



rape and abuse  
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**Sexual Harassment: Myths and Facts**

**Myth:** Sexual harassment is not a serious social problem and it only affects women.

**Fact:** The problem of sexual harassment is widespread. It touches the lives of 40-70% of women in the workplace and 10-20% of men. Further, there are approximately 15,000 cases of sexual harassment brought to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission each year.<sup>3</sup>

**Myth:** People invite sexual harassment by their behavior and/or dress.

**Fact:** Studies show all kinds of people can be vulnerable to sexual harassment: college students who wear jeans and sweatshirts, fire fighters and police officers in uniform, as well as women who dress in a more traditionally "feminine" way. People of all genders, ages, races, ethnic groups, and physical abilities are harassed, regardless of how they act or what they wear.<sup>1</sup>

**Myth:** It is harmless to harass someone verbally or to pinch/pat them. Those who object have no sense of humor.

**Fact:** In any form, harassment is humiliating and degrading. It undermines a person's job or school performance and often threatens his/her economic livelihood. Those victimized by sexual harassment suffer emotionally and physically.

**Myth:** A firm "no" is enough to discourage anyone's sexual advances.

**Fact:** It should not be a victim's responsibility to ensure sexual harassment doesn't occur. Because the harasser often holds more social power, they feel enabled to override the firmest "no." Resistance is often dismissed.

**Myth:** Only certain people harass others at work or school.

**Fact:** Anyone in the workplace or school might commit harassment. The victim can be anyone affected by the conduct, not just the individual at whom the offensive conduct is directed.<sup>5</sup>

24-hour Crisis Line (701)293-7273

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F: Education/updated handouts/Myths and Facts about Sexual Harassment

**Myth:** There are adequate procedures to take care of people who seriously assault or threaten others at work.

**Fact:** Society continues to view sexual harassment from a double standard. While male sexual harassers are tolerated with a "boys will be boys" attitude, female victims bear the brunt of the blame. Personnel managers, union representatives, human rights agencies, courts, and legislators reflect these discriminatory attitudes. Those who seek assistance from such sources are frequently placing themselves at risk of humiliating indifference, ridicule, or even further harassment. Nevertheless, it is important to use the appropriate channels when possible.

References:

1. Work Harassment.net: <http://www.workharassment.net/index.php/myths-about-sexual-harassment.html>
2. SHARP-Sexual Harassment and Rape Prevention Program: [http://www.unh.edu/sharpp/getting\\_help\\_folder/sexual\\_harassment.htm](http://www.unh.edu/sharpp/getting_help_folder/sexual_harassment.htm)
3. The ACA Group: <http://www.theacagroup.com/harassmentarticle.htm>
4. University of Oregon Counseling and Testing Center: <http://counseling.uoregon.edu/dnn/SelfhelpResources/SexualAssaultSexualAbuse/SexualHarassmentMythsandRealities/tabid/390/Default.aspx>
5. Federal Communications Commission: <http://www.fcc.gov/owd/understanding-harassment.html>