

Sexual Misconduct by School Employees

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Content Warning

This Power Topic includes sensitive content that some people might find disturbing and difficult to discuss.

What's Ahead:

- > Some school employees take advantage of their authority and status as trusted adults to sexually abuse students.

In this presentation you will learn:

- What is school employee sexual misconduct?
- How widespread is the problem?
- What is grooming?
- What are the effects on students?
- What can we do?



Definitions

Perpetrator

The person who harasses or assaults a victim

Sexual Misconduct

Unwanted physical, verbal, or visual behaviors of a sexual nature

Grooming

Techniques perpetrators use to manipulate and gain the trust of potential victims

Targets

Students that perpetrators choose by exploiting vulnerabilities

Control

Methods perpetrators use to persuade a student not to report abuse

School employee sexual misconduct

- > Unwanted physical behavior that causes discomfort:
 - Full body hugs
 - Inappropriate touching
 - Student sitting on lap
 - Sexual contact
- > Verbal or visual behavior causing discomfort:
 - Inappropriate comments on appearance or body parts
 - Excessive compliments
 - Inappropriate texts, email, or social media
 - Sending nude pictures, pornography



Who are the targets?

- > Vulnerable students who may be exploited because they:
 - Have physical or cognitive disabilities
 - Have academic, behavioral, or emotional issues
 - Have drug or alcohol problems
 - Have reputations of not being believable
 - Feel lonely or shunned by peers
 - Face challenges at home
 - Have immigration status issues

- > Perpetrators target vulnerable students because:
 - They are less likely to inform on a perpetrator
 - If they inform, they are less likely to be believed



Grooming

- > How perpetrators manipulate students:
- Build a special trusted relationship with a student and parents
 - Offer one-to-one tutoring or mentorship on and off campus
 - Give special attention, praise, affection, or gifts
 - Talk about romantic or sexual relationships
 - Normalize sexual contact
 - Suggest using drugs or alcohol



Control

- > How perpetrators persuade a student to keep silent:
 - Manipulate the student's affections
 - Exploit the power differential by intimidating the student into thinking that no one will believe them if they report
 - Threaten actions that would negatively impact student achievement in academics, sports, or arts
 - Threaten to tell someone about student's illegal behavior
 - Threaten to harm family members or pets

How widespread is the problem?

- About 17% of students say they've experienced some form of inappropriate behavior from a school employee*
- In the first 9 months of 2022, 199 public educators in the United States were arrested for sex-related crimes against students**
- Latino, Black, and Indigenous students disproportionately experience school employee abuse***

* "Title IX Policy Implementation and Sexual Harassment Prevalence in K-12 Schools" (2023)

** "At least 269 K-12 educators arrested on child sex crimes in first 9 months of this year" (2022)

*** "Educator Sexual Misconduct: A Synthesis of Existing Literature" (2004)

How widespread is the problem?

NEW YORK POST

At least 6 female teachers arrested for
sexual misconduct with students over
two days across US

 Office of Public Affairs
U.S. Department of Justice

Former Elementary School Teacher
Sentenced to Life in Prison for Sexually
Abusing Children

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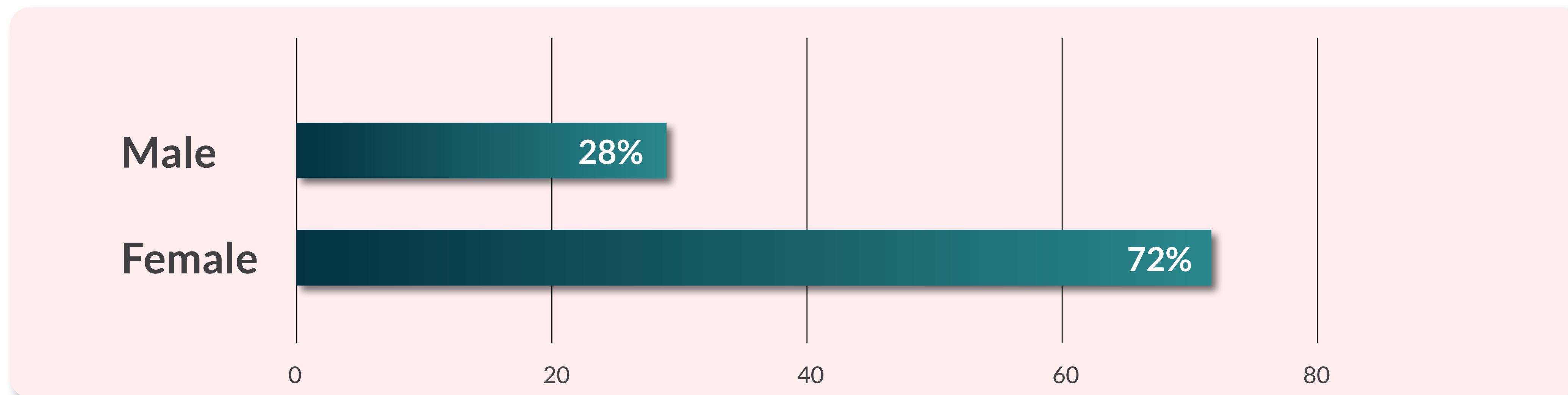
Prosecutors: CPS gym teacher accused of
sexually abusing elementary school students

The Seattle Times

Ex-Summer coach charged with child rape,
molestation of players

Percentage of targets by gender

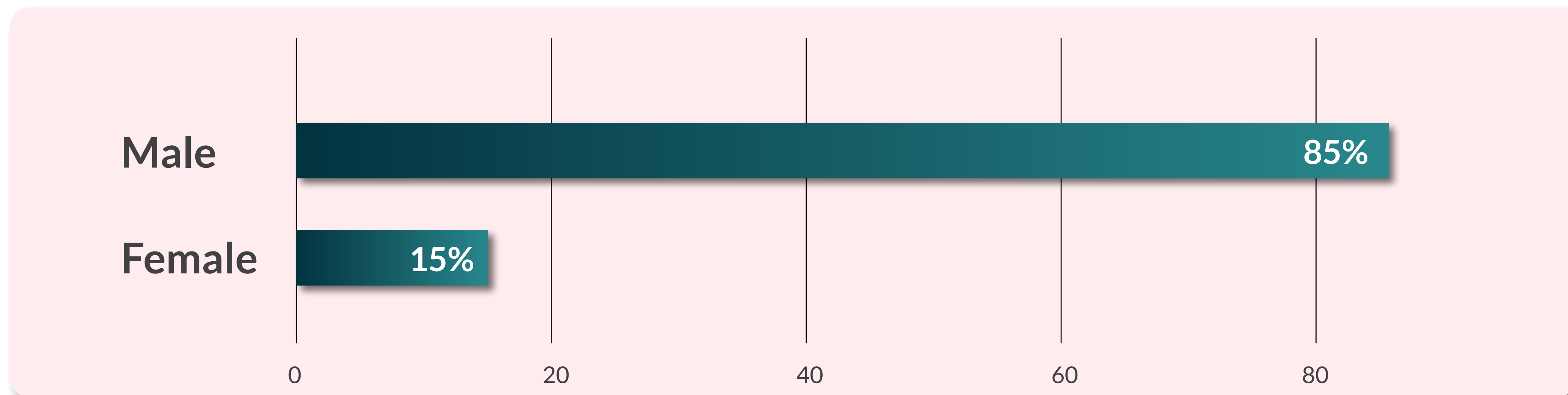
Percentage of students who reported experiencing school employee sexual misconduct are primarily female*



* “Educator Sexual Misconduct Remains Prevalent in Schools” (2022)

Perpetrators by gender

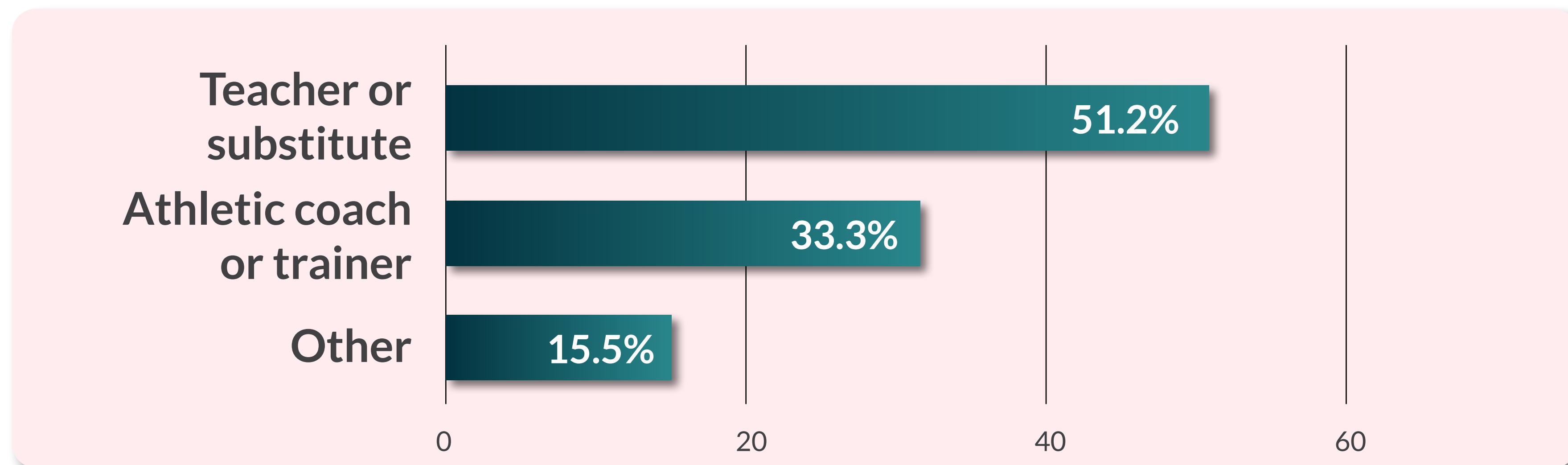
School employees who engaged in sexual misconduct are primarily male*



* “Educator Sexual Misconduct Remains Prevalent in Schools” (2022)

Perpetrators by role

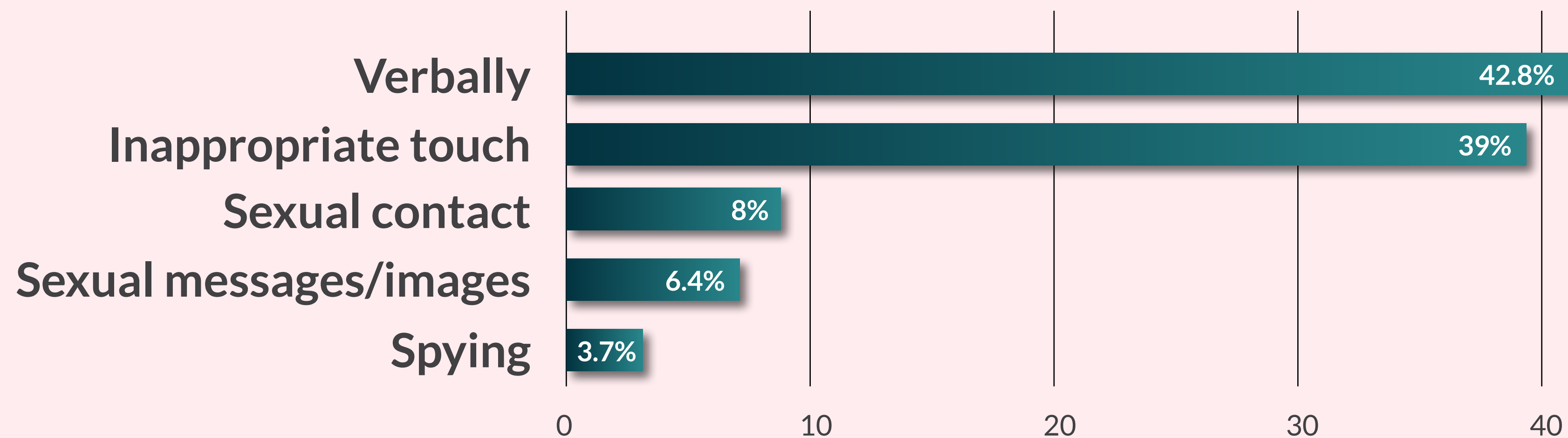
Percentage of students reporting which school employee(s)
sexually harassed them*



* "Title IX Policy Implementation and Sexual Harassment Prevalence in K-12 Schools" (2023)

How are students harassed?

Percentage of students who reported how a school employee sexually harassed them*



* "Title IX Policy Implementation and Sexual Harassment Prevalence in K-12 Schools" (2023)

How and where is it happening?

- People of all genders can be abusers
- People of all genders can be victims
- It can take place:
 - » In the classroom
 - » During after-school activities
 - » Before, during, or after sports events
 - » On field trips
 - » On school transportation
 - » At school employee's home

Scenario 1

A new student, Alex, is attending high school. He tries out for the baseball team and attends practice a few times per week. After one practice, his coach calls him into the office to talk about performance goals one-on-one. The coach makes casual jokes and Alex laughs along. The meetings in the office become regular and sometimes the coach makes inappropriate jokes. Alex has heard this described as “locker room talk” and goes along with it though he feels uncomfortable.



Scenario 1

The situation escalates. The coach compliments Alex and eventually starts touching him. Alex doesn't know how to get help. The coach reassures him this is a normal relationship when a player is "special" like him. Alex is afraid that if he tells someone, the coach will have him removed from the team and he could lose scholarship opportunities. The abuse becomes more frequent, and Alex feels trapped.



Scenario 1



Can you identify the types of abuse?

How does the coach control the abusive relationship?

How might Alex be more vulnerable as a target than other students?

Scenario 1

Can you identify the types of abuse?

Physical: inappropriate touching

How does the coach control the abusive relationship?

Threatening Alex and attempting to normalize the relationship

How might Alex be more vulnerable as a target than other students?

He is new to the school and might not have many friends to turn to. He needs a scholarship.



Scenario 2

Cooper is a talented and bright 6th-grade student with a mild developmental disability. When his father-figure uncle died at the beginning of middle school, Cooper became noticeably withdrawn. His male math teacher noticed this and offered Cooper extra tutoring at lunch time. They met in a classroom in a remote part of campus that was scheduled for remodeling.



Scenario 2

Soon the teacher began showing Cooper pornography and took him to an isolated bathroom where he repeatedly raped him over two years, threatening to kill Cooper if he told anyone. The teacher convinced Cooper that his mother approved of their relationship and that he would be keeping a watch on Cooper from his nearby home. Cooper's emotional health worsened but he did not disclose the abuse for several years.



Scenario 2

?

Can you identify the types of abuse?

How does the teacher control the abusive relationship?

How might Cooper be more vulnerable as a target than other students?



Scenario 2

Can you identify the types of abuse?

Visual: pornography, Physical: rape

How does the teacher control the abusive relationship?

Threats of violence, death, and surveillance; normalizing the relationship

How might Cooper be more vulnerable as a target than other students?

He has a disability; experienced the death of a father figure



What are the effects of sexual abuse?

> School employee sexual misconduct can have these effects on victims:

- Academic consequences:
 - » Avoiding teachers and school
 - » Problems concentrating and lower grades
- Emotional consequences:
 - » Fear, shame, self-doubt
 - » Depression, anxiety
- Long-term effects:
 - » Substance abuse
 - » Mistrust of institutions
 - » Difficulty forming intimate relationships



Scenario 3

Anne is a high school biology teacher in a small town. Her student Brian is a tall 16-year-old who plays on the basketball team. He does not socialize with his teammates and is considered a loner. Anne emailed Brian, offering to assist him with his homework after school, first in her classroom and later at her home. Anne started asking Brian about whether he had ever made out with girls, requesting him to describe the details.



Scenario 3

She befriended Brian's parents, who allowed him to take an overnight trip with her to a state science fair. They had sex on that trip, and continued having sexual relations in hotels, in her car, and in her classroom during her free period. He experienced depression for many years as a result of this relationship.



Scenario 3



Can you identify the types of abuse?

How does the teacher control the abusive relationship?

How might Brian be vulnerable as a target?

Scenario 3

Can you identify the types of abuse?

Physical: sexual relations

How does the teacher control the abusive relationship?

Gains trust of parents, normalizes the relationship

How might Brian be vulnerable as a target?

Does not have many friends, might feel pressure as a male to accept sexual advances of a teacher



Scenario 4

At orchestra rehearsals, Mr. Jones often compliments Sam and her friends, making her feel comfortable and valued. He also makes sexual jokes and comments. Sam brushes them off because she trusts her teacher. She sees one of her friends, Jenna, occasionally alone with the teacher after rehearsals. Sam notices that Jenna starts to get rides home from Mr. Jones.



Scenario 4

Jenna has been having a rough time at home and feels that rehearsal is a place where she is appreciated. Sam is worried that her friend could be in an inappropriate relationship with the teacher, but when she asks about it, Jenna quickly shuts down the conversation. After learning about grooming behaviors, Sam starts to worry.



Scenario 4

Sam lets Jenna know about confidential support resources at the local crisis center. Sam explains that the counselors there are not required to disclose information to parents, the police, or child protection officials. Later, Jenna tells Sam she is glad that Sam intervened. Sam and Jenna stay friends, and Sam continues supporting Jenna.



Scenario 4



How did Sam know to talk to Jenna about what was happening?

How did Sam help Jenna?

Scenario 4

How did Sam know to talk to Jenna about what was happening?

Sam saw warning signs like extended time alone with Mr. Jones and Jenna's vulnerability because of her home life.

How did Sam help Jenna?

Sam tried to make space for Jenna to confide in her. She informs Jenna about confidential resources. Jenna can gather information about when and how to report her situation to the school.



Talk About It



What are examples of inappropriate verbal or physical behavior on the part of school staff?

What are some reasons why a student who reports being abused by a school employee is often disbelieved?

Can schools create an environment that discourages employee sexual misconduct? What would that look like?

What can we do?

- We can work to reduce the stigma and vulnerability around reporting school employee sexual abuse.
 - Raise awareness:
 - » Start conversations to educate students and parents
 - » Learn to recognize inappropriate situations
 - » Learn about and publicize reporting options
 - Advocate for providing:
 - » Clear procedures for reporting inappropriate behavior (anonymous and confidential options)
 - » Clear definitions of unacceptable behavior
 - » Stronger policies regarding student/staff boundaries



Learn more

- > Know the warning signs of educator sexual misconduct (article by Professor Charol Shakeshaft)
- > What parents need to know about educator sexual misconduct with students (fact sheet)
- ▶ A call to action: stopping sexual abuse by school employees (TEDx Talk by Professor Charol Shakeshaft)
- ▶ CBS Reports - Pledge of silence: sex abuse and cover up in America's schools (documentary video)
- > Read more in School Employee Abuse Scenarios
- > More resources in the Stop Sexual Assault in Schools [library](#)

To Do Immediately if Sexually Assaulted

- > Get away from the attacker to a safe place as fast as you can.
- > Then call 911 or the police.
- > Call a friend or family member you trust.
- > You can call a crisis center or hotline to talk with a counselor.
- > One 24/7 option, for all genders, is the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) National Sexual Assault Hotline at 800-656-HOPE(4673).
- > RAINN will connect you with a rape crisis center in your area.
- > Visit the [Survivor Support page](#) for more helpline options and details.

To Do Immediately if Sexually Assaulted

- > **Preserve the evidence, even if you are unsure you will report.**
- > **Do not:**
 - Wash, comb your hair, or clean any part of your body
 - Brush your teeth
 - Change clothes, if possible, so the hospital nurse can collect evidence
 - Touch or change anything at the scene of the assault
- > **Seek medical attention ASAP at your nearest hospital ER:**
 - You need to be examined, treated for any injuries, checked for possible sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or pregnancy, and can receive preventative medicine.
 - The nurse or doctor will collect evidence the attacker may have left behind.

Ask hospital staff to connect you with a local rape crisis center.

If You are Sexually Harassed

It isn't your fault... and you can get help to make it stop.

- Reach out ASAP to a friend, school counselor or trusted adult for immediate safety & support to bring the issue to your Dean of Students, Principal, or Title IX Coordinator.
- Confidential National Sexual Assault Hotline: 1-800-656-4673
www.rainn.org
- Learn about your rights and how to take action on the [Stop Sexual Assault in Schools website](#).

Feedback & Suggestions:

SASH Club welcomes your feedback and suggestions on the content of this presentation. Contact us via:

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> Contact an adult advisor with your questions or concerns about local issues.



Acknowledgement

This Power Topic was inspired by a courageous family whose student experienced school employee abuse.

Special thanks to Dr. Charol Shakeshaft who provided resources for this presentation and to “RK” for instructional design services.

THANK YOU

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