



Sexual Harassment and Assault in Louisiana:  
Findings from the #MeToo 2024 Survey



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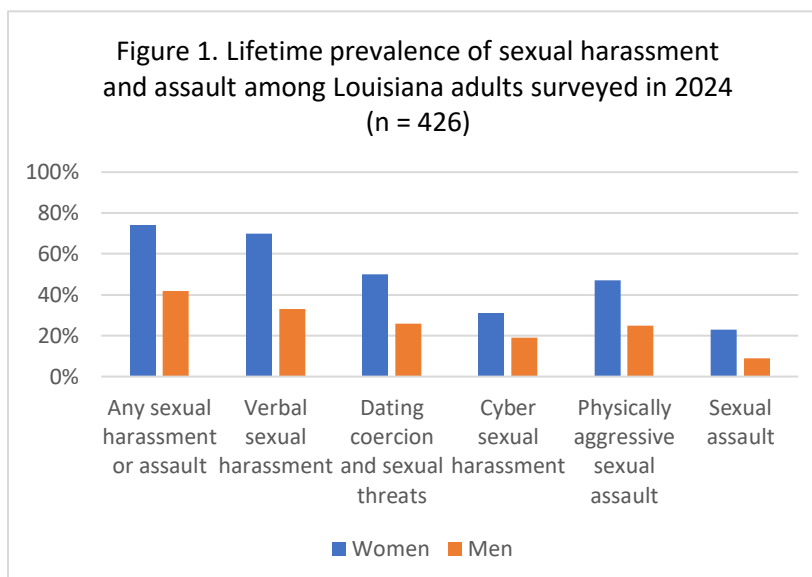
**Objective:** To assess the scope and scale of sexual harassment and assault among adults in Louisiana.

We conducted the #MeToo 2024 survey on sexual harassment and assault using NORC at the University of Chicago’s online panels of U.S. adults with an oversample of participants from four states of focus, California, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas, to allow for state level reports on #MeToo 2024. The cross-sectional survey was conducted from April to May 2024 and provides nationally representative estimates, as well as state representative estimates for our four states of focus, using weights created by NORC. Please see [our #MeToo Survey website](#) for national report findings and methods details. All participants provided informed consent prior to participation; this study was approved by the institutional review boards of NORC at the University of Chicago and Tulane University. The study is unique in capturing a broad range of sexual harassment and assault behaviors in public and private spaces (see Appendix Table 1) for Louisiana adults aged 18+ (N = 426).

### How prevalent is sexual harassment and assault in Louisiana

Almost three in four women (74%) and 42% of men in Louisiana – or over 1.37 million women and over 710,000 men<sup>1</sup> – have experienced some form of sexual harassment or assault in their lifetime.

As shown in Figure 1, while this most often occurs as a form of sexual harassment, some of these forms of sexual harassment are quite severe and include sexual threats and physical aggression. Women are more likely than men to experience all forms of sexual harassment as well as assault. More than one in five women (23%) has experienced sexual assault – defined as forced sex in this study – in her lifetime.



We also examined sexual harassment and assault experiences in the past year and found that 34% of women and 19% of men in Louisiana – or approximately 630,000 women and 325,000 men<sup>1</sup> – reported these types of experiences in just the past year.

### Sexual harassment and assault in public spaces

Most women (62%) and one in four men (25%) have experienced sexual harassment in public spaces (See Table 1). More than one in eight women (13%) have been sexually harassed on public transport, and one in three (36%) have been sexually harassed in a bar or nightclub, compared with 9% and 11% of men who reported

<sup>1</sup> [State population estimates by age and gender](#) indicate that there are 1,851,929 women aged 18+ and 1,699,935 men aged 18+ in the state of Louisiana. We used these estimates to determine the number of women and men affected by sexual harassment and assault, ever and in the past year.

experiences in these types of spaces, respectively. Verbal harassment is the most common form of harassment in these spaces, reported by 60% of women and 21% of men. Over one in four women (28%) reported physically aggressive sexual harassment in public spaces, with almost one in five (19%) reporting having experienced this in a bar or nightclub. Few women and men (1-2%) reported sexual assault in any of these types of spaces.

**Table 1. Sexual harassment in public spaces ever among Louisiana adults (N = 426).**

	Verbal Sexual Harassment		Dating Coercion and Sexual Threats		Physically Aggressive Sexual Harassment		Any form of Sexual Harassment or Assault	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
A public space (like a street, park, beach, store, restaurant, mall, library, movie theater, museum, swimming pool, gym)	60%	21%	20%	9%	28%	13%	62%	25%
Mass transportation systems (bus, subway, metro, train, or airplane)	11%	8%	2%	1%	5%	3%	13%	9%
Nightlife or entertainment venue (like a concert, bar, or club)	30%	9%	11%	6%	19%	4%	36%	11%

### Sexual harassment and assault at work and at school

One in three women (32%) and one in five men (20%) have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace (See Table 2). Further, more than one in four women (29%) and one in eight men (12%) have experienced sexual harassment in school or college (See Table 2). Again, verbal harassment is the most common form of harassment in these spaces. Dating coercion and physically aggressive sexual harassment occur for 10-17% of women in work or at school. We found that <1% of participants reported sexual assault in these spaces.

**Table 2. Lifetime prevalence of sexual harassment in the workplace or at school/college among Louisiana adults (N = 426).**

	Verbal Sexual Harassment		Dating Coercion and Sexual Threats		Physically Aggressive Sexual Harassment		Any form of Sexual Harassment or Assault	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
At your workplace, including temporary jobs and internships	28%	13%	17%	11%	11%	8%	32%	20%
At school or college	27%	9%	10%	8%	9%	5%	29%	12%

### Sexual harassment and assault in private spaces

Among women, more than one in four reported sexual harassment or assault experiences in their home (27%) or in the home of someone they knew (28%), and 15% experienced these types of abuse in a car, either their

own or that of someone known to them (See Table 3). Importantly, these were the spaces that also saw the highest rates of sexual assault for women. One in ten (10%) had been sexually assaulted in their home, one in twelve (8%) had been sexually assaulted in the home of someone they knew, and one in twenty-five had been sexually assaulted in their car or the car of someone they knew.

Among men, 15% had experienced sexual harassment or assault in their home or the home of someone they knew, and 2% reported these types of experiences in a car. Sexual assault was far less likely to be reported by men compared with women in these spaces, but when it did occur, it was more often in someone’s residence.

**Table 3. Sexual harassment in private spaces ever among Louisiana adults (N = 426).**

	Verbal Sexual Harassment		Dating Coercion and Sexual Threats		Physically Aggressive Sexual Harassment		Sexual Assault		Any form of Sexual Harassment or Assault	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Your home or place of residence	16%	12%	23%	9%	12%	8%	10%	1%	27%	15%
Someone else’s home or place of residence	20%	12%	9%	8%	12%	7%	8%	3%	28%	15%
Your car or the car of a person you knew	10%	4%	6%	4%	3%	3%	4%	1%	15%	2%

### Who is causing sexual harm in Louisiana?

We asked participants who reported each of the different types of sexual harassment and assault who did this to them (See Table 4). The major groups that engaged in these abusive behaviors included the following:

**Strangers.** The most commonly reported perpetrator of sexual harassment were strangers, with over half of all women (59%) and one in five of all men (21%) reporting this. Most sexual harassment, particularly verbal sexual harassment, occurs from a stranger. Half of women reported verbal sexual harassment from a stranger (51%), compared with 13% of men. One in three women (32%) reported physically aggressive sexual harassment from a stranger. These findings correspond with the high prevalence of sexual harassment reported in public spaces. One in twenty women in Louisiana and one in fifty men reported sexual assault from a stranger.

**Friends, Acquaintances, and Peers.** Among women, 27% reported sexual harassment or assault from a friend – which we define as an unrelated person they know well, and sexual harassment or assault from an acquaintance was even higher at 40%. Among men, 12% reported sexual harassment or assault from a friend, and 18% reported this abuse from an acquaintance. For men and women, we see that verbal sexual harassment and dating coercion and sexual threats are among the most common forms of sexual harassment reported from a friend or acquaintance. However, 5% and 7% of women reported sexual assault from a friend or acquaintance, respectively, where 1% and 3% of men, respectively, reported this.

We also assessed sexual harassment or assault from teachers, professors, or other authorities at school, and this was reported by the minority of women and men (7% and 6%, respectively), mostly in the form of verbal sexual harassment. Low prevalence of these types of abuses from a teacher or administrator, taken with consideration

of above noted data on the prevalence of sexual harassment at school, suggests that peer sexual harassment in schools may be more likely than that of teachers or administrators.

Bosses and Co-Workers. More than one in nine women (13%) and 9% of men have been sexually harassed or assaulted by a boss, employer, supervisor, or manager. While this was mostly in the form of sexual harassment, it is notable that sexual assaults from a boss or supervisor were more likely to be reported by men (4%) than women (1%). Sexual harassment from co-workers was even more common, reported by 21% of women and 16% of men; sexual assault from co-workers was not commonly reported by women or men.

Family Members: Approximately one in six women (17%) and one in twenty men (6%) have been sexually harassed by a family member or relative. While verbal sexual harassment was the most common, reported by 13% of women and 6% of men, 4% of women reported sexual assault from a family member.

Intimate Partners. One in five women (20%) and almost one in ten men (9%) reported a history of sexual harassment or assault from a current or former spouse or romantic or sexual partner. For women, this most commonly occurs in the forms of verbal sexual harassment (15%) and dating coercion and sexual threats (18%); 6% of women reported that they had been sexually assaulted by a partner in their lifetime.

**Table 3. Relationship to Perpetrator (N = 426).**

	Verbal Sexual Harassment		Dating Coercion and Sexual Threats		Cyber Sexual Harassment		Physically Aggressive Sexual Harassment		Sexual Assault		Any form of Sexual Harassment or Assault	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
<b>Stranger</b>	51%	13%	20%	10%	23%	11%	32%	15%	5%	2%	59%	21%
<b>Acquaintance</b>	32%	14%	24%	10%	14%	8%	17%	9%	7%	3%	40%	18%
<b>Friend</b>	19%	9%	17%	8%	12%	7%	11%	7%	5%	1%	27%	12%
<b>Teacher</b>	6%	3%	2%	4%	<1%	3%	1%	1	<1%	<1%	7%	6%
<b>Boss</b>	10%	6%	6%	7%	3%	3%	5%	7%	1%	4%	12%	9%
<b>Co-worker</b>	15%	14%	9%	8%	5%	7%	8%	6%	2%	1%	21%	16%
<b>Family Member</b>	13%	6%	4%	3%	4%	1%	4%	2%	4%	1%	17%	6%
<b>Partner</b>	15%	5%	18%	9%	8%	5%	6%	5%	6%	1%	20%	9%

**Potential Behavioral and Mental Health Effects of Sexual Harassment**

We asked participants about their current mental health (depression and anxiety), recent substance use (past 30-day binge alcohol use and illicit drug use), and suicidality (thoughts of suicide) in the past year. We then analyzed the prevalence of these by whether or not they experienced sexual harassment or assault in the past year. Past year experiences were largely in the form of sexual harassment. Findings show that past year sexual harassment was significantly associated with behavioral and mental health concerns. (See. Fig 2 and Fig 3.)

Figure 2. Mental Health and Substance Use for those Who Did and Did Not Experience Past Year Sexual Harassment or Assault, U.S. Adult **Women** in Louisiana (wt%\*) (n=255)

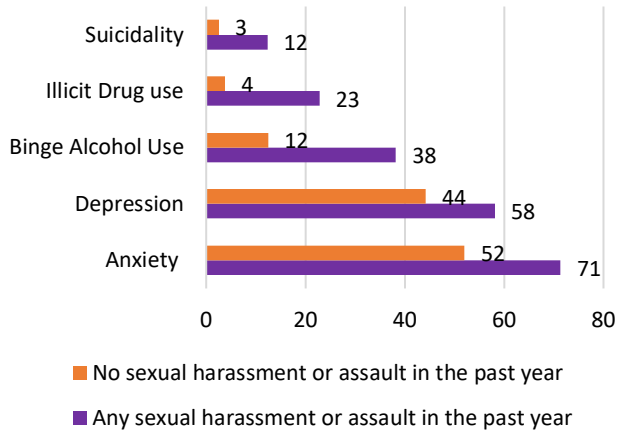
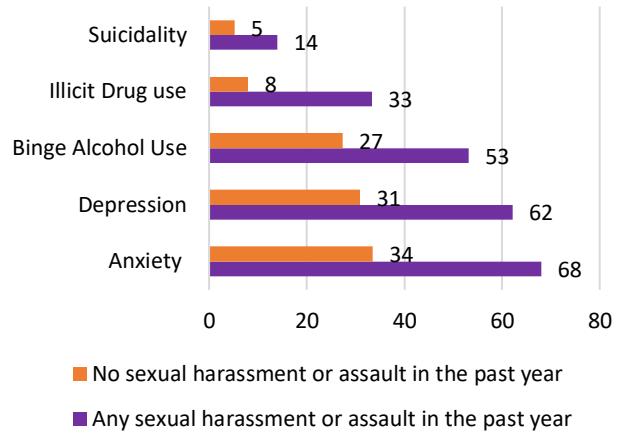


Figure 3. Mental Health and Substance Use for those Who Did and Did Not Experience Past Year Sexual Harassment or Assault, Adult **Men** in Louisiana (wt%\*) (n=163)



## Conclusions

**Sexual violence is pervasive for women and men, especially in the form of sexual harassment.** Over 70% of women and 40% of men in Louisiana – or approximately 1.3 million women and 700,000 men – have experienced some form of sexual harassment or assault in their lifetime. 34% of women and 19% of men in Louisiana – or over 600,000 women and 300,000 men – reported these types of experiences in just the past year.

**Sexual harassment is most often occurring in public spaces, most often from strangers** and secondarily from acquaintances. While verbal sexual harassment is most common, sexual threats and physically aggressive sexual harassment are not uncommon, and these too are often occurring in public spaces.

**Sexual harassment is also occurring in our workplaces and schools.** While this appears to be more at the hands of peers than those in an authority position, regardless of who is engaging in these abuses, they are likely compromising academic and employee productivity.

**Sexual assault is largely occurring in private places and perpetrated by someone known to the person who has experienced the assault.** Women are more likely than men to have experienced a sexual assault. Among women who have experienced sexual assault, an acquaintance or partner are the most common abusers, and the assault most often occurred in their own residence. Men who reported sexual assault are most likely to say it occurred at the hands of boss/supervisor or acquaintance and in someone else's residence.

**Sexual harassment is associated with higher risk for depression and anxiety, substance misuse, and suicidality.** Too often, sexual harassment is viewed as benign or even funny, but it is harming people's health and lives.

**We can change this situation.** We have to encourage people to recognize what behaviors constitute sexual harassment and that these kinds of abuses are harmful, making it difficult for people to feel safe in public spaces, at work, and at school. We also need accountability structures for those committing these harms.

If you or someone you know has experienced sexual harassment or assault and would like help, you can call the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 800.656. HOPE (4673) or chat online at [online.rainn.org](https://online.rainn.org).

**Appendix Table 1. Sexual Harassment and Assault Items and Variables**

<p><b>VERBAL SEXUAL HARASSMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Someone whistling, honking, making kissy noises, “Pssst” sounds, or leering/staring aggressively at you.</li> <li>Someone saying things like, “Hey Baby,” “Mmmm Sexy,” “Yo Shorty,” “Mami/Mamacita,” “Give me a smile,” or similar comments in a way that is disrespectful and/or unwanted and/or made you feel unsafe.</li> <li>Someone calling you a sexist slur, like “Bitch,” “Slut,” “Cunt,” or “Whore”.</li> <li>Someone purposefully misgendering you or calling you a homophobic or transphobic slur, like “Fag,” “Dyke,” or “Tranny.”</li> <li>Someone talking about your body parts inappropriately or offensively (such as your legs, crotch, butt, or breasts), saying sexually explicit comments (“I want to do BLANK to you”) or asking inappropriate sexual questions.</li> </ul> <p><b>CYBER SEXUAL HARASSMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Someone sending you sexual content without your permission, sexualizing you inappropriately, or threatening you with sex acts, in <i>private online spaces</i>, such as over e-mail or text.</li> <li>Someone sending you sexual content without your permission, sexualizing you inappropriately, or threatening you with sex acts, in <i>public online spaces</i>, such as on social media.</li> <li>Someone taking and/or sharing sexual pictures or videos of you without your permission.</li> </ul>	<p><b>DATING COERCION OR SEXUAL THREATS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Someone making threats to harm you, to harm someone you know, or to share personal information you don’t want shared (examples could include your sexual orientation or drug use history or immigration status).</li> <li>Someone saying you must date them or do a sexual act for them in exchange for something (such as a good grade, a promotion, a job, drugs, food, or something similar) or instead of something (like paying rent or a citation, etc).</li> <li>Someone repeatedly texting or calling you in a harassing way.</li> <li>Someone repeatedly asking you for a date or your phone number when you’ve said no or ignored them.</li> </ul> <p><b>PHYSICALLY AGGRESSIVE SEXUAL HARASSMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Someone flashing or exposing their genitals to you without your permission.</li> <li>Someone physically following you without your permission.</li> <li>Someone purposely touching you or brushing up against you in an unwelcome, sexual way.</li> </ul> <p><b>SEXUAL ASSAULT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Someone forcing you to do a sexual act without your permission or one that you didn’t want to do (including while you were under the influence of alcohol or drugs).</li> </ul>
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