ME TOO MOVEMENT

The Me Too Movement is a social movement focused on the problem of sexual harassment and sexual assault. It is also known as "#MeToo," with the hashtag, as followers of the movement tend to be active on Twitter, Facebook, and other social media platforms. Since first receiving widespread attention in late 2017, the movement has encouraged millions of women to speak out about their experiences as the victims of sexual misconduct.

Background

The Me Too Movement began growing in late 2017 in the wake of allegations of sexual misconduct against Hollywood movie producer Harvey Weinstein. Weinstein had produced a lengthy series of popular and profitable movies since the early 1990s, such as *Pulp Fiction*, *Shakespeare in Love*, and *The Lord of the Rings*. He was considered one of the most powerful and influential individuals in Hollywood.

In October 2017, more than 80 actresses and other women publicly accused Weinstein of sexual harassment, assault, or other misconduct. Among the more prominent actresses were Ashley Judd, Rose McGowan, Angelina Jolie, Gwyneth Paltrow, Kate Beckinsale, Salma Hayek, and Daryl Hannah. These women were dubbed "Silence Breakers" by the media. The allegations prompted Weinstein's own company to dismiss him. Additional allegations against him, including accusations of rape, from other women continued.

At the same time, several other famous men in the movie, media, and other industries, as well as in politics, faced their own public accusations of sexual misconduct in late 2017 and early 2018. These men included director James Toback; actors Louis C. K., Kevin Spacey, and Jeremy Piven; television personalities Matt Lauer, Tavis Smiley, and Charlie Rose; record producer Russell Simmons; conductor James Levine; former U.S. senator and comedian Al Franken; Alabama senatorial candidate and former judge Roy Moore; and women's Olympic gymnastics physician Lawrence Nassar.

In most cases, no formal charges have been brought against the men accused of misconduct (Nasser was charged and convicted of sexually assaulting minors). Some of the accusations against these men dated back several years or even decades, though others were relatively recent. Although the overwhelming majority of accusers were women, some accusers, such as the ones making allegations against Spacey, were men. After the allegations came to light, many of the accused men were suspended or fired from their positions.

Beginning and Growth of the Movement

"Me Too" was originally used in an online campaign against sexual misconduct by civil rights activist and sexual-assault survivor Tarana Burke. That campaign, focusing on women of color, was launched in 2006. The use of the "Me Too" phrase in relation to this sudden explosion of sexual misconduct accusations began when actress Alyssa Milano tweeted on October 15, 2017, "If you've been sexually harassed or assaulted write 'me too' as a reply to this tweet." Milano later noted that the phrase originated with Burke.

After Milano's tweet, the use of the "#MeToo" hashtag with personal stories of sexual harassment spread among millions of people around the world. Most of the stories posted online have involved women being victims of sexual misconduct by men. However, the movement has expanded to include other forms of victimization, such as discrimination or harassment based on sexual orientation, gender expression, and race. Although the details of the stories vary, a common theme is the exercise of power over subordinate individuals, such as a boss who suggests that an employee might get better career opportunities in exchange for sexual favors. This is why Me Too advocates often remind people that sexual misconduct is more about power than sex.
Because of this movement, the issue of sexual misconduct has reached unprecedented levels of public awareness. The increased awareness has prompted much discussion within communities, schools, corporations, government settings, and media outlets. Some companies have instituted tougher employee standards in a crack-down on sexual misconduct. Some legislators have proposed new laws to increase penalties against perpetrators of sexual misconduct and to better protect employees who report incidents.

**Backlash and Other Controversy**

Hollywood has always been infamous for its "casting couch"—with the implication being that powerful men help ambitious and sexually compliant young women get movie roles. Some commentators note that just as male directors and producers have used this for their personal gratification, actresses have used it to advance their careers. According to this view, actresses who complain about the old incidents after having long established their careers are being hypocritical. However, many argue that women who benefited from such exchanges were not necessarily willing participants and, in fact, often feared that their careers would be ruined if they did not submit to these powerful men.

Critics of Me Too further note that it is important to keep in mind that not all accused men are guilty of doing what their accusers allege. They argue that it is unfair that some of these men have lost their jobs and careers on the basis of accusations not supported by concrete proof.

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**Further Reading**


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