

Street Harassment

Street Harassment involves behaviors and actions forced upon a stranger in public without the stranger's permission or consent. Individuals who harass others in this way usually want to feel in control by making people feel powerless and afraid. People can be harassed for their race, gender, religion, ability, or sexuality. Fear of street harassment can cause people to be highly aware of their surroundings and might even stop them from visiting places or spaces that are important or necessary to them. People who face street harassment may even move or change jobs to avoid unwanted 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 common is street harassment?

A 2024 survey collected responses from 1,785 women and 1,515 men regarding sexual harassment and violence.² The study found that:

- **82%** of women and **42%** of men reported ever experiencing sexual harassment or assault.
- **73%** of women and **24%** of men experienced sexual harassment or assault in a public space (examples of a public space include a street, park, beach, store, restaurant, mall, library, movie theater, museum, swimming pool, or gym).
- Both verbal sexual harassment and physically aggressive sexual harassment in public places are the most common forms of sexual harassment for both men and women.
- Respondents were most likely to report experiencing sexual harassment in a public space compared to other locations.
- Individuals from marginalized groups are more at risk of experiencing sexual harassment of any kind:
 - **79%** of gender non-conforming respondents reported experiencing sexual harassment or assault.
 - Hispanic respondents were more likely to report experiencing more threatening and aggressive forms of sexual harassments and sexual assault.

What can we do?

When you witness or experience street harassment there is no one 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 ease 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.

Prevent 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 November 14, 2025, from <https://stopstreetharassment.org/about/what-is-street-harassment/>

²#MeToo 2024: A National Study on Sexual Harassment and Assault (2024). Newcomb Institute. Tulane University. Retrieved November 14, 2025 from <https://newcomb.tulane.edu/content/metoo-research>

³The 5Ds of Bystander Intervention (n.d.). Right to Be. Retrieved November 14, 2025, from <https://righttobe.org/guides/bystander-intervention-training>