

What Are We Really Asking For?

By Verity Berthelsen

Christine Laperriere moved to Ontario when she was 25 years old to work as a design engineer. When she first applied to work in this field she was turned down. Then, a man who she'd previously worked with wanted to hire her. He was 50 years old and for the next 18 months sexually assaulted her at work. Sexual assaults like slapping her on the butt and telling her, "I love how your eyeshadow matches your sweater. I just *love* it" were commonplace. She felt so much shame and wasn't able to bring herself to report him until a year and a half later when another woman finally helped her speak up.

As of 2017, 75% of harassment in the workplace goes unreported in the United States. 75% of harassment victims experience retaliation when they do speak up.¹ As of 2018, studies show that 81% of women have been sexually harassed in their life and those are just the people who spoke up.² Everyday, women have to go through sexual harassment in the workplace and some how think that it's their fault. That is terrible but not surprising. Jan Ransom wrote an article in the New York Times titled, "*These Are the 6 Women Who Are Testifying Against Harvey Weinstein.*" Good for them.³ I think that the Harvey Weinstein case made women be able to speak up more. We tell young women everyday that they shouldn't dress provocatively. We say "boys will be boys" and that "they can't control their urges." Schools implement dress codes so that boys won't be 'distracted.' My mother has been lucky enough to have never been assaulted but to think about the thousands of women who have faced harassment and makes me sick. We have come far but we still have a way to go. This happens to trans women and women of all races. I'm feel lucky. I'm 14 and I'm still paranoid when I walk on the street and make sure no one is following me.

We need to take charge. I urge you, take charge of your future, of your kids future, because no one else will. Amend the women in your family's past because no one else will. We need to educate men about what is happening. And not is seminars in the workplace. We need to start early. Not in college. While those are good programs, they need to start earlier. We need to start in middle school so we can form good ideas and habits. We need to train men to speak up for women. We should all be feminists. How many more women have to be told that they were "asking for it"?

¹ "Study finds 75 percent of workplace harassment victims experience retaliation when they spoke up"

<https://www.vox.com/identities/2017/10/15/16438750/weinstein-sexual-harassment-facts>

² "A New Survey Finds 81 Percent Of Women Have Experienced" 21 Feb. 2018,

<https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2018/02/21/587671849/a-new-survey-finds-eighty-percent-of-women-have-experienced-sexual-harassment>. Accessed 6 Feb. 2020.

³ "Sexual Harassment and Assault at Work" 15 Oct. 2018, <https://iwpr.org/publications/sexual-harassment-work-cost/>. Accessed 6 Feb. 2020.