

# Break ...the Silence

Equal  
Opportunities  
Commission 2019

## Territory-wide Study on Sexual Harassment of University Students in Hong Kong

Report



平等機會委員會  
EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMISSION

# What is this **Research** about?

This research, conducted by the Equal Opportunities Commission, is the very first territory-wide study examining the issue of sexual harassment of university students in Hong Kong. The findings provide solid evidence on the prevalence and causes of sexual harassment at universities, as well as students' awareness and views on this issue.

Through this study, it is hoped that the universities and other stakeholders can formulate a better strategy to tackle the problem. It is also hoped that you too will be more aware of the issue and speak up against it. Together, let's break the silence and stamp out sexual harassment!

**14,442**  
**students**

completed the online  
questionnaire  
survey

**9**

**universities** collaborated with the EOC

**13**

**university representatives**  
participated in a focus group discussion

**28**

**students** took part in in-depth interviews  
to share their experience of sexual harassment

I was wearing a suit that day.  
After my presentation, the male professor suggested,  
"Next time if you wear less,  
maybe you'll get higher marks ..."

**I feel very uneasy ...**

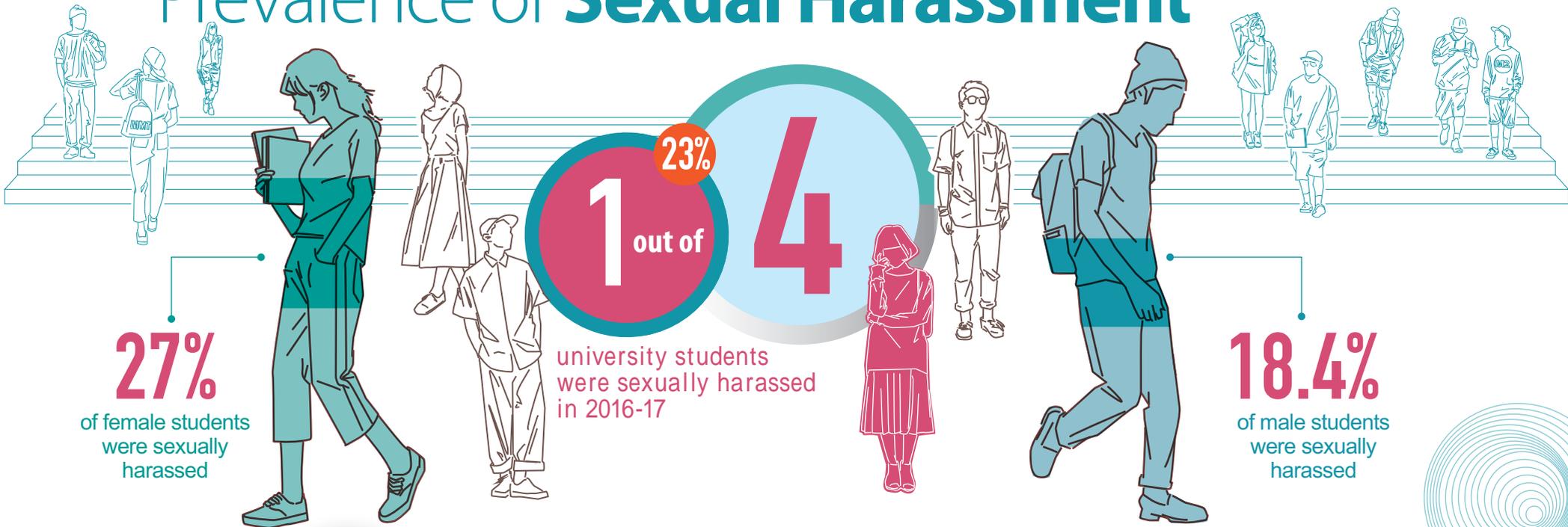
Student Experience

CASE

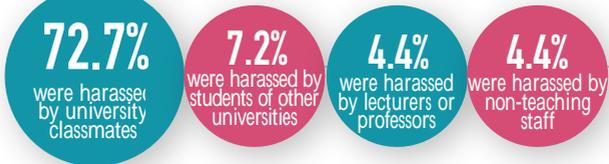
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# Prevalence of Sexual Harassment



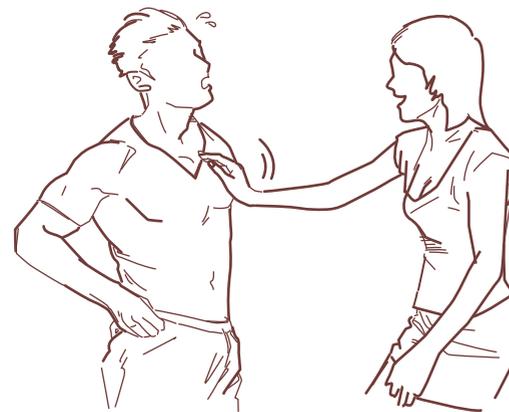
Among students who were sexually harassed :



**58.6%** of students did not know university has anti-sexual harassment policy

**Awareness of university anti-sexual harassment policy**

**only 2.5%** of victims lodged complaints with their university



Student Experience  
**CASE 2**

There is a muscular guy ... a female student touched his chest saying "nice pecs ! "...

The guy probably didn't take it as sexual harassment because of gender stereotype.

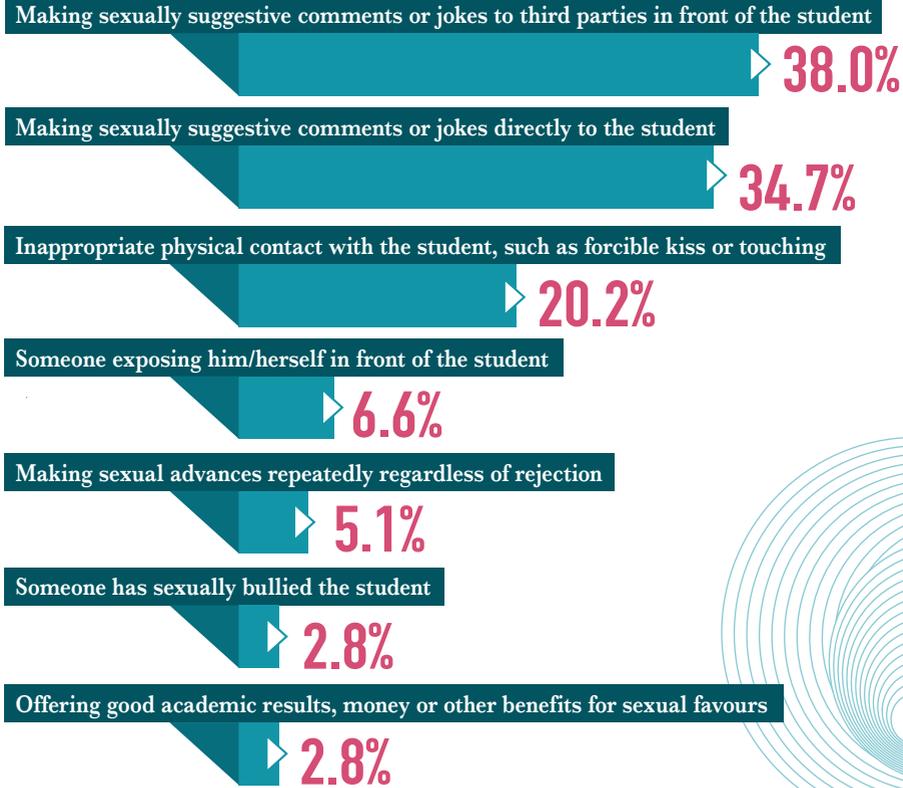
Prevalence of sexual harassment on and off campus, and online:

**15.6%** of students were sexually harassed on campus

**3.8%** of students were sexually harassed off campus by university students or staff

**11.5%** of students were sexually harassed online

The most common forms of sexual harassment on campus include:



Student Experience  
CASE 3

After sports training, I shared a taxi with a guy from another team)  
All of a sudden he touched my breast and exclaimed, "Wow! Your boobs are so much bigger!"

I pushed his hand aside and said, "What are you doing? Don't do that ..."



# What is Sexual Harassment?

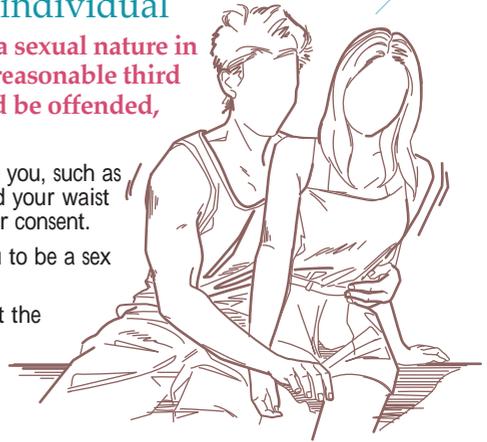


## Sexual harassment targeting an individual

A person engages in unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature in relation to you, in circumstances in which a reasonable third party would have anticipated that you would be offended, humiliated or intimidated.

### Examples:

- A classmate behaved intimately with you, such as touching your thigh, hugging around your waist or pressing close to you, without your consent.
- A classmate sexts you and wants you to be a sex partner.
- A lecturer offers you assistance to get the scholarship in exchange for sex.

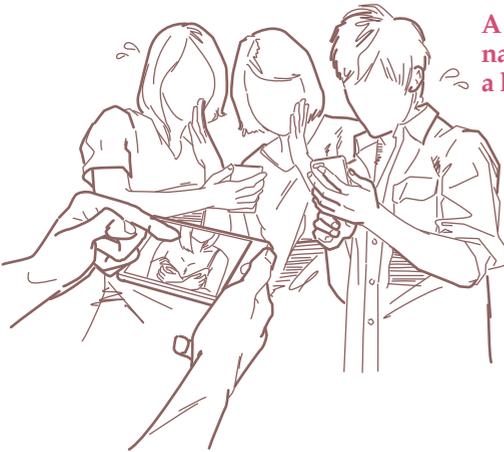


## Creating a sexually hostile environment

A person engages in conduct of a sexual nature which does not target at you, but creates a hostile or intimidating environment for you.

### Examples:

- In the orientation camp, students play games involving inappropriate physical contact in front of you, even though you are not playing the game.
- Someone shares obscene videos in the message group of classmates.
- Some students make dirty jokes in group discussion, making you feel uncomfortable.



## Applicable fields

Provisions on sexual harassment are applicable to specific public domains: education, employment, provision of services, etc. For example, the law forbids:

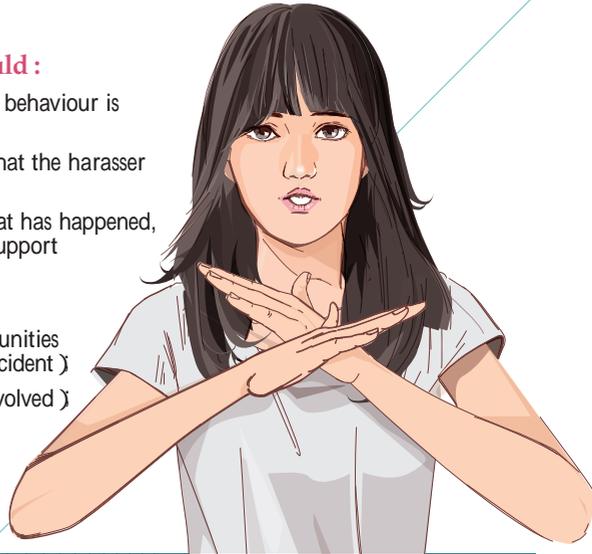
- Sexual harassment between students;
- Sexual harassment between university teaching staff and students;
- Sexual harassment between coaches and students;
- Sexual harassment between university staff members (including student part-timers)

# What should I do when encountering Sexual Harassment?



## If you are sexually harassed, you should :

- Speak up at the time. Tell the harasser the behaviour is unwelcome and must be stopped;
- Record the date, time, location, witness, what the harasser said and did, and your reaction;
- Tell counsellors or the people you trust what has happened, and let them provide you with emotional support and suggestions on handling the incident;
- Lodge a complaint with your university;
- Lodge a complaint with the Equal Opportunities Commission ( within 12 months after the incident )
- Report to the Police ( if criminal offence involved )
- File a lawsuit in the District Court ( within 24 months after the incident )



## Step forward

If you witness a sexual harassment incident or the victim tells you about it, you can step forward and help, for example :

- Listen to the victim, find out his/her needs and respect his/her decision;
- Provide emotional support and advise on the ways of reporting sexual harassment;
- Intervene, under safe circumstances, by telling the harasser his/her behaviour is inappropriate and the act must be stopped immediately;
- Rectify the harasser's misunderstanding of sex or relationship, if circumstances allow;
- Assist the victim to take action, support and accompany him/her to report to the university or law enforcement agencies; and/or
- Testify for the victim as a witness.

# Helplines

Sexual harassment is an unlawful act. You have a right to take action. Contact numbers for complaints and support services are:

Universities	Support Services	Enquiries & Complaints
City University of Hong Kong	3442 8478	3442 9000
Hong Kong Baptist University	3411 7435	3411 5082
Lingnan University	2616 7024	2616 8943
The Chinese University of Hong Kong	3943 7208	3943 8716
The Education University of Hong Kong	2948 6245	2948 6012
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University	2766 6800	3400 2602
The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology	2358 6696	2358 6652
The Open University of Hong Kong	2768 6856	2768 6335
The University of Hong Kong	3917 8388	3917 5115

## You can also seek help from the following organisations:

<b>CEASE Crisis Centre</b> (support service for victims of sexual violence)	18281 (24 hours)
<b>RainLily</b> (one-stop rape crisis centre)	2375 5322
<b>Caritas — Sexuality Zone</b> (supportive & counseling service on sexual behavior of youth)	6188 5555
<b>Suicide Prevention Services</b>	2382 0000 (24 hours)

## Equal Opportunities Commission

The Equal Opportunities Commission is a statutory body set up in 1996. We are committed to promoting equality and eliminating discrimination and sexual harassment. We are also responsible for implementing the anti-discrimination legislation.

Complaint  
Hotline

# 2511 8211

[eoc@eoc.org.hk](mailto:eoc@eoc.org.hk) | [www.eoc.org.hk](http://www.eoc.org.hk)

16/F., 41 Heung Yip Road, Wong Chuk Hang, Hong Kong

SMS enquiry service for people with

hearing impairment/speech difficulties: 697 2566 6165 38



Full report