

Street Harassment

Street Harassment involves non-consensual behaviors and actions forced upon a stranger. It is based in power and control and is often a manifestation of discrimination. People can be harassed for their race, gender, religion, ability, or sexuality. Street harassment is a policing behavior that limits someone's access to public spaces, leads individuals to stay on guard when they are alone, and even causes some to move or change jobs to avoid the behavior.

"Street harassment includes unwanted whistling, leering, sexist, homophobic or transphobic slurs, persistent requests for someone's name, number or destination after they've said no, sexual names, comments and demands, following, flashing, public masturbation, groping, sexual assault, and rape."¹

How prevalent is street harassment?

In 2019, the UC San Diego's Center for Gender Equity and Health and Stop Street Harassment led a nationally representative survey of 1,182 women and 1,037 men regarding sexual harassment and violence.²

This study found:

- **81%** of women and **43%** of men experienced some form of sexual harassment or assault in their lifetime.
- **Verbal comments are the most commonly experienced form of sexual harassment.**
 - **76%** of women and **43%** of men reported experiencing verbal sexual harassment.
 - Of the female respondents, **49%** had been groped, **27%** had been followed, and **30%** had been flashed.
- **Sexual harassment was most frequently experienced in public spaces** (e.g. parking lot, street, store, etc.) by **68%** of women and **23%** of men.
- **Men and women within marginalized groups are more likely to experience sexual harassment.**
 - **35%** of Black women and **39%** of lesbian or bisexual women were harassed within the last 6 months.
 - Of the female respondents, those with disabilities or those who identified as lesbian or bisexual were more likely to be harassed compared to straight women without disabilities.
 - Of the male respondents, men with disabilities, men living below the poverty line, and men who identify as gay or bisexual were more likely to be harassed.
- **Of those who experienced sexual harassment, strangers were listed as the most frequent perpetrators.**

What can we do?

When you witness or experience street harassment, there is no right way to respond, but consider:

- Intervening when someone else is being harassed. Use the 5D's to intervene:³
 - **Directly** address the behavior by confronting the abuser and letting them know their behavior is unacceptable or checking-in with the target
 - **Delegate** by bringing in others to help
 - **Distract** to de-escalate the situation with a random conversation or by causing a disruption
 - **Document** by recording or noting the details of the incident
 - **Delay** by checking in afterwards with the person who was harassed.
- Consider reporting to your employer, Title IX Office, or local police or transit authority.

Preventing street harassment before it starts:

- Educate youth and our peers about appropriate and respectful ways to interact in public.
- Raise awareness that street harassment is a problem through sharing stories and providing education on effective prevention and intervention.

To learn more, visit the websites for **Stop Street Harassment** (<https://stopstreetharassment.org/strategies/moment>) and **Right to Be** (<https://righttobe.org>).

¹What is Street Harassment? (2015). Stop Street Harassment. Retrieved October 26, 2021, from <https://stopstreetharassment.org/about/what-is-street-harassment/>

²Measuring #MeToo: A National Study on Sexual Harassment and Assault (2019). UC San Diego Center on Gender Equity and Health. Retrieved October 26, 2021, from <https://gehweb.ucsd.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/2019-metoo-national-sexual-harassment-and-assault-report.pdf>

³The 5Ds of Bystander Intervention (n.d.). Right to Be. Retrieved May 9, 2022, from <https://righttobe.org/guides/bystander-intervention-training>