Unsafe and Harassed in Public Spaces:

A NATIONAL STREET HARASSMENT REPORT

Stop Street Harassment
Reston, Virginia · Spring 2014

About Stop Street Harassment

Stop Street Harassment (SSH) commissioned this study. SSH is a nonprofit organization dedicated to documenting and ending gender-based street harassment worldwide through public education and community mobilization. SSH started as a blog in 2008 and incorporated as a 501(c)3 in 2012. Our work includes the annual International Anti-Street Harassment Week, a blog correspondents program, the Safe Public Spaces Mentoring Program, and website resources like the tool kit *Know Your Rights: Street Harassment and the Law.* SSH is run by a volunteer board of directors and a team of people who generously give their time to help with social media, press work, graphic design, blog posts, and more. Visit www.stopstreetharassment.org.

About GfK

GfK conducted the 2,000-person survey. GfK is the trusted source of relevant market and consumer information that enables its clients to make smarter decisions. More than 13,000 market research experts combine their passion with GfK's 80 years of data science experience. This allows GfK to deliver vital global insights matched with local market intelligence from more than 100 countries. By using innovative technologies and data sciences, GfK turns big data into smart data, enabling its clients to improve their competitive edge and enrich consumers' experiences and choices. Learn more at www.gfk.com.

About Holly Kearl

Holly Kearl authored the report. She is the founder of Stop Street Harassment, the author of two books about street harassment, and a consultant for organizations such as the United Nations. She works with The OpEd Project, is an adjunct professor at George Mason University, and previously worked at the American Association of University Women (AAUW). While at AAUW, she co-authored a national study on sexual harassment in grades 7-12 with Catherine Hill, PhD. She received a master's degree in public policy and women's studies from George Washington University, where she wrote her master's thesis on street harassment.

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SSH Advisory Committee

The SSH Advisory Committee reviewed the survey questions and the report draft and gave valuable input on both.

Michele Lynberg Black, PhD, has recently retired after 25 years of work as an epidemiologist at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Dr. Black was the lead author of CDC's 2010 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Report. She continues to do work related to the area of violence prevention and intervention.

Nuala Cabral is an educator, activist, and the creator of the award-winning street harassment film *Walking Home*. She teaches video production and media literacy, and she co-founded FAAN Mail, a media literacy and media activism project. She serves on the SSH Board.

Alan Kearl is a company president and a dedicated SSH volunteer. He has organized several community actions in both New York and Florida for International Anti-Street Harassment Week. A sharp editor, he has edited SSH materials for several years.

Michael Kimmel, PhD, is among the leading researchers and writers on men and masculinity in the world today. He is a distinguished professor of sociology and gender studies at Stony Brook University, where he directs the Center for the Study of Men and Masculinities. Kimmel is the author of more than 20 books, including *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*.

Marty Langelan, past president of the DC Rape Crisis Center, is a human-rights activist, self-defense instructor, and the author of *Back Off! How to Confront and STOP Sexual Harassment and Harassers*. An expert on harassment and self-defense, she's taught more than a quarter of a million people to stop harassers and bullies. She's now training Metro employees to stop public harassment on the DC transit system.

R. L'Heureux Lewis-McCoy, PhD, is an associate professor of sociology and black studies at the City College of New York, CUNY. His research concentrates on issues of educational inequality, the role of race in contemporary society, and gender equity.

Patrick McNeil works in communications at the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights. He wrote his master's thesis, which he completed at George Washington University, on the street harassment experiences of gay and bisexual men. He serves on the SSH Board.

Chaitra "Chai" Shenoy is an attorney by day, activist by night, and an adjunct professor in her free time. She co-founded Collective Action for Safe Spaces, a nonprofit working to address public sexual assault and harassment in the Washington, DC, metro area.

Beckie Weinheimer is an author and a longtime SSH volunteer. She organized several community actions in both New York and Florida for International Anti-Street Harassment Week. She has given valuable input on SSH materials for several years.

Acknowledgements

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In addition to the Advisory Committee and their role in producing this study and report, many people volunteered their time and resources, including

- Blueberry Hill Strategies, a group that conducted data analysis pro bono.
- Elizabeth Bolton, who edited the report and press release.
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- All of the people who participated in the focus group, which entailed giving up at least an hour of their time and bravely sharing their personal stories and experiences with facilitator SSH founder Holly Kearl, who, in most cases, was a complete stranger.
- Elizabeth Bolton, Nuala Cabral, Tatyana Fazlalizadeh, Kira Hug, Mark Hutchens, Alan Kearl, Zabie Khorakiwala, Robin Morgan, Layla Moughari, Jennifer Scott, Shira Tarrant, Beckie Weinheimer, and others for donating items for the SSH online fundraiser auctions.
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The paid report consultants include

- Raquel Reichard, who created the charts and infographics.
- Amy Mastrine, who produced the report cover and homepage graphic.
- Talia Hagerty, who edited the report.
- Allison VanKanegan, who designed the report layout and executive summary.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From “hey baby” to “stupid fag,” from flashing to groping, sexual harassment in public spaces, or “street harassment,” is a problem many people experience, some with profound consequences. Since 2008, Stop Street Harassment (SSH) has collected thousands of street harassment stories. This ground-breaking study confirms what the stories suggest: Across all age, races, income levels, sexual orientations, and geographic locations, most women in the United States experience street harassment. Some men, especially men who identify as gay, bisexual, queer, or transgender, do as well.

Methodology

This report presents the findings of a 2,000-person, nationally representative survey (approximately 1,000 women and 1,000 men, ages 18 and up). GfK, a top surveying firm, conducted the Internet-based survey in February and March 2014. Additionally, SSH conducted 10 focus groups across the nation from August 2012 to March 2014.

What is street harassment?

“Street harassment” describes unwanted interactions in public spaces between strangers that are motivated by a person’s actual or perceived gender, sexual orientation, or gender expression and make the harassee feel annoyed, angry, humiliated, or scared. Street harassment can take place on the streets, in stores, on public transportation, in parks, and at beaches. It ranges from verbal harassment to flashing, following, groping, and rape. It differs from issues like sexual harassment in school and the workplace or dating or domestic violence because it happens between strangers in a public place, which at present means there is less legal recourse.

Why does this issue matter?

Street harassment is a human rights violation and a form of gender violence. It causes many harassed persons, especially women, to feel less safe in public places and limit their time there. It can also cause people emotional and psychological harm. Everyone deserves to be safe and free from harassment as they go about their day.

Key Findings.[1]

1. ## Street harassment is a significant problem in the United States.
   Sixty-five percent of women reported experiencing at least one type of street harassment in their lifetimes. More than half (57%) of all women had experienced verbal harassment, and 41% of all women had experienced physically aggressive forms, including sexual touching (23%), following (20%), flashing (14%), and being forced to do something sexual (9%). For men, 25% experienced street harassment, too, including 18% who experienced verbal harassment and 16% who experienced physically aggressive forms. More men who identified as LGBT experienced harassment than men who identified as heterosexual.

   In many ways, persons of color, lower-income people, and persons who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender were disproportionately affected by street harassment overall, as detailed in the main body of the report.

2. ## Street harassment happens multiple times to most people.
   Eighty-six percent of women and 79% of men who reported being harassed said they had been harassed more than once. Women were more likely than men to say it happened sometimes, often, or daily.

3. ## Street harassment begins at a young age.
   Around 50% of harassed women and men experienced street harassment by age 17.

4. ## Most harassed people were at least somewhat concerned that the incident would escalate.
   Two-thirds of the harassed women (68%) and half of the harassed men (49%) said they were very or somewhat concerned that the incident would escalate into something worse. Nearly twice as many women (25%) as men (13%) said they were very concerned.

5. ## Most harassed persons change their lives in some way as a result of the experience.
   The most common change was for harassed people to constantly assess their surroundings as a result of harassment (47% of women and 32% of men). Going places in a group or with another person instead of alone was another common response for women (31%). On the more extreme end, 4% of all harassed persons said they made a big life decision like quitting a job or moving neighborhoods because of harassers.

6. ## Street harassment doesn't just happen on the streets.
   Streets and sidewalks are the public spaces where street harassment most commonly occurs (67% of women and 43% of men reported harassment there), but harassment also happened in public spaces such as stores, restaurants, movie theaters, and malls (26% of women and 28% of men). It also happened on public transportation (20% of women and 16% of men).

[1] The percentages in numbers two through seven represent the share of individuals who reported having experienced some street harassment. As such, the percentages for men and women may be similar but a larger number of women are affected because more women than men experience street harassment.

7. **Men are overwhelmingly the harassers of both women and men.**
   Being harassed by one man was cited as the most common experience by both women (70%) and men (48%). It was also common to be harassed by two or more men (38% of women and 25% of men). Twenty percent of men said their harasser was a lone woman.

8. **When experiencing or witnessing harassment, half of the respondents had a proactive response at least once.**
   Around half (53%) of all survey respondents said that at least once they had done something proactive about harassment they experienced or witnessed. The most common response was to tell a harasser to stop or back off (31% of women and 25% of men).

9. **Most people believe there are actions we can take to stop street harassment.**
   Among all respondents, 91% believed there are ways to stop street harassment. Most recommended more security cameras and increased police presence in communities (55%) or educational workshops in schools and communities about respectful ways to interact with strangers and information about street harassment (53%) as ways to curb street harassment. More training of law enforcement and transit workers, community safety audits, and awareness campaigns were also suggested.

Street harassment affects millions of people, especially women, in significant ways. This report is a call to action for everyone, including educators, businesses, community leaders, national leaders, activist groups, journalists, and individuals, to do something about it. Together, we can work to end street harassment.

INTRODUCTION

All people should have the right to walk down their street, take the bus to school, and drive or ride the subway to work without facing gender-based harassment. Unfortunately, this is a right that millions of people, especially women, are regularly denied. This must change.

This section covers:

- The definition of street harassment, LGBT, queer, and harassee versus harasser
- Why addressing street harassment matters
- Why we need a national street harassment study

Definitions

Street Harassment: "Street harassment" describes unwanted interactions in public spaces between strangers that are motivated by a person's actual or perceived gender, sexual orientation, or gender expression and make the harassee feel annoyed, angry, humiliated, or scared. Even though "street" is in the term, street harassment also takes place in stores and restaurants, on public transportation, in parks and athletic fields, and at beaches.

Examples of street harassment include

- Honking and whistling
- Calling out phrases like "hey baby," "hey shorty," and "mamacita," often referred to as "catcalling"
- Persistent requests for a name, number, or date after being denied, ignored, or otherwise informed that the recipient isn't interested
- Sexist comments and telling someone to smile
- Evaluative comments, both "positive" like "nice legs" and "negative" like "fat cow"
- Sexually explicit comments or demands
- Homophobic or transphobic slurs
- Vulgar gestures and "pssst" sounds

AN OLD PROBLEM

Historians have found street harassment discussed in city newspapers and women's personal journals from at least the 1800s.

During the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1970s, women joined together to address domestic violence and rape, and it was from these efforts that the current activism against street harassment was born.

Micaela di Leonardo first used the term street harassment in the article "Political Economy of Street Harassment" in 1981, defining it as:

"When one or more strange men accost one or more women … in a public place which is not the women's worksite. Through looks, words, or gestures, the man asserts his right to intrude on the women's attention, defining her as a sexual object, and forcing her to interact with him."

- Following
- Flashing or public masturbation
- Grabbing and rubbing against someone
- Sexual assault

Street harassment happens without the consent of the harassee and is done with a sense of entitlement or disrespect for that person, as if the harasser has the right to comment on, touch, or follow the harassed person. Street harassers do not care that the person they are harassing has their own thoughts, pursuits, and reasons for being in public. Two common refrains of people who are sick of street harassment are, "My body is not public space," and "Stop telling women to smile."

Consensual flirting, polite hellos, and respectful small talk are NOT harassment. Asking someone if it's okay to talk to them is always a good idea. If they say no, don't get upset. Leave them alone.

LGBT: GfK used the grouping LGBT in the survey to describe people who self-identified as having the sexual orientation of lesbian, gay, or bisexual and/or the gender expression of transgender. While grouping them together is not ideal, the small sample size made it necessary.

Queer: Queer is often an umbrella term to refer to all LGBTIQA (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, and asexual) people. It's also a more fluid label and allows someone to identify as different from the norm without specifying how or in what context. Some of the focus group participants self-identified as queer.

Harasser vs. Harassee: While in different situations every person may be a harasser or a harassee, for the purposes of this report, the survey respondents and focus group participants who identified as being harassed are harassees. Those they identified as harassing them are the harassers.

Why does street harassment matter?

It signals a lack of safety and impacts lives.

Street harassment keeps many harassed people from feeling safe in public spaces. It can dictate where they go, when, with whom, and how they dress. It can impact their hobbies and habits, their routes and routines. It even causes some people to move or quit jobs because of harassers in the vicinity.

THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT

Beth Livingston, PhD, Assistant Professor at Cornell University's ILR School

"The emotional impacts of street harassment are real. In a qualitative analysis of self-submitted stories to ihollaback.org, we found that emotions such as fear, anxiety, anger, shame, and helplessness were incredibly common. … These sorts of emotions — particularly when experienced day after day — can become paralyzing. … It is incredibly likely that, as with many other negative emotional experiences, the impact can accumulate over time, leading to behavioral and health outcomes that we all should be concerned about."

Interview conducted by Kearl, April 2014

It has an emotional and psychological toll.

A 2008 study featured in the *Journal of Social Justice Research* found that street harassment was positively related to women objectifying themselves. Multiple studies have linked self-objectification with an increase in rates of depression, anxiety, and eating disorders as well as lower academic achievement.

A 2007 report by the American Psychology Association Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls found that girls are socialized by the media, parents, and peers to believe that their worth is their sexuality and ability to please men. The report listed scores of negative effects from such sexualization, including impairments to girls' and young women's physical and mental health. Street harassment reinforces this belief.

It prevents equality.

No country has achieved gender equality, nor have they reached equality for members of the LGBTIQA community. Street harassment is a symptom of that inequality, and it keeps harassed persons from fully participating and thriving in the world. If we want to see equality for every person, we must work to end street harassment.

Why a national study?

To stop street harassment, we first must change the all-too-common social attitude that it's not a big deal or that it's simply a compliment. Changing social attitudes takes time, and data can help. While there have been other studies conducted in the United States (see Appendix C), this is the first comprehensive national study to look at the experiences of both women and men and the intersection of race, sexual orientation, and income. It also has the largest sample size to date.

Methodology

Stop Street Harassment commissioned a 2,000-person, national survey on street harassment with top surveying firm GfK (www.gfk.com).

The GfK KnowledgePanel is the only national, probability-based online panel in the marketplace. Results are projectable to the general population, n=1,000 adults age 18+.

GfK's panel differs from the typical opt-in panel:

- To recruit panel members, GfK uses address-based sampling — a probability-based approach that includes cell-phone only households — as the primary methodology.
- For non-Internet households, GfK provides Internet access and a laptop for the completion of online surveys. Therefore, the sample is not limited to only those who already have Internet access.
- The representativeness of the sample, including hard-to-reach groups, has been documented in numerous academic papers.

GfK surveyed 1,000 people between February 28 and March 2, 2014 and another 1,000 people between March 7 and 9, 2014.

You can request the survey questions and detailed methodology by emailing hkearl@stopstreetharassment.org.

Who took the survey?

Gender: 1,058 men and 982 women.

Age: 643 people ages 18–34, 472 people ages 35–49, 536 people ages 50–64, and 389 people ages 65 and older.

Income: 782 respondents in households with an annual income below $50,000 and 1,258 in households with an annual income of $50,000 or higher.

Region: 388 people live in the Northeast, 481 live in the Midwest, 715 live in the South, and 456 live in the West.

Race: 1,566 respondents were White, non-Hispanic (77%), 195 were Hispanic (10%), 143 were Black, non-Hispanic (7%), 80 were other, non-Hispanic (4%), and 56 were mixed race (3%).

Sexual Orientation: There were 49 men who identified as gay, bisexual, or transgender; 48 women who identified as lesbian, bisexual, or transgender; 1,009 men who identified as heterosexual; and 934 women who identified as heterosexual.

Focus groups

To supplement the national survey, SSH also conducted 10 focus groups from August 2012 to March 2014 with populations such as Native Americans in South Dakota, queer women of color in New York, Latinas in Florida, and men in the LGBTIQA community in Washington, DC. See Appendix A for more information.[2]

[2] SSH tried to hold additional focus groups in Arizona, Louisiana, Missouri, and Virginia but they were cancelled due to snow, low attendance, or other circumstances.

Challenges and Limitations

1. **Funding:** Funding research on gender-based violence issues, especially one as little understood as street harassment, is very challenging. SSH ended up funding it solely through individual donations, online campaigns, special events, and online auctions. While the goal was to have 25 questions and to home in on women and men ages 18–30 (a prime age for experiencing street harassment), the most financially feasible option was a 10-question survey of people ages 18 and older.

2. **Sample:** The sample pool reflects the demographics of the United States and as such, there are more white and heterosexual people in the sample. Without a larger sample, we were not able to examine the findings by multiple identities, such as race AND sexual orientation. A recommendation for a future study is to survey a higher percentage of persons of color and people who identify as LGBT to be able to have more of these findings.

3. **Age:** Street harassment happens for most people when they are teenagers, but due to the added expense and challenge of gaining parental consent for this topic, we had to start the age range of the respondents at 18. Two focus groups each included one teenage girl younger than 18.

4. **Not understanding the issue:** Because street harassment is a normalized experience, especially for older respondents who grew up with it, unless someone had an emotionally traumatic or recent experiences, not everyone may have remembered incidents of harassment immediately.

   While in the opening to the survey we encouraged people to reflect before answering the question about whether or not they had experienced harassment, and we gave several examples of types of harassment to prompt them, not everyone may have remembered incidents they experienced decades earlier or identified them as harassment. (Notably the survey was conducted at the end of one of the coldest winters in history, which means fewer people were outside and therefore likely had fewer recent incidents of street harassment in their minds.)

   A study in the summer 2014 issue of *Gender & Society* found that most young women assume that being harassed, assaulted, and abused is simply something that everyone experiences and is normal. So they may not even identify what happened as wrong.

   A common discussion point and question in the focus groups was the difference between harassment and flirting or a compliment.

   For these reasons, we think the prevalence statistic might be lower than the reality.

   Additionally, the listing of types of street harassment people could select could have been longer. For example, men honking at women from their cars is a very common form of harassment, but we excluded it from the survey questions for fear respondents would skew the results by talking about traffic-related honking, rather than sexual-harassment-related honking.

SURVEY FINDINGS

Street harassment is a widespread problem in the United States, especially for women, and it happens across all age ranges, income levels, races, sexual orientations, and geographic locations. The data show that there are significant differences for some questions based on sexual orientation, race, and income.[3]

All 2,000 survey respondents answered four questions and respondents who said they experienced street harassment answered six additional questions.

Most women and some men have experienced street harassment.

Street harassment is a common experience for most women and some men. Sixty-five percent of all women (two out of three women in the United States) said they had experienced some form of street harassment, as had 25% of all men (one out of four men in the United States).

Most people who were street harassed experienced both verbal and physically aggressive forms. More than half of all women (57%) said they had experienced verbal harassment and 41% of women said they had experienced physically aggressive forms, including following, flashing, and groping. Among all men, 18% had experienced verbal harassment and 16% had experienced physically aggressive forms.

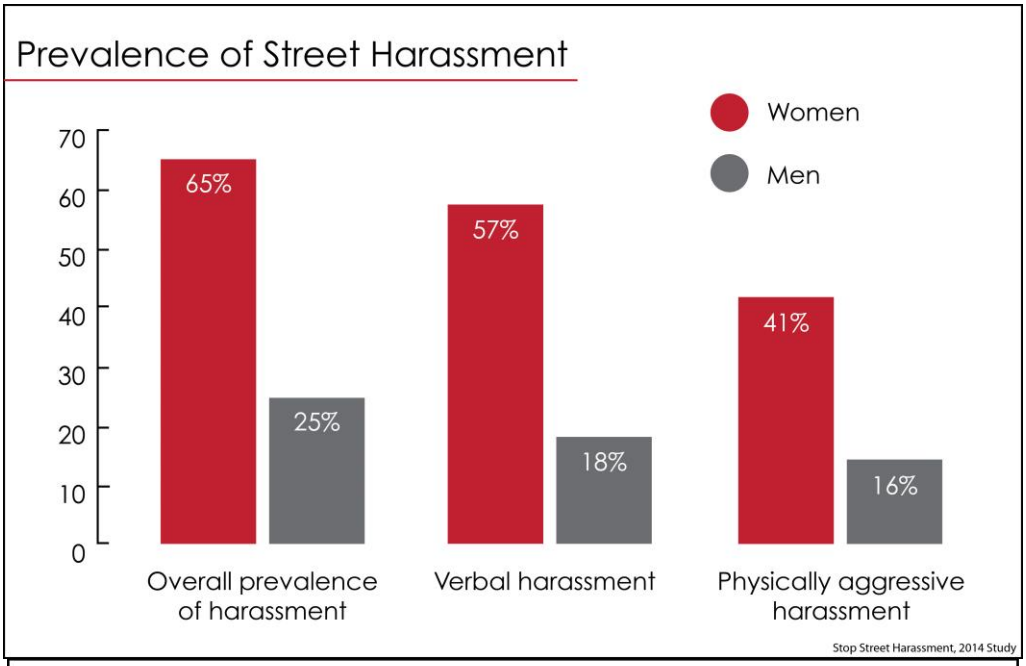
Race

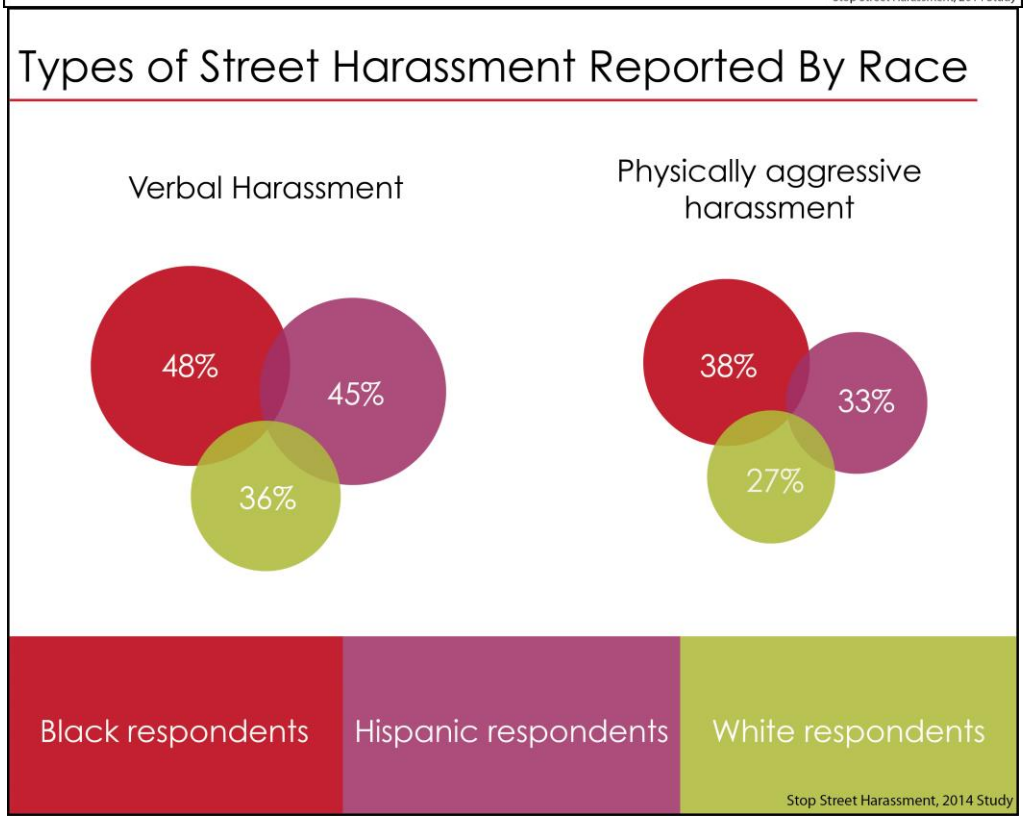
Overall, Hispanic and Black respondents were more likely than White respondents to report experiencing street harassment. Due to sample sizes, these racial categories combine women and men. For context, 45% of women and men of all races reported experiencing street harassment.[4]

- Verbal harassment: Forty-eight percent of Black respondents, 45% of Hispanic respondents, and 36% of White respondents reported experiencing verbal harassment. Black and Hispanic responses were statistically significantly different from White responses, but not from each other.
- Physically aggressive harassment: Thirty-eight percent of Black respondents, 33% of Hispanic respondents, and 27% of white respondents reported experiencing physically aggressive harassment. Black responses were statistically significantly different from White responses.

[3] Because the overall sample size was only 2,000 people, we had to combine people who did not identify as straight into a grouping of those who said they were lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and other and compare it to heterosexual people. This is not, of course, ideal. For some questions, we also had to group all non-White racial groups together versus the White racial group. Unfortunately, due to the sample size we were not able to look at multiple factors at once, like race AND gender or race AND sexual orientation AND income, which undoubtedly would reveal even more important information. Hopefully a future study will have a larger sample and this will be possible.

[4] The differences in harassment by race may in part be due to there being more Black women than Black men in the sample, while there was a more even number of White women and White men.

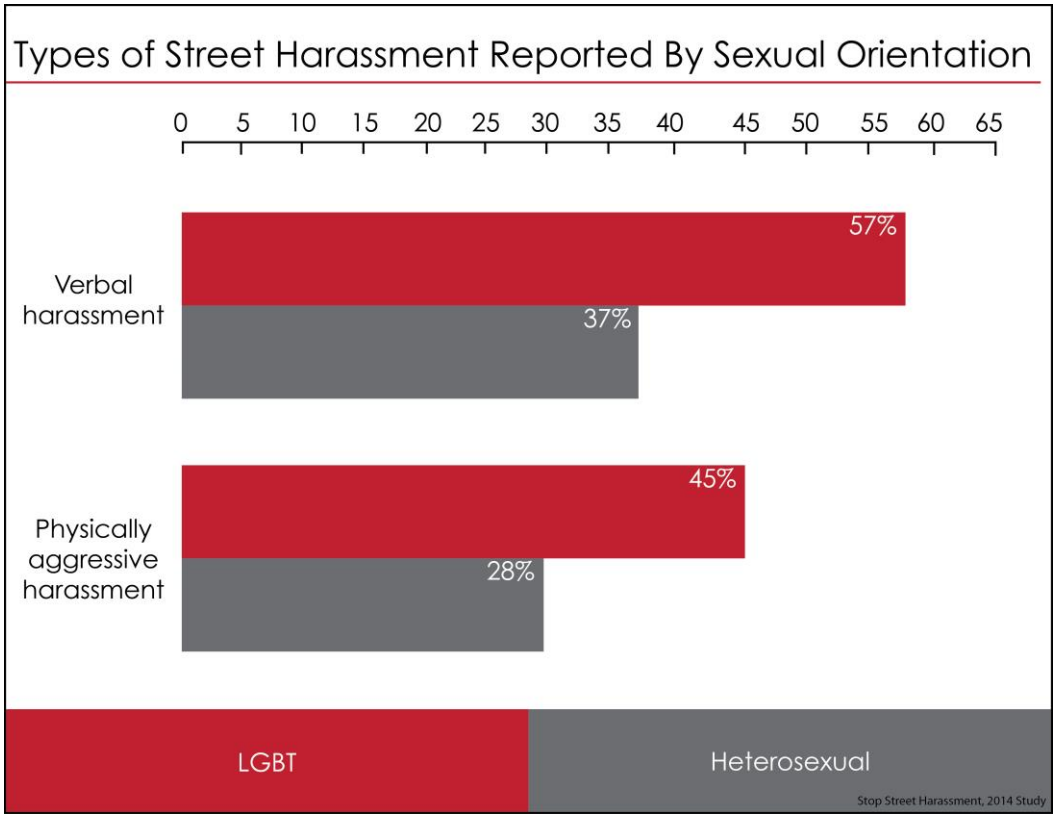

Prevalence of Street Harassment
Women
Men
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
65%
25%
57%
18%
41%
16%
Overall prevalence of harassment
Verbal harassment
Physically aggressive harassment
Stop Street Harassment, 2014 Study


Types of Street Harassment Reported By Race
Verbal Harassment
Physically aggressive harassment
48%
45%
36%
38%
33%
27%
Black respondents
Hispanic respondents
White respondents
Stop Street Harassment, 2014 Study

Sexual orientation

Overall, people who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) in the survey were more likely than people who identified as heterosexual to report having experienced street harassment. This includes verbal forms (57% compared to 37% of those who identified as heterosexual) and physically aggressive forms (45% compared to 28%, respectively).

When looking at gender, the differences are primarily found among men. Men who identified as gay, bisexual, or transgender were much more likely to report experiencing harassment than heterosexual men, but there was no statistically significant difference found between heterosexual and queer women.



Verbal harassment is the most common, but physically aggressive forms aren't far behind.

The following statistics are inclusive of *all* survey respondents (e.g. 50% means half of all respondents, not half of those who were harassed).

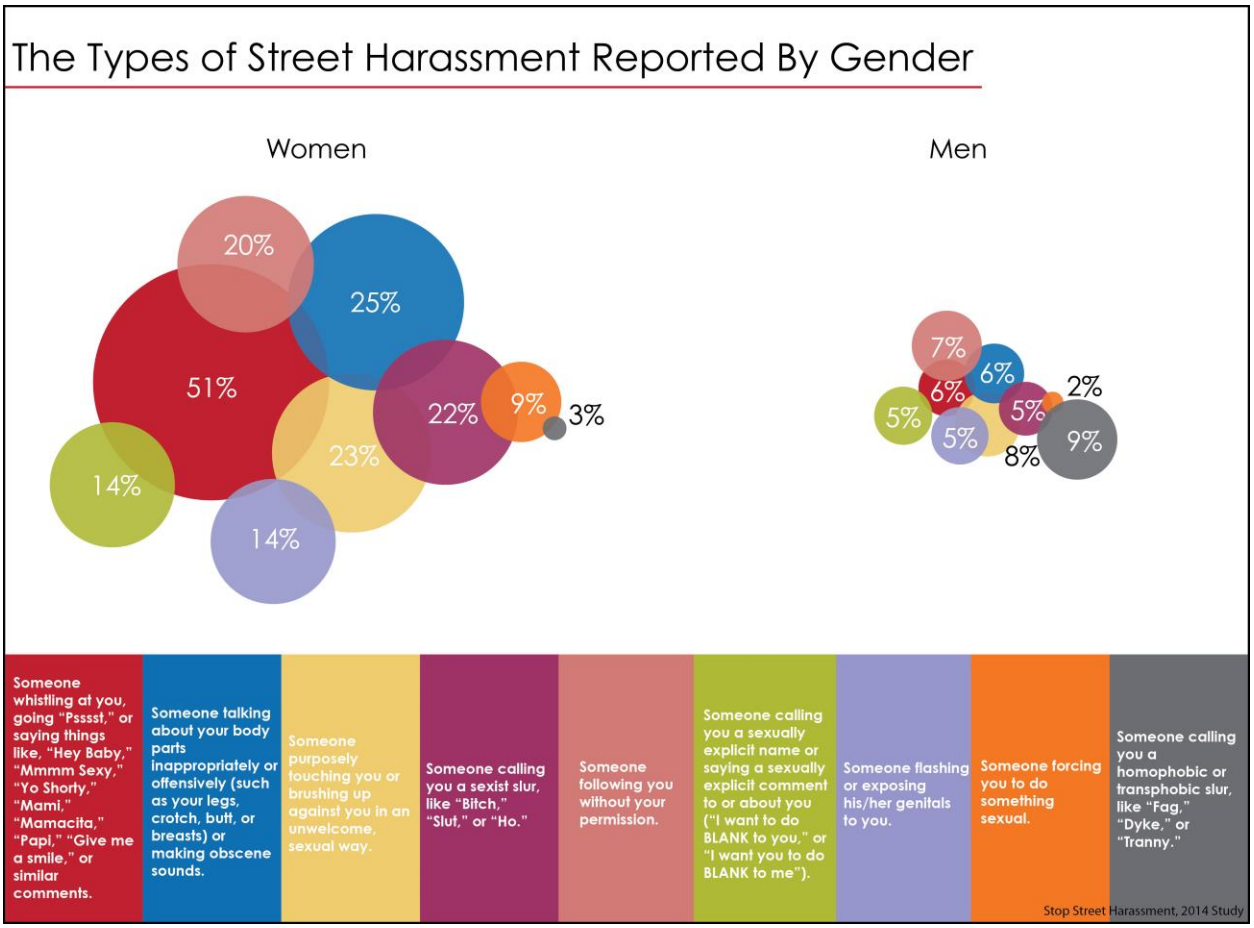
Non-sexually explicit verbal sexual harassment (such as whistling, being called "baby," or being told to smile) was the most common type of harassment for women (51%, compared to 6% of men). For men,

the most common form of harassment was being called a homophobic or transphobic slur (9%, versus 3% of women).

Among all women who took the survey, 25% had been the target of inappropriate comments about their body or obscene sounds. Approximately 22% had been called a sexist slur like “bitch” or “slut.” Fourteen percent of women had been called a sexually explicit name or had a sexually explicit comment said to or about them. Between 5% and 7% of men had each of these three experiences as well.

Street harassment is not “just” verbal. An alarming number of people, especially women, experienced physically aggressive forms of harassment in public spaces.

- Nearly one in four women (23%) had been purposely touched or brushed up against in an unwanted, sexual way while in a public space, as had one in 12 men (8%).
- One in five women had been followed (20%), as had one in 14 men (7%).
- Fourteen percent of women and 5% of men had been flashed.
- Nearly one in 10 women (9%) and one in 50 men (2%) were forced to do something sexual.



There were no statistically significant differences by income, race, or sexual orientation.

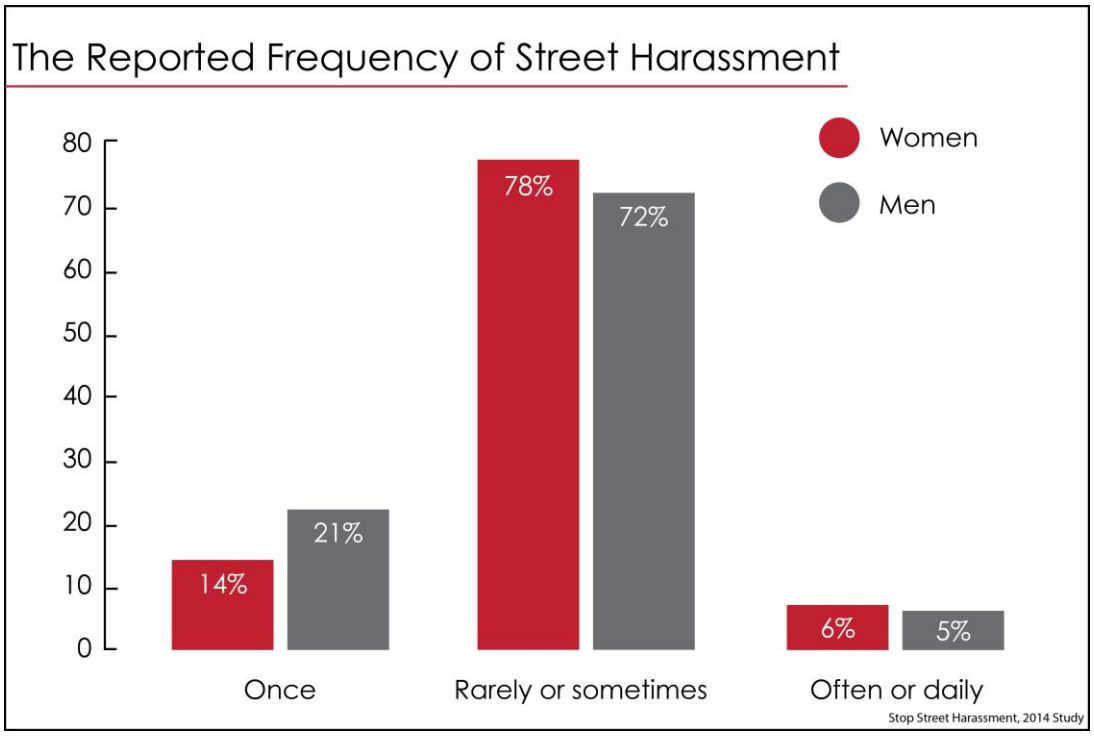
Street harassment happens more than once for most people.

Gauging how often one is harassed across one's lifetime can be challenging; there may be periods of time when the harassment is more frequent than other times. Respondents were asked to reply based on their perception of their average experience.

Most people who reported experiencing street harassment said they experienced it more than once, including 84% of harassed women and 76% of harassed men. Because there were more women than men who reported being harassed in the first place, numerically, around three times as many women as men were harassed more than once.

Most people said they rarely to sometimes experienced street harassment across their lifetime (78% of women and 72% of men). This could mean monthly or a few times a year or a few times in their life.

Six percent of women and 5% of men said they have been harassed often or daily across their lifetime.



There is a difference by income, race, and sexual orientation.

Income

When looking at households with an annual income of $50,000 or higher and households with an annual income below $50,000, similar shares of the two groups reported having experienced street harassment often or daily: 25% of people in households with an income greater than $50,000 and 22% of people in households with incomes less than $50,000.

A higher percentage of people in households with annual incomes of $50,000 or higher reported experiencing harassment rarely (55%), compared with people who reported household incomes below $50,000 (46%). Thirty-two percent of people in households with an income below $50,000 reported experiencing harassment sometimes, whereas 20% of people in households with an income of $50,000 or higher reported the same.

Race

For race, because of the smaller sample size for this question, we compared White people with persons of color (Black, Hispanic, multi-racial, and other categories). Persons of color were more likely than White people to say they experienced street harassment sometimes, often, or daily (41% versus 24%). White people were more likely than other racial groups to report having experienced harassment once or rarely.

Sexual orientation

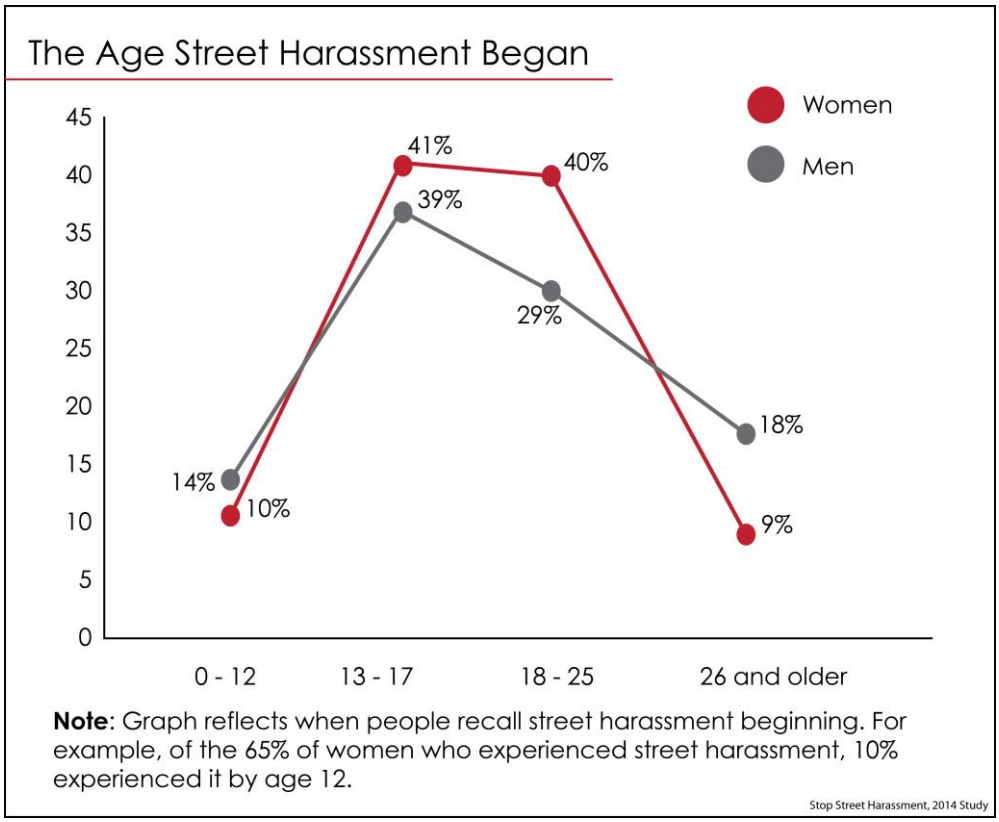
More LGBT individuals — mainly women — said they were harassed daily (7%) compared with heterosexual people (1%). Conversely, more heterosexual individuals said they were harassed once (17%) compared with those who identify as LGBT (6%). Heterosexual men were most likely to say they had been harassed once.

Street harassment begins at a young age.

One of the more disturbing aspects of street harassment is the young age at which people experience it. Around half of both harassed women (51%) and men (53%) said the first incident had happened by age 17. While the percentage is similar for women and men, due to the larger number of women who were harassed, nearly three times as many women as men reported harassment by age 17.

More than 80% of harassed women experienced street harassment between the ages of 13 and 25, as did 68% of harassed men.

Eighteen percent of men and 9% of women said their first harassment incident was when they were 26 years or older.



Income

People who reported household incomes of below $50,000 were most likely to report first having experienced harassment between ages 13–17, while people in households with an income of $50,000 and above were most likely to report having first experienced harassment between the ages of 18–25.

Race

Hispanic respondents were more likely than White or Black respondents to say that they had encountered harassment by age 17 (60% versus 52% and 42%).

Sexual orientation

Seventy percent of LGBT-identified people experienced harassment by age 17 compared with 49% of heterosexual-identified people.

Harassed people — especially women — fear escalation.

Street harassment does not occur in a vacuum. It includes unwanted physical forms and it can escalate into rape, non-sexual assault, and even murder. Someone who has had a traumatic or humiliating experience can become wary of any person who approaches her or him in a public space. For rape survivors — and in the United States, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says that's one in five women and one in 71 men — street harassment can be re-triggering and especially upsetting. One reason why more women find street harassment upsetting than men is the fear of it escalating to sexual assault or rape.

The fear of what an aggressor will do next gives any kind of harassment its gut-wrenching power. People react to the underlying threat, not just the surface words or actions.

When we asked the respondents who said that they were harassed if they were concerned the harassment would escalate, more women than men said yes. Two-thirds of the harassed women (68%) and nearly half of the harassed men (48%) said they were very or somewhat concerned. Numerically, since more women than men were harassed overall, that is nearly four times as many women as men.

Nearly twice the share of harassed women (25%) than men (13%) said they were very concerned it would escalate. More men than women (51% versus 31%) said they were not at all concerned.

Income

People who reported household incomes of less than $25,000 per year were the most likely to say they were very concerned about escalation (30%) compared to every other income group.

Race

The fear of escalation — being somewhat or very concerned — was highest among Hispanic individuals (71%), followed by 58% of White people and 43% of Black people.

There was no statistically significant difference by sexual orientation.

Street harassment causes most people to change their lives in some way.

Street harassment is a human rights issue because of the way it impacts the lives of harassed persons, keeping them from having equal access to public spaces and resources.

Among harassed persons (who could choose more than one response):

- Forty-seven percent of women and 32% of men said they began assessing their surroundings after experiencing street harassment.
- Thirty-one percent of women and 15% of men said they began going more places in a group or with another person rather than alone.

- Twenty-nine percent of women and 21% of men said they became more assertive in how they walked or acted in public places to try to deter harassers (such as making eye contact and saying, “Hello” before someone has the chance to harass).
- Twenty-seven percent of men and 24% of women stopped going to the location where the harassment had happened. (While these percentages are similar, since more women than men were harassed, numerically, more than twice as many women than men had this response.)
- Fifteen percent of women and 10% of men tried to avoid harassment through such tactics as wearing headphones, sunglasses, or clothes they thought would attract less attention.
- Six percent of men and 5% of women gave up an outdoor activity like exercising, going to a park, or swimming at a pool because of harassment.
- Five percent of both women and men looked for advice online or from friends, family, or an organization.
- Four percent of both women and men (but numerically, nearly three times as many women as men) made a big life decision like quitting a job or moving neighborhoods.
- Two percent of men and 1% of women organized or attended a community meeting, event, or workshop about street harassment.

There was one significant difference by income and by sexual orientation and none by race.

Income

People who reported an annual household income of less than $25k were the most likely to say they tried to avoid harassers through tactics like wearing headphones or sunglasses.

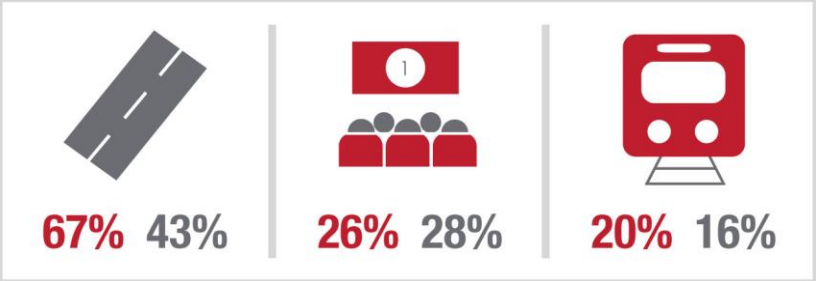
Sexual Orientation

LGBT people were more likely to say they gave up an outdoor activity compared with heterosexual people (14% versus 4%).

As the name suggests, street harassment is most common on the streets but happens in many public spaces.

Most of the harassed persons said street harassment happened while they were on the street or sidewalk (67% of women and 43% of men), either on foot (such as walking, standing, sitting, or jogging) or on a bicycle or skateboard.

The next most-common type of place where people reported having experienced harassment was in a store, restaurant, movie theater, or mall. This was where 28% of men and 26% of women said they had been harassed.



Public transportation was the next most common place (20% of women and 16% of men), especially in regions where taking public transportation is common.

Fourteen percent of men and 12% of women reported experiencing harassment while in a car, truck, van, taxi, or on a motorcycle.

Lastly, 16% of men and 10% of women said they were harassed at a sports arena, gym, ball field, park, or beach.

There was no statistically significant difference in where people were harassed based on income, race, or sexual orientation.

Men were the main harassers of both women and men.

Based on the survey responses, the vast majority of harassers were men.

Of harassed persons (who could choose more than one response):

- Two-thirds had been harassed by one man or boy (70% of women and 48% of men).
- One-third had been harassed by two or more men or boys (38% of women and 25% of men).
- Men were more likely than women to be harassed by one girl or woman (20% versus 5%), two or more girls or women (15% versus 2%), and/or a group of women/men or girls/boys (14% and 4%).

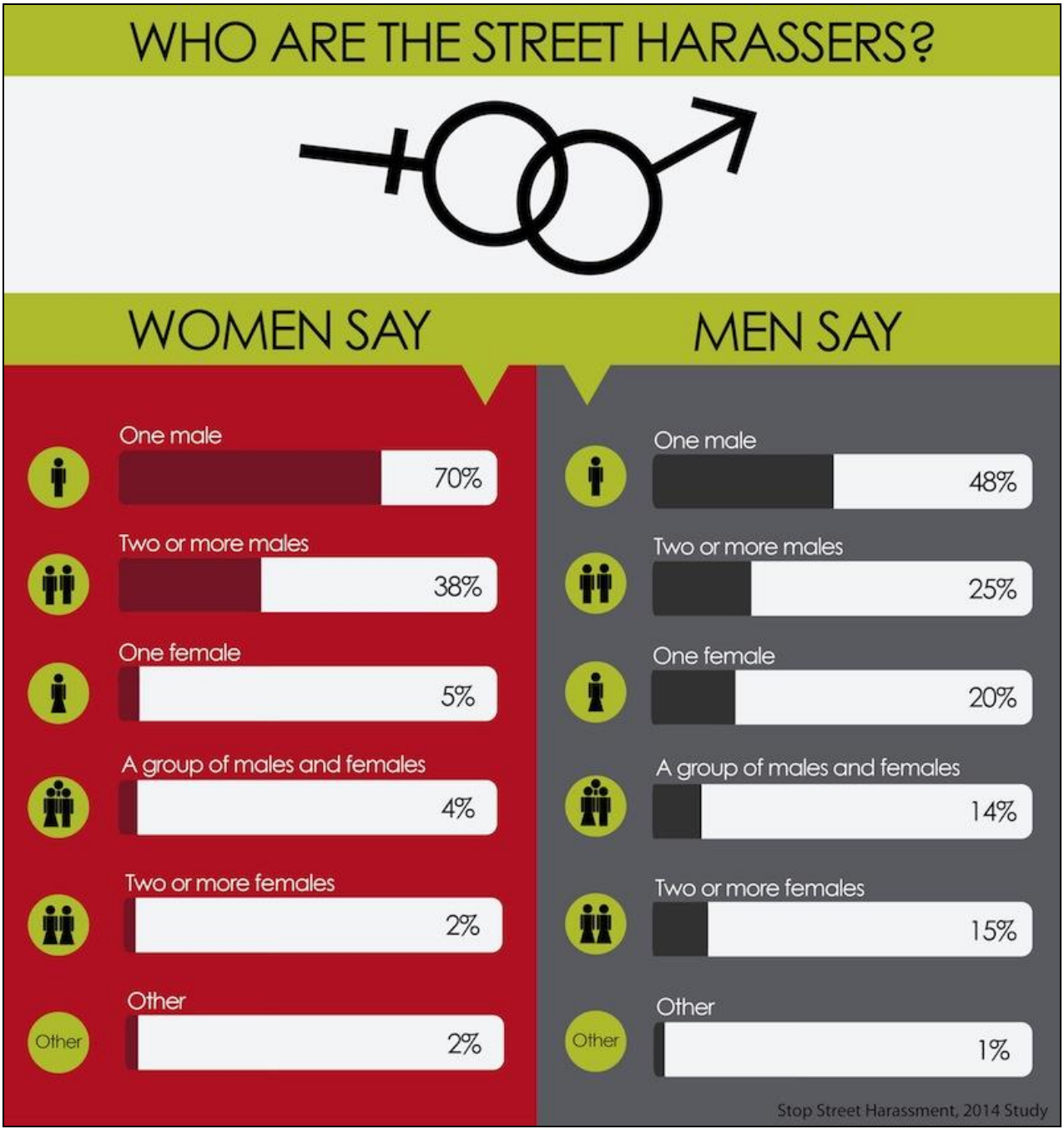
There were no statistically significant differences by income, race, or sexual orientation.

WHY DO MEN SEXUALLY HARASS PEOPLE IN PUBLIC SPACES?

Shira Tarrant, PhD, California State University, Long Beach

"First, our culture repeatedly tells boys and men that one way to prove their masculinity is by putting someone else down. This is a form of hypermasculinity that relies on exerting power over people who are perceived as less valuable. Harassment is a way to make that happen.

Second, so many of our pop culture images — things we see and hear in music, TV, videos, movies — tell men and boys they have permission to think about women as sexually available. Mainstream pop culture use tropes and old stereotypes about beauty and gender that [teach] us to judge women on the basis of how sexy we think they are. Our culture sends chronic messages to boys and men that they are entitled to access other people's bodies, invade personal space, and even to violate our most intimate realms with impunity or lack of awareness if that other person is perceived to be less powerful."


WHO ARE THE STREET HARASSERS?
WOMEN SAY
One male
70%
Two or more males
38%
One female
5%
A group of males and females
4%
Two or more females
2%
Other
Other
2%
MEN SAY
One male
48%
Two or more males
25%
One female
20%
A group of males and females
14%
Two or more females
15%
Other
Other
1%
Stop Street Harassment, 2014 Study

When experiencing or witnessing harassment, half of the respondents had a proactive response at least once.

Half of all survey respondents (53%), meaning those who said they had been harassed and those who said they had not, reported that at least once they had taken an active response to harassment they witnessed or experienced in public spaces. Respondents could choose more than one answer.

- Thirty-one percent of all women and 25% of all men told the person(s) to stop, back off, or to leave them or another person being harassed alone.
- Twenty-three percent of men and 20% of women spoke up or did something to help someone else being harassed.
- Fourteen percent of women and 11% of men physically defended themselves (such as pushing the person away).
- Thirteen percent of women and 7% of men reported the incident to a police officer, transit worker, store manager, or other person in charge.
- Eleven percent of women and 6% of men drew attention to what was happening or asked the harasser for an explanation for his/her actions.
- Six percent of women and 3% of men asked for help from others.

There were no statistically significant differences in these responses by income, race, or sexual orientation.

Most people believe there are actions we can take to stop street harassment.

The majority of women and men (91%), both those who had and had not been harassed, believed that something should and could be done about street harassment. Respondents were asked to choose ideas for addressing street harassment from a list, and were instructed to choose as many responses as they thought would be helpful. Respondents were also given the option to enter their own suggestions.

The most common suggestion from both women (55%) and men (48%) was more security cameras in public spaces and the increased presence of law enforcement or neighborhood watch groups.

The second most common suggestion from both women (53%) and men (44%) was educational workshops in schools and communities about respectful ways to interact with strangers, information about what street harassment is, and how to respond when one witnesses or experiences street harassment.

The third most common suggestion by both women (46%) and men (45%) was more training of law enforcement and transit workers so they can better identify and intervene in harassment situations.

Conducting community safety audits and public service campaigns were also selected by at least one-fourth of the respondents.

Other

About 5% of the respondents selected "other." These are some of their ideas.

OTHER IDEAS FOR STOPPING STREET HARASSMENT

- "Hold a community discussion about what is considered acceptable in that community."
- "Encourage kindness towards everyone; have people meet or learn about the LGBT community."
- "Stop police officers from profiling Black people."
- "Teach people to speak up."
- "Have working street lights."
- "Teach boys at a young age and continuously through life to respect women."
- "Get neighborhoods together, like for a block party."
- "Provide/require training in respectful behavior starting in kindergarten or Head Start."
- "Step up and help people being harassed."
- "Advertisements on radio, TV, and the Internet about behaving respectfully."
- "Stop making the person being harassed feel like they did something to warrant it."
- "Identify root causes, such as racial prejudice."

Conclusion

Street harassment is a widespread problem in the United States, especially for women, persons of color, and people who identify as LGBTIQA. Street harassment is a form of oppression and discrimination that negatively impacts the lives of most harassed persons. It must be taken seriously and stopped.

There is no action too small for individuals to take to make a difference. But it cannot be up to individuals alone to solve this problem, especially not just those who are harassed. We must have men, educators, government leaders, law enforcement, transit agencies, and businesses on board. Together, we can make public places safer for everyone.

Do you have a success story about individual or community action to stop street harassment? Share it with us at www.stopstreetharassment.org/contact.

FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

To supplement the survey, SSH conducted 10 focus groups. These groups ranged in size from two to 15 people and on average had six to seven participants who ranged in age from 14 years old to early 50s. Four of the 10 focus groups included at least one man.

Most participants were women, persons of color, members of the LGBTIQA community, young people, and/or lower-income people.[5]

There were also four focus groups targeting people based on various modes of transportation (car, walking, public transportation, and bicycles) in different geographic locations.

These one-hour focus groups were spaces for people to safely share stories, talk about intersections of identity and harassment, and brainstorm solutions.

The locations of the focus groups were determined by where SSH could easily travel and whether or not SSH had local contacts to help find a space and participants. While most people chose to participate because they cared about the issue, some people were motivated to attend because they would receive extra credit (college students), the free food, or because their friends or family attended.

See Appendix A for the summaries of each focus group.

Focus Groups

- Native Americans and Street Harassment on Pine Ridge Reservation, South Dakota
- Queer Women of Color and Street Harassment in Brooklyn, New York
- Gay, Bisexual, & Queer Men and Street Harassment in Washington, DC[6]
- Latinas and Street Harassment in Deerfield Beach, Florida
- Street Harassment in Rapid City, South Dakota
- Street Harassment in Brooklyn, New York
- Street Harassment in Los Angeles, California
- College Students and Street Harassment in Maryland
- Street Harassment and Cyclists in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- Asian American Women in Boston, Massachusetts

[5] Note: These groups are not exhaustive by any means. SSH was not able to complete additional focus groups with sex workers, transgender individuals, homeless women, Asian-Americans, and or other location-based groups. SSH also did not hold a group with just heterosexual men.
For more street harassment stories, you can read submissions to the Stop Street Harassment blog, Collective Action for Safe Spaces, Everyday Sexism, and the Hollaback! chapter blogs.
[6] The summary combines two focuses groups with this demographic.

Key Findings across the Groups

- Street harassment was a regular occurrence for most of the participants.
- Many respondents, especially women of color, talked about being followed or touched and how at least once men had tried to get the women into their cars.
- Street harassment caused many participants to avoid certain places, change how they acted or looked when alone in public, and take greater caution in public spaces than before.
- Nearly all focus groups discussed the need to educate youth on the topic as a possible solution to end street harassment.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROMISING PRACTICES

Ending street harassment requires individual, community, and national action, commitment, and collaboration. Building on the suggestions of survey respondents and focus group participants, SSH offers these recommendations:

- Everyone can take individual action.
- Efforts need to involve boys and men.
- Educators and community leaders can work with and involve young people.
- Local government leaders can assess the problem and take action.
- Law enforcement and transit agencies can conduct trainings and hold campaigns.
- Local businesses can create safer spaces for their patrons.

Everyone can take individual action

While it will take a community — and a nation — to make public places safer, there are ways we as individuals can help (with the most obvious being, don't harass!).

1. ### Talk about the issue.
   For too long, street harassment has been seen as normal and the harassed persons have been blamed and shamed and then silenced. NO MORE. The time for silence is over. Talk with your friends, family members, neighbors, classmates, and colleagues.

2. ### Share stories. Listen to stories.
   The most powerful way we can change attitudes is by sharing our street harassment stories. There are stereotypes about street harassment in the media that are harmful and wrong; our stories show the truth. The best way to change our own attitudes and to understand the complexities of the issue is to listen to and read other stories. Share your stories in person or online. Websites like Stop Street Harassment, Everyday Sexism, and Hollaback! chapter sites accept stories. Share stories on social media with the tag #EndSH.

   "Street harassment is a global epidemic, one that limits equal access to public space. By telling our stories, we are shifting the conversation, creating a world in which street harassment becomes unacceptable. With the launch of every new site, we are sending the message that street harassment is a problem that we can and will collectively end."[7] — Hollaback!

[7] Interview conducted with Kearl, March 2014.

3. Find ways to do something.
   Whether it is sharing your story or speaking out when street harassment happens, take action. It can feel empowering and lessen the psychological harm. If you choose to speak up, saying something as simple as, "no," "back off," "stop harassing me," or asking the harasser to repeat him or herself can be effective. When you witness harassment, you can ask a harassed person if they are okay or need help or you can create an interruption or disruption.

   "To create a world free from sexual violence, we need to work toward a future where every individual can move freely in public spaces without fear of harassment or harm. Taking a stand against street harassment means playing an active role as bystanders and building an environment of respect for all."[8] — The National Sexual Violence Resources Center

TAKE COMMUNITY ACTION!

Marty Langelan, expert on sexual harassment issues and author of Back Off!

"Creeps in the park, gropers on the bus, jackasses on the street corner — fed up with harassment in your neighborhood? Don't just get mad — do something that works!

With nonviolent community action, everyone from little kids to grandmas can participate in changing what's going on by systematically interrupting the harassers, one after another. The cumulative effect of consistent, continued intervention makes it first difficult and then impossible for sexual bullies to control the neighborhood.

Start with simple, consistent group action: print copies of an anti-harassment flyer and ask folks up and down the block to hand a flyer to the harassers, every time. Then teach everyone to say the same thing – no cussing, no insults, no helpless, intimidated silence, only a calm, clear, honest statement: 'Stop dissing women. No one likes it. This is about respect.' (If the harasser gives you any back-talk, don't argue, just repeat your statement in a calm, bored voice; the more he tries to save face, the more he's already failed.)

Make bystander intervention an everyday practice – it's one of the fastest ways to stop harassers. When a harasser groped a woman on the DC subway, six other passengers called him out on it. The creep fled.

Have some fun – put up posters in the park and at the bus stop, saying: 'Harassment-free zone.' Hold a neighborhood sidewalk-chalking party, to write 'stop harassment' up and down the street. With a friend by your side, interview the harassers, using the questionnaire from *Back Off* (that really floors them). Be a local hero -- neighborhood action works."

[8] Interview conducted by Kearl, March 2014.

There is no one right way to respond to street harassment. Books like *Back Off! How to Confront and Stop Sexual Harassment and Harassers* and *50 Stories about Stopping Street Harassers* offer ideas, as does www.StopStreetHarassment.org.

4. ### Have an intersectional lens and be allies to other groups facing harassment.
Street harassment is experienced by and impacts demographics differently, and parallels other problems, such as racial profiling and the abuse of persons with disabilities. Recognizing all of these problems and how they interrelate is important.

"Street harassment needs to be examined through an intersectional lens, with particular attention to the ways that overlapping social locations and identities influence harassment, fear, risk, response, consequence, prevention, and intervention."[9] — Laura S. Logan, PhD, Hastings College

Involve Boys and Men

Since boys and men are the main perpetrators of street harassment, it's important to focus on them.

Redefine masculinity.
Boys and men are under incredible pressure from each other, from some women, and from society as a whole to prove their manhood over and over. Too many of them see harassing and harming others as a way to do this.

Shira Tarrant, PhD, author of the book *Men Speak Out: Views on Gender, Sex and Power* says, "We tend to equate masculinity with power or strength. But authentic strength does not have to rely on exerting power over others. Authentic strength involves solid ethics, dependability, and a clear internal compass.

Redefining masculinity and power to highlight these qualities will help to end street harassment (and other sex-based assaults) by shifting attention away from subjugation-as-power to understanding that interpersonal engagement, public accountability, and empathy with others as true signs of what it means to be a man."[10]

Men Can Stop Rape is a national organization working to redefine masculinity through the middle school, high school, and college Men of Strength programs and the bystander campaign targeted at men called Where Do You Stand?

Men Can Stop Rape said, "Sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, and other forms of gender-based violence are all related. Men who view and treat girls and women as 'less than' in one context, often do the same in other settings. And it's much easier to physically and emotionally harm people when you see them as 'less than.'

[9] Interview conducted by Kearl, April 2014.
[10] Interview conducted by Kearl, April 2014.

Healthy masculinity can help. Healthy masculinity is all about not treating girls and women as 'less than.' Some basic things we can do to role model healthy masculinity are:

1. Don't sexually harass.
2. Don't laugh or go along with harassment when our friends or others do it.
3. Call out and challenge others who do harass women.
4. Talk with the women in our lives. Ask them about their experiences with harassment and how it affects them. And ask how we can be supportive as they deal with it. Don't joke, minimize, or tell them to ignore or get over it, but be empathetic.

Think about it this way: as men we've been handed a great opportunity to not only improve the lives of girls and women we care about (and others we don't even know), but we've also got a chance to help other men role model healthy masculinity. Take advantage of the opportunity and see what a difference it makes."[11]

Talk to young men.

Relando B. Thompkins, program coordinator, Future Public Health Leaders Program, University of Michigan and a SSH board member suggested, "Help young men recognize their role in it. Talk with them about sexism. Talk about male privilege (use examples, http://tinyurl.com/30ExamplesMalePrivilege) and violence against women (not just physical, but emotional, sexual, and other methods, http://tinyurl.com/TheModule). Find ways to help them recognize patterns in themselves and among those around them."

Many young boys who engage in street harassment are mimicking what they've seen among male relatives or older friends, or they are trying out what they've seen in the media (including kids' cartoons!).

Talking to them at a young age about what street harassment is and how to interact with people in public spaces without being a harasser is extremely important to help counterbalance those messages. Give them a positive substitute behavior: http://tinyurl.com/DontBeaHarasser. Here are three examples of tools you can use:

a) The Futures without Violence program Coaching Boys into Men provides men with a playbook/tool kit they can use to talk with boys about street harassment, domestic violence, and sexual violence. tinyurl.com/coachingboys2men
b) Rogers Park Young Women's Action Team created a "Where Our Boys At?" tool kit for engaging young men as allies to end sexual harassment and violence. tinyurl.com/WhereOurBoysAt
c) Jake Winn, a former Peace Corps volunteer and a youth development facilitator in northern Azerbaijan, helped his male students make an anti-street harassment video. He also developed a companion lesson plan. tinyurl.com/CompanionLessonPlan

Men must take a stand.

Men listen to other men, so men speaking to each other and calling each other out can be effective.

[11] Interview conducted by Kearl, March 2014.

“Men harass women on the street because we can, because we can get away with it, because we believe that other guys approve,” says Michael Kimmell, PhD. “We men need to make it clear that we do not approve. It's up to us to stop it.”[12]

Men can call out friends (“Dude, cut it out,” or “That’s not okay), use humor to stop the situation (“Have you ever heard of eHarmony or JDate?”), or ask a thought-provoking question. One man silenced a group of men harassing his friend by asking, “Who here respects women?”

Simply not participating in harassment is not enough. Show that you don’t approve and that you care enough to speak out.

One young man shared this for the SSH Blog, “Don’t turn a blind eye, confront them even if it’s awkward, even if it’s not socially acceptable, do it anyways.”

Educators and community leaders can work with and involve young people.

Street harassment begins at a young age and all schools, groups that work with teens, and colleges and universities should address it with their young people.

K–12 youth

Many schools address topics like bullying and harassment in schools. One way to address street harassment is to simply mention it within these conversations.

In relevant classes, teachers can incorporate the topic into their lesson plan, as does Ileana Jiménez, a high school teacher of 17 years and founder of www.feministteacher.com.

"For me, stopping street harassment is a part of my work in making the lives of my students safer, just, and whole. Designing courses that address issues of gender-based violence from street harassment to sexual harassment to rape and assault to sex trafficking are critical for making these issues visible to students. Courses that can address these issues include health and wellness and sex education classes as well as high school electives on feminism and human rights. Students can write about their experiences on Stop Street Harassment and other sites, which helps them contribute to the conversation as well as fosters critical thinking skills and civic engagement.

Engage young people through activist art; inspire them to take action. The wealth of activists and artists working on this issue should inspire educators to bring them into schools to further deepen our work in democratic and social justice education."[13]

Community groups can involve young people, too, as Girls for Gender Equity does in Brooklyn, New York.

[12] Interview conducted by Kearl, April 2014.
[13] Interview conducted by Kearl, April 2014.

Joanne N. Smith, GGE's founder and executive director explains, "As an intergenerational organization, GGE values and uplifts the experiences of our young people as well as the women who have come before them. Street harassment is an issue we regularly work on together. One of our first actions took place in 2006.

Our Sisters in Strength Youth Organizers, aged 15–18, watched *War Zone*, a film by Maggie Hadleigh West that documents her daily experiences as she walks alone through major US cities.

Following the film, the youth organizers commiserated about their own experiences with street harassment. "War Zone" sparked the youth's desire to make their own culturally relevant film of girls and young women of color within their community; they made *Hey, Shorty!*

The youth organizers also developed anti-street harassment posters and organized a citywide street harassment summit where they premiered their film and partnered with local organizations to lead workshops. It was an empowering experience and led the way for later projects.

Our work to combat sexual harassment and violence on streets and in schools is featured in the 2014 film *Anita: Speaking Truth to Power*."[14]

Other ideas

Hold story-sharing events or workshops to allow students to safely talk about the issues. For example, GGE's interns had discussed street harassment together many times, but decided they needed to bring their male peers into the conversation. They hosted a "Bring Your Brother" workshop where they invited their brothers, cousins, and other trusted young men in their life.

- The young women led activities that explored what gender stereotypes are, how they impact the lives of young people and how young men can be allies to young women. It was successful and the young men were thoughtful, open, and engaged throughout the workshop.
- Have students do art projects. For example, have each student write a street harassment story on a cut out of a shoe and then put all of the shoes on a bulletin board decorated like a street. Ask students to write pro-respect messages on signs to put by the school.
- Hold self-defense workshops and bystander intervention trainings.
- Have youth create their own public service announcements or documentaries about the issue.
- Help youth organize marches and summits to raise awareness about street harassment in their communities (tinyurl.com/TeensSpeakOut).
- Ask students to organize a school assembly on the subject (tinyurl.com/SchoolAssemblyExample).

Resources

- The award-winning film *Walking Home* (tinyurl.com/WalkingHomeNuala) and discussion guide (tinyurl.com/WHDiscussionGuide) created by the filmmaker Nuala Cabral, co-founder of FAAN Mail, a media literacy and activism project formed by women of color in Philadelphia
- The book *Hey Shorty! A Guide to Combatting Sexual Harassment and Violence in Schools and on the Streets* (GGE)

[14] Interview conducted by Kearl, April 2014.

- The book *50 Stories about Stopping Street Harassers* (SSH)
- An *Educator's Guide* by Hollaback! and a comic book about street harassment by HollabackPHILLY. Visit www.ihollaback.org

Colleges/Universities

The median age respondents in our survey first faced street harassment is 18 years old. Colleges and universities can and should address this issue.

Campus communities can talk about street harassment at orientation and integrate it into efforts around sexual harassment.

Booths in high trafficked places on campus can provide information to students. (For flyers, visit tinyurl.com/StHarassmentFlyers.)

Student handbooks, counseling centers, health centers, and women's and LGBTQ centers can also provide or include information about street harassment.

Campuses can also invite speakers, hold workshops, and have discussion groups about street harassment or help students start their own campus website or blog for sharing stories and tips.

Professors can talk about street harassment in their classes, as Dr. Jennifer Martin does at the University of Mount Union in Ohio.

"I teach gender studies. I have faced some resistance from students in the class who are hesitant to acknowledge that sexism and other forms of oppression exist. Using Holly Kearl's book, *50 Stories about Stopping Street Harassment*, has been instrumental in communicating the fact that such problems are, in fact, real, and this text provides students with practical solutions that have inspired them to get involved on their campus and in their communities to work for solutions to the problems of harassment, among other things. My students, after reading Kearl's text, are broaching activist ideas."[15]

Local government leaders can assess the problem and take action.

Street harassment should be a concern for every local government official. Street harassment keeps many citizens from feeling safe in public places and street harassment can keep them from fully engaging with their community. It can also negatively impact tourism and commerce.

Street harassment varies by community and so, first, local governments should assess what is happening in their communities: are there hotspots of harassment? Peak harassment times? Certain demographics being targeted?

There are three suggested ways to track this information.

[15] Interview conducted by Kearl, April 2014.

1. ### Conduct a survey.
   Find out what people experience. This could be an online survey distributed through districts, neighborhoods, businesses, and school groups or one conducted by paper on the streets.

2. ### Hold a city council hearing.
   Invite members of the public to testify about their experiences and give their recommendations. New York City held one in 2010 and Philadelphia held one in 2013. The hearing in New York City led to the council tackling the issue in many ways, from holding more events on the topic to partnering with local organizations to better document and address the problem. In Philadelphia, the hearing led to a partnership between the City Council and local activist groups like HollabackPHILLY to conduct community safety audits in late 2014.

3. ### Conduct community safety audits.
   A community safety audit is a tool created by METRAC in Toronto and is used by the United Nations all over the world. It allows citizens to go into their neighborhoods and look for things like who is using public space, how well lit the streets are, and whether there is graffiti. Each person evaluates how safe they would feel being at that place alone in daylight and after dark and why. Then each person shares their audit and as a group they find patterns and problem areas to address.

   Groups in Washington, DC, and New York City have led local audits. “This audit focused on women’s safety is a key step in the crime prevention effort in my district,” said New York City Council Member Julissa Ferreras in 2012. “We hope to develop a better understanding of the community’s needs and concerns to help reduce the risk of crime against women in the future.”[16]

   The free iPhone app Safetipin allows people to conduct their own safety audits throughout their community and see what others are saying about how safe they feel there, too.

Law enforcement and transit agencies can conduct trainings and hold campaigns

Countless people have reported to anti-street harassment groups (and a few mentioned it during the SSH focus groups) that they have tried to report street harassment to law enforcement and transit agents and instead of receiving help, they were laughed at, further harassed, or told that what happened wasn’t illegal. While there are some law enforcement and transit agents who respond to complaints appropriately, we want everyone to do so.

Here are suggestions for how law enforcement and transit groups can reach that goal:

1. ### Get educated about the laws.
   Some forms of street harassment are illegal while others are not, and the laws vary by state. Stop Street Harassment produced a state-by-state guide called *Know Your Rights: Street Harassment*

[16] “New York City Safety Audit a Success,” Stop Street Harassment, 8 May 2012, www.stopstreetharassment.org/2012/05/nycaudit/.

and the Law that lets both citizens and law enforcement know the laws regarding street harassment behaviors in each state.

2. ### Learn more about the issue itself.
   Learn more about street harassment, why it's upsetting to people, and why they need a polite and respectful person to talk to/report to. Note: blaming the person or asking them out when they seek help is not acceptable.

3. ### Know about local resources.
   If a person is upset enough by a street harassment incident to report it, they likely need emotional help, too. Referring them to a local crisis center, counseling center, or anti-street harassment group is a good idea. As a law enforcement officer, you can offer help in the form of a referral whether or not you can also make an arrest. The Washington, DC, transit agency does this as a matter of policy.

4. ### Don't harass or over-police.
   Over-policing and over-arresting in low-income neighborhoods and among communities of color is a problem in the United States and not something SSH supports. In general, many law enforcement agencies need more training on respect, empathy, and cross-cultural understanding. They also need training on respecting and not harassing women. Otherwise, police do not become safe places to turn to for help.

Transit Agencies

Several studies show that sexual harassment is a problem on transit systems worldwide and nationwide. As a result, transit police and transit agencies in Boston, New York City, Chicago and Washington, DC, have each tackled the issue to varying degrees.

Boston's agency was the first to address it in 2008, in partnership with the Boston Area Rape Crisis Center, when they launched the first of three waves of public service announcements and had police officers go undercover to look for inappropriate behavior.

"The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) and the MBTA Transit Police take sexual harassment seriously," said Joseph O'Connor, superintendent-in-chief of the MBTA Transit Police in April 2014. "We want the community to feel comfortable letting us know what they are seeing and experiencing because with their help we can make a difference."[17]

In Washington, DC, Collective Action for Safe Spaces (CASS) and SSH have worked with the transit agency since 2012 to address harassment on the system. That year, at the request of the activists, the transit agency created an online reporting form and began following up with everyone who submits a report within 24 hours. They have public service posters on buses and Metro cars and platforms encouraging people to report incidents. And by summer 2015, they will have trained all 4,000 front-line employees on how to deal with street harassment. Trained staff have flyers to hand people about harassment. They have also held several outreach days, handing out flyers, bracelets, and t-shirts to riders.

[17] "Awareness campaign sexual harassment/assaults on MBTA," MBTA Transit Police Blog, 7 April 2014, www.tpdnews411.com/2014/04/press-release-awareness-campaign-sexual.html.

"Our customers have every right to expect a safe ride without fear of being assaulted or harassed in any way," said Metro Transit Police Chief Ron Pavlik. "We wanted to put would-be harassers on notice that we won't tolerate that kind of behavior. Together with our community partners, we created an outreach campaign and new reporting tools to demonstrate our commitment that Metro remain a safe space for all of our riders.

We have benefitted in our campaign from best practices we learned from our partners at MBTA in Boston. In that spirit, we stand ready and willing to assist any other transit agency by sharing information about our experience combatting harassment."[18]

In spring 2014, both agencies participated in a global outreach awareness event along with several other transit agencies.

Local businesses can create safer spaces for their patrons.

Harassment in front of, near, and inside of businesses is bad for business. Countless people have recounted never returning to stores, restaurants, movie theaters, and bars where they were harassed, be it inside or outside the building.

In the mid-2000s, the Rogers Park Action Team tackled this problem in its Chicago community by asking businesses to put "RESPECT" signs in their windows and look out for men who hung outside the stores harassing the women going by. Dozens of businesses joined their successful effort.

Most businesses have sexual harassment training for their staff, and a logical extension could be to talk about what to do when staff witness harassment happening among patrons. A harassing customer is not always right. Businesses should have policies about what to do in cases of street harassment and train staff in bystander intervention techniques.

Businesses can sometimes provide safe haven for people facing harassment on the street. If someone is being followed, they may run into the nearest store or gas station for safety. Knowing that businesses are ready to help them can give harassed persons sorely needed security and peace of mind. Businesses can create "Safe Zone" stickers for their windows and alert community members that they are there to help.

Businesses taking action to call out, stop, and prevent harassment is a win-win. It's better for their business and it creates more public places where everyone can be safe. Business owner Chris Belkas in Baltimore, Maryland, suggests, "By getting more people involved, the lessons learned by each business could help contribute to the movement overall and increase the sense of community in our area, especially if there is a large group of businesses/spaces where it is known that everyone should feel safe regardless of their skin color, sex, gender representation, and that offensive behavior towards patron of a space will not be tolerated."[19]

[18] Interview conducted by Kearl, March 2014.
[19] Interview conducted by Kearl, April 2014.

These are two examples of community groups working with businesses to create safe spaces.

SAFER SPACE CAMPAIGN IN MARYLAND

Hollaback! Bmore launched a Safer Spaces Campaign targeting businesses in 2013. "We want more than a shallow promise, we want actual change," said director Shawna Potter.

They work directly with businesses to ensure its current employee guide and/or security policies are comprehensive and sensitive to experiences of gender-based violence. Then Hollaback! Bmore provides a free training workshop to walk staff through street harassment basics, crisis response, and role playing real-life situations. Once a majority of employees have gone through the training, they sign a pledge, hang an informational poster (provided) in plain view, and receive the Hollaback! Employer's Guide to Ending Street Harassment. Hollaback! Bmore then supports and advertises these spaces on their website. As of Spring 2014, two venues were completely trained and eight more had signed on for upcoming trainings.

RED AND GREEN CARDS AGAINST HARASSMENT IN OHIO

In 2013, Hollaback! Appalachian Ohio started a campaign with businesses because "we noticed a high concentration of stories reported on Court Street, which is the uptown bar area of town," says director Sarah Fick. "We used the personal connections we had in the community and advertised the program through press releases." Two businesses had signed on as of Spring 2014.

Their program has four steps. First, a business must meet with Fick to learn about the program. Then at least 65% of their service staff must attend a three-hour training focused on sexual violence and alcohol, bystander intervention, self-defense, and how to respectfully respond to survivors. Then, the businesses receive print materials like posters for bathrooms, decals for the front doors or windows, and red and green cards to be handed to customers as needed. Green cards have resources for people being harassed and red cards ask harassers to leave the premises immediately. Steps three and four are optional: a free self-defense class and a community conversation about harassment issues.

Conclusion

There is no action too small for individuals to take to make a difference. But it cannot be up to individuals alone to solve this problem, especially not just those who are harassed. We must have men, educators, government leaders, law enforcement, transit agencies, and businesses working together to create safe public spaces for everyone. Share your success stories with us: www.stopstreetharassment.org/contact.

Appendix A – Focus Groups

SSH conducted 10 focus groups between August 2012 and March 2014 to supplement the 2,000-person national survey. Everyone was told about the study and its purpose beforehand and participants signed consent/permission forms to have what they shared be tape recorded and included in the report. Nearly everyone agreed to have their first name and a group photo included.

These groups, in the order they were conducted were with:

1. Native Americans at Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota (four women and one man, all in their 20s and 30s).
2. Residents of Rapid City, South Dakota (four women, ages 16 to early 50s, including three Native American women and one White woman).
3. Residents of Brooklyn, New York (seven African American women in their 20s and 30s).
4. Queer women of color in New York City, New York (four African Americans in their 20s and 30s).
5. Residents of Los Angeles, California (six women in their 20s to 50s, including two women of color and four White women).
6. Gay men in Washington, DC (two White men in their 20s).
7. Gay, bisexual, and queer men in Washington, DC (15 men in their 20s and 30s, including six men of color and nine White men).
8. Latinas in Deerfield Beach, Florida (seven women ages 14 to 50, who were originally from Brazil, Chile, Colombia, and Peru).
9. Female bicyclists in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (seven women in their 20s and 30s, including three women of color and four White women).
10. College students in Montgomery, Maryland (seven students of color in their late teens and 20s, including five women and two men).
11. Asian American women in Boston Massachusetts (nine women in their 20s and 30s)

Read summaries of each focus group in this section.

Native Americans and Street Harassment on Pine Ridge Reservation, South Dakota

The first focus group was conducted at Oglala Lakota College on Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota.[20] Speaking with Native Americans about street harassment was important because, at the time, studies and articles had only focused on non-Native racial groups.

Street harassment — as well as rape, domestic violence, and racial profiling — were problems the five focus group participants had experienced.

"Yesterday, we were outside our house enjoying the night when these 10- and 12-year-old Native American boys yelled, 'Hey baby girl' over and over as we jumped on a trampoline. Then the boys lifted up their shirts and said, 'You want some of this?' as they pounded on their chests," said Kristina about the most recent harassment incident she and her sister Sunny faced. She said the boys wouldn't stop and she and Sunny felt so uncomfortable they went inside.

"People see harassment as a joke, but it's not a joke. It affects our life. If we want to go for a walk, there's always somebody yelling things, honking from their car, and it makes you uncomfortable," said Sunny. "We don't like to walk anywhere."

Kristina said, "The guys in cars sometimes will turn around and harass you repeatedly as they go by."

Sunny said she likes to run, but there are few places she feel safe. "I won't run on the streets here anymore," she said.

Dawn brought up harassment at Pow-Wow festivals and the other women in the room immediately said, "Oh yeah." Dawn explained that it's common and socially acceptable for groups of young men to make a noise like, "Chee chee chee," when young women walk by, "like you're some kind of animal." The women said it's disrespectful and demeaning. But, Dawn said, "Most of the guys are harmless. They do it to be funny and get attention. It's Native humor, to humiliate you in a way, kind of like 'your momma' jokes, but different. So if a girl did stop and go up to a guy, he'd be shocked and thrown off."

Everyone felt there's a higher tolerance for harassment and violence on the Reservation. Several of them noted this was a change in their culture, which used to be very respectful of women. "It was a matriarchal society and respect for women was engrained until colonialism and assimilation and it seems like we just fell apart," said Sunny. "Sexual harassment is one manifestation of that."

[20] The woman on the far left of the photo was the organizer of the focus group, not a participant. The fourth female participant left early.

Sunny and Dawn had both been to different parts of California (Sunny for boarding school and Dawn to visit relatives) and they had experienced harassment there by strangers, too.

"My twin and I were walking to the mall from our boarding school when we were 14 years old and these guys had these trucks they could just press this button and it will whistle at women for them. These one guys drove by like that and we didn't pay attention but then they drove by again and kept doing that. Then they slowed down and so we ran into a grocery store, ran all to the back and locked ourselves in the bathroom … But we got away from them; we had seen them out there looking for us."

For Dawn, going to San Francisco was a shock. Men were continually calling out to her and her cousins, talking about her clothes and appearance and making racialized sexual remarks based on whatever nationality they thought she was. "I was a country girl and thought, oh my God, I want to stay away from this street here, but then every street was like that. I wanted to go home."

During the discussion, they said some of their female peers seek out male attention in public spaces. When it comes to sexual harassment, Dawn said, "It's so normal to us, we don't know it as harassment."

Several people talked about the police as a problem, too, be it for sexual or racial harassment. "I've had instances when I used to live in Kyle and I had to walk by the jail and I'd feel uncomfortable because of the cops themselves who would stare inappropriately. Can you imagine feeling like that when cops are supposed to be here to protect and serve you and they're acting like that?" Sunny asked.

The one man in the group shared his experiences with racial profiling, saying cops regularly pull him over in his car for no reason. "When they see I'm Native. Then I get the business." Recently, a cop pulled him over about a crack in his windshield and made him get in the police car while the officer searched his car. When the officer asked why his windshield was cracked, the man said it was because of rocks from trucks. At that moment a truck went by and rocks flew off it, and he said, "See, like that." The officer still gave him a warning, but the man felt he was lucky the truck went by right then.

Everyone talked about experiencing racial profiling in stores, restaurants, and grocery stores, including being followed around by white sales people, ignored in restaurants by the wait staff, and generally treated as less respectable than white people.

In fact, Dawn said, "We deal with racism more than sexual harassment here. We only deal with other harassment when we go someplace else … And for men, the racism isn't as hidden, it's not as subtle as it is for a women, but we sense it more and are more hurt by it. We can read the body language."

Their ideas for change included

1. Programs for boys and girls on all parts of the Reservation that teach them life skills and respect for others.
2. More education and mentoring of youth in general.

Queer Women of Color and Street Harassment in Brooklyn, New York

Queer women and women of color face some of the most constant and aggressive forms of street harassment. Four queer women of color in Brooklyn, New York, two who present as masculine and two who present as feminine, shared their street harassment experiences.

Charla and Kenisha, the women who are masculine-presenting, said mostly people stare at them, and may whisper, "Is that a guy or a girl?" But they felt they faced fewer sexual comments than feminine-presenting women, including women they have dated. Both women said a lot of times their masculine identity makes them feel safer. "It's almost like having this protection and I can walk home later at night and maybe feel safer," said Charla.

On the other hand, both women had been solicited by men. In Charla's case, it was her barber. They were talking about families and then he asked her if she was into girls and when she said yes, he said, "'I get a lot of women like you who come in here and you know, sometimes, some women have been with guys before and sometimes every now and then they miss it and so I give them dick, if you ever want dick, hit me up.'" Charla was horrified and never went back. A friend cuts her hair now as she doesn't feel safe in barber shops anymore.

For Kenisha, multiple cab drivers have solicited her. "Cab drivers in particular will ask, do you have a boyfriend and if I say no, a girlfriend, they'll ask, 'Have you tried a man?'" she said. "They feel they can convince you." Sometimes Kenisha lies to try to avoid the conversation and she routinely has cab drivers drop her off at a gas station near her home so they don't see where she lives.

Charla also talked about how "people feel comfortable enough to just come and ask you right off about your relationship and everything is always sexualized when it comes to same-gender loving relationships. It's always about sex … it's always questions like 'who wears the strap on?' These are questions people ask when you're walking for the train. It's like, really? It's a type of violation there."

"I think sometimes with couples, when there's the butch/femme dynamic people understand that more or they're looking at it and it mirrors the way that they were socialized but some will ask, 'Why aren't you with a real man?'" said Kim. "I think it's different when there are two femmes or two butches and people won't even realize they're a couple unless there's handholding or something like that."

All of the women talked about men's feelings of entitlement to say anything to them. "It's hard enough coming out to your family and to yourself," said Kim, "Becoming conscious of who you are, and then to have someone on the street try to convince you against it?"

"It's this idea that it's actually their business … there's this sense of entitlement," said Angela. "But my story is not theirs to know."

Charla and Angela are a couple and talked about how they haven't been harassed as a couple yet, but believe they will be. "We need to prepare ourselves to know how to handle it, what to say and what to do," said Charla.

Angela: "Yeah what would we do? I personally would lean toward ignoring it, but I feel like in our relationship, we'd want to protect the other person."

Charla: "I think we would have to assess the environment that we're in and how safe we feel if we could actually speak up or if we should just keep quiet or not hold hands down that block. It's unfortunate that you do have to sometimes police yourself."

Three of the women shared stories about being followed. "I've been followed by men in cars, which is really scary," said Angela. "I usually try to walk on the side opposing traffic instead of with traffic because they can't follow as easily." Then she recounted a story about coming home from a club when two men in a white car pulled up next to her and rolled down the window to talk to her. She pretended to ignore them and they got mad. "They were like, oh what you're going to ignore me now? Hello. We are present, you need to be talking to me … They called me a bitch and all of that kind of stuff… why do they think that's okay to yell at women from their car at night … or whenever?"

"There have been nights when I've been followed," said Charla, "and I've had to call my mom and say I'm at such and such corner and someone is following me and this is the route I'm going to take…When someone is following you it can be really scary because you don't know if they're with someone else who is going to jump out…I shouldn't have to feel that way about getting home."

Kim talked about a time when a man offered her a ride from his car and when she pretended to ignore him, he parked his car and followed her on foot. "I'm like, ok, what do I do, it's a straight shot and the way the street is, there aren't streets to turn down, so it's just me and him…not only do I not feel safe, I just don't know what to do. I took a survey of everything around me and tried to remain as calm as possible."

Once a man directly threatened Charla. She was walking home with two female roommates when a man told one of them, "Damn you look good, can I eat your pussy?" and Charla said, "Why are you being so disrespectful?" The man went off calling her a "f***ing dyke bitch" and threatened to rape her. The women all agreed that public spaces often are not safe for them.

Their suggestions for addressing street harassment were

1. Talk to men. Charla suggested every woman find one man she trusts and tell him a story in the hopes that he will be more aware and call out his friends.
2. Educate youth to respect women.
3. Share stories. "Talking to a person you love and hearing their stories carries a lot more weight…It's like reading your own language," said Kim.
4. Share ideas about responding to incidents among women so we are less reactionary.
5. Talking about it period, instead of brushing it off.

Gay, Bisexual, & Queer Men and Street Harassment in Washington, D.C.

Gay, bisexual, and queer men can face a lot of street harassment, especially if their sexual orientation or gender expression is obvious. SSH held two focus groups with this community: one that two White men attended and one that 15 men of various races attended. This section covers both sessions.

Street harassment was a serious problem for several of the participants, particularly the ones who were often identified by others as being gay, bisexual, or queer.

"My family lives in New York and my husband and I were visiting. It was the day after same-sex marriage had passed there. We were walking near each other, not holding hands or kissing or anything, and this guy comes up behind us in Chinatown and says, 'Just so you know, we kill fags like you in our country,'" shared Tom. "It's the sort of thing where you try to laugh it off. I know he's not going to actually kill me on the street, but it's just spooky."

"I've been harassed on the bus and Metro," said Justin, "and I jokingly refer to myself as a down-low magnet for men who are either on the down-low or in the closet or bisexual, but it's kind of switched to being a bus driver magnet."

"A bus driver has felt so comfortable that he's offered to buy me a sex toy. Another talked openly about being on the DL and asked for my number. I even got passed a phone number on the train by a gentleman who says, "What's up? Trying to f***," and I guess that was his idea of courting. And most of the time I just laugh it off and go, ew gross, but at the end of the day it frustrates me because … I don't know of people who've had a similar instance, so it makes me assess myself and think, what is it about me that makes people think they can say these things to me?"

They were also harassed for doing things that are considered feminine. For example, Justin was harassed a few times because of the bag he carried. Men would yell at him and call it a purse.

For Tom, it was his umbrella. "There was a while where I had a pink umbrella I got at the Cherry Blossom Festival," said Tom, "and I would carry it around because it's a goddamn umbrella and who cares, but apparently plenty of people care. A guy by the bus stop around the corner from my apartment even threatened to rape me with it … I changed my bus route."

Some men feel there is often direct or indirect victim-blaming when a gay, bisexual, or queer man is harassed. "When I hear about someone being attacked, I catch myself thinking, what did they do to draw

attention to themselves?" said Matt, even though he shared that he knows no one is to blame for being attacked.

While men who passed for straight or were butch faced less harassment, all of the men voiced fears and concerns about harassment and assault in public spaces.

"There are places and neighborhoods I will not go," said Matt. "Not because I was harassed but because others have been harassed there. I will not go any lower than 12th Street. That's where you hear about LGBQT people being attacked, robbed and murdered and I avoid those parts of the city as I don't even want to take the chance of putting myself at risk."

"I've been in situations where I've taken the bus and I dress like this [gestures to his bright colored clothes], and I butch myself up more to go on certain bus lines," said Justin. "Like I often paint my nails but when I go up there, I take off the polish."

One man was wearing gay pride bracelets during the focus group, something he said he does for gay rights events, but he said even walking to the focus group, he purposely wore a jacket with long sleeves he could pull down to cover his bracelets. "Other people don't have to prepare themselves so much [when they go places]," he said.

With the large group, there was a debate about the differences between harassment and a compliment and what to do if one saw someone else being harassed. A few men felt strongly about using self-defense. One man said, "Shouldn't we be going to self-defense class? Take on someone … don't quit your job or change a route."

Another man, who was attacked outside of a bar the previous month in Baltimore, but not because of being gay, said, "What I've learned is there's really no way to deal with it unless you have some kind of training beforehand to know what to do… in any type of situation when you feel your safety is your primary concern, it's important to know about your surroundings and what you want to do in that instance."

All of the men said harassment first started in school for them, before it ever happened in public spaces. For example one man said he had a "vivid recollection of being in sixth grade and I was new to school, and these guys were calling me gay and I didn't know what the hell they were talking about and I shrugged them off. In eighth grade I joined the football team and all of a sudden it just stopped cold. It's like they thought, 'He's obviously masculine because he's playing football so he must not be gay.'"

Several men recalled being called "gay" or "faggot" at a very young age and not yet knowing what it meant. One man, originally from Staten Island, New York, said, "As early as age six, kids were calling me gay and I didn't even know what it meant. Later on I learned the definition and was shocked that it was me and that everyone knew but me."

Few people saw the police as a viable option for getting help because they didn't feel the police take them seriously. "I only talked to a police officer once," said Tom. "It was when I was out running and the 40 Days of Life anti-abortion event was happening and there were all these teenagers and I have never had so many people call me a faggot in five minutes ... I went to the police officer standing near the Metro and

told him and he said, 'Just grow up.' It's like, 'Awesome, thanks, officer.' That was more discouraging because it's like, I guess I didn't really expect him to go arrest anyone, but it would be nice if they told them to knock it off. It's things like that where, people ask me why don't you ever go to the police and it's like, well if that's the reaction I get for something that's innocuous, what am I going to do if someone actually does something?"

"I find that city police tend to be the ones that don't give a shit," said Matt. "When I was getting harassed a lot and I talked to an officer about it, his response was, 'Well it's pretty much like Vietnam down here, what do you expect?' And I was like, oh well if that's your attitude… but I find that Metro transit police officers, for whatever reason, are much more approachable."

Washington, DC, had an LGBT liaison unit, but it went inactive a few years ago because it was intended that all officers would be trained to be sensitive to LGBQT issues. That has not yet happened. "Now, I don't see them anywhere," said Tom. "I don't know how to contact them and their website is defunct. People say the DC police have the best outreach team in the country and if that's the best then that is terrifying."

There were critiques of the LGBTIQA community as a whole on this issue. Tom said, "Some issues of discrimination that come up, I can go to the community at large and I'll get some type of support, but when it comes to stuff like street harassment, I can't. I feel like it might kind of tie into the whole thing of this happens to women and you're getting this because you're acting like a woman and if you'd be a good gay and act like a man you wouldn't get this."

"Gay male harassment of each other is a problem," said Matt. "I hate the trend that gay men are going to now about how everything is about how masculine you are. Because apparently there is something inherently feminine about being gay and so if you're gay you have to clarify, well I'm gay but I'm not feminine gay." He also remarked, "If we have a caste system, if we can't treat each other fairly, how can we expect people outside our community to treat us fairly?"

The participants discussed solutions

1. Acknowledge street harassment and issues of violence within the LGBTIQA community and acknowledge harassment of LGBTIQA individuals within the anti-street harassment movement.
2. End the demonization of the feminine or effeminate. Focusing less on sexual orientation and more on gender expression, participants noted that people target tangible things like the swish of a walk or a lisp or pink and, as such, straight men can be targeted too.
3. Focus on more than just gay marriage as an LGBTIQA issue. Several men said comments like, "What good is being able to get married if you're not even safe in your own neighborhood?"
4. Sensitivity training for law enforcement and health care professionals.
5. More inclusive public service announcements on public transit systems. There are anti-harassment posters in DC but many men said they thought the ads were just for women.
6. Education about street harassment and LGBTIQA experiences in schools.
7. Ad campaigns targeting harassers, along the lines of the slogan "Real men don't rape."
8. Raise awareness by sharing stories with friends and family, as well as anti-harassment groups that can use them to advocate for policy changes.

Latinas and Street Harassment in Deerfield Beach, Florida

Florida has a large Hispanic population (23%), comprised of people from many Central and South American countries. Seven women who are immigrants from Brazil, Colombia, Chile, and Peru met in Deerfield, Florida, for this focus group. Three college-age women arrived quite late, so the bulk of the stories are from the four women from Brazil and Colombia.

To start, Maria from Colombia said that verbal forms of street harassment in the United States seemed normal and benign compared to Colombia, where she felt the harassment was much more constant.

“I even had one guy touching my back,” said Maria. “It was very uncomfortable. I started screaming. It was awful. But here, I don’t feel anything.”

“In Colombia I had the same experience,” said Elma. “Somebody just hit my butt because I decided to walk from my house to my job...I started running because I was close to my office. I remember that. My dad was there. I was crying because I never expected this.”

Elma said she faced a lot of street harassment when she and her husband first moved to the United States and lived in New Jersey. She worked in a deli and there was a man who used to come in daily. One day when Elma had to go to the laundromat, he approached her and invited her to go to his house and that “your sir, he doesn’t need to know.” She told him he was crazy. “I just started running because I felt like this man is just going to grab me and take me away or something like that. Since then, I told my husband, ‘You know what? Never ever in my life am I going back to the laundry place by myself.’” Her boss banned the man from coming back to the deli.

Another time in New Jersey, a man trailed Elma in his car and repeatedly asked her if she wanted a ride and told her to get in his car. She told him, “I won’t. I won’t. Just leave me alone,” and called it “another escape for me. I started running because that’s my reaction.”

She felt she was targeted as an immigrant; perhaps they thought she didn’t understand the meaning or intention behind the harassment. Until she moved from the area a few months later, she said, “I was carrying some fears about going out.”

Everyone agreed street harassment is very bad in Miami, which is about an hour’s drive away from Deerfield Beach. The college-age women talked about how they only felt safe there when they’re with a big group of people.

Several women talked about being harassed in restaurants, stores, and malls.

H., from Brazil, said that once she went to a Brazilian restaurant in Florida to buy food with her daughter and they saw two men staring at them. "I heard one tell the other, 'I bet [I can] touch her butt.' When I heard that, I understood it was about me. They came up to me… I just told him, 'No. You do not do that.' The owner of the restaurant came and said, 'Hey, guy! Don't do that!'"

H. said they never went back to the restaurant after that, even though up until then they visited regularly. "I was worried about my daughter. I didn't want her to see that situation. Never again."

A few years ago Elma and her family visiting from Colombia went to the mall. They were at a table, deciding where to eat, when her 10-year-old cousin started crying. She said a man nearby was blowing kisses at her and making her feel uncomfortable. "I looked at this man and I started to argue with him. 'What happened to you? You didn't' see she's 10 years old? You're an old man.'" The man claimed the girl made it up but Elma didn't buy it.

She called the security guard but he blamed the women for letting the harassment happen, then said the girl was confused and to calm down. Elma felt like the guard didn't listen to them because they were immigrants. "I made this big thing. I said, 'We're leaving now.'… It is not safe for you even to go out with a little girl because somebody is going to do something to her. For her, it was scary."

Harassment in grocery stores was not unusual. Gabby said recently she was buying milk when a guy looking at her made her feel uncomfortable. She ran away to rejoin her friends. Maria noted the best way to get rid of a stalker in a grocery store is to go to the diapers section and then they seem to disappear.

Julia, who is 14, said she hasn't experienced harassment. She always has her phone or goes places with someone rather than alone. Even though she hasn't been harassed, it's often on her mind when she's in public spaces.

"The other day I was walking. Next to my school there's a neighborhood and then there's a little road through the neighborhood that gets to another road. I was going through it so my sister could pick me up on the other side…I'm always scared that someone in a car is going to come up [to get me] or something because I just have that heavy conscience that something will happen. But nothing has happened. I'm very glad for that."

Her mother, H., talked about being fearful of pedophiles and how she is cautious about where her daughters can go. She never used to let them go to public bathrooms alone.

Elma and Maria are mothers of young daughters and they talked about wanting to protect them from harassers, too.

The women mused about how much more cautious women and girls have to be to try to stay safe. "It's very different for a guy," Rickelle said. "Parents are more lenient with them. My parents say call me regularly because they worry." Her friend July said, "My male friends can go everywhere but I have to get permission from my parents for everything."

They discussed the differences between a compliment and harassment. They also shared different strategies they use for harassment, from going places in a group to ignoring harassers to being assertive.

Maria said, “I’m not scared. I’m kind of rude [to harassers].” She talks back to people who say things like, “mamacita,” and “pssst.” She asks them, “Are you deflating? Oh my God, what’s wrong with you?” She noted her response depends on the situation: “where you are, who it is, everything in total.”

As far as solutions

They focused heavily on the need for parents, teachers, and celebrity role models to teach children to be respectful and to be nice to people. “They learn from the example of their parents,” said one of the college students.

Street Harassment in Rapid City, South Dakota

Rapid City is a conservative, mid-sized city in the Midwest. Four women participated in the focus group — three Native American and one White — all of whom regularly walk to navigate the city.[21]

Street harassment was a regular problem for them, ranging from unwanted whistles from men in cars up to assault.

A Native woman in her late 20s said that a month ago as she walked along the city’s bike path — a common way to traverse through the city — a group of Native men surrounded her and one of them grabbed her. “I had to fight him off me, I didn’t have a cell phone or anything and I just ran off and they kept hollering. ‘Hey get over here, do you want to f***?’ It is scary in Rapid on the streets, especially at night.”

A rape survivor — as one in three Native women are — said street harassment is re-triggering. In this instance, she said, “It brings back memories … it causes me to drink. I get mad when I think about it.”

Now she won’t go places alone. In fact, her mother came with her to the library, where we were holding the focus group, and halfway through joined us as one of the participants.

Another woman in her 20s shared an experience from the night before. Her husband works the graveyard shift at Hardees from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m., and she often walks there when he starts his shift because he can give her a free meal. The night before, when she walked home from the restaurant a carload of men whistled at her and called her a “f***ing whore.”

“It’s pretty normal to me…that guys say that,” she said. “I just ignore it, I don’t say anything. It makes me mad, but I don’t know them and they don’t know me.”

When he can, her husband walks her part-way home, but many nights she walks alone.

The first woman noted, “We don’t talk about it … it’s an everyday thing for Native women, it’s just normal. You just learn to put up with it I guess, but we shouldn’t have to.”

[21] Note: This group opted to not have a photo taken. The Native women did not want to share their names and they were very shy and reserved during the conversation.

She shared that she was just solicited for sex and harassed on her Facebook account an hour earlier by a man she doesn't know, so harassment online is a problem, too.

The first woman's mother said street harassment is nothing new. "When I was going to school down here at Central, a lot of guys tried to pick me up and stuff as I walked to and from school," she said. "And I'd ask cops to do something about it and they wouldn't do anything and I had to walk a long ways."

She said that in a housing development where she used to live, "girls would get jumped… cops don't care and sometimes the police are scared to go out there."

She said she feels scared for both her daughters and sons when they're walking by themselves. "In 2006 my son got jumped because he wore a blue shirt," she said. "I'm especially worried when I know the cops, who are supposed to be out there to protect and serve, but who nowadays don't do that."

Police were sometimes seen as the harassers.

The older Native woman said, "There were a couple of times the cops have stopped us walking to the store to check us for alcohol. This is not appropriate to do that because we don't drink."

She went on, "Even when we're walking around downtown we still get harassed by cops. Also, other Natives will stop you and ask you for money."

Street harassment begins young. Cheynne, a 16-year-old White teenager, said she's been regularly harassed since she was at least 14 years old. "I was walking by and they were yelling stuff like, 'Hey you, hey sexy' and stuff and I'm like what the heck? I was 14 at the time. These guys are like in their 20s, holy cow," she said.

The harassment happens on the streets and also in the Mall where she and her friends go to hang out. While they like to flirt with boys, they don't like ones who are "disrespectful" to them, or, in other words, harass them.

"It's usually a group of guys," she says. "They hit on you like you're an object. You're not a person. You don't have feelings. It's horrible. It's like they're showing off and honestly, I want to punch them in the face. It makes me angry."

If she could share a message with her harassers, it'd be "To stop. They're not making any progress. They're not cool. They're not making any friends, so just stop."

Changes they want to see

1. More education about respect for youth in schools.
2. Sensitivity training for police.
3. More lights in dark parts of town, including the bike trail.
4. Bike patrols on the bike path, perhaps by community volunteers as is happening in Cairo, Egypt, on the subways.

Street Harassment in Brooklyn, New York

Bedford-Stuyvesant (Bed-Stuy), a neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York, has been a cultural center for Brooklyn's Black population for decades. The Brooklyn Movement Center is located there, and they partnered with SSH to host a focus group on street harassment with seven Black women from the area. The women primarily walk or take the subway.

Street harassment was often a daily experience for them in Bed-Stuy. In this densely populated area, the harassment was more constant than in other places the women had lived, especially for two women who are from California and North Carolina. Men calling them "sexy" or making comments about their appearance was routine.

Men saying vulgar and sexually explicit comments to them was something they had all experienced. Jackie said she was just walking down the street when a man called out to her, "With legs like that, I want to ride you like a horse." She was shocked.

Candice said men who used to harass her from in front of a barbershop would sometimes just shout out, "I love you! I love you!" or make comments about how she looked. "Then at one point they were getting really fresh," she said, "Saying things like, 'I want to lick that pussy,' or 'Can I get that c*nt?'"

One woman recalled how as a teenager, she and a female friend sometimes pretended they were in a relationship to deter men, but one man kept harassing them anyway. As they walked away he yelled after them, "Tick tock, all I want you to do is suck my c*ck." They ran home.

Men feeling entitled to women's attention and bodies came up multiple times. Every woman had faced or witnessed harassers angry after they or other women did not respond favorably to them. Men had called them "stuck-up," "sour face," or "bitch." Kristen said, "One night, I was walking up the street from the train and a guy said, 'Can I talk to you?' and I said, 'No, I need to get home,' and he said, 'Yeah well f*** you.'"

After Jackie pretended to ignore a 15-year-old who harassed her from his bike, he told neighborhood kids to douse her with a bucket of water and they did. She had to walk soaked to her next destination.

Two women shared scary retaliation stories. One said, "I've seen a guy knock a girl's head into a brick wall that she was leaning on behind them because she did not want to talk to him. She was gushing blood. It's unacceptable." Another woman said, "My cousin's friend got shot in the back as she walked away because she didn't want to talk to the guy."

Physical harassment was extremely common for the women, from men on the streets to men at clubs and parties to men at community parades.

“I really hate it when people touch me. I was walking around Main [Street] and two guys came out and said they liked me and proceeded to grab my hand and caress me. And I’m like, I don’t know you! ... The first lesson to be learned is: Don’t touch!”

One woman said she refuses to go to any club, party, or event with a lot of heterosexual men present; she prefers queer events because too many straight men think it’s okay to touch women. One of the last non-queer events she went to was a barbeque where a man grabbed her friend’s butt. She said that she and her friend confronted him but no one else at the party did anything.

Anthonine said, “I won’t take men putting their hands on me,” and has confronted several men for doing so. She participates in the annual Caribbean Day Parade and said she has had men try to reach down her pants on the street. She said one year a cop grabbed her butt.

Several women noted how much street harassment is embedded in patriarchy. While the stereotypical harasser is the man loitering on the street corner, several spoke about facing harassment from more educated men at college and social events. The common factor is being male.

They also debated what is and is not acceptable behavior between strangers. Jackie said, “I feel ok when they say I am beautiful. But when it becomes “sexy” and “legs,” that is way too much.”

They also discussed the desire to be able to express themselves sexually without being harassed or touched. One woman asked, “Can I be sexy in public and not have to worry about my safety — can I express my sexuality?” Kristen’s feelings were: “This is not about spandex showing off my curves for you, this is about me and feeling comfortable and explor[ing] my sexuality for myself — it isn’t all for you.”

Many of the women said they stand up to harassers. They might ask men calling them sexy or similar terms if that’s how they want their mothers, sisters, or daughters treated. They might tell men that they can say good morning, how are you, and you look beautiful. Jassu once told a man who called her sexy, “You don’t know me at all. Find a different way to have a conversation with a woman. Be human about it. Please don’t call me sexy.” Jackie said she has responded positively to men who call her beautiful, sista, or queen. “Personally, I try to applaud good behavior,” she said.

Others noted that even responding that way can be a trap because once you say thank you, the men may start following you, may touch you, and may not leave you alone.

The women talked about how harassment makes the streets their “battlefield” and how felt at war with men because they don’t know which one will be a harasser, and they hated that feeling. “How long can we allow our community to be like this?” one woman asked.

They talked about what to do, including:

1. Teach girls to not think harassment is a compliment.
2. Involve men. Have conversations with men. Men must talk to men.
3. View it as a community problem and work toward community solutions, like more jobs for men.
4. Pass out club cards with information about harassment and why it’s not ok.
5. Mentor people in our own families, churches, neighborhoods. Teach respect.

Street Harassment in Los Angeles, California

In many communities, the most common harassers are people in vehicles because they can anonymously harass someone and drive off. Los Angeles, California, a large city with poor public transportation, is one of the most car-centric places in the country. Six women there shared their street harassment experiences, especially from drivers.

"Frequently, when we talk about harassment on public transport people's responses is, 'Take a car,'" said Genevieve. "I know that's not safer. If anything, there are no witnesses if I'm alone in my car."

As dangerous as it is, some men harass women on the freeways while they are both driving. "I was driving down the freeway doing probably 70 in my beat-up little black car. I happened to look over and there's clearly a man staring at me as he's doing 70," said Sarah. "He made this incredibly lewd gesture with his hand about the size of my chest. That was the point at which I was like *Oh. Oh! That's why you were staring at me. Oh dear.* So I took off and did 80 and left him in the dust."

"I'm on this freeway doing 70 mph," said Evette. "There aren't a ton of cars. It's me and this other guy with a child seat in the back. [He is] probably in his 40s. I was in my early-mid 20s. He was driving beside me and trying to wave and get my attention. I was trying to ignore him because I was doing 70 on a freeway. I didn't want an accident. He literally followed me for a few miles as I tried to just ignore him," she continued. "After a while, I was literally like *No! No, I'm not interested*. That just kind of went in one ear and out the other. He was still very persistent. I started thinking I was going to have to call the police … It seemed like right when I made that decision and I reached for my phone, he got onto [another freeway]."

A few women had stories about being harassed by men while sitting at red lights. For example, while at a red light on her way to work, Sarah rolled down her window when a man in a car gestured to her as she thought he needed directions. Instead, she said, he told her, "'The seat belt. It separates your assets nicely.' I just kind of looked at him in bewilderment trying to process what he was saying. Then we both pulled onto the freeway."

"I'm glad that you brought up the stoplight because that's what I was thinking of because that's a unique feature to living in Los Angeles. The whole, 'Hey baby,' when you're stuck at the streetlight. I'm betting probably everybody has had this happen," said Shira. "So I was at the streetlight and the guy next to me was like, 'Hey baby! Hey!' I was just ignoring [him], staring straight ahead which then escalated to the, 'What, are you too good for me?' [I was] staring straight ahead, turned up the radio, pretended I was singing along, you know all those sorts of maneuvers. Then it escalated even more to, 'What, are you a bitch?'"

Lani described being harassed in a parking lot by a man on foot. She and a co-worker were chatting in a parked car while their boss — whose car it was — was inside a building nearby. They had the windows rolled down but the doors locked. A man came up to the car. Lani turned her back to him, but, she said, it

didn't help. He kept saying things like, "Hey baby" and "You're so beautiful." She was really uncomfortable. She pretended to ignore him but he persisted, so finally she turned to him and said thank you and he backed off a bit. But, she said, "I was like I need to roll up the windows. I don't care. This is making me uncomfortable. So I stuck the key into the ignition and I don't know what I did because the alarm went off. It frightened him away. I was like, "This actually worked really well!" as I wasn't sure how to stop it. My boss came running. The guy scattered."

Being harassed by men in cars while women were on foot was very common, too. Annie, who is new to Los Angeles, was meeting a friend and they both had to walk more than a mile. Annie said she was whistled at on her walk and her friend was solicited. The friend was lost and was looking at her phone for directions when a man pulled over and she thought he was going to offer her directions. Instead, Annie shared, "He said to my friend, 'How much?' [She was just] flabbergasted. She's of Indian descent and he called her really exotic and beautiful. She's like, 'I've been in L.A. 24 hours. I'm going to meet my friend. This is 10 in the morning. What the hell?' So I run into her and this is the first thing we talk about: our street harassment experiences."

The women also talked at length about male entitlement in public interactions.

Genevieve has a 1964 car and finds that it is only men who stop to talk to her about it and most of them speak to her in a condescending way: they don't believe she knows what year her car is or they want to tell her everything they know about classic cars.

Lani, a mixed-race woman, talked about men in general routinely guessing or asking what her race is. "Men will just walk up to me and [say], 'Are you yada-yada?' It's just like, whoa! I did not ask to start this conversation! It always really pisses me off."

Evette shared how a lot of men want to know her age, "and get really angry when I don't want to tell them. What does that have to do with [anything]? I've flat out told somebody, "Look. I'm not f***ing you. I'm not marrying you so you don't need to know my age." Why is that important? I've had guys come up to me [and the] first question out of their mouths is, "Can you cook?"

Several women talked about being seen as male property. "If I'm considered to be someone's property, I'm called-for [so usually the harassment is less]," said Shira. Lani shared how twice in one night she was at bars with her boyfriend when random men high-fived him about her. "I was just some property that other men were congratulating my boyfriend on, like, 'What a shiny toy you have. I appreciate that toy.'"

For solutions

They discussed the need for education in middle schools about this issue, including why hollering at women is not okay.

Evette and Lani also shared examples of success in reporting street harassment. They each described instances of reporting security guards who routinely harassed them. The guards were both subsequently fired. Evette was also able to get police to do patrols in a high-crime area, as drug dealers there harassed women walking by. "I find for me, complaining is really powerful. I can probably only complain 5-10% of the time, but I find when I do, it makes such a huge difference," said Evette.

College Students and Street Harassment in Maryland

College women face high rates of sexual violence and they also face a lot of street harassment. Five female (one not pictured) and two male college students talked about their experiences in the Takoma Park and Silver Spring area of Maryland, near Washington, DC. They experienced harassment in many places, from restaurants to the roads by their homes.

One day after class, Tito said she went to a Chipotle restaurant off campus and after exchanging a hello with a man outside the restaurant, he found her inside and kept pestering her for her name, saying she should date his younger brother. “I said no, I’m not interested. And he kept talking and pressuring me. He said, ‘Oh, he looks like your type.’ He just kept pressuring me. I had to literally beg him to leave me alone … and then he left me alone.”

Maria said she was harassed leaving Coldstone Creamery. She was eating an ice cream cone and a construction worker asked her what kind it was. She told him and then he said, in Spanish, “I have something you can lick.” Maria said, “I basically started going off on him saying, ‘You’re disgusting. Do you talk to your mother that way?’ … The guy got more offensive and he said, ‘Oh yeah, that’s how bitches act when they don’t know how to handle one.’” She reported it to campus police.

“After that,” Maria continued, “it did make me change my routine. I completely avoided that shopping center until I saw there was no construction there … whenever I went to [that area], I made sure I wasn’t by myself.”

Vanessa shared a story about being harassed near her home. Her aunt dropped her off at the corner of her street and a car turned down the street and slowed down next to her. “It just sort of stopped and I noticed the guy kept looking back. It didn’t make any sense … I felt kind of nervous and I got out my phone and I hoped he would drive away so I wouldn’t have to call 911.” Then other drivers started honking at him because he was delaying traffic, so he drove away. She noted there are often guys honking at her from their cars and she is used to that, but she’d “never had a car stop by next to me like that.”

Mykaila didn’t recount a specific harassment incident, but said that she works at a restaurant serving people who order food to go and “guys always ask for your number.” She worries, “what if one day, someone just snatches you into the car or something like that.” Some of her coworkers take advantage of the harassment and say they will give men their number for a tip. “I wouldn’t entertain it,” said Mykaila, “it could go further. It’s a scary job even though nothing has happened before.”

Kim shared two related incidents. The first happened several years ago when she was walking to a party with friends. An older man in a car asked for directions and then tried to give them a ride. “It took a really

long time for us to get him to go away," she said. She found it scary but was relieved they were in a group. Then, a few years later, she was at a gas station across from where she worked, getting a snack, when a man tried to get her to go with him in his car. She had to lie to him to finally get him to go away. "I didn't realize until a few minutes later that it was the same guy from all those years before." She says she regrets not recording any information about him because "obviously that's just what he does … it's really creepy."

The young women all felt that street harassment had increased in recent years, in part because they're at an age where "older men see you and think you're not too young and not too old." Tito said, "I personally started getting attention from guys when I got older."

They also talked about how rape and harassment on campus was expected. Maria noted that a lot of male students skip class to watch and harass girls. "You see them surround women sometimes. Sometimes you have to be fierce and talk back. I always say I'd rather be called a bitch than have someone put their hands on me."

The two young men shared stories about harassment they witnessed. Peter said he and his friends saw a guy groping a woman near campus. "Me and a group of my friends tried to get the guy's attention, but he kept doing what he was doing. So we went up and approached him and physically took him off the girl."

McSteve talked about how recently, at a party, he saw a guy go up to a woman to try to get her phone number. She told him, "'Oh I just want to go home, I don't give my number out to a lot of people, but it was nice to meet you.'" Even though she was nice about it, "he got belligerent and said ignorant things because he got rejected … she got into a verbal argument with him that turned into a physical altercation. To see that, it gives a bad name to other males who don't act that way." He noted that some of the guys at the party extracted the harassing guy and beat him up.

Physical violence came up a few other times. Peter said his friend beat up the groper. Several women said they supported violence if it meant stopping a rape or kidnapping.

At one point during the discussion, Peter offered insight into harassers. "When young men see how their older fellow men are talking to females, they're saying persistence is key and that's what they're mostly getting drilled into their head, so they don't know how to stop. They think when she says no, she's just playing with you, she just wants you to keep talking to her. I think that's why so many people are being harassed."

He said he doesn't harass women. After a woman yelled at him for touching her at a party a few years ago, "that just really made me re-evaluate how I talk to females and everything … I respect women. Having rape or the pedophile thing attributed with my name is not going to work for me so that's why I don't harass people."

In thinking about solutions

The young men wanted to see laws that are both stronger and enforced. A few women talked about wanting a self-defense class offered on campus. Mykaila suggested "more focus on men as harassers instead of on women [as victims]." Kim also noted, "A lot of people want to know how to talk to the children in their families about it so they can be better in the future."

Street Harassment and Cyclists in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

As the nation becomes more environmentally conscious, more people are turning to green modes of transportation, like bicycling. In the past few years, several major cities launched bike-sharing programs. How does street harassment intersect with bicyclists? Seven female bicyclists in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, shared their experiences and views.

Overall, the women loved the freedom bicycling gave them to navigate the city, to see it from a different perspective, and to generally feel camaraderie with and share pleasant interactions with other cyclists. “In a lot of ways, I feel like part of why I ride my bike is to really feel connected to my environment. It’s like a different way of moving through space and you notice different things,” said Katie. “I actually actively really enjoy having interactions with strangers when they’re positive.”

Several women said they feel safer from street harassment while on their bicycles.

“A big part of why I bike is because I feel so much safer, because I feel faster. And I feel like I can get away,” said Kareina. “Bicycling feels really safe” compared to harassment experiences Michelle says she’s had on foot. “I truly feel very liberated from the type of street harassment, the sexual street harassment, that I experience walking when I’m riding my bike,” said Katie. “And it’s one of the reasons that I ride a bike, honestly.”

Everyone, however, had been harassed while on a bicycle, by both drivers of cars, pedestrians, and in a few cases, other bicyclists.

The participants felt drivers were the worst culprits. Many drivers do not know the bicycling laws or are frustrated when they feel a bicyclist is in their way, so most of the women had dealt with angry drivers many times, just as their male peers have. Some had even been purposely hit or hurt by drivers in their cars. But for women, the anger often got sexualized.

“I’m sure if it was a guy biking, you know next to the car, the driver would just be like, ‘Get out of the way, asshole,’ or something like that, right? As opposed to being like, ‘I will do X, Y, and Z to you and it will feel like this … And it’s interesting that then it instantly becomes this very gendered space in the way that the car interacts with you,” said Ema. “I always feel like ‘asshole’ is just a really good gender-neutral [insult for somebody], but it always turns to ‘bitch’ and ‘c*nt.’ It will always go there, you know, if you’re a woman,” said Kate.

Some women reported facing direct sexual harassment from drivers. “In the summertime if folks have their windows open, men will stick their hands out and grope your bum as you’re biking by. That certainly happens every once in a while,” said Janette.

When pedestrians are the harassers, the harassment most often takes place when the bicyclists are stopped at traffic lights or stop signs or dismounting or mounting their bikes. Ema shared, "If you are being kind of harassed by somebody who is walking, it is because you're either stopped at [a] stoplight or you're locking up your bike or you've had some sort of issue with your bike. I think those are often my least favorite times is just getting off the bike and somebody saying, 'Oh, I'm jealous of your bike. Don't you want to ride X, Y, and Z?' And it's like, awesome. No, I don't want to do that."

Many women said they have broken laws when otherwise they would not have to try to get away from pedestrian harassers. "One of the things I was thinking about at stoplights, how sometimes you might disobey the law because you need to get away," said Kara.

"It was 6 p.m. one day in February of last year, and a car full of young men, white guys, from the University of Pennsylvania, saw me on my bike, pulled a U turn on South Street illegally, and then started following me right next to me on the bike yelling really, really inappropriate things. They got stuck at a red light and I biked ahead and then went the wrong way up a one-way street to get away," said Ema. "A lot of times we'll hear, you know, bicyclists don't follow the laws. Well, what does that mean in terms of safety for individuals like women or other people who are in a vulnerable situation like that?"

"While I know it's the best thing for me to do to obey the law," said Janette "… there are times I definitely don't do it because of safety reasons." There's definitely this problem with feeling stuck because there's nowhere else you can go."

"While you can bike through a neighborhood you might not feel comfortable walking through, there's also that choice of I'm not going to stop at the stop signs or stop light because I don't feel safe here; putting my foot down and stopping, then having to get going again," said Kate. "And so you're choosing to break a law where you might normally not."

Harassment by bicyclists was less common: mostly it was men being rude as they rushed by or men trying to pick up female bicyclists. "I've definitely been hit on by other bicyclists on my bike, stopped at [a] stoplight, stop sign, something like that," said Ema. "They're in the same transportation mode so I don't really usually ever know what to do. Sometimes they'll say something like, 'Oh, but I'm just looking for a friend. Don't you want to be friends?' I want to be like, 'This is not the place to look for friends.'"

The women had several ideas for solutions

Education about bicycle laws and biker's rights. This could be in Driver's Ed programs or in elementary school. For example, in Germany all elementary school children go through Biker's Education. Public service announcements like the "Every lane is a bike lane" campaign in Los Angeles were also suggested.

Talk about sexual harassment within the cyclist community, which they said is male-dominated in every city and encourage more women to bicycle.

Have cyclists contribute to harassment awareness-raising efforts, like stenciling anti-harassment messages in bicycle lanes.

Asian American Women in Boston, Massachusetts

Asian American women's harassment experiences are often overlooked. Thus, in November 2015, nine women with nations of origin from varying East Asian and Southeast Asian countries came together in Boston, Massachusetts, to document and talk about their experiences.

Participant Pam said, "I appreciate talking about identity and race. I think a lot of times in data and research, the Asian American voice is not included, which unintentionally leaves us silenced and reinforces the stereotype that we are silent."

In sharing their stories, men following them, blocking their path, or engaging in repeated harassment emerged as common themes.

A man followed Catherine for approximately 45 minutes until she was able to lose him in a grocery store that had a back exit. She talked about her feeling of paranoia and fear. "All you want to do is shut down but you have to somehow keep going or something bad may happen."

Eight white men harassed Jen as she entered a subway station, then followed her and sat all around her as she waited for the subway. Then they surrounded her on the subway. "At this point I'm terrified," she said. "I'm like what if they follow me to the stop? What if they get off at the stop with me?" Finally, before her stop, they got off.

Angela was in her car in an empty grocery store parking lot and as she was getting ready to leave, a man in a black SUV pulled up behind her, blocking her in. He came over and tapped on her window. Thinking he needed directions, she rolled down her window only for him to then tell her she was beautiful and hit on her. She rolled up her window and yelled that she needed to go. Fortunately, he drove away and let her.

A man engaged Cassie and the woman she was dating in conversation outside a club. Then he escalated to harassment, following them inside. He only left them alone once a bouncer ejected him from the club.

A man followed Diana from the post office nearly all the way to her office. Finally he got the hint that she was uncomfortable

A man harassed Sarah three different times near her home, including telling her to "suck my dick." She filed a police report.

Like women in other racial groups, many of their experiences with street harassment are racialized. They all agreed it is common for men to yell "Nǐ hǎo" or "Konichiwa" ("hello" in Chinese and Japanese, respectively) at them. Notably, this happens no matter the woman's nation of origin.

When Catherine was reading on a park bench, a man repeatedly said "Nǐ hǎo" and "Konichiwa" to her, but then he quickly escalated to sexualized epithets. "Things like, 'Oh your pussy must be sideways,' and 'has anyone ever fucked you?'" she said.

Various men have asked the women what they are. Katie said, “Instead of hello, they say what are you? Are you Chinese?”

Every woman said most, if not all, of her harassers have been non-Asian men, some of whom seem to be fetishizing them. Pam mused this may be because “There is this special race power element of ooh you’re this little Geisha who won’t talk about it.”

Several of them noted that the harassment tends to be worse when they are with another Asian American woman who is either a romantic partner or a friend.

Pam said, “It’s like some sick white man’s fantasy that there are two Asian American women together. It excites them even more.” As an example, she shared this story: “I was on the train with another Asian American female late at night and there were a bunch of white frat dude types and one was like, ‘Oooh who wants to eat Chinese food?’ and they just started getting nasty. You could tell they were so excited to see two Asian American women together.”

Cassie shared that “If I’m out with a woman [I’m dating], especially an Asian American woman, it’s usually like it’s really hard just to be out [because of harassers]…It feels really complicated in terms of race. I want to date people who look like me. But I feel safer with white people because they’re usually the ones I feel the most scared to be around. So if I’m with a white man, I feel like I have this pass… But it feels shitty.”

Many noted that the harassment began around puberty, usually by older men. Natalie, for instance, said, “I have memories of my childhood and being in my teen years when people would harass me.”

Jen began walking home from the bus stop around age 10 and she was often harassed, including by older Asian men. “That’s when I learned that my body was a sexual object,” she said. “I was a child learning that I would never be safe in my own body.”

When Diana was in middle school, she had to take the subway to the library alone in the afternoon. One day on the platform, a man repeatedly touched her lower back. She’s always tucked in her shirts ever since.

Several women noted that they try to drive or bicycle everywhere as a way to avoid harassment. Most women agreed they are never or rarely harassed when they are with another man, either a romantic partner or friend. Natalie observed from her experience, “If you don’t use public transportation, if you bike around, if you don’t interact with people, you don’t really get those catcalls.”

A few women shared how they feel they must be rude or stern in public because as soon as they are smiling, pleasant or engage in small talk with men, it escalates into harassment. Katie said, “I feel like any time I’ve just been pleasant out in the public space, I’ve been approached.”

Numerous women shared how their family and friends normalize the experiences or see it as a compliment. Angela said in her family it was seen as “boys being boys.” Now, she shares how she feels scrutinized and unsafe to explain why it’s not okay.

These were their ideas for change:

1. Changing the normalcy of street harassment and ending the perception that it’s a compliment.
2. Having boys and men listen to women’s stories so they can understand the effects of street harassment.
3. Teachers talking to their students. Katie has had success asking her male students if that’s how they’d like their sister or mother treated.
4. Men who get why it’s not okay talking to young men and boys.

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Special thanks to major donor Marty Langelan.

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Appendix C – Other Studies

These are the main studies that have been conducted in the United States—or include the United States—on safety and the prevalence of street harassment. Most of these studies used opt-in or informal surveying methods (resulting in a high number of people who said they have been harassed) and none were conducted in the same way as the SSH study, so it is not possible to make direct comparisons.

Women

Gallup Poll data from surveys conducted in 143 countries in 2011 show that in EVERY country, more men than women feel safe walking alone at night. In the United States, 62% of women said they feel safe compared to 89% of men.

An interview-based study conducted in Indianapolis, Indiana by Dr. Carol Brooks Gardner in the late 1980s to early 1990s found that 100% of 293 women could recall at least one unwanted harassing interaction in a public space.

A 2000 national phone survey of 612 women found that 87% of women ages 18–64 had experienced street harassment, in rural, suburban, and urban areas. Around 84% said they "considered changing behavior to avoid street harassment."

An interview-based study conducted by Dr. Laura Beth Nielsen in the early 2000s with 54 women in the California Bay Area found 100% of women could recall at least one incident of offensive or sexually suggestive remarks.

Informal studies about sexual harassment on the public transportation systems in New York City (2007) and Chicago (2009) found that more than 60% of riders had experienced sexual harassment, with the majority being women.

In 2008, an informal online survey SSH conducted with 811 women found 99% had been harassed, including 81% who had been the target of a sexually explicit comment and 57% who had been sexually touched.

LGBTIQA Individuals

According to a report by the Center for American Progress, LGBTIQA individuals report high rates of discrimination in public spaces. Gay New York City residents who took a 2001 survey reported this, too.

Transgender individuals face particularly high rates of public discrimination according to a 2011 report by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the National Center for Transgender Equality.

SSH Board Member Patrick Ryne McNeil surveyed 331 gay and bisexual men about their experience with street harassment for his master's thesis in 2012. About 90% said they are sometimes, often, or always harassed or made to feel unwelcome in public spaces because of their perceived sexual orientation.

Appendix D – Street Harassment of Gay and Bisexual Men

In spring 2012, Patrick McNeil, at the time a women's studies master's candidate at George Washington University in Washington, DC, conducted online research for his thesis on whether and how gay and bisexual men experience street harassment – a community left out of previous research on the topic.

His research consisted of a survey of 331 gay and bisexual men and follow-up interviews with 24 of those men. The survey participants were from 42 states, DC, Puerto Rico, and 22 countries.

- Ninety-one percent identified as gay, 8.9% identified as bisexual
- Eighty-two percent identified as White, 13.8% as Hispanic or Latino, 6% as Asian American, 3.9% as Black or African American, and 2.8% as Native American or Alaska Native
- Thirty-nine percent were 18–20 years old, 34.7% were 21–24, 11.6% were 25-29, 7.1% were 30–34, 2.9% were 34–39, 4.5% were 40–49, and 0.6% were 50–59 (no one reported being 60+)

Key Survey Results

- Ninety percent of participants said they sometimes, often, or always feel unwelcome in public because of their sexual orientation.
- About 71% said they constantly assess their surroundings when navigating public spaces, 69% said they avoid specific neighborhoods/areas, 67% reported not making eye contact with others, and 59% said they cross streets or take alternate routes to avoid potential harassment.
- Seventy-three percent reported experiencing specifically homophobic/biphobic comments in the past year.
- Sixty-six percent reported being leered at/stared at excessively in the past year.
- Nearly 70% reported first experiencing negative public interactions by age 19, and more than 90% reported experiencing these interactions by age 24.
- These experiences happen disproportionately when men are alone, with a male significant other, or with a friend who is also not heterosexual.
- Five percent (or 15 men) said they have moved to another neighborhood in response to actual or feared interactions with strangers, and 3.3% (or 10 men) said they have changed jobs because of harassers in the area or on the commute.

Street Harassment Stories from Interviews

- "When I was growing up my sexual orientation was definitely a large factor in making me feel unsafe in public. People would yell 'fag,' 'faggot,' 'queer,' and 'homo.'"

- “I have felt unwelcome in public many times. As a frequent/daily rider of the CTA trains, I constantly feel uncomfortable when there are older men making suggestive gestures at me, regardless of the time of day or location. Also, I feel like whenever I visit the Boystown area of Chicago that I am constantly unwelcome, mostly because there are a large number of men who make obscene gestures at me or check me out so thoroughly that I feel violated.”
- “I'd say the most common thing to have happen is people staring or looking at me or the group I'm with, as they talk or whisper. Especially when you're with the more stereotypical gay crowd. My best friend is his own person, and he doesn't care what anyone thinks. I love it, but I know he gets slightly uncomfortable coming back to Iowa and tones it down a little bit. He won't wear the clothes he wants to, etc. Even then, we'll notice people staring, we usually just laugh it off, but it is kind of uncomfortable.”

Click here to read his thesis, or contact him at patrickryne@gmail.com to learn more.