



NORTHWESTERN
UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT PREVENTION

TEN COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT SEXUAL HARASSMENT

1. Only Women Are Harassed And Only Men Are Harassers

No. Anyone, regardless of gender, can be the victim of harassment or a harasser.

2. Harassment is Always Between A Man and a Woman

No. Harassment can be between people of the same gender or different genders.

3. The Only Victim Is The Person Directly Harassed

No. Third parties who witness harassment or are aware of it may also be victims of harassment.

4. Harassment Requires Touching

No. Sexual harassment does not have to be physical in nature.

5. Harassment Requires Talking

No. Sexual harassment does not have to be verbal in nature.

6. “If It Was A Compliment, It Is Not Harassment”

No. Just because a person intends his or her conduct to be flattering does not mean it is not offensive to others.

7. “If I Was Just Joking, It Is Not Harassment”

No. Just because a person intends his or her conduct to be funny does not mean it is not offensive to others.

8. Off-Campus Conduct Cannot Be Sexual Harassment

No. Conduct with colleagues off-campus can contribute to a hostile environment or constitute quid pro quo harassment.

9. Harassment Is Motivated By A Desire For Sex

No. Sexual harassment is often motivated by dominance, power, and bullying.

10. Ignoring Harassment Makes It Go Away

No. Unfortunately, ignoring harassment usually does not make it go away and the problem may worsen.