

# Making Astronomy More Inclusive

*How professional societies can stimulate and implement change*

*Meg Urry, American Astronomical Society President 2014-2016*

2014 October:

ESA's Rosetta spacecraft lands  
on Comet 67P/Churyumov-  
Gerasimenko



# American Astronomical Society timeline 2014-2016

- 2014 Oct: “Shirtgate” explodes
- 2015 Mar: Indiana’s “Religious Freedom Restoration Act,” AAS+AGU presidents send letter to Pence; other “bathroom bills” passed, some in states with AAS meetings
- 2015 May: Mauna Kea: protesters block Thirty Meter Telescope, Twitter explodes over emails from senior faculty, CSMA asks Council for statement, split in Astro community
- 2015 Oct: UC Berkeley Prof. Geoff Marcy publicly apologizes for harassing women students, other cases in academia, Tim Hunt jokes about women students (Jun 2015), #MeToo explodes on Twitter (Oct 2017)
- 2016 Apr: Gender bias found in astronomy proposal reviews

**If It's Unwanted,  
It's Harassment.**

It is AAS policy that all participants in Society activities will enjoy an environment free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, and retaliation.

If you experience or witness such behavior at this meeting, call 1-202-688-1993 to report the date, time, location, nature of the incident, and persons involved. Be sure to identify yourself and leave a call-back number; we will not follow up anonymous tips.

Complaints will be treated seriously and investigated promptly; confidentiality will be honored as far as possible as long as others' rights are not compromised.



Read the complete AAS  
Anti-Harassment Policy at  
[aas.org/harassment](https://aas.org/harassment)

- AAS Meetings
  - Code of Conduct (since 2008), added check-off at registration
  - Visible signage
  - Hotline to report harassment
  - Outside HR firm to investigate & counsel respondent
  - Astronomy Allies
  - Enhanced accessibility – wheelchair access, reserved seating
  - Training of session chairs – anti-bullying
- Revised Code of Ethics, with enforcement
- Town Halls
  - Sexual harassment (Jan 2016)
  - Racism (Jan 2017)
- Statement on GRE
- AAS Committees on Equity and Inclusion
  - 1972: CSWA – Women <https://aas.org/comms/cswa>
  - 1995: CSMA – Minorities <https://aas.org/comms/csma>
  - 2012: SGMA – LGBTQ+ <https://aas.org/comms/sgma>
  - 2016: WGAD – Accessibility/Disability <https://aas.org/comms/wgad>

# Evolution of responsibility and scope

- 1971: Margaret Burbidge refused Annie Jump Cannon award
- STATUS Newsletter created by Sue Simkin
- 1992 Women in Astronomy meeting + Baltimore Charter
- 2003 WiA + Pasadena Recommendations, 2009 WiA meeting
- 2015 Inclusive Astronomy + Nashville recommendations, 2019 IA meeting
- 1990s Email lists for LGBTQ+, women, “Panchromatic” AAS members

*Much of this work was done by the volunteers in affected communities, and was seen as outside the main scope of AAS business.*

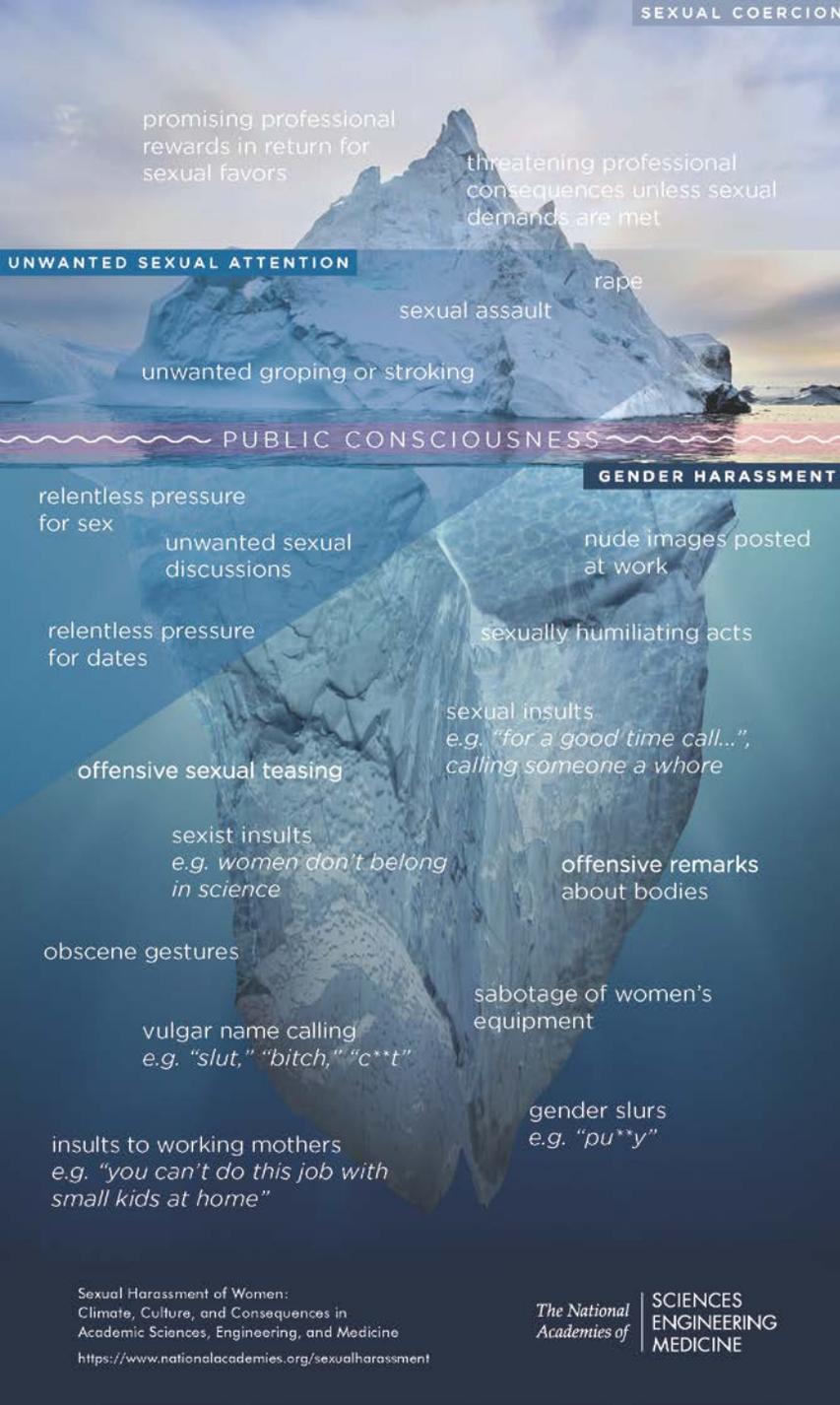
<https://aas.org/comms/cswa/STATUS>

<http://axe-info.stsci.edu/institute/conference/wia>

<http://www.stsci.edu/stsci/meetings/WiA/BaltoCharter.html>

<https://aas.org/press/pasadena-recommendations-gender-equity-astronomy>

[https://tiki.aas.org/tiki-index.php?page=Inclusive Astronomy The Nashville Recommendations](https://tiki.aas.org/tiki-index.php?page=Inclusive+Astronomy+The+Nashville+Recommendations)



- Academia one of the worst environments  
*2018 NRC report on Sexual Harassment*
- “Research misconduct” is broad (e.g., NSF)
- Professional responsibility to create environment in which everyone can thrive
- **AAS Bylaw:** *The Society is committed to the philosophy of equality of opportunity and treatment for all members, regardless of gender, gender identity, race, ethnic origin, religion, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disabilities, or any other reason not related to scientific merit. The Board of Trustees shall provide for such policies as are appropriate to recognize and maintain this commitment.*
- <https://aas.org/posts/news/2016/11/guide-aas-code-ethics>
- <https://aas.org/policies/ethics>
- <https://aas.org/policies/anti-harassment-policy-aas-division-meetings-activities>