UNSAFE AND HARASSED IN PUBLIC SPACES A National Report on Street Harassment

Executive Summary

KEY FINDINGS

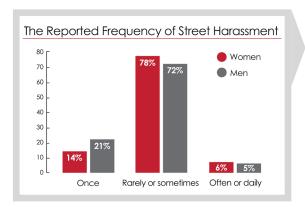
STREET HARASSMENT IS A SIGNIFICANT PROBLEM IN THE UNITED STATES.

Sixty-five percent of women said they experienced some form 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.



STREET HARASSMENT HAPPENS MULTIPLE TIMES FOR MOST PEOPLE.

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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.

STREET HARASSMENT BEGINS AT A YOUNG AGE.

Around 50% of harassed women and men experienced street harassment by age 17.

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%) than men (13%) said they were very concerned.

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 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.

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.

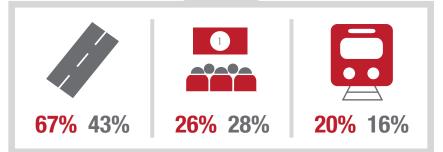
STREET HARASSMENT DOESN'T JUST HAPPEN ON THE STREETS.

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).

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.



WHEN EXPERIENCING OR WITNESSING HARASSMENT, HALF OF THE RESPONDENTS DID SOME-THING 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).



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 either 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, activists groups, and individuals, to do something about it. Together, we can work to end street harassment.

METHODOLOGY

The nonprofit organization Stop Street Harassment (SSH) commissioned the surveying firm GfK to conduct a 2,000-person, nationally representative survey in February and March 2014. Additionally, SSH conducted 10 focus groups. The report covers the findings of both and includes recommendations for individual and community action. It is available for download at www.StopStreetHarassment.org.

