

Rates of sexual harassment and assault still high after #MeToo movement

Mon, 09/16/2024 - 00:01

|

Stacey Plaisance splaisance@tulane.edu

[View PDF](#)



September 16, 2024

Despite heightened awareness and prevention efforts from the #MeToo movement, a new national survey reveals alarmingly high rates of sexual harassment and assault, with many of these incidents happening in public spaces across the United States. The study by the [Newcomb Institute](#) at Tulane University underscores the persistent challenge of combating sexual misconduct beyond the workplace.

[The #MeToo 2024 Report](#) surveyed more than 3,300 U.S. adults over the age of 18 this year and found that most women (82%) and nearly half of all men (42%) have experienced sexual harassment or assault in their lifetime. These abuses often occur as sexual harassment in public spaces, with 73% of women and 24% of men reporting harassment in locations like streets, parks, beaches, gyms, stores, buses or subways.

For the survey, sexual harassment included unwelcomed behavior ranging from “cat-calling” to stalking and unwanted touching in a sexual way. It also assessed sexual assault, which they defined as a forced or coerced sex act.

For many, these incidents begin at a young age, with more than half of women (56%) and 18% of men first experiencing sexual harassment or assault before age 18. Alarmingly, one in five women (20%) first experience sexual harassment or assault before the age of 13 and most often in the form of sexual harassment in public spaces without intervention.

“We have heard about sexual harassment in the workplace, which remains pervasive- affecting more than one in three women, but this report shows us that it is even more pervasive in very public places and commonly is directed toward youth,” said lead study researcher [Anita Raj](#), executive director of Newcomb Institute. “Sure, we as adults know about catcalling and other forms of sexual harassment but children are having to deal with things like this, and it affects their education, ability to move freely, and mental health.”

Despite increased awareness and legislative action in the wake of the #MeToo movement, researchers found no change in the prevalence of sexual harassment since the [last survey in 2018](#). For the first time, the 2024 survey asked about past year experiences and age at first occurrence by type of sexual harassment.

Other key findings from the #MeToo 2024 report include:

- Roughly 1 in 4 U.S. adults (26%), or more than 68 million people, experienced sexual harassment or assault in the past year alone, with significantly higher rates for women (32%) compared to men (15%).
- Non-binary/gender non-conforming (79%) and transgender (87%) individuals reported high lifetime prevalence rates, demonstrating the heightened vulnerability of LGBTQ+ communities.
- Perpetrators are most often strangers for verbal, cyber and physically aggressive harassment, often in public spaces, while sexual assaults more frequently involve known individuals like partners, family members and acquaintances, most often in private spaces like residences or cars.
- Most victims — 87% of women and 89% of men — did not disclose their experiences to anyone, highlighting the need for improved support and accountability systems.

"While attitudes and policies have improved since the start of the #MeToo movement, our latest data shows that sexual harassment and assault remain a pervasive problem across our society with clear social and health impacts on victims," Raj said. "Policies to date have focused on workplace harassment and provide little to no attention to the far more pervasive issue of street harassment and harassment of youth. More urgent action is needed to address this crisis and create a safer environment for all – at work, at school, in our homes and in public spaces."

The full report is available at [here](#).