

# AMERICANS PERCEIVE SEXUAL MISCONDUCT AS A PERVASIVE PROBLEM IN SOCIETY

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**CHICAGO, Dec. 22, 2017** — Sexual misconduct is viewed by both men and women as a pervasive problem in American society, and most Americans are hopeful that the attention being given to this problem will lead to some positive change, according to a new survey from [The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#). Americans view sexual misconduct as a serious problem across sectors, including the government, education, the military, the media, and particularly Hollywood and the entertainment industry, and most people feel these institutions are doing too little to address the problem.

Despite the recent attention paid to this issue, few Americans anticipate a significant cultural change 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.

“The current coverage of sexual misconduct cases is putting a spotlight on an issue that is a direct and personal concern for many Americans. Thirty-four percent of women and 11 percent of men worry about being on the receiving end of sexual misconduct at work,” said Trevor Tompson, director of The AP-NORC Center. “Many do see hope for positive changes as a result of the recent coverage. A majority of Americans expect that victims will be more willing to speak out and that workplaces will institute stricter policies.”

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.

### **About the Survey**

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. 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.

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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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