

Baigent (2007) One Decade on: early release of data on harassment of women in the UK Fire and Rescue Service downloaded from <http://fitting-in.com/decade/harassment.doc>



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## 1. Introduction

Ten years ago I carried out one of the first surveys of women firefighters in the UK. This survey provided data for "[\*Who Rings the Bell\*](#)" (Baigent 1996), a report that set a benchmark on the fire service's reaction to women who became firefighters and suggested that over 60% of women firefighters were being harassed (at that time there were 139 women firefighters, representing 0.5% of the 39,000 male workforce). I have now completed a second survey along the lines of the first and ten years later the data suggest that little has changed. I will turn to this data shortly but first a little more background

### Two cultures

In 2001 I completed my PhD: a four-year cultural audit of the UK fire service. The research used primary data taken from the fire service and analysed it alongside developing sociological debates about the concept of masculinity (Hearn 1995; Walby 1990). The result was "[\*One More Last Working Class Hero\*](#)" (Baigent 2001). Amongst the outcomes was the identification that there were strong links between masculinity, identity and the imagery of firefighting. The research also set out for the first time the analysis that rather than one workplace culture, which represents the collective values of all fire service employees, the fire service had at least two cultures. These two cultures were shown to increasingly divide about the future role of the firefighter and what constituted an efficient fire service<sup>1</sup>.

On the one hand, there was the formal culture, which largely represented the views of managers and government that the fire service should be modernised. On the other hand, there was the informal culture, which largely represented the views of station personnel who gathered under the umbrella of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) in resisting parts of the modernisation agenda. The bitter dispute that occurred in the early parts of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is officially recorded (Bain 2002; ODPM 2003) and there has been some critique (Burchill 2004; Fitzgerald 2005). After the dispute the Fire and Rescue Service (as it is now called) entered a period of transformational change (Burke 2002) and this has hardly eased the difficult relations between the two cultures. In particular the corner stone of change (modernisation) has been a series of government framework documents (ODPM 2006a) and new core values (Prichard 2006). The effect of these changes was indeed transformational but gradually resistance has increased and the pace of change may be slowing.

### Employing women as firefighters

In the middle of this dispute about the future of the fire service there is a debate about how to change an overwhelmingly white working class male fire service to one that more closely represents the community it serves. Government targets (Straw 1999) should have focused minds, but the lack of success in employing women has recently drawn parliamentary scrutiny (ODPM 2006b; Starkey 2006) and there is currently a review of policy (CLG 2007). Notable amongst this scrutiny has been an acceptance in the review that the targets set by Straw were unobtainable – little debate has been held about how institutional conservatism or sexism has allowed fire service managers to make this belief into a self-fulfilling prophecy.

With such a background I decided to collect a second round of data to identify if women's experience has changed since "[\*Who Rings the Bell\*](#)." However, this current research will be more informed by the wealth of work on the fire service and masculinity during the past ten years.

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<sup>1</sup> By referring to cultures in this way there is no intention to reify their existence.

## 2. Method

### Questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed from the earlier model used in 1996 and the FBU helped with its distribution. Approaches for support were also made to the ODPM and CFOA.

### Response rate

There were 237 respondents and 227 of them were from fulltime operational firefighters. Whilst the numbers of fulltime women firefighters are difficult to track down, the latest data I have indicates there are 721 (CLG 2006).

### Questions

There are 78 questions, some of these are quantitative and some qualitative. The plan is to establish, amongst other things, information about the respondents including:

- a profile (age, ethnicity, education qualifications, role, previous employment)
- reason for joining
- access to recruitment
- the recruitment and training process
- expectations and outcomes
- acceptance into service
- facilities
- equality training
- reaction to fire service culture
- support from senior managers and FBU
- treatment at work
- views on promotion
- views on how to recruit women
- views on modernisation
- views on shift system

Analysis takes place from a qualitative and quantitative perspective and for these purposes is coded to SPSS and NVivo coding is developing.

### **There were three quantitative questions that aimed directly at harassment**

This paper uses some of the responses on harassment to provide an overview of change.

There were three questions that aimed to provide a statistical view on harassment. The first asked for a tick in the box answer to the question

*“Have you **ever** been bullied/harassed at work – Yes No”*

The second and third questions asked for a tick in a box response to the questions

*“During the first year did it occur - Frequently Occasionally or Never”*

*“Is it still happening now - Frequently Occasionally or Never”*

### Three qualitative questions were then asked

The numbers speak for themselves to indicate that sexual harassment of women firefighters in the UK Fire and Rescue Service remains unacceptably high. However, this survey did not just record numbers; there was also an opportunity for a qualitative response to three questions:

*“What form did this take?”*

*“How did you deal with it and was it successful?”*

*“If you did nothing about it why was this?”*

There are 307 responses recorded – some have been slightly changed to avoid revealing the identity of the women firefighter and some additional responses have been withheld for the same reasons. These responses provide real information to support the public statement by the Chief Inspector of Fire Service on the harassment of women firefighters - *“the fire service is not bottom of the league – it is in another league.”*

The examination of these qualitative responses indicate that 12 women firefighters who indicated that they had not been harassed should probably have recorded a “yes” response. The social science researcher in these circumstances is not just number crunching sterile facts. (Bourdieu 1992). Despite the widespread acceptance that harassment takes place when an individual says it does - there are areas of difficulty when someone indicates that they have not been harassed but the evidence that they provide points to harassment. Rigor in these circumstances is not a replacement for theoretical analysis or social understanding (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Feminists might suggest these women are acting in false consciousness, but sometimes there might be a more simple explanation such as the person may have misread the question. It is at these times the researcher must make decisions and then explain why. I have not chosen to change these 12 women’s responses from “no” to “yes” at this time. I simply point out that had I done so then each of the statistics for harassment would have been even higher.

### 3. Details of response to questions about harassment

Out of the 227 women who responded to the questionnaire 223 answered the question *“Have you ever been bullied/harassed at work.”* Figure One indicates that 53.4% (119) of women answered “Yes” 45.8% (104) “No.”

**Figure One** Have you ever been bullied/harassed at work

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	119	52.4	53.4	53.4
	No	104	45.8	46.6	100.
	Total	223	98.2	100.0	
Missing	System	4	1.8		
Total		227	100.0		

#### 4. “During first year did it occur: frequently, occasionally, never.”

There were 188 out of a possible 227 responses to the question “*During first year did it occur: frequently, occasionally, never.*” Figure Two indicates that 50 women answered “*Frequently*” and this represents 22%, although if taken as a valid percentage they represent 26.6%. Some 61 women answered “*Occasionally*” and this represented 26.9% (valid 32.4%) and 33% (77) answered “*Never*” (valid 41%).

**Figure Two** During first year did it occur: frequently, occasionally, never

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Frequently	50	22.0	26.6	26.6
	Occasionally	61	26.9	32.4	59.0
	Never	77	33.9	41.0	100.0
	Total	188	82.8	100.0	
Missing	System	39	17.2		
Total		227	100.0		

This data suggests that 59% of women were harassed during their first year of service. It must be recognised that 39 women did not answer this question (as opposed to 4 women in the initial question).

#### 5. “Is it still happening now: frequently, occasionally, never”

There were 184 out of a possible 227 responses to the question “*Is it still happening now: frequently, occasionally, never.*” Figure three recognises that seven women answered “*Frequently*,” and this represents 3.1% of the total available to answer. Some 42 women responded “*Occasionally*” representing 18.5%. There was a considerable increase in those who identified they were never harassed up to 135 who represented 59.4%. There was also an increase to 43 of women who did not answer the question.

**Figure Three** Is it still happening now: frequently, occasionally, never

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Frequently	7	3.1	3.8	3.8
	Occasionally	42	18.5	22.8	26.6
	Never	135	59.4	73.2	100
	Total	184	81.1	100.0	
Missing	System	43	18.9		
Total		227	100.0		

The data suggests that 26.6% of women are currently being harassed.

### 1996 Data

In 1996 I asked only one question about harassment and this provided for three potential answers. Figure four suggests that four women were being “*frequently*” harassed, 19 “*occasionally*” and 13 “*never*.” According to this data 63.9% of women had been harassed.

**Figure Four**

1996 Data		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Frequently	4	11.1	11.1	11.1
	Occasionally	19	52.8	52.8	63.9
	Never	13	36.1	36.1	100.0
	Total	36	100.0	100.0	

## 6. Initial analysis

Whichever way the data is analysed it is possible to identify that a considerable number of women firefighters are still being harassed in the UK Fire and Rescue Service. The 53.4% of women firefighters who admit to being harassed in the 2006 survey (Figure One) indicates a drop on the 63.9% who acknowledged harassment in 1996. However Figure Two suggests that it is possible to identify that 59% of women firefighters were harassed in their first year of service. The ‘best’ possible view is that only 26.6 of women are currently being harassed (see Figure Three).

There are lots of permutations on what this reduction actually represents. The positive view would be to suggest that the harassment of women is significantly reducing; although this positive view would have to accept that whilst 21.6% is an improvement, it is still an unacceptably high percentage. A negative view could suggest that after the harassment during their early years’ in the Fire and Rescue Service women firefighters have ‘*chosen*’ to fit themselves in with the male culture and as a consequence are now avoiding harassment. This is not an acceptable situation in any organisation, least of all one that wants to encourage women firefighters for the qualities they may bring to the Fire and Rescue Service.

The focus of harassment and the time it lasts for is an important indicator as to which women firefighters draws the attention of the men who would preserve the Fire and Rescue Service in its current image. The crosstabs for role provide an interesting snapshot that suggest once women leave the ground floor and seek promotion the more likely they are to be harassed.

## 7. Crosstabs: “Rank/Role” with “Have you ever been bullied/harassed at work”

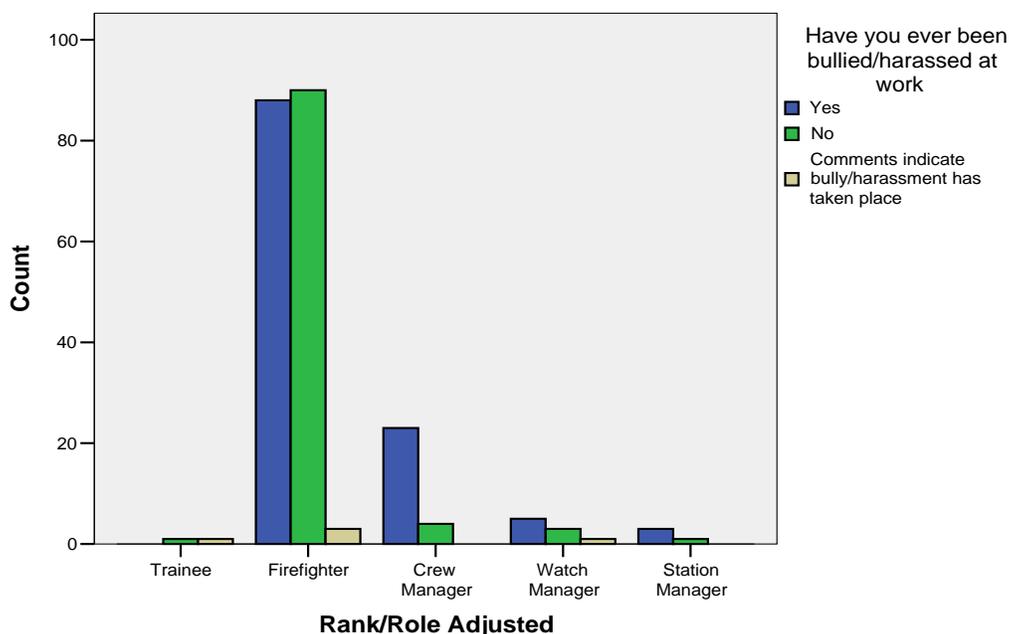
There is a considerable body of evidence to suggest that women who challenge men in the climb up the corporate ladder are more likely to either conform or be harassed (Cockburn 1991; Collinson and Hearn 1996). This data is currently being reviewed with this in mind and further drafts will include a greater analysis. For the moment it is possible to suggest that the Fire and Rescue Service may follow the pattern experienced in the wider world.

## Crosstabs: Rank/Role with Have you ever been bullied/harassed at work

Count

		Have you ever been bullied/harassed at work			Total
		Yes	No	Comments indicate bullying/harassment has taken place	
Rank/Role Adjusted	Trainee	0	1	1	2
	Firefighter	88 (48.6%)	90 (49.7%)	3 (1.7%)	181
	Crew Manager	23 (85.2%)	4 (14.8%)	0	27
	Watch Manager	5 (55.6%)	3 (33.3%)	1 (11.1%)	9
	Station Manager	3 (75.0%)	1 (25.0%)	0	4
Total		119 (53.4%)	99 (44.4%)	5 (2.2%)	223

Bar Chart



## 8. Qualitative data from women firefighters

Numbers are all very well and provide interesting statistics but it is the qualitative remarks that paint in the detail. These answers provide real evidence of the extent and type of harassment that women are enduring in the UK Fire and Rescue Service.

The qualitative data taken from women firefighters is presented at this stage without comment. It may be that in this format it has more impact because the words of the author are always likely to challenge and debate. What women actually say is less likely to this challenge

**Question “What form did this take”**

123 women provided qualitative answers

Being singled out to do difficult tasks on your own when it was group training.

Minor mistakes highlighted and being made a fool of in front of watch.

Colleague making things up to watch about things I did or didn't do on fireground

1st station Ignored. Walked out of rooms etc. 2nd station - physically, verbally, sexually harassed. Inappropriate questions, conversations, magazines, language and comments directed at women while I was around.

A work colleague has not spoken to me in 4 years, except for when I ask a question of them.

Abuse of authority by LF

Abuse of authority from someone temporary acting - he later apologised. Also on going digs and derogatory comments of someone else who has now left

After first year frequently by 4th year rarely after 8 year never - undermining, criticism, exclusion, vicious pranks

Another member of the watch not speaking to me or communicating during drills (different from fire ground) practical "jokes" eggs in shoes wetting me etc.

In the first year just remarks questioning my strength and ability to do the job. But these comments were always made by the same person with an audience not one on one

As a recruit it was verbal and physical and mental, now its mental and verbal and sly and snide and

At training school only - Making an example of me - hard to explain

At training school working as a team that failed a test. Also felt victimised as having long hair, It's acceptable for women but not the men. Male ff complained and referred to me as only female ff on station at time. Had various run-in with same ff at my station.

Be-littling, sexual innuendo, preventing attending courses, shouting, swearing, threatening behaviour, being told I was not putting my career in front of my family and this was wrong, threat of no promotion because I was a mum, intimidation, telling colleagues how I was no longer competent at directing courses, being prevented from transferring to another department.

Being ignored, no one riding the appliances with me. Ignorant comments. Unwanted comments.

Being isolated

Being lied to by instructors and make to feel inadequate and close to losing my job.

Being put down ability questioned behind my back

Being told I was useless and a waste of space if anyone spoke to me at all.

Both myself and another two female colleagues being treated differently by our station manager who used his power to try to make our lives difficult / unsettled. He even tried to ruin \*\*\*\*\* someone's friendship and was even dangerous in some of his demands.

Bullying, exclusion, physical, sexual

But have felt uncomfortable at times.

Comment about height / size / hair

Comments about female intelligence from my crew manager.

Comments about my body and my sex life.

Comments, being grabbed, many rumours spread. Probably small things really but on top of each other it adds up.

Comments, advances, lack of involvement.

Comments, gossip, rumours (but only subtly, nothing majorly concerning and possibly unintentional) attitudes (sexist remarks)

Demeaning, embarrassing, undermining, sexist comment, physical forcefulness.

During training course (initial recruits) one recruit in particular refused to work with me on drills. I believe this was entirely because I'm female.

Excluded socially being made to feel I had problem with physical strength. Being ganged up on by watch!

Exclusion - Nasty comments

Exclusion by a certain group within the watch.

Exclusion from conversations, jokes social events etc. - Sexual innuendos - "Practical Jokes" - pissing in fire boots

Exclusion from social activities, recreation activities, TV room etc. Expected to do all kitchen duties - Completed teasing when I went for my Leading Firefighter's pt 2 exam

Extra work, lectures, pointless tasks

Forced to have long hair cut off. Sexually harassed by instructor, told was useless, excluded, talked about

General niggly comments - was stopped doing voluntary work with young firefighters (fire cadets) Spoke to individual concerned without success. Spoke to 2 Leading Firefighter to get advice then spoke to station commander

Generally piss taking. Not of myself but of member of my family. I could have handled it if they were taking the piss out of me.

Gossip and lies about my work. Time off which with the seriousness of had to be investigated by senior officers (not my watch I was on)

Harassment by a senior manager

I am now on a different watch - non communication - no one spoke to me around station unless slagging me off. Humiliation - constantly during training and in front of others

I do feel that on three occasions I was bullied by someone in a higher position than me. This bullying has been a quiet form in so much as I would be given menial tasks to do - hoovering and polishing !!! , and when promoted to sub in a dept - sorting out leaflet cupboards and basic admin work that should have been carried out by the admin assistant for the dept !

I experienced an older member of the watch telling me everything I did was wrong, even things I knew to be correct. He would make up lies of things I had done wrong and told the

rest of the watch, laughing at me, so all the others thought I was Incompetent. He also insisted on working with me all the time so I didn't get a chance to prove myself.

I had one inappropriate comment on one work night out but that's all and has never happened again as was addressed

I have an annoying person on my watch who dishes out unnecessary comments, but that is just his way, and if you take the trouble to notice, he does it to quite a lot of people – If it became a problem, I would confront him

I have had my ups and downs with some people (men) but don't feel I would call it bullying or harassment but a different opinion

I was excluded from a watch holiday everyone was Invited except me. It was Instigated by one person who was very Influential on certain member so the watch.

I was harassed and singled out my management over a couple of issues that they didn't agree with.

I was humiliated at the station's exams dinner with bullying and sexual harassment

Ignoring me, mocking me, not including me in social events

In as many forms as you can imagine. It now only occasionally happens by way of comments from senior management/other firefighters when I bump into them (note never my current watch)

Intimidation

Isolation, put down, doing more than others, ridicule

It was more like sexual discrimination he was not happy that I had opinions and I want afraid to view them when I thought he was wrong I would tell him. He didn't like that, he didn't like being challenged, especially by a woman.

Just practical jokes being taken too far. They didn't because it was getting to me

Letters to my home - Drawings of obscene nature inside my locker - Personal property tampered with.

Mainly from middle management.

Mainly sexual and mainly behind my back unless they were drunk - so I stopped going out

Making comments about my work/checking my work (not others). Trying to make me look stupid at Christmas having to do all out duties and changing acting up so someone can have my accommodation.

Making up stories that were untrue. What they don't know about you they make up. Embarrassing you in front of everyone about personal matters around the mess table. Going too far about personal relationships.

Mentally, always finding fault with my work, exercises giving me no encouragement. Not a nice working environment.

Moved off station

N/A

Name calling - TRAINING school - being humiliated.

Name calling. Refuse to speak to me directly. Would walk out of the room If I entered. Threw kit at me. Wouldn't take weight on ladders etc. So It was harder for me. Made me look stupid as much as possible.

Nasty sarcasm and intimidating behaviour

Not giving me support, blaming me for certain mistakes during my probation

Not talking, verbal abuse intimidation, humiliation. Wives coming to station to verbally abuse me!

Not within fire service

Officer picking me out all the time and belittling me, would not talk o me.

One of the watch officers just took a dislike to me and tried to make me look stupid all the time.

One person persistently picking on minor things said or done (not always work related) and giving lots of mouth about It.

One person who doesn't like me being there ignores me, makes sure I'm not included or generally rude

Only when I was a junior officer/act up. Men being difficult over basic everyday tasks. As a if

Ostracised at first station. But not necessarily because of being a woman. Then more serious problems in year 2 - allegations of performance, not allowed to be team member

Physical and verbal abuse, interfering with breathing apparatus equipment ostracism

Pornographic material left about. Management were piss poor at dealing with it so have been sick (due to service) for 6 months.

Sexual - Verbal

Sexual as well as verbal e.g. set light to the female toilet, spat on.

Sexually assaulted and verbally bullied.

Singled out - Picked on.

Slandorous comments (stopped) immediately with put downs to make those saying them look stupid it stopped when they realised I wasn't an easy target.

Snide comments i.e. sexist. Treated differently and picked on. Male prejudice against women. All above verbal nothing physical

Soakings. being held down on the floor and bin emptied on me. Being asked about my sex life. Personal comments about my body in front of other watches/public. Female toilet always dirty.

Sometimes at training school - undermined me by doing difficult jobs. caused lack of confidence

Tend to pick on lots of people but particularly me because I was quite quiet. The more he tried to make me louder /more confident the more quiet he made me. He just was poor at man management skills

The persistent use of women's dorm, shower and toilet facilities by male firefighters when on stand by. - To have to ask to use the women's dorm and usually have to ask a male firefighter

to move out of it when on stand by. - To have to share the women's toilet with the males on the station (exception of home station) as this is usually situated conveniently to either.

The Sub O on my previous watch was a unable to allocate any responsibility to me because I was a new JO. He is terrible at man-management anyway but I found it very condescending

The usual (at the time) for a new recruit - more of a test of personality than malicious treatment

There was a sub at another station who has been known to bully and wasn't very ice when I was on outduties at his station but id didn't take his shit!!!

Training school putting me down in front of others, laughing at me undermining me. Now if I go to other stations I get comments slagging off women in fire service from some Individuals.

Undermining confidence in my abilities, deliberately being \*\*\*\*\*

Undermining me. Sexual

Undermining self esteem to urinating in fireboots

Unwanted advances/attention from male colleague

Verbal - Sarcasm - Stoppage of voluntary work

Verbal

Verbal abuse - Emotional and mental abuse.

Verbal abuse, treated as a sub-standard even though I had gained top marks in all training activities

Verbal and mental. in front of others to humiliate

Verbal and sometimes physical

Verbal around the mess table - Giving out duties for tasks - Super gluing my locks on several occasions to my washroom and dormitory - messing in my toilet.

Verbal attacks and abuses, bullying verbal harassment

Verbal bullying / covert

Verbal harassment

Verbal Mickey taking

Verbal sexual at \*\*\*\*\*. Jut verbal humiliation since and now that I feel stronger in myself I don't take it anymore

Verbal taunts, physical touching to test the boundaries and psychological games

Verbal, buckets of water

Verbal, hiding fire kit, making me \*\*\*\* at job etc.

Verbal, inappropriate sexual comments, exclusion and questions about the capabilities of female firefighters. Certain newspaper articles undermining female ff / pornographic magazines placed around station.

Verbal, physical attacks

Verbal, pictures through locker, being ignored/excluded despite asking a person something directly.

Verbal. Not talking to me. Talking behind my back.

Verbally, being singled out, and made to work harder than others and in front of other stating firefighters

Verbally, sexually. I got ignored, I was made to feel stupid, I wasn't included in discussions/tasks

Verbally.

Was made to feel completing training would be impossible due to my size. Was told so. Was given "H & S" reports when dealing with large equipment for the first time and told I'd be sacked if happened again. Eventually \*\*\*\*\*.

Wasn't spoken to for hours. Sat on own. Put down and belittled. Confidence was shattered and ability questioned

Watch manager turned nasty when I put in for a transfer

Water down the pole for good soaking, name calling, swearing, intimidation, making fun of, power trips, shouted at.

Went to watch manager / Leading Firefighter, they already new, then senior management

What form did this take All through my first two years, one person Ignored me, would do anything he could not to work with me, would walk out of any room I walked Into. Another person refused to work In the kitchen with me. I generally felt on my own and that people were ganging up on me though being careful not to make anything look too obvious in case they got into trouble

Words - physical putdowns, ability to do job

**Question “How did you deal with it and was it successful”**

123 women provided qualitative comments

In the first Instance I tackled it head on and it was somewhat successful. However I was promoted soon after so that alleviated the problem. The second time our Deputy Chief officer noticed and sorted it out. I also went to see him informally about the situation and again he dealt with it. Again I moved to another dept.

I ignored him right back then changed watch.

Advice from women's committee and help from other watch members sorted it

After being quite upset I had a chat with my watch manager, then approached the main instigator and asked him what his problem was we chatted together which resulted in \*\*\*\*\*

Am leaving as I have too much of it

As a firefighter I ignored him, he gave up. As a junior officer I got pregnant, so demoted and moved, so didn't have to deal with it!

At a watch meeting I just asked them to have a bit more respect - treat me as they would want guys to treat their wives/girl friends/daughters. They were all so shocked - I got an apology

At first - said nothing and got on with the jobs. Now - Make it clear that I consider ok or not and have regular watch debates to share view points

\*\*\*\*\* All Involved disciplined to varying degrees - However, I feel not successful - taught them how not be caught.

Confronted him, eventually.

Confronted the individual.

Confronted the LF and he realised he was in the wrong and so apologised. Also talked to a senior member of the watch about it and that helped me deal with it

Confronted, got more training leading to promotion

Cried a lot \*\*\* wondered why I had joined the job. Got very low about it. Felt low, lonely so didn't deal with it . Didn't want to go to work. Dealing with it causes more grief and Isolation

Deal by keeping quiet. Crying in the toilets. Not successful as still dealing with the damage now.

Dealt with it badly

Dealt with it myself as I didn't want it to stop my career development

Did not deal with most of It - not worth It.

Did nothing.

Didnt say antying official for a while then all came out

Discussed with colleagues, followed by watch manger, then discussed it directly with person who was harassing

Eventually applied for another job and left he watch.

FBU helped me take it to ACFO who was very helpful and agreed I had been unfairly treated.

Gave up trying to get on with him. In meantime unbeknown to me, rest of watch told him to leave me alone. Ease off. He moved station soon after.

Got promotion. Developed confidence and determination and would jump on any similar events now and have done successfully

Had a row with one colleagues which was heard and dealt with by officers. Other verbal I walk away and ignore. If I answer back you are paid back.

He moved watches. Yes it stopped. And I refuse to work with him again.

I'd have to summarise. Having put up with horrific bullying for years - some major discrimination form the station commander was the last straw. My official complaint was not picked up for a year until they got fed up of me nagging - then a joke of an investigation that failed to comply with any policy or procedure we had - found that the officer was not discriminating but 'incompetent at treating people equally' as it saved on paperwork - no acting or re-training was given. As to bullying the brigade would not hear it or recognise it and I had a senior officer put in writing to me that they were not obligated to do anything about it and were not willing to 'put any resources' to such a complaint to date no action was ever taken. \*\*\*\*\* County Council (when this was highlighted to them by me) looked into it and in their own words "If I have any future complaints I can bypass the Brigade Complaints procedure and go straight to them, as complaining to the Fire Brigades would be a waste of

time. At training school I plucked up the courage to complain if you have seen the film "Full Metal Jacket" I was private Pile who was bullied to the point of insanity and ended up killing the instructor. I complained about severe bullying, harassment intimidation and exclusion from one officer in particular. I was told by the Deputy Chief (now Chief) that if I withdraw my complaint I would not get the sack. I was taken off the run and hidden behind a desk for 6 weeks, with compulsory counselling. The officer in question was transferred and promoted. Why I have no respect for the senior management I can't imagine.

I'm nice to him!! NO I think he hates me even more because he thinks he's not having an effect on me.

I spoke to friends on the watch and one particular Lf. After he couldn't make a difference he suggested the governor who was very good and we spoke to FBU rep together. We sorted it out. In the end the sub moved to another station off his own back.

I asked for comments to stop and I removed offending articles. It made me feel isolated and unpopular. I had support from some male colleagues, but this was never given in front of other members of the watch.

I confronted him and spoke to others who made him feel like an idiot.

I confronted him with it saying I was capable of more than he was giving me credit for. He did improve his attitude towards me but when I see him at incidents now he is still the same but he's like it with every JO

I didn't

I didn't deal with it I put up with it

I didn't deal with it until it became official and was taken out of my hands. I suppose some would say it was successful

I didn't. Not successfully

I didn't/haven't deal with it.

I eventually had to seek management's help after my OIC failed to deal with problem and actually made things worse for me.

I got my transfer one month later

I got the union involved and both times won my case

I had to have a stand up row about his comments and behaviour and then he shuts up. It was successful but occasionally it happens again and we have to have a row again.

I ignored it and proved them wrong and yes very successful

I just got up and shouted him one day and it never happened again.

I keep strong minded and don't let it affect me but I find it hard not to be intimidated and lose a bit of confidence sometimes.

I let it go and didn't do anything about it.

I like to say my bit and keep my head down weather the storm where needed and prove them wrong

I made a complaint - no it wasn't successful. The officer got promoted not demoted. I then made a further grievance for the outcomes of the investigation. This is still ongoing.

I moved stations yes it was successful but I very nearly quit the brigade because I was so unhappy

I requested a change of watch from the stn commander. I refused to name names, This was successful, as I didn't get anyone punished.

I spoke to a sub at training centre who escalated it to the station manager. As it was ground to a head in the last week of the course nothing came of it.

I told management their reply was to just get on. FBU supported me (moved station and the issues were not dealt with). This was a long time ago.

I transferred stations

I wanted to leave until I got in touch with union

I wanted to resign. I thought that it wasn't worth suffering and using my marbles.

I was moved station didn't want to take it any further. Officer still occasionally visit me to see if I'm OK

If it became a problem I would confront him

Ignored it and let them get over it. Rise above it.

Ignored it most of the time. Things improved eventually.

Ignored it, reciprocated, turned to watch manager, transferred.

Ignoring them

Just kept myself to myself. Put in for transfer got moved to another bully. Grew up started to talk back stick up for myself (that worked!)

Just kept on going in the hope that I would eventually be accepted. tried to laugh off the humiliation jibes

Just put up with it and eventually stops

Kept quiet for 3.5 years then went to Station Officer and spilt the beans. Also told my ADO and senior management. something I was told never to do, it must stay on the watch!!

Kept quite until I win some of the men round - it was successful.

Laughed it off at first, then fought back - told them to stop. soaked them. Told officer of watch every time the female loo was left in state in writing.

Looked for support from watch officers - they did not support me. Dealt with it 6 years later when I found a manager who did support me.

Moved station - yes

Moved station and watch

Moved stations - Yes

Moved watches to promotion, swore it would never happen again, spoke up against confrontation it made me stronger

My Stn O sat on the fence. He didn't want to side with his lf, or his sub o. It was then brought to attention of ADO (station manager) he couldn't deal with it so "went to DO level". He told me "just get on within it" and "forget it"

N/A

NA

no it wasn't successful. I just got moved. I tended to get on with it as I was new to the job and had got a lot of years ahead of me.

Not very well - shook it off and tried to show that it didn't phase me. Also went to loo to cry if needed to so that they didn't see. On occasions where I did speak out, if done well it could improve the situation (one on one is best)

On a watch night out after copious amounts of alcohol I broke the Individuals jaw In 2 places and funnily enough no-one ever tried It again

Ongoing

Played along - and yes

Proved my innocence also was seriously injured and was off for nearly 1 year by the time I came back they seemed to have got bored.

Put up with it until I could transfer - I have been lucky with my new watch.

Put up with it for several years then finally lost it - was successful in the long run

Re hair - My line manager got Involved and It escalated beyond all proportions (against my wishes). Eventually brigade order were amended to Include that men could have long hair.

Reported - took out grievance not successful

Reported it, Grievance etc. Finally successful but only because I pushed at every turn. Not happy with way it went at all.

Saw line manager, then watch and station manager, preceding this got very low and keep calling in sick to avoid 1 other firefighter.

See above made it worse. In the end (I'm not proud of this - I didn't sanction it) my boyfriend threatened him and told him to stop (had been over two years).

Sexist comments. Lack of respect

Some comments I have ignored and others I have challenged as being unprofessional.

Some other person from another stating complained

Some was ignored and (In my first 4 years) It stopped when they got no reaction. Some I spoke to another firefighter who then spoke to harasser. Yes this worked.

Speaking to fellow colleague

Spoke to a colleague who was well respected on the watch, he gave me endless encouragement and support which changed how I felt about the bully. The environment continued to be a very negative place to work though and I found constantly challenging it ver

Spoke to a colleague, who I think wanted to h help but not get involved. Advice was to confront the individual. After doing the bullying and harassment was far less

Spoke to colleagues and FBU. Colleagues were supportive FBU weren't particularly supportive. Was not successful problem went when the person left.

Spoke to female union rep

Spoke to individual - Spoke to ADO - Spoke to 2 Lff - The individual has changed since

Spoke to individual concerned - without success. Spoke to 2 LF's to get advice then spoke to station commander

Spoke to the people involved and yes it was successful.

Still ongoing really nowhere to turn to as not sure who to trust and not sure anything can/will be done!

Support from other colleague, confronted male in question. He changed watch of his own accord with apologies for treatment. All amicable now.

Tackled on own - Discussed with other female firefighters / friends.

Talking and patience. I would do it different now

The person was spoken to - was not a big deal

The person who ignored me, was not happy to have mediation so he got away with it until he transferred onto another watch. The person who wouldn't go into the kitchen with me was warned by my watch manager and we had mediation which helped a lot

There are a lot of dominant and mean characters don't let them get away with it. Men cannot cope with being put down or humiliated in front of their work colleagues - make fun of them.

Those culprits recently have had some minor repercussions for me I add another layer to my thick skin.

Told them to their faces after I could stand no more, after no problem! Some people don't know they are bullying they believe it's fun

Transferred to another station did not report it

Tried to ignore it - then sub o has to speak to the person which was then successful

Tried to ignore it and carry out my duties as normal

Tried to ignore it but eventually it grates and grates till you don't want to turn up for work.

Tried to ignore so it went away. Sometimes it works other times it didn't.

Tried to learn all I could, so better knowledge gave me confidence avoided person where possible - not totally successful

Tried to move, it was allowed then stopped by my union. unable to talk to my watch so went to senior management who handled it badly then on return to work after being off with stress I was punished for my actions

Went along with the flow. I now know better

Went to line manager initially, who just laughed. It did not stop, so it resulted in me transferring brigades

Went to seek advice, attempted to ignore it and get on with job and being me. To some extent things are better but some people will never change.

Went to watch manager he sorted it, now the guy is not speaking to me but that's better than what I was taking from him

When I got friendly with some members of the watch and his behaviour was becoming out of hand, I eventually told the others. They believed me as they had seen the situation unfolding. One of them challenged him and fortunately they all took my side. He has now left the watch

Wrote a report to watch manager. Was dealt with on station so perpetrators didn't lose their jobs. I wanted them to realise how serious it was but I wouldn't want them to lose job - however if they do it again I'm prepared to go all the way.

**Question: *If you did nothing about it why was this?***

61 women responded qualitatively

As above

As the situation would not have gone away if I made an issue of it, would have dragged on longer

At first thought it would stop then the next 'buck' came in. Some of it did.

Avoid extra hassle and also word would spread that the woman was causing trouble not that the man was a bully and then no one would feel ok working with me.

Because back then you didn't do that!

Because I feel the last world all support one another and I would feel very much alone.

Because I thought at the time I had to keep my mouth shut! or I would be a trouble maker.

Challenging sometimes made it worse, no support from junior officers

Due to the backlash and stigma that would be with me through out my career

Due to the fact others said when training is finished it will stop and every recruit goes through it. I was told I'd be classed the same as all the other women who have complained

Fear of further reprisals

Fear of making situation worse.

Felt management already knew but wanted to use me. I was continually asked if there were problems I wasn't prepared to be labelled trouble maker.

Felt vulnerable and too alone to be able to deal with harassers

Had no where to go at time, felt very vulnerable as a recruit

I desperately loved my job and would do anything to keep it!

I did but I didn't take it higher and with the other guy who always put me down - I just used to do my best to stick up for myself and make out he didn't get to me - didn't want him to think he'd won

I didn't push anything because I didn't want to look like a "grass" I now regret not pushing It further because I was unhappy for two years.

I didn't report it initially as I was new and also confused if some things were correct procedures. Was also unaware of all procedure/options available to me (back then)

I didn't want the fuss or attention It brought.

I don't like confrontation.

I hoped it would calm down a bit and it did

I knew I was going. I did not want to then create a scene, as men were already making up rumours about "women getting their own way" etc

I knew there would be a detrimental effect to my career. Rumours would be spread and stick with me.

I left it at that. I had to work this horrible man for a year before I successfully got my transfer out.

I never reported it it was not bothering me greatly just an ignorant man trying to make him look big. He soon went away

I tried to deal with it and accept it was part of a male dominated environment (and possibly I was being girly sensitive)

I wanted to be accepted - eventually moved to theory watch to cover shortfalls - asked to stay

I was naive and didn't realise what was happening until later and it was too late. However, I wouldn't have done anything anyway being new and afraid of getting a reputation.

I was worried that I would be labelled a trouble maker and this would blight my career.

I wish I had done nothing

I wouldn't take action again - as I said It went all official and things got worse.

If anything was said the piss taking would have increased 10 fold

Initially because each individual incident seemed too small

It did take a while to speak up but that's because I never believe people are being horrid on purpose. It was other watch members that said it needed sorting out because I got so quiet and they couldn't see why the sub o was being unfair.

it didn't affect me seriously enough to worry - in fact I was happy to be treated the same as others

It immediately singles you out as a "trouble " and therefore isolates you even more

It would make life at work more difficult

Makes life harder

More trouble than worth when trying to fit in and is not affecting me that much.

N/A

NA

No faith In support from line managers. Watch Manager witnessed one Incident and did nothing.

No point telling anyone, they'll say its just personality clash

No point. Most people were waiting for you not to be able to handle it.

No trust in the system due to lack of confidence. To new in the job and wanted to be accepted

Not worth age

Person was trying to get a rise bout of me so I didn't react and he got bored.

Since [training school] I did nothing as you are seen to be a trouble maker no one wants

Sometimes it easier to ignore immature comments. Sometimes its easier to extinguish a fire than to add fuel!!

Talked to the people involved and my watch manager. The atmosphere was strained on the watch for a while

The abuse you get back or if you go to an officer everyone find out and your looked on as a trouble maker

The culture of the fire service is get on with it, we had to endure it, being scared of failing not being able to put up with it.

There was no need to blow anything out of proportion

They were testing to see my limits. For a long time I did nothing. I was fresh in the door didn't want to be the trouble they expected me to be. It was the fire brigade banter

Tried everything.

Used to nothing - who would have listened in 1983?

Wanted to fit in

Went to FBU rep- but he was the biggest sexist man I have ever met!

When I finally mad a comment to my line manager he accused me of having a relationship with that person - which I didn't.

When this happened I was on my own.

## 9. Conclusion

There has not been much comment on this data – it probably speaks for itself. Where there has been a need to interpret this has been done with care so as to not disrupt the message by providing an opportunity for cynics to critique the author. There is one single message from these findings and this suggests that women who become firefighters have a very bad time. The majority are bullied and other data suggests that many of these leave; if this data was available it would make the current findings even more difficult for the Fire and Rescue Service.

This paper will be further developed and comments are appreciated

If you have anything that you would like published on the fitting-in website then contact me

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