

SEXUAL ASSAULTS DURING HOLIDAY PERIODS IN MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES

One in ten female German or British tourists holidaying in southern Europe suffers sexual harassment

The European Institute of Studies on Prevention (Irefrea) surveyed more than 6,000 people in various airports in Mediterranean countries during summer 2009 to find out the levels of harassment and sex against one's will that had occurred. According to the experts, one in ten female English or German tourists has fallen victim to these practices while on holiday in southern Europe, as well as one in 15 males, as published in the journal 'Archives of Sexual Behavior'.

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An international team of researchers, led by Amador Calafat from the European Institute of Studies on Prevention (Irefrea), surveyed 6,502 people in different airports across southern Europe (Crete, Cyprus, Italy, Portugal and Spain). Those surveyed were young people between the ages of 16 and 35, who had visited tourist hotspots in summer 2009 and were returning home. The aim of the survey was to discover the levels of sexual harassment and sex against one's will suffered by these tourists. Their study is published in the journal 'Archives of Sexual Behavior'.

"In this article we have gone into detail with a broad sample on an issue that receives little attention in tourist environments: sexual harassment and sex against one's will. Research was conducted on English and German tourists because they are the most frequent visitors to southern Europe and it is easier to obtain results," Amador Calafat, the Irefrea researcher leading the study, informs SINC.

8.6% of people suffered sexual harassment during their holidays

Despite the known increase in substance use and risky sexual behaviours among young people during holiday periods, issues of sexual harassment and sex against one's will have not received adequate attention, according to the researchers.

The results of the study show that 8.6% of people suffered sexual harassment during their holidays and 1.5% suffered sex against their will. "2.4 times as many women as heterosexual men claimed to have suffered from sexual harassment. However, gay and bisexual men showed similar levels to women and high levels of sex against their will," the expert notes.

Predictor variables for risk

The researchers applied different variables to predict the risk of falling victim to one of the two behaviours studied. "With regard to sexual harassment, those who claimed to have suffered these practices the most were tourists who were visiting Mallorca and Crete, young, British, gay or bisexual, frequent drinkers or attracted to bars where people get drunk, or cocaine consumers," Calafat highlights.

"We're not talking about casual sex, but rather issues that show a correlation, so we must continue researching," the scientist explains.

The Spanish group Irefrea has led various European projects and participated in others on the subjects of violence, driving, sexual behaviour, drunkenness, drug use, differences between countries, management of venues that have an influence on drunkenness and violence, etc., and has prepared Health and Safety European Standards for nightlife venues.

"The first preventive measure is to be aware that these problems exist, since we tend to always think positively about holidays. There are measures that depend on tourist destinations, which are often promoted as places with a high level of sexual permissiveness and advertise cheap alcohol. The venues themselves can also avoid these situations by adopting good management in accordance with already established standards," Calafat explains.

The article is part of a long series of publications on nightlife issues that Irefrea has been publishing in recent years.

References:

Amador Calafat, Karen Hughes, Nicole Blay, Mark A. Bellis, Fernando Mendes, Montse Juan, Philip Lazarov, Barbara Cibir, et al. "[Sexual Harassment among Young Tourists Visiting Mediterranean Resorts](#)" *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 42: 603-613, mayo de 2013. DOI 10.1007/s10508-012-9979-6

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