



Our Streets Now



Experiences of Public Sexual Harassment in Exercise & Sport

“ More needs to be done
to support women ”

80% of respondents have made an
adjustment to their exercise because
of harassment or intimidation

www.ourstreetsnow.org/sports



OUR STREETS NOW

Who are Our Streets Now?

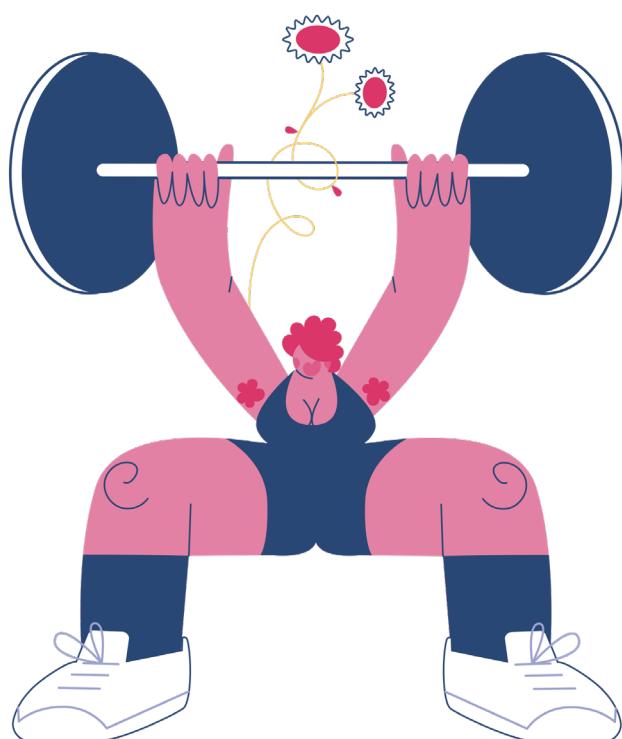
Our Streets Now is a national intersectional campaign demanding an end to public sexual harassment. In 2024, building on our successful campaign to make public sexual harassment a criminal offence, we are launching our Sports Campaign, working towards making sports and exercise a safer, more inclusive environment for all.

What is Public Sexual Harassment (PSH)

Public Sexual Harassment (PSH for short) comprises unwelcomed and unwanted attention, sexual advances and intimidating behaviour that occurs in public spaces, both in person and online. It is usually directed towards women and often oppressed groups within society however, it can be experienced by all.

Our Research

This survey asked 167 people about their experiences of PSH in sports and exercise in gyms, leisure centres, parks and on the streets. It was mainly answered by women, girls and non-binary people, across the UK.



66

"Gyms don't feel safe for me to go to alone."

"It's a violation that really disempowers women in sporting spaces."

"I felt incredibly unsafe and tried to ignore them."



www.ourstreetsnow.org/sports

EXPERIENCES OF PUBLIC SEXUAL HARASSMENT



70% of respondents experienced some form of PSH whilst exercising



57% have witnessed PSH whilst exercising

The most commonly reported forms of PSH:

77.8% Persistent staring

60.7% Comments of an inappropriate or sexual nature

41.9% Being followed around the gym or on a run

24.8% Suspected filming or taking photos

15.4% Unwanted physical contact

8.1% Others: flashing, masturbating, catcalling, chased



"When I was 21 I was grabbed by a man whilst I was jogging. It was in the late morning and I was on a path in a well used park. As he grabbed me, I screamed. He let go and ran away. That incident has made me feel uneasy about running ever since."

"I caught someone filming me in the gym and I knew it was going to happen because he had been staring at me from the moment I entered the room. I reported it and told the manager the exact time and camera to look at for evidence. I never heard from the institution and I still have not yet returned to the gym since then."



"I always feel uncomfortable wearing gym leggings because men will stare."

ADJUSTMENTS PEOPLE FEEL FORCED TO MAKE



80% adjusted their exercise because of harassment or intimidation



69% make these adjustments 'most' or 'every' time they workout

Adjustments people make:

81.2% avoid certain areas or times of day when working out

65.4% cut workout short and gone home

60.2% changed location of workout

49.6% changed what they were wearing

35.3% avoided exercise altogether

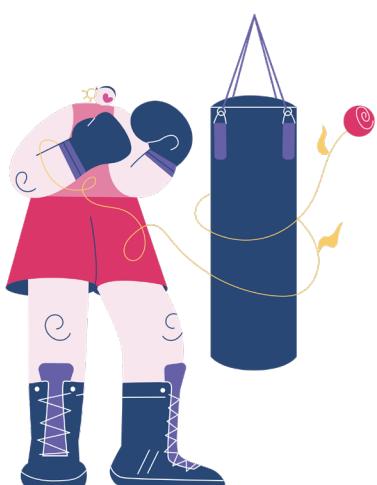
20.3% will not exercise alone

20.3% only attend classes or 'female only' spaces



“

"My friend left her phone on the side of the basketball court in our local leisure centre. We think one of the guys took her phone and took a picture of his d*ck and then put it back without us noticing. We don't play there anymore, we drive 20 mins to a different place because the experience made us feel so weird."

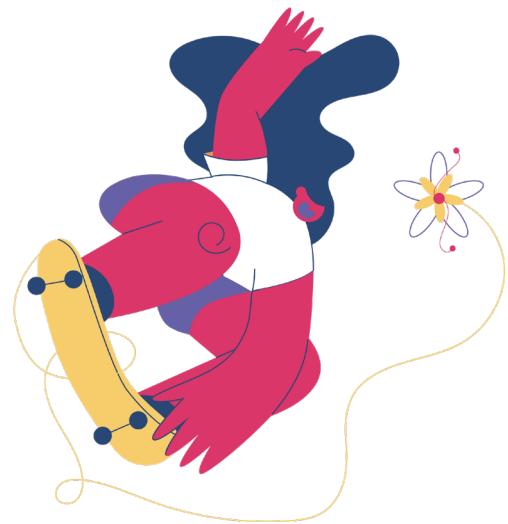


”

66

"I was running on a treadmill at a gym, with headphones in, when an older man approached me because HE felt that it was appropriate to let me know he thought I was attractive. It made me feel awkward and uncomfortable so I stopped my work out. Nowadays I only go to the gym if my husband joins me, or else I just try to workout at home, gyms don't feel safe for me to go alone."

"I was out cycling on my own and suddenly a van pulled up next to me with three men inside. They were jeering and shouting at me. I felt incredibly unsafe and tried to ignore them while I cycled on. Suddenly, the van swerved nearer to me and honked, causing me to fall off my bike and onto the road. The van then sped off. None of the cars that were behind the van stopped to even check if I was okay from my fall or the whole ordeal."



"My first memory of being harassed exercising really stuck with me. I was 14 and training for a swimming competition. There was a group of men watching us through the windows that overlooked the pool from the spa. We all felt uncomfortable, just being in swimsuits, so we let our coach know, who told them off and pulled down the blinds. Five minutes later, the blind was back up and they were still there, staring. This part made me really REALLY uncomfortable... I was really unsettled."

99

RESPONDING TO PUBLIC SEXUAL HARASSMENT

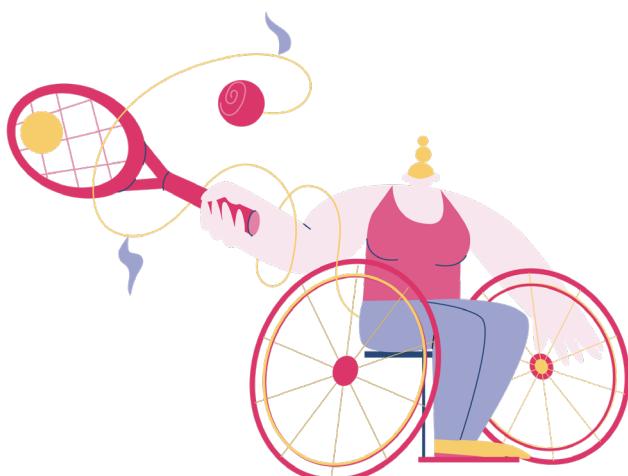


89% think gyms/leisure centres, men and councils need to do more to make women and girls feel safe



"I don't see the point in reporting my experience to the police as it's so frequent and commonplace."

"Unfortunately I have no positive experiences of the gym where someone was an active bystander and stepped in."



"I strongly believe there needs to be clear signage around the gyms about filming and laws about filming other people. It's a violation that really disempowers women in gym spaces."



RECOMMENDATIONS

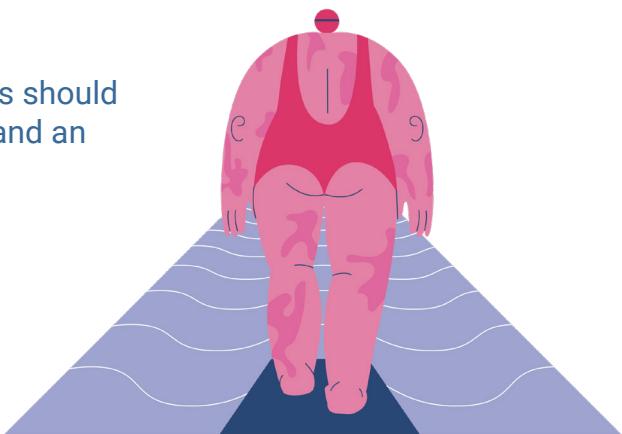
All people engaging in sports and exercise need to feel able to intervene and report any incidents, trusting that they will be listened to, respected, validated and an appropriate course of action or follow up will be taken. Here are our key recommendations:

Training

All staff, coaches, and volunteers need high quality training on challenging and responding to disclosures of PSH

Policy

All sporting bodies and gym or training facilities should have a policy that specifically references PSH and an accessible reporting process.



Awareness

We need public-facing behaviour change campaigns aimed at perpetrators to start to combat the normalisation of abuse directed at those exercising in public spaces.

We all have a part to play in creating a culture in our society where women, girls and marginalised genders are safe to exercise and play sports without the fear of intimidation, harassment or abuse.



"More needs to be done to support women".

"I think posters around buildings with QR codes for support might help."



"I don't trust that any staff members have the training and knowledge to handle a disclosure appropriately."





Our Streets Now

For more information on Our Streets Now's new, CPD-accredited training and resources to tackle PSH in sports visit www.ourstreetsnow.org/sports and follow @ourstreetsnow on social media.

