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'Street harassment' common in Boston, advocacy group's survey finds

Posted by Matt Rocheleau November 13, 2013 01:54 PM

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

A recent online survey of more than 500 people in Boston, mostly women, found that 88 percent said they have experienced some form of “street harassment” – which can include being touched, groped, followed, verbally attacked, catcalled, stared or whistled at in a public space.

About 20 percent reported they experience street harassment a few times a month, while 19 percent said they experience it a few times per week, according to the first-ever “[State of the Streets](#)” survey recently conducted by [Hollaback! Boston](#), a group that says it is trying to combat street harassment.

“Boston knows that street harassment happens all the time and it happens all over our city,” the group said in its report. “We know that because people tell us. They share their experiences with us and we believe them.”

“But we wanted to find a way to communicate this fact to people, especially people that may not think that street harassment is really a problem or people that don’t experience street harassment themselves,” the group added. “We hope that we open some eyes and some doors with the results of our survey.”

The vast majority people surveyed said the street harassment left them feeling a mix of emotions include being angry, annoyed, disgusted, nervous and scared, the report said. About 14 percent said they found the experiences “flattering” and only 4 percent said they were not bothered by what happened.

About 97 percent said they had been harassed on the street; 63 percent on the MBTA; 37 percent in bars or clubs; 32 percent in public parks and 14 percent while at school.

Women comprised 86 percent of the survey’s respondents. About 40 percent of respondents said they were students; one-third of respondents said they were either lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, intersex, or asexual; and 13 percent identified as being a person of color.

The group, in its report, urged for anti-street harassment campaigns to be run around the city, including on public transit.

“We believe that with the assistance of public officials and private citizens, it is a problem that can be conquered in our beloved city,” the report said. “We see street harassment as a community problem and believe that we can come together, as a community, to put it to an end.”

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"Street harassment does not have to be an inevitable part of our society," the report added. "It is harmful and it is not okay, two facts that are evident by the growing number of residents speaking out against it. We have the power to end street harassment and the time to end it is now."

E-mail Matt Rocheleau at mjrochele@gmail.com.

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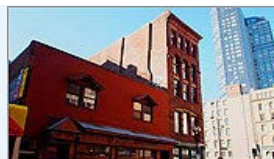
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