

WOLF WHISTLES AND CREEPY COMPLIMENTS



**How Safe Routes to School Programs Can
Take Action to Protect Kids from
Street Harassment**





Introduction

“Hey, baby!” By the time many girls reach middle school, suggestive comments – along with unwanted touches, demands for smiles from strangers, and other forms of harassment – become a common experience in public places.

Street harassment can have a strong negative effect on students who are trying to get to school or home on foot, by bicycle, or on public transit. How do these unsolicited and often threatening comments and actions affect students? Experiences of street harassment can cause students to miss school, and can affect readiness to learn and academic success. They can lead students to avoid convenient, affordable, and healthy ways of getting to school, discouraging walking and taking transit. And, street harassment can affect students mentally, resulting in negative self-esteem and depression.

But figuring out how to address street harassment is easier said than done. This report provides background on street harassment, discusses some potential approaches to addressing street harassment, and summarizes lessons from these approaches that may be applicable for Safe Routes to School programs.



Street Harassment: What, Who, and How?

What is street harassment? We define street harassment as occurring when someone experiences inappropriate and unwanted comments or actions that are sexual, homophobic, or racial, ethnic, religious, or gender-related in public spaces, such as streets, parks, or mass transit.

How common is street harassment? High quality data on this question is hard to come by. Street harassment is not addressed by national surveys or surveillance systems, and researchers have used different definitions of harassment in specific surveys that have been conducted. In addition, rates of harassment can be affected by political trends and topical events; for example, the 2016 presidential election led to a surge in incidents of gender, racial, and religious hate-based harassment.

Girls and young women are often the targets of street harassment. A 2014 nationally representative telephone survey in the United States found that 65 percent of women and 25 percent of men reported experiencing street harassment.⁴ Studies of Canadian women found that between 85 and 91 percent had experienced some form of street harassment after age 16.⁵ The most common form of street harassment identified by the American survey was verbal harassment, but 41 percent of women reported physically aggressive harassment, including having their path blocked, unwanted sexual touching, being followed, and sexual assault. Sexual assault includes touching, molestation, indecent exposure, rape, attempted rape, and related sexual violations.

In a survey of young women conducted in Chicago in 2003, 86 percent reported having been catcalled on the street, 36 percent said men harassed them daily, and 60 percent said they felt unsafe walking in their neighborhoods.⁶ Harassment commonly begins when youth are in their teens, with one survey showing that 50 percent of those harassed reported that such harassment had begun by age 17.⁷



Definitions of Harassment

Different groups define street harassment in different ways. Stop Street Harassment, a nonprofit organization dedicated to documenting and ending gender-based street harassment, defines street harassment as “unwelcome words and actions by unknown persons in public places which are motivated by gender and invade a person’s physical and emotional space in a disrespectful, creepy, startling, scary, or insulting way.”¹ English researchers have defined street harassment as “random incidents involving comments, gestures and behaviour which could be sexual, racial, homophobic or gender-related.”² According to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center: “Street harassment occurs when someone directs unwanted sexually-explicit comments to others in public spaces, such as streets, parks or mass transit. It is propelled by a sense of entitlement and disrespect, and is used to intimidate and bully others.”³

Boys and men who identified as gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer were more likely than heterosexual men to experience street harassment, and their most reported form of harassment was verbal harassment with homophobic or transphobic slurs.⁸ Sexual harassment on the street was experienced far more frequently by people of color, low-income individuals, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer-identified people.⁹ Higher levels of street harassment are also reported by people with disabilities.¹⁰

Effects of Street Harassment

Street harassment affects different people differently. For some, effects are limited to feelings of mild discomfort. For others, there can be major effects on mental health, perceptions of safety, and comfort.¹¹ Street harassment falls into the category of mundane, commonplace, and stressful experiences that researchers have found are apt to create vulnerability to psychological distress, depression, and anxiety.¹² Experiences of street harassment are associated with increased fear of rape and feelings of unsafety in public spaces.

It is not uncommon for street harassment to lead people – both those experiencing harassment and those witnessing it – to avoid certain places or modes of travel, change how they act or look in public, or refrain from being in public at all. For many, the first impulse in response to street harassment is to try to ignore it. People are often unsure how to respond to harassment. They may want to minimize the experience and its effects by trying to put it out of their mind or by pretending it did not happen. But even when people are not consciously affected by street harassment, it can alter their comfort, stress level, and behavior. Some people adopt barriers such as sunglasses and headphones in order to pretend to ignore comments and gestures. Also common is avoiding certain streets, bus stops, and other locations, which can make journeys, such as the trip to school, work, and other places, more time-consuming and less pleasant.

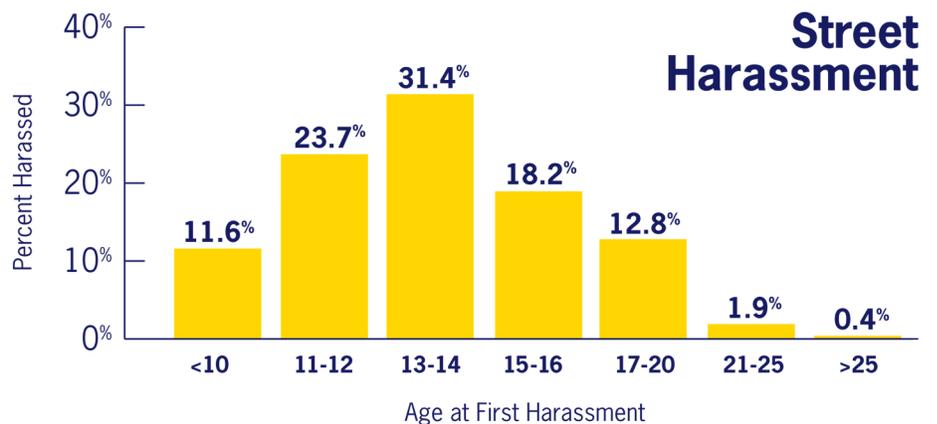


Other choices may affect people’s quality of life and health even more significantly. Some people make major changes to their interactions with the world, limiting their activities significantly, avoiding making needed or desired trips insofar as possible, and choosing to drive rather than walk, bicycle, or use public transit.

How does this affect students? Harassment can have major effects on students and the trip to school, especially for tween and teen girls, LGBTQ youth, and youth of color. Harassment can cause students to not want to walk, bicycle, or use public transportation. It can also lead students to change their routes to ones that are more inconvenient or more dangerous in terms of traffic. Larger scale effects can include students avoiding taking on new independence and responsibilities, instead feeling ashamed, alone, and threatened as they go through puberty.

 **"When kids are harassed on the street, they stop wanting to go outside. And that continues to adulthood. Vicious cycle."**

#MoveEquity Tweepchat



Hollaback! International Street Harassment Survey Project



What to Do? Approaches to Addressing Harassment

Little research exists on how to address street harassment, and there is almost no information about street harassment in the context of Safe Routes to School programs. In order to gather background to assist in making preliminary recommendations for Safe Routes to School programs, we analyzed approaches to harassment from three other contexts: (1) general street harassment of adults; (2) sexual harassment in school settings; and (3) sexual harassment on public transit. In this section, we summarize lessons from these settings. In the following section, we extract relevant approaches for Safe Routes to School.

Harassment on the Streets: All Ages

In the past five years, there has been increased momentum and organizing against the harmful effects of street harassment, with individuals and groups taking action, sharing their experiences, and seeking approaches to end and decrease street harassment.

Nonprofit groups like Stop Street Harassment and Hollaback! have begun working to give women and others experiencing harassment a place in which they can share stories and explore ideas for addressing harassment.

For groups working on this issue, funding and sustainability are a challenge. These groups have also found research on the scope, effects, and effective responses to street harassment to be in short supply. As a result, many of the suggestions for addressing street harassment are based upon crowd-sourced solutions, and constitute promising practices, rather than clearly evidence-based solutions. Some of these suggestions may be aimed at assisting individuals experiencing harassment, while others are directed at decreasing street harassment more broadly.

Organizations focusing on street harassment make it clear that dealing with an individual incident of harassment is highly situational. In some situations, especially in isolated locations or at night, ignoring the comments, appeasement, avoiding the location insofar as possible, or getting away quickly may be the safest ways to deal with harassment. But other times, harassment occurs in a populated, public place, and the person experiencing it may want to speak up and address the harassment directly.

One study showed that when girls and women responded directly to harassment or discussed it with friends, they experienced less psychological distress than when they ignored or denied harassment.¹³ Stop Street Harassment suggests a variety of strategies for addressing specific incidents of harassment.¹⁴

1. *Respond Verbally.* If the person experiencing harassment wants to respond verbally on the spot, recommendations include having strong body language, being calm and firm, avoiding insults or personal attacks, and not getting sucked into argument. Suggestions for responses can be found through resources including an app called Not Your Baby.¹⁵
2. *Respond with a Flyer or Card.* Some people don't want to engage verbally with harassers. If harassment is a common occurrence, people can have premade cards or flyers that contain firm messages against harassment to hand to harassers. Suggested messages are available from Stop Street Harassment.
3. *Step In/Don't Be a Bystander.* Men and women can intervene when they see someone being harassed, asking the person experiencing harassment how they can help and letting the harasser know that the actions are not condoned.
4. *Reporting:*
 - *Report to Employer.* If harassers work for an identifiable company, reporting or threatening to report them to their employer can be a powerful dissuader.

- *Report to Police or Transit Workers.* Reporting to the police or to those responsible for the space that the actions are occurring in (such as public transit officials) can create real consequences for the harasser.
- *Report through Phone Apps.* Reporting street harassment with phone apps can help address the experience, create a record of the effects of street harassment, and can assist in mapping harassment and identifying locales for official or collective action.
- 5. *Take Creative Action.* A variety of other types of actions to address specific incidents of harassment include putting up signs where harassment occurred or throughout a neighborhood or transit system. Stop Street Harassment describes a number of ideas [online](#).

Community-level responses include a wide range of approaches. Workshops and trainings are one strategy. Trainings may seek to educate people who are harassed that it is not their fault and that there are available responses. Trainings may also be focused upon educating and discouraging potential harassers. Workshops may focus on identifying and role playing assertive responses, or may include self-defense approaches. Girls for Gender Equity has held Bring Your Brother Day workshops to help girls and boys discuss these problems together. Showing documentaries and films on the issue can provide more perspectives and recommendations.¹⁶

Systematic safety audits may be another approach. A Toronto violence prevention nonprofit, the Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC), has developed a community safety audit process. For the safety audits, they train a group of stakeholders, conduct a safety audit with the group, come up with solutions, create a neighborhood safety report card, and take action to implement the recommendations.¹⁷ This audit model has also been used in schools and on college campuses, and allows for concrete, stakeholder-identified suggestions for change. The nonprofit advocacy group Hollaback! has developed a how-to factsheet that provides recommendations on how to conduct a community safety audit.¹⁸

Methods to facilitate the reporting of harassment have also emerged. Hollaback! has developed a [harassment reporting app](#) for iPhones and Droids. The app allows the user to share their story and map it. People can use the app to share experiences that were directed at them, as well as events that they witnessed. The app encourages reporting of sexual and racial harassment, as well as of bystander reactions or interventions. People can also share their stories online if they do not have access to the app. In New York City, additional features have been funded by the city council, including an option to report the incident to the city council; semiannual reports are compiled summarizing the findings, and will be the basis for further policy recommendations.

In July 2016, Stop Street Harassment and the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) jointly launched a national gender-based street harassment national hotline that can be accessed by phone or through online chat.¹⁹ The hotline is intended to provide a place for people who have experienced harassment to receive support, to understand their legal rights, and to obtain advice on how to respond to harassment. Of course, such features only assist those who know that they exist. As a result, trainings and workshops may be necessary to serve a more proactive and preventative role.



Harassment in Schools

Like street harassment, sexual harassment and related identity-based bullying is common in schools. A national survey of seventh to twelfth graders revealed just how common – 58 percent of all girls and nearly half of all students surveyed experienced some form of sexual harassment in the 2010-2011 school year alone.²⁰ Other studies show that more than 80 percent of students experience some type of sexual harassment over the course of their school careers.²¹

The national survey showed that for ten percent of the girls who had experienced sexual harassment, the experience caused them to change the way they went to or from school. These rates were higher for African American and Latino students.²² Girls were also more likely than boys to report that experiencing sexual harassment caused significant negative effects over an extended period of time. Likewise, low- to moderate-income students reported themselves to be more strongly affected by harassment than upper-income students.²³ Other studies have also found that 25 percent of students who experience harassment talk less in class or do not want to go to school, and 20 percent find it hard to pay attention in class.²⁴

The survey revealed that most of the harassers were peers; that most harassers were also recipients of harassment; and that the motive for harassment was often peer approval – a desire to be funny or engage in a commonplace activity – and rarely

pursuit of a romantic interest.²⁵ Homophobic harassment was a common type of sexual harassment in schools.

The Association of American University Women's 2011 report "Crossing the Line" suggests the following steps that schools and districts can take to reduce the incidence and effects of sexual harassment in schools:

1. Create, publicize, and enforce a sexual harassment policy.
2. Make sure students know what sexual harassment is and know their rights under Title IX.
3. Train staff and faculty to recognize and respond to harassment and to know their obligations.
4. Teach students that sexual harassment is not funny and not acceptable.
5. Create and reinforce a culture of respect, gender equity, and support for gender and sexual orientation diversity by students and staff.
6. Recognize and provide targeted assistance to address how the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation can cause particular harm to some students when they experience sexual harassment.²⁶

Educating students about sexual harassment through activities, classes, and curricula may be a promising practice for decreasing sexual harassment in schools. In one Michigan high school, high rates of sexual harassment led a teacher to develop a semester-long course on gender roles, sexual harassment, and equity.²⁷ Following the course, girls spoke up more when seeing sexual harassment. One-third fewer incidents took place the following semester. The class became institutionalized and the culture of the school shifted, with students refusing to tolerate sexual harassment. Many schools hold workshops to allow students to share experiences and heal. Another common approach in schools involves developing student art projects that allow students to create art to express how they feel when they are harassed, followed by public displays or exhibits of the art, conveying those experiences to other students or the wider community.

The National Institute of Justice has funded research into a set of interventions known as Shifting Boundaries, aimed at reducing dating violence and sexual harassment in middle school youth.²⁸ A comprehensive systematic review of violence prevention approaches found Shifting Boundaries to be one of three programs that was effective in reducing sexual violence.²⁹ The Shifting Boundaries program has two components: a six-session classroom-based curriculum and a building-level intervention addressing policy and safety concerns in schools – but only the building component, not the classroom curriculum, was found to be effective in reducing sexual harassment and intimate partner violence.³⁰ The building component involved a 6-10 week program including building-based restraining orders, a poster campaign to increase awareness of dating violence, and safety hotspot mapping with increased school staff monitoring of hotspots.³¹

Another conclusion of the systematic review was that adolescence is likely a critical period for sexual and intimate partner violence prevention.³² This fact supports the importance of developing approaches that are successful with middle and high school youth, enabling interventions to avert sexual harassment and violence before or while the behaviors are beginning to emerge.

Harassment on Public Transit

A number of transit agencies across the country have begun to take a new level of responsibility for addressing harassment on transit and at transit stops. The campaigns instituted by transit agencies have in many respects been largely aimed at developing convenient methods for people who are experiencing harassment to report that harassment, and the initiatives have included public information campaigns to inform people about these reporting mechanisms. These approaches also have the effect of creating and publicizing a public stance against harassment, which may discourage harassers and empower bystanders to intervene more aggressively. However, because these systems are aimed at addressing the extremely low levels of reporting, there is not a baseline of data on the background level of harassment. In addition, by and large the campaigns have not been accompanied by evaluation processes. As a result, it is hard to say how successful the campaigns have been in preventing harassment, rather than just responding when harassment occurs.

 **"Many youth who walk to the metro then take it across town endure huge emotional hurdles before getting to school."**

#MoveEquity Tweetchat

Many of the transit agencies' anti-harassment campaigns began because of pressure by women or girls experiencing harassment on the system, whether because of specific egregious incidents or overall concerns. Sometimes local nonprofit agencies, women's rights groups, or rape or violence prevention initiatives spearheaded the efforts. A preliminary step in many of these campaigns involved convincing the transit agencies that existing systems were not adequately capturing the scope of the problem or allowing the problem to be addressed.

 **"As a black hijabi woman harassment comes in many forms, [you] never know who is going to yell at or touch you."**

#MoveEquity Tweetchat

Once the transit agencies became engaged with anti-harassment efforts, they were able to turn the resources at their disposal – which are considerable, compared with the resources available to the relevant nonprofit organizations – to address the issue. Transit agencies such as the Chicago Transit Authority,³³ Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority,³⁴ Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority,³⁵ New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority,³⁶ and Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority³⁷ have initiated anti-harassment campaigns, and have been able to tap in-house communications and design staff to help launch public awareness campaigns around harassment. At the same time, it is crucial that transit agencies remain engaged with community groups as they develop messaging, to ensure that their messages are effective. Los Angeles Metro worked with local nonprofit Peace Over Violence to develop strong messages and a sensitive and appropriate response to incidents.³⁸

Some agencies have developed their own online reporting systems and have trained transit operators regarding how to respond to incidents. There is tremendous promise for these campaigns to be tested with different groups and different goals, which could help in determining effective messages and target groups. Ultimately, school districts and transit agencies would do well to partner and create complementary messaging and approaches to discourage harassment of all age groups and to improve responses when harassment does occur.



IV Taking Action: Applying Lessons to Safe Routes to School Programs

As a starting place, we assume that anti-harassment work in the Safe Routes to School context has multiple goals: (1) assisting students who may be harassed in understanding and responding to harassment in a way that protects their health and safety; (2) training students to intervene safely and productively when they are bystanders to harassment; (3) educating potential harassers so as to prevent behavior of this type; and (4) decreasing the overall prevalence and effects of harassment.

It is worth noting that there is an inherent limitation to what Safe Routes to School programs can accomplish independently, because these programs often have access to only small numbers of students, have limited authority over students, and have little or no authority over other street users. While Safe Routes to School programs have a strong role to play in this arena, they will need to partner with other entities to create larger societal change around this issue.

Safe Routes to School programs can:

1. **Provide targeted anti-harassment workshops and trainings for students as part of Safe Routes to School education efforts or as stand-alone opportunities.** Potential venues include PE classes, after-school events, classroom curricula, and assemblies. For schools that have a strong social emotional health curriculum, this training may be easily integrated and will likely reinforce other lessons. Trainings should be age- and experience-appropriate, and should be tailored to students' underlying levels of exposure to street harassment. Sample curricula exist and may provide a strong starting place for trainings.³⁹

Trainings should emphasize key messages:

a. For students who may experience harassment:

- It is not your fault.
- There are tools for responding in the moment.
- It is important to tell someone what happened for your own emotional health and so that they can help you figure out responses and reporting options. Sharing this information with a trusted adult can be crucial.
- Sharing your experience with friends, both in person and through social media, can help you process what happened, can tell others that they are not alone in these experiences, and can give potential harassers among your acquaintances the message that harassment is unacceptable.

 **"Not okay for girls/others to endure catcalls, crude gestures, unsolicited comments, groping, being followed, and assaults."**

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b. For students who are bystanders:

- You can help.
- Talk to the person being harassed and see how you can provide support.
- Recruit other bystanders to help address the problem.
- Get an authority figure to intervene.
- If your friends are the ones doing the harassing, tell them you don't find it funny and it's not okay.

c. For students who may become harassers

- Harassment is hurtful and can have serious consequences.
- Harassment is uncool and reflects poorly on the person engaged in the behavior.
- Having peers deliver these messages will likely increase their persuasiveness.

Note that one of the implications of the survey of school-based sexual harassment is the fact that for youth, the same student may be a harasser, a harassee, and a bystander at different times. As a result, all students should be exposed to all of these messages.

2. Support students' needs & offer options for additional resources.

Programs can work to understand and support students' needs. They can provide students, especially those who have experienced harassment, connections with youth-oriented nonprofits that may address these issues, and can also provide or encourage opportunities to learn and experience self-defense and assertiveness training.

3. Ensure that Safe Routes to School personnel are equipped to assist students in understanding and processing street harassment.

Provide training for walking school bus leaders or other Safe Routes to School volunteers and personnel to educate them about how to address street harassment if they witness it while escorting students, and how to talk about the issue generally. Emphasize the messages identified above, particularly encouraging personnel to make it clear to students that harassment is not the fault of the person being harassed and that it is important to tell a trusted adult what happened when harassment occurs. Personnel may also have assumptions and prejudices around harassers, and it may be important to emphasize to them that it is inappropriate and inaccurate to overgeneralize about who harasses or to convey such beliefs to students. Depending on the scope of the problem, training can range from including a flyer on the topic in volunteers' packets, to covering the topic in walking school bus leaders' orientations, to providing role play opportunities or longer workshops during Safe Routes to School task force meetings or other opportunities.

4. Establish a reporting system and make sure that students know how to use it.

For a school-based Safe Routes to School program, following Title IX reporting procedures may minimize duplication or confusion. A system for reporting should help students understand what to report and when, should help identify the scope of the problem and potential solutions, and should make it clear who is engaging in the harassment and what alternatives may exist for addressing the problem.



So, you like how I look?

Do you know what I like?

Walking down the street without getting my appearance commented on by total strangers.



It's not a compliment. It's harassment.
Next time, just say "hello."

Learn more at CardsAgainstHarassment.com

5. Create public relations campaigns to let people know that harassing students on their way to school is unacceptable.

Campaigns can be low-budget, student-run affairs, or can be professionally developed and promoted. Campaigns can occur in school buildings, on the streets, on transit, at parks, or elsewhere.

Approaches can include:

- Student-made poster campaigns that are posted around school.
- Student art projects with art displayed in halls, libraries, or other locations at school. For example, the Hey Baby Art Initiative in Tucson, Arizona, worked with high school students to create art around harassment and then hosted an exhibit of the art in the public library.⁴⁰
- Student-made videos/PSAs.⁴¹
- Student posters and flyers that are posted on routes to and from school.
- Events to highlight the problem, such as marches, meetings, concerts, sidewalk chalking, etc. For example, A Long Walk Home, a group for girls of color located in Chicago, organized a march at the high school for anti-street harassment week.
- Memes, tweet storms, and other social media approaches to sharing messages.
- Media coverage of the issue in student newspapers or local media. Hosting events or developing press releases about efforts can assist in generating media interest and free publicity.
- Partnering with transit agencies to explore potential for joint anti-harassment campaigns, especially with a student-oriented perspective.

6. Explore whether students need additional access to safe spaces on the way to and from school to avoid harassment or violence.

For example, in Arizona, concerns about harassment of LGBTQ students and others led to the establishment of Safe Streets AZ, an initiative where local businesses identify themselves as safe spaces with gold stars so that youth and others can take refuge in the businesses to escape harassment.⁴²

7. Consider safety and harassment audits on school routes and in school vicinities. School or Safe Routes to School personnel can work with students to conduct safety audits or hotspot analyses of areas near schools and on school travel routes. These audits can be coordinated with traffic safety audits to support complementary responses to different issues affecting students' safety.

a. Audits can occur during workshops or classroom exercises, when students mark locations where they feel unsafe or experience harassment on a map.

b. Alternatively, audits can take to the streets. Many of the safety audits that currently exist are focused on specific sites, and involve checklists that identify not only harassment problems, but other issues that can create safety problems, such as unlit corners, areas that are blocked from public view that create greater danger of assault, and so on. Audits can also cover entire routes and pinpoint the areas that participants feel endangered or harassed.

c. Street harassment reporting apps, such as the one that has been developed by Hollaback!, can collect data in real time and can track the prevalence over time and for different individuals, rather than just creating a snapshot.

Once the data is assessed to identify if there are locations that are accounting for a high percentage of harassment, solutions can be explored – e.g., seeing whether trained adults, police officers, or security officers may be available to ride a problem bus route during school travel time; fixing broken lights; stationing school personnel on a corner near school where harassment is common immediately after school; or working with local businesses to train them to interrupt harassment.

These lessons and approaches provide a very promising basis for Safe Routes to School programs and others to begin more proactively acknowledging and addressing street harassment. By exploring, implementing, and evaluating these approaches, Safe Routes to School programs can assist in developing a more evidence-based and sophisticated understanding of how to intervene successfully in street harassment. By working to create an environment in which the walk to school is free of harassment, Safe Routes to School programs can help youth and others walk and bicycle on streets and public spaces in comfort and confidence.



The Student Leadership Class at Cesar Chavez Middle School in Union City, California designed and painted a bicycle-themed mural to designate a safe space for securing bicycles at school.



Talking Points on Safe Routes to School and Street Harassment for Community Partners

Street harassment occurs when someone experiences inappropriate and unwanted comments or actions that are sexual, homophobic, or gender-related in public spaces, such as streets, parks or mass transit. Street harassment often also involves other aspects of the harassee's identity, such as race or disability.

Street harassment is very common, especially for women, and it often starts young.⁴³

- A 2014 national survey found that 65 percent of all women and 25 percent of all men reported experiencing street harassment. The most common form of street harassment was verbal harassment, but 41 percent of women reported physically aggressive harassment, including unwanted sexual touching, being followed, and being sexually assaulted.
- Other surveys have shown even higher percentages of women and girls having experienced street harassment. A survey of young women in Chicago showed that 86 percent reported having been catcalled on the street, 36 percent said men harassed them daily, and 60 percent said they felt unsafe walking in their neighborhoods.⁴⁴
- Girls and young women are often the targets of street harassment; 50 percent of those harassed reported that such harassment had begun by age 17.
- Youth and adults of color, as well as LGBTQ identified individuals, experience higher levels of street harassment than their peers. Street harassment of boys and men often involves homophobic slurs.



"Nobody should have to change what they wear or who they are just to feel safe going outside their house."

#MoveEquity Tweetchat

Street harassment can have serious effects on students and can affect the trip to school.⁴⁵

- Ten percent of girls reported that sexual harassment caused them to change the way they went to or from school.⁴⁶
- Harassment can have major effects, leading kids to not want to walk, bicycle, or use public transportation, to change their routes to ones that are more dangerous or inconvenient, and even to avoid going to school or participating in after-school activities.
- Harassment can have negative effects on students' mental health, causing them to feel ashamed, alone, and threatened.
- Academic performance can suffer when students experience street harassment on the way to and from school.



Schools and communities have a role in helping students deal with street harassment and in decreasing its prevalence.⁴⁷

- It can be important for students, teachers, and other adults to understand that street harassment is not a compliment, that it can often feel scary or offensive, and that it is not the fault of or caused by the person being harassed.
- Schools can help by making it clear that sexual harassment is impermissible at school (where school personnel have clear authority), with clear steps for addressing it, and that street harassment is unacceptable on the way to and from school.
- Providing a convenient and potentially anonymous way for students to report street harassment experienced on the way to or from school, as well as at other times, can help school and city officials to understand the scope of the problem, as well as helping students to understand that harassment is not their fault and to recover from the experience.
- Awareness campaigns at schools can help students experiencing harassment to understand and address their experiences; can prepare students and protect them against internalizing the harassment; can encourage bystanders to help; and can educate and dissuade potential harassers.
- Students can educate themselves and each other about street harassment by holding forums; discussing harassment in clubs, classes, and other settings; and engaging in art projects or poster campaigns.

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