

1st Person Plural: Street Harassment

Teenage girls ask: why can't men resist chatting up strangers?

Being harassed in the street is common for teenage girls in England - and dealing with it can be difficult.

"I'm just walking down the street and there are guys, old enough to be my granddad, eyeing me off. I'm just walking down the street and there are guys, old enough to be my granddad, eyeing me off," says Erica, 17, from London. "I don't know when a mid-life crisis starts but they want to get their lives in order and stop chasing teenagers."

Rupal, 16, once found herself surrounded by five men on a night out in London's Leicester Square. "Each one of them wrote out his phone number, put it in my pocket and then kissed my hand. I just said, 'Go away.'"

Jisselle, 15, says she deals with harassment by telling little white lies. "I say I've got a boyfriend who's older and really big, who will beat them up." Dealing with drunks is simple. "They're easy to get rid of because they don't see who they're talking to anyway!"

Some street harassment is truly bizarre according to Gabriella, 13. "I was going to the train and this man said, 'Do you want to go out with me?' and I said 'No'. He had a frying pan and he tried to hit me with it! So I started running and he followed me, saying 'Let me fry you an egg,' It got funny, actually."

Sometimes attention is welcome, says Erica, especially when the boys are attractive. But her grandmother has other ideas. "This man wanted to chat me up. He was actually quite nice, so I didn't mind that much. But my grandmother said, 'Leave my grandchild alone!' I wanted to chat, but she was so protective."

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