

# Connecticut

A variety of forms of street harassment are illegal in Connecticut, including abusive language, flashing, following, groping, and hate crimes. Here are the laws and reporting procedures you need to know.

## Verbal Harassment

In Connecticut, there are seven laws that prohibit some form of verbal street harassment.

### ***Breach of the Peace***

[Title 53a, Chap. 952 §53a-181](#)

It is considered a breach of the peace in Connecticut for anyone, “with the intent to cause inconvenience, annoyance or alarm, or recklessly creating a risk thereof,” to:

- Use abusive or obscene language or make an obscene gesture in a public place.
- Engage in fighting or in "violent, threatening, or tumultuous behavior."
- Assault or strike you.
- Threaten to commit any crime against you or your property.

If a street harasser uses obscene language or makes an obscene gesture to you, engages in tumultuous (noisy or uproarious) behavior, or threatens or assaults you, you can report him/her.

Penalty: This would be a breach of the peace in the second degree, which is a class B misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

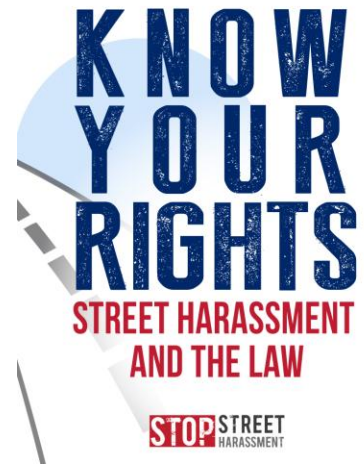
### ***Disorderly Conduct***

[Title 52a, Chap. 952 §53a-182](#)

Connecticut’s law against disorderly conduct prohibits a variety of actions relevant to street harassment. It is illegal anyone, “with the intent to cause inconvenience, annoyance or alarm, or recklessly creating a risk thereof,” to:

- Annoy or interfere with another person by offensive or disorderly conduct.
- Make unreasonable noise.
- Engage in fighting or in "violent, threatening, or tumultuous behavior."
- Obstruct pedestrian traffic.
- Expose his or her private parts.

If a street harasser is interfering with your lawful activity (such as walking down the street), shouting or making unreasonable or excessive noise, threatening you (verbally or physically), obstructing your passage to get your attention or prevent you from leaving a space, or exposing him or herself to you, you can report him/her.



## Stop Street Harassment

Connecticut also has a law against public disturbances ([§181a](#)) that has the same text prohibiting unreasonable noise, fighting, and offensive conduct but carries a milder penalty than disorderly conduct. Police may cite someone with either creating a public disturbance or with disorderly conduct, but in either case these actions are illegal.

Penalty: Creating a public disturbance is an infraction, punishable by a fine of approximately \$100. Disorderly conduct is a Class C misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to three months in jail.

### ***Intimidation Based on Bigotry or Bias***

[Title 53a, Chap. 952 §53a-181k](#)

It is illegal in Connecticut for anyone, with the intent to harass you based on your actual or perceived race, religion, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity or expression, to:

- Threaten you.
- Have physical contact with you.
- Damage any of your property.

Gender identity or expression is defined in Connecticut as “a person’s gender-related identity, appearance or behavior, whether or not that gender-related identity, appearance or behavior is different from that traditionally associated with the person’s assigned sex at birth.”

If anyone touches you, damages your things (such as your purse or your car), or threatens you (and there is reason to believe s/he will carry out the threat) and s/he also indicates that the harassment is based on one of the above categories – such as by using a racist, homophobic, or transphobic slur – you can report him/her.

Penalty: This is considered intimidation based on bigotry or bias in the second degree, and it is a Class D felony in Connecticut, punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 and/or between 1 and 5 years in prison.

### ***Loitering on School Grounds***

[Title 53a, Chap. 952 §53a-185](#)

Loitering near a school without a legitimate reason to be there is grounds for police to ask that person to leave.

If you see someone hanging out near school facilities and s/he is harassing you or other passerby, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Loitering on school grounds is a Class C misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or 3 months in jail.

### ***Patronizing a Prostitute***

[Title 53a, Chap. 952 §53a-83](#)

Connecticut’s law against patronizing a prostitute includes soliciting or requesting that another person engage in sexual conduct in return for a fee. There is also a section that specifically prohibits patronizing a prostitute from a motor vehicle.

## Stop Street Harassment

If a street harasser solicits sexual activity from you, including from a car or on the sidewalk, you can report him/her. You can also make the case that harassers who yell, “How much?!” or offer you money, or anything else, for sex, even in jest, are soliciting prostitution.

Stop Street Harassment doesn’t oppose consensual sex work, but we do think it’s inappropriate for a street harasser to make assumptions about your sexual availability and make you feel uncomfortable.

Penalty: Patronizing a prostitute is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,000 and/or up to 1 year in jail.

### ***Ridicule on Account of Creed, Religion, Color, Denomination, Nationality or Race***

[Title 53a, Chap. 952 §53-37](#)

It is illegal in Connecticut for anyone to, “by his [or her] advertisement,” ridicule or hold up to contempt another person or group of people based on creed, religion, color, denomination, nationality, or race.

If a street harasser is making racist or other inappropriate prejudicial comments about you based on any of these categories, you can report him or her for ridicule based race or religion.

Penalty: Ridicule on account of creed, religion, color, denomination, nationality or race is a class D misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$250 and/or 30 days in jail.

## Unlawful Filming/Photographing

### ***Voyeurism***

[Title 53a, Chap. 952 § 189a](#)

Connecticut’s Voyeurism law covers two types of unlawful filming/photographing.

1. It is unlawful for anyone to photograph or film someone without that person’s consent when done with malice and under circumstances in which the person would have a reasonable expectation of privacy.

This includes filming and photographing in restrooms, dressing rooms, locker rooms, hotel rooms, and other locations.

2. The law also states that it is illegal for someone to take a photo or video of someone without that person’s consent to arouse or satisfy sexual desire when that person is not in plain view and under circumstances when that person should reasonably expect privacy.

Although this law does not explicitly state that it is illegal to take up-skirt or down-blouse photos of you in a public place without your consent, it would be reasonable to expect that you have privacy under your clothing. You can report someone taking inappropriate photos of you in public. Even if a judge does not find up-skirt photos to be prohibited under this law, increased reporting may lead to it being prohibited.

Penalty: Voyeurism is a Class D felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 and/or between 1 and 5 years in prison.

## Stop Street Harassment

### **Indecent Exposure**

#### ***Disorderly Conduct***

[Title 52a, Chap. 952 §53a-182](#)

Exposing one's private parts in public, "with the intent to cause inconvenience, annoyance or alarm, or recklessly creating a risk thereof," is considered disorderly conduct.

If a street harasser flashes you or exposes him or herself to you, you can report that person.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct is a Class C misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 3 months in jail.

#### ***Public Indecency***

[Title 53a, Chap. 952 §53a-186](#)

It is illegal in Connecticut for anyone to lewdly expose his or her body with the intent to arouse or satisfy sexual desire *or* to lewdly fondle or caress the body of another person in a public place where s/he may reasonably expect to be viewed by others. The statute does not specify which body parts it is illegal to expose or fondle, but rather focuses on the lewd or sexual nature of the act.

If a harasser commits a sex act, flashes you, or otherwise exposes him or herself to you in a public place, such as a park, on public transportation, or in a store, you can report that person.

Penalty: Public indecency is a Class B misdemeanor in Connecticut, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

### **Following**

If you think someone is following you, you can call 911 right away, the first time it happens. You do not have to wait for that person to commit a crime.

#### ***Stalking in the Second Degree***

[Title 53a, Chap. 952 §53a-181d](#)

Stalking is illegal in Connecticut and it occurs when someone follows, lies in wait for, monitors, observes, threatens, or harasses another person at least two times and in such a way that a reasonable person would fear for his or her own safety.

If the same person, on more than one occasion, follows you or harasses you and you feel threatened and unsafe, you can report that person.

Penalty: Stalking is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,000 and/or up to a year in jail.

## Stop Street Harassment

### Groping

#### ***Sexual Assault in the Fourth Degree***

[Title 53a, Chap. 952, §53a-73a](#)

It is illegal for anyone to subject you to sexual contact – touching the intimate parts of your body or touching your body with the intimate parts of his or hers – without your consent.

If a harasser grabs your crotch, breasts, or butt, or rubs him or herself against you in a sexual or inappropriate way, you can report that person for sexual assault in the fourth degree.

**Penalty:** Sexual assault in the fourth degree against someone 16 years of age or older is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,000 and/or up to a year in jail. Sexual assault in the fourth degree against someone under 16 years of age is a Class D felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 and/or between 1 and 5 years in prison.

### Hate Crime

#### ***Intimidation Based on Bigotry or Bias***

[Title 53a-181b](#)

In Connecticut, a person commits the second degree crime if s/he acts maliciously and intends to intimidate or harass someone by:

1. Making physical contact with him/her.
2. Damaging, destroying or defacing property.
3. Threatening to do either of these things.

And the person's actions are motivated because of the victim's actual or perceived:

- Race
- Religion
- Ethnicity
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Gender identity or expression

**Penalty:** Second-degree bigotry or bias is a Class D felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 and/or 1-5 years in prison.

### Reporting Crimes to the Police

- Call 911 for help if:
  - The crime is in progress
  - You or someone else is physically hurt or have been threatened with physical violence
  - You can provide information about who may have committed a crime.

## Stop Street Harassment

- Call the local police office's non-emergency number to submit a report afterward. For example, in Hartford, this number is (860) 757-4350 and in Bridgeport it's (203) 576-7671. For New Haven it is (203) 946-6316, and for Stamford, it is (203) 977-4444. Be prepared to provide them with:
  - When it happened (date and time).
  - Where it happened (street location, store location, bus line or bus stop, park name, etc).
  - Who is reporting (your name and contact information).
  - A description of what happened.
  - The name and contact information of any witnesses, if you spoke to any.
  - It can be helpful to include the law the crime falls under, such as Harassment in the First or Second Degree, in [CT Law Section 53a-183 and 53a-182b](#), respectively. If you're not sure which law you should use to report an incident of street harassment, just tell the police what happened and s/he or the district attorney's office can determine the appropriate charges.
  - A description of the harasser/s.
- Many police departments also have online reporting forms, for example, in [Bridgeport](#), you can submit an online report through iWatchBridgeport, where you have the choice to leave your contact information.
- Some police departments also allow you to anonymously send a tip about a non-emergency incident, for example if you see a group of people routinely harassing passersby at the same location. Visit your local police department website for information.
  - In Bridgeport, you can do this by texting the number 27463 or CRIME, and beginning the message with 717 and a space or by completing a confidential tip form at [iWatchBridgeport](#). You can also download their [application](#) for your iPhone or Android.
  - In [Hartford](#), you can complete an anonymous tip form via web, or by phone by dialing 860-722-8477 (TIPS).
  - In New Haven, you can text the number 274637 or CRIMES, and begin the message with NHPD, or call the number 1-866-888-8477 (TIPS).
- Once you've reported a crime, if you've provided your contact information, within a few days, you will receive a call with a police report case number and may have to answer follow-up questions. Save a copy of the police report for your records.

If someone tries to tell you that street harassment "isn't a big deal," or isn't illegal, don't buy it. You always have the right to be free from sexual harassment and assault in public.