



71% of UK businesses have now taken concrete action in response to #MeToo movement

71% of UK businesses say they have now taken concrete action in response to the #MeToo movement and Harvey Weinstein scandal, shows research by GQ|Littler, the specialist employment law firm.

The survey suggests that tens-of-thousands of UK businesses have reopened old investigations, made significant changes to internal investigation processes, physical work spaces and to rules on how colleagues interact.

Changes made by UK employers in response to #MeToo include:

- 13% of employers have taken the controversial step of reopening past sexual harassment investigations
- 18% of employers have eliminated certain work-related social outings and have introduced strict limits on alcohol consumption by employees at those events
- 23% of employers have actually rebuilt and reshaped office space, such as by making offices more open plan and increasing the size of communal areas
- 25% of employers have completely overhauled internal investigations, introducing more stringent procedures and new tools for gathering evidence

The research also shows that, despite the dramatic response by UK employers to the Weinstein scandal, they actually lag behind many other European countries in their response to #MeToo.

Whilst only seven in ten UK employers have taken action in response to #MeToo that lags noticeably behind the eight-in-ten European employers that have taken action. Employers in Spain (88%) and Belgium (81%) have been particularly responsive compared to the UK.

GQ|Littler says it is important employers are proactive in taking steps to prevent sexual harassment as the costs for failing to do so can be huge. This includes the costs of settling allegations, enormous reputational damage and even the impact of poor morale on productivity.

39% of businesses have revised hiring to close gender pay gap

The research also revealed that 39% of UK employers have revised their hiring practices to close the gender pay gap, following the introduction of gender pay gap reporting in April 2018. A growing number of employers are ensuring that hiring processes involve at least one female decision-maker and that all slates of candidates include at least one woman.

Other steps taken by employers to close the gap include conducting audits of employees’ current salaries (26%) and modifying compensation policies (21%).

However, as with responding to #MeToo, the UK is lagging behind other European countries in taking steps to close the gender pay gap. 73% of UK employers have taken steps compared to the European average of 80%; employers in Spain (86%), Belgium (84%) and France (82%) have been particularly responsive compared to the UK.

Raoul Parekh, Partner at GQ|Littler, says: “Thousands of UK businesses have taken some major steps in responding to #MeToo. But compared to Europe it does seem that some UK employers risk being too complacent.”

“Proposed boycotts of Topshop on social media shows just how damaging sexual harassment allegations can be, both in damage to reputation and actual lost sales.”

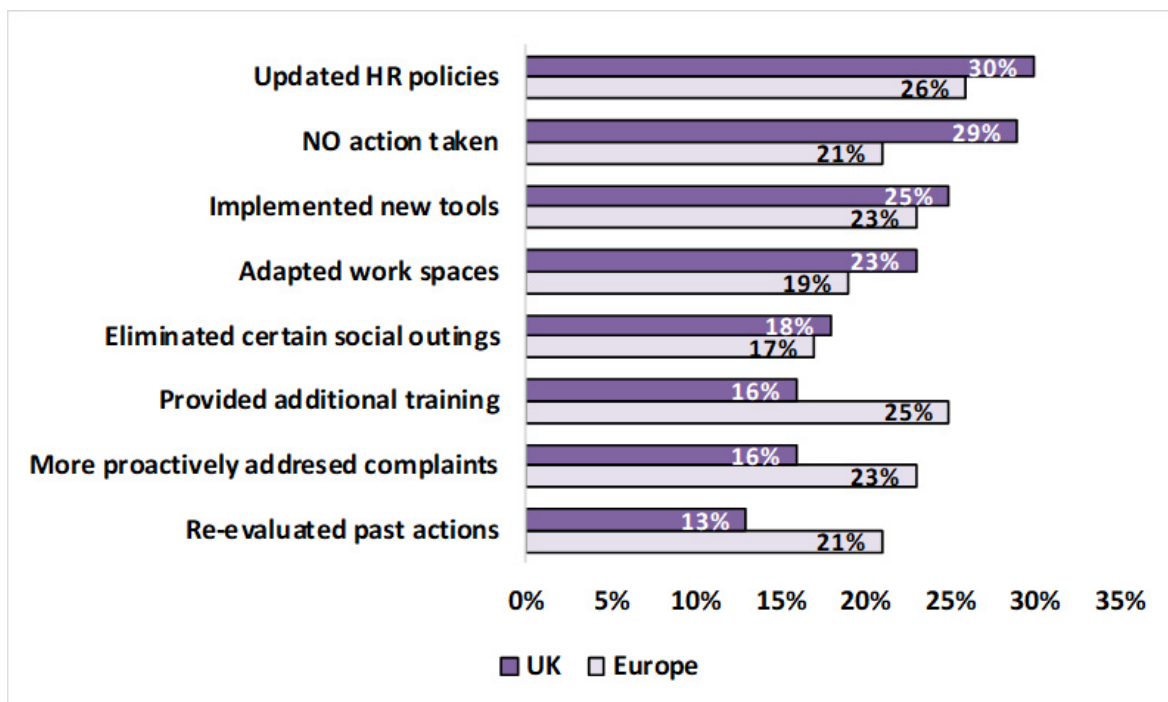
“Although some employers may believe that sexual harassment is unlikely to happen in their workplace, the breadth of the #MeToo movement shows the problem is endemic. Taking comprehensive action is crucial in combatting this longstanding societal issue and also helping to protect the employer.”

“There are no easy fixes, but obvious first steps include engaging employees in drawing up sexual harassment policies and rolling out bespoke training tailored to each workplace’s specific issues.”

“Getting out ahead of these issues is key to managing risk.”

Stephan Swinkels, shareholder, Executive Director of Littler’s International practice, adds: “Gender pay equity has been bubbling under the surface for many years but the last 12 months have seen its unprecedented rise to the top of the agenda for HR departments and boards across Europe.”

UK employers lag behind their European peers in responding to the #MeToo movement





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About GQ|Littler

GQ|Littler is the leading specialist law firm for employers in the UK. Based in the City of London, the firm is part of Littler, the world's largest employment law firm with over 1,500 lawyers in 80 offices worldwide, offering a single source solution to international businesses. Offering risk-based contentious and non-contentious advice, the firm's legal expertise includes employment, immigration, employee tax and incentives. Its client base spans a wide range of sectors including financial services, technology, healthcare, professional services and luxury goods. GQ|Littler is recognised as a leader in its field by both Legal 500 and Chambers & Partners, which describes the firm as "a premier outfit".

Research methodology

An anonymised online survey was conducted by independent agency [Atomik Research](#) among 800 HR, legal and C-suite professionals in eight European markets. The sample comprised 100 respondents within each market: the UK, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Norway, the Netherlands and Belgium. The research fieldwork took place between 20th June and 23rd July 2018. Atomik Research is an independent creative market research agency that employs Market Research Society (MRS)-certified researchers and abides to MRS code.

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