

Harassment is broadly defined as any unwanted, unwelcome, or offensive behavior that demeans, intimidates, or humiliates an individual. Under U.S. law, such behavior becomes illegal discrimination when it is tied to protected characteristics like race, gender, religion, age, or disability, and creates a hostile or intimidating environment.

Harassment takes many forms and can occur in-person, in the workplace, or online. To better navigate or evaluate your situation, it is helpful to look at how different types of harassment are categorized:

1. Workplace and Legal Harassment

In an employment setting, harassment violates protections like Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. It occurs when offensive conduct becomes so severe or pervasive that it alters the terms and conditions of your employment.

- **Sexual Harassment:** Includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal/physical conduct of a sexual nature.

- **Discriminatory Harassment:** Hostile actions or offensive jokes based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or disability.

2. Online or Cyber Harassment

This involves the use of digital platforms (social media, email, text messaging, or forums) to threaten, stalk, or persistently demean an individual. Because online spaces can feel intrusive and inescapable, this is often treated very seriously by both platforms and law enforcement.

3. Criminal Harassment

In many jurisdictions, this crosses into criminal law when the behavior includes stalking, threats of violence, or intentional, repeated actions that place a person in reasonable fear of physical injury.

How to Respond and Protect Yourself

Knowing your rights and options is the first step toward finding a resolution:

- **Document Everything:** Keep a detailed, written record of incidents, including dates, times, locations, and any witnesses or evidence (screenshots, emails).

- **Report the Conduct:** If you are at work, follow your company's formal grievance process and consult your employee handbook.

- **Seek Support:** There are many dedicated organizations that can provide advice, counseling, and legal resources to victims of harassment.

If you can share a bit more about what you are dealing with, I can give you more targeted guidance. Are you experiencing this at work, online, or in your personal life?