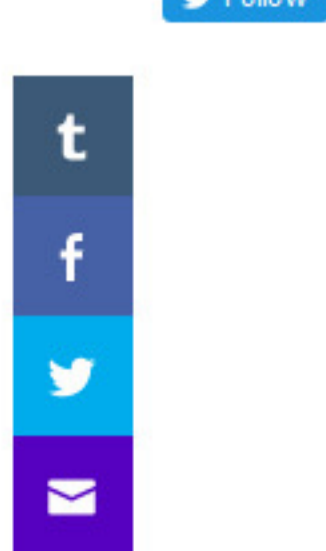


A look at the impact the #MeToo movement had on the world

Marie Claire Dorking
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Today marks a year since the release of that explosive [New York Times exposé](#) accusing Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein of decades of sexual harassment.

While more and more women came forward to speak out against Weinstein's behaviour, Jodi Kantor and Meghan Twohey's article also provided an ignition to start more open and honest conversations about rape, sexual harassment and sexual violence outside of Hollywood.

And so began the #MeToo movement.



Has #MeToo changed the world? Photo: Getty

What started as a call to action by the actress Alyssa Milano, has now become a symbol across the world for women and men to speak up about their experiences of catcalling, unwanted attention and abuse.

Originally created by Tarana Burke in 2006, the hashtag took on an entirely new significance post-Weinstein and today stands as a powerful representation of the reality many women (and men) face on a daily basis.

Hollywood's stars continued the call for a change with Time's Up, and soon sexism, sexual harassment and assault were being challenged in almost every industry.

But while there's little doubt the marching, protesting and reporting women have done over the last year have shifted the conversation, what's changed on a day-to-day basis?

What's different for the millions who shared their own #MeToo stories? And how far has the social media call to action been seen in real life change?

We chart the #MeToo successes in the last 12 months and those areas that need a little more work.

More people are speaking up about their experiences

According to recent statistics, calls to the [Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network](#) (a US crisis hotline) between October to December 2017 rose by 23% compared with the same period in 2016.

While in the UK, police figures show that crimes reported on British railways have increased by almost a fifth.

The [End Violence Against Women Coalition](#) said a rise in the number of people reporting sexual violence was partly down to the #MeToo movement.

Rachel Kryss, co-director of the End Violence Against Women Coalition, said: "There has been a huge increase in the number of women reporting sexual violence in the last year, partly as a consequence of #MeToo and because we have seen initiatives to encourage reporting over the last few years."

Women's rights activist and author [Paola Diana](#) believes that encouraging people to speak out about their experiences is one of the most prominent successes of the #MeToo movement.

"It has given a platform for women to speak out about the oppression, physical and psychological violence they have faced at the hands of men," she explains.



The Women's March helped change the conversation around sexual harassment. Photo: Getty

"The #MeToo movement allows them to identify with other women's stories and hardships, and given them the confidence to speak up about it."

It has taught people that sexual harassment is always wrong

Before #MeToo, some victims could have questioned whether what happened to them was actually a crime or important enough to complain about. Post #MeToo, women – and men – have learned that sexual harassment or violence is always wrong.

And perhaps more importantly, victims have learned that it's never their fault.

"#MeToo] has taught women across the world who have experienced violence at the hands of men that what has happened to them is wrong, no question about it, and that they shouldn't keep quiet and hold that pain with them for the rest of their lives," explains Paola Diana.

"It has given women an overwhelming amount of support and made it clear that they are not alone, and no one should fear fighting for justice."

"#MeToo is not just a movement, it is a revolution," Paola continues. "After millennia of silence, finally women have a strong voice that is heard by everyone thanks to the magic of social media. Women have now to learn to always use this voice. Not only the bravest ones, we need all of them to speak up and to break the tradition of modesty, of silence, of acceptance."

[Kate Mansfield](#) relationship expert and love coach agrees.

"I think that #MeToo's greatest achievement has been a fundamental shift in global consciousness about what isn't acceptable and people; both male and female now have permission to say no where they previously did not feel that this was an option."

Men have added their weight

In an attempt to show solidarity with the #MeToo movement, men also took to social media to help raise awareness of everyday sexual harassment.

Just a few weeks after the Weinstein expose, writer [Benjamin Law](#) urged men on Twitter to use the hashtag, #HowWillChange, either as a pledge to stand up against sexism in the workplace or a promise to call out 'lad culture' when with friends.

Within a matter of hours, men from across the globe had taken to Twitter to share how they plan to support the thousands of women who have answered, "Me too".

Attitudes to sexual harassment have changed

[New research from The Fawcett Society](#), has found that one year on from the outpouring of #MeToo stories, there has been a significant shift in attitudes to sexual harassment.

According to the research, supported by the law firm [Hogan Lovells](#), the majority of people (53%) say that since #MeToo what is seen as acceptable has changed.

The biggest change has taken place in the 18-34 age group with over half of young people saying they are now more likely to challenge behaviour such as sexual harassment, including 58% of young men.

The survey also found that people who are aware of #MeToo are one and a half times more likely to say that the boundaries of acceptable behaviour have changed with 69% of those who were aware of #MeToo agreeing compared to 46% who were unaware.

"This survey confirms that we have had a year of disruptive attitudinal and behavioural change and that was long overdue," says Sam Smethers, Fawcett Society Chief Executive.

"Other evidence shows we are also still seeing significant numbers of women being sexually harassed at work. Now it is time for tougher legislation and real, lasting culture change."

But Kate Mansfield has a word of warning about pigeon holing all men into being potential abusers.



#MeToo – a huge step forward but more needs to be done. Photo: Getty

"The shame and fear caused by both subtle and more overt sexual abuse – of men or women – is really at the heart of why so many people find it difficult to have close relationships," she says. "I am always glad for any conversation that brings truth to the table because this is how we change and grow, and this kind of honest discussion is what gives us the ability to choose love over fear."

But what still needs to change?

More accountability

According to Paola Diana, there needs to be more accountability for perpetrators of sexual harassment.

"What needs to improve is that men who have wronged need to be held accountable for their actions and disciplined accordingly," she says. "Too often are we see them walk away unscathed which means women who have been violated feel they cannot speak up about incidents."

That's something Sarah Green, Co-director, End Violence Against Women Coalition agrees with.

"In the UK, many more women have come forward and called out sexual harassment at work. But, some employers are dragging their feet on improving the workplace," she says.

"And we really need the law to spell out clearly that sexual harassment by a customer as well as a colleague is not on."

"Women, and men, also now seem a bit more willing to report serious sexual assaults including rapes to the police, which means the figures have really gone up," she continues. "But the justice system still has massive, unfair barriers to getting these crimes prosecuted. There are huge delays. There are prejudices among those who make the critical decisions about what 'real rape' and a 'real victim' or a 'real offender' look and behave like. Rape trials involve enormous intrusion into victims' lives and still often end up being a test of a woman's character."

More action from older generations and those in a position of power

While various research has revealed young people are on board with the changes #MeToo has kickstarted, the older generation needs to get involved.

"We also need to see those in positions of power such as the government and the church advocate change too," Paola Diana says. "These are the people that can really make a difference. When they talk, people listen. When people listen, action is taken and change happens."

Employers need to take up the baton, too.

"We need to bring back section 40 of the Equality Act which would outlaw harassment from customers and clients," says Sam Smethers, Fawcett Society Chief Executive. "But we also need to go further and place a new duty on large employers to prevent discrimination and harassment. Employers have to take responsibility for their own workplace culture."

"Older men have to be part of the change because they often hold positions of power. But their attitudes are lagging behind. They don't seem to realise the #MeToo movement is also about them."

Overall the #MeToo movement has inspired a positive change, but we need to keep that momentum going.

"The women in film and the arts who stood up to say #MeToo over the last year, and who built TIME'S UP as a way for us to resist together, have made it possible to have a different conversation about the daily reality of this abuse, and how it is not inevitable," explains Sarah Green.

"Employers who ignore sexual harassment on their watch, and a justice system that keeps failing sexual assault victims, will not be able to do so with cover for much longer."