

# Sexual Harassment in the Scuba Diving Industry

## – Comments by Male Dive Professionals

Michael Menduno ([InDEPTH Magazine](#)), Tamara Adame ([Cenote Girl](#)), and Darcy Kieran ([Business of Diving Institute](#)) conducted a survey in June & July 2025 on sexual harassment in the scuba diving industry.

[Statistical results from this survey are available on the Business of Diving Institute website.](#)

At the end of the survey, participants were asked:

**"Please share any additional thoughts you have on sexual harassment or assault in the dive industry: the current situation, the causes, and the solutions."**

Comments below are from **MEN** who were also **DIVE PROFESSIONALS** (divemasters and instructors).  
*Find comments from other groups [here](#).*

These published comments are those of the individual commenters and do not necessarily represent the views of the survey organizers themselves.

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1. Sexual harassment is rampant in the industry. As is bigotry and racism. Misogynist instructors are also visible, and some don't even try to hide it.
  2. My wife was almost raped by a boat crewman on a Thai liveaboard.
  3. People have become overly sensitive and fearful, and political correctness has made it so that no one even dares to tell a joke anymore. The fact that I feel the need to preemptively tell a student that I might occasionally need to hold them underwater—for safety reasons—just to avoid any chance of being accused of misconduct, is absolutely ridiculous.
  4. It would be interesting to compare tourist destinations and non-tourist destinations. It seems to me that people lose their brains when they are on vacation: sea, sun, sand, sex... And scuba diving comes with bathing suits, changing clothes... It may not be a sexy activity like surfing, but it is kind of sensual. Therefore, sexual harassment should definitely be covered in divemaster and dive instructor training courses (along with customer service, etc, but there is barely any real training preparing dive professionals to be "professionals.")
  5. It's hard to prove. It's a he-said-she-said type scenario, typically. The agencies have a hard time proving it for this reason. Unless multiple people come forward and a pattern can be established. Even then, it is difficult to prove. (I work at one and have had to deal with the Ethics cases) the person has to pretty much go to the authorities, file a police report, and then send it in. Otherwise, it is just hearsay. Something needs to change, but the agencies need to

be willing to do it and talk to one another to keep people from agency swapping.

6. Most harassment seen (4/5) were by shop owners, old white men...
7. Often, it was the culture of the DC to treat people this way. Coming from the top.
8. Even if I never witnessed episodes of sexual harassment, I understand that there might be a high risk of this happening, especially for young women. The factors that can lead to this exposure, in my opinion, are: big closure with unknowns, whom probably will never see again (clients or staff of the dive center), and the high presence of rich people that are used to have everything they want.
9. Sexual harassment is endemic in the industry, seemingly more obvious in some Islamic cultures. Indonesia and the Maldives, for example.
10. There is also Central Europe, you know. This is something you should be aware of if you're making surveys on sensitive subjects.
11. I'm sure it has happened in the dive community as it has in every other part of society. I have not witnessed any in my 40+ years of diving. Many are somewhat stand-offish until the new person has proven themselves. It is the rare diver who is not willing to offer help or advise if asked or are open to it. I try to treat others as I want to be treated and grant others the benefit of the doubt.
12. It is wrong. What I've seen has happened 20 yrs ago. Nevertheless, it was very wrong and I don't accept that act at any level.
13. The most common harassment I have seen/experienced is a dive shop owner telling me his goal was to have instructor staff and boat staff move towards 70-80% of "young, hot women".
14. I think it is rarer today than years ago.
15. While not witnessing sexual harassment that I can recall, homophobia is another story. I am a cis-gendered, straight male of color. I have shared berths on liveaboards with straight female divers, and we were respectful of each other's space. Homophobia and racial comments are, unfortunately, common in the industry.
16. In all industries, there is sexual harassment of men and women. It feels that men can be accused more easily, but women can make unwanted approaches. Probably, men don't see it as harassment yet.
17. In every activity, there are stupid people.
18. I have been a witness to sexual harassment incidents, but have not formally reported them or confronted the harasser because the affected parties asked to be given their space/agency in how to handle the situation. I deferred to them and did not want to place them in a more uncomfortable situation. Although my agency uses generic language in its standards concerning the need to respect "all those involved in dive activities", regardless of gender (et al), there is no language specific to sexual harassment as a breach of standards or as professional misconduct. No part of continuing education initiatives I have seen offered

includes sexual harassment awareness or workplace conduct training. Most instances of harassment I have either seen or heard (complaints) of involve male dive professionals aged 40+. Your survey's question about the identity of the women being harassed (dive pro or client) leave out instances where the women being harassed are passersby (tourists, beach goers, pedestrians). Harassing dive pros I have witnessed seem incapable of understanding that \*all\* women -- whether or not they are clients -- should be treated with dignity. They've seemed more concerned with getting sued or reported by a client than their fellow female dive pros or women in the general public near a dive site.

19. Nobody cares when men get harassed.
20. It would be good to compare the outcome of this survey to the same survey conducted in other industries (modified for relevance in terms of professional involvement in each of the questions). It would lack relevance otherwise.
21. I have heard rumors of other shops/people in my area that have been inappropriate. It typically comes from older instructors and/or students.
22. Part of the reason that I left the PADI organization is because the owner/director of the dive center where I worked was the person sexually harassing women. Never to the women's face. Always making comments to the male divemasters and instructors. It was an unhealthy environment.
23. It is uncommon to have sexual harassment in our Region. Our President would never brag about touching women's intimate Parts Like Trump did. So he is not our role model. A 2nd view: is sexual harassment also seeing less-dressed Models doing ads for dive gear?
24. I have the feeling the topic slowly evolves in the consciousness of the diving industry. But there is still a lot of work ahead. One important point and quiet often seen thing by me are patronizing and condescending comments on the technical side of diving. Things like how to get the gear ready or how to carry it along are pretty often commented inappropriate and derogatory towards women.
25. I think this survey is not gonna help. What would help is better education in schools, better manners/respect taught at home, and diving agencies having much stricter policies on kicking out any dive pro that has a (verified) record of misconduct.
26. Not accepted. Not on my watch.
27. The organisation doesn't anything about it, they only want their money of the certifications.
28. It's very difficult to see sexual harassment in a sport, where the Buddy to Buddy contact sometimes is pretty close, e.g. helping your buddy into his dive suit, etc. That can lead to situations where you can't differentiate between a helping and harassment actions. I think with the Generation coming into the diving industry, they force esp. Older Divers to change some behaviours through calling out the problems they encounter. It will still be a long way, to better the whole situation. Diving professionals who sexually harass other divers should be permanently banned from teaching.

29. There is a clear asymmetric power relationship between instructors and students. In which instructors (pretty much male ones) abuse of them.
30. I've never seen any problems or signs. At the same time can overreact quickly, making it hard for people to act based on 'common sense'.
31. I'm aware of sexual harassment happening to others and have heard from a rape victim who alleged she was raped by an instructor, though she did not report it. I have not witnessed anything, but just from talking with female instructors in the industry, it seems like it's pretty prevalent.
32. [Dive training] agencies need to have more strict policies and restrictions about it.
33. There should be zero tolerance. If the instructor has been found guilty of harassment, license should be removed. This can of course have problems because of possible wrong claims. So rules should be very clear. Different people think different things as harassment. Compliments given in honest goodwill may seem as harassment to some.
34. It seems to be usual suspects, repeat offenders that are either independent dive professionals or professionals that are in an ownership or leadership position in their organization. Plus a couple of captains.
35. Sexual harassment is unacceptable, and it should be treated as a major problem.
36. I have heard from very credible sources about sexual harassment going on in Playa del Carmen, but from a Freediving Instructor Trainer, not a scuba trainer.
37. Should not be allowed.
38. I have no doubt it happens. It would be interesting if it's statistically more than other environments. I would suppose it happens more in the recreational industry than the technical industry. Curious about the results.
39. To an observer, it felt uncomfortable. I was not sure if it was fun between the two. They have known each other for years.
40. I really reflected on my 34 years of experience in the diving industry, and I have to say that I did not explicitly witnessed any kind of special sexual harassment that is especially related to diving. In the diving-related activities, it is rather the opposite - because you are close to each other, people in my surroundings are very sensitive to this issue. However, I witnessed discriminatory conversations (locker talks) during a diving trade show in the after-work gathering. But in my opinion, this is not exclusive and special for the diving industry, but for a lot of men having two beers together. I also have to say that most women I know in diving are 'tough', i.e., I know that for them it's an issue, but I did not witness this by myself. One last thing: 5 years ago, I saw an advertisement for a large equipment manufacturer that was clearly sexist and could have stemmed from the 80s. Embarrassing. I wondered about this and I chose not to buy things from that company anymore...