



You Oughta Know . . . About Sexual Harassment

What is sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment is unwanted and unwelcome sexual attention and behavior. Sexual harassment is not attention or behavior that you like or want.

Sexual harassment includes the following:

- ▶ Sexual pictures, photographs, and messages sent by any form of technology
- ▶ Sexual graffiti on bathroom walls and in locker rooms
- ▶ Spreading sexual rumors and rating other students by sexual activity or performance
- ▶ Derogatory comments about sexual orientation
- ▶ Talking about one's sexual activity in front of others
- ▶ Exposing oneself to others or touching oneself in a sexual way
- ▶ Touching, grabbing, and pinching in a sexual way
- ▶ Pulling at clothing in a sexual way or pulling clothing off or down
- ▶ Brushing against someone in a sexual way
- ▶ Blocking someone's way or cornering someone in a sexual way
- ▶ Forced kissing or touching

Remember . . .

- ▶ Sexual harassment is defined by the person being harassed—NOT by the person perpetrating the behavior.
- ▶ Recognize and respect others' boundaries for wanted and unwanted sexual attention and behavior. Know your own boundaries and communicate them to others.
- ▶ Anyone can be a target and/or perpetrator of sexual harassment. Boys may not admit when they have been targets of sexual harassment since the Boy World Box tells them they should always want sexual attention from girls.
- ▶ Sexual harassment is against the law. Know your right to be safe from sexual harassment and your responsibility not to harass.
- ▶ Schools are mandated by law to have a policy against sex discrimination that includes sexual harassment. Get a copy of your school's policy and learn how to use it.
- ▶ Report sexual harassment by talking to an adult you trust, such as a parent, teacher, or counselor.

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Facts About Sexual Harassment in Schools

Prevalence of sexual harassment in schools

- ▶ 83 percent of girls and 79 percent of boys have experienced peer sexual harassment in school.
- ▶ 76 percent of students have experienced nonphysical harassment, while 58 percent have experienced physical harassment.
- ▶ Slightly more than half of students (54 percent) say that they have sexually harassed someone during their school life.

Why students harass

- ▶ 39 percent say it's just part of school life, a lot of people do it, or it's no big deal.
- ▶ 28 percent say they thought the person liked it.
- ▶ 26 percent say they wanted a date with that person.
- ▶ 24 percent say their friends encouraged or pushed them to do it.

Behavioral and emotional impact

- ▶ Nearly half (47 percent) of all students who experience sexual harassment feel very or somewhat upset right afterward.
- ▶ Students who experience sexual harassment are most likely to react by:
 - Avoiding the person who bothered or harassed them (40 percent)
 - Talking less in class (24 percent)
 - Not wanting to go to school (22 percent)
 - Changing their seat in class to get farther away from someone (21 percent)
 - Finding it hard to pay attention in school (20 percent)
 - Staying away from particular places in the school or on the school grounds (18 percent)
 - Finding it hard to study (16 percent)
 - Losing their appetite or not being interested in eating (16 percent)
 - Staying home from school or cutting a class (16 percent)

Source: Harris Interactive. (2001). *Hostile hallways: Bullying, teasing, and sexual harassment in schools*. Washington, DC: American Association of University Women Educational Foundation. www.aauw.org/research/upload/hostilehallways.pdf

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Harassment of Gay and Lesbian Students

Harassment of gay and lesbian students in schools

- ▶ 75.4 percent of lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered (LGBT) students report hearing homophobic remarks such as "faggot" or "dyke" at school.
- ▶ 89.2 percent of LGBT students report hearing expressions like "That's so gay" or "You're so gay" used to indicate that something or someone is stupid or worthless frequently or often at school.
- ▶ 18.6 percent of survey respondents report hearing homophobic remarks from their teachers or other school staff.
- ▶ 64.1 percent of LGBT students report being verbally harassed (name calling, threats, etc.) because of their sexual orientation.
- ▶ 37.8 percent of LGBT students report being physically harassed while at school.
- ▶ 17.6 percent of students report being physically assaulted because of their sexual orientation and over a tenth (11.8 percent) because of their gender expression.
- ▶ 28.9 percent of LGBT students report missing at least one day of school because they felt unsafe.

Impact of harassment on academic performance

- ▶ The average GPA for students who are frequently or often physically harassed because of their sexual orientation or their gender expression is about a half-grade lower than for other students (2.6 versus 3.1).
- ▶ Those students who had many supportive faculty/staff in their school have GPAs about a half-grade higher than those with no supportive faculty/staff (2.8 versus 3.2).

School policy

While a majority of the students surveyed (68.3 percent) report that their school has a policy for reporting incidents of harassment and assault, less than a quarter of all respondents (22.2 percent) attend a school with a policy that specifically mentions sexual orientation, and only a tenth (10 percent) are at a school with a policy that mentions gender identity/expression.

Source: Kosciw, J. G., & Diaz, E. M. (2006). *The 2005 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in our nation's schools*. New York: Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network.
www.glsen.org/binary-data/GLSEN_ATTACHMENTS/file/585-1.pdf

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