

Sexual Harassment

Before you go:

- Plan to interact respectfully with the host culture and to learn as much as you can prior to departure
- Ask about things like values, how people drive, how much cash is safe to carry, and the safety and reliability of public transportation
- Look up crime rates and safety information on the U.S. State Department website for the country or countries in which you plan to study or travel

When dealing with uncomfortable situations:

- Understand the culture context. If you don't know, ask someone you trust!
- Avoid confrontations; do what you need to do to stay safe
- Report all incidents immediately

Reduce your risk:

- Remain sober
- Pay your own way
- Employ the “buddy system”
- Trust your instincts
- Ask yourself, “Am I comfortable with what is happening?”
- Focus on the behavior without rejecting the person
- Look confident and ignore inappropriate remarks
- Assess your options to find an escape, depending on location/circumstances

Dealing with Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault

Cultural norms vary regarding what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate behavior. You cannot assume that behavior that is considered acceptable in the U.S. will be viewed similarly abroad. Suggestive catcalling and aggressive advances by men in social situations might be the norm in some locations. How you deal with these situations and how you behave generally can increase or decrease your risk of sexual assault.

Being informed, exercising good judgment, and taking appropriate precautions can reduce the risk of sexual assault. Talk with your Program Director and do some research about cultural norms as they relate to dating. It is important to know that North American women are often stereotyped as being promiscuous, and this may be reinforced by styles of dress and the general friendliness of U.S. women. While the majority of cases involve women, sexual harassment or assaults can also happen to men. In some countries, the concept of date rape is almost unknown and, in most settings, your behavior prior to an assault may be more important than the number of times you says no. There is no 100% way to prevent sexual assault, but consider these guidelines:

- Remain sober. This allows you to both judge situations and react if needed.
- Dress conservatively.

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- Employ the buddy system (it's always good to have friends watching out for you).
- Take care of yourself on a date: Be prepared to pay your own way, have access to a phone, arrange for transportation, and consider dressing in a way that allows you to move freely and quickly.
- Make your intentions clear.
- Trust your instincts; listen your inner voice and act on it if you feel uncomfortable and can safely remove yourself from the situation.
- Ask yourself, "Am I able to say 'no'?" And "Am I comfortable with what is happening?"
- If you don't like what someone is doing, you can reject the activity without rejecting the person.
- Get out of the situation as soon as you sense danger or feel afraid.
- To avoid stranger rape, try to walk on well-lighted streets; avoid standing in shadows.
- Look confident and strong and ignore inappropriate remarks from strangers.
- If an assault is attempted, consider your options to find an escape.
- Last, but NOT least, if something does happen remember that it is **not your fault**, no matter what you did or didn't do; it is the perpetrator's fault.

Remember that you are not alone, so seek help from your Program Director or a responsible person at the host institution. If you are living with a family and feel uncomfortable, request a new housing assignment from the program sponsor immediately. If you feel your concerns are not being taken seriously, contact the ISU Study Abroad Center, and we will provide support and options for you to consider.

Incidents involving other ISU students should be reported to the Program Director. If the incident involves an ISU employee, you should seek assistance from another ISU faculty or staff member traveling with you and/or contact the Study Abroad Center.

You may also seek help and information from the following resources while you are abroad or after you have returned home:

- ISU Student Counseling Service (515) 294-5056
- ISU Sexual Assault Response Team Coordinator (515) 294-3116
- ISU Thielen Student Health Center (515) 294-5801
- ACCESS Assault Care Center (515) 292-0500