



## Examples and Dynamics of Sexual Harassment

Sexual Harassment: The legal definition of Sexual Harassment by the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (1980) is “Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

1. submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual’s employment
2. submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual;
3. such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.”

Beyond the legal definition, harassment, sexual or otherwise, can also occur in the community or ministry when the people involved are not employees of the organization. In accord with our values, sexual harassment is not restricted to what is defined as sexual harassment under the law. [Organization Name] considers any unwanted sexualized behavior or sexualized behavior within a power differential to be a serious form of harassment (including unwanted touch or communication, other unwanted sexual attention, or any behavior that objectifies or degrades.) Other common forms of harassment include bullying and acts of discrimination. Harassment can include discrimination against a specific group of people based on age, race, sex, ethnicity, national origin, religion, language, disability, health conditions, socioeconomic status, marital status, domestic status, or parental status.

Group vs. Individual Harassment: When group harassment is not held accountable it emboldens individual harassment and more severe forms of harassment.

Cultural/Unenlightened Harassment: When harassing conduct (especially by men) is normalized in a culture. Often men are socialized to act in harassing ways but some may not fully realize the impact this is having on women. And yet the behavior contributes to an intimidating or degrading environment for women. This does not mean men are not accountable for their impact or the harm done. Characterizing it as cultural or unenlightened does not absolve anyone for responsibility for the impact and the harm done to others.

Most harassment is very calculated behavior. Sexual harassment is a serious form of violence. Those who experience sexual harassment often experience fear. Men especially must realize that women or those who hold less power do not know whether the violence will escalate to more violent forms of abuse (e.g. assault). Violence against women and objectification of

women is epidemic: domestic violence, sexual harassment (jogging, workplace, church), sexual assault, porn (violence, degradation).

Sexual harassment can include any unwanted sexual behavior including communication of any kind and unwanted physical contact. It can be any type of behavior where women are treated as “objects of the male sexual prerogative.” (Pamela Cooper-White, *The Cry of Tamar*, chapter 3)

## Types and Examples of Sexual Harassment

### Touch Examples Can Include

- Unwanted touch even if it to non-sexual areas (knee, shoulder, back, hand, etc.)
- Brushing them or other “accidental” touch
- “Innocent” touch that is too long, or evolves into something more (caress, etc.)
- Inappropriate and unwanted physical touches such as brushing against a woman with the man’s body
- Touching women’s hands, arms, or necks in a sexual way
- Being very “huggy”; using other cultural greetings to make initiate unwanted physical contact (e.g. kissing a woman though the culturally appropriate greeting was to touch cheeks and “kiss the air”)
- Asking permission without waiting for an answer - “Can I give you a hug?” - gives cover and plausible deniability
- “I’m a hugger.” Justification - This is just who I am you need to respect (when you are the one who needs respecting)

### Spacial Examples Can Include

- Standing inappropriately close to a woman (such as when looking over her shoulder) or walking close behind
- Getting too close, they back up, and you come forward again too close
- Blocking or cornering them in some way
- Sitting too closely and causing discomfort

### Verbal Examples Can Include

- Comments to females about body weight and shape and attractiveness and beauty - even about others - “my hot wife”
- Unwanted or inappropriate sexual advances
- Using gendered or sexualized nicknames that belittle: “Little Lady” “Honey” “Sweetheart” “Darlin”
- Sexual Jokes - “That’s what she said.” “Does the carpet match the drapes?” “I love women.” “I don’t know her in the biblical sense.”
- Asking about intimate details: dating life, underwear, anything intimate and it is clear they don’t want to talk about it: “Do you use micro bead shower gel?” “How long do you shower?” “Do you and your husband use condoms?” “Do you shave your armpits; nipples; pubic hair?” (other details related to sexuality, hygiene, etc.)
- Telling stories that objectify women and treat women as sexual conquests (e.g. a man telling a story about how proficient he became at taking off bras in college; telling about an erotic dream)
- Saying it while denying you are saying it: “I wish I was allowed to tell you that you look nice (or your hair smells nice, etc) today.”
- “You girls are so smart.” (Implying this is a surprise or unexpected for most women)

- Talking in stereotypes that degrade women
- Implying women don't need to make as much
- Implying women are more emotional

#### Visual Examples

- Leering at females (there is a difference between noticing someone and staring at them to the point they and others are uncomfortable)
- Posting or sharing sexualized pictures or signs or other content
- Leaving out pictures or content that is sexualized
- Sharing sexualized videos
- Using sexualized gestures, body movements, etc.

#### Social Media/Messaging

- Unwanted or inappropriate (e.g. boss-employee) sexualized communication as in an dm, app, email, or texts
- Suggestive comments or comments on physical appearance in posted photos online
- Online stalking

#### Stalking

Stalking is pattern of unwanted, fixated and obsessive behavior which is intrusive and causes fear of violence, alarm, or distress. Stalking is a terrifying reality and is now recognized as a crime in all fifty states. Examples of stalking include (from The Justice Department's Stalking Victimization Survey):

- Making unwanted phone calls/texts or sending unwanted messages or emails
- Following or spying on the victim
- Showing up or waiting at places without a legitimate reason
- Leaving unwanted items, notes, presents, or flowers
- Posting information or spreading false or confidential information about a person or victim on the internet, in a public place, or by word of mouth.

Paraphilic Harassment: Paraphilia are mental disorders such as pedophilia, voyeurism, exhibitionism, groping/touching (e.g. hands or knees not just private areas), etc. In the DSM-5 the term paraphilia is defined as "any intense and persistent sexual interest other than sexual interest in genital stimulation or preparatory fondling with phenotypically normal, physiologically mature, consenting human partners." Many paraphilic behaviors are also criminal.