



FACT SHEET: Sexual Harassment

What is Street Harassment?

Street harassment is a form of harassment, primarily sexual harassment that consists of unwanted comments, gestures, horn-honking, whistling, cat-calling, exposure, following, persistent sexual advances, and touching by strangers in public areas such as streets, shopping malls, and public transportation.¹

Who Experiences Street Harassment?

People of all genders experience street harassment but women are much more commonly victims of harassment by men.²

In a survey of 2,000 Americans:

- 65% of women and 25% of men reported having been the victims of street harassment in their lifetime.³
- 41% of women and 16% of men said they had been physically harassed in some way, such as by being followed, flashed, or groped.³
- The perpetrators were lone men in 70% of cases for female victims and 48% of cases for male victims; 20% of men who were harassed were the victims of a lone woman.³

For men, the most common harassment was homophobic or transphobic slurs, followed by unwanted following, then cat-calling and commenting on body parts.³

For women, the most common harassment was cat-calling, followed by comments on body parts, unwanted touching or brushing up against, and then sexual slurs like "bitch" or "slut".³

What is Workplace Sexual Harassment?

Workplace sexual harassment is any conduct, comment, gesture, or contact of a sexual nature that is likely to cause offence or humiliation to any employee; or that might, on reasonable grounds be

¹ Whittaker, Elizabeth; Robin M. Kowalski (2015). Cyberbullying Via Social Media. *Journal of School Violence*. 14(1): 11–29. doi:10.1080/15388220.2014.949377

² Bowman, Cynthia Grant (January 1993). "Street Harassment and the Informal Ghettoization of Women". *Harvard Law Review*. 106: 519.

³ Unsafe and Harassed in Public Spaces (2014). Stop Street Harassment. Retrieved from <http://www.stopstreetharassment.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/2014-National-SSH-Street-Harassment-Report.pdf>

perceived by that employee as placing a condition of a sexual nature on employment or on any opportunity for training or promotion.⁴

Who Experiences Workplace Sexual Harassment?

People of all genders can be sexually harassed by others at work. Using data from the 2016 General Social Survey on Canadians at Work and Home⁵, over a one year period:

- 19% of women and 13% of men reported that they had experienced sexual harassment in their workplace. This included verbal abuse, humiliating behavior, threats, physical violence, and unwanted sexual attention or sexual harassment.
- The most common type of workplace harassment was verbal abuse which was reported by 13% of women and 10% of men.
- Women were more likely to report sexual harassment in the workplace (4%) than men (1%).
- Among women who reported sexual harassment, more than half were targeted by clients or customers.
- Workers in health occupations are most likely to report having been harassed on the job.

In a 2020 survey of a representative sample of Albertans by Leger Marketing Inc.⁶ found that:

- 22% of Albertans had been sexually harassed by someone at work;
- 24% of Albertans had witnessed sexual harassment at work;
- 42% of Albertans had heard about sexual harassment at their workplace.

AASAS welcomes your suggestions and recommendations about other relevant Canadian research references that could be included on this handout. Please e-mail us at mailbox@aasas.ca

⁴ Human resources and skills development Canada: Information on Labour Standards –Sexual Harassment https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/canada/employment-social-development/migration/documents/assets/portfolio/docs/en/reports/labour_standards/sexual_harassment/harassment.pdf

⁵ Hango, D. & Moyser, M. (2018). Harassment in Canadian workplaces (Insights on Canadian Society). Statistics Canada.

⁶ Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services Workplace Sexual Harassment Survey (2020). Leger Marketing Inc.