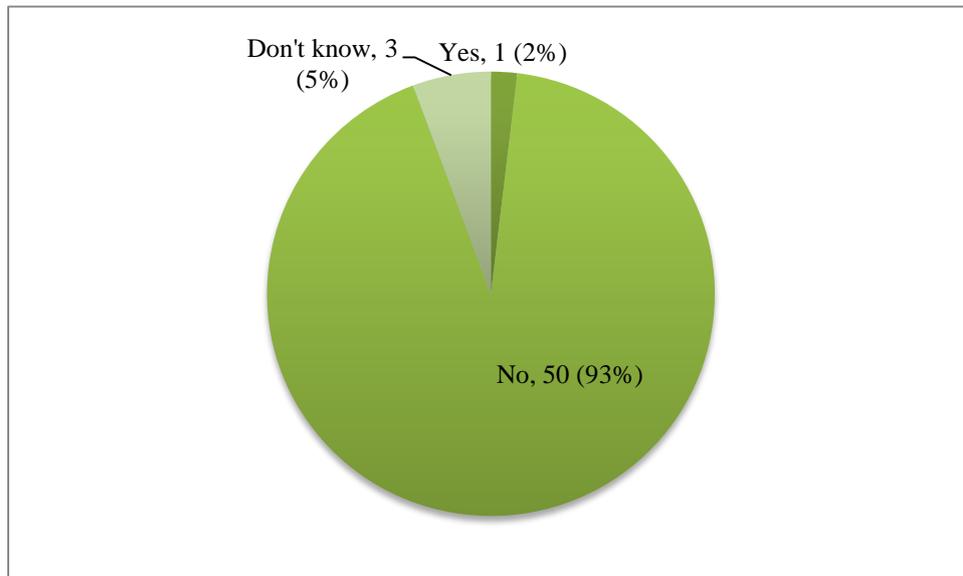
**Table 10.1:** NSAs taken preventive measures and the items of preventive measures (N = 31).

(You may tick more than one box)

	Case	%
Require the prospective coaches to verify nil criminal conviction records against a specified list of sexual offences under the 'Sexual Conviction Record Check' Scheme	15	48%
Require coaches to sign an acknowledgment and consent form after reading the policy/Code of Ethics/ Guidelines on sexual harassment	9	29%
Provide anti-sexual harassment training for coaches	7	23%
Display information related to anti-sexual harassment in the sports association, e.g. leaflet/poster	5	16%
Provide anti-sexual harassment training for athletes	2	6%
Others:	5	16%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Technical Committee has regularly reminded affiliated club members on this issue;</li> <li>• Assign male coaches to teach male participants and female coaches to teach female participants, etc</li> </ul>		

**11. Based on your understanding, were there any complaints about sexual harassment in your sports association in the past 12 months?**

**Chart 11** (N = 54)



**12. If there were complaints about sexual harassment in your sports association in the past 12 months, please indicate the number of case(s).**

N = 1

Only ONE case: Physical (e.g. inappropriate touching, patting, and/or kissing)

**13. When was your sports association established?**

N = 53

Range: 1901 – 2003

**14. Number of affiliated clubs in your sports association:**

**Table 14** (N = 46)

Range	0 – 1,045	Total	3,021	Average	66	Median	30
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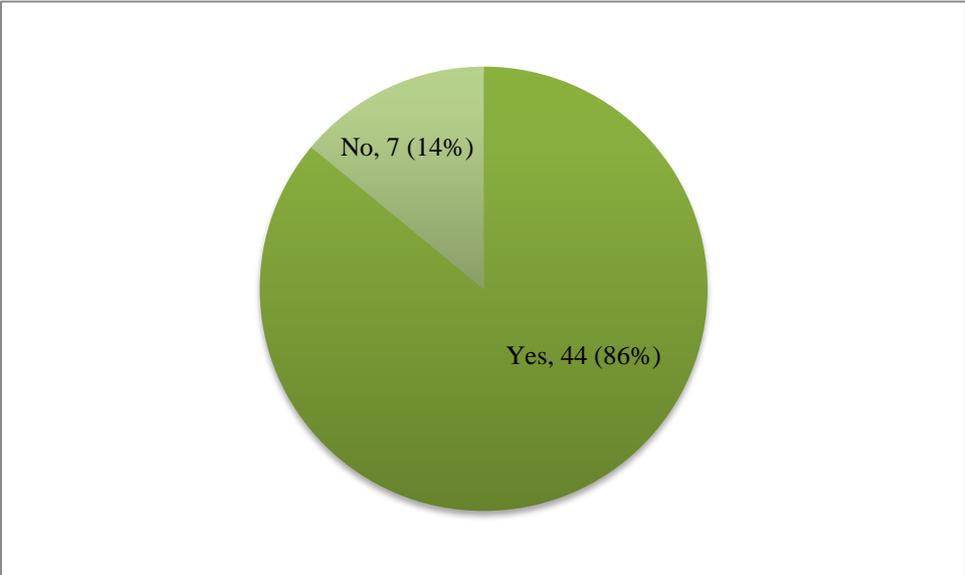
**15. Number of individual members in your sports association:**

**Table 15** (N = 49)

Range	0 – 140,000	Total	291,815	Average	5,955	Median	983
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**16. If training courses on the prevention of sexual harassment are provided by the EOC, will you or your colleagues attend?**

**Chart 16** (N = 51)



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