



The Associated Press-NORC
Center for Public Affairs Research

THE PROBLEM AND IMPACT OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

Sexual misconduct is viewed by both men and women as a pervasive problem in American society—one that occurs all too regularly and with serious repercussions. In the latest survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, most Americans are hopeful that the current attention being given to this problem will lead to some positive change.

Workplaces are seen as having major trouble with sexual misconduct and as doing too little to address the problem. However, few employed people agree that their own place of work needs to deal with the same issues.

Fifty-six percent of Americans predict that the number of victims willing to speak out about their experiences will increase in the wake of the recent revelations, and 54 percent anticipate the implementation of stricter workplace policies. Forty-three percent say observers of this behavior will be more likely to come forward now.

But the public is more skeptical about specific benefits for working women. Only 8 percent anticipate a lot of change for the better for women in the workplace, and 47 percent anticipate some positive modification. Forty-four percent do not expect any constructive change to come out of the new recognition of sexual misconduct.

One-third of employed women worry about being on the receiving end of sexual misconduct at work. The same number of men have concerns about being falsely accused. However, fabricated allegations of sexual misconduct are not seen as particularly widespread by most Americans, and few think employers have been too tough on their staff who have been accused.

The survey showed that anger is the most common reaction following encounters with sexual misconduct in the workplace—whether personal experience or observation. Most who have been subjected to this behavior also agree that they feel humiliated and intimidated, and nearly half suffer shame.



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Three Things You Should Know

About The AP-NORC Poll on Sexual Misconduct

Among Adults age 18 and older:

1. Fifty-six percent say workplaces have major trouble with sexual misconduct, and 54 percent say businesses are doing too little to address the issue. But only 32 percent of workers consider it a serious issue at their own job.
2. Thirty-four percent of women and 11 percent of men worry about being on the receiving end of sexual misconduct at work. And 34 percent of men worry about being falsely accused.
3. As a result of recent coverage, 54 percent expect stricter workplace policies against sexual misconduct to be instituted, and 56 percent predict an increase in the number of victims willing to speak out about their experiences.

The nationwide poll was conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research December 7-11, 2017, using AmeriSpeak®, the probability-based panel of NORC at the University of Chicago. Online and telephone interviews using landlines and cell phones were conducted with 1,020 adults. The margin of sampling error is +/- 4.3 percentage points.

Other key findings from the poll include:

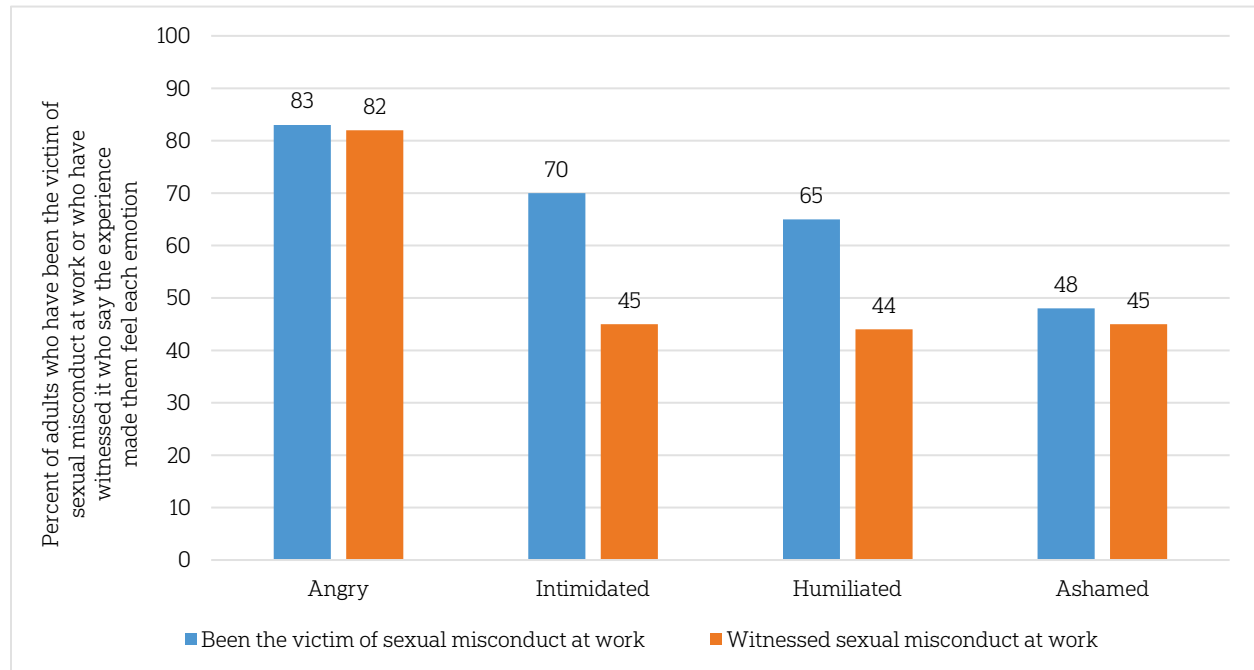
- Fifty-six percent say workplaces in general have major trouble with sexual misconduct, and 54 percent say businesses are doing too little to address the issue.
- However, only a third of employed Americans see it as a serious issue at their own job. And 67 percent think their own workplaces have been doing enough to deal with sexual misconduct. Forty-nine percent of employed adults have been required to take training at their current job to deal with sexual misconduct.
- Thirty-four percent of women and 11 percent of men worry about being on the receiving end of sexual misconduct at work. On the other hand, 34 percent of men worry about being falsely accused. And 26 percent of men admit to the possibility that they have been a perpetrator of such behavior, even inadvertently.
- Fourteen percent of Americans believe all or most allegations of sexual misconduct to be false, 69 percent say people are falsely accused some of the time, and 16 percent say false allegations are rare occurrences.
- Few Americans think employers are being too hard on staff members who have been accused of sexual misconduct. About 4 in 10 say they are too lenient, and about the same number say employers are handling the problem about right.
- More than 8 in 10 of those who have experienced or witnessed sexual misconduct on the job say they are angry about the experience. Most who have been subjected to this behavior also agree that they feel intimidated (70 percent) and humiliated (65 percent). Forty-eight percent say they are ashamed about the sexual misconduct they experienced at work.
- Sexual misconduct is also seen by most as a serious issue in the government, education, the military, the media, and particularly Hollywood and the entertainment industry. Overall, 62 percent of the public regard sexual misconduct as important to them personally.

ANGER IS THE DOMINANT REACTION TO SEXUAL MISCONDUCT IN THE WORKPLACE.

Among those who have personally experienced sexual misconduct in their workplace, 83 percent say they are angry about the experience. Most people who have personally been subjected to this behavior also agree that they feel humiliated and intimidated. Forty-eight percent say they are ashamed about having been mistreated, though more than half disagreed.

Among those who have witnessed sexual misconduct, 82 percent say they are angry. Fewer than half say the experience made them feel humiliated, intimidated, or ashamed.

More than 8 in 10 adults who have experienced or witnessed sexual misconduct at work feel angry about the experience.



Questions: [If personally been the victim of sexual misconduct] Please tell me if each of the following words does or does not describe your feelings about the sexual misconduct you experienced at work.

[If personally witnessed sexual misconduct] Please tell me if each of the following words does or does not describe your feelings about the sexual misconduct you witnessed at work.

Source: AP-NORC Center poll conducted December 7-11, 2017, with 1,020 adults nationwide.

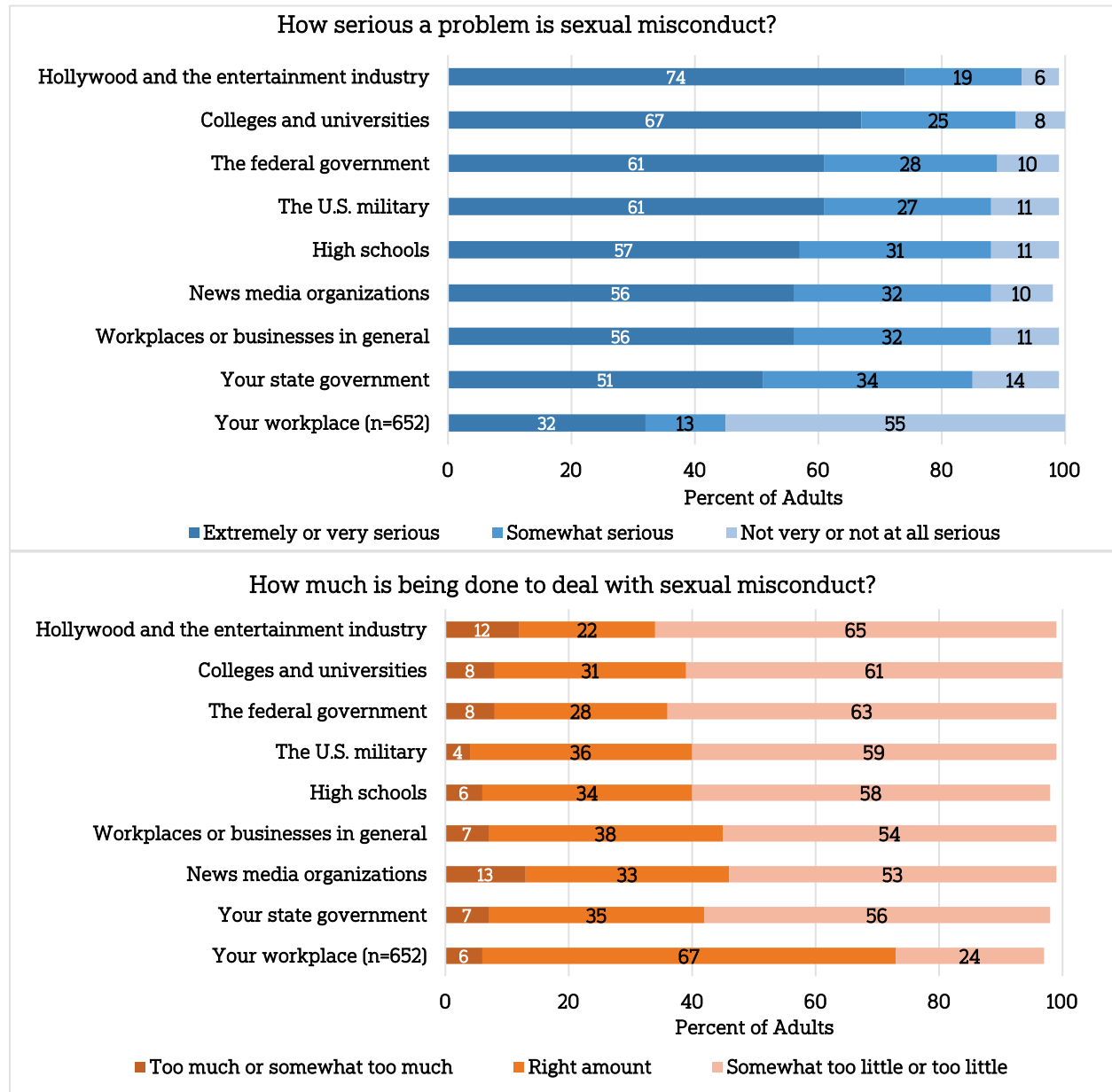
Overall, 23 percent of Americans worry they will be the victim of sexual misconduct. Women are three times as likely as men to disclose this concern (34 percent vs. 11 percent). Younger adults are also more inclined to share this fear. Adults age 18 to 44 are more likely than adults age 45 and older to say they worry about being the victim of sexual misconduct (33 percent vs. 15 percent).

Thirty-four percent of men worry about being falsely accused of sexual misconduct. And 26 percent of men who have ever been employed admit to the possibility that they have been a perpetrator of such behavior at work, even inadvertently.

FEW SAY THEIR OWN WORKPLACES HAVE A SEXUAL MISCONDUCT PROBLEM.

While 56 percent say workplaces in the United States in general have major trouble with sexual misconduct, only one-third of employed Americans say it is a serious issue in their own workplace. And while most say workplaces in general have done too little to combat the problem, two-thirds of employees say their workplace has done an adequate job with addressing sexual misconduct.

Majorities see sexual misconduct as a serious problem across a wide variety of institutions and industries, and most say too little is being done to address it.

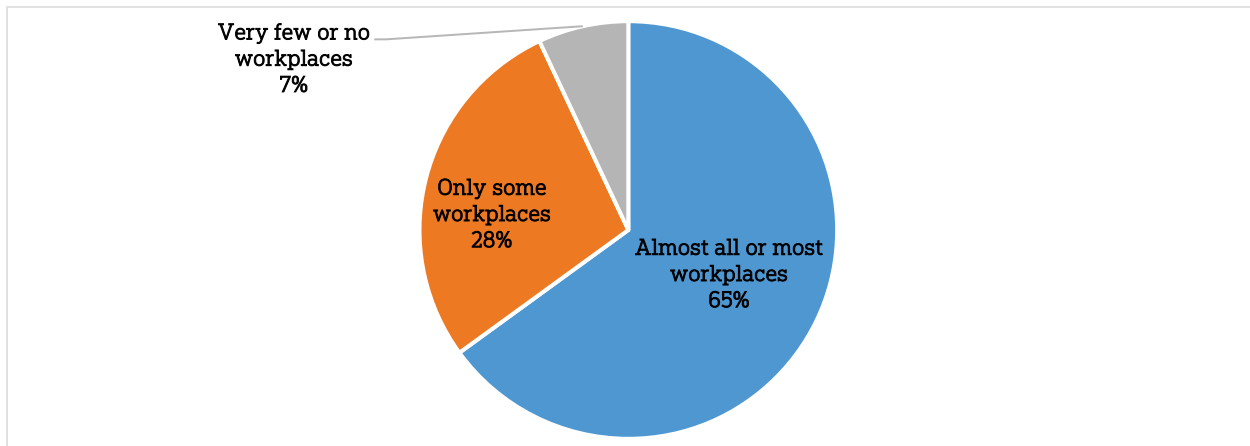


Questions: Do you think the following are doing too much, too little, or the right amount to address the problem of sexual misconduct? How serious a problem would you say sexual misconduct is at each of the following places?

Source: AP-NORC poll conducted December 7-11, 2017, with 1,020 adults nationwide, of whom 652 are employed.

However, most Americans think sexual misconduct in the workplace tends to be the rule, rather than the exception, with two-thirds saying it happens at most or almost all workplaces. Women are slightly more inclined than men to say sexual misconduct occurs in a majority of workplaces (69 percent vs. 61 percent).

Blacks are more likely than whites to say it happens at most jobs (84 percent vs. 62 percent), as are those who have experience with sexual misconduct at work, either as a victim or as a witness (80 percent of those with experience vs. 57 percent without experience).

More than 6 in 10 Americans say sexual misconduct happens in most workplaces.

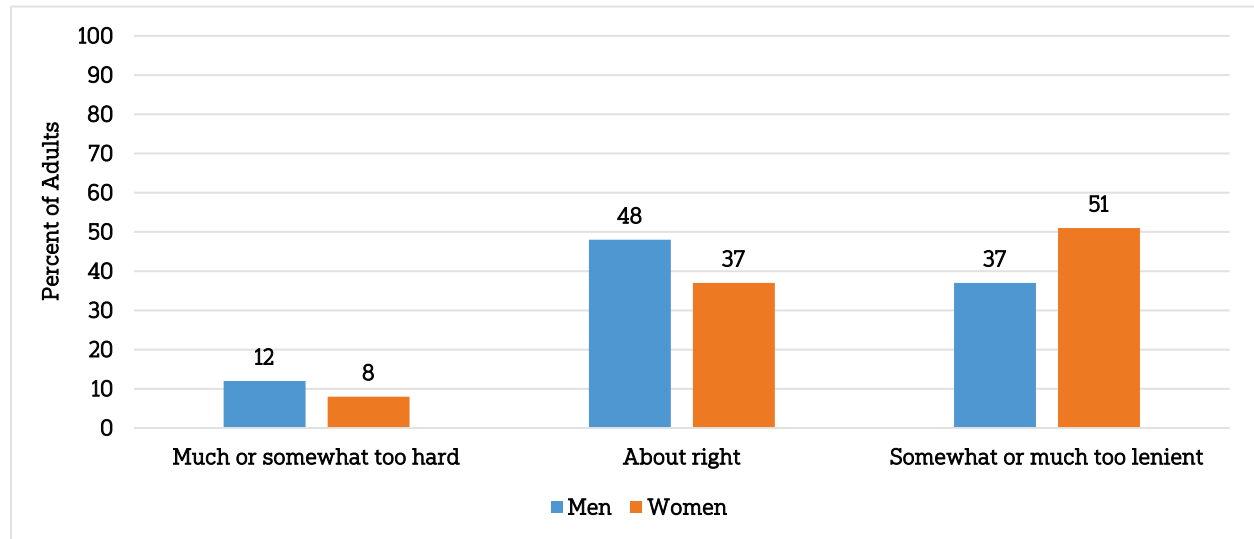
Question: In the United States, do you think sexual misconduct happens in...?

Source: AP-NORC Center poll conducted December 7-11, 2017, with 1,020 adults nationwide.

At the same time, false accusations are not seen as particularly pervasive. Sixteen percent say false accusations are a rare occurrence, 69 percent say they occur sometimes, and 14 percent believe all or most accusations of sexual misconduct in the workplace are false. Views on false accusations do not vary significantly by gender, race, or experience with sexual misconduct.

One in 10 Americans think employers are being too hard on employees who have been accused of sexual misconduct. About 4 in 10 say they are too lenient, and about the same number say employers are handling the problem about right. Fifty-one percent of women say employers are being too lenient, compared with 37 percent of men. Those who have experience with sexual misconduct in the workplace are more likely than those who don't to say employers are too lenient on alleged perpetrators (51 percent vs. 41 percent).

Men are more likely than women to be satisfied with the status quo when it comes to employers' handling of accusations of sexual misconduct in the workplace.



Question: Do you think, in general, employers are too hard or too lenient on employees who have been accused of sexual misconduct, or do they treat them about right?

Source: AP-NORC Center poll conducted December 7-11, 2017, with 1,020 adults nationwide.

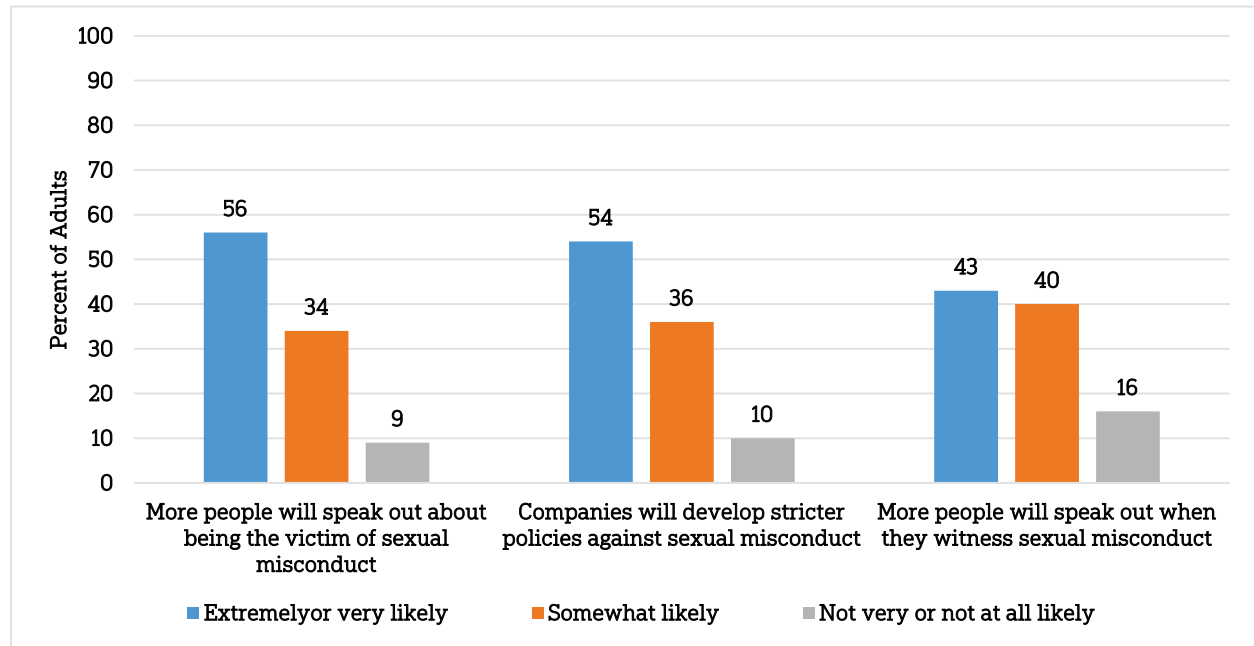
Among those who are employed, 49 percent have been required to take training on best practices for dealing with colleagues or on how to handle charges of sexual misconduct. Adults age 60 and older are the least likely to say they have been required to take this type of training (38 percent).

MOST AMERICANS SAY THE RECENT ATTENTION TO SEXUAL MISCONDUCT WILL RESULT IN AN IMPROVED WORKPLACE FOR WOMEN.

Fifty-five percent of Americans say things will change for the better for women in the workplace, including 8 percent who anticipate a lot of change for the better and 47 percent who anticipate some change for the better. Thirty-six percent say the workplace won't change for women, and 9 percent say the workplace will change for the worse.

Most Americans expect other changes as well. Fifty-six percent say it's extremely or very likely that recent high-profile sexual misconduct cases will empower those who have been the victim of sexual misconduct to speak out. Fifty-four percent believe it's likely that companies will develop stricter policies against sexual misconduct. Fewer than half say it's likely that more people will speak out about being a witness to sexual misconduct.

Most Americans say that as a result of recent sexual misconduct cases, it's likely that more victims will speak out.



Question: How likely do you think it is that each of the following will happen as a result of recent high-profile sexual misconduct cases?

Source: AP-NORC Center poll conducted December 7-11, 2017, with 1,020 adults nationwide.

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT IS SEEN AS A SERIOUS PROBLEM IN FEDERAL AND STATE GOVERNMENT AND ONE THAT SHOULD BE ADDRESSED.

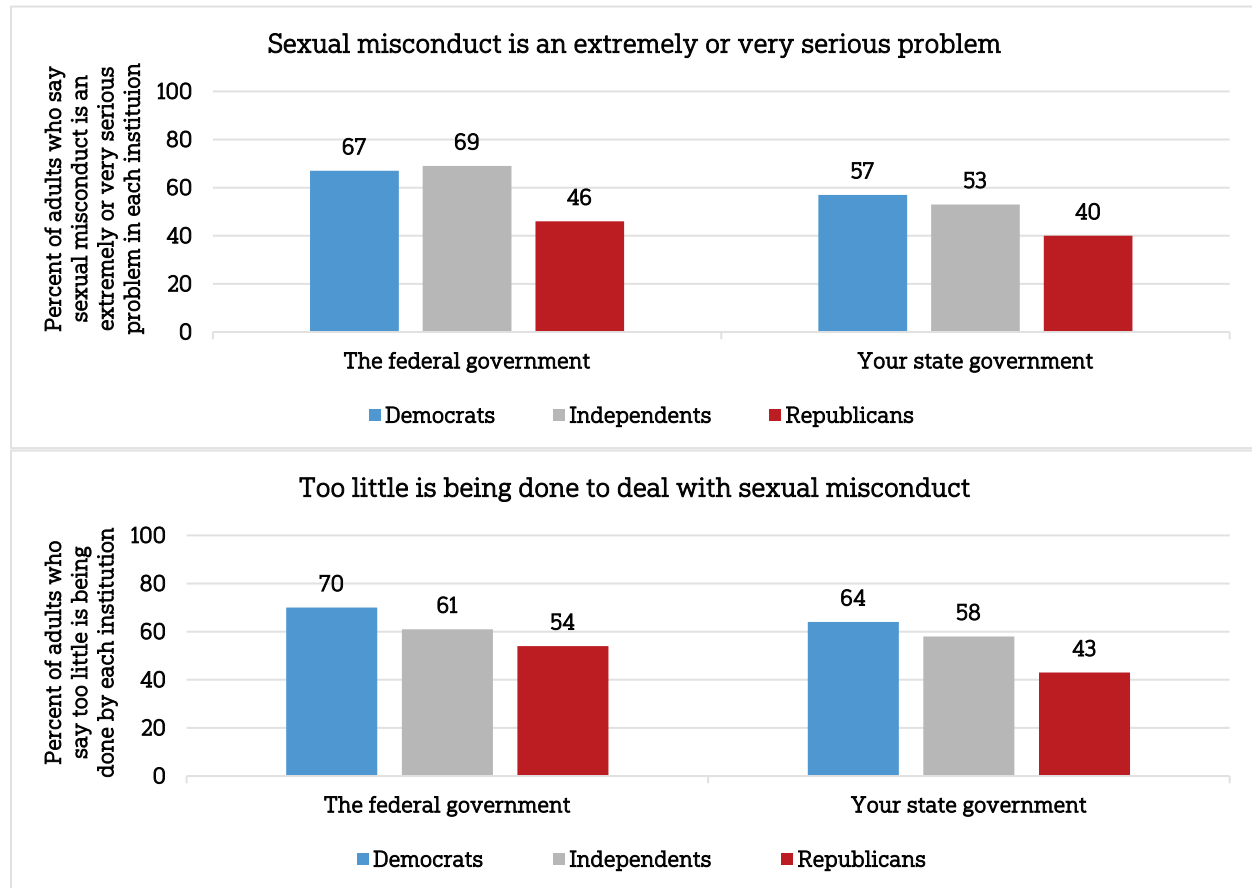
Recent weeks have seen multiple elected officeholders at both the state¹ and federal² level stepping down due to allegations of sexual misconduct. In the wake of these resignations, 61 percent of Americans say sexual misconduct is a serious problem in the federal government, and 51 percent say it is a serious problem in their state's government. Many say governments are not doing enough to address the problem either; 63 percent say the federal government is doing too little, and 56 percent say the same about their state government. Just about 3 in 10 say either is doing the right amount. Less than 1 in 10 say either is doing too much.

Democrats are more likely than Republicans to say sexual misconduct is a very or extremely serious problem in federal and state government. Democrats are also more likely to say too little is being done about the problem in these places, while Republicans are more likely to be satisfied with what has been done so far.

¹ <https://www.minnpost.com/politics-policy/2017/11/state-sen-schoen-resign-says-it-was-never-my-intention-make-inappropriate-ad>
<https://www.politico.com/states/florida/story/2017/10/27/clemens-says-hes-resigning-after-admitting-to-affair-with-lobbyist-115319>

² <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/07/us/politics/al-franken-senate-sexual-harassment.html>
<https://apnews.com/cf1f3410e4e74be290872b08f08d293a/US-judge-steps-down-after-accusations-of-sexual-misconduct>

Democrats are more likely than Republicans to say sexual misconduct is a serious problem in both the federal government and their state's government and more should be done to deal with the issue.



Questions: How serious a problem would you say sexual misconduct is at each of the following places?

Do you think the following are doing too much, too little, or the right amount to address the problem of sexual misconduct?

Source: AP-NORC Center poll conducted December 7-11, 2017, with 1,020 adults nationwide.

Many Americans would like to see both political parties crack down further on sexual misconduct by members of their own parties. But, they do see differences in how the major political parties are policing sexual misconduct within their caucuses, with more of the public saying Republicans are not facing severe enough repercussions compared to Democrats. Six in 10 Americans overall say Republicans have been too lenient on their fellow Republicans who have been accused of sexual misconduct, while just 4 in 10 say Democrats have been too lenient on their fellow Democrats. More Americans say Democrats are treating their fellow Democrats about right (44 percent) compared to the number of Americans who say Republicans are treating their fellow Republicans about right (31 percent).

HOLLYWOOD IS SEEN AS PARTICULARLY EGREGIOUS WHEN IT COMES TO SEXUAL MISCONDUCT.

More than two months after the allegations against Harvey Weinstein were first published in *The New York Times*, more Americans see Hollywood and the entertainment industry as having a problem with sexual misconduct than schools, workplaces, the government, or the media. Three quarters of the public say sexual misconduct in the entertainment industry is an extremely or very serious problem.

A majority also say the industry is not doing its due diligence to address it. Two-thirds believe Hollywood and entertainment are doing too little to deal with the issue.

While gender does not make a difference in perceptions of the entertainment world, African Americans (86 percent) are more likely to say the industry has a serious problem with sexual misconduct than either whites (72 percent) or Hispanics (65 percent). Seventy-one percent of Americans with household incomes of \$50,000 or more say Hollywood is not doing enough to address the problem, compared with 57 percent of lower-income Americans.

MOST AMERICANS SAY SEXUAL MISCONDUCT IS A PROBLEM IN SECONDARY AND HIGHER EDUCATION.

As for educational institutions, 67 percent of Americans think sexual misconduct is a serious problem in colleges and universities, and another 57 percent say it is an issue in high schools.

Many do not believe schools are doing enough to combat the issue, with about 6 in 10 saying universities and secondary schools are not adequately addressing sexual misconduct. And when it comes to dealing with students who have been accused of sexual misconduct, 55 percent say college campuses have been too lenient, though 34 percent say students facing allegations are treated about right.

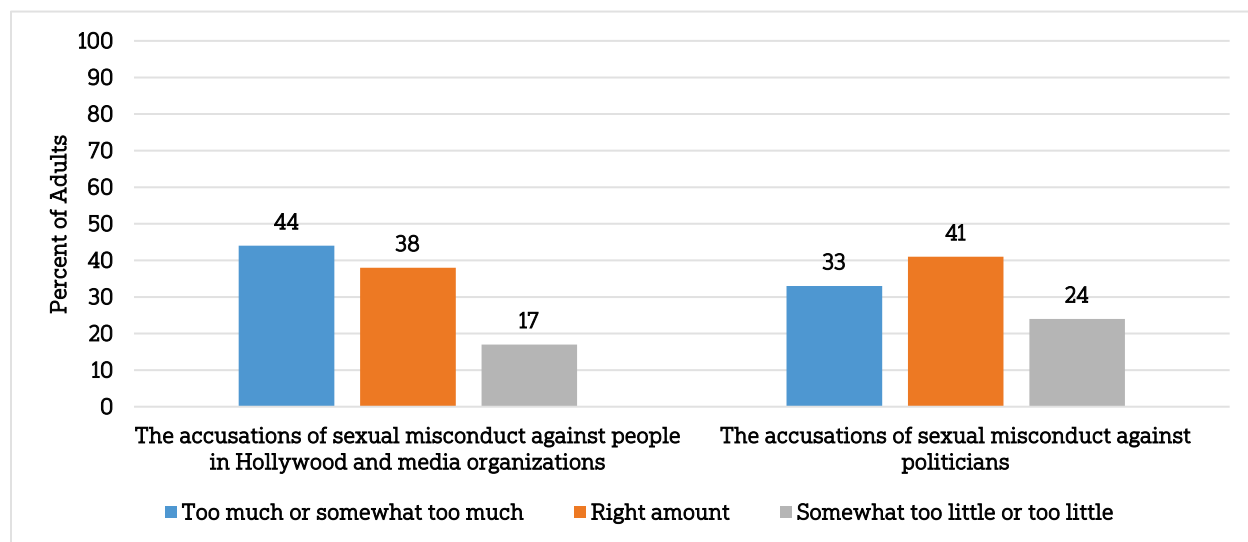
Views on sexual misconduct in America's schools are split primarily by political party and gender. In both high schools and higher education, Republicans are more than 20 percentage points less likely to say the problem is serious than are Democrats or independents. Women also see misconduct in schools as more severe than men, though majorities of both genders say it is serious.

MOST AMERICANS VIEW THE ISSUE OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT AS PERSONALLY IMPORTANT, AND FEW ARE SATISFIED WITH THE AMOUNT OF COVERAGE PAID TO THE ACCUSATIONS.

Sixty-two percent of Americans consider the issue of sexual misconduct to be very or extremely important to them personally. In comparison, the economy, health care, and taxes are seen as personally important by about 8 in 10 Americans, and immigration is personally important to 50 percent of Americans.

More Americans say there is too much coverage of the accusations of sexual misconduct against people in Hollywood and media organizations than say the same about the coverage of similar accusations made against politicians. Forty-four percent of Americans say news organizations are giving too much or somewhat too much coverage of the accusations of sexual misconduct against people in Hollywood or media organizations, while 33 percent say there is too much or somewhat too much news attention paid to the sexual misconduct allegations against politicians.

About 4 in 10 Americans are satisfied with the amount of news coverage given to the accusations of sexual misconduct against people in Hollywood and media organizations, and politicians.



Question: Do you think news organizations are giving too much coverage, too little coverage, or about the right amount of coverage to each of the following?

Source: AP-NORC Center poll conducted December 7-11, 2017, with 1,020 adults nationwide.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

This survey was conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research and with funding from The Associated Press and NORC at the University of Chicago. Data were collected using AmeriSpeak®, NORC's probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. The survey was part of a larger study that included questions about other topics not included in this report. During the initial recruitment phase of the panel, randomly selected U.S. households were sampled with a known, non-zero probability of selection from the NORC National Sample Frame and then contacted by U.S. mail, email, telephone, and field interviewers (face-to-face). The panel provides sample coverage of approximately 97 percent of the U.S. household population. Those excluded from the sample include people with P.O. Box only addresses, some addresses not listed in the USPS Delivery Sequence File, and some newly constructed dwellings.

Interviews for this survey were conducted between December 7 and 11, 2017, with adults age 18 and over representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Panel members were randomly drawn from AmeriSpeak, and 1,020 completed the survey—916 via the web and 104 via telephone. Interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish, depending on respondent preference. The final stage completion rate is 22.7 percent, the weighted household panel response rate is 33.7 percent, and the weighted household panel retention rate is 88.8 percent, for a cumulative response rate of 6.8 percent. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 4.3 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups.

Once the sample has been selected and fielded, and all the study data have been collected and made final, a poststratification process is used to adjust for any survey nonresponse as well as any non-coverage or under- and oversampling resulting from the study-specific sample design.

Poststratification variables included age, gender, census division, race/ethnicity, and education. Weighting variables were obtained from the 2017 Current Population Survey. The weighted data reflect the U.S. population of adults age 18 and over.

All differences reported between subgroups of the U.S. population are at the 95 percent level of statistical significance, meaning that there is only a 5 percent (or lower) probability that the observed differences could be attributed to chance variation in sampling.

A comprehensive listing of the questions, complete with tabulations of top-level results for each question, is available on The AP-NORC Center website: www.apnorc.org. For more information, please email info@apnorc.org.

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ABOUT THE ASSOCIATED PRESS-NORC CENTER FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS RESEARCH

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- The Associated Press (AP) is the world's essential news organization, bringing fast, unbiased news to all media platforms and formats.
- NORC at the University of Chicago is one of the oldest and most respected, independent research institutions in the world.

The two organizations have established The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research to conduct, analyze, and distribute social science research in the public interest on newsworthy topics, and to use the power of journalism to tell the stories that research reveals.

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