What is sexual harassment?
A form of discrimination that includes

1. Gender harassment: verbal and non-verbal behaviors that convey hostility, objectification, exclusion, or second-class status based on gender
2. Unwanted sexual attention: unwelcome verbal or physical sexual advances, including assault
3. Sexual coercion: favorable professional or educational opportunities are conditioned on the harasser receiving sexual attention from the targeted person

Harassment can occur even when it is not intended or perceived, particularly when one is in a position of power over another. Sexual harassment is harmful both to the people targeted and to those in environments in which sexual harassment is taking place.


Other biases, similar problems
People of color, sexual- and gender-minority people, and disabled people experience more sexual harassment and discriminatory behavior reflecting biases against their race or ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disabled status.

Even when we consciously think racism, sexism, ableism, etc., are wrong, our judgments and behaviors may reflect unconscious biases.

Regardless of intent, people who are stereotyped or subjected to biased behavior experience harms that include:
- Declines in job satisfaction or motivation in school
- Declines in organizational commitment and/or withdrawal from involvement with their organizations
- Declines in performance or productivity
- Increases in stress (including impacts on physical and mental health)

Bystander Intervention

Everyone in our community has an interest in challenging social norms that support or enable biased or harassing behavior. Even before behavior escalates into illegal acts, we can push back against biased behavior we observe.

Especially when you are not directly targeted, you may be well positioned to help people being targeted and to discourage biased or harassing behavior going forward.

Basic strategies

Disrupt the behavior.
Distract the person acting in a biased or harassing way. Find a way to insert yourself in the situation to help the target get out of the situation.

Get help if you need it.
Call on others to help, especially if you’re feeling vulnerable in the situation. A response from multiple people can reinforce that biased and harassing behavior will not be accepted in our community.

Address the problematic behavior.
Find a respectful, direct, and honest way to tell the person behaving problematically that their words or actions are not okay. (See “What should I say?” for ideas about how to do this.)

Support the targeted people.
Ask people targeted by biased or harassing behavior if they are okay. Let them know that you observed the problematic behavior and that it wasn’t their fault. Find out what kind of help they want from you.

Sponsored by the Philosophy of Science Association Women’s Caucus
For more information about the Women’s Caucus, visit http://womenscaucus.philsci.org
Join us at our business meeting at 12 p.m. on Saturday!
There is no one right thing for a bystander to say. Here are some options:

- **“I”-statements**
  “I feel uncomfortable with what you just said/did because …”

- **Challenge bias with facts**
  “There’s actually research on this, which shows…”

- **Support targeted people**
  “I heard what they said to you. I am so sorry.”
  “I saw what just happened. Are you okay?”

### Additional Resources

- **National Sexual Violence Resource Center Tip Sheet: Bystander Intervention Tips and Strategies**

- **The Unconscious Bias Project**

- **Care2: 7 Bystander Intervention Tips for Racist Harassment**
  [https://www.care2.com/causes/7-bystander-intervention-tips-for-racist-harassment.html](https://www.care2.com/causes/7-bystander-intervention-tips-for-racist-harassment.html)