

Forms of Sexual Harassment among young people aged 15-29 in Nairobi, Kenya

PMA Agile 2.0 Gender/ GBV study

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October 24, 2024

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Background

- Sexual harassment is a major global issue with serious consequences at the individual, family, community, and national level.
- It is defined as unwelcome sexual advances that can occur online or offline and includes non-consensual touching, grasping, pilfering, cuddling, brushing against a person's body, and staring/leering among others.
- Often sexual harassment is taken casually by offenders and society at large
- It is a serious offence with short and long-term negative health impacts on the survivors, who quite often, are young women below 30 years.
- Very limited data exist to understand the nature and prevalence of sexual harassment



Study Objective

- Determine the prevalence of different forms of sexual harassment among young women aged 15-29 in Nairobi Kenya
- Examine sexual harassment prevalence using a more detailed assessment relative to a single survey item measure commonly used for survey research



Background on Cohort: Agile 2.0

- **Nairobi Youth Cohort recruited via respondent-driven sampling (2019); PMA Agile**
- Baseline (n=1357; June-Aug 2019; in person); extensive qualitative
- Focus: sexual/reproductive health, contraception

- **Gender/COVID-19**
- 12-month follow-up (Aug-Oct 2020; phone-based due to the pandemic); extensive qualitative
- 18-month follow-up (April-May 2021; phone-based due to the pandemic)
- Focus: gender dynamics, gender-based violence during Covid-19

- **Agile 2.0 Gender/GBV Evidence to Action**
- ~12-month follow-up (June - August 2023; in-person, with a remote option)
- Participants: 871 young men, 831 young women (total 1702), including replenishment sampling
 - Qualitative (N=30 youth; n=15 women, n=15 men)

Methodology

- Cross-sectional study among young women (n=831) in the 2023 round of the longitudinal youth cohort
- Accompanying qualitative methods included in-depth interviews with young women ages 15-29 sampled purposively, based on demographics (n=15)



Results

- The study revealed that sexual harassment is highly prevalent among young women.
- Approximately three-quarters (70.3%) had experienced sexual harassment in the past year
 - compared to non- partner sexual violence (4.5%) and intimate partner violence (28.1%).
- The most common type of sexual harassment was being stared or leered at 57.7%, followed by unwanted sexual comments, innuendos, jokes, or gestures at 54.6%.
- Measure of prevalence varied substantially when using a single item (33.5%) versus a detailed scale (70.3%)

Comparison of the single item and multi-item scale

Single item

In the past 12 months, have you experienced unwanted sexual attention or harassment such as verbal comments, staring or leering, or unwanted physical contact like groping or grabbing?

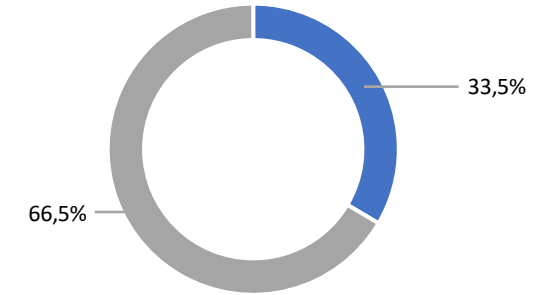
Never / Once / A few times / Often / No response

Scale

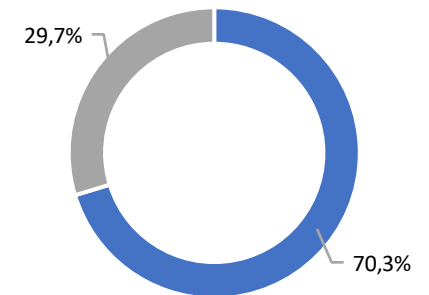
How often in the past year did the following happen:

Every day / Once or twice a week / A couple of times each month / A couple of times in the past year / Never / No response

1. Did someone make unwanted sexual comments, jokes or gestures toward you?
2. Did someone touch, grab, or pinch you in a sexual way that you did not want?
3. Did someone give you unwanted sexual attention?
4. Did someone stare or leer at you?
5. Did someone touch you in a way that made you feel uncomfortable?

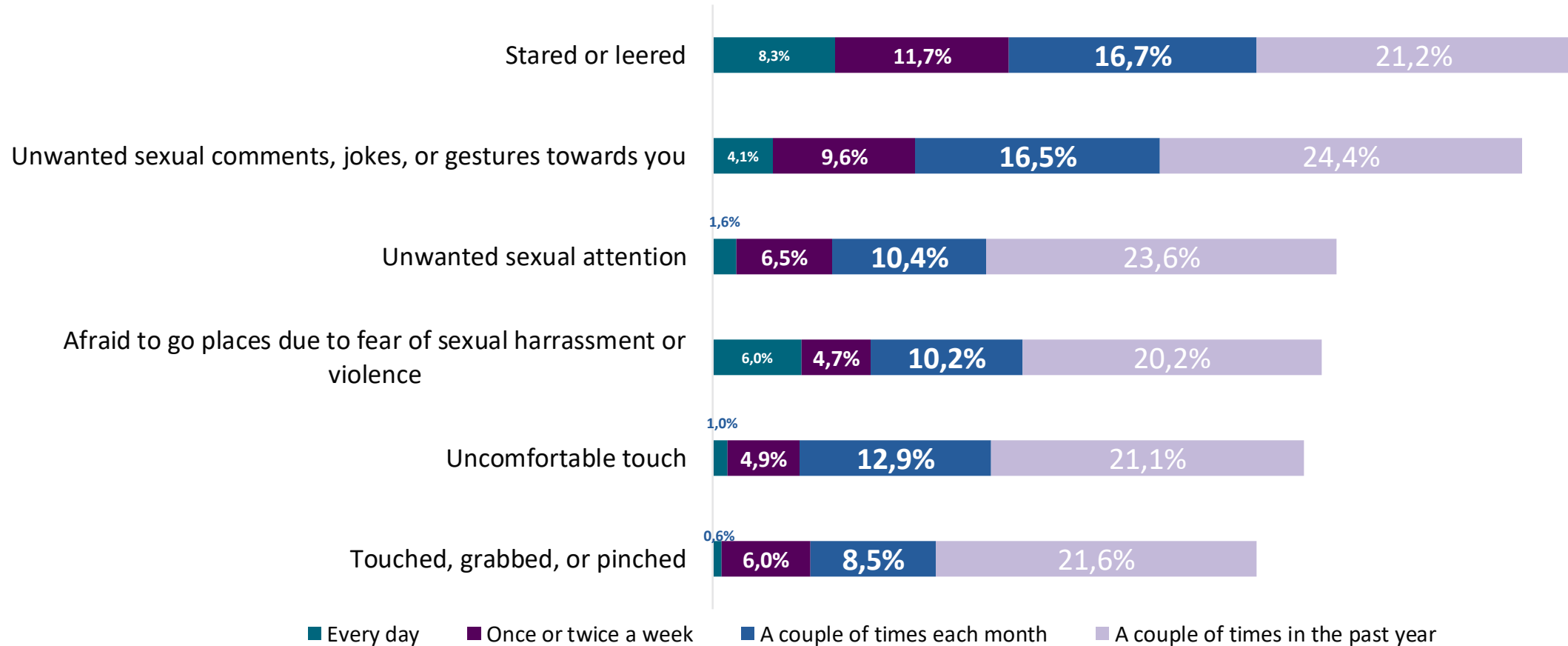


■ Any sexual harassment [single item]
■ No sexual harassment



■ Any sexual harassment [scale]
■ No sexual harassment

Sexual harassment type and frequency, among those who experienced



Weighted, not mutually exclusive



Results: Qualitative

“Most of the time it happens when I’m walking in my community, and you meet a man, and he throws dirty words at you that I don’t feel okay about. When it mostly happens, I prefer to walk away because if you turn and start arguing with him, he’ll continue throwing words at you. The words will now change to sexual verbal abuse. When it happens to me, I just walk away.”

-17-year-old female IDI participant



Recommendations

- There is a dire need to address sexual harassment in both public and private places.
- Innovative approaches and methods to prevent and respond to rampant sexual harassment are required.
 - Policies against sexual harassment need to be responsive to its prevention and total eradication.
- Further, a policy framework that recognizes sexual harassment in public and private spaces as a criminal offense; addresses safe reporting processes; and protects survivors from victimization is required.
- More research is needed to understand the changes in policies that may impact sexual harassment among young women.
- Measurement: study finds increased value of detailed assessments (i.e., scales) beyond single items in future survey data collection



Study Impact

- The study fills an evidence gap by providing an estimate on the prevalence and various forms of sexual harassment
- This evidence is valuable to design effective policies and programs.
- The findings inform policy frameworks and legislation against sexual harassment to ensure they are responsive to its prevention, protection relief, and recovery of the survivor as well as the total eradication of sexual harassment in public and private spaces.
- Addressing sexual harassment is critical to advance women's health and safety, and fulfill the commitments of the Sustainable Development Goals

