Harassment occurs when a housing provider aggressively pressures or intimidates a tenant. It is a form of housing discrimination, and it is illegal under fair housing laws. A housing provider may not disrupt your quiet, peaceful enjoyment of your rental unit, illegally force you to move, or stop you from exercising your fair housing rights.

**BREAKING DOWN SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

- **Quid pro quo harassment** is when a housing provider makes an unwelcome request to engage in sexual conduct in exchange for something housing-related. Like when a landlord tells an applicant he won’t rent her an apartment unless she has sex with him.

- **Hostile environment harassment** is when a housing provider subjects a person to unwelcome sexual conduct that interferes with their ability to be comfortable in their home. Like when a property manager makes unwelcome, lewd comments about a tenant’s body.

In a tight housing market – like now – providers can feel more empowered. Desperate tenants are seen as easy prey.

Sexual harassment is not just a cis/hetero problem. LGBTQ+ tenants are equally at risk, especially if providers perceive them as being more vulnerable or less likely to report harassment.

**IT'S NOT ALWAYS ABOUT SEX:**

Harassment Based on Other Characteristics

Fair housing laws also prohibit harassment based on other legally protected characteristics, including race, color, religion, national origin, familial status, and disability. New York State adds protections for people using housing subsidy vouchers and for people who have experienced domestic violence.

**ACTUAL VS. PERCEIVED CHARACTERISTICS**

Sometimes a provider will harass a tenant because of what the provider ASSUMES about the tenant’s sex, gender, race, nationality, etc. But harassment is harassment and it’s always illegal, even if the provider gets it wrong.

**RETAILIATORY HARASSMENT**

When landlords provide poor services or fail to properly maintain their buildings, many tenants choose to suffer in silence rather than filing a complaint. They worry that the provider will punish them for speaking out.

But retaliation against any tenant for exercising their rights is another form of harassment, and it’s illegal and punishable.

**HARASSMENT BY OTHER TENANTS**

You also have legal rights if you are being harassed by a co-tenant or neighbor. Your landlord also might be liable if they knew about the harassment but didn’t do enough to stop it.

**TAKING ACTION**

**YOUR GENERATION CAN PLAY A KEY ROLE IN MAKING FAIR HOUSING A LIVING REALITY FOR EVERYONE**

If you think you are experiencing any form of housing discrimination, contact the FHJC. We will help sort out the facts and provide you with information about your rights and options under fair housing laws. Our counseling and investigative services are provided for free, regardless of income. [fairhousingjustice.org](http://fairhousingjustice.org)

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