PUBLISHED Updated **3 weeks ago** by Erin Friedrich (talk | contributions | block) started by Lydia Morrish (talk | contributions)

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New data shows girls as young as 14 face regular public sexual harassment

Sixty-six percent (two thirds) of girls in the United Kingdom have experienced unwanted sexual attention and physical or sexual contact in a public place, a new survey by girls' rights charity Plan International UK revealed. Some of those surveyed were as young as 14 years old.

The survey of 1,002 girls aged 14-21, published on September 5, showed that more than one-third (38 percent) of girls are catcalled, experience wolf whistling or are at the receiving end of sexual comments in public at least once every month.

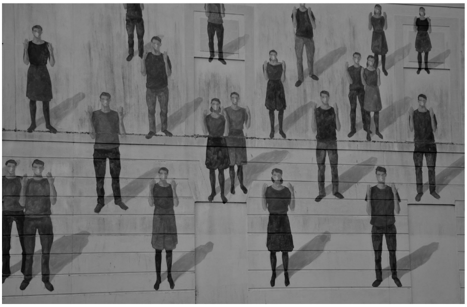
Since the "#MeToo" movement raised the issue of sexual harassment worldwide, campaigners and experts have identified the problem at every level of society, from Hollywood to boardrooms to the street. A young woman in France was recently assaulted by a catcaller after telling him to stop. A video showing the harasser slapping her after she retorted went viral. The French government is planning to impose on-the-spot fines for street harassment including catcalling.

"We already know that women sadly experience street harassment all too often, but this survey brings to light the shocking fact that it's regularly happening to girls as young as 14, too," said Plan International UK's chief executive, Tanya Barron.

Public places such as parks, high streets and bus stops were cited as common locations for harassment in the survey. Fifteen percent of girls said they are harassed in a public place every month.

Malikah, a 19-year-old from Birmingham, said she experiences street harassment frequently. "It can be scary, especially if it's at night and someone approaches you quite a few times," she said.

Despite the very public nature of such harassment, 20 percent of the girls surveyed said they had not received helpful responses during or after their encounters with harassers. Such responses would included passersby asking if they are okay, helping them report the case to a professional, or speaking to the person doing the harassing.



Nearly half (43 percent) of girls pretend to be on the phone when walking home to avoid street harassment. Photo: Pixabay, used under Creative Commons CC0 license

3 Talk Comments

4 Contributors

Activity

(diff) .. 2018-09-12 02:14:26. .
Erin Friedrich (talk | contributions | block)
(Action → removed unnecessary word in sentence) **** **Latest version** ****

(diff) .. 2018-09-11 09:58:28. .
Lydia Morrish (talk | contributions)
(Action → breaking up first para)

(diff) .. 2018-09-11 09:56:58. .
Lydia Morrish (talk | contributions)
(Action → tweak intro)

(diff) .. 2018-09-11 09:56:42. .
Lydia Morrish (talk | contributions)
(Action → spelling out sixty-six)

(diff) .. 2018-09-11 07:19:09. .
Christian Ellis (talk | contributions | block)
(Action → shortened first sentence.)

(diff) .. 2018-09-11 07:17:12. .
Christian Ellis (talk | contributions | block)
(Action → new heading.)

(diff) .. 2018-09-07 11:30:32. .
Lydia Morrish (talk | contributions)
(Action → adding tweet)

(diff) .. 2018-09-06 12:42:27. .
Angela Long (talk | contributions | block)
(Action → extra info after sept 5)

(diff) .. 2018-09-06 12:06:55. .
Lydia Morrish (talk | contributions)
(Action → update: government review of hate crime)

(diff) .. 2018-09-05 11:44:31. .
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(Action → adding tag)

(diff) .. 2018-09-05 11:17:35. .
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(Action → publishing)

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Regular harassment without assistance or punishment for perpetrators is leading girls to take precautions themselves, such as changing their routines.

To avoid harassment, 43 percent of girls pretend to be on the phone, 22 percent walk a longer route to avoid a certain place and 17 percent dress differently, according to the survey.

British Labour Party MP for Walthamstow Stella Creasy said the new survey should be a "wake-up call" to make street harassment history.

"It's not on young girls to hide away, but our society to make sure they are as free as their male counterparts to lead their lives," she told *WikiTribune*.

Upskirting under the microscope

Nine percent of girls in the survey reported being "upskirted" – when someone takes a photograph or records a video looking inside somebody's skirt without their permission.

Upskirting is already illegal in Scotland but the act is set to become a criminal offence in England and Wales. Prime Minister Theresa May promised to take on the legislation that would land perpetrators with up to two years in prison (*The Guardian*).

A bill introduced to outlaw upskirting could help end street harassment by also outlawing misogyny. Creasy put forward an amendment to the Voyeurism Bill to make misogyny a hate crime so it would be easier to prosecute street harassers.

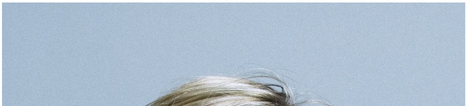
When the bill was debated in parliament on September 5, the government agreed to fund a full review of all hate crime legislation and whether it should include misogyny.

"Upskirting is just one example of the kind of problems [girls] face on a daily basis, but this data shows we have to deal with so much more to ensure they are safe," Creasy told *WikiTribune.*

She said the amendment is "our chance to give them the freedom to live their lives not in fear but in hope for the future."

Campaigners against upskirting say the practice is exploitative and degrading, like other sex crimes. Creasy says the act is motivated by misogyny, along with other crimes against women that are of a sexual nature, including street harassment.

"The Government must not ignore these problems but learn from those police forces which have begun recording misogyny as a hate crime and support a full review of all hate crime by the Law Commission including misogyny to make sure we have the modern legislation our young girls need," Creasy told *WikiTribune*.



Labour Party MP for Walthamstow, Stella Creasy, who is pushing for an amendment to be added to the Voyeurism Bill to make misogyny a hate crime. Photo by: Chris McAndrew

Nottinghamshire Police became the first UK police force to treat street harassment as a hate crime. Its two-year pilot scheme that ended in July recorded the public harassment of women, from groping to catcalling to taking unwanted photographs. Advocates are calling for the scheme to be rolled out nationwide (*Guardian*).

Misogyny hate crime is defined as “incidents against women that are motivated by the attitude of men towards women and includes behaviour targeted at women by men simply because they are women”. It includes sexual assault, upskirting, being followed, threatening behavior and unwanted sexual advances.

“I felt like I’d lost control of my own body,” said Gina Martin, whose petition to criminalize upskirting sparked a campaign and drew political support to outlaw upskirting.

She previously told *WikiTribune*: “It makes you feel completely humiliated and invaded. There’s something incredibly invasive about a strange hand being in between your legs taking pictures of your crotch without you knowing.”

Plan International UK is urging the government, local councils and police forces to acknowledge street harassment as a form of violence against women and girls. The organization is due to release a landmark report and campaign on the harassment of girls in the UK and advise policymakers on how to tackle it.

> ### Gina Martin on Twitter
>
> So happy to see the Gov is going to instruct the law commission to review misogyny as a hate crime. Some wondered why I haven’t been supporting @stellacreasy’s amendment – this is why. @ryantwhelan & I have been championing this outcome with the MoJ.

Girls have a right to move around independently and without fear, said Plan International UK’s Tanya Barron.

“They are telling us that they refuse to accept harassment as a normal part of growing up. They want to see change, and we all have a responsibility to help make that happen."

Street harassment worldwide

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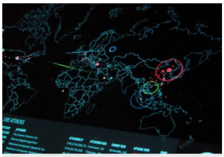

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