

## **Men And #MeToo**

Results of an opinion poll:  
what do men in southwest PA think  
about sexual harassment, sexual  
assault and domestic violence a  
year into the #MeToo movement

October 2018

The #MeToo movement has exposed the scope of harassment and violence in the lives of women. We believe that abuse is preventable, but teaching risk-reduction strategies to women won't solve this issue. We need men to be engaged. In recent years, many men have joined women in speaking out against abuse, calling out abusers, demanding accountability from institutions and promoting healthy respectful relationships. But many men have gone quiet during #MeToo.

We wanted to know what men think about violence against women, a year into the #MeToo movement. So, we asked them.

*NOTE: All statistics listed are for men in southwest Pennsylvania. The poll also included a national sample of men, for comparison. The results of the national sample were not substantially different.*

*NOTE on language: Sexual harassment, sexual assault and domestic violence are highly gendered crimes. Most victims are women and girls and the vast majority of perpetrators are men. However, men can also be victims and women can also perpetrate abuse. The impacts are serious, regardless of the gender identity of the victim or perpetrator. We also acknowledge that some groups (women of color, people with disabilities, people who identify or are perceived to be gay/lesbian/transgender) are at substantially higher risk for victimization. The parameters of this survey prevented us from exploring more nuanced attitudes and beliefs.*

## METHODOLOGY

Polling provided by Change Research, a Public Benefit Corporation, per a poll of 1304 men, 671 in a ten-county area of southwest Pennsylvania and 633 nationally in the United States. Sample demographics reflect the population for age, education, and ethnicity. Survey conducted online September 24 - 29, 2018. This report reflects only the results of the southwest PA sample.

### **Domestic violence, sexual assault and sexual harassment are personal issues to the majority of men**

**71%** of men in SWPA acknowledge that domestic violence, sexual assault, and sexual harassment against women are common experiences.

**74%** say that they or someone close to them has personal experiences of victimization.

- **60%** of domestic violence
- **56%** of sexual harassment
- **49%** of sexual assault

**81%** say it's important to believe women who speak publicly about their experience with harassment or abuse.

**86%** of men believe that violence against women and girls can be prevented.

**89%** agree that "Men like me have an important role to play in preventing violence and harassment against women."

## **Men say things are changing**

**86%** say that most men respect women and oppose harassment and abuse committed against women.

**77%** believe that “Expectations for men’s behavior towards women have changed.”

**70%** believe “More men speak up than before when other men are being disrespectful or abusive to women.”

Overall, men support women in reporting abuse:

**59%** think it’s positive that more women are breaking their silence and speaking publicly about their experience with harassment and abuse.

## **But when discussing specific examples, opinions are mixed**

Men are divided in how they feel about the #MeToo movement.

**42%** are supportive, and **51%** are concerned that #MeToo has gone or will go overboard.

Men are split in how they think allegations of abuse should be responded to:

**47%** say that we should tend to believe the allegations unless there is hard evidence that they did not occur.

**54%** say that we should tend to be skeptical and wait for hard evidence that the abuse or harassment occurred.

Men are mixed in their opinions about how victims and perpetrators are treated after abuse is disclosed.

**More than half** of men, 59%, think victims are generally treated fairly and **less than half**, 42%, think people who are accused of harassment or abuse are treated fairly.

### **Talking about harassment and abuse is difficult for most men**

The **majority**, 58%, said that **no one talked to them about how to recognize the warning signs of abusive behavior**, though this is changing.

81% of men over age 65 said they never had this conversation growing up. But more than half, 59%, of men age 18-35 report that they had this talk.

Even with unceasing news coverage over the last year, **most men report that they haven't been talking about it.**

Only **38%** have had conversations with women

**22%** with other men

**14%** with a child or teen in their life

But many men are willing to talk about these issues, in order to prevent domestic violence, sexual assault or sexual harassment.

**46%** are willing to talk with women

**32%** with other men

**36%** with children or teens

**Men think it's very important for society to do something to prevent abuse and harassment**

**84%** support action at the local or community level,

**82%** at the state level and

**76%** at the federal level

Approximately **90%** of men say schools, law enforcement, and business leaders should do more to prevent abuse and harassment.

More than **4** out of **5** men say faith based groups, elected officials, healthcare providers and nonprofits should do more.

**But men have not reached out much to initiate those conversations:**

**8%** initiated conversations with employers

**4%** with elected officials

**2%** with religious leaders

**1%** with their child's school

**However, more men say they would be willing to engage in conversations if it would help to prevent harassment and abuse:**

**15%** with employers

**21%** with elected officials

**12%** with religious leaders

**13%** with their child's school

**Overwhelming majorities of men think that employers should take action**

**81% support more awareness around how to report abusive behavior** in the workplace and what the organization's process is for addressing those reports.

**82% support strong and consistently applied policies** against inappropriate or illegal harassment or abuse in the workplace.

**77% support managers and company leaders** speaking about creating workplaces free from sexual harassment.

**67% support implementing a survey** about workplace culture.

**61% support ending forced arbitration** that requires allegations of abusive conduct in a workplace to be settled in private hearings rather than the public judicial system.

**57% support having more female executives** and board members.

**But only half of men report that their employer has taken steps** to address domestic violence, sexual assault, or sexual harassment.

## **A significant minority of men have personally taken steps to support prevention**

**28%** of men say they've earned more about sexual harassment, domestic violence, or sexual assault this year, or are willing to learn more in the future.

**38%** of men are willing to intervene if they witness or find out about abuse or harassment.

Over the past year, **1 in 4** men report reflecting on whether they have made a woman feel uncomfortable and **18%** made changes in their behavior around women.

**25%** of men have offered support to a victim of abuse or harassment this year. And **35%** would be willing to offer support in the future.

In the last year **20%** of men told someone that a comment or a joke they made about women was inappropriate; **26%** are willing to do so in the future.



## Conclusions and next steps

- **The vast majority** of men acknowledge that harassment and abuse are common experiences for women. Most men **say it's important to believe women** who speak publicly about these experiences. They feel strongly that action should be taken to prevent abuse.
- **However, there is a gap in putting these beliefs into action.** Small actions taken by many people can make a big difference in prevention. We ask supportive men to take one of the following steps:
  - **Ask your mother, partner or another close woman in your life about her experiences with sexual harassment.** Many don't share these experiences unless they are asked and feel that they'll be listened to and taken seriously.
  - **Reach out to the Human Resources department or senior leadership of your company.** Share this report findings that there is widespread support for employers to take action. You might say something like: *"There has been a lot in the news and on social media about sexual harassment. What would happen in our company if someone reported it?"*
  - **Next time you are in the car with a young person you care about, ask them what they think is important in a healthy relationship.** Talk to them about what kind of man/woman you hope they will grow into; and that you hope they will find people who listen to, respect and support them. Great resources are available at [LevelsRespect.org](http://LevelsRespect.org).

- **Listen for and interrupt when you hear men joke and (playfully) put each other down using comparisons to women.** (“You throw like a girl” “C’mon ladies!” or more graphic “locker room talk”). Even when meant to be harmless, it conveys messages of disrespect for females. Challenge yourself to use different language.
- Commit to calling attention to or shutting down friends and colleagues when they engage in sexual harassment or other disrespectful talk or jokes. This is difficult but important.

**Practice these sentences:**

- **“I don’t get it. What’s funny about that?”** or **“Is that what you really meant to say?”** This can communicate that you disapprove and give the other person an opportunity to take their comment back.
- **“Dude, that’s not cool”** or **“I think you are being disrespectful.”**
- Say **“I don’t support this”** before you walk away. If you’re worried about what the others might do, tell someone.
- Offer support to the person being harassed or abused. **“I’m sorry, you don’t deserve this. I believe you.”**

If the **90%** of men who believe that ***“Men like me have an important role to play in preventing violence and harassment against women”*** each took a small step to put their beliefs into action, it would profoundly change the culture.

Sexual harassment, sexual assault and domestic violence could become rare.

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