

Sexual Harassment in the Scuba Diving Industry

– Comments by Female Scuba Divers (Non-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 **WOMEN** who were **SCUBA DIVERS** (non-dive professionals). *Find comments from other groups [here](#).*

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

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1. Professional scuba divers and schools need education on the topic. As I am a solo female traveler, I have very often been a prey for male scuba divers. Before that, I had been diving with my boyfriend and never had any issues. When I started to dive and travel alone, it was a recurring issue in most of the dive shops. Ask for phone number, want to take me for a ride in their car... and it's just the way it starts. Unfortunately, after too many of these, I stopped diving 2 years ago. I think about going back now that I have a boyfriend again with who I can go diving. It's unfortunately, the only solution for a no harassment. If you go dive alone, even if you clearly say you have 0 interest for anything else, they don't understand.
 2. I think part of it has to do with education about how to treat your customers. Maybe in the short 3-week version of the DM and/or IDC course, there is not enough attention for this subject. I strongly believe that the short courses don't make you a proper dive professional.
 3. I've only dealt with this from one individual (multiple times over a few years). I reported him to PADI (I had proof and people willing to back me up), and they did nothing. I know others have reported this same instructor. Until PADI is willing to hold to their own standards, I don't know how you can expect small businesses to put a stop to this.
 4. Dive professionals are much like surfing instructors who have "blue girlfriends". Many fall for the trap of having a charming dive instructor, so it became a norm for the instructors to expect women to fall for them, even when women don't want to. They have a sense of

entitlement.

5. My numbers here are imprecise because I've observed sexual harassment of women on so many occasions in diving, and been the subject of it myself so often. Something I also see a lot of is indirect sexual harassment (eg, two male dive pros making sexual comments about a female student while the student is out of earshot). There are multiple male instructors in my area who have a reputation for groping and making sexual comments towards young women in their classes, but the agencies don't allow for third-party reports like that, and the students often don't know (or don't want) to report.
6. I love this sport, but old habits die hard, especially when women are continued to be viewed as "less capable" in a very male-dominated sport. Women can be our own worst enemies of one another, too, by misjudging someone's intention by being in the sport (only wanting to find a partner, etc). So when both sides are beating one another up, it can be hard for women to find a "safe" place to learn & grow respectfully in this sport (and often continues to show in the population of "active" divers).
7. It's not all men, but it's always men. And men frequently mistake the kindness/politeness of women for sexual interest when it's simply kindness/politeness, but we get called rude or bitches when we're not kind. I'm so tired of it.
8. Male staff at the dive center regularly make bad jokes objectifying women who dive. Sometimes they do it in Creole, thinking clients don't understand. Often, I roll my eyes and make fun of them, rather than escalate it to anyone in charge. I think it's so culturally normal to speak about women this way, no one will do anything.
9. While it hasn't happened to me on dive trips, nor have I witnessed any incidents yet...I have heard stories of horrific treatment of women by men in my scuba groups on social media.
10. Direct sexual harassment is not as frequent as the crass "jokes" that are part of being in the "tribe". I have witnessed females and males that addressed the comments only to see them ostracized for the rest of the trip. Unfortunately, unless egregious timing the feedback until the end of the trip by pulling someone aside - whether the offender or the leader of the dive might be best. Just be cautioned that the "talk" about the incident will get spread by either creating an improvement in behavior or the possibility of being accused of being "too sensitive". There is very little monitoring/ repercussions for bad behaviour.
11. What I have personally seen falls under harassment of female DMs and instructors on the boat. It is typically hypersexualized comments that the client would never make about another client, but feels perfectly ok to make about a professional. On rare occasions, it also explicitly disrespects her authority and/or abilities. I have never witnessed physical assault, and I hope it is exceedingly rare and that the whole boat would jump in to support anyone grabbed/groped, or worse.
12. I think it's best if there is a man taking a woman diving, then there should be a buddy. Best case scenario, another female friend, or another individual.
13. Whilst I haven't come across sexual harassment (my husband is my buddy so maybe protected by that) I have come across misogyny such as being told as a woman I need to have decisions about my diving made for me (by a man) but my husband being "a big strong man"

can be trusted to make his own decisions. Followed by unwanted, but probably not sexual, physical contact i.e., "playful" punch and pushing. I'm not sure if this counts towards sexual harassment or just indicative of a wider negative opinion of women, divers or otherwise, in general. Sadly, within my club, of which I am no longer a member, this behaviour was tolerated. Individual women were instructed to challenge it independently with no support from the club.

14. More than sexual harassment and the varying ways in which it can occur, but general misogyny, cliques, the way rules apply to women vs men.
15. Just a creepy guy pressing his attention on a young dive professional (Maui, HI, USA). It was uncalled for. It was wrong. The naked guy was not being funny or cute. And the dive guide was very, very embarrassed. Everyone on the boat got to see the man's butt, but the dive guide was pretty much trapped by the rail by the penis side of the naked man. The guide looked to be thinking about jumping over the side just to get away. Not cool. The naked man's wife or girlfriend had already put on a show for the male clients. My take was that they were just a very creepy couple. I said something about the naked man needing to move and let the kid by. And that the young man was not interested.
16. I feel lucky I have not witnessed it or been a victim but it's probably a matter of time.
17. It is not harassment per se, but more often than not there is a (maybe cultural) assumption that being alone means single and is an invitation for unwanted attention. Not serious enough to report or complain, but the approach itself is unprofessional and should not even be initiated unless explicitly invited. That said, I also do not want to harm any local's livelihood where saying "no" in a few sentences was enough. It can happen anywhere, not just in the dive industry.
18. I've never experienced harassment from a dive professional, I've been fortunate to have had excellent experiences and professional outfits. Familiarity and banter occasionally, but never anything that crossed any lines, nor have I witnessed it happen to other paid divers. I've also made a point to dive with female operators where available.
19. I am very confident and try to be very business-like when diving. I ask when I need help, but I am very good with my gear.
20. I almost always dive with a known buddy or my husband. I believe the buddy and my age (51) skews toward less opportunity... add my strong sense of self, and it skews the data even more so.
21. I am confident calling out poor behaviour without it escalating to harassment. Many aren't, and I believe that standing up for others or having an avenue can stop this. But it is also a location issue, I find that the US has a higher prevalence and possibly tolerance to harassment. It is not just diving; it is a worldwide issue.
22. When I first started diving 20 years ago, one of my instructors kept hitting on me, including touching, grabbing, and trying to kiss me. Circumstances were such that I had to keep using him as my instructor, and I eventually got him to stop doing it, and I successfully completed all of the training. But I regret not reporting him at the time, as I'm sure he did this to other

women.

23. Instructors should be given a class on sexual harassment, just like a professor in a university. No sexual misconduct with students.
24. Only once did a dive guide say “that was a man’s dive” I said “oh really?”
25. I’m a relatively new diver with only about 20 dives, which may explain why I have not witnessed anything unfortunate.
26. When it happened to me, I reported it to PADI, SSI and the dive shop, but not much of anything was done about it.
27. Fortunately I have never experienced or seen sexual harassment while diving on any trip. I travel with my husband always, so it may be a contributing factor.
28. I have found that as a group, women are treated as inferior divers much the way society treats women as inferior drivers.
29. Inappropriate comments about my “curviness” and touching.
30. Not sure it matters, but I have never been diving solo. My buddies have been my ex, an older brother, or with a group.
31. Very new. Have only dealt with a woman-owned dive shop at this point.
32. I’ve been diving in Egypt and Thailand, have around 100 recreational dives, and guides, helpers and staff have never been anything but helpful and polite.
33. I think many don’t report because there is no one to report to, or concerns someone will lose their job, or because they will never see them again. It is very difficult to experience and witness, leading to people continuing to get away with it.
34. I have seen a number of posts in an all-female dive group that I am in. It is obviously out there, and there are plenty of single females who have been in situations where they feel unsafe.
35. I’ve never been sexually harassed by a dive professional, but have been harassed by other divers numerous times. In several instances, the male dive professionals have actually stepped in to stop the inappropriate behavior.
36. I’ve been hit on/flirted with, but I’m a pretty strong person and shut it down if it’s unwanted.
37. I am Australian. I know of many incidents of sexual abuse of underage girls by dive professionals here - 2 of which I knew the perpetrator or victim personally. One of which resulted in the jailing of a (British) instructor who worked at a GUE centre here in Bondi Beach, Sydney. He was jailed for almost 4 years and then was released early from jail and deported back to England after his expat friends who worked at the Dive Centre rallied together to write good character references for him. Many Australians are still very, very

angry about it, and it has had a very negative effect on the image of GUE in Australia.

38. Just because I haven't seen it, doesn't mean that it doesn't exist. I feel for anyone who has had to go through this!!
39. You have asked for a number of times if I have been sexually harassed or if I have witnessed somebody being sexually harassed. This is an absurd question - NOBODY counts all the moments they have been approached in a harassing manner by professionals or other clients. This has happened to me on every dive trip, on every dive-related outing for the past 6 years since I started diving. This is also true for other women who were present on trips, on boats, and so on. Not only in Eastern Europe, but EVERYWHERE else. I had my behind grabbed repeatedly, sexual jokes are ever present, my CCR instructor (well-known and respected instructor trainer, actually) was sharing my dive videos for feedback, and he also shared numerous videos with sexual encounters "by accident" over several days.
40. I have been a recreational diver since 1985 (tech diving was not defined in your survey) and have not experienced or witnessed what I thought was sexual harassment, both here (well, Caribbean) and abroad (Seychelles, Indonesia, etc). Most in the dive industry have been helpful, if not paternalistic.
41. The "worst" cases I have experienced happened before "me too", so I didn't even think I could/should say something.
42. My experience was with a deck hand on a boat, he would loom and block me from moving off the dive deck while smirking. Would follow me around the boat, and anytime I checked, would be staring. I felt incredibly threatened and uncomfortable; I have never experienced anything like it before or since. I am a grown ass woman, was solo travelling, and would consider myself a strong and self-confident person. He reduced me to silent terror without saying a word. Nobody else on the boat had any bad feelings at all from him.
43. I've heard other women being sexually harassed in countries out of the USA by divemasters to the point where vengeance was taken when the man was turned down by the woman. It's unacceptable, and the other divers and instructors should observe the behavior of others and step in when they see inappropriate behavior or unwanted advances.
44. Many times, there are misogynistic comments, or women are subtly excluded from activities, mostly in tech diving.
45. The definition of sexual harassment in this survey is vague. "Harassment means you feel uncomfortable" - some people feel harassed and uncomfortable when being told, for example, that their wetsuit size is too big or too small! With this definition, every phrase can be interpreted as harassment.
46. The defensiveness of men and women trying to minimise this and make the victim the one who is to blame/or making a big fuss over nothing. Wider societal factors are fueling this, as this issue is not only in the dive industry but in our everyday lives and employment. Dealing with sexual harassment is now normalised and something women have to be weary of and deal with.

47. Although I have never witnessed sexual harassment in any form, I think it's important to talk about it. I have read real stories in women's diving groups on the internet and even heard first-hand accounts. (I did not witness it, but she told me not to dive with a certain guy). Diving can be nerve-wracking enough as it is; nobody should have to deal with discomfort or harassment on top of that. Diving should be a safe environment.
48. While I was lucky enough to never experience sexual harassment myself, specifically in diving, it has more to do with the fact that I am lucky enough to have a very supportive dive community (mixed genders) based on respect. Since my 50th dive on I have been exclusively diving with them (more than 550 dives ago). Unfortunately, in daily life I have experienced sexual harassment way too much, and even from a too early age of 13 on. I believe an important thing is that people who witness it don't look away and speak up. This can make a big difference since it backs up the victim and hopefully discourages the perpetrator. I think it might be more prevalent in areas where you have more vacation diving, as the clientele changes often and quickly, making it easier for such behaviour to never get really reported. I believe that looking deeper into the issue - like you are starting with this study - is absolutely crucial. Also, people who have been convicted of such behaviour shouldn't be allowed to work in the industry as the victims are oftentimes in an environment (underwater or on a boat) where their safety is oftentimes dependent on the perpetrator.
49. Women in the diving industry are always minimized, sometimes ridiculed, so much difficult to be respected, including in tech diving. There is also another type of harassment that comes from people who believe they are the best in the diving industry and ridicule people that decide to be recreational divers - sometimes even because of the equipment brand one is using. That is very sad.
50. Sometimes Captains like to call "sweetheart, beautiful... etc," but never from a fellow diver. Just respect.
51. I stopped going to the dive instructor.
52. There seems to be nowhere to turn to. I received tremendous backlash for reaching out to the Dive Training Agency - they have continuously denied my DiveMaster application despite my completing the DM training, due to my bringing sexual assault allegations against a dive professional >1 year ago at a different dive center than the one where I trained. I have received retaliation for speaking up. Neither DAN, Girls that Scuba, nor the dive organization I'm a member of offered any support. Sexual harassment continues to happen to myself and other solo female divers around the world.
53. I am married, and my partner is my dive buddy. I think that protects me quite a bit from experiencing sexual harassment.
54. I have experienced and witnessed sexual harassment in the diving industry at a far lower rate than I have in the general public.
55. Due to this sport being male-dominated, there seems to be sexism as well as sexual harassment, and because it happens so frequently, people seem to be dismissive of it.

56. It's already such a male-dominated field, especially the tech side, it's critical to support women in the hobby and industry.
57. It is tiresome and ruins dive trips. Men are aggressive, especially with young, pretty divemasters in training.
58. I've done most of my diving with my husband and group trips through our local dive shop, where we got our certification. Everyone is always so respectful, and I love the trips. I'm saddened to hear that sexual harassment is an issue in the dive community because I hold it in very high regard.
59. It is not because it is more friendly or an activity where you get change that people shouldn't respect your personal space, and they should not take advantage of the situation.
60. My husband is my dive partner, so that could be why I have never experienced sexual harassment. I have experienced dive guides who don't believe I know how much weight I require and try to convince me I need less than I do. Overall, my diving experiences have been very positive.
61. I predominantly dive in Canada. The professionalism with the dive shops I've been to in Canada has been great. The instructors and divemasters have all been very professional in dealing with men and women. It's on overseas trips that there have been issues, and I think a lot of it comes down to cultural differences and norms. Western women are seen differently in parts of the world, and unfortunately, we have to deal with how men portray us as easy. Proper education in dive certifications would probably help. Clarifying what is considered sexual harassment, verbal and physical, in a course module with all the course right from open water would be helpful.
62. I was being touched underwater twice by DM. It's really hard to say that you could have confronted that person because in a diving situation, you would wonder if it was the current/choppy waves, etc. It ruined my trip, and I spent weeks thinking about it after. Dive shops are ill-equipped to handle such situations because the authorities, such as PADI/SSI, do not have clear guidelines for such cases too.
63. I believe having more women in leadership in diving will change attitudes faster and may therefore reduce sexual harassment or assault. I definitely feel safer when there are women on a boat with me.
64. Was in training for my dive cert. Unwanted attention received from dive hands at the dive shop, being young late teens, I was not confident to speak directly to the person. The dive instructor saw I was uncomfortable after several advances from the dive hand, which at best I could rejected politely. The dive guide, after asking if I was OK and why I didn't tell him no - then quietly gave a glance to the dive hand, which stopped any further advances. Being so young, this incident has always haunted me, and unless I'm in a friends-oriented dive group, I never fully relax in my surroundings when I'm diving.
65. Whilst it was not reported to the authorities, it was reported to the dive company, and minimal follow-up was provided by the company. I think the communication needs to improve, as the lack of communication gave the impression that it was not being taken

seriously.

66. I believe a huge part of the reason I do not experience this is that I always dive with my spouse. I will bring up that while I haven't experienced harassment while actually diving, I frequently experience discrimination as a woman if I ever go to a dive shop to buy or service gear alone, if the sales attendant is male.
67. There is going to be harassment in any industry in the world. As women, we must teach other women how to be assertive and not accept it.
68. We just had a conversation last week with another client from my dive association. We were talking about this topic and he was shocked that it happened to me several times within our own small dive association.
69. I have experienced and seen sexual harassment of women quite a few times. I have seen some men who might be objectified, but it didn't rise to the level that they appeared uncomfortable. Men may brush it off or ignore the behaviour more.
70. I was too new to diving to realize that the DM's behavior was inappropriate and unnecessary (he made it seem necessary). When I spoke about it to other women on the LOB, it turned out he had harassed most of us. I reported it on the feedback form, and the cruise director made me give her more info and promised to act on it. She didn't. Then I reached out to the owners, [and they] reached out to me, acting as if she was taking it seriously, and then completely disappointed me. I will never dive with [them] again because of that. They did not give a shit about women's safety in spite of the reports of sexual harassment by one of their DMs.
71. It's rampant, and it's hard to address when it's your instructor.
72. I do hear many stories of this occurring, but have been lucky not to experience or witness it myself.