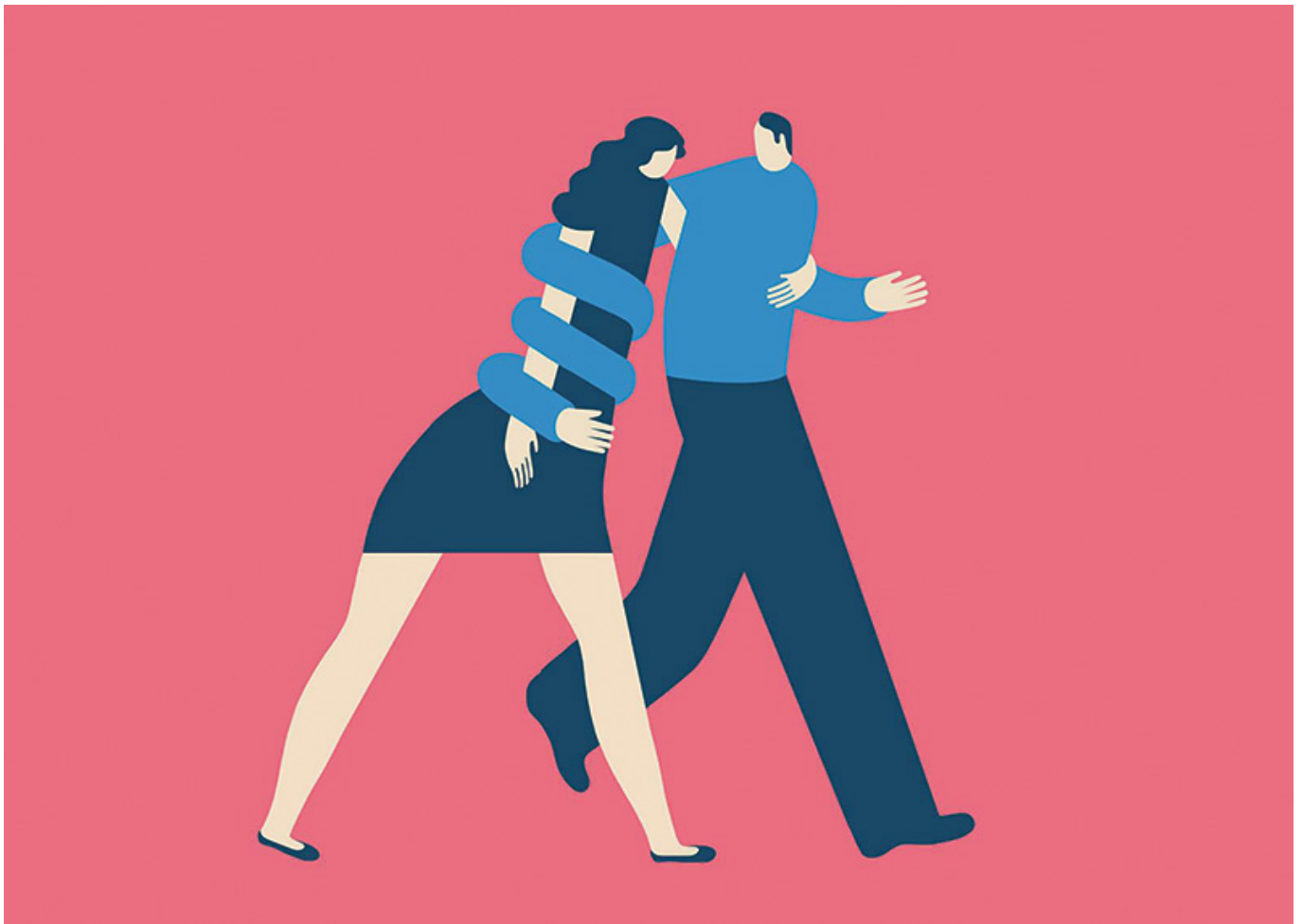


Casual Sexism: What Impact Does It Have Onboard Yachts?

Many of us may believe that if we saw an incident of outright sexual assault or harassment, we might call it out, or perhaps even intervene. But what about casual sexism? Are we just as likely to call it out, or even understand what it is?



Casual sexism is the type of everyday behaviour and language that is commonly accepted in work environments and sometimes is so commonplace that the effects go unnoticed but even at its most benign, casual sexism has major negative impacts on crew members. Whilst it may be true that sexism does not only affect women, the most common complaints are from female crew members regarding this topic.

Consider the crew mess on any yacht with a mixed-gender crew,

it is a space for tea breaks and perhaps indulging in after-work drinks and conversation – and arguably the most likely place for casual sexism to occur. Whilst sexism can work both ways, most yachts feature an imbalance when it comes to the number of men working onboard over women, so typically it is the perfect environment for casual sexism toward female crew members to fester.

How do we categorise casual sexism?

In order to know how to tackle something, we have to first identify what it is.

[Career Contessa](#) defines casual sexism as such:

“Casual sexism could also be called latent sexism—it’s so ingrained in company culture that it often passes by unnoticed. Maybe you don’t even notice it’s happening to you, but just experience a subtle feeling of alienation or even impostor syndrome. Think: “harmless” sexist jokes, “mansplaining,” or even those times when your boss treats your male colleagues marginally differently than you”.

Casual sexism comes in many forms and is often less likely to be taken seriously due to its nature, often disguised as humour or simply ‘banter’. Although these comments or jokes may not be intended to cause major harm, their effects can be tenfold. If remarks are made most frequently toward female crew members, it is likely to cause a feeling of isolation or imbalance and eventually lead to feelings of resentment which could then lead to a lack of performance at work.

Joking around could also disguise more questionable tendencies for some, it’s worth remembering that whilst for one person a joke is just a joke, for others it could be taken as a green

light to take inappropriate behaviour even further. Tragically, this theory was proven in the case of [Wayne Couzens](#), who was given a nickname by colleagues at the Met Police that turned out to reflect more sinister intentions, and ultimately the rape and murder of Sarah Everard.

Impact On Performance At Work

Further, not only are casual sexist comments embarrassing and uncomfortable for female crew members, many women feel that their positions onboard are undermined due to these seemingly harmless remarks. Female maritime engineer Lauren Harrison reflects on some incidences she has faced throughout her career:

“As a female engineer, I have worked with men who have literally grabbed things out of my hands because they don’t trust I know what I’m doing. I’ve had men observe how I do something then show me ‘the way a man would do it’”.

Harrison speaks of the frustration that casual sexism caused her professionally, stating she simply wanted to do her job but was sometimes prohibited by male colleagues:

“I’ve had men not let me do my job because they thought it was too dirty or too difficult for me. To be fair, yes I need help sometimes. I’d love for someone else to do all the dirty jobs, [such as] clearing a toilet or whatnot, but at some point, you’re going to have to let me do my job otherwise I’m being paid to hang out”.

Call It Out

So how do we know when the line is being crossed? In general, if any one person is being targeted more than others, this can create a toxic culture onboard. Joking and fun should be encouraged onboard, but try to steer the content of these jokes away from gendered remarks. We should all practice calling out the behaviour we believe to be unprofessional or unfair, it should not simply be the job of female crew members to tackle it alone.

At the risk of sounding like the 'fun police' it is increasingly important that we monitor the kind of language that we are using in crew spaces, it's not difficult to save some of the more lurid material for outside of the boat, in private, around friends – not at work. If we are to progress as an industry, practising respect for one another is crucial. Whilst much of the culture onboard yachts is typically dictated by the captain, remember that as individual crew members, you also have the power to create the environment you want to exist within onboard.

For more Crew Mess articles, [click here.](#)

We are looking for input from crew, male especially about this subject. If you have something to say please do get in touch!

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