

# Measuring #MeToo



## A National Study on Sexual Harassment and Assault



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A NATIONAL STUDY ON SEXUAL  
HARASSMENT AND ASSAULT - 2019

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# Measuring #MeToo: A National Study on Sexual Harassment and Assault

*UC San Diego Center on Gender Equity and Health  
Stop Street Harassment  
April 2019*



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## ABOUT THE ORGANIZATIONS

### UC San Diego Center on Gender Equity and Health

The Center on Gender Equity and Health aims to improve population health and development by improving the status, opportunities, and safety of women and girls, globally. To achieve sustainable and large-scale change, GEH seeks and maintains partnerships with governmental and non-governmental agencies around the globe. A social justice framework is utilized by GEH, and innovative technologies are employed to facilitate change at individual, community, and national levels. Visit: <http://geh.ucsd.edu/>.

### Stop Street Harassment

Stop Street Harassment (SSH) is a volunteer-run nonprofit organization dedicated to documenting and ending gender-based street harassment worldwide through public education and community mobilization. Our work includes the annual International Anti-Street Harassment Week, the National Street Harassment Hotline, research reports, and website resources. Visit: [www.stopstreetharassment.org](http://www.stopstreetharassment.org).

### NORC at the University of Chicago

NORC at the University of Chicago conducted the 2,000-person survey online. It is an independent research institution that delivers reliable data and rigorous analysis to guide critical programmatic, business, and policy decisions. Since 1941, NORC has conducted groundbreaking studies, created and applied innovative methods and tools, and advanced principles of scientific integrity and collaboration. Today, government, corporate, and nonprofit clients around the world partner with NORC to transform increasingly complex information into useful knowledge. Please visit [www.norc.org](http://www.norc.org) for more information.

### California Coalition Against Sexual Assault (CALCASA)

CALCASA provides leadership, vision, and resources to rape crisis centers, individuals, and other entities committed to ending sexual violence. CALCASA is committed to ending sexual violence through a multifaceted approach of prevention, intervention, education, research, advocacy, and public policy. CALCASA relays the challenges and successes of local work to the statewide and national levels and best practices and evidence-based and practice-based programs at the state and national levels to local constituents. Learn more at [www.calcasa.org](http://www.calcasa.org).

### Promundo

Promundo works to promote gender equality and create a world free from violence by engaging men and boys in partnership with women and girls. Since its founding in Brazil in 1997, Promundo has worked with partners to advance this mission by conducting cutting-edge research that builds the knowledge base on masculinities and gender equality; developing, evaluating, and scaling up high-impact gender-transformative interventions and programs; and carrying out campaigns and advocacy initiatives to prevent violence and promote gender justice. Learn more at <https://promundoglobal.org>.

### RALIANCE

RALIANCE is a national partnership dedicated to ending sexual violence in one generation. Every day, RALIANCE makes prevention possible by advancing research, influencing policy, supporting innovative programs, and helping leaders establish safe workplaces and strong communities. Founded in 2015 through a multimillion-dollar seed investment by the National Football League, RALIANCE is based in Washington, DC. Visit: <http://www.raliance.org/>.

## ADVISORY COMMITTEE

This survey builds on the 2018 survey – see that report for the full list of the advisory committee. The following people also gave input on this update survey in 2019.

**Annie E. Clark**, co-author of *We Believe You: Survivors of Campus Sexual Assault Speak Out*.

**Brian P. Heilman**, Senior Research Officer, Promundo.

**Nicole E. Johns**, Research Data Analyst, Center on Gender Equity and Health, University of California, San Diego.

**Holly Kearl**, Founder, Stop Street Harassment and author of the 2018 report.

**David S. Lee**, MPH, Director of Prevention, California Coalition Against Sexual Assault, PreventConnect, RALIANCE.

**Patrick Ryne McNeil**, MA, Stop Street Harassment Board Member and civil rights advocate.

**Laura Palumbo**, MA, Director of Communications, National Sexual Violence Resource Center, RALIANCE.

**Britnae Purdy**, MA, Stop Street Harassment Board Member and Project Coordinator to Reduce Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence and Stalking at the University of Mary Washington.

**Anita Raj**, PhD, the Tata Chancellor Professor of Medicine, School of Medicine; Professor of Education Studies, Division of Social Sciences; and the Director of the Center on Gender Equity and Health, University of California, San Diego.

**Chai Shenoy**, Esq. and Co-Founder of Collective Action for Safe Spaces.

**Jasmine Tucker**, MA, Director of Research, National Women's Law Center.

**Nancy Xiong**, MA, Stop Street Harassment Board Member and Associate Director, Women & Gender Studies, George Mason University.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Special thanks to:

Nicole E Johns at GEH, who analyzed the data and created the graphs.

Megan Thomas, a communications specialist with RALIANCE, who created the cover art and social media graphics and did the copy editing of the report.

Lorena Campos, a communications associate with CALCASA, who gave copy editing input of the report.

Bruce Barr at NORC, who was instrumental in the execution of this national survey and worked with SSH on two prior surveys (2014, 2018) when he was employed by GfK.

## DEFINITIONS FOR THE REPORT

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines sexual violence as “a sexual act that is committed or attempted by another person without freely given consent of the victim or against someone who is unable to consent or refuse.”<sup>1</sup>

This is inclusive of forced sex acts, as well as unwanted non-penetrative sexual contact, or non-contact unwanted sexual experiences.

For this report, we used the terms as follows, delineating forced sex acts from other sexual abuses and using the terms sexual assault and sexual harassment, to be more consistent with the terms of the #MeToo movement.

### Sexual assault:

This term involves a sexual act that someone was forced to do against their will and without their consent. See Table 1 on the next page for the precise wording of the question from the survey. When assessing reported perpetration of sexual assault, the exact same phrasing of the survey item was used, but we switched it to reflect the respondent doing that act rather than experiencing it.

### Sexual harassment:

This term includes 14 different specific actions, categorized into verbal sexual harassment, cyber sexual harassment, and physically aggressive sexual harassment. The specific actions included in the survey are presented in these three categories in Table 1 on the next page. For the sake of concision, the report will frequently refer to these categories by name; this is meant to refer to reported experiences or perpetration of *any one or more* of the actions within that category. Forced sex acts are excluded from the term “sexual harassment” for this study. When assessing reported perpetration of sexual harassment, the exact same phrasing of these survey items was used, but we switched it to reflect the respondent doing the act rather than experiencing it.

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<sup>1</sup> Basile, K.C., Smith, S.G., Breiding, M.J., Black, M.C., & Mahendra, R. (2014). *Sexual violence surveillance: uniform definitions and recommended data elements, version 2.0*. Retrieved from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/sv\\_surveillance\\_definitionsI-2009-a.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/sv_surveillance_definitionsI-2009-a.pdf).

**Table 1. Detailed Survey Items and Categorization**

<p><b>Verbal sexual harassment</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Someone whistling, honking, making kissy noises, “Pssst” sounds, or leering/staring aggressively at you.</li> <li>● Someone saying things like, “Hey Baby,” “Mmmm Sexy,” “Yo Shorty,” “Mami/Mamacita,” “Give me a smile,” or similar comments in a way that is disrespectful and/or unwanted and/or made you feel unsafe.</li> <li>● Someone calling you a sexist slur, like “Bitch,” “Slut,” “Cunt,” “Ho,” or “Thot.”</li> <li>● Someone misgendering you or calling you a homophobic or transphobic slur, like “Fag,” “Dyke,” or “Tranny.”</li> <li>● Someone talking about your body parts inappropriately or offensively (such as your legs, crotch, butt, or breasts), saying sexually explicit comments (“I want to do BLANK to you”) or asking inappropriate sexual questions.</li> <li>● Someone making threats to harm you, to harm someone you know, or to share personal information you don’t want shared (examples could include your sexual orientation or drug use history or immigration status)</li> <li>● Someone saying you must date them or do a sexual act for them in exchange for something (such as a good grade, a promotion, a job, drugs, food, or something similar) or instead of something (like paying rent or a citation, etc.).</li> <li>● Someone repeatedly asking you for a date or your phone number when you’ve said no or ignored them.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cyber sexual harassment</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Someone repeatedly texting or calling you in a harassing way.</li> <li>● Someone electronically sending you or showing you sexual content without your permission, such as over email, Snapchat, or Facebook or on their phone or computer.</li> <li>● Someone taking and/or sharing sexual pictures or videos of you without your permission.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Physically aggressive sexual harassment</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Someone flashing or exposing their genitals to you without your permission.</li> <li>● Someone physically following you without your permission.</li> <li>● Someone purposely touching you or brushing up against you in an unwelcome, sexual way.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sexual assault</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Someone forcing you to do a sexual act without your permission or one that you don’t want to do (including while you are under the influence of alcohol or drugs).</li> </ul>

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This 2019 national survey reconfirms the findings of our 2018 national survey: Sexual harassment and assault are widespread problems in the United States, causing pain, limiting people's lives, and negatively affecting communities and society. Study results show that most women and many men have experienced one or more form of harassment and assault, while a comparably smaller proportion tells us that they've ever committed these acts. This may indicate that many abusers are repeat offenders who abuse multiple people. The findings add to the large evidence base demonstrating that nearly all instances where someone is accused of sexual harassment are based in fact, and most respondents believe those who make high-profile accusations.

### Methodology

This report presents the findings of a nationally representative survey of 1,182 women and 1,037 men, ages 18 and up, conducted online in February - March 2019. The UC San Diego Center on Gender Equity and Health (GEH) conducted all data analyses.

### Key Findings

#### 1. Sexual harassment and assault pose a significant problem, especially for women.

Nationwide, 81% of women and 43% of men reported experiencing some form of sexual harassment and/or assault in their lifetime.

- More than three in four women (76%) and one in three men (35%) experienced verbal sexual harassment;
- One in two women (49%) and nearly one in five men (18%) were sexually touched in an unwelcome way;
- Four in 10 women (40%) and one in five men (21%) experienced cyber sexual harassment;
- More than one in four women (27%) and one in 10 men (11%) were physically followed;
- One in three women (30%) and around one in 10 men (12%) faced unwanted genital flashing;
- Nearly one in four women (23%) and one in 10 men (9%) survived sexual assault.

#### 2. Sexual harassment takes place across a range of locations, but the most frequently listed location is a public space.

Women most frequently reported experiencing sexual harassment in a public space like a street, park or store (68% of women), at their workplace or school (38% of women, respectively), at a nightlife venue (37% of women), and at their residence (31% of women). Men's most frequently reported locations were a public space (23% of men), their school or own residence (15% of men, respectively), or their workplace or someone else's residence (14% of men, respectively).

#### 3. Most sexual assault takes place in private homes or residences.

For sexual assault, both women and men listed someone else's residence (10% women, 3% men) and their own residence (7% women, 2% men) as the top locations for these acts.

**4. At least one-third of women ages 18-24, Black women, and lesbian or bisexual women reported experiencing sexual harassment in the past six months.**

Of those who experienced harassment or assault overall, 18% of women and 16% of men experienced it within the past six months. At least one-third of young women aged 18-24 (32%), Black women (35%), and lesbian or bisexual women (39%) reported sexual harassment in the past six months, the highest prevalence across demographics.

**5. Those who reported sexual harassment alone were most likely to report that a stranger committed it, while those reporting assault as well as harassment were most likely to say that someone close to them was involved in the abuse.**

Among the respondents who reported experiencing sexual harassment alone, strangers were by far the most frequently listed type of person who committed the harassment against them (47% of women and 32% of men who reported only sexual harassment). Those with a history of both sexual assault and harassment were significantly more likely than those who experienced sexual harassment alone to report known people as those who committed the assault or harassment.

**6. Sexual harassment and assault cause people, especially women, to feel anxiety or depression and prompt them to change their route or regular routine.**

Among those who reported experiencing sexual harassment or assault, 30% of women and 18% of men said they felt anxiety or depression, while 23% of women and 12% of men changed their route or regular routine, and 22% of women and 16% of men ended a relationship (such as a friendship or romantic partnership) on account of these experiences.

**7. Most people who said they committed sexual harassment also said they had experienced sexual harassment.**

Among those who reported committing sexual harassment, 95% of women and 73% of men reported experiencing it too. In contrast, among those who reported never having committed sexual harassment, 74% of women and 31% of men reported experiencing it.

**8. While experiences of sexual harassment and assault are highly prevalent, accusations of sexual harassment and assault are very rare.**

Despite 81% of women and 43% of men reporting experiencing sexual harassment, only 2% of men and 1% of women said they had been told that they sexually harassed or assaulted someone. Only 1% of those who self-reported that they have never committed sexual harassment or assault said they were told by an individual that they had done so.

**9. Beliefs related to high-profile allegations of sexual harassment and assault are comparable for women and men.**

Almost half of women (43%) and men (40%) believed sexual harassment occurred in all or most of the recent high-profile allegations of sexual harassment and assault; only 8% of women and 11% of men believed in most or all cases nothing happened, and the accusers are purposely lying. Half of women and men felt it varied from case to case, with some true and some false.

## INTRODUCTION

In February 2018, we released a ground-breaking national study on sexual harassment and assault in the United States.<sup>2</sup> The goal of the report was to provide the data behind people's #MeToo stories and create a fuller picture of the prevalence of the problem.

The findings of that study demonstrated that sexual harassment occurs across all parts of our life, particularly in public spaces. The findings also showed that this is not just an issue that affects women; it affects any group that is marginalized. The findings confirmed that sexual harassment and assault are acts of abuse of power, disrespect, and disregard for human dignity.

Now, in 2019, we release an updated report. The findings on prevalence are remarkably consistent; nothing substantial has changed in a year regarding people's experiences of sexual harassment and assault and how it negatively affects their life.

What is new in our survey are questions and findings around committing sexual harassment and assault and accusations of sexual harassment and assault. We chose to add these questions in light of a few events that occurred since early 2018.

In September 2018, ahead of the U.S. Supreme Court nomination hearing, Dr. Christine Blasey Ford publicly accused Brett Kavanaugh of sexually assaulting her when they were both in high school. Then they both testified in Congress. The country was heavily divided between supporting her versus him.<sup>3</sup> Those showing solidarity for Dr. Blasey Ford and defending her against the questions regarding why she did not speak up sooner rallied behind hashtags on social media like #WhyIDidntReport and #IBelieveChristineBlaseyFord and shared their own stories.<sup>4</sup> Many in support of Kavanaugh spoke of their fears that high-profile men will always face accusations and that usually those accusations are false.

In the fall of 2018, Department of Education Secretary Betsy DeVos proposed to change the rules guiding schools on how they handle sexual assault allegations. DeVos has said changes are to balance the rights of sexual assault survivors with those who are accused, suggesting efforts in recent years to ensure campuses respond more comprehensively when students report sexual assault have gone too far. This

### #MeToo Origins

Tarana Burke created a "Me Too" movement in 2007 to help victims of sexual harassment and assault. In October 2017, actress Alyssa Milano helped popularize the term with this tweet.



<sup>2</sup> Stop Street Harassment (2018). *The facts behind the #MeToo movement: A national study on sexual harassment and assault*. Retrieved from <http://www.stopstreetharassment.org/resources/2018-national-sexual-abuse-report/>.

<sup>3</sup> Fandos, N. & Shear, M.D. (2018, September 26). Before Kavanaugh hearing, new accusations and doubts emerge. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/26/us/politics/kavanaugh-calendar.html>.

<sup>4</sup> #WhyIDidntReport: The hashtag supporting Christine Blasey Ford. (2018, September 23). *BBC News*. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-45621124>.

has also caused a deep divide in our country between those who support her efforts and those who do not. Nearly 100,000 people submitted comments to the proposed rules in January 2019.<sup>5</sup>

More people are publicly voicing their fears about false accusations following these two news stories and because of the number of high-profile men who faced retribution within the #MeToo movement since the fall of 2017. Our survey, however, shows that the proportion of people who have ever been accused of sexual harassment or assault is much smaller than those who admit to perpetrating it (which we expect is under-reported in our survey). Further, our survey shows that most people believe, to some extent, those who say they have experienced sexual harassment or assault.

We hope that people who set policies and shape public opinion around accusations will use these findings to inform their efforts. We hope they will recognize that even in a self-reported survey, very few people have ever been accused of sexual harassment or assault compared with those who have said they perpetrated it, and especially compared with the many people who said they have experienced it. By and large, when people say they experienced sexual harassment or assault, they are telling the truth.

The report covers information on these main topics:

- 1) The prevalence of sexual harassment and assault overall.
- 2) The locations where sexual harassment and assault take place.
- 3) When sexual harassment and assault most recently occurred.
- 4) How sexual harassment and assault makes people feel and what they do because of it.
- 5) The people who commit sexual harassment and assault, including from the viewpoint of those who have experienced it and from those who say they have done it.
- 6) Accusations of sexual harassment and assault, including the percent of people who say they've been accused, and public opinion of high-profile accusation cases.

Demographic information is broken down by gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, household income, disability, age, and region of the country for each section, when the sample size allowed.

## Methodology

UCSD GEH and SSH commissioned a nationally representative survey of women and men on sexual harassment and assault with NORC at the University of Chicago, using the AmeriSpeak Panel, the most representative online probability panel available in the U.S. NORC recruited and surveyed a total sample of N=2,219 adults aged 18 and older, all of whom were required to complete a forced choice item on sex, in which they identified themselves as female (n=1,182) or male (n=1,037). The sample was surveyed in three waves of the AmeriSpeak Omnibus; 40% of the sample were surveyed between February 14-17, 2019; 40% between February 28-March 3, 2019; and the final 20% between March 14-17, 2019.

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<sup>5</sup> Meckler, L. & Svrluga, S. (2019, January 30). Nearly 100,000 comments on Betsy DeVos's plan to overhaul rules on sexual assault probes. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/nearly-100000-comments-on-betsy-devoss-plan-to-overhaul-rules-on-sexual-assault-probes/2019/01/30/ce441956-24b9-11e9-ad53-824486280311\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/nearly-100000-comments-on-betsy-devoss-plan-to-overhaul-rules-on-sexual-assault-probes/2019/01/30/ce441956-24b9-11e9-ad53-824486280311_story.html).

Funded and operated by NORC at the University of Chicago, AmeriSpeak® is a probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. Randomly selected U.S. households are sampled using area probability and address-based sampling, with a known, non-zero probability of selection from the NORC National Sample Frame.

These sampled households are then contacted by U.S. mail, telephone, and field interviewers (face to face). The panel provides sample coverage of approximately 97% of the U.S. household population. Those excluded from the sample include people with P.O. Box-only addresses, some addresses not listed in the USPS Delivery Sequence File, and some newly constructed dwellings. While most AmeriSpeak households participate in surveys by web, non-internet households can participate in AmeriSpeak surveys by telephone.

Households that don't have conventional internet access but do have web access via smartphones are allowed to participate in AmeriSpeak surveys by web. AmeriSpeak panelists participate in NORC studies or studies conducted by NORC on behalf of governmental agencies, academic researchers, and media and commercial organizations.

The survey included this introductory text to clarify how pervasive the assessed behaviors are and the confidentiality of the survey, a typical practice for surveys on sensitive topics:

“This survey is focused on sexual harassment and abuse, which includes all forms of **unwanted** sexual, homophobic, transphobic and/or sexist experiences across all areas of people’s lives. Your answers to the questions will be strictly confidential. We are not collecting your name nor any identifying information.

We appreciate and honor you for sharing your experiences in the survey. We know it can be upsetting and challenging. The information from the survey will help advocates, policymakers, and educators better understand how to address these issues, and make communities safer for everyone. Your participation matters, and it will make a difference.”

The full survey is available at [www.StopStreetHarassment.org/our-work/nationalstudy/2019study/](http://www.StopStreetHarassment.org/our-work/nationalstudy/2019study/).

Individuals who declined to answer questions were retained in analyses for consistency with 2018 methodology. Exclusion of these individuals changed point estimates by no more than 1%.

## Who Took the Survey?

All data were analyzed by the UC San Diego’s Center on Gender Equity and Health. To determine the representativeness of the sample in the U.S., they made comparisons to national government data.

**Gender:** 1,182 males and 1,037 females (based on the forced choice response on gender) took the survey, and this was weighted to become a sample size of 1,076 males and 1,154 females. Individuals could select transgender as relevant, and two people did.

**Region:** Geographic distribution is on par with the 2017 U.S. Census information.<sup>6</sup> Thirty-eight percent of the sample was from the South (735 people), 18% came from the Northeast (341 people); 21% from the

<sup>6</sup> US Census. (2017). US population growth by region. Retrieved from [https://www.census.gov/popclock/data\\_tables.php?component=growth](https://www.census.gov/popclock/data_tables.php?component=growth).

Midwest (598 people), and 24% from the West (545 people). The majority (89%) resided in a metropolitan area; 11% were in a non-metropolitan area. Metropolitan area comprises a metropolitan statistical area (MSA), which is “a geographical region with a relatively high population density at its core and close economic ties throughout the area.”

**Age:** Among respondents, 34% were aged 18 to 34 (13% age 18-24 and 21% age 25-34), 25% aged 35 to 49, 25% aged 50 to 64, and 16% aged 65 and older. Because people under 18 years old were not included in the survey, the percentages for the age groups that were included are larger than the general population. Also, the 2010 Census does not have the exact same age groups. But for a comparison, 37% of people in the 2010 Census were age 18 to 44 years (50% in our data), 26% were 45 to 64 years (34% in our data), and 13% were 65 years or older (16% in our data).<sup>7</sup>

**Race/Ethnicity:** Participants were mostly non-Hispanic White (64%). An additional 17% were Hispanic, 11% were non-Hispanic Black, and 8% were mixed-race/other race. This was comparable to the U.S. population as a whole, which is 77% non-Hispanic White, 18% Hispanic, and 13% non-Hispanic Black.<sup>8</sup>

**Income:** Seventeen percent of participants resided in households with an annual income below \$25,000, which is below poverty for the average-sized household in the United States<sup>9</sup> and a comparable prevalence to the 13% of people living below poverty seen nationally.<sup>10</sup>

**Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity:** For the total sample, 6% reported being gay/lesbian or bisexual, which is slightly higher than national data indicating that 4% of people in the U.S. identify as gay/lesbian, bisexual, or transgender.<sup>11</sup>

**Disability:** One in four respondents reported having some type of disability (17%), which is comparable to national data indicating that 19% of those in the general population live with a disability.<sup>12</sup>

Notably, there were no significant differences by sex in region, age, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, or disability. Women were more likely than men to be poor ( $p < 0.01$ ), which is also seen nationally in U.S. Census data.

Compared with our 2018 sample, our 2019 sample is slightly larger and slightly younger.

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<sup>7</sup> US Census. (2010). Age and sex composition. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-03.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> US Census. (n.d.). Quick facts: United States. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045216>.

<sup>9</sup> US Census. (2017). Poverty thresholds. Preliminary estimate of weighted average poverty thresholds for 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/poverty.html>.

<sup>10</sup> US Census. (n.d.). Quick facts: United States. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045216>.

<sup>11</sup> Gates, G.J. (2017, January 11). In U.S., more adults identifying as LGBT. *Gallup*. Retrieved from <http://news.gallup.com/poll/201731/lgbt-identification-rises.aspx>.

<sup>12</sup> US Census. (2017). 2017 U.S. Census Bureau disability statistics facts for features. Retrieved from <https://www.disabled-world.com/disability/statistics/cbfff.php>.

## Study Limitations

1. **Sample:** By creating a nationally representative sample, some groups like transgender or non-binary folks, Native Americans, and Asian Americans, were too small in number to allow for findings specific to these populations. Fortunately, other research has been conducted on various smaller demographics. Appendix A highlights examples of studies on specific demographic groups whose experiences are unable to be reflected in the current study. Also, this survey excluded people without phones, such as people in prison or jail.
2. **Age:** Due to the added expense and challenge of gaining parental consent for this topic, the sample is limited to those aged 18 and older.
3. **Survey Length:** Due to a limited budget, the survey was short, but we hope it will inspire future surveys and research.
4. **Reliance on Self-Report Measures:** Sexual harassment and assault measures rely on self-report and are thus vulnerable to recall biases and response biases. The consistency of the responses to the repeated questions in the 2018 and 2019 survey suggests the validity of study findings, however.
5. **Challenges in Measuring Use of Harassment and Assault:** This year's survey, for the first time, includes a section on self-reported use of sexual harassment and assault behaviors. Measuring self-reported use of harassment and assault carries inherent risks and limitations, including a well-documented likelihood of producing results that reflect under-reporting of perpetration behavior. In addition, the field of research practice in measuring these behaviors is relatively new and evolving, with no firmly established standard, validated scales, or sets of questions yet emerging. As such, in the interest of continuing to advance this research practice, the questions comprising this section in our study had never been fielded before.

As discussed in the relevant section below, lower rates of reported use of sexual harassment and assault in the 2019 survey as compared to rates of experiencing victimization of sexual harassment and assault are to be expected, and also support the conclusion that people who commit sexual harassment and assault may have multiple victims. Furthermore, the survey asked identical questions related to use of harassment and assault behaviors to respondents of all gender identities. Findings therefore require careful consideration related to ways in which the qualitative nature or cultural context of certain acts/questions may shift based on the gender of the person using the behavior and their relative position in a patriarchal society.

## SURVEY FINDINGS

All survey respondents answered the first of the seven questions to indicate whether they had experienced sexual harassment and/or assault. They were shown the descriptors for 14 types of sexual harassment one at a time and also a descriptor for sexual assault. They were asked whether they had ever experienced that type of sexual harassment and assault, and if they answered yes, they were asked where it occurred (with 15 location options). If they answered, “No,” to ever experiencing all forms of harassment and assault, the survey went on to questions five through seven. Respondents who selected at least one sexual harassment or assault experience answered all six remaining questions.

Analyses were weighted to provide nationally representative prevalence estimates. Bivariate analyses were conducted to assess significant associations (at  $p < 0.05$ ) between sexual harassment and assault on key demographics, when the sample size allowed.

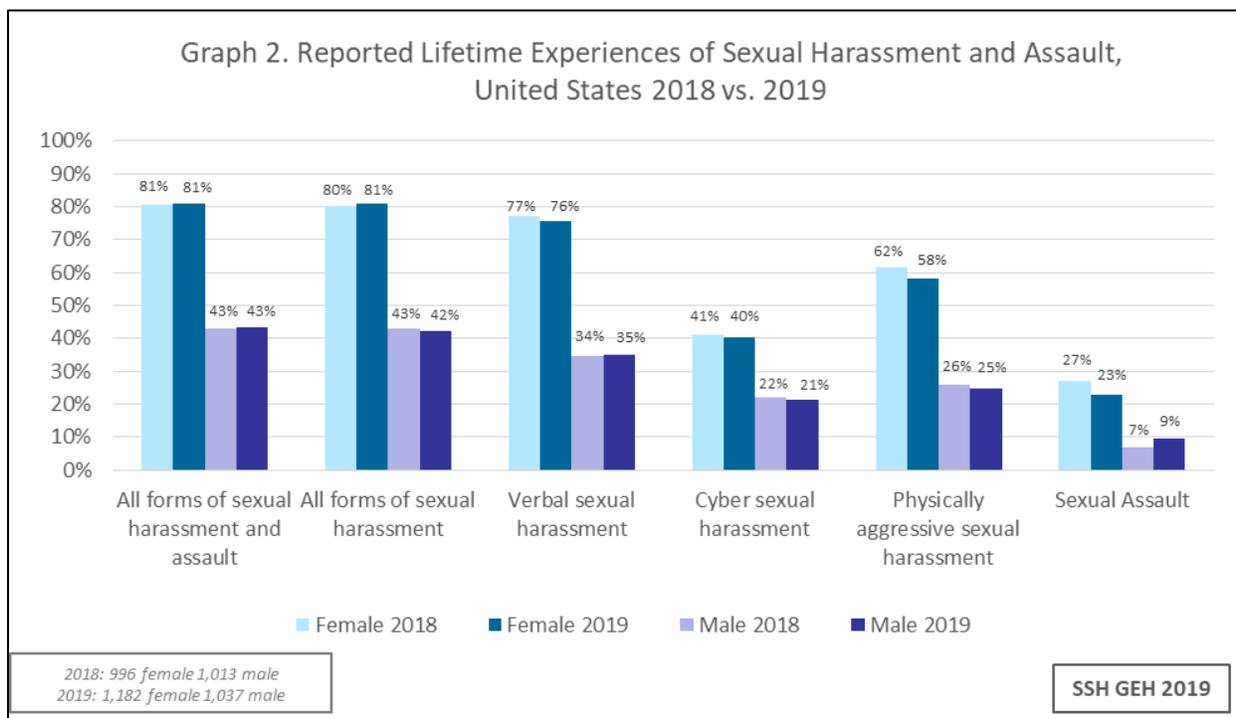
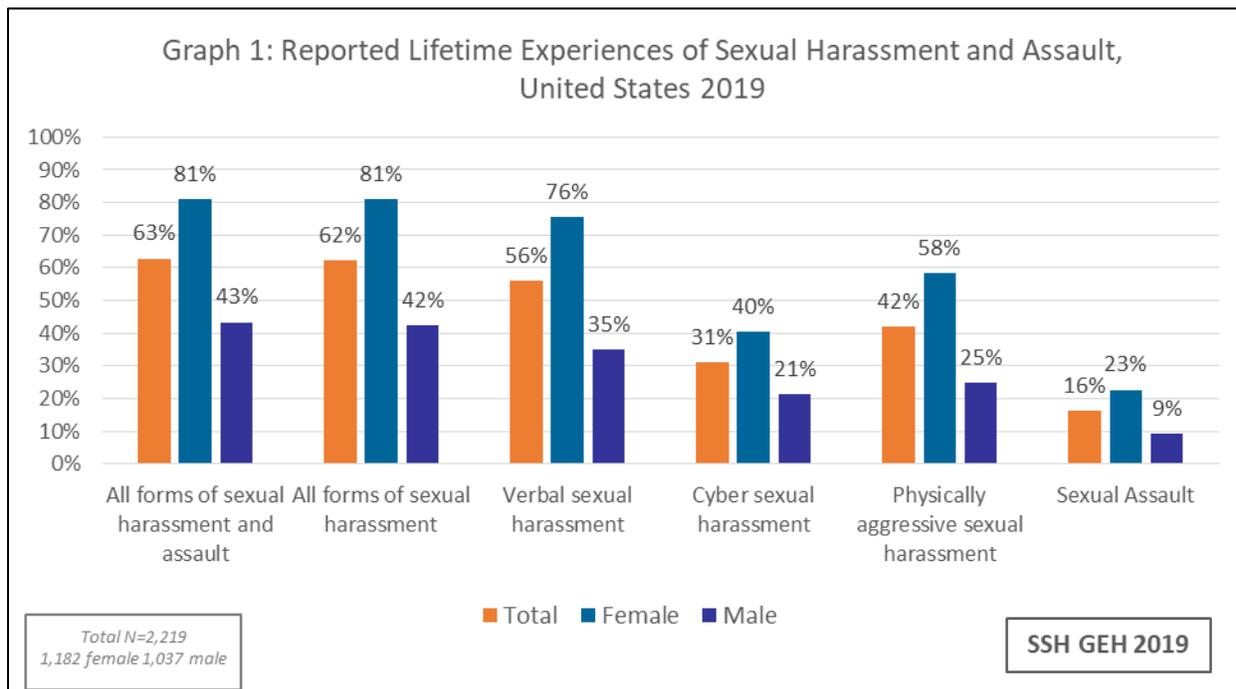
### Prevalence of Sexual Harassment and Assault

#### Sexual harassment and assault pose a significant problem in the United States.

From verbal to virtual to physical forms, millions of people in the United States experience sexual harassment and/or assault, especially those who: are female; are low-income; are a person of color; identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual; and/or live with a disability.

Most women (81%) and many men (43%) in the survey reported experiencing sexual harassment and/or assault (see Graph 1). Notably, this is the same prevalence demonstrated in 2018 with a different nationally representative sample but similar research methods, supporting the validity of these findings (see Graph 2).

- **Verbal sexual harassment** is most common, as reported by 76% of women and 35% of men.
- **Cyber sexual harassment** (via text, phone, online) was reported by 40% of women and 21% of men.
- **Physically aggressive forms of sexual harassment** were reported by 58% of women and 25% of men. This severe form of sexual harassment included being sexually touched in an unwelcome way (49% of women and 18% of men); being physically followed (27% of women and 11% of men); and being flashed or shown genitals against their will (30% of women and 12% of men).
- **Sexual assault** was reported by an alarming 23% of women and 9% of men, and almost every person who had experienced assault (97%) had also experienced sexual harassment.



The top five most frequently selected forms of sexual harassment and assault by gender in 2019 are:

Women:

- Someone whistling, honking, making kissy noises, “Pssst” sounds, or leering/staring aggressively at you. (64%)
- Someone saying things like, “Hey Baby,” “Mmmm Sexy,” “Yo Shorty,” “Mami/Mamacita,” “Give me a smile,” or similar comments in a way that is disrespectful and/or unwanted and/or made you feel unsafe. (60%)
- Someone calling you a sexist slur, like “Bitch,” “Slut,” “Cunt,” “Ho,” or “Thot.” (50%)
- Someone purposely touching you or brushing up against you in an unwelcome, sexual way. (49%)
- Someone talking about your body parts inappropriately or offensively (such as your legs, crotch, butt, or breasts), saying sexually explicit comments (“I want to do BLANK to you”) or asking inappropriate sexual questions. (46%)

Men:

- Someone purposely touching you or brushing up against you in an unwelcome, sexual way. (18%)
- Someone whistling, honking, making kissy noises, “Pssst” sounds, or leering/staring aggressively at you. (17%)
- Someone misgendering you or calling you a homophobic or transphobic slur, like “Fag,” “Dyke,” or “Tranny.” (15%)
- Someone repeatedly texting or calling you in a harassing way. (15%)
- Someone talking about your body parts inappropriately or offensively. (14%)

See Graph 3 for more information.

It is also worth highlighting the following two findings:

- Being called a homophobic or transphobic slur was one of the most frequently selected forms of sexual harassment for men (15%), while it was the least selected form of harassment for women (12%). It is the only form of harassment that was more commonly reported by men than by women, though not significantly more so ( $p=0.2$ ).
- Quid-pro-quo sexual harassment (in this context meaning “something for something” between someone with power over someone else) was not as frequently selected as other forms, but it was still notable. Around 13% of women and 6% of men said someone told them they must date them or do a sexual act for them in exchange for something (such as a good grade, a promotion, a job, drugs, food, or something similar) or instead of something (like paying rent or receiving a citation).

Graph 3. Forms of Sexual Harassment Women and Men Report Having Experienced



## Prevalence of Sexual Harassment and Assault by Various Demographics

Overall, sexual harassment is so common for women of all backgrounds that most differences by demographic groups as far as if they have ever experienced sexual harassment are not statistically significant. Three main exceptions are sexual orientation, disability status, and metro versus non-metro area residence. Women with disabilities and women who identify as lesbian or bisexual were more likely to report experiencing both sexual harassment and assault than women without disabilities and straight women, respectively. Women in metro areas were also more likely to report experiencing sexual harassment than women in non-metro areas.

Among men, those in marginalized groups were more likely to report experiencing sexual harassment and, especially, sexual assault. This includes men with disabilities, men living below the poverty line, and gay and bisexual men.

### Race/Ethnicity

Any slight difference in experiences of harassment and assault across racial/ethnic groups for women was not statistically significant.

There was no significant difference between experience of sexual harassment by racial/ethnic groups for men, but there was for sexual assault. Men of color were more likely to report experiencing assault (20% mixed race/ other race, 13% Black, and 11% Hispanic) compared to White men (7%) ( $p=0.047$ ).

### Sexual Orientation

Lesbian and bisexual women respondents were significantly more likely than straight women to report harassment, with 95% reporting lifetime experience of sexual harassment, compared with 80% of straight women ( $p<0.001$ ). Of course, homophobic slurs was one of the forms of sexual harassment they could choose, which may contribute to the difference. Lesbian and bisexual women were also more likely to report sexual assault: 47% of lesbian or bisexual women reported experiencing sexual assault compared with 21% of straight women ( $p<0.001$ ).

The difference in all sexual harassment and assault experiences based on sexual orientation for men was also significant. Notably, 64% of gay and bisexual men reported facing physically aggressive sexual harassment compared with 22% of straight men ( $p<0.001$ ), and 21% of gay and bisexual men reported experiencing sexual assault compared with 9% of straight men ( $p=0.01$ ). See Table 2.

	<b>Sexual Harassment Overall</b>	<b>Physically Aggressive Sexual Harassment</b>	<b>Sexual Assault</b>
Lesbian/Bisexual Women	95%	71%	47%
Straight Women	80%	58%	21%
Gay/Bisexual Men	77%	64%	21%
Straight Men	40%	22%	9%

## Household Income

Overall, there was little difference based on annual household income for sexual harassment for both women and men.

When it came to sexual assault, there were not significant differences among women, but among men, those in the under \$25k category (below the poverty level) were the most likely to report experiencing it (21%) ( $p=0.01$ ).

## Disability

People with disabilities were significantly more likely to experience all forms of sexual harassment and assault than people without disabilities. The strongest findings were for the more severe forms, for physically aggressive sexual harassment (among men, 48% vs. 20% for those with and without a disability,  $p<0.001$ ) and sexual assault (among women, 35% vs. 20%,  $p<0.001$ , and among men, 25% vs. 6%,  $p<0.001$ , for those with and without a disability, respectively).<sup>13</sup> See Table 3.

	<b>Sexual Harassment Overall</b>	<b>Physically Aggressive Sexual Harassment</b>	<b>Sexual Assault</b>
Women with Disabilities	87%	66%	35%
Women without Disabilities	80%	57%	20%
Men with Disabilities	62%	48%	25%
Men without Disabilities	39%	20%	6%

## Age

People were asked about their experiences of sexual harassment and assault *ever*, so one would expect older respondents to be more likely to report experiences than younger respondents. This was not the case. Overall, participants in our oldest age category (65 and older) were the least likely to report experiencing sexual harassment and assault.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Unpublished federal crime data obtained by NPR in January 2018 from the Justice Department found that people with intellectual disabilities are “sexually assaulted at a rate seven times higher than those without disabilities.” Shapiro, J. (2018, January 8). The sexual assault epidemic no one talks about. *NPR*. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/2018/01/08/570224090/the-sexual-assault-epidemic-no-one-talks-about>.

<sup>14</sup> The reason for this lower reporting among the oldest individuals is unclear: 1) If most incidents of sexual abuse take place in people’s younger years, do older people not remember many of those incidents but they did have them? 2) Are older people less likely to identify the examples provided of sexual abuse as sexual abuse compared with younger people? 3) Did sexual harassment and assault occur less in decades past, perhaps due to fewer women being in public spaces, workplaces, and institutions of higher education? 4) Were forms of sexual violence so normalized that older people do not identify them as abuse? 5) Some other reason?

### Age + Women

Reports of sexual harassment and assault among women varied by age, though not significantly so. Women aged 25 to 49 tended to report experiencing higher prevalence of sexual harassment than those of other age groups, while women in the 65+ category were the least likely to report experiencing every form, except for physically aggressive harassment. See Table 4.

	<b>Verbal Sexual Harassment</b>	<b>Physically Aggressive Sexual Harassment</b>	<b>Cyber Sexual Harassment</b>	<b>Sexual Assault</b>
18-24	74%	48%	53%	18%
25-34	79%	58%	55%	25%
35-49	80%	61%	44%	29%
50-64	76%	62%	33%	23%
65+	65%	55%	21%	11%

### Age + Men

Age was also related to sexual harassment and assault among men, though again not significantly. As with women, men aged 25 to 49 tended to report experiencing a higher prevalence of sexual harassment than those of other age groups, while men in the 65+ age category were the least likely to report experiencing every form, except for physically aggressive harassment. See Table 5.

	<b>Verbal Sexual Harassment</b>	<b>Physically Aggressive Sexual Harassment</b>	<b>Cyber Sexual Harassment</b>	<b>Sexual Assault</b>
18-24 years	34%	20%	27%	12%
25-34 years	42%	31%	23%	11%
35-49 years	43%	27%	24%	9%
50-64 years	30%	20%	20%	10%
65+ years	23%	25%	11%	3%

### Metropolitan Area and Region

There was significant increased risk for sexual harassment, but not assault, based on metropolitan vs. non-metropolitan residence for women (83% vs. 68%, respectively,  $p=0.01$ ). This is likely due in part to differences in experience of harassment in a public space (71% vs. 47% metropolitan vs. non-

metropolitan,  $p < 0.001$ ). There was no significant increased risk for sexual harassment or assault for men based on metropolitan area residence. There were no observed differences by region.

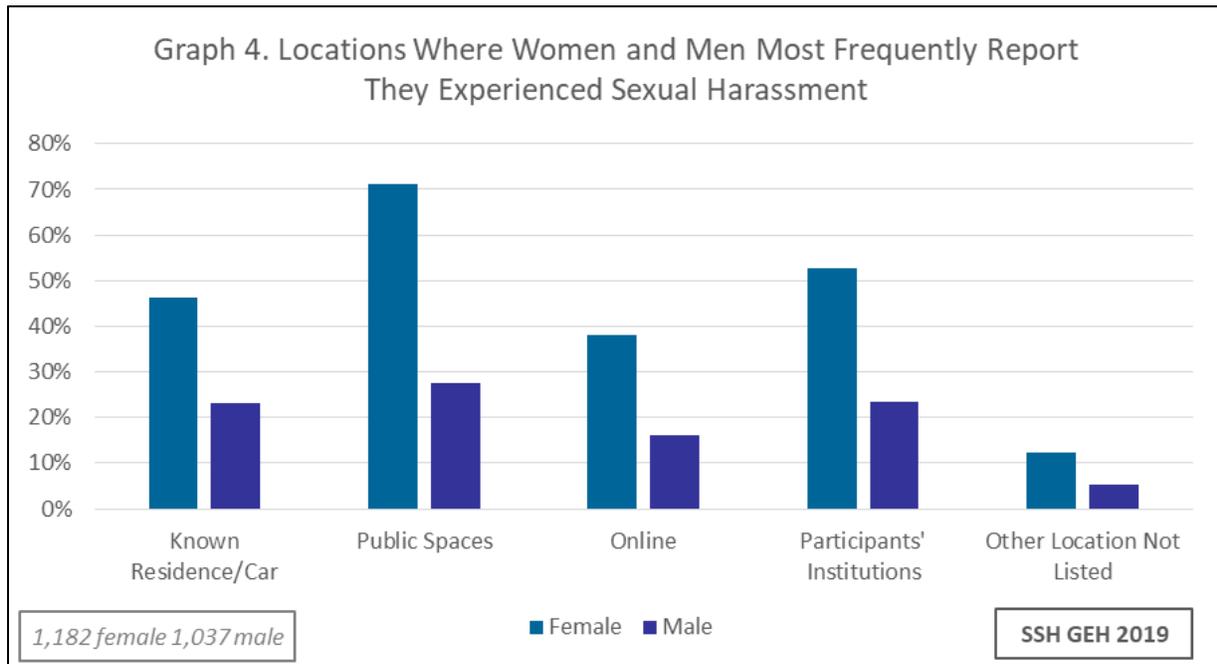
## Locations Where Sexual Harassment and Assault Occur

A public space was the most frequently reported location for sexual harassment, and a private residence was the most frequently reported location for sexual assault.

For every instance of sexual harassment or assault that respondents had experienced, they were asked to specify the location where this act took place. Possible locations included known residences, public places, online spaces, and/or institutions known to participants.

The top five most selected locations for sexual harassment are as follows. See Table 6 for a complete list and Graph 4 for more information about the main categories of locations.

- Women: Most women (68%) reported experiencing sexual harassment in a public space, like on the street or in a store. Around one-third of all women reported experiencing sexual harassment in their workplace (38%), their home/residence (31%), a nightlife venue (37%), and a school (38%), respectively.
- Men: Among men, 23% reported experiencing sexual harassment in a public space, and 14-15% reported experiencing it at school, their home/residence, someone else's home/residence, and their workplace.



Notably, when you combine all public spaces together (including mass transit, ride-sharing services and night life venues), the reports of sexual harassment in all public spaces, often termed street harassment, rises to 71% for women and 28% for men.

<b>Table 6: Prevalence of Sexual Harassment by Location Among All Respondents</b>			
	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Known Residence/Car</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>35%</b>
Your home or place of residence	31%	15%	23%
Someone else's home or place of residence	27%	14%	20%
Your car or the car of a person you know	19%	9%	14%
<b>All Public Spaces</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>50%</b>
A public space (like a street, park, beach, store, restaurant, mall, library, movie theater, museum, swimming pool, gym)	68%	23%	46%
Mass transportation (bus, subway, metro, train, or airplane)	25%	10%	18%
Taxi or ride-sharing service driven by someone you didn't know	4%	4%	4%
Nightlife venue (like a concert, bar, or club)	37%	12%	25%
<b>Online</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>27%</b>
Online (such as over email or social media platforms)	27%	10%	19%
By phone (texting or calls)	30%	12%	21%
<b>Participants' Institutions</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>39%</b>
<i>Participants' schools (elementary through university)</i>	<i>38%</i>	<i>15%</i>	<i>27%</i>
Your elementary school	6%	4%	5%
Your middle school	17%	8%	13%
Your high school	27%	11%	19%
Your university or college or technical training school	18%	6%	13%
Your workplace, including temporary jobs and internships	38%	14%	27%
Other Location Not Listed	12%	5%	9%

## Sexual Assault

For the 23% of women and 9% of men who experienced sexual assault, they said most sexual assaults took place in private homes/residences. Graph 5 lists the top four locations for sexual assault: someone else's home/place of residence (10% female, 3% male), the respondent's home/place of residence (8% female, 2% male), a public space (4% female, 1% male), and the respondent's car or car of someone they know (3% female, <1% male).



## Number of Locations

When looking at how many places people said they had experienced sexual harassment and assault, most people (83% of women and 75% of men) who reported having ever experienced harassment or assault reported experiencing it in more than one location. Notably, one in three women (36%) had incidents across six or more locations, as had 22% of men. Twenty percent of women said they had experiences in four to five locations, as had 18% of men. Around 28% of women and 34% of men said they had experienced sexual harassment and assault in two to three locations.

## Locations of Sexual Harassment and Various Demographics

The next sections group the locations listed in Table 6 into four main categories: public spaces, known residences/vehicles, online harassment, and harassment at institutions (like schools, universities, and workplaces). Also, the next sections only focus on sexual harassment (verbal, physically aggressive, and cyber); sexual assault is *not* included.

### Race/Ethnicity

There were no significant differences in locations of sexual harassment by race/ethnicity for women.

There were no significant differences in locations of sexual harassment by race/ethnicity for men, except in the case of sexual harassment in public spaces, which was more likely experienced by Black men (41%) and less likely by White men (24%) ( $p=0.04$ ); 29% of Hispanic men and 38% of mixed-race or other race men reported experiencing sexual harassment in public spaces.

### Sexual Orientation

Among women, lesbian and bisexual women were more likely to report sexual harassment across all locations; 91% of lesbian and bisexual women report harassment in a public setting, compared with 70% of straight women ( $p<0.001$ ). Among men, gay and bisexual men were at greater risk for harassment in public spaces, online, and in known residences/vehicles, relative to straight men. Half of gay men (50%) reported experiencing sexual harassment in public spaces, compared with a quarter of straight men (26%) ( $p=0.01$ ).

### Household Income

Among women, the highest income group (\$75K or more per year) was more likely to report harassment in an institutional setting (61%) than women in lower income groups (48-49%) ( $p=0.03$ ). This is driven by higher likelihood of harassment at a university, college, or technical school (due in part to higher likelihood of attendance), as well as higher rates of workplace harassment.

Among men, the lowest income group (\$25K or less per year) was more likely to report harassment in a known residence or vehicle (36%) than higher income groups (19-25%) ( $p=0.04$ ).

### Disability

Among women, sexual harassment in a private residence ( $p=0.02$ ) and harassment online ( $p=0.002$ ) were significantly more likely among those with disabilities versus those without a disability. Among men, those with disabilities reported facing higher rates of harassment across private residences ( $p<0.001$ ), public spaces ( $p=0.01$ ), and online ( $p<0.001$ ) compared with men without disabilities.

### Age

Among women, there were significant differences based on age in harassment in private residences, with women aged 25 to 34 reporting the highest rate of harassment there ( $p=0.03$ ). Women aged 18 to 24 and 25 to 34 also reported experiencing significantly more online harassment than older women ( $p<0.001$ ).

Among men, no significant differences were observed by age across all locations.

### Region / metropolitan area

Among women, the most notable finding is that those residing in metropolitan areas were significantly more likely to report experiencing sexual harassment in public spaces (73% for women in metropolitan areas vs. 52% for women in non-metropolitan areas,  $p < 0.001$ ). No such differences were observed for men.

No differences in location of harassment by region were observed for men or women.

## How Recently People Experienced Sexual Harassment or Assault

**Around one in six women and men who experienced sexual harassment or assault said it had most recently occurred within the past six months.**

Participants who reported ever experiencing sexual harassment or assault were asked when the most recent incident occurred. Eighteen percent of women and 16% of men said the most recent experience occurred in the past six months, and 45% of all respondents said the most recent experience took place in the past five years.

Younger women were the most likely age and sex category to report sexual harassment or assault within the past six months (32%); past six-month prevalence decreased steadily with age for women (26% age 25-34, 17% age 35-49, 14% age 50-64, 5% age 65+;  $p < 0.001$ ). A different age pattern for recent harassment incident was present for men, where middle-aged men (35-49) were the most likely to have experienced an incident within the past six months (29%), and the percent experiencing recent harassment or assault was lower for younger & older men (5% age 18-24, 13% age 25-34, 18% age 50-64, 4% age 65+;  $p = 0.01$ ).

Women and men of color (35% Black women, 19% Hispanic women; 26% Black men, 24% Hispanic men) were more likely than white women and men (14% white women,  $p = 0.01$ ; 9% white men,  $p < 0.001$ ) to report that the most recent incident had occurred in the past six months.

Lesbian and bisexual women were more likely than straight women (39% vs. 16%,  $p = 0.005$ ) to report that harassment had occurred within the past six months; no such difference was observed for men.

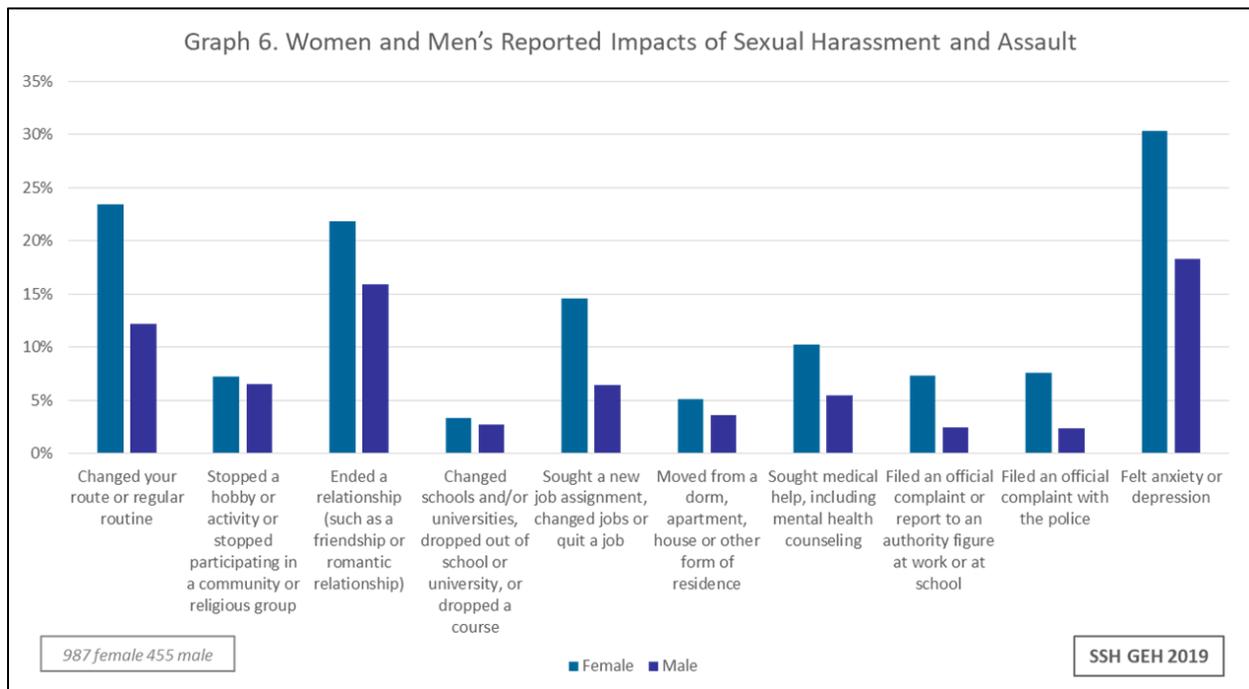
No significant differences by disability status, income, region, or metropolitan residence were observed for men or women.

Notably, 82% of men who reported experiencing harassment in the past six months reported harassment in a public place, compared with 61% of men who reported experiencing harassment more than six months ago ( $p = 0.01$ ). There was no such difference for women.

## The Impact of Sexual Harassment and Assault

The most frequent response to experiencing sexual harassment and assault was feeling anxiety or depression.

The survey also asked respondents to share whether they had experienced any one or more of ten possible responses or effects of victimization of harassment or assault. Among these, the most frequently selected outcomes of respondents' experiences of sexual harassment and assault were the same across gender, though women were significantly more likely than men to report these. The top outcome was feeling anxiety or depression (30% women, 18% men). The next most frequently selected response was to change one's route or regular routine (23% women, 12% men). The third most frequently selected response was to end a relationship due to the abuse (22% of women, 16% of men). A full list is found in Graph 6.



Notably, only one in eight women filed an official complaint or report to an authority figure, including filing a police report. The figure was even lower for men: one in 20. Also, one in seven women sought a new job assignment, changed jobs, or quit a job due to the abuse, as did one in 17 men.

Gay, lesbian, and bisexual people (both women and men) were more likely than straight people to report feeling depressed or anxious and make changes to their lives ( $p=0.01$ ), as were people with disabilities compared to people without disabilities ( $p<0.001$ ). Younger women were more likely than older women to report feeling depressed or anxious ( $p=0.01$ ), and men in the highest income bracket (\$75K+) were less likely than men reporting lower incomes to report feeling depressed or anxious as a result of harassment or assault ( $p=0.01$ ). No differences were seen by racial/ethnic group, metro residence, or region.

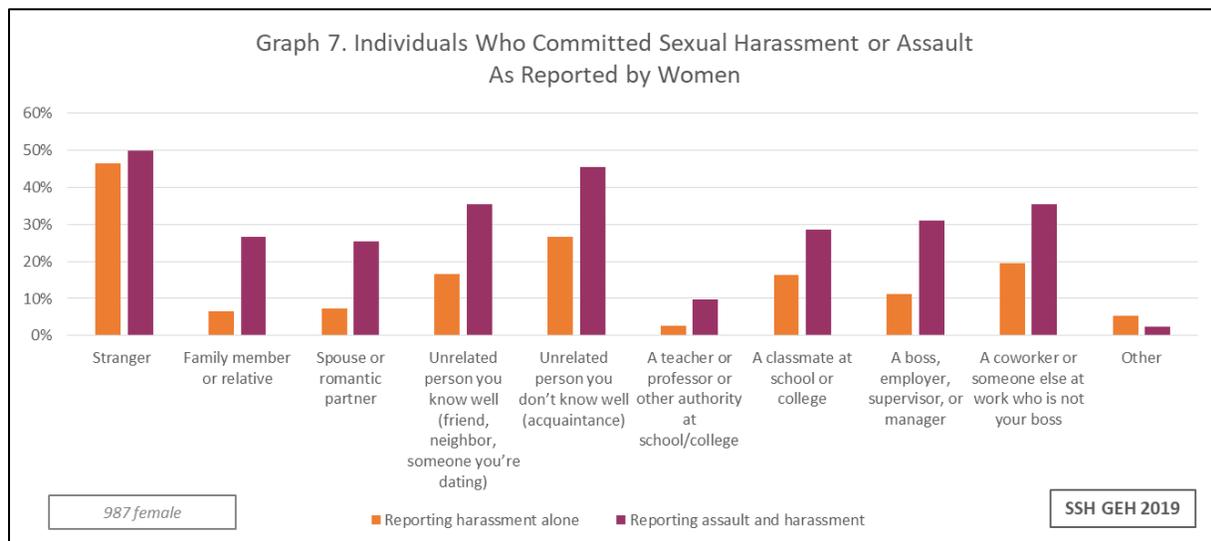
## People Who Commit Sexual Harassment and Assault

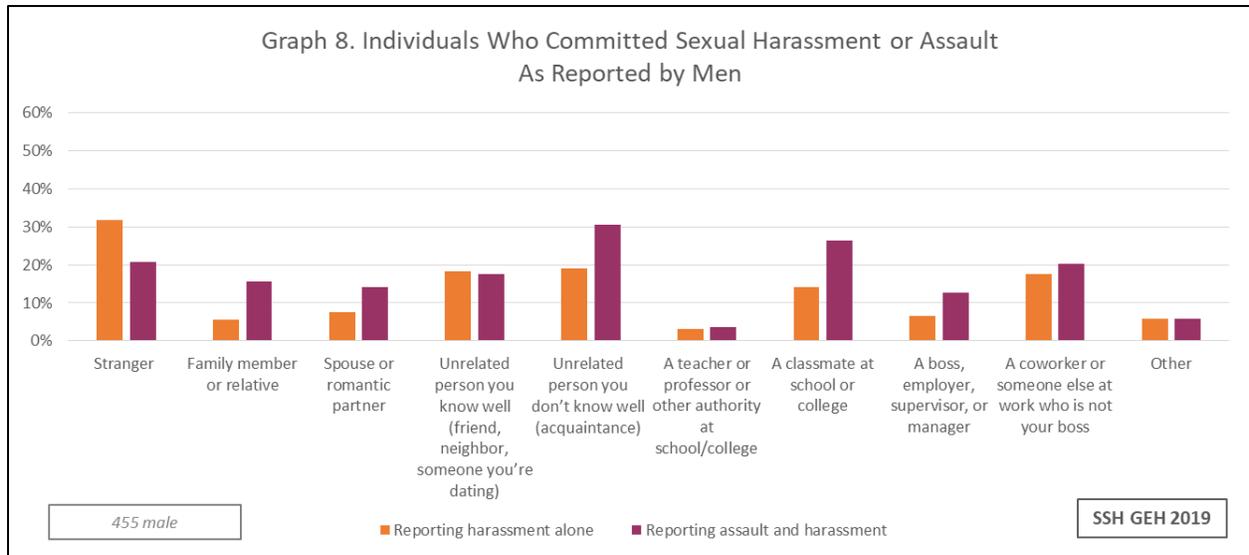
Those who reported sexual harassment alone were most likely to report that a stranger committed it, while those reporting assault as well as harassment were most likely to say that someone close to them was involved in the abuse.

Among the respondents who reported experiencing sexual harassment alone, strangers were by far the most frequently listed type of person who committed the harassment against them (47% of women and 32% of men who only experienced sexual harassment). Those in our study who reported both sexual assault and sexual harassment were most likely to report that someone they knew well was involved in at least one incident (66% of women and 36% of men reporting assault and harassment). This included a family member or relative (27% women, 16% men); a romantic partner or spouse (25% women, 14% men); and a friend, neighbor, or someone they were dating (36% women, 18% men).

Women who reported experiencing sexual assault were significantly more likely than women who experienced sexual harassment alone to report known people as those who committed the harassment or assault (66% of women who experienced assault vs. 28% of women who experienced harassment alone,  $p < 0.001$ ).

See Graphs 7 and 8 for more information.





## Respondents could indicate if they had ever committed acts of sexual harassment or assault, and reported perpetration was far less likely than victimization for women and men.

In 2019, for the first time, we included a series of questions to ascertain whether the respondent had ever committed sexual harassment or assault themselves. Mirroring the questions on experiences of sexual harassment or assault, respondents were asked whether they themselves had ever done any of the same 15 acts, “when others did not willingly agree to [the act] or did not want to have [the act], or you were unsure if they wanted to have [the act] but you did it anyway.” See Table 1 in the Definitions section.

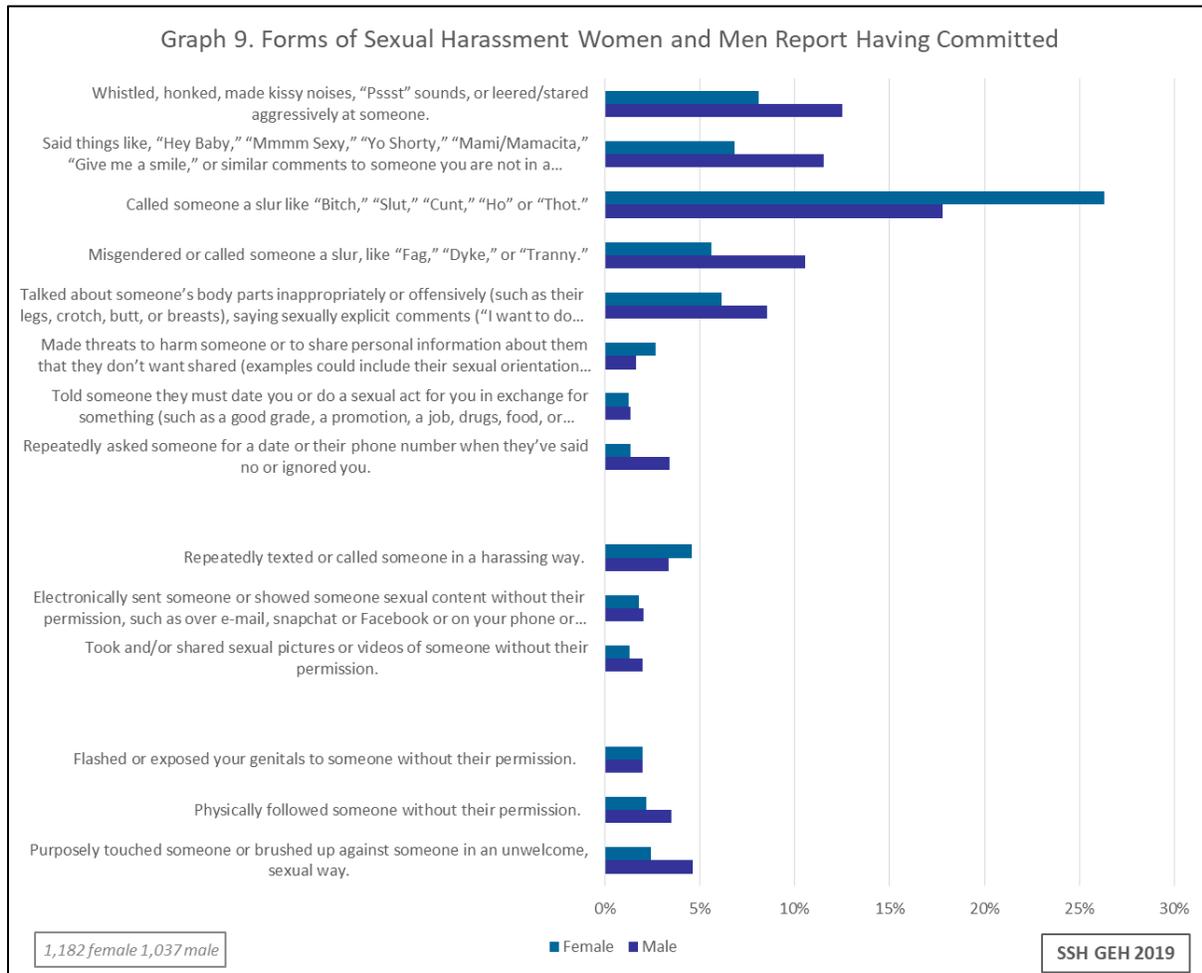
In total, approximately one-third of participants reported ever committing one or more forms of harassment. Only 2% of men and 1% of women reported ever committing sexual assault, using the report’s definition. These self-reported figures almost certainly reflect under-reporting among all respondents due to the sensitivity (and, for some items, illegality) of the related acts, and other studies have suggested that men may under-report sexual violence perpetration even more so than women.<sup>15</sup>

The findings also lend credence to the observation that individuals who commit these offenses not uncommonly do so against multiple individuals; this may be a partial explanation for why reported rates of perpetration are lower than reported rates of experiencing these acts.<sup>16</sup> This trend - the likelihood of a single person using violent behaviors against several people - has been shown to be true for men who

<sup>15</sup> Reed, E., Gupta, J., & Silverman, J. G. (2014). Understanding sexual violence perpetration. *JAMA Pediatr.*, 168(6), 581. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2013.5408.

<sup>16</sup> Abbey, A., & McAuslan, P. (2004). A longitudinal examination of male college students' perpetration of sexual assault. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 72(5), 747–756. doi:10.1037/0022-006X.72.5.747

commit sexual violence and may hold true for sexual harassment as well.<sup>17</sup> Further, differences in how women and men tend to understand sexual harassment and assault may impact their awareness level when self-reporting their own actions. See Graph 9 for further detail.



The findings on self-reported use of harassment and assault behaviors tell a complex story. First, it is a testament to the widespread prevalence of harassment and assault in the United States that fully one-third of respondents report using one or more of these behaviors in their lifetime. But it is also essential to consider that the ways in which women and men approach, interpret, and experience these behaviors (and the survey questions about them) may likely vary based on the gendered nature of certain of these actions.

<sup>17</sup> Reed, E., Gupta, J., & Silverman, J. G. (2014). Understanding sexual violence perpetration. *JAMA Pediatr.*, 168(6), 581. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2013.5408.

For example, the one and only action women were significantly more likely than men to report engaging in was “calling someone a sexist slur like ‘bitch,’ ‘slut,’ ‘cunt,’ ‘ho,’ or ‘thot.’” In interpreting this finding, it is essential to recognize that these slurs are gendered in their nature: They imply a female subject and are most often directed at women. Therefore, for this item, we must recognize that there is an important qualitative difference when a member of the group demeaned by a particular slur (women in this case) uses this word, by comparison to when this word is used by a member of another, more privileged, group (men in this case). It is simply not accurate to directly equate women’s use of these terms with men’s use of these terms, as if the act is identical in its cultural connotation and implication regardless of the gender of the person using the terms. Certainly, these terms can be wielded in harassing and abusive ways by members of all genders, but the gendered nature of the terms is undeniable and must affect our interpretation. For comparison, readers may consider slurs of a racist and homophobic nature, and the qualitatively different social meaning and impact when these words are wielded against marginalized groups from the outside as compared to when they are used within the marginalized group.

While our initial analysis of overall rates of self-reported harassment and assault behaviors showed that perpetration did not differ in statistically significant ways by the gender of the respondent, this equivalence altered upon removal of the “sexist slurs” item from our definition of harassment. Upon removal of this variable, we see a marginally statistically significant trend suggesting that men are more likely to engage in behaviors of sexual harassment and assault as compared to women (27% of men vs. 21% of women,  $p=0.051$ ).

## Most people who said they committed sexual harassment also said they had experienced sexual harassment.

Experiencing and committing sexual harassment and assault appear to be connected. Among those who reported committing sexual harassment, 95% of women and 73% of men reported experiencing it too. In contrast, among those who reported never having committed sexual harassment, 74% of women and 30% of men reported experiencing it.

Putting this another way, among men who experienced sexual harassment and/or assault, 51% admitted to committing it against someone else and 49% said they did not. Among women who experienced sexual harassment and/or assault, 40% admitted to committing it and 60% said they did not.

These findings suggest there is often a cyclical nature of sexual harassment and assault.

These findings are consistent with prior research on sexual harassment in schools,<sup>18</sup> adolescent cyber-sexual harassment<sup>19</sup> and military contexts<sup>20</sup> and suggest that contexts or cultures that are more tolerant of these behaviors may connect perpetration and victimization.

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<sup>18</sup> Hill, Catherine. Holly Kearl. (2011). *Crossing the Line: Sexual Harassment at School*. AAUW.

<https://www.aauw.org/research/crossing-the-line/>.

<sup>19</sup> Ybarra, M.L., Espelage, D.L., & Mitchell, K.J. (2007). The co-occurrence of internet harassment and unwanted sexual solicitation victimization and perpetration associations with psychosocial indicators. *J Adolesc Health*, 41(6 Suppl 1):S31-41.

<sup>20</sup> Morral, A. R., Gore, K., & Schell, T. L. (2015). *Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment in the U.S. Military: Volume 2. Estimates for Department of Defense Service Members from the 2014 RAND Military Workplace Study*. Retrieved from Santa Monica, CA: [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR870z2-1.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR870z2-1.html).

## Accusations of Sexual Harassment and Assault

### Accusations of sexual harassment and assault are very low.

In 2019, we also asked respondents if anyone had ever told them they had committed sexual harassment or assault. All participants of this study were asked this question, regardless of their responses to the question about their self-reported committing of sexual harassment and assault. Only 2% of men and 1% of women said that they have been accused of committing sexual harassment or assault; 1.9% of men and 0.4% of women reported having been accused of harassment, and 0.7% of both men and women had been accused of assault. Of the subsample of participants who reported never having committed sexual harassment or assault, only 1% of males and females said they had been accused of harassment or assault. Thus, more people self-reported engaging in sexual harassment or assault than the number of people who were accused of doing so.

### Few people think that those who make high-profile allegations of sexual harassment and assault are purposely lying.

In 2019, we asked respondents whether they believed the high-profile allegations against prominent men regarding sexual assault or harassment. Most people said it varied from case to case, and that some were true, and some were untrue (49% of both women and men). More people believed harassment or assault happened in most or all cases (43% of women, 40% of men) than believed that harassment or assault did not happen in most cases (8% of women, 11% of men).

	Female	Male	Total
I believe sexual harassment or assault occurred in every one of these cases	14%	10%	12%
I believe that in most of these cases something inappropriate happened, but not all of them were at the level of sexual harassment or assault	29%	30%	30%
I think it varied from case to case, with some of the cases being true and some being untrue	49%	49%	49%
I believe that in most of these cases nothing happened and that accusers are often misremembering or confused about what rises to the level of sexual harassment or assault	3%	3%	3%
I believe that in most of these cases nothing happened and that accusers are purposefully lying for attention or money	5%	8%	6%

## Conclusion

Eighteen months after the #MeToo movement gained national traction, it has been encouraging to see legislatures and various industries address sexual harassment in the workplace. But our study demonstrates that the problem begins well before most people reach the workplace, with public spaces and private residences being prime locations for experiences of sexual harassment and assault. When an alarming 81% of women and 43% of men across the country face sexual violations that cause them pain and prompt many to alter their lives in significant ways, we must do more to stop and prevent sexual assault and harassment earlier.

Prevention efforts, including education in schools as early as possible around issues of consent and harassment, are crucial. It is also necessary to shift to a culture where individuals look out for one another, getting involved when they witness inappropriate behavior, and where those who commit sexual harassment and assault are held accountable. This includes holding public figures to high standards to send a clear message that sexual harassment and assault are not tolerated. We must stop the cycle of harassment and abuse and create a better world for the next generation. Visit organizations like National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC), PreventConnect, RAINN, 1 in 6, CDC, SSH, and others to find resources and ideas about what you can do.

As one example, NSVRC released a bystander intervention tips and strategies factsheet last year to coincide with the release of the 2018 report, and it is available here: <https://www.nsvrc.org/bystander-intervention-tips-and-strategies>.

Believing survivors of sexual harassment and assault is also critical. Our study shows that false allegations are rare, particularly in contrast to the high number of people who say they have experienced harassment. Further, our study shows that most people do believe each other, to varying degrees. Our policies should reflect these realities, and it is always necessary to hold those who cause harm accountable.

Finally, our study affirms that in order to prevent harassment and assault, it is necessary to know more about people who commit these acts. Given the limitations of self-reporting perpetration behaviors, the study provides only some insight on individuals who commit sexual harassment and assault, but it is a start. And, it is notable that as many people were willing to self-report as did. We believe more research on these populations is necessary to understand the behaviors we want to end and inform effective prevention efforts.

## Appendix A – Other Studies

These are examples of resources and studies on sexual harassment and assault that can supplement the findings of this report regarding specific demographics or locations.

### Overall Resources:

1 in 6. (n.d.). The 1 in 6 statistic. Retrieved from <https://1in6.org/get-information/the-1-in-6-statistic/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (n.d.). National intimate partner and sexual violence survey (NISVS). Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/datasources/nisvs/index.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). Sexual violence. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/sexualviolence/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2016). *STOP SV: A technical package to prevent sexual violence*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/sv-prevention-technical-package.pdf>.

Chicago Task Force on Violence Against Girls & Young Women. (n.d.). *Reporting on rape and sexual violence: A media toolkit for local and national journalists to better media coverage*. Retrieved from <http://www.chitaskforce.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Chicago-Taskforce-Media-Toolkit.pdf>

Love is Respect. (n.d.). Dating abuse statistics. Retrieved from <http://www.loveisrespect.org/resources/dating-violence-statistics/>

National Sexual Violence Resource Center. (2017). *Reporting on sexual violence: Tips for journalists*. Retrieved from <https://www.nsvrc.org/publications/nsvrc-publications/reporting-sexual-violence-tips-journalists>

National Sexual Violence Resource Center. (2017). *Talking points: American Journal of Preventive Medicine releases lifetime economic burden of rape among U.S. adults*. Retrieved from <https://www.nsvrc.org/publications/nsvrc-publications/talking-points-american-journal-preventive-medicine-releases>

National Sexual Violence Resource Center Resource (n.d.). Welcome to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center library catalog. Retrieved from <http://www.nsvrclibrary.org/>

Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (n.d.). Scope of the problem: Statistics. Retrieved from <https://www.rainn.org/statistics/scope-problem>

### LGBTQQIA

Burns, C. & Ross, P. (2011). *Gay and transgender discrimination outside the workplace: why we need protections in housing, health care, and public accommodations*. Retrieved from Center for American Progress: [https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2011/07/pdf/lgbt\\_discrimination.pdf](https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2011/07/pdf/lgbt_discrimination.pdf)

Grant, J.M., Mottet, L.A., Tanis, J., Harrison, J., Herman, J.L., & Keisling, M. (2011). *Injustice at every turn: A report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey*. Retrieved from [https://www.transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/resources/NTDS\\_Report.pdf](https://www.transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/resources/NTDS_Report.pdf).

National Center for Transgender Equality. (2015). *2015 Transgender Survey Report*. Retrieved from <http://www.ustranssurvey.org/reports>  
(It includes breakout reports for various racial/ethnic groups and each U.S. state as well as the military.)

National Sexual Violence Resource Center. (2017). *Key findings from 'Sexual identity, sex of sexual contacts, and health-related behaviors among students in grades 9–12 - United States and selected sites, 2015'*. Retrieved from <https://www.nsvrc.org/publications/nsvrc-publications-research-briefs/key-findings-sexual-identity-sex-sexual-contacts-and>

## Disabilities

Disability Justice. (n.d.). Sexual abuse. Retrieved from <http://disabilityjustice.org/sexual-abuse/>

National Council on Disability. (2018). *Not on the radar: Sexual assault of college students with disabilities*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncd.gov/publications/2018/not-radar-sexual-assault-college-students-disabilities>

Shapiro, J. (2018, January 8). The sexual assault epidemic no one talks about. *NPR*. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/2018/01/08/570224090/the-sexual-assault-epidemic-no-one-talks-about>

Shapiro, J. (2018, January 18). From the frontlines of a sexual assault epidemic: 2 therapists share stories. *NPR*. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/2018/01/18/577065301/from-the-frontlines-of-a-sexual-assault-epidemic-two-therapists-share-stories>

Shapiro, J. (2018, January 18). In their words, adults with intellectual disabilities tell their sexual assault stories. *NPR*. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/2018/01/18/578956859/in-their-words-adults-with-intellectual-disabilities-tell-their-sexual-assault-s>

## Race/Ethnicity

Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.api-gbv.org/>

Indian Law Resource Center. (n.d.). Ending violence against Native women. Retrieved from <http://indianlaw.org/issue/ending-violence-against-native-women>

National Sexual Violence Resource Center. (2016). *Key findings from sexual violence victimization and associations with health in a community sample of African American women*. Retrieved from <https://www.nsvrc.org/publications/key-findings-sexual-violence-victimization-and-health-community-sample-african-american-women>.

Women of Color Network. (2006). *Domestic violence*. Retrieved from <http://www.doj.state.or.us/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/women-of-color-network-facts-domestic-violence-2006.pdf>

## People Who Commit Sexual Abuse

Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers. (2014). *Eight things everyone should know about sexual abuse & sexual offending*. Retrieved from <http://www.atsa.com/pdfs/Policy/8ThingsEveryoneShouldKnow.pdf>

Promundo. (2018). *Unmasking sexual harassment: How toxic masculinities drive men's abuse in the US, UK, and Mexico, and what we can do to end it*. Retrieved from <https://promundoglobal.org/resources/unmasking-sexual-harassment/?lang=english>

Sedensky, M. & Merchant, N. (2015, November 1). Betrayed by the badge. *Associated Press*. Retrieved from <http://interactives.ap.org/2015/betrayed-by-the-badge>

## Public Spaces

Kearl, H. (2014). *Unsafe and harassed in public spaces: A national street harassment report*. Retrieved from Stop Street Harassment: <http://www.stopstreetharassment.org/our-work/nationalstudy/>

## Domestic Relationships/Intimate Partner Relationships

Brown, T.N.T. & Herman, J.L. (2015). *Intimate partner violence and sexual abuse among LGBT people: A review of existing research*. Retrieved from The Williams Institute: <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Intimate-Partner-Violence-and-Sexual-Abuse-among-LGBT-People.pdf>

Catalano, S.M. (2013). *Intimate partner violence: Attributes of victimization, 1993–2011*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. Retrieved from <http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/ipvav9311.pdf> - PDF.

## K-12 Schools

Hill, C. & Kearl, H. (2011). *Crossing the line: Sexual harassment in schools*. Retrieved from AAUW: <https://www.aauw.org/research/crossing-the-line/>

Human Rights Watch. "Like walking through a hailstorm." *Discrimination against LGBT youth in US schools*. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/12/07/walking-through-hailstorm/discrimination-against-lgbt-youth-us-schools>

McDowell, R., Dunklin, R., Schmall, E., & Pritchard, J. (2017, May 1). Hidden horror of school sex assaults revealed by AP. *Associated Press*. Retrieved from <https://www.ap.org/explore/schoolhouse-sex-assault/hidden-horror-of-school-sex-assaults-revealed-by-ap.html>

National Sexual Violence Resource Center & Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape. (2012). *Sexual harassment & bullying of youth: Sexual violence & individuals who identify as LGBTQ*. Retrieved from [http://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/Publications\\_NSVRC\\_Guides\\_Sexual-Harassment-Bullying-Youth.pdf](http://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/Publications_NSVRC_Guides_Sexual-Harassment-Bullying-Youth.pdf)

Onyeka-Crawford, A., Patrick, K., & Chaudhry, N. (2017). *Let her learn: Stopping school pushout for girls of color*. Retrieved from National Women's Law Center: [https://nwl.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/final\\_nwlc\\_Gates\\_GirlsofColor.pdf](https://nwl.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/final_nwlc_Gates_GirlsofColor.pdf)

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. (2014). *Addressing Sexual Harassment in New York City Public Schools*. Retrieved from <https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/research/2014/10/addressing-sexual-harassment-in-new-york-city-public-schools.html>

Smith, J.N., Van Deven, M., & Huppuch, M. (2011). *Hey shorty! A guide to combating sexual harassment and violence in schools and on the streets*. New York, NY: Feminist Press.

## Colleges/Universities

Cantor, D., Fisher, B., Chibnall, S., Townsend, R., Lee, H., Bruce, C., & Thomas, G. (2015). Report on the AAUW Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct. Retrieved from the Association of American Universities: [https://www.aau.edu/sites/default/files/%40%20Files/Climate%20Survey/AAU\\_Campus\\_Climate\\_Survey\\_12\\_14\\_15.pdf](https://www.aau.edu/sites/default/files/%40%20Files/Climate%20Survey/AAU_Campus_Climate_Survey_12_14_15.pdf).

de Heer, B. & Jones, L. (2017). Measuring sexual violence on campus: Climate surveys and vulnerable groups. *Journal of School Violence*, 16(2), 207-221. doi:[10.1080/15388220.2017.1284444](https://doi.org/10.1080/15388220.2017.1284444)

Fisher, B.S., Cullen, F.T., & Turner, M.G. (2000). *The sexual victimization of college women*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. Retrieved from <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/182369.pdf>.

Krebs, C.P., Lindquist, C.H., Warner, T.D., Fisher, B.S., & Martin, S.L. (2007). *The campus sexual assault (CSA) study*. Retrieved from the National Institute of Justice: <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/221153.pdf>.

Krebs, C., Lindquist, C., Berzofsky, M., Shook-Sa, B., & Peterson, K. (2016). *Campus climate survey validation study final technical report*. Retrieved from the Bureau of Justice Statistics Research and Development Series: <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/ccsvsfr.pdf>

Wood, L., Sulley, C., Kammer-Kerwick, M., Follingstad, D., & Busch-Armendariz, N. (2017). Climate surveys: An inventory of understanding sexual assault and other crimes of interpersonal violence at institutions of higher education. *Violence Against Women*, 23(10), 1249-1267. doi:[10.1177/1077801216657897](https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801216657897)

## Workplaces

Feldblum, C.R. & Lipnic, V.A. (2016). *Select task force on the study of harassment in the workplace*. Retrieved from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission: [https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/task\\_force/harassment/upload/report.pdf](https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/task_force/harassment/upload/report.pdf)

National Sexual Violence Resource Center. (2017). *Key findings of the select task force on the study of harassment in the workplace*. Retrieved from <https://www.nsvrc.org/key-findings-select-task-force-study-harassment-workplace>.

Quick, J.C. & McFadyen, M.A. (2017). Sexual harassment: Have we made any progress? *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 22(3), 286-298. doi:[10.1037/ocp0000054](https://doi.org/10.1037/ocp0000054)

UNITE HERE Local 1. *Hands off, pants on: Sexual harassment in Chicago's hospitality industry*. Retrieved from <https://www.handsoffpantson.org/wp-content/uploads/HandsOffReportWeb.pdf>.

U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. (2017). *Working for inclusion: Time for Congress to enact federal legislation to address workplace discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Americans*. Retrieved from [https://www.usccr.gov/pubs/docs/LGBT\\_Employment\\_Discrimination2017.pdf](https://www.usccr.gov/pubs/docs/LGBT_Employment_Discrimination2017.pdf).